FROM CALLING TO CRISIS:
THE GROWTH PROCESS OF TEACHERS THROUGH CRISIS-LIKE INCIDENTS

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FROM CALLING TO CRISIS:
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Dissertation

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ABSTRACT

The phenomena of crisis in the formation and development of teacher identity is not unknown in the field of educational research, yet the study of these phenomena tends to focus on preservice and novice teachers. The purpose of this research is to discover through veteran teacher narratives, descriptions of crisis-like incidents, as well as any growth and transformation they may have experienced in the context of the profession. By studying teacher stories I hope to contribute to the understanding of how teachers navigate their teaching lives and shifting identities, especially in the face of difficulty, and gain insight into the value of collectively sharing and talking about the stories together. This Organic and Narrative based inquiry engaged three veteran teachers in conversations about the difficulties and challenges (crisis-like situations) of their teaching lives.

The stories of crisis-like incidents (Veteran Stories) varied greatly, but themes emerged, such as: passion for the profession; varying needs for reflection; conflict of personal beliefs and institutional beliefs; conflict of belonging and not belonging; harmed and healed relationships; and the presence of a strongly held core belief.

The process of sharing crisis stories in a safe and caring environment was quite transformative for participants. Their reflections indicated increased understanding of self and others, desire to be of service, a sense of wellbeing and personal implications, as well. They concluded that teachers often cause crisis-like incidents for other teachers,
and that reflecting on incidents, while emotionally difficult, proved valuable to them. The researcher gained increased awareness of the vulnerabilities and risk in teaching, and now views herself as moving into teacher Elderhood. Early readers responded to the stories of crisis with stories of their own, demonstrating the truly widespread nature of crisis-like incidents in the lives of public school teachers.

Recommendations for the profession include increased time and space for teachers to talk to one another about their philosophical beliefs and values and the value of a healthy, trusting school culture. Further research is needed to unearth aspects of critical incidents among teachers with varying philosophical viewpoints, as well as the phenomena of teachers causing critical incidents to other teachers.
DEDICATION

One looks back with appreciation to the brilliant teachers,
but with gratitude to those who touched our human feelings.
The curriculum is so much necessary raw material,
but warmth is the vital element for the growing plant and for the soul of the child.
~ Carl Jung (1954, p.144)
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION OF THE PROBLEM

“I decided it was time to leave teaching” (Story #3, The Darkest Time)

I was so tired. I stood facing Paul. He was a tall and doughy seventh grader who, at 5 foot 10 could look me directly in the eye. We were at a stand-off and I, for once, was silent. My previous words still rang like a death-knell in my ears:

“Paul! Shut up!”

I had taken the job at this middle school for the arts two years earlier. I was driving 75 minutes to work each way and after a brief honeymoon period I began to feel even more isolated than I had been at my previous school. I watched my friend and art teacher Jack lose his spark, his eyes deadened by the stress of a killer schedule and non-existent leadership. I felt myself slowly dying, pulling myself up bleary-eyed every morning and half dozing on my drive to arrive in the modular trailer that was my room before the first bell.

I loved the work and my students were wonderful. We did Model United Nations, philosophy projects, and we read novels and built bridges out of toothpicks. But Paul never fully engaged. He sat sullenly in the back of the class, his wicked sense of humor and satirically drawn comic strips floored me: this kid was s.m.a.r.t. = smart. I tried everything to reach him, but he argued and ignored and talked back and went silent. The seventh grade English teacher told me, in his sweetly reproachful manner, that Paul was a delight to have in class—just a delight. He just couldn’t understand why Paul would not do any work for me.

Sigh. I looked up into Paul’s sullen face.

And I was suddenly very, very tired. I had never—ever—told anyone to shut up, not since probably the third grade, when I told my brothers to shut up when they called me “Jen, Jen, the Big Fat Hen.” I hated that phrase—”shut up” (almost as much as I hated “Jen, Jen, the Big Fat Hen”), and I hated myself for using it. As I felt the words vibrating between us, I dropped my shoulders and sat heavily in a nearby chair.

“Paul,” I muttered, my head down. “I have never told a student to shut up in my entire career. I am so sorry.”
“Silence.
Why don’t you go back to your class.”
Silence.
The sound of footsteps. The door closed.
Silence.
As the words “Shut up!” clinked like broken glass on the linoleum floor, I decided that it was time to leave teaching.

**Problem: The Disappearing Teacher**

I am not alone in my decision to leave the profession. More than 13% of US teachers will leave the profession this year (Haynes, 2014). The National Education Association reports that although the majority of teachers are satisfied with their jobs, 45% of teachers have considered leaving because of standardized testing alone (Walker, 2014). In the years since my experience with Paul I re-entered teaching at the college level and my concern has turned toward teachers who feel and will feel the physical, financial, emotional, and spiritual burden of the profession. My bookshelf holds titles such as *Why Great Teachers Quit: And How We Might Stop the Exodus* (Farber, 2010), *Why Half of Teachers Leave the Classroom: Understanding Recruitment and Retention in Today’s Schools* (Rinke, 2014), and *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher’s Life* (Palmer, 2007).

However, teachers who permanently leave the profession are only part of the problem. Popular media seems to be buzzing with reports on teacher absences and missed days. The National Council on Teacher Quality (2014) examined attendance data from 40 metropolitan school districts and determined that teachers lost an average of 11 days per school year to absences and that 44% of teachers were frequently to chronically absent, using up to 18 school days. One article by *USA Today* estimated the total costs
for substitute teachers in the 40 districts during the year of the study to be over $400 million dollars (Konz, 2014). Miller (2012) stated, “multiple studies have linked teacher absences to job-related stress” (p. 6). Also worth noting is the price students themselves pay in lost knowledge and time. Students need continuity and a trusting connection to their teacher, both of which are lost when the teacher is frequently missing from the classroom.

These phenomena combine in an already challenging cultural environment for teachers. Intensified emphasis on standardized testing to measure student learning and scripted methods for teaching (i.e., Direct Instruction) are often in direct conflict with teachers’ reasons for entering the profession (Olsen, 2008b) and their beliefs about what is best for students (Carlyle & Woods, 2002). In addition, standardized testing is increasingly attached to teacher pay and retention: U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan is repeatedly quoted as stating that performance pay is his department’s “highest priority” (Campbell, 2013; Rosales, 2014; Toch, 2009). It would seem that the institution and the teacher are at crossed purposes, or what Moore (2004) called “incompatible wishes” (p. 27), which lays the foundation for the difficulties to come.

Twenty years before I uttered those terrible words to Paul I was a young coed, wavering on my future path.

“The Calling” (Story #1, Entry Story)

Truth be told, I wanted to be a professional bassoonist and not a teacher when I entered college. And I was pretty good, too. I played in as many groups as I could fit into my schedule, just like high school, and spent the majority of my free time in the practice room. Perfecting that etude, working on those scales and arpeggios: it was a pleasure and a joy, not a chore.
It was Dad who suggested I major in music education, I wanted to perform. He said that it would make me more marketable, and I could perform no matter what degree I had hanging on the wall. So Music Ed it was.

I remember the classroom well, the day I was called into this profession. If I close my eyes I can still see it all. Windows covered in tissue paper flowers, chalkboard and individual desks, each bursting with papers, workbooks and folders. I walked that morning to a nearby elementary school to do a couple hours of observation in a third grade classroom for a music education class that gave us experience in non-music classrooms. Most of us weren’t thrilled, of course we wanted to see classes in our major, but I dutifully went with notebook and pen in hand. It was math time. The teacher taught a lesson in simple calculation and then gave out little counters and the children spread out all over the room to work on their dittoed worksheet. There was busy happy noise as they worked, scrunching up their little faces in concentration, or lining up their counters like little soldiers. That’s when it hit me. No, I mean, literally hit me like breath of air in my face. I was totally drawn to put down my notebook and sit on the floor with one of those kids and help them work. It was sudden, and it was strong. I fidgeted. I itched. I longed.

I was called.

I changed my major to Elementary Education before the month was out.

From Calling to Crisis

After student teaching and graduation, I departed college, 24 years old, with a crisp new teaching degree and a passion for my chosen profession, excitement for what lay ahead, and a true desire to be of service. At that time I could not have imagined myself at age 40, exhausted and depleted, leaving the classroom. What happened to me in those years? How had I evolved to such a point? Who had I become? How had I gone from calling to crisis in 16 short years?

Much research has been done on the life cycle of the career teacher. There are charts and timelines moving teachers from Preservice to Career Exit (Fessler, 1985), and Novice to Emeritus (Steffy & Wolfe, 2001), or Novice to Late Career (Huberman, 1989). These are all fine ways to organize the trajectory of teachers through a career with an eye
toward professional development needs and support. However, my research interests lie
in the deeper study of the growth of teacher identity: a journey that often includes
difficulties and transformations of identity over time. A study of this kind must view the
teacher not only in the context of her teaching life, but it must respect the daily evolution
of the teacher through interactions with her outer and inner world (Clandinin & Connelly,
2000; Dewey, 1938) and must listen for her intuitive, reflective, and sensory responses to
those interactions in a profession that engages the heart as well as the intellect. In
addition, this view appreciates crisis as significant to transformation and development of
identity (Illeri, 2009; Mezirow, 2003), especially teacher identity (Meijer, 2011; Meijer
& Oolbekkink, 2012; Rolls & Plauborg, 2009). Overall these qualities describe a
transpersonal view—specifically a transformative learning view—of teachers’ lives and
work. Palmer (2007) believed that “every profession that attracts people for ‘reasons of
the heart’ is a profession in which people and the work they do suffer from losing heart”
(p. xiii). And because teaching engages the heart in a culture that often denies that depth
of human experience (another example of Moore’s “incompatible wishes”), the crises
described above can often be simply blamed on stress, overwork, or substandard pay.
These elements have a share of the crisis, to be sure, but ultimately the journey is very
personal, very individual, and very spiritual, and every teacher in crisis experiences its
motivations and trajectory in a unique way. Only something we love could hurt so much.

The phenomena of crisis in the formation and development of teacher identity is
not unknown in the field of educational research (Meijer, 2011; Meijer & Oolbekkink,
2012; Milner, 2002; Troman & Woods, 2009), yet most of the field focuses on preservice
and novice teachers and their shifts within the first five years of service in the profession,
often called “practice shock” (Danielewicz, 2001). Meijer (2011) went so far as to suggest that crisis situations are so profound in forming, solidifying, and transforming new teachers’ identities that teacher trainers should have two main tasks: “the first, and most important one, is the support of transformative learning of the student teacher in crisis” (p. 51) and “the second task . . . is to make sure that all student teachers go through crisis, so sometimes a teacher educator even needs to provoke transformative learning” (p. 51) within a safe learning environment. A number of researchers believe that crisis and its impact on teacher identity is under-researched within the context of veteran teachers’ experiences (Meijer, 2011; Meijer & Oolbekkink, 2012; Rolls & Plauborg, 2009). Adams, Hayes, and Hopson (1976) stated that individuals will undergo transitional cycles that often include crises between 10 and 20 times in their lifetime. Bridges (2004) agreed that although not standard in timetable or number, difficult transitions and crises are numerous throughout the adult lifespan. Veteran teachers, therefore, will have experienced a number of these crises, whether profound or mundane.

Most of the research on the occurrence of crisis in teachers’ work lives is focused on novice and student teachers as it relates to the identity growth in the first 18 months of service (Measor, 1985; Meijer, 2011; Rolls & Plauborg, 2009). Yet most researchers agree that further identity shifts occur throughout a teacher’s career (Meijer & Oolbekkink, 2012). “Following the often turbulent period immediately after entering the profession, research on teachers’ careers is somewhat scant” (Rolls & Plauborg, 2009, p. 16).
“Tigress Caged” (Story #2, The Beginning)

I was ten years into the profession and I just wanted to be a good teacher. I worked hard at it, with long hours of planning and paperwork organizing my new little gifted program around changing requirements and local committees while working nights on my master’s degree. I was dedicated to my students. Those of us who are considered “specials” teachers (art, music, PE, gifted) were not the same as regular ed, special ed and Title I teachers. That was understood the day I entered my classroom, tucked as it was behind the gymnasium in a padded walled equipment storage room. This was Crewland Local School’s room for the gifted and talented. It smelled like old gym socks.

Jordan’s mother came to me one day with agitated tears in her eyes: her son was not eating, was stressed and disengaged in the second grade class that she felt was not challenging him. I sighed. I had worked with that teacher before. She was a gentle soul, but three of the four teachers in that grade felt no need to differentiate for their gifted students and she was the staunchest. “He needs to work more slowly, take time with his work,” she would say. Meanwhile he waited for others to finish, while his quickly scrawled but perfectly answered math papers piled up on her desk.

I went into tigress mode: I visited the principal and spoke to him about allowing Jordan to change teachers midyear and to place him with a teacher who would make the accommodations he needed. The principal, a weak and insecure retiree who had been hired quickly to fill in as interim leader, put me off. I was tireless, working on ways to challenge Jordan, relieve his stress, and keep his mother from removing him for private school.

One day after school, four teachers walked into my classroom, a second grade teacher and three Title I teachers. Sandy, Kristina, Laura, and Sheila (who had never entered my room before. I actually remember thinking how surprised I was that they even knew where it was!) filed in and told me they needed to talk to me. We all sat down and I waited, unnerved. As the conversation started, they each in turn told me how unprofessional I was for choosing to put the needs of this one student before the reputation of a tenured teacher. They reminded me that I was an inexperienced teacher, new in gifted education, and this was a veteran educator with dozens of years of good service. I was unprofessional, disloyal, and unprincipled. I felt surrounded and attacked from every angle. How could I dare to question her ability to work with this student when she had taught hundreds of happy little second graders over her two decade career? I sat in stunned silence, holding back angry tears until they finally released me and left my room.

Then I fell apart.
Teacher Evolvement

The school environment is anything but conducive to experiencing and expressing these crises. Teaching in itself is an isolated—and isolating—profession (Foucault, 1979; Irwin, 1996; Palmer, 2007) where crises arise with feelings of shame (Woods & Carlyle, 2011), deterioration of school relationships (Carlyle & Woods, 2002; Rinke, 2014), and an inability to express feelings contrary to dominant school policies (Carlyle & Woods, 2002; Irwin, 1996). Giroux (2012) stated that “within this atomistic, highly individualizing script, shared struggles and bonds of solidarity are viewed as either dangerous or pathological” (para. 9). The lack of a language, time, and sympathetic space in schools prohibit expression of the crisis, much less undertaking any alleviating processes.

In summary, human beings as social and cultural creatures evolve with time as a natural part of the growth process. Within the context of the educational emphases, difficulties, and expectations that occur, it is understood that teachers have many conflicting roles and purposes that impact their evolution. Whereas each teacher experiences conflicts differently, there are teachers who, in the course of their evolution, reach a crisis point. The crisis may include a time of loss or questioning of personal or professional sense of self—an existential crisis—where they leave or consider leaving the profession. The existential crisis, both major and mundane, that arises in some teachers during the course of their careers is the research problem of specific interest for this study. The opening story of my interaction with Paul shows how over time teachers may lose their ability to regulate their emotions. It takes patience, focus, and compassion to deal with difficult students, and early in my career I had those things. Yet I was left
facing a sullen student and an awful feeling I had failed him, at a loss as to when I turned into “that teacher.” Surprisingly enough, we know little about these types of crises and how they might be overcome.

**Purpose and Significance of the Study**

The existential crisis is a pivotal point that holds deep personal growth potential (Assagioli, 1993; Bridges, 2004; Daniels, 2005; Ellenberger, 1970; Firman & Gila, 1997; Ford & Blacker, 2011; Frankl, 1967; Grof & Grof, 1990; Hale, 1992; Jung, 1971; Maslow, 1968; May, 2004; Moore, 2004; Palmer, 2007; Walsh & Vaughan, 1993; Washburn, 1995); its experience is universal, yet as varied as the number of authors who describe it. To understand the growth and psychological evolution of teachers as they navigate the rocky landscape of today’s educational culture, it is essential to listen to their stories of school, especially their stories of crisis. It is important to include teachers in a conversation about their stories to draw out motivations, metaphors for living and coping, and other elements from their storied experiences.

On a smaller scale, and yet equally powerful in their ability to stimulate change, critical incidents in teaching are experiences of existential discomfort through interactions with certain events, people, and phases which challenge prior knowledge and ways of behaving, according to Kelchtermans (2009), Measor (1985), and Meijer (2011). Measor defined critical incidents as “key events in the individual’s life, and around which pivotal decisions revolve” (p. 61), and as with existential crisis, is given a variety of names, such as career frustration (Fessler & Christensen, 1992) and practice shock (Danielewicz, 2001). Teachers faced with critical incidents must rethink previous ideas and ways of being and come to new understandings about teaching and learning. In this
way, critical incidents act as turning points in the lives and actions of teachers. Most research on critical incidents in teaching emerges from teacher education contexts and novice teaching experiences (Measor, 1985; Meijer, 2011; Rolls & Plauborg, 2009).

The use of teacher stories of the profession is grounded in Dewey’s (1938) models of interaction and continuity as the “longitudinal and latitudinal aspects of experience” (p. 44) and his conception of intellectual and moral growth. Human interaction in the world includes both the objective and internal conditions that form a situation. “Different situations succeed one another. But because of the principle of continuity something is carries over from the earlier to the later ones” (p. 44). This forms Dewey’s experiential continuum. Supportive ways to draw out teachers’ experiences of crisis-like situations include the use of narratives, self-reflection, discourse, and the use of metaphor.

For this inquiry, it is understood that crisis-like situations occurring in teachers may take the form of the existential crisis or the form of critical incidents or any variation on a continuum of experiences between them. All of the authors writing about crisis-like experience cited in this study include either existential crisis or critical incidents, but I found no researchers I found who consider both types of experiences. In this, the study outlined here may very well be unique.

The purpose of this research is to discover through veteran teacher narratives, descriptions of crisis-like incidents, growth, and transformation they may have experienced in the context of the profession. By studying teacher stories, I hope to contribute to the understanding of how teachers navigate their teaching lives and shifting identities, especially in the face of difficulty, and gain insight into the value of
collectively sharing and talking about the stories together. My chosen research approach combines transpersonal and transformative perspectives through Organic Inquiry, and narrative structures of storied experiences through Narrative Inquiry. What emerges is quite different from the typical dissertation in form, language, and content.

**Theoretical Frame**

The philosophical roots of this study are positioned at the intersection of two paradigms of understanding human experience and personal growth: Transpersonal theory, founded in the work of William James (1988), Carl Jung (1933, 1969, 1969/1989, 1971), and more recently Michael Washburn’s (1995) model of transpersonal development; and a Sociocultural context of identity that meshes a Deweyan (1938) view of experience and Margaret Mead’s (1951) concept of cultural change.

There are three foundational aspects to the transpersonal paradigm. The first is evident in William James’ (1988) long-held belief that while we have a present consciousness, there are many “worlds of consciousness” (p. 391) containing experiences which also hold meaning for our lives. It is in this idea that transpersonal psychology finds its value for *multi-states of consciousness in human experience*. The second transpersonal concept of *attending to liminal realms beyond ego* (Hartelius, Caplan, & Rardin, 2007) is exemplified by Carl Jung’s use of image, active imagination, dreams, symbols, and art as ways of experience and meaning making in human understanding, as well as transpersonal acceptance of meditation and interaction with nature. Also of interest here is Jung’s work on the four fundamental psychological functions of thinking, feeling, sensing, and intuition, which also influence transpersonal psychology in the myriad ways humans gather information and make decisions regarding their world.
The third aspect of the transpersonal paradigm is in understanding and cultivating transformation (Hartelius et al., 2007). Jung’s concept of individuation (self-development) is a process of transformation by which the psyche’s natural innate urge toward wholeness is realized (Frager & Fadiman, 2005); and although I prefer individuation to Maslow’s (1980) self-actualization, the two terms have many relatable characteristics for this study, especially Maslow’s conception of growth as the movement toward self-actualization. In the context of this study, my assumption of teacher growth in the profession aligns with Rowe and Braud (2013) in “that the seeker is on a journey of transformation in which the ultimate goal is to bring personal authenticity, wholeness, a sense of relationship, and greater consciousness of self, community, and planet” (p. 670). Within this characterization, growth is understood as transformation.

Michael Washburn’s (1995) thoughts on transpersonal human development and “regression in the service of transcendence” (p. 21) serve as the basic model for the existential crisis investigated in this study, although other exemplars of transpersonal transformation through “emotionally negative experiences” (Daniels, 2005, p. 83) such as the dark night of the soul, existential crisis, the archetype of the ‘wounded healer’ and others are also included as relevant.

“Strengths, Weaknesses” (Story #4, The Return)

I wanted to connect with these gifted teachers and coordinators. I knew what was going on in their heads. It wasn’t too many years before that I attended state-run meetings, listening to some nerdy no-load from the Ohio Department of Education tell me how to teach. These teachers and coordinators were now looking at me with that same, exhausted look. “Really? I spent two hours preparing sub plans for this?”

My interaction with Paul was one of the breaking points for me. I left teaching and spent two years in personal and emotional darkness. Upon my
return I accepted a job at the state level, slowly returning to life. I’d been working three years with a team of terrific teachers creating a series of online instructional modules that would—free of charge—teach groups of school staff and parents to accommodate for gifted students. We had done some great work and I was beginning to see my way ahead to teaching again. I was trying to talk to this group about how, when working with adults and colleagues, our greatest strength can sometimes also be our biggest weakness. The PowerPoint slide glared and they just stared glass-eyed at me. I knew exactly what they were thinking. Suddenly something clicked. I sighed and leaned slowly on a nearby table. I said softly, “I know something about this. I come across as all Miss Enthusiasm And Passion, but there is a weakness to that, and I learned it the hard way.”

I began to tell them the story of my dealings with Jordan’s teacher, back in Crewland. I had been thinking about it lately. I had long since apologized to Jordan’s teacher for not going to her with my concerns about his accommodations, but it had lately been on my mind. I told them that my enthusiasm and passion for teaching and protecting my students gave me an inflated sense of power and self-righteousness that seemed to give me permission to totally run over a respected colleague.

“I was young and ‘enthusiastically’ gifted,” I reasoned aloud, laughing at my own pun. My audience—suddenly attentive—was listening in silence. “And youth has its way of blinding us, doesn’t it? It was a very painful realization at the time, but it taught me a lot about being human with others. It also taught me a lot about my own strengths and weaknesses.”

My workshop partner, Mason, was staring transfixed from the back of the room. I had strayed from our usual formula. I asked teachers to pair and share about their own strengths, and how they could be weaknesses, and their own weaknesses and how they could be strengths. During the sharing out period a number of teachers talked frankly about their lives. One teacher shyly said, “I tend to be very quiet and I have always viewed that as a weakness. How could it be considered a strength?” Another woman raised her hand and said, “Teachers are more comfortable working with someone who works with them, rather than trying to tell them what to do. Maybe being quiet would be an asset to them.”

Click. Connection.

After the workshop Mason and I sat together reading the evaluations. He glanced over at me and smiled. “That went well,” he said.
Epistemological Context

**Sociocultural frame.** A useful structure for this work is one that respects the teacher in the midst (Clandinin, 2013) of the work she does, while considering the shifting and interweaving nature of a multitude of influences from within and without. The sociocultural context of identity emerged initially from anthropology and combines cultural anthropology, a study of cultural variations among people living in different settings, and social anthropology, viewed as a subcategory of cultural anthropology that studies *sociality*, or how humans organize and create roles and status (Olsen, 2008a).

In a 2008 issue of *Teacher Education Quarterly* dedicated to teacher identity, Olsen (2008a) outlined sociocultural theory as a useful frame. Containing aspects of “social psychology, social anthropology, sociolinguistics, and philosophy” (p. 4), sociocultural theory focuses on the interdependence among “person, context, history, and other; and on the situated, continuous nature of self-development” (p. 4), therefore also including Dewey’s (1938) past/present/future continuum of temporality. This frame values the self as well as the culture and history surrounding teachers as they work. Sociocultural influences are also embedded in Weber and Mitchell’s (1995) study of media and popular culture images of teacher identity found in film, historical photographs, personal memories of school and teaching, and drawings created by children and adults (inside and outside North America) that represent the concept “teacher.” Their studies are fascinating insights into the creation of teacher identity as infused by Western stereotypes. Weber and Mitchell drew our attention to Margaret Mead (a cultural anthropologist) as “one of the first to recognize the power of image in the media, literature, and other forms of popular culture to create our sense of what is
possible, normal, usual. This sense becomes part of our identity” (Weber & Mitchell, 1995, p. 26).

Mead’s (1951) short text *The School in American Culture* brings the idea of rapid cultural change to the sociocultural context of Western (non-”primitive”) society. Her words, now almost 70 years old, still ring with stout accuracy when they speak of a teaching force unable to relate to children who grow up with “zippers” instead of “buttonhooks” (p. 33), or should I say “Google” instead of “encyclopedias”? Although there continues to be a rapid cultural shift in the context and students, teacher training remains traditionally and stodgily static. Her words remind us not only that the culture around teachers and students is shifting, but also that the changes in students occur in such a way that the field of teaching needs a constant “reunderstanding of history in the light of our new knowledge of men and their motives” (p. 39). It is important that teaching remains cognizant of its own sociocultural context, including the temporality of its past, present, and future histories.

For the purposes of this research study a sociocultural frame is merged with that of transpersonal psychology. Interestingly enough, the Latin origin of the word psychology literally means “the study of the soul:” Psyche meaning “breath, spirit, soul” and logia meaning “study of” (Psychology, 2014). Psychology in its earliest context had a slightly blurry beginning, throughout the ancient civilizations of Egypt, Greece, China, and India (Mannion, 2002); but Western psychology can be dated to 1876, when William James proposed and taught the first psychology course at Harvard. He also wrote one of the first textbooks on the subject in 1890, titled *The Principles of Psychology*, and James began to write and speak widely on the topic, as well as philosophy, religion, and the
nature of truth (Asher, 2010). Western psychology found its voice and focus in the “talking cure” coined by Josef Breuer and adopted by Sigmund Freud to describe the fundamental treatment of psychoanalysis as comprised chiefly of dialogue between the patient and the psychologist. As a neurologist, Freud saw many patients with complaints of ailments that he determined had no apparent physical cause. He discovered that using dialogue to search out the root of what was truly troubling the patient often alleviated the psychic distress (Mannion, 2002).

**Transpersonal psychology.** Among the earliest influences on transpersonal psychology are William James (1950), Carl Jung (1969/1989), Abraham Maslow (1968), and Roberto Assagioli (1993). Transpersonal psychology grew out of Abraham Maslow’s observation that the first three forces in Western Psychology—behaviorism, psychoanalysis, and humanistic psychology—were limited in their attention to states beyond the self.

I consider Humanistic, Third Force Psychology to be transitional, a preparation for a still ‘higher’ Fourth Psychology, transpersonal, transhuman, centered in the cosmos rather than in human needs and interests. We need something ‘bigger than we are’ to be awed by and to commit ourselves to in a new, naturalist, empirical, non-churchly sense. (Maslow, 1968, pp. iii-iv)

Walsh and Vaughan (1993) defined transpersonal experiences as those “experiences in which the sense of identity or self extends beyond (trans) the individual or personal to encompass wider aspects of humankind, life, psyche and cosmos” (p. 3).

Weaving this with the etymological definition of the word *psychology*, one could imagine that transpersonal psychology uses self-transcending experiences to study the soul of the self, the soul (“breath” or “spirit”) of humankind, and of the cosmos, which might include our physical world, the mysterious world, and worlds yet to be known.
The language of transpersonal psychology gives the profession a means of appreciating and expressing multi-states of consciousness to transcend the egoic Self, without espousing religion or dogma. The transpersonal paradigm values experiences beyond the usual waking, single state of consciousness to include dreams, contemplation, meditation, and yoga. Many non-Western cultures frame their beliefs and behaviors within multi-state disciplines, including Buddhist psychology, Taoist philosophy and indigenous cultures (Rowe & Braud, 2013).

Three distinct themes frame Hartelius et al.’s (2007) definition of transpersonal psychology as “an approach to psychology that 1) studies phenomena beyond the ego as context for 2) an integrative/holistic psychology; this provides a framework for 3) understanding and cultivating human transformation” (p. 11). This weaving of transpersonal and transformation is echoed in Anderson and Braud’s (2011) concept of transpersonal psychology as “the study and cultivation of the highest and most transformative human values and potentials—individual, communal, and global—that reflect the mystery and interconnectedness of life” (p. 9).

A transpersonal based inquiry perspective means that the dissertation proposal and final presentation will most likely appear quite non-traditional. The transpersonal researcher esteems the reader in a subjective way, and “this is facilitated through writing in the first person and including quotes from participants as well as addressing the reader directly” (Clements, 2003, p. 29). It also considers the researcher’s story as the point of entry into the study, or the “inroad par excellence” (Freeman, 2007) into exploring the stories of others. The concept of “self-as-instrument” (Clements, 2003, p. 14) means that attending to the researcher’s growth and transformation throughout the study is expected
and invaluable. With this in mind, this chapter includes five initial stories I wrote at the beginning of this project. These five stories, read in order, represent the movement through my crisis. While it appears out of order, I opened with my story about Paul as a way to draw in the reader. I believe that it accurately represents the inner turmoil as well as how teachers lose capacity for patience and emotional regulation. My experience is then rewritten and presented in Chapter 5 as a gauge of my own transformation through the progression of this study.

In addition, transpersonal ways of learning respect multi-faceted, masculine, and feminine aspects of experience, including thinking and logical means (theoretical literature and previous studies), as well as sensing, feeling, and intuitive means. For this reason the reader will see the world through the use of intellectual resources and researcher (and eventually participant) personal journal writings, dreams, and creative work. These firsthand writings (which appear in italics) and artwork appear throughout the dissertation as they relate to the topics and reveal inner reflections of the researcher and participants as we progress through the inquiry.

Transpersonal research methodologies respect feminine spiritualties and forms that balance the current masculine worldview. For this reason, the use of the pronoun “she” is used often or equally with masculine pronouns (Clements, Ettling, Jenett, & Shields, 1999). The use of the pronoun “she” throughout this work is meant to shake the reader out of the traditional use of masculine pronouns to describe the reader or the research participants, especially as it applies to teachers. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2015), over 75% of teachers across the nation are women. As the researcher I am a woman, and it is statistically probable that the majority
of the participants will be women. As the research unfolds the use of pronouns is flexible with the gender of the participants, but overall, when no single gender is apparent, the pronoun “she” is used.

I choose to study crisis-like situations in teachers because of my experience in crisis, leaving the profession and re-entering it with renewed vigor. This personal experience inspired me to learn more about crisis experiences in general, and instances of existential shift in friends and colleagues which cause them to question their commitment to the profession.

The topic of the crisis-like experience is of special concern because I perceive an increasing apprehension of the young college students with whom I work as they navigate the difficult emotional and psychological terrain of teacher training. It seems as though every year these preservice teachers ask more and more questions about coping with the difficulties of the profession and about combating stress, especially during discussions around standardization, high stakes testing, and the evaluation of teachers. That a 20-year-old teacher candidate would already be concerned about leaving the profession disquiets and troubles me. Insight into crisis and critical incidents may assist in gaining new strategies to prepare teachers for the profession, especially to support them once they are in the profession as mentors, professional development coaches, and teacher educators.

“Parachute Warriors” (Story #5, The Now Story)

*I want to teach teachers to work every day with heart. I am on a journey to do that as I work on this doctoral degree, study for exams, write papers, and prepare for my dissertation project: and I am happy. I am deep down, sun-up to sun-down, smiling goofily in the grocery store happy. Who’d have thought?*
At the end of last semester, late April 2014, I was getting ready for my final class with the two college groups I had been teaching in Introduction to Education. My afternoon class was set up with their final projects around the room, art installations that represented their learning from the course. I always loved these works and how the students enthusiastically embraced these projects, after, of course, an initial response of disbelief, then discomfort and fear. (“An art project for a final? In an education class? What a joke.”) After 45 minutes of walking the ‘gallery’ of installations, we gathered together one last time in our circle to talk over what they had done and seen. As the discussion came to a close, Zach, sitting in his traditional place by the window, stood with a massive multicolored piece of fabric overflowing in his arms. “Jen, I brought the parachute from the day care. Can we?”

The class laughed and looked to me for the okay. I smiled, remembering the day early in the semester when the group barely knew each other and Zach shared during our “Good News” session at the beginning of class. He told us how his day care class had used the parachute and he had learned some really great moves with it, and he and the kids had a blast. We all reminisced about our own experience with gym class and ‘parachute days’—some of them had never heard of it! Zach asked then—probably 12 weeks earlier—if he could bring the parachute in on the last day. Of course I said yes. But I never expected him to remember . . .

We gathered the parachute together in our circle and shook it. Zach instructed us to “go low!”—the parachute went down—and “go high!” and the parachute went high—and “run in!” and we all stepped in, plopped down and brought the parachute behind us to the floor. We grinned at each other like children as we sat inside our little bubble. We did that move over and over until we had it perfected. It was joy and communion.

Today there is a student-created Facebook group called “Best Class Ever 2014 Intro to Ed Parachute Warriors” with a picture of a dozen legs and feet below a multicolored parachute. Yeah. Those kids have heart.

The Inner Lives of Teachers

I must admit to a personal sense of wonder about the creative and improvisational process of talking about and listening to stories related to what we truly care about in—and out of—the profession. My experience working with preservice and veteran teachers has been that these conversations offer something liminal and extraordinary to everyone
involved in the process. This study has the capacity to provide insights into these experiences and conversations and may even suggest ways to enhance or deepen them.

A field of research that includes the inner lives of teachers has been opened by Parker Palmer through his own experience and working with teachers in his *Courage to Teach* workshops (Palmer, n.d.). However, I see little evidence of research that focuses on teachers’ lives in crisis and the progression of the teachers’ lives as they work through difficulty. Research on teacher crisis and absence due to crises (sometimes under the heading of ‘stress’) are fairly well documented in the United Kingdom (Bailey, 2013; Carlyle & Woods, 2002; Ratcliff, 2012; National Union of Teachers, 2008) but very difficult to find in the United States. This research contributes to the field’s understanding of teacher development through crisis and difficulty.

**Primary Research Questions**

1. What is the lived experience of the process of growth in veteran teachers, particularly as it relates to crisis-like situations?

2. What might be learned by the researcher, participants, and readers through inquiring into veteran teachers’ stories of crisis-like situations and the process of growth?

As I deliberate this evolution and growth, crisis and trajectory, I can see the makings of reflective and moving stories. As a songwriter and a keeper of a daily personal journal for almost 20 years, I find stories a natural and personal way to relate transformational change. I have always believed that stories have a great deal of power, whether they are told orally, through a beautifully turned phrase of a poem, or within the rich description of a short story or novel. My belief in the power of story extends into those told through visual art, dance, or music. Beijaard, Meijer, and Verloop (2004)
believes that “identity is formed and reformed by the stories we tell and which we draw upon our communications with others” (p. 123). Teacher narratives and the discourse of sharing and discussing those narratives are widely used in the study of preservice and novice teacher identity and its development (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011; Alsup, 2006; Beijaard et al., 2004; Kelchtermans, 2009; Meijer & Oolbekkink, 2012). The integration of the arts in educational research, which includes poetry, music, novels, plays, sculpture, and photography, is well supported by the discussions and compilations of Diamond and Mullen (2006), van Halen-Faber and Diamond (2008), and Slattery (2006).

Summary

Chapter 1 began with a personal story of my movement into existential crisis as an introduction to the problem of study. I outlined the foundation of the problem, which is deepened by the teaching profession’s present dilemma of the mass exodus of teachers. Here I introduce the phenomena of crisis-like experiences and outline the purpose and significance of the study. I continue by presenting the theoretical frame and the sociocultural and transpersonal contexts of the study. The chapter concludes with a statement of the research questions.

Chapter 2 returns to the research questions to define and contextualize the concepts that arise: the transformative context of: growth; teacher identity; crisis-like experiences; and the discursive nature of narrative dialogue, self-reflection, and creative work. Chapter 3 describes the study and the methodological frames of Organic and Narrative Inquiries, and details of the research project itself, including data collection and analysis procedures. Chapter 4 is a presentation of analysis and findings from the project,
and Chapter 5 reviews the entire inquiry, its limitations and assumptions, and its implications for the profession.
CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

Figure 2.1. Below the surface (3/11/2015).

This study is designed to investigate the nature of the shifting of teacher identity through crisis-like situations (Illeris, 2009). By understanding the process of identity shift I hope to add empirical, experiential research narratives to a field of study that is frequently more theoretical than practical (Rodgers & Scott, 2008) and to improve teacher pedagogy with an increased practical knowledge of the process and varieties of identity growth in teachers.

The study outlined here takes place within a transpersonal and transformative context. Research Question One is: What is the lived experience of the process of growth
in veteran teachers, particularly as it relates to crisis-like situations? It regards the concept of growth in veteran teachers, but what is it that “grows”? The foundational discussion underlying this conversation is the definition and illustration of teacher identity as that which “grows.” Described within the realm of teacher identity, then, are a variety of crisis-like situations that occur within a continuum of experiences ranging from the existential crisis to critical incidents. Research Question Two is: What might be learned by the researcher, participants, and readers through inquiring into veteran teachers’ stories of crisis-like situations and the process of growth? The act of “inquiring into” teacher stories respects the many authors cited in the research on existential crisis and critical incidents who recommend self-reflective, narrative, discursive and metaphoric ways of working, and so a review of these concludes this chapter.

“Ordinary truths about teaching . . . can be expressed only as paradoxes,” stated Palmer (2007, p. 65). I agree. I have been a teacher for half my life and I feel confident in my ability to do this work. On the first day of class, however, or when something goes awry, I can suddenly feel as vulnerable as a first year teacher. With this in mind, many, if not all of the aspects and ideas in this chapter can be viewed only with Palmer’s words about paradox in mind.

**Transformative Learning**

Given this study’s focus on a transpersonal paradigm, which means that the concept of “growth” is a transformational shift in teacher identity, transpersonal psychology and transformative learning are equally of interest here. Rowe and Braud (2013) distinguished these topics thus:
Transpersonal, transformative, and spiritual forms of education are interrelated. Each assumes that the seeker is on a journey of transformation (Baker, 2012; Braud, 2006; Dirkx et al., 2006; Markos & McWhinney, 2003) in which the ultimate goal is to bring personal authenticity, wholeness, a sense of relationship, and greater consciousness to self, community, and planet (Braud, 2006; Clark, 1974). (p. 670)

Piaget (1952) outlined three types of learning applicable to adult learning. They are:

1. Cumulative learning—learning that is unconnected to anything previously learned.
2. Assimilative learning—knowledge that is built into existing structures of knowledge without changing any of those structures.
3. Accommodative learning—knowledge that does not fit into existing structures of knowledge, so shifts in those structures are needed.

To these Mezirow (1990) added a fourth:

4. Transformative Learning—knowledge that requires not only a shift in structures of knowledge, but transformation in perspective that include changes in how the individual views herself, in her beliefs and in her lifestyle and behaviors. In short, these are “identity shifts” (Meijer, 2011, p 44).

Maslow (1968) appealed the need for a discipline with an empirical and ‘unchurchly’ sense that is answered in transpersonal and transformative fields of work. Walsh and Vaughan (1993) stated that “these disciplines do not require dogma or religious creed, and welcome the scientific, philosophical, and experiential testing of all claims, and usually assume that transpersonal experiences can be interpreted either religiously or non-religiously according to individual preferences” (p. 6). Transpersonal and transformative scholars invite serious scientific and intellectual studies of their assumptions, effects and conclusions and hope to reconcile traditional researchers to the belief that work in these disciplines is powerful and real.
Hendricks and Fadiman (1976) cited Robert Ornstein’s 1972 work *The Psychology of Consciousness* where he provided current (for the time) research on the brain that there “are two modes of consciousness at work in human beings; one, a rational, logical, and active mode, is associated with the left side of the brain, while the other, a mystical, intuitive, and receptive mode, seems to be a function of the right side of the brain” (p. 1). Whereas 21st century researchers are divided on the literal left brain/right brain placement of these attributes, there is little dispute that these two modes of being are present in all individuals. Hendricks and Fadiman (1976) established that the first task of transpersonal education is to “shift the focus from external to internal awareness” (p. 5). To initiate this shift they suggested the use of guided imagery, dreams, meditation, and relaxation techniques.

These ideas have stood firm—even expanded—through the more than 35 years since Hendricks and Fadiman’s groundbreaking work. Authors John Miller (2006), Parker Palmer (2007), Clifford Mayes (2005), Krishnamurti (1981), Christopher M. Bache (2008), and Tobin Hart (2000) use deeper consciousness endeavors in teaching and learning with children and adults. Similarly, yoga and mindfulness are finding their way into primary and secondary schools as part of physical education and health courses. In February 2014, *The LA Times* reported that 48 U.S. states have schools where mindfulness training for teachers and students has become part of the landscape. “‘Mindfulness has been my favorite thing in my whole life,’ says one of the students, Alia Briglia, 6” (MacVean, 2014).

Krishnamurti (1981) spoke of the awakening individual and creating the “right kind of education” (p. 17) that transforms us out of our own conditioned behaviors.
Transformation is one of many achievable purposes of a transpersonal education. Mezirow (2003) first introduced the term *transformative education* as “learning that transforms problematic frames of reference—sets of fixed assumptions and expectations—to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, reflective and emotionally able to change” (p. 58). Rowe and Braud (2013), through a review of literature on the subject, alchemized the term transformative education into that which “focuses on transformation within individuals, organizations, communities, society, and the planet” (p. 668). Illeris (2009) regarded two major elements of transformative learning as “critical reflection or critical self-reflection on assumptions . . . and second, participating fully and freely in dialectical discourse to validate a best reflective judgement [sic]” (p. 94).

Based on multiple authors and readings, the concepts and ways of knowing valued by transpersonal and transformative processes are varied and widely encompassing. For the purposes of this research, and with the understanding that this list is by no means complete, these concepts and values include: a tolerance for ambiguity, the relational place of the researcher, flexibility and responsiveness, multiple ways of knowing, multiple forms of expression, liminality, an ethic of compassion, search for wholeness, and being of service (Anderson & Braud, 2011; Frager & Fadiman, 2005; Hartelius et al., 2007; Hendricks & Fadiman, 1976; Maslow, 1968; Mezirow, 2003; Miller, J: 2006; Rowe & Braud, 2013; Walsh & Vaughan, 1993).

To date transpersonal disciplines stand alone in the scope of their search. They advocate an eclectic, integrative quest that includes personal and transpersonal, ancient and modern, East and West, knowledge and wisdom, art and philosophy, science and religion, introspection and contemplation. (Walsh & Vaughan, 1993, p. 10)
A view of teacher identity that includes transpersonal psychology and transformative learning theory considers not only traditional cognitive and egoistic teaching and learning, but also trans-(beyond) ego phenomena such as respecting intuition, processing ideas through meditation, reflection, creativity and the arts, and embodiment such as movement and yoga. These phenomena are understood to exist within the broader integral (a more intellectual term) or holistic (a New Age term) psychology that includes the physical, mental and spiritual realms into an understanding of the “whole self.” Hartelius et al.’s (2007) definition also respects the transformation of all participants that occurs in true and authentic learning.

Teacher identity as seen within the sociocultural and transpersonal frames creates a socially contextual, three dimensional time-space that emancipates the traditional mind-based view of self and respects and assumes the transformation that exists at the heart of the teaching and learning process. A study of identity and teaching within this type of space harkens back to John Dewey’s (1938) view of experience in educational contexts.

Teacher Identity

Teacher identity, like all forms of identity, is complex, multi-faceted, and shifting. Moreover professional challenges and personal commitments shape one’s identity and influence the expressions of that identity in various contexts. As a teacher educator, I wonder about teacher identity, how it is formed, how it shifts over time, and how it can be deadened or rejuvenated under certain conditions. It is this shifting, change, and ultimate transformation of the intertwined professional and personal identity that is of
utmost concern in the research questions’ focus on veteran teachers. Identity is the unspoken but ever-present element of this study.

A review of literature reveals several areas of interest in the study of teacher identity. This section presents teacher identity as it relates to the study outlined in Chapter 3, and includes definitions of teacher identity; aspects of teacher identity; and a discussion of the process of identity formation and development in teachers. An examination of the “good teacher” concludes this section.

**A Working Definition**

“Identity can be seen as the answer to this recurrent question: ‘Who am I at this moment?’” (Beijaard et al., 2004, p. 108). As a definition, this statement is quite precise. The question it asks is simple and straightforward. It recognizes the individuality of identity (“Who am I . . .”) as well as its fleeting nature (“. . . at this moment?”). Definitions presented by a number of the researchers on teachers’ professional identity fit into one or both of these two aspects, often without nearly as much brevity or precision.

The individuality inherent within the concept of teacher professional identity is characterized in many ways. Olsen (2008b) stated that “who one is as a person has a lot to do with who one is as a teacher” (p. 38). Palmer (2007), in similar terms, believed that as teachers “we teach who we are” (p. 3). Mitchell and Weber (1999) reminded us “that we do not cease teaching or being teachers once we leave the school. For many of us, teaching is part of who we are, wherever we are” (p. 144). It is understood by most authors and this researcher that our teacher identity and self-identity are irreversibly intertwined (Knowles, 1992; Nias, 1989; Olsen, 2008b; Palmer, 2007; Weber & Mitchell, 1999), considering both professional (inside the classroom) and personal (outside the
classroom) facets of the teachers’ lives (Clandinin, 2013; Connelly & Clandinin, 1999; Goodson & Cole, 1994; Volkmann & Anderson, 1998). In addition, teachers have personal values and priorities based on their own experiences and backgrounds, in and out of the classroom (Beijaard et al., 2004). This includes how the teacher sees herself as a teacher (Brooke, 1994; Coldron & Smith, 1999), as well as the different roles she performs in and out of the classroom context. “It is important to pay attention to the personal part of teachers’ professional identity” (Beijaard et al., 2004, p. 109).

The second defining part of identity is its fleeting, dynamic quality: Who am I at this moment? This question fairly assumes that who I am at this moment will most likely be different from who I am at other moments in time. Kelchtermans (2009) saw an in-the-moment view of identity as a “product” (p. 39), which he believed ignores the dynamic nature of identity. He preferred, as do the majority of the researchers included here, to view identity (or what he called “Professional Self-Understanding”) as a vibrant, ongoing process. This dynamic nature of identity also assumes time as a concept of temporality, which includes one’s past, present, and future (Clandinin, 2013; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Dewey, 1938; Kelchtermans, 2009). Clandinin (2013) used the term “stories to life by” (p. 37) to describe teacher identity, as teachers’ “shifting selves” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999, p. 131) respond to changes over time in educational programs and curricula which surround teachers in the context of their working lives.

In addition, historical, sociological, psychological, and cultural contexts, each of which are in a constant state of flux, impact how we respond to situations (Gee & Crawford, 1998; Mishler, 1999; Reynolds, 1996) as do the expectations of others in these settings (Reynolds, 1996). The nature of society requires teachers to cope with rapid
changes (Beijaard et al., 2004), which is especially relevant to this study when the changes conflict with what teachers desire and value in their work with students (Beijaard et al., 2004).

William James (1950) described humans as containing multiple selves, and predicted that people have as many selves as they have relational partners. According to Oysterman, Elmore, and Smith (2012) these multiple selves include “the traits and characteristics, social relations, roles, and social group memberships that define who one is” (p. 69), and can be focused on the past, the present, and the future. They believed that identities are “orienting” (p. 69) and oblige one to view the world through an orienting, but limited lens. According to this definition, we are able to see or not see features of our world based on what we believe to be true about ourselves. As an orienting aspect of the self, our identity helps us make decisions that align with our belief system. In this respect it is a bit like a compass, which is dependent on the mysterious pull of the earth to orient us toward magnetic North.

Mikel and Hiserman (2001) believed in an “evolving personal identity” (p. 127). Bateson (1990) called it “the composition of our lives” (p. 1) where “each of us has worked by improvisation, discovering the shape of our creation along the way, rather than pursuing a vision already defined” (p. 1). What a paradox! Identity is strong enough to be orienting, yet flexible enough to be evolving and improvisational. As this discussion on aspects of teacher identity unfolds, the categories and descriptions must be respected as simply partial aspects of one woman’s research at this moment. The aspects of identity I see and choose emerge through my meaning-making lens, based on what I
believe about the profession at this point in time. They are orienting, improvisational, and sometimes paradoxical.

A useful structure for this study is one that respects the teacher in the midst of the work she does, while considering the shifting and interweaving nature of a multitude of influences from within and without. Because of its individual and dynamic nature, a definitive statement of professional identity is simply not feasible—nor is it desirable. For the purposes of this study I prefer to view a teacher’s professional identity as an individual and in-progress answer to the question: “Who am I as a teacher in this moment?”

**Aspects of Teacher Identity.** A study of teacher identity, especially one that delves into the shifting of identity over time, must consider at least some of the numerous aspects of teacher identity. I include these as they (and other aspects not discussed here) may emerge as points of interest during the study as the veteran teachers discuss growth through time in the profession and through crisis-like situations.

Fischer and Kiefer (2001) discussed three types of images that affect teacher identity: constructed images, given images, and ideal images. Constructed images emerge from continuous interactions during “mutual act of teaching and learning” (p. 103). Given images are expectations by society, school districts, tradition, and parents of culture-bound roles of teachers (i.e., babysitter, moral model, expert, tester, grader); these images are actively or passively accepted as true representations of teachers. Ideal images come from idealistic or ideal models of teaching, where teachers may say to themselves, “I believe teaching should look like this” and act on that ideal image. It is evident that teachers construct images of who they should be and how they should act as
they interact with other teachers, students, administration, and parents. Preservice teachers (even those who are homeschooled in their younger years) experience at least 12 years of “school” as well as other learning experiences, and these images become part of their constructions of teacher identity. My own early experiences started as a summer job in eighth grade working as a teacher in a morning “Playschool” that was organized by my town’s recreation department. I played with and watched a number of younger cousins and children of my parents’ friends, besides working as a babysitter, playground supervisor, and then the more formal college preparation for the profession. My work with pre-service and veteran teachers indicates that these types of previous experiences may not be uncommon.

While these images are powerful constructs of identity, Fischer and Kiefer (2001) have overlooked an enormous aspect of teacher identity: the inner life. The inner life includes aspects unseen and often unexplored or unspoken. This is the realm of the transpersonal. Several authors discuss and truly respect the inner lives of teachers. They include Parker Palmer (2007) and those who discuss teaching as a “calling,” including Brad Olsen (2008b), in his discussion of reasons for entry into the profession as showing aspects of teacher identity, Judith Irwin (1996), in her studies of the empowerment of teachers, and Clifford Mayes (2005, 2010), who integrates Jungian psychology into the understanding of the teaching profession and teacher identity. The following are a few threads from their work that relate to teacher identity.

**Mystery.** For Palmer, there is a mysterious quality to teacher identity. He stated that identity “is a moving intersection of the inner and outer forces that make me who I am, converging in the irreducible mystery of being human” (Palmer, 2007, p. 14).
Identity as he described it is “an evolving nexus” (p. 14) that includes our genetic make-up, the nature of our parents, the culture in which we live and grow, people who have helped or hindered our growth, our own good and ill deeds toward others, the “experience of love and suffering—and much, much more” (p. 13). Clandinin (2013) stated that there will “never be a final story” (p. 203) because of the interweaving nature of our lives with others’ lives, and the past-present-future continuum of encounters (Dewey, 1938) means that we can never fully know the nature of experience.

**Reasons for entry into the profession.** Olsen (2008b) “looked at how reasons for entry illuminate complex bundles of interactions among personal history, professional preparation, and current work to make visible some of the development processes that constituted teacher identity for these teachers” (p. 27). One can see in this statement an interweaving of various aspects of personal identity as well as the concept of identity as a process. Reasons for entry include gender roles and early role-playing, skills and knowledge, and a sense of “calling.”

**Gender roles and early role-play.** Historically, teaching has been perceived as woman’s work. It is admittedly “shaped around parenting” (Olsen, 2008b, p. 29), and school schedules are certainly advantageous to family life. Subsequently, many women entering the profession talk of early experiences in teacher role-playing, often setting up stuffed animals, pets or siblings as their pretend ‘students.’ This early role-play reinforces a stereotypical belief of what teaching entails (Olsen, 2008b) and can become a given image of identity.

**Skills and knowledge.** Often teachers enter the profession because others have told them they are “good at ‘explaining stuff’” (Olsen, 2008b, p. 31) or that they enjoy
telling people about ideas and issues or give good advice. During school they discover a love of literature or history, or find they are very adept at socials studies or mathematics, and these skills and intelligences open them to the possibility of teaching. Their identity then becomes intertwined with their perception of these abilities. Ronfeldt and Grossman (2008) “emphasize the centrality of ‘practices’ to professional identity” (p. 42) and this recognizes skills and knowledge as part of constructing an identity.

**Calling.** Clifford Mayes (2005) compiled 10 “pillars” of Jungian approaches to education, and the last pillar is “the need for teachers to experience a sense of calling, what we used to call vocation” (p. vii.). Feeling called into the profession gives the teacher a sense of sacredness in her work. Parker Palmer (2000) spoke unabashedly of teaching as a calling or vocation, which is defined as part of “authentic selfhood” (p. 12). A mature sense of vocation holds the idea that life has a purpose of its own which is born within us. This is vocation as a calling, a birthright: we must listen to what our heart says (Palmer, 2000). Hillman (1996) shared this image of vocation as fate. He believed that our calling is born within us and must be lived; this he calls the Acorn Theory. He drew in the Greek concept of the Daimon as “the carrier of your destiny” (1996, p. 8); I call this the “Sacred La” (Allen, 2002; Groman, 2013), from an early experience. In high school I was given the responsibility of tuning the orchestra by playing an “A” on my bassoon. My high school orchestra director would point to me and say, “Miss Groman, please present us with the Sacred La.” An “A” (“La” on the solfege scale) would sing out from my bassoon and the orchestra would tune to that one note. Then the stringed instruments could use their “A” to tune the rest of the strings on their instrument. When I graduated the director gave me a tuning fork with a little tag that said “Sacred La” so I would always have one with me.

It wasn’t until some 15 years later that the deeper meaning of the Sacred La was revealed. Each of us has one Truth that, once found, can tune the rest of our being. This metaphor echoes Hillman’s Acorn, the Greek’s Daimon, and Piirto’s Thorn. It has become the purpose of my music, to seek the Truth in my life and put my part of the musical conversation in motion. Globally, if we could
all find one common Truth, be it peace, kindness, or awareness of the greater good, we could tune the strings of all humanity. This Truth can heal and it can bind together that which has been broken. I have begun similar work now, using art to communicate and teach at a deeper level (Allen, 2002).

**As a process.** Teaching identity as an ongoing process was suggested earlier in this work; nevertheless, it is significant enough to reiterate here. Narrative researchers Clandinin et al. (2006) discussed teachers and “how their stories to live by shifted over their careers” (p. 114). These “stories to live by” are the authors’ term for identity, understanding that the stories we engage in combine to create who we are. They study teachers within the context of their teaching lives, and realized that

Change did not happen in an all-transforming kind of way. Rather, change happened as each teacher encountered a situation, met a child, heard a story, and begin to use that moment as a trigger to re-story who they were in the shifting, evolving ways. (p. 132)

The formation and growth of teacher identity, then, is slow, constant, and involves using experiences to activate a shift in their beliefs and viewpoints. Ronfeldt and Grossman (2008) agreed, and posited that being an active participant in an experience is not necessary. “As people observe others in the professional role, they generate a repertoire of potential identities” (p. 4). These possible identities become a place from which teachers act, responsively in each given situation. Palmer (2007) maintained, “Each time I walk into a classroom, I can choose the place within myself from which my teaching will come” (p. 58).

**Toward individuation.** The braiding of identity as a process with an individual educator’s sense of calling leads to a type of teaching and teacher identity that has a purpose beyond self-interest alone. The teacher who feels a sense of calling desires work that is sustaining—not only for the self but for the learners in her care. Calling is “a
place inside that has vision and can perceive both our own potential and that of those we educate” (Whitmore, 1986, p. 213).

Individuality embraces our innermost uniqueness; it also implies becoming one’s own self. Individuation, in Jungian terms, is a process of becoming an individual—individuation means “undivided” (Mehrens, n.d.). It is the journey of the self as a move toward wholeness; a “coming to selfhood” or “self-realization” (Mehrens, n.d.). Mayes (2005) discovered that late in life Jung decided that individuation is not “just a psychic process: it is a universal one” (p. 56) through which “every living thing becomes that which it was destined to become from the very beginning” (p. 61). This statement resonates with the work teachers do and the process of identity formation as I have experienced it. The process of individuation, as well as its eventual outcome, is unique and very individual.

What Maslow (1968) discovered is that there is an innate human need to “go beyond oneself: to make psychological contact with ‘the naturalistically transcendent, spiritual, and axiological” (p. vi). People can never be whole “if they do not find something greater than themselves to love and serve—and something that inspires them to love and serve others, too” (Mayes, 2010, p. 138). Within the heart of a teacher lies a drive to impart wisdom to an ‘other’—and the ‘other’ who is served is the student. This connection can develop into a yearning for social justice. Mikel and Hiserman (2001) stated it well: “certain images expressed by the teachers reveal an evolving personal identity. Within this identity the deepest and most enduring feeling of being alive and well lies in the unerring commitment to the future of those accorded least in the present scheme of things” (p. 127). Mayes continued: “This is the heroic vision of education. It
honors teachers and students as free agents who, dedicated to discovering and developing the best in themselves and others, create change that is powerful and humane” (p. 138). Teacher identity is developed as the “best self” is developed, in tandem and powerfully linked to the development of others. It is through a lens of identity as a process of individuation and the desire to be of service to others that Danielewicz (2001) made this powerful statement: “What makes someone a good teacher is not methodology, or even ideology. It requires engagement with identity, the way individuals conceive of themselves so that teaching is a state of being, not merely ways of acting or behaving” (p. 3). She continued:

A good teacher is an invested teacher, someone who identifies him or herself as a teacher. To be effective, to be really good . . . then one must be a teacher, not just act like one. This happens when one sees oneself and is seen by others as a teacher. Instead playing a role, teaching entails a greater investment—one’s identity must be on the line. For me, then, the classroom is a compelling and serious place where the stakes are high. (p. 3)

The engagement with teacher identity, I believe, is crucial to what makes a good teacher. While the qualities listed above are often evident through theoretical discussions of teacher discussions, this type of engagement may not be easily categorized into neat headings and overarching themes, especially considering the ongoing dynamic and shifting nature of true identity development. Clandinin (2013) viewed the varied facets of identity as teachers’ professional landscapes and they agreed with many other researchers (Ben-Peretz, 1995; Coles, 1989; Danielewicz, 2001; Elbaz-Luwisch, 2002; Kelchtermans, 2009) that the meaning of identity within these landscapes is derived from living out and telling their stories to live by (Clandinin, 2000; Clandinin et al., 2006).
Meijer and Oolbekkink (2012) agreed: “Identity involves the construction and reconstruction of meaning through stories over time” (p. 151).

**Existential Crisis and Critical Incidents: Transformative Ideas of Identity Growth**

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Many teachers know the feeling of being surrounded by negativity and stress. I was a teacher of elementary and middle school gifted students during the time of the above writing and experienced it daily. Not from students: no, from them I gained endless satisfaction from my work. Their enthusiasm and quirkiness often kept me going when I was ready to give it up. The negativity came mostly from colleagues, exhausted like me, and underappreciated, like I felt. It wore away at me and disrupted my peace of mind. It led me to question my calling to be a teacher, causing an existential crisis of identity and changing the course of my life forever.

My early research delved into the realm of deep transpersonal crisis of identity, also called the *existential crisis* (Daniels, 2005), because it was similar to the journey I experienced. My curiosity also led me to informal discussions with teaching colleagues, friends, and acquaintances, and I began to realize how immensely varied the crisis experience can be. As a result of these conversations I returned to the literature and found more mundane, yet still powerful, forms of teaching identity shifts through *critical incidents* (Kelchtermans, 2009; Meijer, 2011; Rolls & Plauborg, 2009). In the section that follows I revisit the path of my own discovery through the literature, beginning with the deep existential crisis and its forms and varieties; continuing my journey through the
literature of critical incidents specifically indicated in studies and theoretical writings about the teaching profession. Eventually, this continuum of experience is termed “crisis-like” events or experiences, as seen in both research questions. All of the experiences within the continuum are relevant, and any may manifest themselves in my study. I prefer not to value label any of these experiences, but to view the variety of their manifestations and intensities as an indication of the individual nature of teachers’ professional storied landscapes during difficult times. The main focus of my deliberations here is to discover situations in teachers’ lives that stimulate and enhance their identity growth and transformation. What is it about the crisis journey that might be transformative? Ultimately, how can I be of service to teachers as they navigate varieties of crises? These are questions with very personal connections to my personal and professional identity.

As the various types and degrees of crises and critical incidents unfold in this section, it is important for the reader to understand and appreciate a distinct aspect of individuation. Individuation, as the movement of a being toward wholeness, includes the appearance and resolution of difficulties, struggles, and adversities—crises—that are a natural and desired component of identity development (Frager & Fadiman, 2005; Hollis, 2005; Jung, 1971; Maslow, 1980). This is the reason for my choice of the word instead of Maslow’s (1980) similar term, “self-actualization.” Self-actualization, as Maslow outlined it, is the realization of one’s full potential, something achieved by a mere 1% of the population. Although it may include a major critical event such as the mid-life crisis (Jung, 1933), the concept of individuation is more appropriate here for its inclusion of conflict as inherent to the growth process. The process of identity growth through crises
is supported in the research on teacher development, especially in preservice and novice
teachers (Danielewicz, 2001; Kelchtermans, 2009; Meijer, 2011; Meijer & Oolbekkink,
2012).

**Existential Crisis**

As a student of transpersonal psychology, my initial investigation into crisis took
me into that realm. I found a number of authors whose theoretical writings and practical
labeled this a “dark night of the soul;” Grof and Grof (1990) employed the term “spiritual
emergency,” playing on the double meaning of “emergency” to indicate a sense of
urgency and spiritual emergence; for Daniels (2005) it was the “existential crisis;” Walsh
and Vaughan (1993) called it a “transpersonal experience;” Washburn (1995) used
“regression in the service of transcendence;” and Zen writings called it “the great doubt”
or “Zen sickness” (Ford & Blacker, 2011; Washburn, 1995). In the section that follows I
label this variety of experience as “existential crisis.” It is important to note that while all
of the above authors speak to the idea of crisis in a general sense, it is only Palmer (2007)
and Carlyle and Woods (2002) who wrote specifically about this deep crisis in teachers.

Carlyle and Woods (2002), whose research follows teachers’ crises as
experienced through chronic stress and burnout, and Moore (2004), cited Arnold Van
Gennep’s (1960) concept of status or identity passage, which closely parallel indigenous
rites of passage that occur at a time of critical change in individuals or cultural groups
(Grof & Grof, 1990). In their descriptions of these changes, Moore (2004) and Carlyle
and Woods (2002) referred to Van Gennep’s (1960) classic work *The Rites of Passage*,
which outlined three phases of the status (identity) passage: separation, liminality, and
reincorporation. The separation phase puts the initiate in painful disconnection from her old identity and the surrounding structures and culture. The liminal phase puts the initiate on the threshold between solid philosophical ground and the unknown ‘next,’ “not quite in and not quite out” (Moore, 2004, p. 39). The liminal phase often includes an ultimate low point, followed by a sense of existential rest or “cocooning” (Carlyle & Woods, 2002, p. 55). Slowly the initiate begins to feel deliverance from the dark unknown, aware of the assistance of significant others and can begin re-emerging as a changed and stronger self. The final re-incorporation phase finds the individual’s identity reconstructed and the new enlightened being seeking ways to bridge her new self with her community and the larger culture. While these distinctions may seem neat and appear to proceed along a timeline, “the identity passage is an unscheduled one” (Carlyle & Woods, 2002, p. 55).

Identity includes an individual’s conception of self, a portion of which can be found in the persona. Jung (1969) compared the persona to a mask; the social face that an individual wears toward the world and others to hide the true face. “The persona is that which in reality one is not, but which oneself and others think one is” (p. 123). Jung noted that every profession or “calling” (p. 122) maintains its own distinguishing persona wherein certain behaviors and expectations are required by the culture. He warned, however, against becoming identical with the persona since by doing so the individual risks losing her biographical self. Teacher identity, especially in those who experience teaching as a calling, not only includes their sense of self (personal identity, personality and home life) but also a teaching persona, or a reflection of what they believe teacher and teaching should be. This persona is based on their own previous experiences in
schools, interaction over their lifetime with media portrayals of teachers and schools, professional values, and the archetypal idea of teacher.

Difficulties arise when there are discrepancies between an individual’s personal identity of teacher and the cultural persona of teacher, and these difficulties can increase vulnerability to identity confusion and crisis. Woods and Jeffrey (2002) examined teacher values in comparison to values supported by then-recent school reforms in the United Kingdom that included a prescribed national curriculum and high-stakes standardized testing. They determined that the reforms were established under discourse completely opposed with those embraced by many teachers as integral to their professional identities. For example, the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) values the standardization and uniformity of a prescribed, controlled and subject-based national curriculum that emphasizes products. According to their survey, Woods and Jeffrey found that teachers value the diversity of a negotiated, flexible, and autonomous national curriculum, which is child-centered and holistic and emphasizes process. Discrepancies between government policy and teacher values in the United Kingdom are deeply rooted in philosophical differences and the state of affairs in the United States within the last 15 years may be extrapolated as reasonably similar. Former Assistant Secretary of Education Diane Ravitch (2011) saw this discrepancy as a result of “seeing like a state” (p. 10); viewing schools and their inhabitants from high above as objects to be moved about, rather than independent entities with varying historical and social contexts. In “seeing like a state” the views of teachers, students and local administrators are not considered. Ravitch herself went through an “intellectual crisis” (p. 1) in her very public shift from a proponent of standardization to one of its staunchest opponents.
When such education reforms are contrary to teachers’ powerful beliefs about what is best for children, teachers are vulnerable to loss of heart, and consequently, a crisis of identity, or dark night of the soul. “Sometimes a dark night begins to brew when you are caught between two incompatible wishes, when some powerful necessity rubs against security and comfort” (Moore, 2004, p. 27).

A standardized system often includes teaching from curriculum that is not locally created or verified, often implemented through scripted methods of Direct Instruction and rote repetition; programs referred to as “teacher proof,” insinuating that even a poor or inexperienced teacher can have good results, as the program holds the power, not the educator. The results of this type of system are teachers with little to no time for self-direction, professional development, or socialization, as well as increased isolation and disempowerment (Carlyle & Woods, 2002; Irwin, 1996; Palmer, 2007; Rinke, 2014), making them vulnerable to crisis, especially stress-related.

The rites of passage described above compare to Joseph Campbell’s (1973) hero’s journey, which is, in simple terms: departure (or separation), initiation, and return. The hero’s journey is a symbol of every human being’s individual passage through mortality in search of individuation and wholeness (Mayes, 2005). The Hero’s Journey indicates not only a crisis of identity, but an existential shift in identity, both personal and professional (Campbell, 1973; Mayes, 2005). Likewise each phase of the journey metaphorically holds various aspects of the existential crisis as it progresses.

Isolation is a crucial factor in the separation phase. Carlyle and Woods (2002) reported the teachers they interviewed identified a “need for a moratorium” (p. 87) that provided time for identity work and reflection. While this isolation is a much needed
component of the separation phase, the loss of both community and the understanding of others can be devastating. In my own teaching life I worked with colleague Jack, from the introductory story, through his extreme stress and, I believe, the beginning of an existential crisis. I noticed that colleagues and administration shunned him, and I wrote in my personal journal at that time: “Depression breeds more depression because people avoid the depressed person. No one wants to be depressed by proxy, it’s like we’re afraid it’s catching” (Groman, 2013, pp. 279-280, italics in original).

Initially this distance can compound guilt, fear, loneliness, and emotional estrangement. The isolation of the separation phase often begins in the teacher’s professional work, but may progress even further within the teacher’s life to include detachment from their own body and emotions, loss of health of the mind, body and spirit, loss of social health and social connections, and loss of more intrinsic rewards of teaching, such as connections to students, enjoyment and creativity (Blazer, 2010; Carlyle & Woods, 2002; Palmer, 2007; Woods & Carlyle, 2011).

Blazer (2010) found that teachers undergoing a crisis journey and anxiety no longer found their jobs interesting or enjoyable, and many lost the ability to care about doing a good job. They felt dread going to work in the morning and were regularly dissatisfied, resentful and hopeless in their work. To compound these feelings, Carlyle and Woods (2002) reported that teachers experienced loss in cognitive responsiveness, weakening and loss of memory, decision-making, and information processing, all linked to exhaustion, anxiety and loss of self-confidence.

Loss of energy, loss of body sensations and emotions, physical symptoms such as headaches and digestive problems, high blood pressure, heart palpitations, neuralgia,
chronic fatigue, “women’s troubles, ‘draining my life’s blood’” (Carlyle & Woods, 2002, p. 70) were reported regularly by Blazer (2010) and Carlyle and Woods (2002). Chronic absences, tardiness and poor job performance are a result of these physical symptoms.

It is a mistake to think of illness only as an affliction of the body. Not only is the ‘whole person’ involved, but so is the family and the sick person’s life and world. Serious illness is often a dark night of the soul. (Moore, 2004, p. 267)

During my own crisis experience I lost more than 25 pounds with chronic stomach and intestinal issues, fatigue, and hair loss. These turned out to be temporary, and since I emerged from the crisis my digestive illnesses are only intermittent. Yet I know at least two stressed colleagues whose physical symptoms lasted beyond their existential crisis and have become chronic fatigue and immunity difficulties. Marla Morris (2008), in her book Teaching Through the Ill Body, and Rita Charon’s (2006) Narrative Medicine, share stories of what the ill body can teach about stress, discrepancies between cultural and personal values, and marginalization of illness of the body, mind, and spirit.

Fatigue causes teachers to tend toward rote activities and lose the ability to respond and teach creatively (Blazer, 2010), which makes good teachers feel even more isolated from what they enjoy about the profession. Palmer (2007) stated outright: “Bad teachers distance themselves from the subject they are teaching—and in the process, from their students” (p. 10). Most good teachers intuitively know this, so when they begin to isolate themselves for protection against the outward stress, they feel a strong sense of guilt over it (Carlyle & Woods, 2002).

It was especially noted by Carlyle and Woods (2002) that a shift in school philosophy to data and curriculum centered models created a classroom culture in which
teachers no longer had as many positive emotional experiences with students. For many teachers this loss is catastrophic to their enjoyment at work, because the act of relating to and helping students is the very reason they entered the profession. In a study of teacher burnout by Woods and Carlyle (2011), one teacher mused, “Teaching no longer feels joyful, and the energy, that spirituality, that life force, is definitely lacking. I’m not being fed” (p. 176). Even collegial interaction became difficult, as socialization activities became simply another place where teachers complained about the job (Carlyle & Woods, 2002).

Teaching itself is an act of creativity, and teachers tend to be among of the most creative of individuals (Carlyle & Woods, 2002), yet under the experience of crisis and its ensuing stress, many teachers lost their creative selves. Teachers stopped doing their own personal creative work, and this “loss of the creative self not only impinged on personal identity, it negatively affected teaching” (p. 67). One teacher stated “I wasn’t feeling I could be me” (p. 71).

Many teachers in Carlyle and Woods’ (2002) research believed that in their early careers teaching was a vocation, something they enjoyed. However, after the educational reform movement toward standards-centered instruction, one teacher remarked, “now it’s just a job” (p. 77). With motivation, creativity, and confidence in the system and the self waning, teachers no longer believed they had an impact on students lives or learning and lost the energy needed to continue caring about students or expending effort on their behalf, even purposely filling their school day with routine (Carlyle & Woods, 2002).

The positive side of separation and isolation at this time is that there is a true necessity for solitude and silence so that individuals can “attend to the voice of the
teacher within” (Palmer, 2007, p. 33). Self-reflection is an important function in all phases of the existential crisis journey, but in the isolation phase there may be almost a conscious decision to abandon—albeit temporarily—social life and take time to begin identity work. One teacher in Carlyle and Woods’ (2002) study stated that “soul searching takes an incredible amount of time” (p. 88), and isolation is the body and mind’s way of giving the soul that deep time.

Regarding the liminal phase of the process, Moore (2004) spoke of “bardo,” a state revealed in the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* that is a “liminal period between the old life and rebirth, a preparation for a new life” (p. 91). It is a point of falling below the lowest point into a place where you are almost ready for new life, which is the purpose of bardo. To the exhausted, frightened teacher who has lost her joy in the profession, this phase feels like dark madness, the proverbial pit of despair. Initiation into this phase can be sudden, as the self (body, mind, and spirit) simply collapses and cannot continue, or it can be laborious, as the difficulties of the separation phase slowly sink the self more deeply into the depths of bardo. It is important during this phase to remember that while it feels as though the darkness will never end; it is, in fact, temporary. Eventually the self will find its way out into the light again.

Teachers at this liminal stage, especially those who have experienced discrepancies between school and cultural values and their own professional beliefs, feel a heightened sense of inauthenticity. All of the above manifestations of crisis and chronic stress are also indicative of loss of identity—especially professional identity—in the teachers studied by all the authors. Palmer (2007) knows that “we lose heart, in part because teaching is a daily exercise in vulnerability . . . the things I teach are things I care
about—and what I care about helps define my selfhood” (p. 17). When we lose joy in these things we care about, identity crumbles, the beginning of the annihilation of identity. This time of despair is the soul’s movement toward wholeness and individuation. Palmer (2007) spoke to the condition of the teacher with a poem by Rainer Maria Rilke,

Be patient toward all that is unsolved in your heart and try to love the questions themselves... do not now seek the answers, which cannot be given you because you would not be able to live them. And the point is, to live everything. Live the questions now. Perhaps you will then gradually, without noticing it, live along some distant day into the answer. (p. 89)

There is a need at this time to explore the inner life, and to balance the isolation of self-reflection with the unraveling aspect of discourse and community. The authors agreed that through the language of story, film, dance, art, and music, the existential crisis is more directly expressed and more easily understood and accepted, because the quality of language within the arts is what gives significance to the events, not any attempt to explain, interpret or defend it (Moore, 2004). It is important to use any form of artistic expression (including visual art, music, movement, or poetry) that feels comfortable and right to the individual.

The teacher toward the end of the liminal phase begins to re-establish a sense of purpose and identity, and with these will determine her future plans in (or out of) the teaching profession. Blazer (2010) recommended that individuals use this liminal time to think through career goals and assess whether it is time for a change in professions. As teachers rediscover their own creativity they may begin to feel a sense of release through the expression of their stress journey. They may begin to see the light of hope and feel a
sense of movement toward their ultimate transformation. These types of liminal experiences can help the teacher to move herself into the re-incorporation phase.

When teachers reemerge from the liminal phase of their crisis they have been markedly changed—transformed—by the process. They have literally seen and experienced the darker aspect of their soul, and their identity has shifted in many ways. They may be more spiritual than before, there may be personality or priority changes, they may have discovered untapped talents or interests, or they may still be harboring resentment or pain (Carlyle & Woods, 2002), and as such, they may feel incredibly divided about their future as educators. The teachers took unsteady steps to re-engage with their world, and returning—with varying degrees of success—back into their schools or into new assignments or careers. Carlyle and Woods identified this time as a time of “bridging” (p. 97) from their existential crisis back to their previous context, albeit with new understandings and presence. This is their return.

The crisis experience proved empowering and ultimately enriching to several of Carlyle and Woods’ (2002) teachers. Most recovered a sense of their essential self, their empathy skills improved, and they were able to recognize stress in peers and colleagues more readily. One teacher stated that she realized how “it was important to be able to give something back” (p. 131). Every passage is unique; each stage for each person has different manifestations, metaphors, and needs. The authors included here give suggestions for those who wish to assist others, and it is important to remember that help is not given to resolve the crisis but to assist the individual in fully experiencing their passage. Moore (2004) said to those who work through the Dark Night of the Soul, “Care rather than cure” (p. xx).
I have described situations of deep crisis in individuals experiencing long term stress, loss of heart, and depression-like symptoms that indicate personal growth. As characteristics of my own crisis unfolded and agreed with the above authors: I cannot help but infer that the above experiences relate to teachers and their crises, as supported by the stress research compiled by Blazer (2010) and the study of teachers experiencing severe stress and burnout by Carlyle and Woods (2002). The depth of the experiences described here may indicate the need for counseling or therapy (Blazer, 2010; Carlyle & Woods, 2002; May, 2004; Palmer, 2007), medication (Blazer, 2010; Carlyle & Woods, 2002; May, 2004), and the presence of caregivers trained in spiritual emergency (Grof & Grof, 1990). These experiences are most severe and use enormous amounts of mental and physical energy. As such they occur only a few times in one’s life (if at all), mark a powerful movement toward individuation, and often require outside assistance and understanding. Research into these areas of deep crisis as experienced by teachers are difficult to find, and seem limited to stress or burnout (Carlyle & Woods, 2002; Farber, 1991) or as it relates to teacher attrition, especially within the first five years of service (Rinke, 2014). Teacher depression does not appear often in the literature, but does appear in many teacher blogs (Angryexteacher, 2013; Old, 2014; Stortz, 2014), including a Facebook page and website hosted by David Lee Finkle, who draws a comic strip called, “Mr. Fitz” and dedicated 24 daily strips to his crisis experience as told by his strip’s protagonist, a teacher named “Mr. Fitz” (Finkle, 2014; Strauss, 2013).

As I continued my study of crisis experiences by reading, talking to others, and self-reflection, I discovered that there are also more “mundane” (Daniels, 2005) experiences of shifts of identity, termed “critical incidents” (Kelchtermans, 2009; Meijer,
2011; Rolls & Plauborg, 2009) that describe the rocky moments in the development and
growth of teacher identity throughout their career. Critical incidents occur more often
than the severe crises described above, usually 10 to 20 times in a lifetime (Bridges,
2004), probably because of they involve less expended energy than crisis. Critical
incidents result in shifts in behavior and beliefs over time that form and re-form
professional identity in a continual cycle of growth.

Critical Incidents  The shifts in teacher identity brought on by critical incidents are
considered transformative learning (Mezirow, 2003) by most of the authors used here
(Danielewicz, 2001; Fessler & Christensen, 1992; Kelchtermans, 2009; Meijer, 2011;
Rolls & Plauborg, 2009). Illeris (2009) defined this type of learning as “personality
changes, or changes in the organization of the self . . . a break in orientation that typically
occurs as a result of a crisis-like situation” (p. 13). These “crisis-like situations” are
given a variety of names: critical incidents, phases and persons (Kelchtermans, 2009);
transition cycle (Adams et al., 1976); career frustration (Fessler & Christensen, 1992);
practice shock (Danielewicz, 2001); critical incidents and critical phases (Rolls &
Plauborg, 2009). The majority of research on teacher crisis is focused on preservice and
novice teachers and the identity growth that occurs from the time of student teaching
through the first 18 months of service (Measor, 1985; Meijer, 2011; Rolls & Plauborg,
2009). Dutch researcher Paulien Meijer (2011), for example, who worked with
preservice teachers, related the challenges her students experienced during student
teaching to Erikson’s (1963) adolescent identity crisis. Yet most researchers agree that
further identity shifts occur throughout a teacher’s career (Meijer & Oolbekkink, 2012).
“Following the often turbulent period immediately after entering the profession, research on teachers’ careers is somewhat scant” (Rolls & Plauborg, 2009, p. 16).

Early research by British researcher Lynda Measor (1985) argued that critical incidents are “key events in the individual’s life, and around which pivotal decisions revolve” (p. 61). These decisions direct the individual to certain actions that in turn lead them in particular directions; all of which has implications for identity. She determined three types of critical incidents: *extrinsic* critical incidents are a result of historical events or, in teachers, large-scale, localized changes which force actions and decisions on teachers; *intrinsic* critical incidents are part of a natural progression during critical periods in a teacher’s career, such as choosing to enter the profession, the first 18 months of teaching, and mid-career moves; and *personal* critical incidents include family events, marriage and divorce, the birth or illness of a child, all of which may propel the individual in a different direction. She did not believe that the incident itself is responsible for the shift in direction, but “represents the culmination of the decision making, it crystallizes the individual’s thinking” (p. 64). She also introduced the idea of “counter incidents” in which the teachers she studied shared another incident similar to the critical incident, but showed the teacher’s new choice and behavior in successfully managing the situation.

Meijer (2011) found that critical events (she termed ‘crises’) are common in preservice teachers, whose professional identity is not yet fully formed to the realities of teaching. Critical events are experienced as “lows and highs” (p. 42) of struggle and frustration followed by joy and excitement as student teachers are faced with what veteran teachers would consider the ordinary struggles of teaching: hours of lesson
planning met with student apathy or obstinacy; overwhelming paperwork; “CHAOS in lessons” (p. 47, emphasis in original). These difficulties—crises—are painful and disorienting, and cause student teachers to become disillusioned and question their competence and commitment; therefore time and space are required for incubation, self-reflection, and discussion with peers and mentor teachers for resolution. This is imperative, as learning only takes place after the crisis cycle is complete and reflected upon. Meijer compared student teacher crises to the adolescent developmental crisis and identity resolution described by Erikson (1968), and as such she believed that difficulties of this kind are necessary for growth and identity resolution in young teachers. For this reason she recommended teacher preparation programs consider exposing preservice teachers to learning situations that gently provoke crisis, and follow up with support, self-reflection activities, and discourse as they question and shift their preconceived notions about the profession, and in this way preparing them for the “lows and highs” that are surely to come.

Another view of critical events comes from Belgian researcher Geert Kelchtermans (2009), who sought to understand teachers’ professional learning as it occurs over time. He defined critical as “distinctive, compelling and challenging, often with a strong emotional connotation” (p. 33). He found that teachers experience turning points in their thinking as they interact with certain events, phases and people which challenge their previous knowledge and modes of action and force teachers to rethink ideas they have previously taken for granted, coming to new understandings about teaching and learning. While this appears a simple process, the strong emotional ties individuals have to their ideas and beliefs suggests that a forced shift in them can cause
great distress, especially in novice teachers whose professional identity is still very much in flux. In addition, the critical character of these incidents, phases and people are unique to the individual teacher, and the meaning belongs to her alone. Kelchtermans’ work with critical incidents, phases, and persons relies on narrative accounts, or “teacher stories” (p. 37) in context of teachers’ working lives. Through teacher stories, the critical incidents, phases, and persons form what he termed “moments of narrative condensation [that] reveal complex interactions between teachers and their personal goals, norms, values, on the one hand, and contextual demands on the other” (p. 38). The prospect of reconsidering and shifting elements of belief and actions is what constitutes the critical nature of the event, and Kelchtermans’ views align with Meijer in the view that only in retrospect—through the telling—is the critical nature of the incident evident. As such, the critical incident (phase or person) is therefore constructed in the re-telling of the lived experience.

American researcher Jane Danielewicz (2001) studied the continual transformation of identities in preservice and novice teachers; she stated that forming a teacher identity and becoming a teacher has a great deal with seeing oneself and being viewed by others as a teacher. “Instead of playing a role, teaching entails a greater investment—one’s identity must be on the line” (p. 3). This deep engagement, one of the facets of the “good teacher” discussed earlier, means that any conflicting ideas or contesting visions between practice and reality not only clash with ideas and visions, but also with the self: more precisely, the identity. Critical incidents in teaching and learning contexts in individuals who identify as a teacher often create a situation in which the teacher’s very identity is called into question.
Whereas each researcher has a unique definition of teacher identity as well as a working phrase and described progression of the “critical incident,” the purpose of the studies agree: to understand teachers’ process of identity development in the context of their teaching and personal lives. The literature includes primarily European (The Netherlands, Belgium, and Great Britain) studies of teacher identity; in fact Danielewicz (2001) is one of the few researchers studying critical incidents and teacher identity in the United States. The researchers’ ideas of conflict in the teaching profession indicate a moment of difficulty in the face of an unexpected event that challenges teachers’ beliefs. When an individual first meets with a critical incident, the current identity literally fights to protect the individual from incoming information that threatens their assumptions and beliefs (Illeris, 2009), using defense mechanisms such as resistance and ambivalence. Defense mechanisms demand a great deal of energy and hard work to break through, accept and accommodate new learning from the critical incident, and this is as it should be. “Often when one does not just accept something, the possibility of learning something significantly new emerges” (p. 16).

In the context of the research and reflection I have done so far, I can view existential crisis and critical incidents as vastly different in their depth of complexity and their length of presence. In the existential crisis Carlyle and Woods (2002) found that long term stress (of many kinds) wears away or increasingly weakens the identity and communication ability until the person cannot continue as they have always done. The lengthy nature of the existential crisis manifests in a progression through the separation-liminality-reincorporation of the hero’s journey. I believe that the shift in identity that
occurs during the existential crisis may very well live up to the term “crisis”—as it threatens the very existence of the identity of the teacher as a teacher.

Critical incidents, on the other hand, I view as incidents that cause one to lose heart, become disillusioned, or that challenge what one knows and believes—which can be positive challenges (like realizing a student’s needs that could not be seen before . . .) or negative challenges (like students refusing to prepare for class after substantial teacher preparation). I think that there may be an “aha” moment, epiphany (Denzin, 1989) or crystallizing experience involved as well. Teachers—especially preservice and novice teachers—experiencing these critical events would immediately experience a frightening incongruity between what they believe and what they experience and immediate self-reflection and discourse with peers or a mentor teacher would help them to make meaning from the experience and support new beliefs and behaviors.

The research literature shows that studies of critical incidents are numerous, and tend to focus on the needs and identity shifts of young teachers. Linda Measor (1985) performed life history interviews on veteran teachers, yet contained her research to events in their early years in teaching and the problems the teachers faced. Australian teacher educator David Tripp (1993) compiled a book of stories of critical incidents to assist preservice teachers in their university coursework in navigating difficult situations through reading, diagnosing and responding to incidents. These researchers also agree that studies of veteran teachers experiencing crisis and critical incidents are rare.

Transformations in identity are an inherent part of how critical incidents and existential crisis influence teachers as they live and work in their storied landscapes. Mezirow’s (2009) concept of transformative learning values both: “Transformation can
be *epochal*—sudden major reorientations often associated with significant life crisis—or *cumulative*—a progressive sequence of insights resulting in changes of point of view and leading to a transformation in habit of mind” (p. 94, emphasis in original). This continuum of experiences is inferred in the term “crisis-like” experiences, incidents or events within both research questions, as seen below. The “lived experience” of these transformations is seen to emerge through the use of career stories, or stories to live by.

Kelchtermans (2009) called career stories a “gateway to understanding teacher development” (p. 29). She believed that the composition of identity and its shifts over time pivots not so much in teacher experience in historically accurate facts, but rather in the meaning these events have for the teachers who live them. Career stories reveal the acts of sense-making that take place in teachers and this sense-making is taken with them in their future perceptions, decisions and engagements. She used the term “professional self-understanding” instead of the traditional “identity” because of the value she placed on the ongoing, dynamic nature of identity and the power of self-reflection and discursive sharing of teacher stories with peers and colleagues in the development of identity. Nias (1989) observed that when teachers speak about their professional work and actions they inevitably speak about themselves, and their sense of self is very deeply embedded in their accounts of practice.

But what of these stories? Under what circumstances does teacher professional identity shift? And what are the subjects and content of the stories teachers tell and retell that allows them to form and re-form their identities?
Narrative and Discursive Contexts

“‘Who are you in this narrative inquiry?’ is a question I usually ask narrative inquirers as they begin to imagine a narrative inquiry” (Clandinin, 2013, p. 81).

Jennifer’s Journal May 31, 2014: Who am I in this research inquiry?

Last night I dreamed that I was walking a low concrete wall between two bodies of dark, brackish water. The walkway inclined down to the water on each side of me, and I walked with a young female guide. All I know about the water was that it was full of carnivorous reptiles—like alligators. One false move, one ripple in the water on either side of the walkway and they would emerge, snapping. I knew this to be true. My guide was pixie-ish, young and slight, highly intelligent and fearless. She could throw a ball into the water, run out to get it and return without ‘waking’ the alligator beasts. I was amazed and enamored of her ability to do this.

In my current situation I straddle two ways of knowing. On one side of my walkway are my studies in curriculum and education, a conventional university program that reflects a positivist paradigm and respects standardization, traditional, quantifiable results and economic efficiency. On the other side of my walkway are my studies in transpersonal psychology and life coaching, in a nontraditional hybrid program that reflects multiple ways of being and understanding, respects the uniqueness of the human experience and furthers the search for individual and cultural wholeness.

This divided walkway is the metaphor I have lived within for more than a decade. I feel as though I risk becoming lost—or devoured—by a false step in one direction or the other. I always believed that too much of one side would make me mechanized and unfeeling, and too much of the other side would make me appear weak, unstructured or diaphanous. In my dream there is a being that can cross between those two sides—effortlessly, with humor, intelligence and courage. I do so wish to follow her: perhaps even to be her.

As I walk this divided way in my teaching life, I know that when I do it right, no matter which side I am walking on, this work is transformational for my students and for me. This transformation intrigues me.
I want to know about the inner lives of teachers. I want to be able to coach and work with teachers in a way that is meaningful, invigorating, supportive and ultimately transformational. I have my own stories of teaching and transformation; they sit latent within me, waiting to be brought out as illustrations or teaching points. Who I am in this inquiry is a believer that teaching stories—narratives—are going to be a powerful part of how I learn about this profession. I honor experiential knowledge and can see shifts in being that occur as we live, work and interact. And I love to listen to, read, and tell stories of teaching and inner change.

Human beings are naturally story-tellers because “humans, individually and socially, lead storied lives” (Clandinin, 2013, p. 13). Bruner (1990) believed that we tell the stories of our lives in distinct patterns that contain four crucial components: human action, a sequential order, a sense of that which is out of the ordinary and “something like a narrator’s perspective” (p. 77). His third and most intriguing component implies that we tell stories of those incidents which fall outside of normal, day-to-day occurrences. After all, what is a story without a surprising twist? “Atypical teaching episodes” (Beijaard, et al., 2004, p. 114), crisis and critical incidents are wellsprings of interest in this study, and teacher stories of these types of incidents have the capacity to include all of Bruner’s qualities of a story.

When Clandinin and Connelly (2000) first began using the terms “narrative inquiry,” they believed that narrative inquirers specifically attend to the Dewey-inspired concept of experience (Dewey, 1938). As researchers within educational domains, Clandinin and Connelly were particularly drawn to Dewey, an educational philosopher who assumed “that amid all uncertainties there is one permanent frame of reference: namely the organic connection between education and personal experience” (Dewey, 1938, p. 25). This idea forms the foundation of their style of narrative inquiry.
Dewey’s (1938) concept of experience has two criteria: interaction and continuity: interaction as human interaction with their world, with others, and themselves, and continuity as the idea that experiences grow out of other experiences. Starting from these concepts, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) continued: “This set of terms creates a metaphorical three dimensional narrative inquiry space, with temporality along one dimension, the personal and the social along a second dimension, and place along a third” (p. 50). They relate temporality as the continuity of past, present and future; sociality as personal and social interaction; and place as a notion of situation.

Dewey’s ideas of experience run contrary to much of our past and current educational paradigms, especially that of academia and research. During the time John Dewey explained his ideas in *Experience and Education* (1938), Edward Thorndike’s (1913) philosophies framed the science of education based on the observation of behavior and of social efficiency, and the quantitative style of psychometrics that values standards, assessments and generalizable data. The result of the conflict between these ideas and the information they valued was, in short: “Edward L. Thorndike won and John Dewey lost” (Lagemann, 1989, p. 185). Clandinin and Connelly saw,

> The competition between Dewey and Thorndike as competition between two stories of how to do social science research. The story scripted by Thorndike became so pervasive, so taken for granted, as the only valid story, that we call it a ‘grand narrative’ of social science inquiry. (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. xxv)

The grand narrative made them “feel that our narrative thinking was somehow less than acceptable; somehow weak, effete, and soft; somehow lacking in rigor, precision, and certainty” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 25). My dream and journal of the narrow walkway between two dark oceans echoes this awareness.
Schön (1987) rejected this type of narrow thinking as “technical rationality” (p. 36) and stated that it rests on a purely objectivist view. Narrative inquirers believe that we can only truly know another if we view them in subjective terms, as a unique case, and with all of the messy, interactive and particular qualities that comprise the human being. The complexity of “people in relation studying people in relation” (Clandinin, 2013, p. 22) means that we can never fully know another. Narrative, by its very nature and in all its complexities, is simply one way of knowing, one thin slice of another’s life.

Dewey’s ontology is not transcendental, it is transactional. It implies that the regulative ideal for inquiry is not to generate an exclusively faithful representation of a reality independent of the knower. The regulative ideal for inquiry is to generate a new relation between a human being and her environment. (Clandinin, 2013, p. 14)

How one person experiences her environment is unique, and in a narrative frame the individual’s perception is a valid source of experiential information. According to Clandinin and Connelly (2000), there are four directions in any narrative inquiry: inward, outward, backward, and forward:

By inward we mean toward the internal conditions, such as feelings, hopes, aesthetic reactions, and moral dispositions. By outward we mean toward the existential conditions, that is, the environment. By backward and forward, we refer to temporality—past, present, and future. We wrote that to experience an experience—that is, to do research into an experience—is to experience it simultaneously in these four ways and to ask questions pointing each way. (p. 50)

This is contrary to the ontology of the Grand Narrative, which tends toward a one-time snapshot of experience with a wider emphasis on a group; it speaks of averages and generalizability of data to as many constituents as possible.

What is most powerful about the ontology of narrative is the importance and integration of the researcher into the work. “All narrative inquiries begin with an
autobiographical inquiry into who the researcher is in relation to the phenomenon under study, which helps to set the personal, practical, and theoretical/social justifications and shapes the emerging research puzzle” (Clandinin, 2013, p. 191). When I intersperse these chapters with intimate journal writings, dreams, the use of first person, and my personal integration to the work ahead of me, not only am I following transpersonal ideologies, as stated in Chapter 1, but I follow true narrative ontology by marking the way I am fully engaged and transforming within the context of my research at its onset. Anthropologist Clifford Geertz realized in returning to a village he had studied intently years earlier that “everything had changed—he had even changed. This complexity, multiplicity of change is a hallmark of his work” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 5). It is a hallmark of this narrative study as well.

Cultures value types of knowledge, and these types can shift in and out of favor over time. In the Grand Narrative and our current system of science and education, the types of knowledge that tend to hold power are those pieces of information that can be expressed quantifiably. Also valued are traditionally acquired and exhibited (i.e., tested) intelligence, the ability to follow directions, objective, bias-free viewing of processes and subjects, controlled variables, and scientific knowledge gained by blind testing that can be replicated and compared elsewhere. Important words are standards, validity, and measurement. Outliers, those subjects whose data fall outside of the behavioral norm, are usually eliminated or seen as irrelevant.

With its focus on the social aspect of the human condition, probably the most important value in narrative is relationship. “Relationship is at the heart of thinking narratively. Relationship is key to what it is narrative inquirers do” (Clandinin &
Connelly, 2000, p. 189). This focus on relationship goes well beyond the traditional idea of inter-human relationship, into:

The relational between the person and his/her world, including the relational in the intergenerational; the relational between person and place; the relational between events and feelings; the relational between us as people; the relational between the physical world and people; the relational in our cultural, institutional, linguistic, and familial narrative; and so on. (Clandinin, 2013, p. 22)

Narrative inquiry also supports the nature and experience of the individual as a valid source of information. The way an individual understands and interacts with her world can give insight into the nature of the human experience, in all of its complexity and multi-layered aspects. Important words and phrases are fidelity to relationships, personal justifications and co-compositions (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Clements, 2003). In narrative research, the outlier is a source of fascination and significance.

Dewey embodied these epistemological values; he believed experience to be both personal and social. People are individual and need to be understood as such, but they cannot be understood only as individuals. They are always in relation, always in social context. The concept of “continuity” is that notion that experiences grow out of other experiences in shifting social interactions (Dewey, 1938; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Narrative and discursive contexts embrace not only the external experience of teachers as they live and work, but dialogue that includes expressed stories and conversations about their meaning and context. Yet this is merely a part of the possible ways of working with stories. In an interesting integration of stories into the field of medicine, Rita Charon (2006) outlined a process she created called the “parallel chart” which offers the patients stories alongside the medical evidence to inform a diagnosis in a
more holistic way. Another quite powerful process for meaning making from stories is the inner discourse of self-reflection.

**Self-Reflection and Discourse**

The growth of identity through crisis and conflict is dependent upon dynamic interplay between internal and external discursive processes (Danielewicz, 2001; Mezirow, 2009; Palmer, 2009). Palmer (2009) explained:

If we want to grow in our practice, we have two primary places to go: to the inner ground from which good teaching comes and to the community of fellow teachers from whom we can learn more about ourselves and our craft. (p. 146)

The internal, inner ground is the place from which reflection and self-reflection emerges, and the external, community dialogue is the realm of discourse. Recall the ‘talking cure’ of Breuer and Freud, which depended on dialogue between the patient and psychologist as a means of searching out the root of what was troubling the patient. The simple act of dialogue is en-lightening.

These two aspects of identity growth are of great interest to researchers of teacher development and align with Mezirow’s (2009) concept of transformative and adult learning, in which we become “more critically reflective of our own assumptions and those of others, to seek validation of our transformative insights through more freely and fully participating in discourse and to follow through on our decision to act upon a transformed insight” (p. 94). He found that

Adults engage in reflective discourse to assess the reasons and assumptions supporting a belief to be able to arrive at a tentative best judgment and are able to transform their frames of reference through critical reflection on assumptions, self-reflection on assumptions and dialogical reasoning when the beliefs and understandings they generate become problematic. (p. 92)
Crisis and critical incidents can be considered part of these problematic beliefs and understandings. Yet, when properly supported, discourse and self-reflection work in tandem to keep teacher’s identities vibrant and responsive to the conflicting and changing needs of the students, the culture at large and the teacher. It is imperative that teachers speak, listen and learn in a kind of “receptive openness” (Palmer, 2007, p. 159) to their own inner thoughts and ideas as well as to those of others.

The Inner Ground: Reflection

In his seminal work *The Reflective Practitioner*, Donald Schön (1987) delved into what he called “knowing-in-action” and “reflection-in-action.” Schön determined that skilled practitioners often have tacit knowledge, which is that they “know more than they can say” (p. 22). Knowing-in-action is the knowhow exhibited through action; it is a construction of behavior made and shown in the moment; the practitioner may be unable to describe the action and thoughts behind it in words. In the course of everyday events, people are able to use their knowledge and skills to make spontaneous decisions on how to act: “knowing-in-action.” However, he continued by saying that in the course of everyday events in a teacher’s daily life often something of a surprising or conflicting nature occurs. This is when a teacher relies on her “reflection-in-action”—a kind of skillful improvisational behavior that looks at previous experience, intuition and “on-the-spot experiment” (p. 28) to respond to the unknown event.

But there is more to reflection-in-action than this intuitive response to a surprise condition: Schön (1987) encouraged further reflection on the reflection-in-action behavior, especially toward verbalizing a description of the event, and then a reflection on the description of the event to determine the deeper, tacit knowledge exhibited. These
several levels of reflection are important in acquiring what he called “artistry” (wisdom, talent, or intuition) in professional practice. He believed that we can learn most about the profession not by making better use of research-based knowledge, but by carefully examination of artistry in teaching, “that is, the competence by which practitioners actually handle indeterminate zones of practice, however that competence may [or may not] relate to technical rationality” (p. 12). Technical rationality, in his definition, considers that practitioners are instrumental problem solvers who make decisions using technical, practical methods; yet Schön believed that “the problems of real-world practice do not present themselves to practitioners as well-formed structures. Indeed they tend not to present themselves as problems at all but as messy, indeterminate situations” (p. 4).

Reflection and self-reflection in this context considers the teacher as a knowledgeable interactionist in the classroom; and by continually taking in information, reflecting on it and applying previous knowledge, intuition and talent to action, she is able to meet with, adapt, and learn from problem situations she encounters. Much of the adaptation takes place immediately, yet many of the researchers discussed above may argue that the powerful learning through crisis and critical incidents occurs over time—days, weeks, months or years—in reflection. The importance of self-reflection appears often in literature on identity and growth (Illeris, 2009), especially in teachers (Alsup, 2006; Beijaard et al., 2004; Carlyle & Woods, 2002; Kelchtermans, 2009; Meijer, 2011; Meijer & Oolbekkink, 2012; Palmer, 2007; Rolls & Plauborg, 2009). It is in reflection that we learn. Palmer (2007) believed that “the conversation we have with ourselves does not have to reach conclusion to be of value” (p. 33).
The Outer Community: Discourse

The term “discourse” is used many ways and in many contexts in research literature pertaining to teacher identity and growth. Discourse usually refers to language in all forms of utterances or text (Danielewicz, 2001), yet Jim Gee (1999) saw discourse as “situated identities” (p. 38) that holistically encompass language and non-language elements (thinking, acting, feeling, interaction, valuing and using symbols), including those “along the mind-body-spirit continuum” (Alsup, 2006, p. 8). Danielewicz concurred that individual communities use and value various types of language, communication and interaction, which can be considered discourse, such as “the discourse of teaching” or “the discourse of qualitative inquiry” which hold value to certain ideas, ways of being and communicating.

A culture encompasses many discursive groups. In the field of education there exist communities of discourse, all of which contain and value ways of speaking, specified vernacular and rules of conversational engagement. The discourse of teachers varies greatly from the discourse of higher education, which varies from the discourse of educational researchers. While discursive communities can overlap and share qualities and values, they are distinctly unique. Jane Alsup’s (2006) studies of preservice (student) teachers reveal a great difference between the discourse of teacher education in university classes and the discourse of the teaching profession as the students experience it in real school classrooms. When faced with two such different discourses student teachers can experience cognitive dissonance, “productive tension” or crisis in identity until they are able to find a middle ground between the two discourses. Alsup called this region between discourses and the conversations that occur there “borderland discourses.”
result of borderland discourse was neither the rejection of one discourse nor the full acceptance of another; “instead, the result was a new discourse with characteristics of both of the earlier ones as well as new characteristics unique to the preservice teacher herself” (p. 37). Within this definition is one explanation of identity shifts that result from critical incidents: they are the result of new discourses formed in preservice teachers when existing discourses do not fit within their discourses of personal values, understandings and beliefs about the profession. Alsup and others (Danielewicz, 2001; Measor, 1985; Tripp, 1993) determined that this is a powerful aspect of preservice and novice teachers’ induction into the profession, yet they do not apply this thinking to experienced or veteran teachers.

Palmer (2007) believed that these topics tend to make us vulnerable. It is important to realize that the human soul simply wants to be seen, heard and supported; it does not want to be fixed. In addition, there is a beauty to discourse in its self-renewing nature. Discourse affects those who engage in it, and in turn, the discourse is affected by those engaged. Palmer spoke eloquently on the nature of discourse in a community of learners. It is often the unravelling or lack of support of discourse and community that contributes to stress and crisis in teachers (Carlyle & Woods, 2002). Palmer stated that “our purpose in the small groups is not to critique each other’s pedagogy but to speak honestly from our own experience and listen openly while others do the same” (2007, p. 152). Research Question Two queries: What might be learned by the researcher, participants, and readers through inquiring into veteran teachers’ stories of crisis-like situations and the process of growth? Deep within the word “inquiring” is the process and conversation discourse, which affects and is affected by the participants in the
proposed study. Yet discourse also includes varying communities from which people live and communicate. Through the act of inquiring into the professional and personal lives of teachers, I am using conversational discourse to uncover aspects of discursive communities that may contribute to the growth and transformation of teachers through crisis-like events.

Palmer’s (2007) work with teachers also includes generating and exploring metaphors and images of teachers when they are at their best. With metaphor, he said, teachers not only look at the positive aspects of their identity, but also make evident the shadow and the strength it reveals. We can “take our metaphor and with the help of others, discover the guidance it may offer for the hard times in our teaching” (p. 154).

The Arts and Creative Process

The inclusion of images and metaphor naturally bring the arts into this discussion of identity, crisis, reflection, and discourse. Eisner (2008) saw education as a way to “create ourselves” (p. 3), and the arts as a strong part of this creation by expanding consciousness, shaping values, assisting in the search for meaning, bringing what is inside out, connecting with others, and sharing culture. Similar to the above discussion of discourse, Eisner felt that art helps create the maker, just as the maker creates the art.

Eisner (2008) saw the arts as forms that “generate emotion” (p. 3); emotions being a powerful aspect of crisis and critical incidents. Dirkx (1997) stated that “behind every emotion there is an image” (p. 249). Professor of education and researcher Susan Finley (2008) agreed that the arts make use of “emotive, affective experiences, senses and bodies, and imagination and emotions as well as intellect as ways of knowing and
responding to the world” (p. 72). This is a very transpersonal way of working, as is a holistic balance of the body, emotions and intellect.

For her book *Understanding Creativity*, Jane Piirto (2004) studied hundreds of creative persons in a myriad of arenas to learn the different ways the creative process functions. She distilled over-arching themes in how creative individuals work and in their creative process. Piirto included: Core Attitudes of creative individuals (naïveté, self-discipline, risk-taking and group trust); Seven “I’s” of the Creative Process (inspiration, imagery, imagination, insight, intuition, incubation, and improvisation); and Other Aspects of the Creative Process (the need for solitude, creativity rituals, meditation, creativity as the process of a life). Many of these themes are evident in the various discussions throughout this chapter on transpersonal and transformative learning, teacher identity, crisis and critical incidents, and narrative and discursive contexts and can provide a unifying thread to the work. If characteristics of creative individuals and the creative process are so present in this discussion, then creative work may well be one of the unifying aspects of a methodology for researching these ideas.

Inspiration is part of Maslow’s (1968) discussion on the nature of individualized persons who feel inspired to love and serve others. Inspiration also appears in Carlyle and Woods’ (2002) research on the shift in teachers after their stress crisis in that some of the teachers under stress discussed their loss of inspiration, and they went from teaching as a vocation to “now, it’s just a job” (p. 77).

Images and imagery appear numerous times in this chapter. Weber and Mitchell (1995) asked children of many cultures to draw images of teachers, which turned out to be very similar, despite the varying backgrounds of the children. Margaret Mead (1951)
recognized the power of image in the media in our determination of identity; transpersonalists Hendricks and Fadiman (1976) encouraged the use of guided imagery (pictures in the mind) to bring the contents of the unconscious to the conscious and Fischer and Kiefer (2001) discussed the power of constructed images, given images, and ideal images in teacher identity construction. And in his work with teacher authenticity, Palmer (2007) used images and metaphors that teachers create from times when they were at their best as teachers.

Insight is expounded in Mezirow’s (2009) concept of transformative learning as an epochal reorientation of identity and as a cumulative “sequence of insights resulting in changes of point of view” (p. 94). Mezirow saw discourse as a way to validate and act on our transformative insights.

Intuition is included in: Robert Ornstein’s (1972) look at brain psychology; in the definition of transpersonal psychology and transformative learning; in Palmers (2007) discussion of what “good teachers” know; in Schön’s (1987) explanation of how the reflective practitioner responds to the mystery of the classroom, as well as how he describes “artistry” in professional practice; and in how reflection and self-reflection assist teachers in their daily work.

Incubation appears as the phase of liminality in the hero’s journey, as a powerful time of “cocooning” (Carlyle & Woods, 2002, p. 55) or a “moratorium” (p. 87) for identity work and reflection. Meijer (2011) stated that after a critical incident her students need incubation time to self-reflect and discuss their thoughts with a peer or mentor teacher.
Improvisation is included in Bateson’s (1990) description of our identity as an improvised “composition of our lives” (p. 1), and in Schön’s (1987) description of “reflection-in-action.”

The divided nature of teachers when they experience crisis or critical incidents means that at this point in their lives they feel (and are) more vulnerable. Teaching, after all, is a “daily exercise in vulnerability” (Palmer, 2007, p. 17) because we teach that which we care about. This vulnerability requires risk-taking and group trust (two of Piirto’s Core Attitudes) as teachers explore the meaning of the crisis and the resulting identity shifts.

Much of creative individuals’ work within the realms of inspiration, insight, and Piirto’s other aspects of the creative process, is voiced and mediated by symbols and images. Through a dialogue with symbols and images, individuals gain insight into aspects of themselves which are outside conscious awareness, yet influence their sense of self. Jung’s concept of individuation as the development of an individual’s personality involves a dialogue between the ego and the unconscious—also voiced and mediated by symbols and images (Dirkx, 1997). The content or process of formal learning evokes images expressed and realized through dialogue and discourse and symbols express emotions that arise as individuals make their way through the learning process. During this interaction, both the content and the individual are transformed (Mezirow, 2009).

Individuation is an ongoing psychic process. When entered into consciously and imaginatively, it provides for a deepening of awareness of the self, an expansion of one’s consciousness, and engendering of soul. We become more fully who we are and we are more fully able to enter into a community of humans. In Jungian terms, this is transformation—emergence of the self. (Dirkx, 1997, p. 251)
Summary: A Braiding of Contexts

The next chapter positions me in the midst of the storied lives of veteran teachers, engaging us all in inner and outer discourse to reveal insights into teacher identity and its growth. It was the goal of the preceding chapter to engage and open up the varied meanings of concepts that arise from these research questions:

1. What is the lived experience of the process of growth in veteran teachers, particularly as it relates to crisis-like situations?

2. What might be learned by the researcher, the participant and the readers through inquiring into veteran teachers’ stories of crisis-like situations and the process of growth?

I began by outlining the transformative context of “growth” which permeates the entire study: growth as a transformative shift in identity; growth as shifts in structures of knowledge; and growth as transformation of perspective; all of which are relevant. I continue by delving into the concept of teacher identity as a weaving of personal and professional selves in a multi-faceted and evolving entity, including aspects of teacher identity and the crucial aspect of engagement with identity as what forms a “good teacher.”

Crisis-like experiences are defined as a transformative continuum of experiences ranging from existential crisis to critical incidents. These experiences are identified by many researchers as powerful aspects of identity growth in teachers and can be revealed through the use of stories. Inquiring into these stories involves varied communications, including the external discursive process of narrative and dialogue, as well as the internal discourse of self-reflection and the use of metaphor and creative works.
In the chapter that follows the research project is outlined, its methodologies and procedures detailed, and subjectivity and validity explored.
Chapter III
Design of the Study

Figure 3.1. Rhythm (5/15/2015)

Starts simple
a curved line
again and again
A pattern grows.
When I deepen a shade
call attention to a line
the whole piece changes
and becomes more beautiful and intricate –
yet simple still.
There is a rhythm to this work
that requires
mathematical precision
with intuition
and bind faith
That the next line will
find its proper place.
Introduction

The substance of organic inquiry is the interwoven stories of the women and men who offer their experience of the topic being studied. These stories, beginning with the researcher’s own tale, are the material from which the meaning will grow. Because stories speak from the heart as well as from the intellect, they communicate and transform on many levels from archetypal and unconscious realms to rational and intentional ones. The mystery and creativity of these stories are the soul of organic inquiry. (Clements et al., 1999, p. 5)

This dissertation research project is a story in progress. For me it began with my experience of crisis in teaching, and it continued through the story of my re-enchantment with the profession, and through my storied decision to take the doctoral journey. It continues through my storied interaction with the narratives of others who are curious about difficulties that give teachers cause to reflect on and grow (dare I say—transform?) their teaching life and identity. Indeed, these theoretical and investigative “others” initiated this story decades before my teaching degree was even imagined. I enter this story, as Clandinin (2013) would say, “in the midst” (p. 43) of its playing out through the relational lives of teachers, even as the crisis-like events transform them—and me, as the researcher—in the telling and retelling of our stories. The story continues as I move through the dissertation and toward my next big adventure.

To determine the nature of experiences of teachers in crisis-like situations, it is essential to explore the stories of their “inner landscapes” (Palmer, 2007), which also includes my own stories of crisis-like incidents, and explore teaching lives with their—our—perceptions and in our own words. These stories will most likely appear as a “pure rendering of the experience of the participants with little presence of the researcher” (Clements, 2003, p. 177).
Purpose. The body of research on teacher identity and its transformation over time is very concerned with the early experiences of preservice and novice teachers (Danielewicz, 2001; Kelchtermans, 2009; Meijer, 2011; Sikes, Measor, & Woods, 1986). This research gives teacher education programs vital information as to the development of identity and how critical incidents and difficulties early in a career can shape young teacher identities. The Sikes et al. (1986) study of veteran teachers and their stories of critical incidents asked the teachers to report on incidents occurring in the early phases of their careers (student teaching to within the first 18 months). Studies of the development of veteran teacher identity, especially as it relates to challenges, crises, and critical incidents, are rare (Measor, 1985; Meijer & Oolbekkink, 2012; Tripp, 1993). It is to this body of research, one that explores veteran teachers’ development of identity through crisis-like-experiences, that I wish to contribute.

In addition to adding to the literature and understanding of crisis-like experiences in veteran teachers, I have a personal concern for the profession in this conviction: I believe that the ultimate consequence of many teachers experience of crisis-like events is a loss or questioning of personal and professional identity. And this experience may be transformative. There are numerous references in the previous chapter to the effect of individuation, identity growth, and transformation as emerging from crisis-like experiences. With my contextual history and this conviction in mind, the purposes for my future career in education and for this study are intertwined.

I am a teacher educator. I want to deepen my understanding of crisis-like experiences in teachers to work toward supporting preservice and veteran teachers as they progress through crisis and to prepare them for challenges they almost certainly will face.
My purpose is to gain intimate knowledge of the diversity of crisis-like experiences and ways that the psyche has to process the journey when forced to go through it alone. My ultimate career purpose is to show teachers the best of who they are and what they bring to the profession. If an existential crisis is part of the transformation of some of the teachers in this profession, I want to improve their chances of emerging a better teacher. The purpose, then, of this research is to effect the larger body of research on teacher identity and crisis as well as the more personal aspect of my own future work with teachers.

Research Questions

1. What is the lived experience of the process of growth in veteran teachers, particularly as it relates to crisis-like experiences?

2. What might be learned by the researcher, participants, and readers through inquiring into veteran teachers’ stories of crisis-like situations and the process of growth?

Methodology

Rationale for Qualitative Inquiry

Identity and teacher identity, transformation, and crisis-like experiences are processes that include all facets of human experience: from the intellectual to the emotional; from the logical to the intuitive; and from the rational mind to the irrational body and senses. As outlined in the previous chapter, it is understood that during crisis-like experiences, a teacher’s feelings are powerful and her emotions are difficult to regulate, her body may become ill or energized, her connections to Spirit and the intuitive realms of consciousness may be interrupted or enhanced, and the intellectual mind feels
the effects as a diminished ability to negotiate a busy world. Because human experience involves so many realms and is so unique, a qualitative research paradigm is essential to accommodate its variety as well as its individuality. Organic Inquiry, a transpersonal methodology, values the multi-faceted aspects of human experience in the context of human stories.

**Rationale for organic inquiry.** Organic inquiry is a qualitative research methodology that draws from feminine spirituality, transpersonal psychology, and feminist research. From feminine spirituality comes a respect for capacities that are little used in the present masculine culture of rationality, previously described in the form of the “grand narrative” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 25). Feminine spirituality respects non-rational responses such as those from the body, those through connections to the earth and spirituality, those via intuition and the experience of the individual over generalized applications for the masses (Clements et al., 1999). To this, transpersonal psychology offers a balance of masculine (rational) and feminine (non-rational) ways of knowing. It respects phenomena that take the individual beyond the ego, holistic psychology that includes mind/body/spirit integration, eco-psychology, and transformation. From feminist research techniques comes a respect for the individual experience, including diverse and little-heard voices of minorities, women, and children. Organic inquiry also draws its subjectivity from feminist research as relational, mutual, diverse and responsible. Organic Inquiry requires the researcher be open to the experience of the participants and the topic to such a degree that she is willing to allow herself to be changed by it (Clements, 2003).
The research study outlined here requires a methodology that seeks to understand the growth (transformation over time) of teachers’ identity as they experience crisis-like situations. The researcher is the “subjective instrument of research” (Clements, 2003, p. 113), yet so are the participants who have previous experience with the phenomena under study. Organic inquiry is best suited to such topics of psycho-spiritual growth and transformation because it compels the researcher to collect data in a way that values the transformation of the many research selves (the researcher-self, the participant-self, and the reader-self) over time (Clements, 2003; Curry & Wells, 2006). Clements (2003) wrote “by choosing the [Organic] approach, the researcher commits to an archetype of transformation that must be actively facilitated, but may not be controlled” (p. 16).

Research Question Two queries: What might be learned by the researcher, participants, and readers through inquiring into veteran teachers’ stories of crisis-like situations and the process of growth? This question not only seeks to learn from my transformation as the researcher through the period of the study, but it also follows the transformation of the participants as well as reaching outward to the readers of the finished work to determine their transformation.

An organic approach evolves out of the personal experience and interest of the researcher (Clements et al., 1999; Curry & Wells, 2006), and as such data collection begins with the researcher’s own story, from which the research questions and method develop. My exploration of crisis and critical incidents emerged from personal experience with such phenomena, and my wish to be of service to future teachers as they prepare for and experience crisis-like incidents is a powerful motivation. Similarly, Organic Inquiry reflects one of the transformative goals of the research is to “be of
service” (Clements, 2003, p. 115), aligning to my wish as a future teacher educator and transformative life coach.

The transformative context of my dual traditional and transpersonal studies, as evidenced in the dream journal opening Chapter 2, includes my long-time integration of personal journals and mandala drawings in processing events and ideas.

Jung (1969, 1969/1989, 1974) used mandalas in his practice as a psychotherapist as well as in his personal dream work. In Sanscrit, mandala means “circle,” or “magic circle” (Cornell, 2006; Jung, 1974). The mandala can be drawn, painted or in the instance of certain Tibetan monks, created in intricate patterns using colored sand. While Jung outlined very precise symbolism of the mandala (Jung, 1974), he also allowed it to follow a more simplified form (Jung, 1969, 1974), like the ones used here. It is simply a drawn circle within which the maker meditates and draws images.

“When a practitioner willfully illuminates and embodies a sacred image from within the psyche while in a meditative state, spiritual transformation, physical healing, and the integration of personality fragments can result. (Cornell, 2006, p. 3)

I began creating mandalas since attending a mandala class in 2009, using them to work through ideas, difficulties, and to gain insight. I use black paper and white pencils in the style of Cornell (2006). I start by drawing a circle. I meditate on the question, problem, dream, or interaction and allow my mind to create intuitive images. When I feel I am ready, I begin drawing, often accompanying the mandalas with journal writing or poetry. The process is extremely intuitive, I often have no idea what I will draw when I take up the pencil, the image and words simply emerge. This practice mirrors organic valuing of rational and non-rational sources of data collection and analysis.
These rational and non-rational sources include Jung’s (1971) four functions, or domains, of consciousness, referring to different ways the conscious mind has to apprehend reality: intuitive, which include artistic and dream-state responses; sensate, in which the body’s responses are mined for data; feeling, which includes emotions and value responses; and thinking, which is the intellectual, logical and rational comprehension of truth. A multi-faceted viewpoint of the experience of crisis-like incidents allows for communication that moves beyond the knowledge and perception of meaning gained by stories. “Verbalizing is not the only way our lives speak, of course. They speak through our actions and reactions, our intuitions and instincts, our feelings and bodily states of being, perhaps more profoundly than through our words” (Palmer, 2000, p. 6)

Organic Inquiry promotes a three-fold process of working which includes Preparation, Inspiration, and Integration. Described by Clements (2003) as the “organic model for transformative change” (p. 51), this process closely parallels the Hero’s Journey of separation, liminality, and re-incorporation. Preparation represents the recognition of the question or problem at hand, releasing attachment to the ego, so as to move toward the liminal (Inspiration) realm, for example, the space between researcher and participant, participant and the experience being studied, between researcher and the intuitive or feeling functions, or other borderlands. Meditation, ritual, journaling, contemplation, and stories (all of which are, incidentally, mentioned in Piirto’s [2004] research on creativity) prepare the individual for a connection to the deeper realm of experience. Inspiration represents the individual’s observation and encounter of the new, which exists deep within the liminal experience, as well as the ability to hold aspects of
the encounter in the return back over the liminal threshold to the corporeal world, and the ongoing research. In the Integration phase, the researcher takes the new experience, knowledge, or insights and attempts to weave it into the current research. In simple terms: this three-fold process prepares the researcher for interaction with the experience under study; the researcher travels into new experiences and liminal realms, taking in new information with naïveté, openness and fresh eyes (Piirto, 2004) without containing or controlling it; and returns from the experience with new knowledge and understanding that comes from aspects including the intellect and beyond, weaving it into the ongoing study. The creative and expressive arts, metaphor and stories are natural, and indeed recommended (Clements, 2003; Clements et al., 1999; Curry & Wells, 2006) pathways of preparation, inspiration, and integration as well as presentation of the final research discoveries.

Organic Inquiry has strong ties to narrative forms of inquiry, especially as they apply to liminal and spiritual experiences, which can often be difficult to communicate. Clements (2003) viewed stories as intricately woven with identity. Yet, as Organic Inquiry uses storytelling as its chief approach to experience, for the purposes of this study it lacks form and structure for gathering, working with and contextualizing narratives of participants. For this reason, Narrative Inquiry as constructed and utilized by educational researchers Clandinin and Connelly (Clandinin, 2006, 2013; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Clandinin et al., 2006; Connelly & Clandinin, 1999), supports and frames the use of stories of participants’ lived experience.

**Rationale for narrative inquiry.** Many researchers of crisis-like incidents and teacher identity suggest the use of narrative and storytelling modes to gain insight into the
experience of teacher in the midst of their teaching lives (Alsup, 2006; Beijaard et al., 2004; Kelchtermans, 2009; Meijer & Oolbekkink, 2012; Rolls & Plauborg, 2009). Narrative inquirers seek to understand how people make meaning from their world. It emerged from John Dewey’s (1938) writings on the nature of experience as interaction and continuity. Dewey viewed interaction in light of humans as social creatures, perpetually gaining experience by interacting with others, themselves and their environment. He viewed continuity in a three dimensional sense as experiences emerging from previous experiences, as well as seeding future experiences: the temporality of past, present, and future. Clandinin and Connelly (1999) expanded these concepts to create a three-dimensional research space that includes temporality (a continuum of past, present, and future experiences), sociality (how humans interact social with their world), and place (situation). It is in this context that narrative research is used to study topics related to how human interact with their stories.

The most defining feature of narrative inquiry as presented by Clandinin, Connelly and colleagues is “the study of experience as it is lived” (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007, p. 69), encompassing a Deweyan view of experience. Narrative inquirers privilege lived experience in that it not only provides insight into the person herself, but also to social science as a wider field. Lived and told stories of experience are at the beginning of all narrative inquiry, and are interwoven with and informed by theoretical literature that informs the experience under study.

I borrow a number of elements from Narrative Research to assist in this study. Organic Inquiry’s deep work with stories does not include techniques for working and re-working stories with participants to create a final, agreed upon text. For this I borrow
narrative’s cyclical process to co-create the stories with participants: field texts, as initial or raw texts from transcripts and writings; recreated into interim texts, as researcher deconstructed and reconstructed texts which shape stories into draft texts to be checked by participants for accuracy, or “narrative coherence” (Clandinin, 2013, p. 48); recreated and co-created into research texts, as final drafts of texts after participants have reviewed and helped to re-work them to ensure that stories are accurate depictions of their lived experience. I also borrow the three dimensional inquiry space of temporality, sociality and place as rational (thinking) views of data analysis. Clandinin (2013) used a “timeline” feature in her work co-creating texts with participants to view stories in context of their lives. I include this concept in my research as an Annotated Lifeline, which uses a timeline format but allows the participant and me to expand on certain events using brackets, drawings, or other means.

Organic and Narrative Inquiries agree on a number of aspects of research, and two are applicable here. They agree that the research project should begin and end with the researcher’s storied experience of the phenomena under study (Clandinin, 2013; Clandinin & Connelly, 2006; Clements, 2003). The five stories that outline my arc of crisis appear in Chapter 1. In this way the researcher’s (my) experience and ultimate transformation is a valued part of the research. Because of this, both inquiry techniques also require the researcher to keep a reflective journal throughout the study to note and respond to changes in the researcher as a result of the work done with participants.

Participants

The participants for this study were selected through purposeful sampling and chain referral or snowball sampling. This type of sampling is suitable for hidden
populations where potentially qualified participants are difficult to find through general sampling. A convenience sampling of initial subjects was located through individuals known to the researcher, each of whom were considered “seeds” who can suggest further waves of “seed” recruits. Each layer of “seeds” grows more “seeds,” and the group of possible participants grows with each wave, like a snowball rolling down a hill (Heckathorn, 2011). The participant group was comprised of three veteran K-12 public schoolteachers, each with more than 10 years in the profession, who self-identify as having experienced crisis-like incidents and were willing and able to tell stories from the experiences. The organic and metaphoric nature of this study necessitated including teachers who were comfortable expressing themselves through journal writing and creatively. To locate participants, I networked through colleagues I believed would be interested and suitable for the study and requested that they ask colleagues, as well. A flier with a description of the study and expectations was distributed to interested teachers, and a short survey of interest and suitability was provided. Participants were selected on their level of interest, their willingness, their ability to accommodate the research schedule, and their level of comfort with creative and transpersonal ways of working.

Three Story-Telling Participants were selected. Maggie, Cathrine, and Ellie are all veteran teachers (15, 22, and 29 years, respectively) in public schools. In addition, Ellie trained and taught in a private Montessori middle school. Maggie and Cathrine found their way into teaching from other jobs, whereas Ellie immediately entered the profession after college. Each teacher shifted positions within a district or between districts often—at least four times—in their careers, usually between different teaching
posts. Maggie and Ellie also worked as teacher and curriculum support personnel. All the participants acknowledge a deep caring for the profession and their students.

Participants took part in two interviews and a Research Weekend and reflected in writing and through creative work of their choice on the project activities and other aspects of the topic throughout the month of the study. Participants also member checked stories via email. The small sample size was due to the time-consuming and complex nature of the varied facets of Organic Inquiry (Clements, 2003; Curry & Wells, 2006), especially considering the transformational impact of the study in addition to the main topic of crisis-like experiences. Participants’ accommodations and all meals but one during the Research Weekend were provided as part of the study.

After research texts of the Veteran Stories were finalized, four Resonance Panel Participants (separate from Story-Telling Participants) were selected from the remaining completed questionnaires of volunteers. Matthew, Emily, Bailey, and Charles are varied in their background and experiences. Matthew left teaching after a year (via a self-identified crisis-like event), to become a school counselor. Emily has taught more than 10 years, and is a second grade teacher at an International Baccalaureate school. Bailey was a public school Art teacher who left the profession (via a self-identified crisis-like event) to work privately. Charles, a high school teacher who has recently retired after more than 30 years in the profession, also self-identifies having experienced a crisis-like event. Resonance Panel Participants read all four (my own included) Veteran Stories and responded to three prompts:

Prompt 1: Write about how the stories reflect (are similar to) your experience as a teacher.
Prompt 2: Write about how the stories resonate with you. (Resonance as qualities of the stories that are personally meaningful or important to you, even if unrelated to teaching.)

Prompt 3: Write about any new realization or growth you experienced by reading these stories.

**Procedures**

**The Researcher’s Story**

In mid-November of 2014, just after my Comprehensive Exams, I wrote my story of crisis, as suggested by Clements (2003). “The first step in designing an organic research method, even before considering participants or questions or interview techniques, involves writing one’s personal story of the topic” (p. 129). I wrote five stories in response to my early literature review on crisis and the Hero’s Journey, in fact, these stories appear through Chapter 1. I edited the stories a week later and set them aside until such time as the data gathering and analysis is completed. In addition, I have adapted my personal journal to accommodate research and creative work from the study.

**The First Interview**

The goal of the first individual meeting and interview was to explain and clarify the study and interview the participant for stories of entry into the profession and a preliminary response to how the participant views the impact of crisis-like experiences on her role as teacher. I reviewed the research protocol and expectations, had participants sign Institutional Review Board forms (See Appendix A), and explained journal and creative work (See Appendix B). In an individual semi-structured interview I asked participants to respond to two questions:
1. Tell a story of how you came to the teaching profession. (Entry Story)

2. Have you experienced difficulties or challenges through your career as a teacher? How do you think these have impacted you as a teacher? (First Overall Impact Story)

I started the first interview by sharing my own Entry Story and inviting them to share their story of entry into the profession. The “Entry Story” ties into the conception of teacher identity as including reasons for entering the profession (Olsen, 2008b), as stated in Chapter 2. The “First Overall Impact Story” connects to a second interview question at the end of the participants’ involvement in the study. Responses to this question may illustrate transformative shifts in participants’ perceived impact of the crisis-like incidents that occur as a response to the study.

All sessions throughout the study were recorded. Transcripts from the interview were used to write interim text for the Entry Story, which was then member-checked with the participant for accuracy and meaning via email, eventually written into a research (final) text, which serves as portion of the introduction to participants in Chapter 4. Participant responses to the First Overall Impact Story question were compared with the Second Interview responses to a similar prompt.

After each interaction with participants and many analysis and writing sessions, I performed a 4 Function Self-Interview, using the four functions of sensing, feeling, thinking, and intuition to gauge my responses, reflections, and eventual growth through the study. Sensing modes use the body’s responses to the data; the feeling function looks at emotions and values within the data; thinking function is a traditional and rational view of the data as themes and content; and intuition uses artistic responses, doodling, dreams
or free-writing as insightful responses to the data. Immediately following an interview or group meeting I sat quietly alone and performed a self-interview that included the above four functions to gauge my immediate and direct response to that specific interaction. Because the 4 Function Self-Interview is meant to gauge researcher transformation throughout the study, it also included a response to the question: “What new understandings and realizations exist as a result of this interaction?” A detailed description of this and all data gathering formats and analysis procedures follows at the end of this section (See Table 3.1).

Between the First Interview and the Research Weekend, participants read two articles, one explaining crisis-like situations and another outlining the four Jungian functions of sensing, feeling, thinking, intuition. This prepared participants to respond to stories and discussions throughout the Research Weekend using each of the functions. Participants also created an Annotated Lifeline of their lives (focusing on their teaching life) annotated with important events and critical incidents, using my Annotated Lifeline as an example (See Figure 3.2). This timeline is created by each participant to show the progression of events in their life (mostly professional, but personal events as they wish) up to the present time. Annotations might include drawings or doodles, bracketed out stories, events, or other indications of detail as they desire. In addition, participants wrote in a reflective journal and did creative work throughout the study using dreams, prompts, or timeline events.
Table 3.1

*Research Design: Data Collection and Analysis Organized by Research Question*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Data will include:</th>
<th>Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q1: What is the lived experience of growth in veteran teachers, especially as it relates to crisis-like experiences?</td>
<td>a) Tell a story of how you came to the teaching profession. (Entry Story)</td>
<td>a) and b) Member-checked, combined and used as an participant introduction in the final dissertation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b) Who are you now as a teacher? (Now Story)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c) Veteran Stories (final version).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d) LifeLine Sharing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2: What might be learned by inquiring into veteran teachers’ stories of growth through crisis-like experiences? ~Focusing on the growth or transformation of the Participants through the process.</td>
<td>a) Participant Journals</td>
<td>a) b) and d) Transformational Content Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b) Second interview. What lasting impressions do you have from your experience participating in this research study?</td>
<td>c) Compared the two stories, noting ideas in the Second Story indicating Transformation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c) First and Second Overall Impact Stories How have the difficulties and challenges you experienced impacted you as a teacher?</td>
<td>d) Group Analysis Discussion were Distilled and mined for “Essence of” quotes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d) Group Analysis Discussions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2: What might be learned by inquiring into veteran teachers’ stories of growth through crisis-like experiences? ~Focusing on the growth and transformation of the Researcher through the process.</td>
<td>a) Researcher Journal</td>
<td>a) and c)Transformational Content Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b) Before (October, 2014) and After (May, 2015) Stories</td>
<td>b) Compare the two stories, noting differences with Transformational Content Analysis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c) 4 Function Self-Interviews</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(table continues)*
Table 3.1 (continued)

*Research Design: Data Collection and Analysis Organized by Research Question*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Data will include:</th>
<th>Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Q2: What might be learned by inquiring into veteran teachers’ stories of growth through crisis-like experiences? -Focusing on the growth and transformation of the Reader of the finished stories. | a) Resonance Panel written responses  
(1) How do the stories reflect your experience as a teacher?  
(2) Do the stories resonate with your experiences as a teacher? In what ways?  
(3) What new understandings and realizations exist as a result of reading and discussing these stories?  
| a) Transformational Content Analysis, Distillation of ideas and mined for “Essence of” quotes.  
| Q2: What might be learned by inquiring into veteran teachers’ stories of growth through crisis-like experiences?  
| a) All research documents (journals, transcriptions, and artwork) in chronological order  
| b) Group Analysis discussions  
| a) and b) Ideas distilled and mined for “Essence of” quotes.  
| The Group Story  
| l relates the collected meaning of the group’s work together.  
|
Figure 3.2. Researcher’s Annotated LifeLine

The Research Weekend

The goal for the weekend was to create a safe community for working, to have participants share stories of crisis-like experience, and use conversation, sharing, self-reflection, and creative work to make meaning from the experiences. To that end, a
licensed therapist was on-call in case the story-telling became too emotional or if participants or I required immediate professional support.

On Friday evening we opened the circle with a ceremony that allowed each participant to share her intentions and purposes for joining the research study. Each participant shared her Entry Story and responded to the question, “Who are you now as a teacher?” using artifacts such as photos, notes, creative work, awards and other memorabilia. Participants responded to one another’s stories in her own way and using the four functions as she wished, much in the style of Palmer’s groups, remembering the importance of being seen, heard, and supported, rather than critiquing or fixing. We completed the session (and most group sessions hereafter) with a Group Analysis Discussion, where the group verbally responded to three questions:

1. What new understandings and realizations exist as a result of this working session?

2. What are the recurring group themes from this working session?

3. What knowledge, understanding, and wisdom does this group have to offer the profession?

Immediately following Friday’s session I performed a 4 Function Self-Interview.

On Saturday morning the group met for breakfast and opened the circle again. Participants checked in with dreams and reflections on the previous day’s work. Each participant shared from her Annotated Lifelines, honing in one or two veteran stories of crisis-like experiences that represented the most powerful or best remembered. This sharing of LifeLines continued into Saturday afternoon.
On Saturday afternoon participants were given a task: Tell a detailed story of crisis from their teaching experience and how that experience impacted them. They could tell the story any way they wished, using artwork, poetry, or any creative form. I gave them the rest of the afternoon to incubate (Piirto, 2004) and to reflect on how they would tell the story when the group reconvened in the evening. Incubation is time alone for participants to deeply consider their career, their stories, and their manner of communication.

On Saturday evening each participant in turn shared her story and creative work. After each sharing, the group commented on the stories in their own ways and using the four functions. We finished the evening by discussing the Group Analysis questions (as stated above), drawing out new realizations, themes, and group wisdom. Immediately after this session I performed a 4 Function Self-Interview.

On Sunday the group met for breakfast and checked in with dreams and reflections of the previous day’s session. We discussed the Group Analysis questions and closed the circle by honoring each participant’s story and contribution to the profession. After this session I performed a 4 Function Self-Interview. Between the Research Weekend and the Second Interview, participants were expected to continue dream-work, journaling, and creative work for one week using Self-Reflection prompts I provided.

To analyze the Research Weekend, I listened to the Entry Story-telling session (from Friday evening) and used it and the Entry Story from Interview One to create a verbatim Entry Story, which was member checked via email. The Now Story (the story of who each participant is now as a teacher) was also transcribed and used to create a verbatim Now Story, also member checked.
I transcribed the narrative of the Veteran Story (from Saturday evening). The field texts (transcriptions and creative work) were worked into interim texts by removing unnecessary verbiage, including statements from other participants and myself, and leaving a clear rendition of the story in oral language. The Veteran Story was then shared with the participants, who were to check the story for accuracy of meaning (Is the story an accurate telling of the event?), protection of all concerned (Does the story contain any identifiable details or events that could cause distress in the participant?), and presentation (Does the story sound as if it is in oral, spoken language?). The stories were then returned with any changes to the researcher. The member checking cycle continued until the participants were satisfied with the level of authenticity and representation, by which time the interim texts became research (final) texts.

I transcribed the Group Analysis sessions (from Friday evening, Saturday evening, and Sunday afternoon) and analyzed them through the four functions (Thinking, Feeling, Sensing, and Intuition) and for transformational content (Clements, 2003). In this, the Transformational Content Analysis, I looked for phrases and discussion threads indicating a shift or transformation of the mind, heart, self-awareness, connection to Spirit, and desire to be of service, indicated by Clements (2003) as the “final part of the analysis which is a report of transformative change” (p. 199). Changes of mind are insights and new knowledge gained by the inquiry. Changes of heart are when “one’s picture of who one is and how one operates in the world alters” (p. 199). Changes in self-awareness give the participant insight into their own identity, meanings, and motivations. Changes in connection to Spirit are a fairly new idea and more rare in Organic Inquiry, but may manifest as increased interaction with Spirit (through prayer, meditation, or other
spiritual practice). Changes in service occur when participants feel the need to extend or increase their energies toward improving the lives of others and the material world.

I spent time with the audio and transcription and distilled potent themes and ideas. The Distilling process (Clements, 2003; Giles, 2000) extracts the spirit of participant’s words, seeking out the most potent expressions, thoughts, and feelings that are stated passionately and repeatedly. The distillation process is a way of trimming away redundant words, allowing the potent aspects of the discourse to be heard. Due to the potency and passion of the ideas, participants’ own words are used to represent the “essence of” distilled ideas. Hence, these are called “Essence of” quotes.

In it, I sought the most potent expressions, thoughts, and feeling that not only appeared frequently, but are said with passion, often accompanied by slowed or distinct speech and pronunciation, faster or less distinct speech patterns, and emotional responses such as weeping or trembling voice. The functions of sensing, feeling, and intuition are useful in determining this passion. The distillation process is a way of extracting the essence or trimming away extra, redundant material, bringing forth the vital and potent aspects of the discourse. Due to the potency and passion of the ideas, it is important to use participants’ own words to represent the “essence of” distilled ideas. Hence, these are called “Essence of” quotes.

The Group Analysis Discussions of the three questions and the sharing of the LifeLines were analyzed using a 4 Function Analysis (described below) and Transformational Content Analysis (described above). For this analysis, the researcher looks for evidence of Carl Jung’s (1971) four functions:
• Thinking function, including thematic and content analysis, as well as Narrative ideas of temporality, sociality and place;

• Feeling function, including evidence of personal emotional responses and a search for value laden ideas;

• Sensing function, including responses that indicate illness, or somatic feeling in the body;

• Intuition function, including responses that indicate metaphor or symbolism, or the use of intuition or “gut feelings,” or creative responses such as art, dream work, or poetry.

The Group Analysis themes were distilled and are included as the Group Story in Chapter 4. Distilling themes (Clements, 2003; Giles, 2000) unearths the spirit of participant’s words, the most potent expressions, thoughts and feeling, which are stated passionately and repeatedly.

**The Second Interview**

The goal of this interview was for teachers to share their personal reflections and evolution through the weekend and in the week since, and to submit their journals and creative work. I encouraged participants to share from their journals as they responded to the following interview questions:

1. What lasting impressions do you have from your experience participating in this research study?

2. Let’s talk about the more powerful aspects and lasting impressions that came out of our experience participating in the research study.
I performed a 4 Function Self-Interview after each interview. I transcribed the Second Interviews and performed a 4 Function Analysis and Transformational Content Analysis on the response to the first question, doing the same with the written journals collected at the same time. I compared the First and Second Overall Impact Stories with a Transformational Content Analysis. I also reviewed the journals for further incidents and stories of crisis-like experiences to include for Research Question One. I continued writing and member checking the interim texts of Entry, Now and Veteran Stories to reach a final research text for each story. Just prior to the meeting of the Resonance Panel, I rewrote my own stories of crisis-like experience, including them in the Resonance Panel stories to read and respond to.

**The Resonance Panel**

Once the Veteran Stories were finalized as research texts, they are sent to the Resonance Panel via email with instructions and reflection prompts (See Appendix C). The Panel read and responded in writing to the completed Veteran Stories and three questions. The written responses were analyzed with a Transformational Content Analysis and for incidents of resonance and are included in Chapter 4 to reflect perceived shifts in the future readers of this dissertation.

I performed a Transformational Content Analysis on all of the 4 Function Self-Interviews I completed during the study, on my research journal, and upon comparison of the 5 Story Arc and the new stories written at the end of the study to reflect my own transformation as a result of this project.
Subjectivity

Organic Inquiry takes its subjectivity from Feminist Research in the realms of relation, mutuality, diversity and responsibility (Clements, 2003). These four realms hold specific determinations for the researcher’s relationship to the topic, the participants, the reader and the field. The relational aspect of subjectivity means that there is an admittedly powerful and direct relationship between the researcher and the topic of study. I am also in direct relationship with participants to encourage intimacy and ensure a comfort level with and between participants as they sharing stories from their lives. This direct relationship requires what Piirto (2004) called the Core Attitudes of risk-taking and group trust. There is also a direct relationship with the reader of the research, hence the use first person and directly referring to the reader throughout these chapters. Likewise, the researcher has a responsibility to the reader to make sure that the space is safe for sharing, and that nothing is shared in the final research text that gives the participant discomfort or angst. The researcher also has a responsibility to the topic and to the field to present accurate data that while not bias-free, freely admits any bias.

Mutuality takes that relationship to a deeper degree by allowing and encouraging equal partnership with the participants; who in some Organic studies are called co-researchers. It is understood that participants have experience with the topic under study, just as the researcher has, and this mutual entering of the space allows for equality in their ideas, their experiences and their voice in the final dissertation writing.

With that said, the research respects and values diversities. Organic Inquiry suggests that researchers explore diversities of experience and participants as a way to connect to as many individual readers as possible.
Validity

Qualitative inquiry examines the validity of a study based on its textual authority rather than its numerical accuracy and objectivity. It strives for consensus and coherence. Clandinin (2013) realized that objectivity is not a goal of narrative inquiry, and that validity is not as important as honoring the relationship entered into with the participants. “Like other qualitative methods, narrative relies on criteria other than validity, reliability, and generalizability. It is important not to squeeze the language of narrative criteria into a language created for other forms of research” (p. 184). Good narrative is explanatory and inviting, and is described as having authenticity, adequacy, and plausibility (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). A dedication to the cycle of field texts to interim texts to research texts and continuous input by participants as to the content and wording of their stories is crucial. As participants tell their Veteran Stories, they will also share suggestions for the telling of the story and inclusion of their creative work into the final research text version. In addition, the responses of the Resonance Panel of both participating and non-participating teachers are also useful in gauging the authenticity of the final representations of the stories.

William Braud’s (2003) review of Organic Inquiry includes Clements “notion of transformative validity. An indication of the reality, accuracy, or ‘truth’ of a particular finding is that the finding can have a meaningful and profound (i.e., potentially transforming) impact upon readers and others” (p. 9, italics in original). A study includes transformative validity when it succeeds in affecting the individual reader’s deeper awareness of self, connection to Spirit, and desire to be of service. Research Question Two and the data collection and analysis of the researcher and participant journals, the
First and Second Overall Impact responses and the Resonance Panel responses are all included to gauge transformative validity on the participants, the researcher and the eventual reader.

One challenge of Organic Inquiry is that of credibility (Clements, 2003). Personal sharing is essential to the success of an organic study, yet it is important not to become lost in the length or depth of the personal aspects of the participants’ or the researcher’s stories. This is an additional purpose of the Resonance Panel and any early readers of the finished work, to offer honest assessment of the effect of the personal sharing on the credibility of the researcher. There is a delicate balance to be reached between personal sharing that connects to the reader and enhances their understanding, and sharing that is narcissistic and self-absorbed.

Another aspect of validity in Organic Inquiry is consistency. Analyzing material from a variety of perspectives offers a balanced approach that invites validity in this area. Accurate and thorough reporting on all four levels of experience (thinking, feeling, sensation, and intuition) encourages both factual and emotional consistency. The body does not lie (Braud & Anderson, 1998). “This is the well-known wisdom of the body. It is possible that certain bodily reactions could provide indications of the truth or validity of statements or conclusions in research, and other reactions could signal that something is amiss” (p. 216). Consensus or coherence, a facet of consistency, is reached in the coming together of multi-faceted means of interpreting and analyzing data. “Each of these modalities can easily be misinterpreted, however they have value when taken together” (p. 26). In addition, validity increases when the researcher uses the participants’ own words.
Rosemarie Anderson (1998) includes a technique for validation she called sympathetic resonance.

The principle of sympathetic resonance in the scientific endeavor is best introduced with an analogy. If one plucks a string on a cello on one side [of] a room, a string of a cello on the opposite side will begin to vibrate, too . . . The resonance communicates and connects directly and immediately without intermediaries except for air and space . . . The principle suggests that research can function more like poetry in its capacity for immediate apprehension and recognition of an experience spoken by another. (p. 73)

In my own work, sympathetic resonance is inherent in my concept of the “Sacred La” (Allen, 2002; Groman, 2013). It is important that the presentation of organic research be such that it invites resonance in the reader. The Resonance Panel, as a group of participants and teacher-peers, is asked to report on aspects of the stories that relate (or are similar) to their own experience and on aspects of the story that resonate (have strong, particular or emotional meaning) with their own experience. In addition, their responses to the stories will be analyzed on their indication of increased of connection to the self, to Spirit, or service to others, and changes of heart (transformation) or mind (information).

Summary

In this chapter I detailed my study of teacher identity through crisis-like experiences. I began with the research purpose and continue by describing and justifying the methodological frames of Organic and Narrative Inquiries. Following this framework were the confines of the study, including the participants, detailed procedures including the types of data, and analysis procedures. I concluded with discussions of subjectivity and validity.

By entering into a study of teacher identity using multiple facets of understanding, I join more fully into my participants’ experience. I believe that my role as a researcher
is not only to discover more of the experience, but ultimately to make life better for someone in the future that may be forced through a crisis-like experience of her own. Dorothy Ettling stated, “I no longer wish to do research . . . that does not improve their lives” (Clements et al., 1999, p. 46), a sentiment with which I agree wholeheartedly. Research should exist to further transformation and healing of this world—and for me, my world is the teaching world. I wish to heal it.

I don’t believe I can change the world. I believe I can change someone’s world. And that, for me, is enough.
CHAPTER IV

TEACHER IDENTITY CONTEXT AND RESULTS

Figure 4.1. I drew a circle (4/12/2015).

I drew a circle
    safe and round,
    and invited you in.
“Will you tell me your stories?
    Will you risk?”
I set the table
    I lit the fire
    I sang my songs.
    And I waited, and hoped.
The words began
    spinning, stretching out past
    travels, lives, classrooms,
    hospital rooms, safaris and
    studio spaces, and
back again.
Emerging tears, laughter, sorrow,
fear, uncertainty, joy.
I drew a circle
and you let me in.

This chapter describes the process of drawing a circle of safety, inviting stories, and exploring the stories for insights into teachers’ crisis-like experiences. The chapter follows the schedule of the research inquiry from Interview One to the Research Weekend to Interview Two, pausing after the description (data gathering and analysis) of each piece to tell the stories of the participants and my gleanings from those stories. Within these stories I changed all participant names and place names as well as many of the more revealing details of participants’ stories. This serves to protect the confidentiality of each of the participants. The inquiry begins with participant Introduction Stories. These stories give the reader insight into the individual identities, motivations and values of each teacher, insights to hold loosely as the chapter unfolds. Research Question One opens the next section, and the participant Veteran Stories are presented and discussed. Research Question Two follows, as multifaceted and extending to include perceived transformation of participants, the researcher, the reader, and a shift in the Group Story.

The back and forth motion of this chapter—from data gathering and analysis to explanation and the intuitive—echoes the dream “me” as I navigated two sides of the dark sea. As your guide perhaps I become that pixie-sprite (if there are 5’10” pixies) dancing out into the alligators—back and forth between the traditional world of data collection and analysis to the mysterious and intuitive realm of the transpersonal. It is quite a journey, taking us through these research questions:
Research Question 1: What is the lived experience of the process of growth in veteran teachers, particularly as it relates to crisis-like situations?

Research Question 2: What might be learned by the researcher, participants, and readers through inquiring into veteran teachers’ stories of crisis-like situations and the process of growth?

Throughout this chapter I invite the reader to savor the verbatim stories shared here, which appear in italics. They emerged from spoken language, and so are meant to be spoken aloud rather than read silently as scholarly text. I suggest that the reader take time to think the words as spoken rather than skimming them. Hear your mind recite the words, considering even the volume and speed of the speaker, appearing with the text. In this way you can truly and deeply enter the experience of each teacher.

Participant Introductions and Teacher Identity

Interview One

In order to begin a dialogue about difficult crisis-like situations, I conducted initial interviews in locations chosen by participants. During my initial interviews I used two open-ended prompts:

1. Tell a story of how you came into the teaching profession.

2. Have you experienced difficulties or challenges through your career as a teacher? How do you think these have impacted you as a teacher?

To honor the equal partnership of researcher and participant, I started the first interview by sharing my own Entry Story (as an improvisational oral story, not read from my written story, this is important) and subsequently inviting them to share their story in the spirit of give-and-take. The second prompt is used again in the second interview,
after the Research Weekend, and acts as a pre- and post- to gauge shifts in their perception about crisis-like experiences. The interviews were transcribed. Their analysis and use are discussed further in this chapter.

In addition to the interview, I set each participant to the task of writing or working creatively in a reflective journal, to continue until Interview Two. I provided instructions and optional prompts to guide their thinking toward crisis-like incidents, and reflecting on aspects of their teaching life. I also invited participants to create their Annotated LifeLife in a format of their choosing to help them draw out relevant stories from their lives, and to give the group and the researcher a sense of context during the telling of stories at the Research Weekend. The Annotated LifeLife was not analyzed.

**Introductions: The Research Weekend, Friday Evening**

Cathrine, Ellie, and Maggie were all known to me but did not know one another as the research weekend began. It was vital that I create a safe space for the work as soon as possible, and to allow participants to share from their lives and get to know and respect one another. Initially the meetings were slated to be held at a bed and breakfast near my home. As we gathered in the bed and breakfast meeting room before we started our first session, however, my intuition told me that the noise and openness of the space was not going to be advantageous to in-depth sharing and confidentiality. I decided to move the group to my home, and the opening ritual I had planned would take place at my living room hearth. I hurriedly made some adjustments, prepared the space and we gathered, though a bit later than planned. Participants would comment later that the change to the coziness and safety of my living and dining room would be one of the reasons they felt able to share so deeply from their lives.
I welcomed them into the space. Immediately at the beginning of each session I shared my intentions for the day’s work and gave them an overview of what we would be doing together. I asked participants to share their intentions for the work or reasons they chose to participate.

_Cathrine_: Well, one, we’re teachers and we help people, it’s just one of those things, and I just thought that it was the coolest thing that anybody had ever asked me to do.

_Maggie_: When I saw what the topic was, it was almost like it was meant to be, because I’ve experienced what I consider to be some pretty significant ones throughout my career that has made me wanna . . . become a chef (everyone laughs) to be quite honest. But to be able to process through those [events] even at a deeper level than what I have to this point, is what I’m looking forward to.

_Ellie_: I have no doubt that this research is going to make a difference. And once I read [about] it, too, I’m curious. I think it’s a great topic, and I think its time has come. I think that what you’re going to be writing is very important to incoming teachers, especially in the current culture. So I want to support that because I believe in it. If you had been doing it on another topic, I might not have said yes. But this one I do feel is very important, so I’m here.

Transpersonal thinkers and narrative researchers honor temporality, how the past influences and shapes the present and the future in a continuum. To get participants talking to one another deeply, but with a low risk, I invited them to share short vignettes of past teachers who have influenced them, writing names on strips of paper and weaving them into a small grapevine wreath: an Honor Wreath. In this, as with some of the other sharings, I joined the participants in telling stories. In this way participants and I connected to one another through stories of encouragement and positive influence.

Participants then all shared stories of their entry into the profession (Entry Story), with the group commenting supportively and asking clarifying questions throughout.
Then the participants shared their thoughts and stories based on who they are now as teachers (Now Story). I suggested that participants bring artifacts such as pictures, student notes, and journals—anything that might support the telling of the Now Story and two did so.

The entire evening of Entry and the Now Stories was recorded and transcribed. For the finished Entry Story I used verbatim speech from both Interview One and the Friday evening storytelling session, and for the Now Story I used verbatim speech from the Friday session. I spent a great deal of time with these recordings and transcripts to truly know the participant and mine the deeper meanings of the stories. To create each finished story I culled most filler words (such as “um,” and “like”) and phrases, as well as verbiage unessential the story and its emotional impact. I worked toward clarity of the story while keeping the personality of the teller, leaving some conventions of oral speech intact including repetitions, and filler words to give the reader a sense of spoken word. This is an intuitive process. I also included pauses and responses from the other participants, as appropriate, to create a sense of audience. After those modifications were made the stories were sent to the participant and member checked. The Entry and Now Stories were combined to become each participant’s Introduction, and these appear below. All verbatim stories are presented in the order they were told.

I begin with these verbatim stories to reveal the most basic and apparent aspects of Cathrine, Ellie, and Maggie’s teacher identity and, in some instances, foreshadow the experiences of crisis that were told on Saturday of the research weekend. Their varied reasons for entry into the profession are indicative of the unique nature of each of their experiences and reiterate that this is not a place for generalizations about teachers and
their experiences, but show the variations that occur within the profession and its professionals.

The final member-checked Introduction stories were reviewed and reread, during which time I identified recurring themes for each participant using a highlighter. Many of the themes included aspects of teacher identity discussed in Chapter Two. I pulled out the highlighted quotes and statements and put them into a document, organizing them by participant and dividing them further by theme. In this way I was able to identify themes and their intensity for each participant. Themes for all participants are included in Table 4.1.

The Introductions are in two-column format. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) recognized that narrative inquiry often requires creativity in form, in fact they stated, “[W]e encourage novice narrative inquirers to see themselves as engaged in an ongoing inquiry experiment with narrative form” (p. 165). I did so, with varying results. Traditional researcher-created text with snippets of verbatim speech had an unfortunate tendency to break up the stories, their context and the way they were spoken and I abandoned it. In addition, as Rita Charon (2006) worked with narrative story in the context of medicine, she created the Parallel Chart, which uses columns for medical information as well as patient and doctor reflections that inform the diagnosis and outcome. My responses, because “response plays a central part in this process of experimentation with form” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 165), and interpretations of the data needed a place beside the stories, and this inspired the two-column format. The left column is for the verbatim Introduction, with underlined text indicating the presence of themes of teacher identity as discussed in Chapter 2.
The right column identifies the underlined text using the notations in Table 4.1 and explains themes as they relate to the participant. A visual map of individual identity themes appears after each Introduction, many of these themes will appear throughout this chapter as the participants’ stories are revealed.

Table 4.1

*Identity Themes and Notation*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Notation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early school influences</td>
<td>ES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills and knowledge</td>
<td>SK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personality aspects</td>
<td>PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasons for entry</td>
<td>RE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family influences</td>
<td>FI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other themes</td>
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The finalized Entry and Now Stories appear below as an Introduction to each of the teacher participants: Cathrine, Ellie, and Maggie. Their verbatim words appear in italics below and throughout the dissertation. Again I invite you, the reader, to savor the spoken language of the participants by reading their stories deeply and in full before moving to the left hand column to read the analysis. Enter into each participant’s experience and walk briefly in his or her life.

**Introducing Cathrine.** Cathrine, age 49, has short-cropped hair and is stylish without seeming to be concerned with it. She speaks quickly, like she’s trying to keep up with her thought process, which is going 90 miles an hour while her speech can only go 55. She punctuates her story with gestures and flourishes of her hands, which display
long, tapered, well-kept fingernails. She is a 22 year teaching veteran, married with two children.

Table 4.2

**Cathrine’s Introduction**

<table>
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<th>Cathrine’s Introduction</th>
<th>Researcher reflections on Cathrine’s teacher identity</th>
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<td>My mom had gone to college to become a teacher, and then decided she didn’t like kids. Which is funny because she is the oldest of 11 and already had two of her own at the time. She had married my dad, who wanted to be a teacher but was told by the brothers at Warren University that he would never be a good one. So he worked at the Harding Company until I was about three and my sister was just born and he said, “I really want to do this.” And he went from making $9,000 a year to $6,000 a year (FI). So I grew up the teacher’s kid. Which was fine, but when it came down to choosing a career, my parents said “We will help you become anything, as long as it’s not a teacher.”</td>
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<td>That was okay because I thought I was going to be a doctor the whole time I was growing up. It never occurred to me to be a teacher. I was not into little kids, I never babysat, nothing like that. I helped Dad with his teaching stuff, and that was fine (FI). I had some really bad experiences in school, I was a gifted kid and ended up skipping three grades (PA). I remember my third grade teacher—the first thing she said to me was, “You don’t belong in this class.” I should have been in second grade and she made my life hell (ES)</td>
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<td>I started college on my 16th birthday, pre-med. In my second semester I learned that I can’t tell the difference on slides between a sheep fluke and a liver fluke—and I don’t care. Not a good sign for a future doctor. My advisor told me that Warren University had just started a math and computer science degree and I was the first person to sign up for it. I moved to Detroit and worked as a computer programmer and I was making good money, and that was fine (FI). I got married very young, and divorced after two years, when I went back to school. I liked being a computer programmer, but it was so</td>
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- (FI) Finances (during childhood and as an adult) are ongoing themes in C’s stories and have a strong impact on her reasons for staying.

- (FI) C has many wonderful memories of working with her father, who taught 3rd grade. He was a damn good teacher. Big teddy bear of a guy, loved by everyone, and he loved everyone. Yet he always had a second part-time job to supplement the income. (PA) C is highly gifted, math especially. (ES) Very bad experiences. C changed schools six times, skipped three grades, experienced bullying by her teachers and exclusion by her peers. She continually calls herself a freak and a nerd. (ES) This is a powerful part of her identity, especially considering the population she now teaches.

- (FI) Finances.

- (PA) There is a theme of belonging
The only time you see people is when something goes wrong. And I really just, you know, didn’t want to be in a cubie for the rest of my life. So I would volunteer at my Dad’s school (FI) and he taught second grade by then, I think, and I would spend half the day in an older group, you know, with the other teachers, and then half the day with him, and I just . . . I just liked it. It was fun, you know? I thought, okay, look, I’m smart. They need smart teachers, and you know, I want to replace some of the people like my third grade teacher (PA, RE). I don’t know if she’s still around or what, but I really wanted to kick her out. That’s kind of how I, I kind of, I don’t know, tripped into it, I think. I don’t know. I never, I did not grow up with the calling to be a teacher or anything. Maybe it was there—every computer job I ever had I always ended up being a trainer. Always. You know, you saw that I could do this even though I didn’t know I could do it (RE). So apparently it’s always been there, but because it wasn’t an option, I never really thought about it.

And now I tell my students, you know, I have the world’s coolest job. I spend all day in a school, I get to teach math, I get to be with gifted kids . . . and they pay me (SK, PA, RE, FI).

My “Now Story” is weird (ES, PA) . . . so, I’m talking to my husband, and I tell him (in a low voice), “I have no idea what to do, I don’t have a clue. I don’t do open-ended things.” (PA) So, on my board in my classroom today, it says, “Who I am as a teacher?” I told my kids a little bit about what I’d be doing this weekend (O), and they thought it was totally cool, they were all like, “You have to tell us how the weekend went,” and all this stuff, and they’re so funny. I told them I had to have an artifact about who I am now as a teacher, so I was coming to the experts; they’re the experts about who I am as a teacher right now (O). I said if I wanted to know what kind of Mom I am, I’d ask my kids, right? So I told them, “You guys are the experts.” I said they could write, they could draw, they could color, they could not color . . . whatever—and they thought that was totally cool. So they made me these (she holds out white photocopier paper with student drawings and writings in marker and pen. The group is delighted, “Oooh!” “Cool!” and “Wow!”).

I didn’t look at them all day; I just read them before I came over here. And some of them were (high pitched) so fricking cute! So, anyway, they are absolutely adorable. And I have to put them all over my room when we’re done. So, I don’t know, do you guys want to look at these? I’ll pass them around.

| lonely (PA) The only time you see people is when something goes wrong. And I really just, you know, didn’t want to be in a cubie for the rest of my life. So I would volunteer at my Dad’s school (FI) and he taught second grade by then, I think, and I would spend half the day in an older group, you know, with the other teachers, and then half the day with him, and I just . . . I just liked it. It was fun, you know? I thought, okay, look, I’m smart. They need smart teachers, and you know, I want to replace some of the people like my third grade teacher (PA, RE). I don’t know if she’s still around or what, but I really wanted to kick her out. That’s kind of how I, I kind of, I don’t know, tripped into it, I think. I don’t know. I never, I did not grow up with the calling to be a teacher or anything. Maybe it was there—every computer job I ever had I always ended up being a trainer. Always. You know, you saw that I could do this even though I didn’t know I could do it (RE). So apparently it’s always been there, but because it wasn’t an option, I never really thought about it. | and not belonging in C’s stories. |
| — (FI) Family influences, her father’s teaching, and she just liked it. |
| (PA) C believed that her ‘smarts’ would help her get a job. But it didn’t work out that way. (RE) She wants to replace her 3rd grade teacher, whose words she will never forget. |
| (RE) Her colleagues seemed to know she could train others well. |
| - Many of C’s themes - her skills in math (SK), her personality (PA), finances (FI) and gifted kids (in one sentence! |
| (ES, PA) C often calls herself weird, or acknowledges that her way of thinking is different or unusual. Influence of her early school experiences becoming part of her personality. |
| - (PA) Prefers logical rational activities over open-ended. |
| - (O) C shares her life with her students, and they seem to love her for it. |

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Some of them have names, some don’t. If you can’t read something let me know, because I know exactly which ones they will be (O), but . . . they were allowed to do anything they wanted. [Participants begin to read aloud from the student writing, which appears in standard font.]

She is a dragon lover. Is a total dragon lady (O).

![Figure 4.2. Dragon.](image)

Oh, you have to understand, I am the dragon lady. I have dragons everywhere. There are about 45 dragons in my room, stuffed dragons. They bring their siblings and in and say, “Look, I told you - it’s full of dragons, I told ya.”


I don’t know where they get that one, I really don’t (PA). We talk; we talk about games, though. And see, I’m an acronym type of person (PA), and I came up with GAMES back when I was in the pullout program, because everyone complained that all we do is play games. So GAMES stands for Great Activities Make Educational Success. I have a game called Stare, which is all about paying attention to details. OK, this is not math, it’s not language arts, why do we do it? And we actually talk about, you know, paying attention to details and the whole thing. So they know, they know that when we play games there’s a reason behind it (O1). We do that a lot. Every once in a while they try to argue with me, well, why are we doing this one today? Because I feel like it. I tell them everything. I do.

- (O) Like most teachers, C knows her student handwriting well, but she also know them as individuals. Based on their responses to her request, they know her well, too.
- (O) Dragons are a passion of hers. She is The Dragon Lady. This theme is revisited and deepened throughout the study.
- (PA) As a self-proclaimed math nerd, C has a habit of downplaying her creativity. In reality she has a home craft studio, working with beads and jewelry with beautiful mathematical precision.
- (PA) She is highly creative in her classroom, using acronyms to name interesting activities.
- (O1 and O2) Two more examples of her honesty and relationship with students.
Like PARCC testing, they say, “Our teacher said it doesn’t count for anything.” I’m like, “Whoa, whoa,” and they say, “If we get a zero, it doesn’t hurt anything.” “Excuse me? It doesn’t hurt you, it hurts me!” They are confused, “What?” So I tell them. I’m very open and upfront with that kind of stuff with them (O2). I tell them “This is your chance to show what you know, and to make your teachers and your district look good. Don’t you want to make me look good?”

I argue with you because you get to where you don’t want to talk but you never yell at me (O).

Figure 4.3. Who is my teacher

I don’t yell. . . . I don’t. I know exactly who that is, too, because she drives me nuts. She’s the youngest of six.

Mrs. Dragon.
Mathemagician. Reads a lot.
Awesome at math. Great teacher. Outrageous.
Never is boring.

Figure 4.4. Mrs. Dragon

I’ve been showing them, things like MEAN. I’m a MEAN teacher, “Making Excellence A Necessity.” But they know I have all these acronyms, so that’s where they got it.

Math teacher, respected by all, satisfies the brain, works out problems, over-achiever.

- (O) I suspect that C is often more patient with her students, who are highly gifted, than she is with most adults she knows (despite the fact that this student drives me nuts).
That’s not me (PA).

And sums up to . . . Awesome! Teaching is the best profession for her. Wide range of knowledge. She brings her thoughts and hobbies to school.

They know a lot about me. And I listen to them (O). They come in and they yack at my desk, and you know that’s all right, you know for a few minutes, it’s important, and I don’t mind.

Cool. Gives us a chance to challenge ourselves. You’re wearing a red shirt and you’re wearing all of these words. Mrs. Kaiser, kind, smart, caring, fun. This one I don’t know—this word on your left hand—g-u-i-e-n-s-e.

Figure 4.5. Genius

Believe it or not, it’s genius.

Genius! A rare model. A clown. The best teacher ever. As a teacher Mrs. Kaiser is a lot of things. Here are a few: A role model, a clown, the best teacher ever. Weird. (It’s a compliment) (SK).

Oh, yes. That is a big compliment in my room, we are all weirdos (SK). Oh, yeah, they know me. I don’t know what the adults I work with would say, I hardly ever see them. Our building actually has three staffrooms, one for each grade level. So I eat at my desk. I do PLC usually with fourth grade, so I know the fourth grade teachers better than fifth. But, we get along, it’s fine, but as far as, like, friends . . . they don’t really know me very well. I’m just one of those teachers, well, I share with my kids. (Half sigh, half chuckle) I’m the go-to person when they don’t know a word. One of the teachers came in the other day, and said, “Do you know what a paramour (PA) is?” I said, “Yeah. Why do you need to know?” (The group laughs) “Well, there’s a paramour order in this and I don’t know what it is, and we knew you would.” Yeah, well, I’m the go-to person for that kind of stuff. The principal didn’t know what it was. And I’ve been there long enough they know I’m not fluff (PA). They had a teacher (speaks with a childlike voice) they made pillows.

That’s not me (PA).

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and they made this. (Back to normal voice) I’m sorry, we don’t make that kind of stuff. So, they’ve seen that, you know, I’m substance. And I’ve earned that over the years. At first they thought we were just playing games. But now the other teachers will come to me, “I have this kid, do you have something or an idea?” and they know that I can do all that. But they don’t know me as well as the kids do, that’s for sure.

The teachers in fourth and fifth are pretty good. Third grade, they’re in a different part of the building. So I don’t see them very often (O), unless they have a kid that they say is bored to tears, and there’s nothing for them, you know, then they say, “I need Cathrine.” That kind of thing. But I think the fourth and fifth grade teachers are pretty good. But I’ve been there twelve years. Like I said, they know I’m not, we’re not making pillows, using up your time, that kind of thing.

I started in remedial, which is very different. I would definitely say that I’ve come into my own (O), I don’t want to sound . . . but my kids ask me all the time, I mean they know that I skipped three grades, and that I was a gifted kid, which means I’m still gifted, they don’t quite understand that, though. So they ask me all the time what my IQ is, and I won’t tell them. But I do tell them it’s in the gifted, it’s in the genius range. And that’s all I’ll tell them (PA). So, so, they think that’s cool. They also think it’s cool that I’m a gifted teacher of the gifted. And they freaked when I told them that you don’t have to be gifted to teach gifted. They were like, “Wait a minute. How does that work?” I say, “I have no idea, I never tried it.” But, they said, “You could have kids who were smarter than the teacher,” and I said, “Yes, presumably,” and they were just mortified. They just thought that was absolutely, “No, you can’t do that.”

I right now have a fourth grader who knows way more math than I remember, but he’s gotten it all from YouTube (O). He’s definitely on the spectrum. He knows all this stuff, but there’s no connection between what he knows and can do and what he remembers and can spout. So for me, my goal is to bridge that. So we’ll be talking about abundant numbers and the other kids are like, “Huh?” And I’ll say, it’s an Liam thing, and they say, “OK.” They just know he’s Liam. So anytime I get an “Ohhhhhhh!” out of him, it’s a (excitedly) “Yes!” I just want to stretch this kid, and I’ve got him next year, too.

You left the assignment open, and (with a weak laugh) it scared me to death (PA). So, there they are, my response is a little different (O). But I figure if there’s anyone who knows who

is meaningful.

- (O) C feels cut off (belonging/not belonging) from the third grade teachers because of the structure of the building.

- (O) C also values making the classroom her own, coming into her own.

- (PA) She makes no apologies for being smart, to her students or her peers, but does not act in an arrogant way.

- (O) She speaks often about specific students and their inside jokes. She knows them well and enjoys their weird little quirks.

- (PA) Open, creative assignments are difficult for her logical, rational mind at first. But her creativity comes through. Besides, she assigns open-ended work for her students, as well!
I am as a teacher right now, it’s my students. - (O) Being a little different.

**Figure 4.6.** Cathrine’s Identity Map.

**Introducing Ellie.** Ellie, age 51, is a 29 year veteran teacher, yet a few of those years were spent at home raising her son and daughter. She is calm and very present, a deeply rooted person. Her hair is long and straight, her clothes and shoes are simple and rugged. There is something very unique about the way she pronounces the word “teachers”—as if the “t” was a “tch” sound that touches me as being distinctive and reverent every time she says it. There is a thoughtful, unhurried way about her speech and mannerisms. Everything she says means something.

Table 4.3

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Ellie’s Introduction

I loved going to high school. I had very strong relationships with my teachers (ER), especially my science teachers, because I was a lab rat, and a lot of my identity was wrapped up in the educational system. I was an afterschool volunteer, a science lab volunteer, and even into the summer I would go to school, volunteering my time in the science labs, cleaning snake cages, feeding the critters. Even though I lived in the science lab, I struggled with chemistry and physics and never figured it out. But the teachers just loved me (ER) anyway, so I hung around.

But I graduated from high school not really knowing what to do. I knew I was going to college, and I went with the intent to become a teacher. It wasn’t a serious intent, I just didn’t know what else to do, and Mom kept saying, “Oh, go into teaching, you’ll get your summers off, and when you have kids, you will have the same schedule as they do and you’ll love it!” (FI, RE) That was a big deal to her. Looking back, she was looking from her perspective of coming from a family whose dad had abandoned them and her mom had to work constantly to support them. So I see now why that advice was so important to her. And I don’t know why, but she said it to me a lot. She didn’t say it to my sister, who’s a year younger. I only thought of that later. Looking back I didn’t have a lot of confidence that I could do much. And I loved school (ES, RE). She said, “Be a teacher, be a teacher.” And I was like, I don’t know what to do, I loved my teachers, I know how to do school. Mom says be a teacher, I’ll be a teacher (FI, RE).

So I just went into it pretty blindly. I went to Orange State, back then they accepted anyone. I really wanted to be a science teacher like my peers, because I really loved my science teachers in high school (ES, O), but the truth is I’m really bad at science. When I took science courses at a higher level, the first one was a “D.” I mean, it wasn’t going to happen, folks. So I went there, and I got an education, and I loved it. (Very slowly) I . . . just . . . loved it (O). And it never occurred to me to switch, except once in my junior year I took a cultural anthropology class and fell in love with it like crazy (ES, O). I went straight to the counselor and said, “I want to get a minor in this,” and he said, “There’s no such thing, you’d have to get a major,” and I said, “Well, how long do you think it would take to do both? And said, “Oh, another three years,” and I said, No (laughing). No. So I dropped the idea, and that was the only time I was tempted. As I went into those education classes, I really fell in love with teaching (O), and as I went into the field, you know those deep experiences, and I went eventually into student teaching. I enjoyed it more and more, and I did well and I got great feedback. And by the time I was into it I was sold. And then I just, literally, I graduated in the
summer and I was teaching before I graduated. They gave me a day off in my second week of teaching so I could go to graduation. So I’ve never stopped. I’ve always been in school. And I’ve never had a regret.

I love teaching. I love teaching (O). I’ve questioned what I subject might teach at times, what grade I might teach, but never teaching itself. It was really tough, but I did really well, because I loved it. I did. I loved it. I didn’t mind working that hard (PA). And the more I taught the more I loved it. So it was like falling in love with it as I went. It was a falling in love experience.

As for my “Now Story,” I’ve changed dramatically from when I first started teaching. I’m no longer the same person, let alone the same teacher (PA). My most recent job in education is in an administration position. I am more like a teacher on special assignment. I am a support person for teachers (O, SK) and I help develop curriculum for them. Most of what I do is to teach elementary teachers how to teach science through hands-on, inquiry project-based methods. I manage the school’s nature preserve (O, ES) and it is my job to get the teachers to take their students outside so they can experience authentic learning that is through exploratory and STEM based work. I have had a very unique role that I could be creative within my job. When I get evaluated at the end of the year and they call me in and they’re like, “What do you do?” (All laugh)

I wanted to develop curriculum. I wanted to work with teachers. So I just did what I wanted to do. So where I am now is a very unique place, I’ve created my job into what I wanted it to be. And I love it. Basically over time I’ve gotten to know teachers throughout the district, and I honestly know most of the staff, a lot of them on a personal basis at all grade levels (O). I’ve grown dramatically from that because now I’m awake in that I understand what a district is.

Recently I’ve developed new course offerings. When we got a new superintendent she had this vision statement for the district about how we’re all going to be global learners, that’s a part of her vision statement. And I went, “Hmmm, really . . .” Just kept saying it and saying it and saying it. I thought, okay, and I went to my friend Bob and said, “I have an idea. I’d like to take kids to Africa. Do you think she’ll buy it?” (Maggie softly chuckles) And he’s like, “Sure! Go for it!” And I put a whole proposal together and I recruited teachers (O, SK). I’m like, “You wanna go to Africa?” “Sure!” And I said, “Trust me.” So I picked my people and I said, “You’re going to teach, I’m going to organize. Because I know how to organize, and I know how to see what you’ve got to offer and I know how to piece you together as a team.” (O, SK)

So I put a PowerPoint together, went to the standards, put the whole package in, what it would be, and I used it as a way to create what
I believe in. And it symbolizes how much I’ve changed as a teacher. So everything I now believe in as a teacher, and how I think teachers should teach, the research behind it and the philosophy, assessment to curriculum design, everything I put into that project (O), and then I sold it. And long story short it was approved which was really amazing! And that’s what I’ve been doing ever since. I run these courses that I’ve developed with other teachers. This is the fourth year. And this is what I consider to be the pinnacle of my career because of my belief that a good teacher is nice to have in a classroom, but a great teacher teaches the teachers around them how to be great teachers (O, SK). So if you want to measure your growth as a teacher, you really don’t look at yourself and your kids, that’s too easy, you’ve got to empower everybody else. It’s just, I really believe if you’re going to evaluate me, evaluate me by what they (the teachers) are doing around me. Because if I’m closing my door, which I see teachers doing so much, I’m keeping that to myself. And sure, I’m enriching 25-30 kids. But if I open the door I can enrich hundreds of kids (O). And that’s kind of what this is. So this (holding up a large, glossy book, her artifact) is our assessment. I developed thematic course offerings, I recruited the teachers, and I’m one of those teachers. They are all STEM because that’s what the district believes in. These are STEM course providing credit in science, technology and photography. And we’re going to learn about habitats and ecosystems. And then we did digital photography, which was a high school level class, and they had to reach all the requirements for that in order for them to get credit, and then they did robotic applications.

I also believe that you don’t have to know what you’re teaching (ES, O), which a lot of teachers are very offended by. I believe you have to get off the stage and empower them (the students), because I do have background in gifted ed and I learned early on to get the heck out of their way. Just because I don’t know how to do it doesn’t mean the kids can’t. I did the tracking piece, the digital photography teacher at the high school bought in and agreed to teach her course, and then the robotics teacher bought in. And I said, “This is what you have to do. I don’t know how you’re going to do it.” I showed the robotics teacher this cool video I found on the internet of a robotic car. I told him, “I want a robotic car, I don’t know how you’re going to do it, and I want a camera on it. They have to make the car, and they have to take it to Africa. I want it to take pictures, I want it to take video, I want it to find a rhino, because it’s the most endangered we’ll see, and they’ll be extinct in the wild in ten years. They have to document it in its natural habitat to preserve that information for future generations. I want to be able to see what the camera is seeing in the bush on my Apple phone, or on the laptop, and the kids have to build it.” And they did. And we, I remember the test during the safari and I said “Turn on your phones.” and we could see, and everyone yelled, “We passed!” (O) So their assessment then was to put all that thematic teaching into one piece. And I really fought for sold it to them.

- (O, PA) Everything I now believe in as a teacher will be revealed in her Veteran Story, below. Her beliefs and philosophies have been a point of crisis in her mainstream educational community. This also reveals personality aspects such as hardworking and proactive.

- (O) A strong part of E’s philosophy is true collaborative work, “opening the door.”

- (ES, O) Interesting comment here, because of her love of science, and yet she says she was never very good at high level science. She believes the students can move beyond the teacher, and this kind of work takes a teacher with a very strong, but not arrogant, ego (PA).

- This entire paragraph shows her passion (PA), tracking and nature (O), making learning relevant (O), going beyond her own capabilities (ES, O), and hard work (PA).

- (O) E believes strongly in authentic, relevant learning
middle schoolers to get credit for the courses, because it’s one and a half high school credits, and there are a lot of people who don’t believe they’re old enough, and I’m like, it has nothing to do with age, it has to do with ability. We have to stop thinking and categorizing kids according to age. If they can do the work then they earn the credit. And I fought for that. So this is the assessment. I thought I would bring this book, which was done by an eighth grader at the time, so it symbolizes my belief that it’s the kid, it’s not the age, and if you get out of their way what they can do (O).

After the trip, they had to spend a full week of school from 9 to 3, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, until it was done. Part of the fee was having the book published. So this (pointing to the book) was an eighth grader named Helen. Cool kid, her dad died of a heart attack when she was little so she and her mom were very close. And she was just one of those kids, she’s not identified gifted, but a hard worker (O), but one of those kids because she had the opportunity to do something different she was, she was amazing, and this was my proof that thematic teaching works, mastery learning works, multi-age works (O), and you can put it all together into one assessment. Of course, then the assessment had to be authentic, so we had an opening at an arts center where every kid had their book on display and had to dress up, the community came in, and they had a photograph slide show, and they spoke on stage, because if you don’t have an audience, what is the point?(O)

This is one of the better books, but they were all good, and this is all their photography, and the data and everything. Every book is different, unique to that student. I have a stack from the first trip to [out of state], which, they wouldn’t let me go to Africa the first year, I don’t know why (sarcastically) so they said, “Just stay in the US, would you? And try one?” I said, fine, so I took them to [out of state], and that was their trial run. And the next year I got away with Africa (O). Then last year was [out of state], archaeology, and that one was designed mainly for middle school kids, and then this year is [out of state], and the kids are studying volcanoes, and they’re going to be doing, it’s mainly volcano stuff, I have the geology teacher in charge of that. I’m not going to that one, I’m like, I gotta get out of the way (O).

So that’s where I am now. And I’ll continue it next year, I’m already planning on taking kids to [out of the country] next year, and the year after that we’ll start with Africa, and do the whole cycle again.

And then we got people in the community who were willing to supply scholarships. So I really fought, I was at a school board meeting presenting, and one board member said, “No. Poor kids can’t go.” And I’m like, “You’re right. And we need to fix that.” You don’t eliminate and assessment.

- (O) Another Montessori principle.

- (O) E, of course, knows these details about the student. She cares about her.

- (O) A few of E’s beliefs, from Montessori.

- (O) An authentic assessment requires a true audience.

- (O) Throughout her stories, E references school as “a game” to be played. She has learned a bit about playing the game, and in this case got away with Africa, as if she had stolen third base.

- (O) Montessori learning applied to adults, as well.

- (PA) E is tenacious, and it is pointless to tell her, “no.”
things, you solve the problem. I’m too old now. I’m not shy anymore. I don’t have anything to lose (PA, O). So he and I got into it, but because of him, he made it better. He thought I hated him. I pulled him aside and I said, “I don’t . . . we disagreed. And yes, I was upset, and you were upset, I said, but that doesn’t mean we don’t have the same goal. Because you questioned things, where are we today? We have a scholarship program.” He called it. And because of that we had a kid go on this trip who was on a poverty level, single mom. Before this trip he never talked, and today he’s just, he was one of the best kids on the trip (O). He blossomed. We got 50% of his course fee paid. And then you know, grandma pitched in a little, and we had fundraisers, and I believe that if you want something to happen, you say to kids, “You can be anything,” then you better be anything. You know? Because otherwise you’re lying to them. So that’s where I am and that’s the thing I’m the most proud of.

I also pissed people off. The high school science department still hates my guts because I didn’t go through them. I tried to go through them, and the high school chair was furious. And I had to go to his classroom. I literally walked to his classroom, sat on the desk and waited for him, because he wouldn’t talk to me. And just was like, “Talk to me.” “We can’t go to Africa,” and I’m like, “Why not?” Every excuse in the book. And I was like, “Well, what if we did this? Why don’t you come with us? Why don’t you teach part of it?” I threatened people because I broke all the rules. They were used to having control (O, SK) of every course decision, how things would be taught and who would teach them. They owned that.

It worked out, but in the long run I had to wait. But last spring I’d had enough and the high school chair changed, so there was a new chair, who still was a critic. I just called her to lunch. I said, “I think we need to talk,” and we talked for two hours (O, SK), and now - as of last month - she’s decided that she’s going to teach the science part. I said, “I shouldn’t be the teacher, it should be a high school science teacher. You wanna go? You wanna make it better? Because I can’t make it better but you can.” She signed on and she’s the department chair. So it worked.

Also as part of my job I’m invited into classrooms a lot. I do go in and I’m a guest teacher (O). And teachers email me and they say, “I have this standard, I don’t know what to do with it. Can you make it fun?” So I, I’m a teacher. But I’m an administrator. But they’ve eliminated this position. They had to cut 7.5 mil from the budget. (The group collectively gasps) That’s about 45 teachers. It hasn’t occurred to them to ask what happens next, so again I don’t ask. I’ve already decided how it will happen next (PA). And it will move forward without their realization that it is moving forward.

I don’t think they have a clue, and I didn’t get paid for it anyway, it fell under my job description. So next year it’ll be, we’ll just

| - (O) As the most veteran teacher in the group, E has strong convictions and is not willing to give them up. |
| - (O) Her motivation: kids. |
| - This phrase foreshadows her Veteran Story crisis. |
| - (O, SK) E, who reads a lot of professional research, told the group that she read that many teachers enter the profession because they feel the need to control their environment. |
| - (O, SK) E cultivates open communication with others. |
| - (O) Teacher support. |
| - (PA) Confident. Proactive. |
keep doing it. I probably won’t get paid, but I’ll just keep doing it anyway, and that way I can go as a chaperone. I’ll just do an exchange. The first time I went on my own, paid my own way, I went over because I had to check it out. You don’t go halfway round the world and not know where you’re going. I did, and I am a wildlife tracker, that’s my hobby, so I like tracking animals (O), which is kind of weird, but . . . well.

Maggie: Well, and I say this not to embarrass you, but it’s, it’s the way I think (deliberately) teaching should already be.

Ellie: Yes, this is what I think teaching should be, I think it should be thematic (O). And our district wants that, but (whispers) but they need to support the teachers. (Returns to normal volume) The best teacher is the one who is passionate about what they’re teaching (PA). And you wanted to get in there and you wanted to do it the way you knew it could be done. So you just empower the people with what they’re passionate about.

- (O, PA) These are E’s strong statements of philosophy.

Figure 4.7. Ellie’s Identity Map.
Introducing Maggie. Maggie, age 43, is quiet and thoughtful, and she smiles easily. She wears loose, comfortable clothes and her shoes are off. She speaks slowly and deliberately, using volume and rate of speech to give her words power and depth. When she speaks it is as though she has deeply weighed every single word beforehand. She is a 15 year teaching veteran and is married with a pre-teen son.

Table 4.4
Maggie’s Introduction

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<th>Maggie’s Introduction</th>
<th>Researcher reflections on Cathrine’s teacher identity</th>
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<td>As I was creating my LifeLine (O) I found that there were re- occurrences of dedicating my life to kids (SK). Very early, like I’m going to say babysitting as early as 11 years old, I was like the neighborhood babysitter. The Driscoll boys—there were six of them. They lived right around the corner, and I would babysit them. They didn’t have a TV, so we did a lot of cowboys and Indians, where I was usually the robber who got chased. We also played hide and seek and they knew all of the great hiding places. And when I went there, after a whole evening’s work, I think I got six dollars. (She grins sheepishly) If I hadn’t done the LifeLine, I wouldn’t have realized how much of my life has been dedicated to kids. So babysat the Driscolls and I babysat for everyone at church, and from there it went to teaching Sunday School, and then it went to working with the youth group, and starting to work with teenagers, and, let’s see, from there it was third shift babysitting for a family with four kids. I knew I couldn’t babysit my whole life. I knew I had to have some kind of career. I thought it was interior design (O) but I had too many distractions in my life at the time. Then it was accounting (O). I did get an associate degree in accounting but then realized I wasn’t behind the desk kind of person (O, PA). And so I went out searching to try and figure out what it was I was supposed to do. I was living with my sister and I pulled open the newspaper, (she speaks slowly, deliberately) “What am I gonna do? Ohhhhh! A nanny!” I became a nanny for two doctors and their daughter—the Little Genius(PA). She was two and a half years old when I started and she was already speaking 500 plus words, and sentences, and counting and knew her alphabet. I mean it was amazing what she could do, so my mission for the next year was to continue to educate her. So Little Genius and I constantly did trips down to the library that was only two</td>
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<td>- (O) Distribution of time, energy, and creativity into her LifeLine. These aspects are all part of her identity.</td>
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<td>- (O, SK) Dedication to children from an early age. She believes all children are precious.</td>
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<td>- (O) Creativity and art are a strong part of her teacher identity, as is math.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- (PA, O) Even as introverted as she says she is, M desires a working environment where she interacts and collaborates with others.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- (PA) M often uses symbolic names or titles in her stories, indicating intuition.</td>
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blocks away and constantly learning, learning, learning, and what I loved about her being three years old was that when she got something it was always like (she gasps, opens her eyes wide and makes an “O” with her mouth) “Aha!” face. (She speaks deliberately) And I was like—that’s what I wanna see right there. That what I want, is the Aha. (Back to her normal speaking voice) So I decided at that point in time that I wanted to go into education. At first I thought it was going to be early childhood education, but I decided K-8 then when I signed up for classes, because I really saw myself more working in kindergarten. The Aha moment that kids get, that is very self-satisfying to me because it’s like, “Oh, they got it! Oh, yeah! Okay!” And I had something to do with that (O, RE).

Looking back over my own education there are whole sections that I don’t remember. Like I don’t remember any books that I ever read, except for one, and that was the Scarlet Letter because it was scandalous. (she laughs) but any other books, I don’t even remember, you know, and I don’t know if it was because I wasn’t drawn into those things enough or - I’m not quite sure why it didn’t necessarily connect with me. But my desire was to be the teacher that could bring students into that learning, and make it real for them, and make it personal and something they wanted to learn about (RE, O). And it didn’t always necessarily have to be something that I decided they had to learn about. You know, sometimes it’s OK for them to decide what they want to know about. So that’s what I really try to do.

As for my Now Story, I teach fourth through eighth grade computer science, and the whole way I got the position is like one of those big black holes I’ll talk about later (O). It was a position I’d wanted for years. (Very slowly, deliberately.) For . . . years. (Returns to normal voice.) Over ten years I’ve wanted that position or a technology position. Just seeing where technology was going, I could see that K-3 needed to know how to use technology in a positive way before being given it by their parents, and then using it (higher pitched and with verbal air quotes) the “wrong way.” That was just my personal feeling on it. Our small rural district wasn’t going to create a position for something like that, but I wanted to be sure that I was qualified for that position (SK). So I got my masters through Winston University, K-12, Integrating Technology in the Classroom, assuming it would make me highly qualified whenever that position became available. And last year the technology teacher announces he’s definitely retiring; he’s got his boat and wants to go fishing. Great guy, I mean super great guy. But I so wanted his position.

There were five of us who applied. Two of us are called back for a second interview, and one of them was my co-teacher, Alice. I was seventh grade math and pre-algebra, and she was the Special Ed teacher who co-taught with me for two periods every day. And (deliberately, enunciating each word) I . . . talked . . . all . . . the time . . . about . . . (she trails off)
Ellie: She did that to you?

Maggie: Yes.

Ellie: I’m sorry.

Maggie: But, here’s the really shitty part of it. She didn’t tell me that she applied for it until the last day of the posting. (Silence) I looked at her and I just said, “You’d be really good at that,” because she would have been. And that’s all I could say (PA). What else could I say? She never once mentioned that she was even interested in it. Where did that come from? Totally took the rug right out from under me.

The principal says to me, “We’re thinking about it being a STEM position.” I said, “Even better!” and started telling him all kinds of ideas I had already been piecing together for STEM (PA, O). And then he interrupts me, “I have to go. We’ll talk later,” one of those things.

So, at the Tech conference I’m talking to our Instructional Technology Administrator, and he says, “No worries, Maggs, you got this.” He was in on the interview, then, that following week, and after the principal asked me the very first question I suddenly felt it was going in a different direction. He stopped me mid-sentence and said, “Oh, it’s not going to be STEM.” I had prepared my entire interview around STEM, and I sat there and literally didn’t know how to answer questions from that point on. It was hard for me not to feel a little bit like it was intentional (PA) because of some other events that had happened throughout that year. And besides, he was very good friends with my co-teacher, Alice, outside of school.

(Breathing audibly) So when I got the call to do a second interview, the superintendent asked me how I deal with failure. (Silence.) I said, “I roll with it. Isn’t failure a constant thing when you’re a teacher, really?” (Laughs.) There’s something that doesn’t feel quite right (PA). Later he calls to tell me that they were offering it to Alice and that she had accepted it. And I thought, thank you for your time. She had only been teaching for eight years, and only special ed. But I was just going to let it go.

Of course, now as the teachers were hearing about it, the union president calls and says, “Did you turn it down?” I said, “It wasn’t offered to me.” She said, “Now wait a minute, here. Don’t you have your masters?” I said, “Yes.” (Loudly and deliberately.) “Integrating technology, K-12. Yes.” So my question to you, Miss Union President, (laughs) if I’m not highly qualified to teach this, what am I really highly qualified to teach?

The issues of being highly qualified never even came up. Never even came up. Basically, then the union has a meeting with the superintendent and they tell him, this goes against our contract, because

- (PA) Even though she is greatly hurt, M is not confrontational.

- (PA, O) There is a strong sense of enthusiasm for teaching in M, and she always seems to be bursting with new ideas she wants to share.

- (PA) Throughout M’s stories she talks about having an intuitive ‘feeling’—in this case she knows something is awry. M is a very intuitive person and teacher

- These details are important as they outline
and make it visual.

fourth grade, little eight year olds, and get them to get away from the words

think?

what they

coming out and picking those teachers I know want tech integration with

with not having to collaborate with anyone for this first year

introverted I just wanted to be in my room with my door shut

spiders from working with this lady

position

anyone for a while

time I change a position

career

extremely excited about? I couldn't be back behind the couch than sitting right here (PA).

But something I should have been looking forward to and being extremely excited about? I couldn't. In fact it was one of the lowest points of my career. Really? I got a job like this - again? It's been the story of every time I change a position. Is there some type of drama around it. And I am not a dramatic person. In fact, I am very introverted. I'd rather be back behind the couch than sitting right here (PA).

And really, taking this position, I didn't have to collaborate with anyone for a while. Because I am still scarred from someone in my last position I call the Black Widow because I've had dreams of Black Widow spiders from working with this lady. To the point where I became so introverted I just wanted to be in my room with my door shut. And I was fine with not having to collaborate with anyone for this first year. I'm finally coming out and picking those teachers I know want tech integration with what they're doing, and I'll just kind of go out and, "Hey, what do you think?" Or someone will email, "Hey, I'm thinking about this (O)." I've got a great project going on with fourth grade right now. I called it The Good, the Bad and the Ugly of Presentations.

I show them the first slide is just a plain white background with all these words, you know, bullet points. I thought I could take these kids at fourth grade, little eight year olds, and get them to get away from the words and make it visual. The document, GoogleDocs is about the words. But the

one of M's crisis-like incidents occurring during a job transition.

- (PA, O) M's intuition at work. Eventual healing of this relationship, one of the larger themes.

- (PA) While she is introverted, she is active, needs interaction with students and deeply desires collaboration and sharing with colleagues.

- (PA) M reveals powerfully symbolic dreams throughout her stories. This Black Widow story is another crisis-like situation bubbling up, and has made her simply want to avoid collaboration unless (O) it was sought from her.

- (O, SK) This story illustrates the relevant and
presentation is about the visual. I showed my next slide, and I said, “Who wants an audience looking like this?” and in the picture everyone is looking like (puts her head on her desk with her eyes glazed over) “Anyone want them looking like that when you’re giving a presentation?” They’re like “No way!” (Laughter) “No you want them to look like this,” and then I show SpongeBob, (in a high voice, sighing) “Ahhhh!” all starry-eyed, “Ahhhh,” you know? (The group laughs.) You know, fourth graders totally get it.

I’m like, “You want them to look like that! Right? Yeah. Okay, well this is how we do it.” And we’re doing our projects on animals, because I’m tying it in with science, and they’re learning about adaptations and how they survive in their habitat (O). And so my first slide is of a manatee looking at me face to face, and it is on the whole screen. I said, “Don’t you feel like you could reach out and rub its little nose?” And of course when it goes up there they were like, “Wow,” and I said, “That’s what you want your audience to think. Wow.” So it’s all about the visual. Now don’t worry about what you’re going to say, because we’re going to worry about that later. You’ve already done all your research, you have all your information.” So it’s about making a presentation something more than just words and bullets. This has literally been a four month project, but by the end of the year they’re going to have their presentation and then they’re going to have a GoogleDoc saying on slide one, this is what I want to say, on slide two, this is what I want to say. Something nice that they can put into a portfolio (O).

One of the things I brought up wanting to teach kids is coding. But when I sat across from the principal talking about what I wanted to do for this year and I brought up coding, he says, “Coding? Coding? Why?” You know, as if he were asking, “Like what are they going to use it for, anyway?” In exactly that tone. (Jennifer puts her hands over her mouth.) And literally that’s exactly what I wanted to do. I didn’t know what to say. So for the next year I’m thinking to myself, “Why coding? Why coding?” It’s been my mission to answer that question. Why coding? (SK, PA, O) Over the summer I had the opportunity to meet one of the professional development people from Microsoft. (The group laughs.)

Ellie: We can see this coming. What did they say?

Maggie: (Slowly) They said it’s the new foreign language.

Ellie: That’s a good answer.

Maggie: Who can not learn how to code? And I’m like, seriously? I got goosebumps. It’s . . . (excitedly and deliberately) It’s the new foreign language. I love it! I love it! (Laughter)

real way that M talks to her students. She really understands kids.

- (O)M is a strong believer in holistic education, integrating as many subject areas as possible.

- (O) Relevance of their work to their future.

- (SK, PA, O) M is very concerned that her teaching and student learning is relevant to her students’ futures. She has been a champion for teaching coding to her middle school students.

- (PA) Such enthusiasm!
Discussion

I do not believe I could have found a more diverse population of three teachers. There are no similar themes in any of the areas of identity that I collected from the Introduction stories. One exception is that they all experienced many changes in classrooms, mostly by design. Ellie’s changes are specifically chosen; she stated that she usually changes every dozen years or so. Cathrine and Maggie’s shifts seem to be a search for a place where they belong. For Cathrine, circumstances of difficulty or conflict (such as those stories supporting her Veteran Story, which appear below) inform her when it is time to move on. She states that she now has the perfect job. Maggie has moved a number of times within the district where she grew up; each transition in its own way became a traumatic change. She also seemed to be seeking a place where her holistic philosophy and need for collaboration could be realized. She set her sights on her current Technology position and now that she has gained it, she seems to be where she
belongs, as well. At her final interview she revealed that at her recent summative evaluation her principal told her, *I really feel like this move has been good for you,* something she was very happy to hear.

While the Introduction stories are not included formally as data toward the two research questions, it is important to note that these themes of identity add to “our” knowledge (both the researcher and the reader) of each participant. This knowledge cannot be forgotten or lost, but became part of my thinking as I analyzed further data, and becomes part of your – the reader’s – thinking as you read and interpret their Veteran Stories. The unique aspects of Cathrine, Ellie, and Maggie’s teacher identities can be seen threading through their Veteran Stories. Change continues to be a theme with them all.

**Data Gathering and Analysis for Research Question One**

Research Question 1: What is the lived experience of the process of growth in veteran teachers, particularly as it relates to crisis-like situations?

**The Veteran Story. Research Weekend, Saturday**

The group met for breakfast Saturday morning, which allowed us to talk informally, re-establish and deepen relationships that were started Friday and warm up a discussion. We returned to my hearth where I again opened the space and stated my intentions for the session. I also shared a song as a way for me to take a risk first, modeling for later risk-taking of the others.

The group reflected on the previous day’s work, shared from their dreams and their journals. Maggie’s dream was especially poignant and intuitive. This from her journal:
A group of us on a different, tiny planet made of different, small islands. We were expected to recreate an island into a habitat. Then come together and create one together. We needed to compromise to accomplish our task, often compromising our ideas and values in the process. The Dominates seems to have the most say, therefore the island worked on collectively looked most like their individual pieces. Mark, the Dominate in the dream, argues that it is supposed to be a certain way. We were all wrong. The finished product looked most like his island.

Many colors in the dream. My island was rich greens to represent growth and life and balance. White representing most complete and pure perfection. This was surrounded by tints and hues of blue, the color of trust and peace, loyalty and integrity.

In her verbal sharing of the dream, she said:

So it was almost like it was a lot about compromise, and how when we work with others there’s a lot of compromising that’s done. And it can reshape us to where it doesn’t even look like what we originally would have been if it had been just us. So that revealed quite a bit to me. Just through a lot of my struggles, being, you know, wanting to collaborate with people, wanting to get the optimal curriculum, but it just not working out that way, And as we were part of the group working together, there was a lot of resistance there as I was offering ideas it was a lot of negativity and No’s, which also reveals a lot in my life. About not being, not feeling like I’m being heard when I talk and share my thoughts. But not necessarily my husband, but just, you know, in general.

What a fascinating insight into Maggie’s ongoing concerns for collaboration and creating a space where she can teach in her own way. I especially loved the rich description of her personal island, taking in the meanings of the colors to her, as well as their overall effect. It was revealed throughout the weekend that Maggie’s dreams are intuitive and hold strong insights into her situations. Jungian psychologists and analysts do not “interpret” dreams, but allow the dreamer to determine her own insights from the metaphors and symbolism, and she gets a lot from this dream.
After this check-in period, the group pulled out their Annotated LifeLines; we sat at a table and they each, in turn, told the story of their lives: childhood, schooling, personal, and professional. This sharing was so in-depth and powerful that the collage-work I had planned for the afternoon was abandoned, and more time was allotted each participant to share from her life, and allow the others to ask questions, comment, and commiserate. There was a lot of laughter, and not a few tears. This session was recorded and transcribed. I performed a 4 Function Analysis (including a Transformational Content Analysis) on these tellings for each individual participant. This transcription and analysis was used to inform all aspects of the results, especially for drawing out themes from individual participants’ personal and professional lives, and as a useful source of verbatim quotes to support ideas throughout this chapter.

Specific Annotated LifeLines for each participant were not included in the final dissertation for two reasons. In the first place, I did not analyze them. LifeLines were simply a tool for participants to remember and draw out events in their lives. In addition, I found that the LifeLines were so personal, with placenames, people and events being so specific that it was difficult to protect participants’ anonymity. Overall, the LifeLines were not pivotal to data gathering, but were extremely useful for participants.

After sharing from their LifeLines, the group discussed the kinds of stories I needed for my research and what that might look like for the evening. I set them to this task. “Take one story deeper, with those rich details that will help me do the narrative part. But I also need to know what you believe you got out of that experience. Not just telling the story, but here’s what I think, here’s how I think this changed me.” I gave
them two hours on their own to work on this task. They were invited to share their stories any way they wished.

Saturday evening Cathrine, Maggie, and Ellie each shared their Veteran Stories, which were recorded and transcribed. Each participant’s written Veteran Story was assembled using verbatim language from the transcript, in the same fashion as the Entry and Now Stories, and member checked for accuracy and narrative cohesion. Cathrine’s and Maggie’s stories include their perceptions of how the events changed them as teachers. However, as Ellie’s stories did not include this data, I culled her perceptions of her change from her Participant Journal. The Veteran Stories appear in the left column; in the right column are my reflections on the four functions and Transformational Content (TC; how the teachers are changed) from these stories.

For the 4 Function Analysis, I look for evidence of Carl Jung’s (1971) four functions:

(T) Thinking function, including thematic and content analysis, as well as Narrative ideas of temporality, sociality and place (recurring themes, past, present or future alongside each other, interacting with others, importance of a location or locale);

(F) Feeling function, including evidence of personal emotional responses and a search for value laden ideas (“I felt so sad” or “I cried”);

(S) Sensing function, including responses that indicate illness, or somatic feeling in the body (“My head simply ached” or “I felt like I would be sick”);

(N) Intuition function, including responses that indicate metaphor or symbolism, or the use of intuition or “gut feelings,” or creative responses such as art, dream
work or poetry (“I dreamed about snakes” or “I just knew something was wrong”).

I reviewed and reread the final member-checked Veteran Stories, marking incidents of the four Jungian functions and transformational content using five highlighter colors. I pulled out the highlighted quotes and statements and put them into a document, organizing them by participant and dividing them further by specific function and transformational content. In this way I was able to identify the functions, their intensity and recurrence, as well as the particulars of the transformational content from participants’ words. Frequently used functions, (including recurring themes, which are part of the Thinking function) and transformational content (using the notations T, F, S, N and TCA) were then underlined in the Veteran Story and placed side by side with explanations of the notations.

**Results**

**Introduction to Cathrine’s Veteran Story.** Early in her journal Catherine said she spent time listing out difficulties from her time in teaching to prepare for the Research Weekend. She wrote:

*What concerned me most about the list is that it—by necessity—focused on so many negatives. I realize that the whole study is about ‘crisis’ but think I will get bogged down in the writing if I stick too strictly to that.*

Cathrine is a self-admitted logical mathematical thinker, and not prone to emotional displays. During Interview Two, she openly admitted that when she experiences a difficulty she expresses emotion, usually by telling the story to her husband Craig, then takes the lesson learned and moves on. *It’s a story. It becomes part of me,* she said.
Many of her stories came out during the LifeLine sharing, but do not appear in detail in her Veteran Stories. For this she chose a children’s picture book, narrating the story with insights from her different crisis-like situations. Later she said to the group,

You already knew all of the stories, and I knew that I had hit all these things, so I felt comfortable enough that I could just do it this way and still show that this is what happened, this is what I learned, this is what happened, this is what I learned.

As a result the reader may not fully understand the deeper difficulties she experienced. Therefore I let Cathrine’s words tell three of the more powerful stories.

They appear below and should assist the reader in following Cathrine’s Veteran Story.

Table 4.5

Support Stories for Cathrine’s Veteran Story

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Support Stories for Cathrine’s Veteran Story</th>
<th>Researcher’s comments on appearances of the 4 Functions and Transformational Content (TC)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Mrs. White Story (from Cathrine’s Journal and LifeLine telling)  
I’ve known some real dragons in my time. Mrs. White was known as the Dragon Lady (T). She taught 4th grade at my very first school as a teacher. I was a Math (Title One) Tutor. It was a new program, and she didn’t need me. She was quite vocal about it. I went into her room every day & she would either 1) ignore me completely, (T) or 2) put me on the spot in front of the students. Outside of class, she told everyone how much she wanted me out of her class. Dragon lady indeed. Here I was, a newly minted teacher, being harassed and bullied by another teacher (T). I had no idea it was even possible. I cried in my classroom for about 3 weeks (F) until I just couldn’t take it anymore, until I said, dammit. Get mad because when you’re mad, you don’t cry, and I wouldn’t let her see me cry (F). I went to the principal & told him what was going on. He had us both come in to talk.  
Not only did Mrs. Whitman open my eyes to the less than wonderful qualities that some teachers possess (N), but I think she helped me become more flexible & accommodating to other | - C’s theme (T) of dragons does not take long to appear. On multiple occasions she calls herself a “freak,” naming the theme (T) of belonging and not belonging (ignoring me completely). Another theme (T) that appears in her childhood stories is being bullied by teachers.  
- C does not share emotions (F) often in her stories, so I cried in my classroom for about 3 weeks) is rare and poignant. Her recognition that anger (F) kept her from crying in front of Mrs. White is powerful. Her insights into this incident are even stated in metaphoric (N) words, “open my eyes to the less than wonderful qualities” of teachers. She learned to be “flexible & accommodating” (TC). |
Entering Gifted Ed, The Racist Story (From Cathrine’s LifeLine telling)
Cathrine was teaching third-fourth-fifth grade in a self-contained gifted-classroom. “The principal is driving me crazy, she’s a micro-manager. Drove me insane (F). I thought, I need a break and I need a hysterectomy (S)and I said, why not?
It was kind of nice. I didn’t have to deal with her for six weeks. Well, about two weeks before I’m supposed to come back I get this very official letter from the district and I open it up, and when I get back I have to meet with the superintendent, the principal about misuse of my aide. [Whispers] What were they talking about? [Normal voice] I had no clue what they were talking about (F). So I called the union people, “I don’t know what’s going on, but . . .” I also called my aide, “what’s going on?” And she was kind of vague. I go into this meeting, he union president made sure to be there, too, and I’m being accused of being a racist and that people were calling my aide, my slave. I’m like, “What?” “Well, according to her job description . . .” “I don’t have a job description.” They said, “Well you should have.” “Well, no one ever gave me one” [deep voice] She was supposed to be doing things like teaching small groups. Wait, uhhhhmm she has no teaching degree, why is she teaching small groups? I don’t get this. I’m like, fine, I promise to do better. okay, now just give me the description, I’ll be good (T).

But I am so upset (F). I’m telling my mom and dad after work about how this ridiculous thing went, my mom looks at me and she says, “Why would Lisa care if you’re a racist?” I said, “Oh,” I’ve known this woman for a year, they know all about her, I said, “she’s black.” My parents didn’t even know, that’s how racist I am. They didn’t even know what color she was because I never thought to mention it. The other people calling her my slave, that wasn’t racist? I don’t get it, I still don’t understand it, So I immediately started putting out resumes. That’s it. I’m not doing this (F).

For a year Cathrine’s district moved her into a second grade classroom. (From Cathrine’s LifeLine telling)
And the next year they put me in second grade [mumbling] I don’t like second grade, I don’t want second grade, ahhhhhh (normal voice) it was just not my thing (F). Craig and I met in ’08, ’09-’10 was when they took me out of gifted [to work in second grade], so he got to deal with all that, (sarcastically) that was a lot of fun (F).

- The Hysterectomy (S) was a convenient way to take some weeks away from the stress of a micro-managing principal.
An official missive to meet with the superintendent and principal is enough to cause distress (F). Cathrine’s response was one of confusion, but does not appear overly emotional.

- The moniker of racist is obviously distressing, yet Cathrine’s response in the presence of her administration is stoic (T), “I’m like, fine, I promise to do better, okay, now just give me the description, I’ll be good” but is followed with, for her, clear-cut emotional (F) language, “[But] I am so upset.”

- This is one of a number of crisis-like situations causing Cathrine to decide that it is time to leave (T) that district.

- Cathrine declined kindergarten certification; she prefers working with upper elementary students. Her speech patterns here indicate strong emotional (F) response. Craig got to deal with all that and that was a lot of fun speaks volumes about how difficult it was for her. But she does not tell this story. To her it is over and she has moved on (T).
Cathrine’s Veteran Story.

_Cathrine: This is my career told as the book Drago_ (Ball, 1993).

**Figure 4.9. Drago1**

So, you start with an egg. It’s just me.

**Figure 4.10. Drago2**

Then there are cracks in it. That’s Mrs. White. Not all teachers are nice to each other, but compromise and civility are a must. That’s what I learned.

**Figure 4.11. Drago3**
And then you see an eye. So that’s when I started looking for jobs in Bertonville. The best person for the job doesn’t always get the job, that’s what I learned.

So I had to push out of my comfort zone and look elsewhere. This led me to a job in gifted education, which I don’t know if I would have otherwise.
So, here’s me. And I was so isolated in my new job, I had an new job, no collaboration, and other teacher were in cliques, that kind of thing, that it took something extreme, like being called a racist, to get me to pop my head out and I learned to pay more attention to the school environment and culture.

*Figure 4.15. Drago7*

I call this one the kick-out. I had to break into yet another new area when I came to my current district with a pullout gifted program.

*Figure 4.16. Drago8*
Sometimes you fall on your back. [chuckling] My new job had no support, no respect, no belief in what I did, so I learned to tell people what we were doing. I gave my monthly newsletters, I gave them to the parents, I gave them to the teachers, I gave them to the board members, I gave them to the principal, I gave them to the superintendent. They all knew what we were studying, why we’re doing it, everything. Sometimes you’re flat on your back.

Figure 4.17. Drago9

Sometimes you get pushed as low as you can possibly go. That was when I taught second grade. And I learned that I can do anything for a year. [Quiet laughter from the group, slowly growing in volume] I learned persistence and resiliency.

Figure 4.18. Drago10
Then you have to look at what you came from. I went from part time to full time, remedial to gifted, novice to veteran.

Figure 4.19. Drago11

Then you take the pieces, all the things I’ve learned: compromise, civility, flexibility, getting out of my comfort zone, attention to school culture, going in different directions, letting people know what I do and how it helps their students, persistence and resiliency. Here he’s putting the pieces together . . . [the group makes noises of agreement] . . . into a coherent whole.

Figure 4.20. Drago12
Figure 4.21. Drago13

I know what I’m doing and I’m good at it.

Figure 4.22. Drago14

Figure 4.23. Drago15
And then . . . I remember who I am,

Figure 4.24. Drago16

. . . and I make it mine.

Figure 4.25. Drago17

Ellie: Oh, wow. That is awesome.
Maggie: It is.
Ellie: That is great!
[Group laughing and talking over one another.]
Ellie: Well done.
Maggie: I feel this right - right here in my chest. Yes.
Cathrine: I thought of the words we talked about as I was doing it, too, “Oh, there’s that word, oh, there’s THAT word!” I had to incorporate a dragon today, there was absolutely no way I could not. I could show you pictures of my classroom, there are dragons, literally, I probably have 40 stuffed dragons in my classroom. Kids bring their friends. “C’mere, Look—look—look!” Really. So I knew I had to somehow. But the funny thing is that Mrs. White was known as the
Dragon Lady, because everybody knew she was hard to get along with. (Whispers) Everybody. And now I am known as the Dragon Lady. Cathrine: But for totally different reasons.

Cathrine’s Lessons (TC) as a result of crisis-like incidents.

- Not all teachers are nice to each other, but compromise and civility are a must.
- The best person for the job does not always get the job.
- Push out of your comfort zone; you may have to go in a different direction.
- Pay attention to the school environment and culture.
- Tell people what you are doing and how it helps their students.
- I can do anything for a year.
- Persistence. Resiliency.
- Make it mine.

Introduction to Maggie’s veteran stories. Maggie’s journal began with one of her early crisis-like incidents, a story she called “War.” She is a wonderful storyteller with a natural sense of voice, and she begins with words of combat, following her title’s theme: It felt like a battlefield, and the first two years of my teaching career were a combat zone. And defending this and defending something else. She continued with the next story, Parent I and the next, The Blind Side. As the stories continued the writing opened up—taking up more space here, all capital letters there, underlines and ellipses. The writing was neat and firm, the stories were expressive, beautifully detailed, emotional, deeply personal and passionate—yet not self-absorbed. No request for pity, no feeling sorry. Maggie was writing to purge—and it came out in torrential waves of profound prose:
Being able to get my thoughts of these events out of my head is powerful. Opening up the flood gates has been freeing. I feel less alone.

In the packet of materials I sent to each participant, I included the first 15 pages or so of Chapter One, outlining crisis and critical incidents. This section included Lynda Measor’s (1985) research on critical incidents. Measor recognized three types of critical incidents: extrinsic (a result of historical events or large scale changes); intrinsic (part of the natural progression through critical periods of a teacher’s career); and personal (including family events, marriage/divorce, illness). Maggie read and absorbed this research, using these three types of critical incidents to frame her Veteran Story.

Maggie created a chart in her journal on Saturday of the Research Weekend, which succinctly lists each story (with her perfect titles) and bullet points of what she gained from those critical experiences. It is amazingly insightful. I include it at the end of Maggie’s Veteran Story.

Table 4.6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Maggie’s Veteran Stories</th>
<th>Researcher’s comments on appearances of the 4 Functions and Transformational Content (TC)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I’m going to have to read mine. Later I’ll explain why I’m better off reading it than trying to just say it. This was the Great Depression (N), from my LifeLine.</td>
<td>Her titles are so Intuitive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I hope I don’t have to eat crow one day for this,” Mother said to Principal across the table. I sit dumbfounded, feeling sick to my stomach, asking myself, “Is this really happening? Is Manipulator really being removed from my class? How did this happen? Where did it go wrong? Am I really everything these parents think I am? Do Manipulator and I really have a ‘personality conflict’?”</td>
<td>- M is aware of the affect stress and confrontation has on her body (S). This awareness and body reactions are recurring themes (T) in M’s stories.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forty-eight hours before started out like any other school day. It was</td>
<td>- Her interesting choice of</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


the beginning of March and the natives were restless (N). We just came in from an extra recess on one of the nicest days since the fall. We were working on spring projects and Spring Break was just around the corner. As the students were heading to Art that afternoon, Whistleblower (N)told me that Manipulator (I) brought a book of matches to school and was showing everyone. I called Manipulator out of class and asked about the matches. At first, he wanted to deny, but when I asked what was in his pocket, he knew he was in trouble. He pulled them out, head hanging low. I told him I would need to talk to Principal about it. I explained that if he had just told me about it when he first realized it, there would have been little concern. He said they went out for dinner and he got the book of matches from the restaurant. He forgot to take them out of his pocket. All well and good, but he decided to show everyone else and said not to tell, that created a whole different sequence of events.

Principal’s typical discipline for something of this caliber would be to meet with the students and have them call home and tell their parents what they had done. As I explain to Principal, she said she should definitely call home. But—she was on her way to a meeting with Superintendent and asked if I would get him from Art class and have him call. I had never done anything like that before. It was always her role. I didn’t like confrontation in any shape or form (T) and this was crossing more than one line for me. It went against my whole philosophy (T), to be quite honest. To me, putting a child on the defensive is not always a successful move. There are many dynamics of home lives that we don’t see. This was . . . delving into unknown territory and I was extremely uncomfortable (N), but I said yes. Huge mistake. Never again will I perform a disciplinary action on behalf of someone else . . . ever (TC).

As I explain to Manipulator what is about to happen, he starts crying, sobbing uncontrollably because he knows he really screwed up. He is gasping for breath between sobs as I tell him we need to take responsibility for our own actions. Again, that sick feeling in my stomach that makes me want to vomit (S). Why did I say yes to this madness? Be a good employee now, Maggs . . . that’s why (T). Couldn’t I just move his discipline clip to blue and make the call home myself? He tries to tell Mom what happened through the sobs. Before long he hands the phone over to me and says in a calmer voice, “She wants to talk to you.” “Hello - “ I was quickly interrupted. “WHY is my son calling me crying?” I instantly felt on the defensive. So I now knew how Manipulator felt. I began to explain when I hear yelling in the background. I could hear Father ranting and raging, and I thought it was about his son being in so much trouble when he gets home, but, in fact, he was raging about me. I was called quite a few names and Mother is still trying to talk to me. I hear Father shout, “That bitch better have my son ready to go when I get there!” I began to discern

- M identified in her Introduction that she is an introvert. Confrontation, a theme (T) of her stories, is uncomfortable.
- Another theme (T) is that M has a strong sense of her personal philosophy. However, she does not act on it during this confrontation.
- Her intuition (N) is working overtime, uncomfortable, huge mistake. A little foreshadowing here—something bad is about to happen.
- (TC) Never again—lesson learned.
- Her body (S) responses continue to be very strong. The reason she was unable to stand up for her philosophical beliefs to Principal: Be a good employee. (T)

- M knows how Manipulator feels. Empathy? Or being made to feel like a punished child? (N)
that something was very wrong (N) and I needed to survive this in some way. I barely hear what mom is saying anymore as everything gets hazy for me. “How would you feel if your son called, so upset that you couldn’t even understand him?” I continue to recoil into my introverted disposition only half listening at this point. Is he coming with a gun—is what I’m thinking. What will he say or do when he gets here? What about the other students who would be in my room by then? Will I need to protect them? (N) “I understand you feel that way,” I said to Mom. I feel bile rise in my throat (S). Am I deserving of this? I was only doing what Principal asked me to do.

I quickly had Manipulator get ready to go. I told him to wait in his seat. I told Secretary, hoping the Principal would be called to intercept the confrontation. A call was made, but not soon enough. Time to get my kids. By the time we are back in the room Father is there. He screams at me, “My son will never step foot in your room again if I have anything to say about it!” Right in front of the students. I was horrified, devastated, humiliated (F). Twenty-two pairs of eyes staring at me, visibly scared and confused, some even hiding under their desk (F). I didn’t know what to say. Even Manipulator was shocked at his father’s performance. Father walked straight down to the Superintendent office and threatened to take his kids out of our school if something wasn’t done about me.

A little side note here. Superintendent that year had recommended me for a Scholar Program, an honor . . . [begins weeping, now speaking haltingly (F, S)] . . . an honor to about a few hundred teachers every few years to recognize outstanding teachers and enhance the importance of the teaching profession. The goal was to help provide resources for these teachers and their administrators in hopes they might develop creative and imaginative teaching techniques. (Maggie takes a few breaths here to compose herself, wipes her eyes and continues. (F, S))

The Superintendent told Father he could take his kids out of our district if he so chooses, but he would not entertain the conversation about one of his best teachers and directed Father to Principal’s office to set up an appointment.

So back to the ‘eating crow’ conversation. We are meeting a few days later for closure. I find out other stories Manipulator told his parents, [which] all led me back to believing this was a big miscommunication. And I sat in the meeting not knowing what else to say. I was sorry things ended the way they did. But did I need to apologize? Confusion. It was just kind of left out there then. And to this day I still wonder if they feel like they’ve eaten crow at all. And then part of me is like, you know? I don’t even care if they did or not (TC). And that is Layer 1 of the Great - Her sense (N) of danger is increasing.

- I see all of these questions as intuition (N) that she may need to defend her students.
- Another strong physical (S) response.

- These are very strong emotionally (F) personal words and responses. I can almost see her scanning her own feelings, then looking around at the horror in the reactions of her students.

- There are still very strong memories connected to this story for her, affecting her feelings (F) and her speech (S).

- M fully embraced the topic and the readings I sent before the weekend and periodically refers to them (T). Extrinsic Layer comes from Measor (1985) and frames her crisis.
The Great Depression, continued. All this was happening right in the middle of one of the worst illnesses I have ever had (S). For three weeks, my one and a half year old son Gareth and I had tossed either the cold or the flu back and forth (S). I was missing a few days of school each week and exhausted when I did come back. Taxes were due and I had one more lecture to attend for the Scholar Program. I felt awful and too sick to go (S), but if I didn’t attend I would not receive the honor. My mom offered to drive me to the lecture, about 90 minutes away. The lady held Gareth, yellowing skin (S), worried look (S). I no sooner got home (S) than my mom calls and tells me that people go into shock and die with higher red blood counts than that. Normal is about 5,000 (S).

But by Monday, I felt even worse. Lightheaded, no strength, couldn’t hold Gareth, yellowing skin (S). A teacher friend came in my room Monday morning and saw how I looked and went to Principal right away. I explained to Principal that this was not a normal flu or cold (S). This was something much bigger. She sent me home for the rest of the week (S). My red blood count was 3.4. Normal is 12 to 14. White blood cells were 18,000. Normal is about 5,000 (S).

My mom later tells me that people go into shock and die with higher red blood counts than that. I had two blood transfusions (S) that night. I literally felt like I was dying (N). People were trying to come and see me and I turned people away. I couldn’t even hold a conversation, I couldn’t even make it to the bathroom. Two more blood transfusion, more blood work, three to five times per day they were drawing blood, more tests, MRIs, CTs, PET scans (S). Finally, after a week of being in the hospital, I was diagnosed with Auto-Immune Hemolytic Anemia, brought on by viral infection similar to Walking Pneumonia (S). Five more weeks off school for recovery. Six months until full recovery. I was in the hospital, I was tested, MRIs, CTs, PET scans (S), three to five times per day they were drawing blood (S), more (S). I was hardly make it to the bathroom (S), I turn people away (S). I literally felt like I was dying (N). My red blood count was 3.4. Normal is 12 to 14. White blood cells were 18,000. Normal is about 5,000 (S).

And I turned people away (S), I hardly make it to the bathroom (S), I was hardly make it to the bathroom. By that time, I was worse (S). As the phlebotomist was taking my blood (S), I am crying in pain (S, F). “Do I look normal to you?” I say crying (S, F). She says, “The doctor will get the results back today and will be calling you.” I no sooner got home and the doctor’s office called saying they had a room ready for me—how soon could I be there? Freaked me out (F), to be quite honest. That day was the lowest of the low (N). I felt like death (N). My red blood count was 3.4. Normal is 12 to 14. White blood cells were 18,000. Normal is about 5,000 (S).

- (N) Metaphor of starting fresh.
- (N) I felt like death rather than “I felt like I was going to die.”
- The literal (T) “I felt like I was dying.” Both are at play here—the literal death and figurative death.
- Very strong emotionally (F) charged phrase here as to the levels of Prednisone.
- Decreased body response (S) and diminished brain response.
on extremely high dangerous levels (F) of Prednisone, a steroid. I was on it for so long I know it killed brain cells like steroids do, and it really affected my memory. Even the way that I put sentences together, in case you couldn’t tell, like not choosing the right word, and sometimes even getting stopped right in mid-sentence, that’s how it affected me (F, S). So that’s Layer 2 of The Great Depression, The Personal layer (T).

The next part—within the first few weeks of being sick, we start a group study at church to help us identify strongholds (N) in our lives which would be revealed throughout the study. Within the first week, it was revealed to me that my stronghold was control (NO). I have a way of just jumping in and doing it. Just kind of my personality. I’ll just jump in, “Sure I’ll help,” you know, “I’ll do that.” I had many responsibilities to my job at that point, to my husband, to my son, to my grandpa. I was trying to be all to everyone (T). Not in a micro-managing kind of way, but a spreading myself too thin kind of way (T, N).

I feel like the sicknesses were God’s way of slowing me down (N). But it didn’t slow me down at the time. Then, I find myself in a hospital bed, needing blood transfusions or I will die (S). . . . “All right, God, you got my attention. What do I need to do?” And as I’m lying there in the hospital bed he’s telling me “Let it go.” (N) Let go of my classroom? Let go of taking care of. . . ? Let go of having to do this one more thing? I’m lying in this hospital bed feeling like death (N) and He says, “Let . . . It . . . Go.”

So I did. Union president? Gone. Health insurance committee? Gone. Building Leadership Team? Gone. Cooperating Teacher? Sometimes two at the same time? Gone. Technology Committee? Gone. The hardest was when Mark brought Gareth in to the hospital and he wouldn’t even come to me.

I dove into (N) the church group study in search of what I needed to learn and come to terms with. A lot was revealed to me and I sought peace for each one of those things. As I would deal with one, then another one would be revealed, and as I dealt with that, again another one would be revealed. And the peace was welcoming as I decided, “You know what? I don’t really need that in my life.” It was freeing and I forgave the Family (N). I forgave Manipulator. I could feel all that weight lifting off of me.

But wait. As God was helping me with all these other strongholds, all of these other controls, there were still dreams. Bad dreams I was having through all this because of stress. They were very vivid dreams. Scary dreams. They seemed to progressively get more alarming. They turned to dreams of devastation and creatures not of this world. One night I dreamt of hell. The dream seemed to go on forever. I was trying to get away. I was hiding from this two legged creature who was doing (T) are combined here.

Frightening.

- And, again, M refers to Measor’s layers (T).

- There are numerous references to the intuitive (N) realm in this story, metaphor, faith, dreams.

- Strongholds as a metaphor for overactive driving forces. She identifies control and responsibilities (T) as two of her strongholds.

- Another stronghold (T).

“Sure, I’ll do that,” reminiscent of calling home for Principal.

- Another metaphor of spreading herself too thin.

- M’s faith insights that sickness is God’s way of slowing her down (N)

- She integrates her illness and her work with strongholds.

- Instructions from God, Let it go (Metaphoric and faith-centered).

- Symbolically diving into work seems to also be a theme (T) for M.

- (N) Forgiveness as freeing is a powerful aspect of this story

- M shared especially vivid and metaphorically (N) meaningful dreams throughout the weekend. She even identifies that these dreams as a result of stress.
terrible things to people. There was screaming, there was moaning all around me. And He sees me and approaches me. I try to run but I move slower than a sloth. I begin to panic. And the dream ends (N).

The next night I dream of hell again. This time I am trapped and being swallowed whole by a creature with only a mouth. As it begins to close over my head, I wake up, terrified (N).

That’s it. I’m done sleeping. I stayed awake for the next 36 hours. By then I was exhausted. I was asking myself, “You know, can God really hear me when I’m in a dream? When I’m in the unconscious?” (N) I told my husband I was afraid to go to sleep. He knew the dreams I had been having. I had been doing much praying that last 36 hours. Was God listening? Obviously, because I was overcoming so much, He was listening. But what about at a subconscious level, during my dream state? Would He hear me and help me when I needed Him most? When I fell asleep, it was a deep sleep. No rolling over, tossing or turning. Solid sleep.

I dreamt (N) of a town that was completely desolate. It looked like a bomb had gone off (N). Buildings were concrete shells of what once were magnificent buildings. I was standing on the fifth floor of a building, looking out over the city, the windows no longer obstructing the view. The streets were flooded with a few inches of water seen clear to the horizon. A white elephant (N) stood with all its grandeur . . . staring up at me. It seemed like eternity. Suddenly, the elephant turned and walked away from me. “No!” I kept saying. I turned around and The Devil was standing there. He says, “You are coming with me.” He’s looming in the corner of the room, the blackest of black shape (N). The blackness seemed to envelop him. I said, “No. I’m not going with you.” He came toward me and begins increasing in size, filling the room (T). As he towers above me, he repeats, “You ARE coming with me” in a booming voice that echoes off the concrete walls. I shouted, “No! I won’t! This has already been taken care of!” Meaning Jesus’ death on the cross, dying for my sin, my acceptance of Jesus as my Savior. (N) The Devil continues to approach, swelling, filling the entire room around me. He laughs and whispers, “He can’t hear you!” I scream at the top of my lungs, “Jesus! Jesus! Jesus!”

Instantly I awake from the dream, gasping for air (S, F). I wake up my husband and ask him to pray over me. I can’t even tell him about the dream yet. I am crying as he prays. Then the Lord says to me, “Get your Bible.” As I open it, turn on the light, He tells me to turn the page. (N) It opens to Psalm 116 and I read it out loud:

> I love the Lord, for He heard my voice, He heard my cry for mercy. Because He turned his ear to me, I will call on Him as long as I live.
The cords of death entangled me,
the anguish of the grave came upon me; I was overcome by distress
and sorrow.
Then I called on the Name of the Lord: “Lord, save me!”
The Lord is gracious and righteous; our God is full of compassion.
The Lord protects the unwary; when I was low He saved me.
Be at rest once more, O my soul, for the Lord has been good to you.
For you, O Lord, have delivered my soul from death,
my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling,
that I may walk before the Lord in the land of the living.
I believed, therefore, I said, “I am greatly afflicted.” (N)
How can I repay the Lord for all His goodness to me?
I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord.
I will fulfill my vows to the Lord in the presence of his people.
Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.
O Lord, truly I am your servant, You have freed me from my chains.
I will sacrifice a thank offering to you and call on the name of the
Lord.
I will fulfill my vows to the Lord in the presence of all His people.
In the courts of the house of the Lord—
in your midst, O Jerusalem.
Praise the Lord.

My husband is fully awake by now and asks me to read it again. He asks
who gave me that scripture, and I said, “God!” (TC) That was Layer 3
of The Great Depression, the Intrinsic Part. (T)

Maggie: (rustling of paper) So the art I created . . . I ended up with only
half an hour, so it’s not finished, but it’s started. And that is a tree with
roots, solid roots that are clear down deep because without those roots
it would not be standing. In all of its grandeur, beautiful as we see it out
here, it’s what’s going on underneath that’s most important. (T; TC)
Maggie: I thought about realizations of a lot of different things (she
sniffs) and how they affect my teaching now, and I did come up with a
list (T) of some of those things.
Table 4.7

*From Maggie’s Journal: Events and Their Effects on her Teaching (TC)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Effect on teaching now</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Love of children</td>
<td>*Every single one of them is precious. It is my job to make sure they know that, to know they have talent. *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Blind Side</td>
<td><em>People will have opinions about me, but they do not define me.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>War</td>
<td><em>I determine my annotation.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>I decide the philosophies on which I stand my ground.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Great Depression</td>
<td><em>Don’t sweat the small stuff.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>I only have the power to change within myself.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>I can influence, guide, expose others to different views but I can not change them.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Keep those founding, non-negotiable philosophies firm.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Negatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Dread parent/teacher conferences.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Memory loss (stress and medication)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Appeasement</td>
<td><em>Do not sacrifice for the sake of other teachers (not in a selfish way, but always keeping the students’ needs first).</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Sometimes our best intentions to help may not be help at all.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reality Bites</td>
<td><em>Importance of collaboration, teaming, cooperation, compromise, seeing others’ point of view.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judas Kiss</td>
<td>* Remain confident in your truths.*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Remain student focused.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Relationships can heal.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Strife can result in something better than before.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>We do not always know why things happen at the time.</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Introduction to Ellie’s veteran stories. Ellie’s journal begins with:

*Age of Righteousness Poem.*
*Centered on playing teacher*
*Organizing the ditto*
*Grading every homework answer*
*Assigning a point value to every single thing*
*Calculate their worth in percent*
I thought teaching was about me
*How much time I put into it
*How many hours I graded
*The comments I took time to write
*I worked all day and all night!
*After all, I was a professional.

*There was a parent who call me one night
*at home.
*I was shocked.
*The dad wanted clarity about the homework
*he was working on with his daughter.
*She struggled a lot in school
*Awkward pause on the phone line
*Then I explained it.
*He was polite.
*We hung up.
*I was almost offended.
*He had called me at home!!!

*It would take a decade of time
*and having my own kids
*Before I realized how self-centered I was

*What I would give to talk to him now
*to say thank you
*For being MY teacher.

Ellie’s journal is succinct: stories, short vignettes, a list of her philosophical non-negotiables, and responses to my prompts. Her mind was on *my* worries: my research, considering what was going to be useful, helpful, and worthwhile to me, in short—providing data. She included critical stories from her early years and the lessons she learned from them, which are compiled (like Maggie’s) in a chart at the end of her Veteran Stories. Her entries are insightful and profound, and I can see the thought she
has put into her practice and appreciate how she kept my investigation in mind.

However, when it came time to tell her Veteran Story to the group, she said,

*I’m sitting here thinking, should I talk about this, should I talk about this, should I talk about this? And I’m probably just going to ramble, because usually I know exactly what I need to say and I say it, and the fact that I don’t tells me that it doesn’t matter. That really the research you need you already got, and I don’t need to worry about it.*

She kept me on task through the weekend, to be sure, but in this case I am incredibly grateful she listened to her intuition and spoke without worrying about my research: from her core.

Table 4.8

Ellie’s Veteran Stories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ellie’s Veteran Stories</th>
<th>Researcher’s comments on appearances of the 4 Functions and Transformational Content (TC)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You know, I don’t know what I’m doing. I thought I did. But then I heard your [Maggie’s] story and now I’m thinking differently, I’m sitting here thinking I don’t have a crisis like that, in fact my role as teacher is taking care of everybody else’s crisis (T), that’s what I do. And I’ve been doing that since I started teaching. So the stories I have pretty much involve other teachers. I’ll talk a little about that because all the crises have become my crisis, if that makes sense. You guys kind of know my LifeLine, the last time I taught I was an eighth grade science teacher for nine years. I really enjoyed it and I did really well. Part of my own crisis was that I came into that position from being a Montessori teacher (T), which turned everything upside down for me (N). Even though I went back into public schools I couldn’t go back to the way I used to teach. I developed a mastery learning system (T), and basically what that meant was I know I didn’t believe in the game (N). And if I didn’t believe in the game of being a teacher, I had to reconstruct my own rules (N). And the new rules caused crisis.</td>
<td>- Taking care of others is a recurring theme (T) in E’s stories. In addition, through the weekend she expressed concern that I was getting the data I needed, and she helped Maggie come to terms with an aspect of her grandfather’s death during her sharing time. - One of E’s foundational themes (T) is the transformative nature of Montessori training on her teaching, the metaphor of being turned upside down (N) indicates her perspective on traditional, American teaching as being poles apart from Montessori.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rule number 1, every child can learn—no matter what. Rule number 2, I</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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will make sure that every child learns. I had a great principal, we became very good friends and used to have very deep philosophical discussions about education (T, F). He’s the one who really got me thinking: what does a grade mean, what does a zero mean, what’s the difference between formative and summative assessment, how do you assess learning, and what does it mean to say a kid is succeeding or failing? (T) So I looked at that and decided that certain things had to go. First, there was no reason that anyone in my class was going to fail, it’s not possible. I wouldn’t allow it, and I told the kids that. “You’re not allowed to fail.” (T) Second, no one is ever allowed to not do an assignment, because I don’t believe in zeros. Zeros destroy grades, because grades are based on numbers and averages that therefore define you; and your learning shouldn’t be defined in that way (T). If I assign something you have to do it, and only after you’ve done everything do you earn the right to take the assessment (T). Everything else is formative assessment, because in true learning - now this is the “Ellie Philosophy” - in true learning you have to make mistakes (T). As a science teacher, everybody knows that scientists screw up on purpose all the time because they don’t care about the results so much as the learning that comes with the results, so they’re constantly making a hypothesis that they know is wrong, or a negative hypothesis, so they can do the experiment to figure out one more piece of information. So if you’re going to be in my classroom, and you don’t know something, and you work on figuring it out and you don’t get the right answer, then the right answer isn’t what was important. Tell me what you learned when you got an answer (T). And you just keep working until you’ve shown me that you’ve learned enough, and we are confident that you could take the summative test to display your learning. That’s how you earn the right to take the test.

And I started teaching that way. I had to ask myself, what does the mastery level look like? And I decided 90 percent. So those who got 90 percent or higher, it goes in the gradebook, if you got under that, then I had a team teacher who - God bless her (T, F) - who rode with me all the way, and bought into all of it. Then that next day the ones who had the 90 percent mastery, you go to this room, we have enrichment. So for the gifted kids, you’re going deeper, and you get to explore more through choice activities—a really cool owl pellet dissection or an experiment—whatever the enrichment activity was. Those who need the material retaught stay here. Then we would reteach and retest (T). We had study center (T), they could come in and do that, and we had tutoring after (T) school, and it got to the point where they knew how to use the system. I was proud—by the end of the year I had done my hardest work, and I knew when they walked out my door, every single kid learned. And I could send them off to the high school knowing that, eighth grade material, they all learned 90 percent of it. I guarantee and I can prove it to you. And if the nine weeks ended, by golly I gave them an incomplete until they finished it. And if they couldn’t finish it, I called the parent and I said, “We have tutoring sessions after school that are staffed, and they can finish it and
once they finish it they can get the grade, but they can’t choose not to.” (T) and that’s all Montessori. That’s stuff I did in the other school. So that wasn’t a crisis, I thought it was pretty cool. The principal loved it. I had no problems from the other teachers in the school, my team teacher, we became buddies and we did it together, our rooms were together, and it was very kid-centered.

But I was torn apart (N) by the high school teachers. (Slowly and distinctly) They . . . hated . . . my . . . guts . . . (F) because the kids went from eighth grade to ninth grade, which was lecture and read the material. And they all had basically B’s and A’s in my class because they earned it, by golly, through my sweat and their sweat (N, T)). But to the high school teachers I ‘gave away grades.’ I was the ‘easy A,’ I was just giving them away, and they looked at that as absolutely horrific, and it caused a huge rift between our departments, because I was also department chair. Two of the science teachers at the high school were husband and wife, and she was my best friend, Ever(F). We raised our kids together. And it destroyed the friendship to this day.

They didn’t attack me (N), but they went after my team teacher, and it was vicious (F). There were emails that I just could not believe, and the stress (F, S) level for her—my team teacher—grew out of sight. My team teacher, who had the daughter of the married science teachers in class, it was worse for her. I said “Invite them over to talk to you.” She would invite them . . . no response. We had department meetings together, and you could just feel (F). . . and we started to hear things about what was being said about us. All the sudden kids were coming back saying, “Such and such says that you guys didn’t teach us anything in eighth grade.” It got vicious (F).

I was department chair, my job was to defend (N) my staff member, even though my best friend in the world was the person attacking (N). So I ended up having to document everything that had been said. I documented everything, (T) I can’t turn this into administration without telling them. So I’m going to go tell them, because that’s my job. And that’s what I had to do.

I called a meeting, she came, another science teacher who was her good friend came, and I handed the documentation over and I said, “You need to read this. These are things that you’ve said.” And these were not just things that we had heard, these were things in meetings that were said, teachers are extremely upset, the department is extremely upset, it is getting out of control and it’s got to stop. And she threw it and just started screaming. (The group gasps) I looked at her and said (slowly and deeply) “You are hurting me,” (T, F) and she just kept screaming. I’ve never seen that before, I didn’t know this person. This was my best friend. I watched her child in my home when he was an infant; it was crazy. And the rift remained, and the philosophical rift still remains, though I’ve gone out of

- This section gives richly detailed background into the context of her teaching, which is at the crux of the crisis she describes next.

- Turned upside down by Montessori, torn apart by colleagues. E uses powerful images (N) to describe her emotions. Her speech patterns punctuate every word here (F).

E likens hard classroom work (T) to physical labor—for both student and teacher (N).

- Colleague, friend, raising their kids together, this woman was very special to E (T).

- Battle language begins here, attack and vicious (N).

Stress usually indicates emotional and physical responses (F, S).

- She again throws concern toward her team teacher, rather than on herself (T)

- E hears and experiences the crisis, also intuitively feels the conflict in their presence (N).

- The war verbiage continue (N).

- This documentation is a logical (T) response, part of her job. Her respect for colleagues (Theme) means she has no choice but to go to them before turning it in.

- (T, F) The listener does not know what she is screaming, just that she is. E’s response in the face of her estranged friend’s emotional screaming at her is calm but deeply hurt.
But, talk about stress making you sick? (S) My good friend had a daughter—adorable. In short she wanted one more, and it was hard for her to become pregnant. She got pregnant during all of that and lost the child (S). (The group gasps and makes supportive sounds) And I can’t say that’s why, but my heart says it is (N). Me? I think my immune system crashed. I don’t get sick, I just don’t. I got the flu, I was flat on my back, I couldn’t function, I felt drained. I felt physically sick (S). And my job was to take care of my team teacher (T). So I had to deal with that and take care of her. This is finally beginning to heal over.

So that was a crisis because of me, and decisions I made as a teacher. And I don’t regret it (TC), and when I go back next year, I’m going right back to what I did, because I can’t play the game of education. I do not believe in grades anymore (T). I think they are symbols, and if the kid turns in his work to me, I have the power to decide if it’s an A, B, or C. If I turn it in to you, teaching the same curriculum, he might get an A over here, a C over here, what the heck does that, how does that show learning? So I just don’t believe in the system. I don’t believe in grades at all (T). I believe in showing learning.

I can’t play games in other ways, either. We have a district that is very well off, a rich philanthropist bought the land when the school system was on the verge of collapse (N) and was going to be absorbed by a neighboring district. Couldn’t pass a levy to save their life. One of the worst school districts in the state. You only went there if you couldn’t possibly teach anywhere else. I didn’t even apply there in my early days. But then this guy came in and started buying up land, and businesses started moving in, and we watched a poor district turn into one of the wealthiest districts in the state (TC). So white fences now, and very expensive. It was a planned community, they put the school in the middle and they built this huge campus, it looks like a college. It’s, it’s incredible. Every kid should go to a place like this. And the town is very rich. We have people coming from million and multi-million dollar homes and estates. And then you still have the agricultural kids, who still go huntin’ you know what I mean? And my first year teaching was the last year tractor drive. That’s long gone, and now you have the BMWs drive (laughs) (T).

It’s a different world. But it’s a stressful world, because they really want

- (T) Openness in communication is a theme in E’s interactions with others.
- Body (S) integration—what she noticed in others as well as her own illness.
- Her intuition (N) tells her that the stress was tragic for her friend’s pregnancy (S).
- Strong indication that these events affected her own health (S). And still, she takes care of others (T).
- (TC) She acknowledges that the crisis happened because of her, and is determined she did the right thing.
- Two recurring themes here: playing the game of education and her distinct thoughts on grading as arbitrary. I do not believe in grades anymore.

- This is background material for another crisis event that is district-wide. The district is currently rich, but E’s telling relives the temporality of past/present/future of the shifting district. In the span of her career (29 years) the district has transformed (TC) from one of the poorest to one of the richest, with many accompanying difficulties.
- (T) The planned community, campus, with BMWs and tractors in the parking lot. What an interesting sense of place.
their kids to go to Harvard, Yale or an Ivy League. You’re kind of buying a private school for a public school price. So imagine the stress that kids are under (T), you also have drugs like you do in every community. They can afford to buy them, and they can afford to have parties, and they have an attitude that has begun to develop in the town, whether they want to admit it or not, and a separation. And I’ve lived there since 2000, moved there because of their special ed department, for my son. When we left Montessori it was the best choice. They were way ahead of the game in special ed. But in the last six or seven years we’ve had five our kids kill themselves. (The group gasps.) One a year. In a row (F, T). Boom. Boom. Boom. The last one? She hung herself from a tree in front of the [public place]. We’re not allowed to talk about it.

And it just keeps happening (T). One of the kids was one of my past students. She was the quiet kid . . . she hung herself in her bedroom. The staff began to crumble because there was this sense of denial in the community, don’t talk about it. Then we’d lose another kid. How many districts do you know that have lost kids like that? And it just kept happening.

At that time my role was working in the woods, I made that transition, because, to be honest with you, I was burning out (F). I was working my ass off (T) and I cared a great deal (T) for my kids. I no longer have separation between teacher (T) and students. I do, in a sense, but I don’t because I’ve learned in Montessori how to remove it and I can’t put it back. I love those kids and I actually really get along with parents, and I have parents who call me, and parents who need to talk, and go for a walk. Even after they graduate. They’re long-term commitments, they’re not just students (T), . . . they’re human beings. So I was burning out (TC), and I was starting to get sarcastic in class.

So I knew I needed a change (T). I went to the woods [the job where she managed the outdoor curriculum] because that’s what rejuvenates me. I am an earth person. My life is the earth (T). The earth and I talk, and I soak it up and I have a very strong spiritual connection to the earth (N). That did the trick. I was able to hand-pick my kids to mentor, so a guidance counselor would call and say, “Can you have this person be a nature preserve student?” Absolutely. And then I can track them all the way to graduation (N). Every year. So put me in a power position where I can still do what needed to be done and I could get it done without having to grade. I loved it. It’s been a really, really good role.

Another crisis coming up (N) is that I know I’m heading back to the classroom. I’m not happy about it, because I don’t want to get caught in the system. It’s making me nervous, and I also know that I won’t hide it. I’m dangerous—to myself. Because I don’t think I have patience anymore to deal with the system. When you get to that point, that’s dangerous,

- She brings up a new theme (T) of student stress.
- A very emotional (F) crisis revealed, a recurring (T) difficulty for E as well as the entire district.
- Burning out is an emotionally charged (F) phrase that contains stress (F & S), a sense of time (T), and a combination of working my ass off and caring a great deal, both themes for E.
- (T) Here again is the theme of close teacher / student relationships.
- burning out and getting sarcastic is a transformational change in E.
- E changes jobs every 7 years or so (T). She expands a bit on her life theme of connection to the earth. It is a spiritual (N) connection.
- As a wildlife tracker, this is an interesting use of the metaphor (N)—tracking students.
- As a seasoned veteran, she anticipates difficulties ahead (N) because of the current milieu and her philosophy of learning.
because you have to **play the game** (N) in order to be successful and to be powerful, and my role these last several years has been take care of kids, take care of teachers. Because if we lose kid after kid after kid, they call me in for that support.

So, our district is in so much pain from the loss of life. We have a new superintendent who has totally **turned the district upside down** (N). I am seeing that the emotional health of the student (F) is really not important, they say it is, but they’ve moved curriculum all down, to accelerate faster, and by pushing them faster they will get college credits in high school and go to Harvard and Yale, and the stress that they are under is increasing (with deliberate pronunciation) in-tense-ly. Out of control. And that’s the environment people are living in, and I have to jump back in, so I’m a little worried. I know that I’ll do okay. And I know that my teaching is needed, I’ve had people come up and say [whispers] “So glad you’re going to be back in here.”

You wonder how long you can keep people healthy in the teaching environment of our society. My district is **symbolic** (N) of what’s going on across the nation, what we’re calling education for our kids. And the kids are living in crisis. And I am an environmental person and I do believe in what I’ve read, that our mental and emotional health directly comes from experience with the land, and these kids I’m working with have no connection with self, and no connection with the land anymore. **They don’t** know who they are, they think they are what they play (N). “I am a basketball player.” And if they don’t make the team, they don’t know who they are beyond that, and therefore they are nothing—really **scary** (F). I’ve had more kids on prescription drugs than I’ve ever, ever seen. When I took kids on these trips I handle the meds, and the last time I went on a trip, the newest thing is they’re like, “Oh! Are you taking that pill, too? Me, too. I can’t sleep without it, can you sleep without it? Nope!” I mean (in a sing-song voice), they’re taking drugs to sleep, they’re taking drugs to wake up, they’re taking drugs to focus in class, they’re taking drugs to fight depression. (In normal voice) Our kids are really screwed up, and we are in a time of crisis, and standardized tests and everything else.

Maggie: (quietly sarcastic) Yeah, but let’s test them.

Ellie: It’s out of control. And it is very scary. I could go on—because I try to get people to understand the connection and to re-establish the connection with the land, but we’re gonna crash. I’m getting extremely concerned, I’m getting my kids ready. And hopefully teach them the appropriate skills, because fresh water is, look at California. It’s not coming back to California. Do not move to California. That’s all I have to say, they will not be getting that fresh water back. The climate is too far
shifted by now, the water and the weather cycles have all changed, and they can’t be reversed. At least in our lifetime. So it’s crazy, and the crises are crazy, and the critical moments—it’s just sad. It’s going to be interesting. I know I’m walking back into a building in crisis because I’ve been hearing about it for years.

And this is my most recent crisis, I can’t even believe I forgot to talk about it. One of my Adventure Club kids, her name was Annie, and Annie went to college, and she was sustainable planet, quite full of herself, and she was going to change the world and don’t you dare stand in her way because she was powerful. She was well on her way to changing the world. Well, she broke up with her boyfriend. Drove home, broke up with him, and went back to school. The next day he went to her school, she knew he was coming, uninvited, because I guess he called or something, and she was scared (N). She called the cops, she said, “I’m scared of him, he was violent when we broke up.”

So the cops were waiting, and they were there in the parking lot, he was there, and she was scared because he owns guns. And they checked him out, checked his bag that he wanted to bring up. He said he just wanted to see her. And I know Annie, she’s got the sweetest - I can just see her going, “Oh, God.” She took care of everybody (N), I can just see her going, “O-kay, you can come up.” So they escorted him up, and he was like, “I drove so far, it’s late, can I just spend the night?” And I can see her going, “O-kay.” That’s what you do, you know? And she’s that sweet. And the next morning when she was sleeping her blew her brains out, two shots straight to the face, and then laid next to her and blew his out. And so I went to that funeral with the Mom. (Long silence)

And that’s another thing I’m going to change about teaching. Because (slowly) we . . . failed . . . her. Because we taught her all the curriculum, but one thing we don’t teach in our society as women is that it’s okay to say no. You don’t have to take care of everybody, you don’t have to be the nice guy. Her gut told her when she called the cops, “I’m afraid.” She was right. And because the cops are standing there waiting, and he was waiting, she felt . . . we didn’t teach her about intuition. We didn’t say to her and practice that it’s okay to say no. Let’s practice saying no. They should be hearing it their whole life. How many girls do you know who can say no? I know I couldn’t at that age (N, TC), I feel that we—meaning me—our school, our society let that one go, and I’m not letting another one go.

So it should be interesting next year. So we’ll see where things go. Just jump back in and try to hold people together. And hopefully take care of kids. They are more important than the curriculum.

- E tells this story as she heard it. It is evident that she intuits (N) Annie’s feelings and responses from what she has heard. This story has a powerful transformational impact on Ellie

- E’s journal writings expand how this experience affected her

Annie’s Death. I will teach the hidden curriculum. 5 suicides plus 1 murder =
*How to trust your gut
*How to reach out to each other
*Care more about the kids than the rules and the work.
*Take them camping.
*Be there for them always
*Emotional health is more important than academic success.
*Grades don’t mean anything.
Table 4.9

*From Ellie’s Journal: Other Critical Events and Their Effects on her Teaching (TC)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Effect on teaching now</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First year - Mark, the “Idiot” teacher, who taught history through the use of plays.</td>
<td><em>Never ever did I imagine that someday I would be like Mark. Never. I should find him and tell him that I respect him now. I get it.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First year - Making peanut butter pine cones and a mess out of her classroom.</td>
<td><em>Teachers and administration stopped by just to see the room. The janitor came by and stared. It was an incredible disaster. What was amazing is that they all just laughed. No one was critical. I never felt hated or judged. That kind of support is rare. I am still grateful for it.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A difficult student and his difficult parent.</td>
<td><em>For years I thought I had won. Then, several years later I found out that [the parent] had been fighting cancer during that time, eventually passed away. Suddenly their behavior made sense. Their behavior wasn’t about me at all. I get it now.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Montessori kids I had, the outcasts.</em></td>
<td><em>Taught me that they were people, that they deserved the chance to learn and that learning was their right.</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Discussion**

The above stories are the lived experience of crisis-like experiences for Cathrine, Maggie, and Ellie. Not only are the stories themselves unique and distinctive, but so also is language and manner of their telling. Their significance to the teller is very personal, regardless of whether the speaker tells it emotionally and with details, or in metaphor and symbolically. In addition, they all learned something from their crises and were able to verbalize these unique and varied lessons. In the right hand column I discussed each woman’s use of the four functions, and expanded on a number of shared ideas, including passion, change, varying needs and styles of self-reflection, conflicts of philosophy and fitting in, harmed and healed relationships, and presence of a Sacred La. The discussion
in this section is based on knowledge gained through the Introduction stories, the LifeLine telling, and participant journals.

As I analyzed the finished stories for evidence of the four functions, it became apparent that they vary greatly. Cathrine’s story uses the intuitive metaphor of birth to give structure to her telling. Her early concern about the crisis stories as too negative is balanced by the whimsical nature of the picture book, and the delightful story hides the difficult and emotional nature of the experiences themselves. That is Cathrine’s nature. *It’s a story. It becomes part of me.*

Maggie’s stories include all four functions and quite deeply, but I perceive that the intuitive function appears most consistently. The stories are told in present tense as if we are in the middle of them with her. As she retells the stories there are times that she relives them, too, and weeps to be in the presence of the difficulties once again. She is so brave, once again facing them head-on, but this time in the presence of warm, supportive feminine energy. Interestingly, each story is concentrated in specific function. The first story is emotional, the second is centered on the body, and the third, with its focus on her faith and dreams, is strongly intuitive.

Ellie has spent a great deal of time sorting through her stories as they occurred by journaling and spending time in her beloved woods. Because of this her stories are told in a logical, thinking manner, with qualities of intuition, sensing and feeling in balance. She is solid in her movement through them. This groundedness is also evident in the way she is able to tell the stories in past tense. She has strength in her philosophy of teaching and learning and that she is doing exactly what she is meant to do.
As for threads that run through all of the stories, all of the women are passionate about teaching, and all have experienced a great deal of change in their careers, and they each instigated change for different reasons. For Cathrine, this theme of movement runs throughout her childhood as an exceptionally intelligent student. Cathrine gets to a point of feeling like she is not seen or wishes to improve her situation and is thwarted, and she moves. Maggie’s moves seem to indicate a search for a place where her philosophies ‘fit’—a place where she had the freedom to express and use her holistic philosophy, and work with like-minded, collaborative others. Ellie’s moves have occurred because of a need to move on, but also as a result of having children and her son’s difficulties in school due to Asperger’s. As we discussed emergent themes from Friday’s discussions, Ellie observed:

*What’s come up [as a theme] is the teachers involved wanted a specific teaching assignment, and found a way to get it, I mean I’ve heard that consistently. [Agreement noises from the group.] And I think that is important because we’re still teaching, and I wonder if that’s not an element, and if you can’t figure out a way to get it, we leave teaching. So I wonder if that’s not a common element of people who stay with the profession over time? That’s an answer I don’t have, but it’s a question that comes up.*

The very nature of this project is on retelling and self-reflection of stories of experience, yet I noticed Cathrine, Maggie, and Ellie each have varying needs for and styles of reflection. Cathrine expresses her emotions, yet often these are expressed in the safe-zone of her home and with her husband. She expresses, she gets support, and she moves on. She recognized early that anger keeps her from expressing less desirable feelings like crying in front of others. Maggie’s use of the journal was a powerful tool for purging herself of the stories, reflecting on them throughout. Her strong Christian
faith gave her a venue for self-study as well. The church study and her connection to the Bible as a relevant tool for insights were both powerful. Ellie showed a mature sense of balance in her self-knowledge. She keeps a journal regularly and freely admitted that her connection to the woods heals her.

All teachers experienced some measure a **conflict** in one or both of two areas: their professional beliefs versus the general culture of the school and profession (me vs. them); and their sense of belonging versus not belonging. Cathrine identified early with the sense of marginalization as she moved grades and schools, and because she was intellectually different from her peers. Over time she has embraced her “freak”ness, even making it a symbol for inclusion in her classroom. From my own experience in gifted education, gifted students and their teachers are often seen as unknown entities in even the closest of school communities, and she has determined a place where this mystery, this “weirdness” is not only tolerated but embraced. Maggie, on the other hand, experienced both areas of conflict—simultaneously. While Ellie found her Montessori training to be enormously impactful to her teaching philosophy, much of Maggie’s philosophy comes from natural intuition, formed over time with children. It is evident in her first story that she has strong philosophical beliefs about calling Manipulator’s parents, even her body is warning her against it, yet in the face of the general culture of the school *(be a good employee, Maggs)* this conflict results in acquiescence. She also experiences crisis of belonging because she deeply desires true collaborative conversation with teachers, something she has yet to find. As an alumnus of the small, rural district where she teaches, she feels that she belongs: *I’m a Panther, born and bred*. This conflict of belonging, yet not belonging is a challenge. Ellie’s Montessori training
changed her philosophy of teaching completely, and now that she has returned to traditional public schools, she can’t go back to teaching their way. For her this conflict of beliefs and belongingness is merged. She seems resigned to the fact that with some, she will not belong, but she will not acquiesce in this conflict of philosophy. She said, I’m too old now. I’m not shy anymore. I don’t have anything to lose.

The theme of harmed and healed relationships threads through each woman’s stories as well. Cathrine told the story of her struggles with Mrs. White and in her journal she declared:

But Mrs. White finally came to realize that I was good for the low kids & worth keeping around. Sometime during the 8 years I was there, we even became friends.

Healed. The story Judas Kiss (the Introduction story of Maggie getting the technology job, and Alice’s perceived betrayal) culminates in Alice’s return to Maggie, telling her about her joy at coaching basketball, something she could not have done as the Technology teacher. Alice hugs her. In her journal Maggie calls this story, “Mended Fences.”

Ellie’s story does not have such a happy ending, but she has hope. She knows she will return to the teachers from whom she is estranged. A number of staff changes have occurred since the conflict, and Ellie says:

Now the department is finally coming back together because the years have gone by. I met with the new department chair, said, ‘Ask me any question you want. I am here to listen. Anything you want,’ and we just cleared it up. ‘Ask me something else,’ and we cleared that up. We kept it coming until two hours later we’re like [hand clap], we’re done.
Each woman exhibits a Core belief or Sacred La. Cathrine seems to find her strength in being different, a self-proclaimed “weirdo.” With this core belief, she simply does not care that her ideas, ways of being, teaching and working are different, or even misunderstood. What matters to her is that her students have a place to be themselves, and that she created that place. She finds strength in her family and creative work.

Maggie and Ellie both spoke in detail about their core beliefs in learning, which are student centered and relevant, valuing kids over curriculum. Maggie gains her strength from her faith and her family. Ellie gains hers from the earth. These manifestations of the Sacred La have kept Cathrine, Maggie, and Ellie in the profession thus far, and most likely will continue to do so.

There were a number of synchronistic events following the Research Weekend. Maggie told me in her second interview that she found herself asking very Big Questions after the weekend:

*Is this really what I want to be doing? That following Sunday the pastor’s message was all on “Don’t give up the grind” and while he was preaching I was like “Oh!” clear through it, clear through it. I even texted the pastor and said, “That was sooooo, that just kind of finished my whole week out, just to let you know.” Even though you sometimes don’t feel that you’re doing what you should be doing? You really are.*

Both Cathrine and Maggie had powerful confirming interactions with their principals shortly before our last individual interview together. In her journal Cathrine wrote:

*I got one of the nicest compliments from my principal last night. We had a parent meeting for 3rd graders who will be in my gifted classes next year. My principal was explaining how I have a great rapport with the kids, and how we become a family.*
Wow, it’s true. I have these kids for 2 years, some of them for 2 ¼ hours a day. I probably know them as well as anyone other than their parents. And they know me. I’m always telling stories about my kids, my childhood, my education. Some classes are more “family” than others, of course. But it felt really good to have y principal acknowledge that.

At our last interview Maggie said:

I’ve had some great conversations with my principal between then and now, you know, and he met with me yesterday for my summative evaluation, and he said, I just, he said, I really do feel like this move was good for you, like it’s been good for you. And I was just like, Oh I’m just so glad to hear that from you (laughs).

When decision had to be changed and they had offered me the [technology] position, one of the things he did, he went down ranting to [union president’s] room that, and said, “You really want a bad teacher in a position?” and I was like, “Are you talking about me? Do you consider me a bad teacher? Or was it [the other person] who wanted the position?” That just didn’t, I don’t know, I’ve never asked him where that came from, was he talking about me, all I could do is prove if he thought it was me, that that’s not me. That’s all I could do. And when he said what he did, and gave me an “Accomplished” [evaluation] score this year, that means a lot. That means I was not what he thought I was.

These synchronicities are powerful confirmation for Maggie and Cathrine, as well as for me because in them I felt the far reaching hand of Spirit (or God, or Fate, or the Universe) in their lives as well as in the research.

The retellings and discussions of the Veteran Stories over, and as Saturday evening drew to a close the circle of women had strengthened and tightened. We were connected by the deepest sharing of those incidents, people, and ideas we cared most about. To close the circle that evening I honored each participant, thanking them for their courage for remaining in the profession through such difficulties and challenges, and
welcoming them back from their re-journeying expedition through those stories and back to their teaching lives.

**Data Gathering and Analysis for Research Question Two**

Research Question 2: What might be learned by the researcher, participants, and readers through inquiring into veteran teachers’ stories of crisis-like situations and the process of growth?

Research of this kind not only informs and transforms the researcher and (it is hoped) the field of study, but incurs deep changes in all those who touch the ongoing and completed work. The beauty of Organic Research is that it recognizes and assumes this capacity for change and encourages the researcher to structure the inquiry in such a way as to reveal the shifts occurring in the individual participants, in the future reader, and in the researcher. In addition, there is a Group Story that reflects the transformation of the group and the collective meaning of our work together. Revealing transformation as a result of the inquiry is the purpose of Research Question Two.

**The Research Weekend, Sunday**

The group met for breakfast Sunday morning. I placed the Group Analysis Questions in the middle of the table:

1. What new understandings and realizations exist as a result of this working session?

2. What are the recurring group themes from this working session?

3. What knowledge, understanding and wisdom does this group have to offer the profession?
However, at this point in the weekend these questions felt contrived and limiting, consequently I sat back and the conversation took its direction from Cathrine, Maggie, and Ellie. Sitting in our customary circle around the table, we commented on the wonderful French toast casserole, on upcoming Spring Break, and the lives to which we would be returning. Then the group began reflecting on the weekend’s conversations and interactions, the new gleanings, and old wisdom. This conversation was recorded and transcribed. I did a Transformational Content Analysis on these data pieces, seeking out statements indicating shifts in thinking. While this is an intuitive process, there are also indicative words and phrases such as “I believe” and “I realize” or indications of self-questioning.

**Interview Two**

The second interview was held in the same fashion as Interview One. I asked the following open-ended questions:

1. What lasting impressions do you have from your experience participating in this research study?

2. How have the difficulties or challenges you experienced through your career impacted you as a teacher?

I collected the participants’ journals and Maggie’s creative work. The responses to these questions were recorded and transcribed, and a 4 Function Analysis—including Transformational Content Analysis—was performed on the transcription and the journal.

**Results**

**The participants.** Discourse is powerful, and discourse among like-minded individuals can be utterly transformational. To determine any transformation of
participants occurring throughout the inquiry I scoured participant journals, Interview Two, transcriptions of the Group Analysis Sessions, and a general perusal of the entire Research Weekend transcriptions using a Transformational Content Analysis.

Determining the cause for these changes is challenging, and may be a moot point. The assumption here is that evidence of transformations arose in the oral dialogues and written journals, from which the following general themes appeared: Transpersonal and Organic themes, insights about interacting with others, healing aspects of the work, and increased understanding of the teacher identity. Within each theme are more specific sub-themes exhibited by one or more participant. It is also important to honor specific individual implications for Cathrine and Maggie, which appear at the end.

Transpersonal/Organic themes:

Increased understanding of self.

I believe I am a more sensitive teacher now. I also believe that I am a better teacher than I would have been without critical incidents. They are painful but they define you. They have made me less self-centered and more willing to listen to others. I know they have enabled me to be a better support person for other teachers (Ellie).

I realize this year how much my health affects my teaching and parenting. I have had several health issues that involved an infected cyst. Looking back, I realize that while those were brewing, I was not at my best - tired, impatient (Cathrine).

After the weekend Maggie had a dream of a student who came to school as a spider that made her realize she was putting to death my fear of inadequacy that I have allowed others to project onto me. I feel [the spider-student and his mother] symbolize my overcoming the problems in my teaching career (Maggie).

Increased desire to be of service.
I realize I am not alone in my experiencing critical incidents and that I could do a better job supporting my peers. I realize now that we all have these moments (Ellie).

It’s got me reflecting more on what kind of a teacher leader I could be, rather than a closed teacher surviving in a classroom (Ellie).

With progressively more vigorous handwriting Maggie wrote: What is my purpose? To offer light in a stagnant school. To BE the place they want to be. To INSPIRE them to achieve. To Make them wonder. To Make them Question. To Make them see it’s okay to swim upstream, when all the other fish are swimming downstream. To EXPLORE. TO DISCOVER. TO WANT TO KNOW MORE. TO NOT SETTLE FOR STATUS QUO. THEY HAVE A BRAIN TOO, YOU KNOW. TO CREATE, TO BE WRONG, TO GET BACK UP AND TO BE STRONG. Life is what they make of it. Not “me” or “them” SCREW THAT. I’m just the door opener, the page turner for the next chapter in their lives, the gardener adding water, watching them bloom. I’m the barber, smoothing out the rough edges. I’m the yellow on the traffic light when I need to bring someone back to reality. It is Less of ME and More of THEM. STAND BACK. LET IT GO. WATCH ALL THE BUSINESS FLOW (Maggie).

Interacting with Others:

An increased understanding or appreciation of others.

Mostly I look at the teachers around me and am amazed by them. I know of a crisis or two for most of them. Yet there they are—day in & day out—doing what is best for children. Wow (Cathrine).

And I came away with more respect and tolerance than maybe I had. When I get in a rush, I’m looking down the halls as a teacher and thinking, “Do I really know that person? Do I really understand what they’re going through? How could I support them more?” (Ellie).

I actually look at things a little differently [after the weekend]. I just kind of look at other teachers, I knew that something had happened to them, and maybe that’s why they blew me off that time. I try to be a little more cognizant and forgiving, I guess, because we all work through so much, there are teachers, some of them have been there longer than me, you can’t be there more than a couple years without going through something stupid, especially these days, you just can’t. I
don’t think that it’s changed my teaching, but I’m trying to cut people some slack a little more. Just try to be a little more aware of what’s going on, just being more cognizant of it. Which could lead to a change in teaching, actually, quite easily (Cathrine).

Teachers often cause crisis-like incidents in other teachers.

And actually teachers cause other teachers to have critical incidents more than not. And that frustrates me (Ellie).

It was a very . . . very . . . good feeling for me. Even though I left there feeling I just wanted more of that. And those are the kind of relationships you want with your colleagues. You know? Not the ones that are, like so many are (makes a motion of putting her fists together) confrontational (Maggie).

Teachers don’t share stories enough.

And what if we had more time to talk, like we did that weekend, with people that we don’t know, that we’re teaching within the same building? Can you imagine the culture change that would happen? It would be amazing. And what that would do for the staff, and for the community, and for the kids (Ellie).

I think that’s one thing that, to me, was the most amazing thing about that weekend was how much we accomplished, how much we learned about each other, about ourselves, about the teaching profession, just . . . by . . . having . . . time . . . to talk. And I don’t mean PLCs, a set agenda, because we’ve all gone to those, and I don’t like them (Cathrine). We have little chance to get together because when we do it becomes a gripe session. Even when we get together with curriculum teams, that can suddenly become a very huge, out of control, let’s just complain (Maggie).

There is a sense of safety sharing stories with strangers.

I didn’t have to worry that these were teachers that I’m going to see the next day. You know? I’m not going to see you guys, and you’re not teaching with me. I don’t have to be careful of what I say because I might regret when I see you in the hallway, or you’re going to tell somebody else that I work with, you know, all those dynamics were missing. All the fear dynamics. So it made for a real good, safe place (Ellie).
You just made it easy to believe in the process, and say, okay, if this is what you need this is what you are going to get, so don’t worry about it. If I don’t want to, I don’t ever have to see those two ladies again, so I don’t have to be, well, what did they think of me? You are a little freer [to share] (Cathrine).

Healing aspects:

It feels good to share and be heard.

It just, it just amazes me how much came out of all of that talking, and not that we’re changing the world or anything, but how good it felt to be able to do that (Cathrine).

What will stay with me is having a sounding board, you know, that I haven’t had. The freedom to be able to come out and talk about those things. I was just at a meeting this evening at school, and it’s like, do I feel comfortable? Even though they’re asking opinions, do I feel comfortable just saying my feelings? Because so many times I don’t feel like it’s welcome, and sometimes it’s because I do have a different philosophy, a different way of looking at things (Maggie).

Reflecting on past difficulties is uncomfortable but valuable.

I thought I was over stuff, and then when you dig that all out again it can still almost be as raw as it was years ago! And that was uncomfortable, I didn’t like that. [laughs] I didn’t like that. And I didn’t like thinking about things I did a really good job packaging, and putting away, and moving on from. It wasn’t fun. [But] just because something is hard to remember or hard to dig up, doesn’t mean it’s not a worthwhile process, and that there isn’t value in that reflection, I would say that maybe that needs to happen more often in order to be a healthy human being or a healthy teacher. We need to revisit things, whether they were warm fuzzies or not (Ellie).

Going back to school that week, I think a lot of those things I put in a pocket somewhere, and just kind of left there and suddenly, when you pull them all out, you put them in a 63 page document, it was just kind of like, wow. I think the tree [her artwork] came in because even though it’s all negative, there’s still a lot of positive that came through all of that. And that’s what I was trying to focus on there, is the positive, the why all this happened. That there are other things that come out of that situation (Maggie).
Healing comes with sharing the stories.

But it is through the sharing of those times that you have healing, and I don’t think you can get healing any other way (Ellie).

You know there are things that I come home and I rant about, and get upset about and cry, and Chris pats me on the back and listens, and then I’m done. And then, like you said, I do what I gotta do. It’s a story. It becomes part of me (Cathrine).

Identity:

There is a holistic nature to teacher identity.

I guess my takeaway when the weekend was all over, I was really surprised or reminded might be a better word, how incredibly sensitive teachers are. What I mean by that is that we do not do a good job of separating our-selves, our emotional, spiritual, physical selves, from our work. Our work is what defines us and we don’t separate it, and we can’t separate ourselves from our job because we deal with human beings, not products (Ellie).

Teachers carry their burdens alone.

When I walked away (after the weekend), the overwhelming feeling was sad. And the sadness wasn’t the dredging up of the critical incidents so much as we don’t have to carry them as burdens for as long as we do. And so alone. And I felt that everybody there had carried their burdens alone. And as teachers, of all people, we’re so good at not letting our students do that, and reaching out to them. Why don’t we do that for each other more? And I think there are places that you are lucky enough to have that happen, where you have support, but for the most part, the way teaching is designed, that’s a risky thing, and teachers don’t. Teachers don’t reach out to other teachers (Ellie).

Teachers are at a high risk for critical incidents.

I came away thinking we have much more critical incidents than other people would and other types of professions, and we are at a high risk for that. And I walked away thinking, Oh my gosh! How do teachers make it—a career—for their whole lives? It’s a miracle that they do (Ellie).

Individual Implications:
Large-scale questions posed in Maggie’s post-weekend journal indicate thoughtful reflection about her purpose and place in the field. In addition to the above question about her purpose, Maggie writes four separate entries considering different aspects of her professional life:

Ellie asked why I was still there . . . good question. Are my roots so deep that I can’t move from [the district I grew up in]?

I know that I must focus on a change within myself. A Change for the positive. The big question has been, you know, why am I doing this? And is this really what I want to be doing? Even though you sometimes don’t feel that you’re doing what you should be doing? You really are. We’re not getting into it to see the glory of it, sometimes you don’t see any of that at all, ever. It was a good realization. I certainly persevered to be where I am now. Doing what I want to do. Then my question is: Am I in the district that I should be in? That is the question. I said it to my parents and I said it to Mark [her husband].

And I’m thinking, did I move into Black Widow’s role? I do. I wonder really, am I perceived that way? Sometimes I feel like I’m the confrontation piece.

One of Cathrine’s comments at Sunday breakfast show that she, too, is thinking deeply about aspects of her personal and professional life that are in need of renewal.

I was trying to think, within my comfort level, to begin, [creating a pathway through the ravine behind my house] especially for my son, because he is very much like me, very much an indoor person, like my daughter is [always] out in the dirt. I need to figure out how I can be more in tune with that. I don’t know. Technology, too— I have four computers in my classroom and I never use them. I was a computer programmer, this should be a [no-brainer], and it’s not. I need to work on that.

Ellie: That’s a very specific life change.

Cathrine: Change is good. Scary, but good. I was thinking about that. Yes, and it’s both your faults.
The researcher. In an Organic Inquiry, it is assumed that the researcher has a strong commitment, interest and background in the topic; thus she is more likely to be changed by the study than the participants. The process begins and ends with the researcher’s stories: for me, the 5 Story Arc which was woven throughout Chapter 1, as compared to the Veteran Story I created as the inquiry came to a close. This is the first measure of change. Other data include researcher journals and the 4 Function Self-Interviews completed after each interaction throughout the study. I begin with research journals.

My research journals are oversized three-ring binders containing a chronological record of all writing, drawings, transcriptions, and conversations from the inquiry. I painstakingly revisited the research notebook with Transformational Content Analysis, marking instances of new realizations. In so doing I felt as though I re-lived the experience of creating, establishing, implementing and reflecting on this inquiry in triple-fast time, and looking down from a mile above. Here are a few themes:

Burying the Ruler: An art exhibit at the Art Gallery of Ontario in Toronto (I visited in October 2014, for a conference) I saw an altered photo collage by Native American artist Carl Beam titled, *Burying the Ruler*. Beam literally buried a ruler in the dirt as a gesture of hope, seeking a burying of limiting Western values that “rule” us and a revaluing of traditional knowledge. This struck me deeply, especially as I was beginning to form my research questions and felt the conflict of the many voices on my dissertation committee and elsewhere. In many ways I felt that the knowledge I valued was going to be difficult to give voice. During the conference my notes included:

*I’m struck by how helpless people feel. Despair is the greatest enemy.*
What can we do as school teachers to make a difference? You know what? For me, transpersonal psychology is my hope. That’s what I need.

Dream: I am walking through the grounds and find a heavy furry buffalo skin and pick it up and put it over my shoulders. I see a Native American chief walking toward me, and he has chest hair or a furry front that is in the shape of a heart on his chest. I bow respectfully to him as we pass one another and when he gets past me he complains loudly about the white man’s disrespect for the land and animals. It felt like he was questioning my motives for having that skin. Like I had not come by it honorably.

This dream told me that I had to earn the right to research in the way I believed. I had to work for it, support it, prove it.

Soul. In mid-November I posted an angry rant on my Facebook page:

Today I realized that I have spent too much time [on campus] recently, thinking the way they think, and writing the way they would have me write. And researching the limited and contrived they would have me do it. I have lost a piece of my soul to it. I forget who I am sometimes, especially since I don’t teach every semester. How can a piece of land dedicated to higher learning have so much hardness to it?

I also wrote in my journal:

I am sick inside. My body and heart and mind are all worn out. I’m fighting—literally fighting a battle in my head the last couple of days over the wording of my project/problem. If I am going to try to build a proposal that doesn’t tear apart the stories I want to tell I am going to have to really support it. Tonight I visited the Sofia site to catch up with my work for class. The people and the ideas there are in that soulful language I understand, but that I fall out of when I’m away from it for too long. If I’m not careful I’m going to forget the transpersonal aspect of this entire study and I will hate it and it will hurt me. And I will either do a crappy job or I will give it up.

This strikes me as very important now, in June 2015. A few days ago a good friend said to me that he had seen many people go through the dissertation process and become hardened or lose their soul to the work. He didn’t see that in me; he saw that the
work invigorated me, and that opening a research space for powerful teacher stories in this way is important work. I was bringing soul to the work, which is what I wanted and needed.

Crucifixion: In early April, just before the Research Weekend, I struggled with the Easter holiday. I could not manage to see a cross without viewing it as a device of torture. I spoke to a friend who is an expert in Carl Jung. She said (from my journal):

*Do you want to know what Jung said about the crucifixion? It’s when you can’t go left and you can’t go right and you can’t go up and you can’t go down. You just have to open yourself up and let the self go, let the ego go, and let something that is not you have its way. And then you are changed. The resurrection - then you are changed.*

Making space: After the Research Weekend (late-April) I was inundated with work to do; transcriptions, analysis, writing, and the end of semester grading. As I thought about the weekend I mused:

*I was surprised that when the tears came and the powerful stories emerged—I was a little at a loss. As my researcher-self bumped up against my teacher-self, I didn’t know how to do that, except for simply allowing that story to have its space.*

As a teacher it has been my practice to guide discussions and stories to a curricular point—a means to an end. But these stories were not to be guided. I had to learn to open my hands (*you can’t go left, you can’t go right, you can’t go up, you can’t go down*) and let the story unfold.

These reflections of transformation emerged from my research journals. Another source of data is the 4 Function Self-Analyses, completed after each interaction. I have been deeply touched by each participant; therefore I simply chose a mandala that visually represented each participant to include here.
Figure 4.26. Cathrine: The Dragon Lady (4/28/2015)

Figure 4.27. Maggie: Pearl of Great Price (4/1/2015)

Figure 4.28. Ellie: Offering (5/1/2015)
Soon the time came to rewrite my stories of crisis. The participant Veteran Stories were member checked and the Resonance Panel participants were selected. I knew that I needed to include my Veteran Story with the others when I sent them to the Resonance Panel readers. I sat quietly and thought about the task. I brought out my paper and pencils and drew.

Figure 4.29. Tempest (5/18/2015)
Tempest, May 18, 2015
It was always a risk,
    stepping in front of the classroom.
    and still is.
Because we walk into Mystery
    alongside Mysterious Souls
    we can only know if we open to them and invite
    them in.
This kind of vulnerability, deep within the tempest, is the only way.
    The only way to open toward truly Being.
For you, for me, for Us
    and for the
    greater Whole.

The next day I pulled out my journal and wrote:
I just reread the Veteran Stories and put the analysis stuff on my charts. This is what was needed. I can start writing now. I needed my rewritten stories to put in with the participants’ Veteran Stories for the panel. I put two mandalas in for my new Veteran Story. Yesterday’s mandala and an old one called “An Ancient Cycle.” I am sitting here thinking, I’m tired of my story. Delving into my story. I just couldn’t do it again. I—really—I could not even bring myself to dredge it up to retell it.

As I started writing this just now, I was really concerned, you know? As if this was just exhaustion, writing too much, tired of the topic. But reading [participant] stories today—last night—remember, was it, Friday? When I was so discouraged and tired of working? Yet when I returned to their stories I was drawn back in. Totally re-invigorated.

And today I don’t want to relive my own. I think I’ve learned what I needed to learn from them this time around. I think a purpose of this project—an end product for me, I mean—is that it pulled me away from my own limited experience and opened me to the varieties of ways of being.

It has seriously moved me from always inward seeking for answers to also outward seeking, listening, finding the good, and opening the conversation. This is a pretty high level for me. Especially when the team reproached me through the proposal defense that I was applying my own—my experience (of The Hero’s Journey) to the whole project. There are bits of the Hero’s Journey in these stories, but it reflects the uniqueness of the person who experiences it. Truly. There cannot be generalizations made at all. The experiences need to be looked at with a close lens, but they also have to be viewed in context of their lives—childhood, home, faith and school culture, motivations.

I am amazed at how multifaceted we all are. How could we ever even think of standardizing this field?

The second mandala I included as my Veteran Story appears below. I created it in the mountains of Los Gatos, California, on retreat with my masters cohort in transpersonal psychology. The fresh green trees, the way life grows out of life in a forest, and a growing sense of becoming an Elder in my profession led me to draw “An Ancient Cycle.”
My hope is that you
take all that I have all that I give you
and grow yourself smarter, taller, reaching higher
than I ever could.
You emerge from me as I did from my own
teachers,
Smarter, taller, reaching higher than they ever could.
They are in me.
I am in you.
And when you grow, we all grow;
An Ancient Cycle.

The mandala was more than 18 months old, yet I am just realizing its ramifications in my
life as I move—with the completion of this inquiry—into Elderhood.

**The reader.** One of the more difficult aspects of this inquiry was how to imagine
the reader’s response or transformation as a result of reading participant stories.
Clements (2003) spoke about the presentation of participant stories to early readers as
stories that induct, integrate or invite. Induction stories are created to induce a liminal or
spiritual experience, integration stories present a way to integrate the storied experience
into one’s own identity, and invitation stories (the purpose of the stories presented here) are written to encourage the reader to enter into the story within the context of the reader’s own experience. In invitation stories, the narratives are offered as a means of interplay or parallel between the reader’s story and the one on the page. In the instructions and prompts I sent the Resonance Panel readers (See Appendix C), I asked for instances of reflection (similar to), resonance (qualities of the story that are meaningful) and new realizations.

Because the Veteran Stories are the crux of this work with crisis-like experiences, these were the stories used to gauge reader response and resonance. In addition, I included the final versions of my own Veteran Story, the two mandalas and poems from the previous section, giving myself the pseudonym “Grace.” Hence, the Resonance Panel readers were invited to read four veteran stories and respond to them.

Of the 11 teachers volunteering for the study, I asked those who were not selected as story-telling participants to consider becoming a Resonance Panel reader. Four participants volunteered. Of the four, two participants were in-service teachers (Emily and Bailey), one was a retired teacher (Charles), and one was a school counselor (Matthew). Emily is a second grade teacher at a suburban public International Baccalaureate school. Bailey, an Art teacher, recently left public school teaching after a difficult schedule and lack of support caused her crisis. Charles is a retired high school foreign language teacher. Matthew entered the profession as a teacher, but left after a year. He gained a master’s degree and is now a school counselor in an inner city school. Their backgrounds and experiences, like the story-telling participants, are very unique. While I initially considered that the instructions and the prompts would elicit similarly
styled responses to the stories, I was surprised at the variety in the replies. The prompts were:

Prompt 1: Write about how the stories reflect (are similar to) your experience as a teacher.

Prompt 2: Write about how the stories resonate with you. (Resonance as qualities of the stories that are personally meaningful or important to you, even if unrelated to teaching)

Prompt 3: Write about any new realization or growth you experienced by reading these stories.

One of the most powerful aspects of the reader responses was that three of the four spent a great deal of time and energy retelling stories from their professional lives in response to those they read. An invitation to share stories of their own was not part of the prompts. I have known Bailey, Charles, and Matthew for a number of years and I expected them to feel quite safe sharing from their lives. However Emily, whom I have not met face to face and do not know well, also reflected deeply using stories of interactions with her colleagues, parents, and her philosophical beliefs. One reader responded intensely to the written stories in a more intuitive way.

Emily stated that Cathrine’s story reminds me of my own situation now, and told her own story of working with two other second grade teachers with vastly different philosophies. She says:

This puts me on an island. So I have some of the same feelings Cathrine had with not having support, and in the end I find I seek the approval of [teachers in] the higher grades and our coordinator for the pat on the back I need, so [that I] know I am on the right path.
She also reveals: *I am just now getting to the point where I trust what I am doing, so maybe I am at the point of rebuilding my egg.*

This is quite a realization to make in the midst of such philosophical conflict. In response to Maggie’s story about Manipulator’s parents, Emily shared a similar situation that happened quite recently with a parent, saying:

*I am more scared of parents than ever before. Getting past these kinds of parents is very tough for me; it is the stress that holds me back.*

Ellie’s story reminded her of *that fine line I walk every day.* Emily spoke about the disconnect between the district’s directives and her philosophy:

*I do however, hear the chant of my district, “do what is best for the student” in the back of my head all the time, while at the same time they are handing out pacing guides and mandatory materials.*

Emily’s response to Ellie’s situation with her friend was: *heart breaking.* Maybe *that is why I mostly have friends at this time in my life no best friends.* She ends by attending to Grace’s (my) poem with a written “image” of her own:

*She is right, every day we take a risk and we put ourselves out there. This is the image that comes to mind after reading her poem: Every day we get out on that stage and most days we put on our best show, some shows are flops and we change the script and try again. A few days we might get booted off the stage, and those are the bad days. Not always our fault, but we take the fall. We pick ourselves up and start all over again. No two audiences are the same, no two classes are the same, no two children are the same, we have to write and rewrite the script every day and sometimes every hour to unfold the mystery of how that child is going to learn.*

It is evident that Emily felt the invitation of the stories. She was reminded of her own crisis-like experiences, not only in a specific way with her stories, but also in the metaphor of how teachers interact with learning institutions, especially in her phrase:
Ellie’s story reminds me of that fine line I walk every day. That she responded to
“Grace’s” creative work with a metaphor of her own shows a wonderful sense of a give
and take, responding to art with art.

Bailey, too, responded with stories of her own teaching crisis. In story 1
(Cathrine) I could personally relate to the feelings of isolation described. I was also a
teacher who jumped around from spot to spot and found it difficult to feel part of a team.
She tells of her own experiences avoiding the teacher’s room because of the complaining.
I found it infuriating to hear others complain while I felt I was in the worst position a
teacher could possibly be teaching. I lost all empathy for other people’s circumstances
. . . and pulled out of engaging with other teachers. She even tells of her eventual
decision to leave: I took a walk one day at lunch and felt I might fall on the sidewalk. I
knew I could not continue as I was teaching. I took sick time and never returned to
teaching at public school. Cathrine’s story and images (Bailey is an artist and art
teacher) truly invited Bailey to share this crisis point.

Bailey commented on Maggie’s story with Manipulator’s parents: Maggie’s story
reminded me of the one and only phone call I made to a parent, who was later shot by his
son, a very angry young boy. Ellie’s story reminded her of another tragedy in the life of a
student. Bailey considers the tragic impact of so many lives interacting in schools, and
how teachers are intensely involved with other people. She writes:

In my first year of teaching, a veteran teacher listed out all of the terrible things
and illnesses that affected the faculty in my district. I can’t remember all of them,
but I was shocked at the amount of cancer and illnesses that impacted the faculty.
After reflecting more, it absolutely is a mind and body connection. I myself was
in a car accident with lasting physical injuries and contracted mononucleosis.
I was most interested to read Bailey’s thoughts on her emotional and physical responses to the stories in general. *I was surprised at how much anxiety I felt while reading these stories. It was much harder than I anticipated. I felt a bit of empathy while hearing them, but also felt that twinge of empathy lacking. I know that is a signal that my hurts are not totally healed. Remembering the helpless and powerless feelings triggers protective anger. I recognize this lack of empathy as a symptom of the suffered environment.* Because of her own difficulties, she felt intensely trapped in the situation I was in, with no voice or control over my life and career. *I can sense my own internal hesitation and do not want to be in a situation that I feel I can’t easily get out of. Fear of commitment is definitely present after being in an abusive working environment.* As she copes with the remnants of crisis and remains in limbo as to her own professional direction, Bailey emphasized how impressed she was that the teachers in the stories were dedicated to the profession and stayed true to their calling after such trying circumstances.

Matthew wrote a great deal, responding to each Veteran Story in turn, and telling powerful stories from his short time in teaching and his current role as a school counselor. *With Cathrine’s story being so short and personal, there isn’t a whole lot that resonated with me beyond two things: 1) The idea that you can do anything for a year, which was basically my motto for my first year teaching, and 2) the idea of making your vocation your own, or building up confidence in the self after it has been torn down.* He then details the story of his first year teaching, in what the local newspaper called the worst school in the state. Cathrine’s little book, with the witty statements of what she
had learned, reached into Matthew and invited him to share from his critical and difficult first year and his eventual decision to become a school counselor.

Maggie’s story didn’t really connect with Matthew, as he was not religious or spiritual. However he did respond to Maggie’s focus on children and the poor behavior of adults, and while he did not share stories, he shared many of his frustrations with teachers. He writes:

Most of my frustrations now as a school counselor are with the adults not doing what they should be doing or making our lives a lot harder because of their interpersonal issues or prejudices against certain children or families or other teachers. I know it isn’t, but sometimes I wish that the educational environment could somehow be different than other professional environments, that adults working there would try harder to model the behavior they want out of their children, not end up emulating it.

Matthew was distressed by Ellie’s stories, because: I see teachers like that on a daily basis, who don’t know how to separate their life from their job. My response to her story is based around the [how] each one of us has a personal belief when it comes to the ‘best’ for students and doing what is the ‘best.’ My role as School Counselor puts me at odds sometimes with teachers or others when ‘the best’ we can/need to do for students is different because of our different experiences with them. He continues with a recent story of a teacher who believed that the ‘best’ for a student was to apologize to her for being disrespectful, yet would not take his apology because he apologized but he didn’t mean it, he wasn’t sincere. Matthew’s point seems to be that we each have our own ideas of what is “best” for students—and these ideas can often clash because of the unique and individual way that students and teachers interact. While Ellie and Matthew would most likely debate on these ideas, the ultimate point is that Ellie’s story unearthed powerful
emotions and a detailed story from Matthew. He did not simply disagree with Ellie and go on to the next story. He was invited into a dialogue with her story, sharing his points, a story of his own and his own conclusions on her interactions with students and teachers.

To respond to “Grace’s” stories, Matthew repeated two quotes:

*It was always a risk, stepping in front of the classroom.*

*My hope is that you take all that I have, all that I give you, and grow yourself smarter, taller, reaching higher than I ever could.*

*How those two quotes resonate with me.* Matthew continues to talk about how stepping in front of the classroom was a great risk for him:

*I am amazed that I made it a full year that first year. I wouldn’t consider it a failure at all; to me it was a great success. I got out when I knew I should have gotten out. I didn’t stick around just because I was already there. I blew open my life and spent time searching for what I really wanted to do. I felt [like] just a cog in a machine as a teacher, unable to give my students what they really needed, which more than anything seemed to be a place to reflect, to slow down, to talk about their lives, to find some meaning in something, to encounter unconditional positive regard and learn how to give it (maybe just a little).*

I think that what stands out the most about Matthew’s writing is that he is writing in a way that solidifies (to his reader) his purpose and his place in his chosen profession. His stories are illustrative, they help make his points, but the most powerful aspect is that the Veteran stories have invited Matthew to share from what he truly believes.

*The teachers in my buildings joke (I hope) about giving me kids to fix, and I laugh along with them but I want to tell them that there is no way I can fix what isn’t broken. All I’m doing, when I’m doing it well and right, is showing them where they hid their tools and how to use them so that they can ‘fix’ themselves. It’s a curious place to be in because I know that I am most successful, that a student has really learned how to ‘fix’ themselves when they don’t need me, and it’s a great feeling, to not be needed.*

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Charles’ responses were quite unlike the rest. Rather than answer with stories, his tended toward feeding back in the spirit of gift-giving and included the intuitive and sensing functions. For each participant he spoke to the places where his body resonated with the stories, he gave an intuitive “message” to the teller, and his thoughts on how the stories reflected the teller.

Charles felt Cathrine’s story in his skin, feeling warmth in his heart. His message to her: She is One Who Knows. Cathrine’s tale of being “led out from” [the Latin root of educator, which means “to lead out from”] is sweetened by how she made the small space, the broken shells of her younger life a reference point of honor.

Maggie’s stories were a Call to Adventure. They brought an image of fire to Charles.

I felt the story in my spine, as if I feel the strength of what holds me vertically, but also, fear and memories of how it feels to have someone try to break me by breaking my back.

The message he offers Maggie: Bring the Healing Fire.

Ellie’s story brought the word ‘warrior’, whose story speaks to me from the trenches of our profession. She is at the heart of the battle for the actual sol of education, in my opinion.

He felt her story in his eyes, throat and heart. Her message was: Speak with courage of what your eyes have seen.

Of Grace’s stories, Charles wrote:

To speak in poetry and images in this way has an opening impact on me. I feel it physically across my face, like my face being spread apart. Intellectually, I recognize the style of teaching that I prefer, the one that stays woven with Mystery, with the big “M.” Charles’ message to “Grace”: She is courageous enough to face this.

It is interesting that Charles’ responses did not include the sharing of stories from his teaching life. Having reached the end of his public school career he must have many.
Instead, the Veteran Stories acted more as induction to spiritual experiences than an invitation for Charles to revisit his own teaching stories. I suspect that this cannot be attributed to the stories themselves, as much as to the attitude with and purpose for which Charles approached the stories. While the responses are symbolic, there is a deep sense of experience and recognition in the words Charles offers the storytellers.

. . . memories of how it feels to have someone try to break me by breaking my back.
. . . from the trenches of our profession.

These lines especially make me think that Charles knows difficulties of his own. It appears that instead of revisiting those difficulties, he directs his energies outward on others, in the spirit of giving.

Clements (2003) encouraged researchers to provide a diverse range of experiences (stories) so that a variety of readers can engage with and experience the material. While this was on my mind during the Research Weekend and in the re-composition of the Veteran Stories, the diversity in the stories simply arose from the diversity of participants and their experiences. The responses of the Resonance Panel readers suggests that the stories have the capacity to invite future readers to revisit their own teaching lives, especially those times of crisis-like experiences. After reading the Veteran Stories, these readers shared gifts of themselves with me, and gifts of insight for the participants. This is a true spiritual exchange.

As a singer songwriter I have often performed in front of groups of people. What I find interesting is that when individuals come forward to talk to me afterward, they rarely talk about me—they come up to talk about themselves. They share how a certain song reminded them of their father, how another song made them remember sing-alongs
around the campfire, and they whisper nervously how they once wanted to sing and write
songs. When I am in the presence of these reminiscences I am encouraged by the
connectivity to be had in the sharing of music. It is the same with good theatre, a lovely
film, or a well told story: you should walk away thinking about yourself and your own life.

The group story. During the research weekend at the end of every work session,
participants and I reviewed the session and talked about themes and new realizations they
had as a result of that day’s work. This was to become the Group Story. As I distilled
and prepared to include them here, I realized that what I was about to write was not the
ture Group Story. What emerged were personal themes of what they had learned from
their crisis-like events supported by what they had said and heard, which fit more under
Research Question One than Two. The method I had planned was not a true indication of
the group’s movement through the project, just a check-in on themes and realizations. I
had to step back. I revisited my research journal to the time when I was planning this
project many months ago, when I was working through the Group Story portion of my
Organic Inquiry text by Clements (2003). Even then I was stumped. I could not
determine a way to tell the group’s story, so I set a dream intention. This is from my
journal.

October 14, 2014. Dream.

I’m with one of my brothers, and we are in the basement of our childhood home.
I’m visiting and it’s been a busy day. We’re getting ready to go to sleep and I am
so tired. I curl up in an unmade bed, and my brother tells me that’s his bed. I
apologize and look around to find a bed wedged between the ceiling and a shelf.
I climb in but I feel claustrophobic and cramped. I’m not sure what to do.
My immediate thought about this dream is that any attempt to define the Group Story would contain it too much. I get that, I do, but much of this is going to be difficult for a committee to take, anyway. I can’t go in and say, “Meh! We’ll see.” I think I have figured it out, today, that the Group Story isn’t like a story at all, it’s looking at shifts, connections, etc. in the group. I was obviously confining myself by looking at it that way—as a story.

While this was insightful at the time, I still did not plan a meaningful way of pulling together the Group Story in my research proposal. The beauty of Organic Inquiry is that planning, either good or poor, does not restrict flexibility in the research process. As the researcher, if I see where something does not work I am free to look for alternatives that match the research questions, the data and the project as a whole, as long as I can support my choice.

What I see now as the Group Story is the arc from the first interview to the weekend to the second interview. The group was separate for the interviews, they came together, we shared, and then we separated for the final interviews. With that in mind, the actual group story starts and ends with my words, my ideas and my planning: One person; three separate people; the group of four; three separate people; back to one person.

Poetic forms are used throughout Narrative and Arts-Based Inquiries (Clandinin, 2013; Leavy, 2009). While poet Carl Leggo (2008) stated, “Poetic knowing has been too much ignored in human science research” (p. 167), he continued by discussing M. Prendergast’s compilation of various forms and names under which poetry has been used in research, including research poetry, data poetry, and narrative poetry. Poetic knowing balances “logos—the realm of logic and objectivity” and “mythos—the realm of all that is felt and organic, of all that appeals to the inner world of emotions” (p. 167). Sinding,
Gray, and Nisker (2008) wrote that Laurel Richardson “fashioned” (p. 461) a poem from a research interview transcript, herself becoming “rearranged by the artful representation of qualitative research” (p. 460).

The Group Story that follows is told in word “bites” from transcripts of recordings, all chronological. It is in Richardson’s style of fashioning and rearranging found text through all of the data. From my research journals I pulled out words and phrases from times when I was planning or writing about aspects of the project where the teachers were working together. From individual Interviews One and Two, I culled words and phrases that indicated connection to other teachers and to the future work of the project, or interesting and unique personal comments. From the Research Weekend transcripts I looked for interactions between group members that may not have occurred without this distinct project and phrases and distill ideas the group discussed, eliminating names. It was a very intuitive process, working with words and chronology, making the piece meaningful and nascent.

**Jennifer**

“An integrated individual begins to interact harmoniously with other individuals who, as a result of resonance, begin to put themselves and the world around them in order”*

*The “who” of my research.  
The Hero's Journey  
a frame, not a container.  
I get butterflies. My body concurs.  
Lessons, wisdom from the elders (my participants) for the future traveler, insight into the way the story of these teachers wants and needs to be told.  
Needs to be told.  
Playfulness. Synthesis. Intelligence  
Transformational?  
Interviews, Field texts, Editing, Member Checking  
Research Texts  
Persistence of Identity

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Meditation on Intent

Cathrine
Computer programmer, it is so lonely.
In a cubie for the rest of my life?
Blech.
I’m sure this will be interesting.
I don’t know why she wants me, I don’t have,
I don’t have anything.
They’d been friends for years.
I didn’t belong.
You have to work together.
Figure it out.
“You’re weird.”
“Yeah, just like you!”

Maggie
And I love, I love that kind of relationship with people.
To be able to bounce ideas off of each other
Hey—
What do you think about this?
I keep longing
longing
to have that kind of relationship with teachers.
(heavy sigh)
“Hey that’s so great!”
“What about this?”
“I can do this”
We did.
(both laugh)

Ellie
I had very strong relationships with my teachers.
Lab rat. (Sneezes)
I didn’t mind working that hard.
I’ve met a lot of teachers who are afraid of change.
They don’t change.
They don’t move.
What the government does to teachers,
and what teachers do to teachers.
It’s all ego.
It’s a very stressful place to be.
Friday
I like a circle, a circle’s good.
I love this. Yeah. I have to say them all.
Other people going through the same thing.
That’s exactly what I was going to say!
It’s not just me.

Quote. Unquote.
Remembering what has resulted and reflection,
which we Don’t Do.
Teachers are very passionate.
I mean, your passion is obvious.
In your Voices, and in your Stories . . .
I’m looking forward to hearing more stories.
It’s not about You. Get over it.
We’re always treating them as Less Than.
Well, that didn’t work.
Retreat. Regroup. And do it again.

Saturday
I have little interaction with other teachers [but] these women are truly inspiring.
I am humbled by their strength and integrity. Just plain interesting.
No idea what to expect, but this is better than I could have imagined.
We talked about that, too, on the walk back, you know.
And I took a Xanax before I came yesterday. I’ll admit it.
Oh, I totally agree.

I need your plans. Okay.
I’m serious. Okay.

Okay, that’s what we’ll do.
That’s how it’s supposed to be.
Really deep, altering, life-altering situations.
But yet we all . . . still . . . are choosing to teach.
If we could get together and just talk.
If we could just—talk.
I am not alone.

Sunday
Why does it have to be straight up and down?
I’m telling you I would not have ever said that before I met her.
It’s my fault. (laughing)
(laughing) It’s all . . . your . . . fault.
There’s literally no one who knows all that story, how it all worked on me.
Thank you for sharing that.
Honored.
We give students things we don’t give ourselves.
Time to encourage.
Talk it out.
Maybe a step beyond your research is how to heal those,
and now we all know that, too.
It isn’t to try not to have them, try to defend yourself from them, so much as
accepting them,
digesting them,
processing them,
sharing them,
healing them,
keep teaching.

Ellie
You wanted to get critical incidents out of the experiences.
It was such a small group, you had a lot of variety for a small group.
How sensitive teachers are, and we have many more critical incidents than other people would.
We are at a high risk.
Oh my gosh!
How do teacher make it a career for their whole lives?
It’s a miracle that they do.
I loved being trusted with their stories.
Everyone had carried their burdens

Cathrine
It was intense, for sure.
As soon as you put a bunch of teachers in a room
we don’t shut up.
Someone ought to
1) Figure this out
2) Figure out a way to embrace it, and use it.
How much we learned about each other, about ourselves, about the teaching profession, just
by having
time
to talk.

Maggie
When I came home I felt as though suddenly I was on an alien plant.
Really.
Having a sounding board.
The freedom to be able to come out and talk about those things.
I can’t imagine being the only one
Who feels this way.
alone. And teachers cause other teachers to have critical incidents more often than not. If we had time to talk can you imagine the culture change that would happen? It amazes me how much came out of all of that, not that we’re changing the world or anything, but how good it felt to be able to do that. We can’t do that through email. It’s not the same. I left there feeling I just wanted more of that. And those are the kinds of relationships you want with your colleagues. You know? Not the ones that are, like so many are—confrontational.

Jen
I noticed we didn’t want to leave one another at the B&B this morning. Standing together. Talking about small things to remain together. I was honored by that body language. “Softening your attitude opens your heart.” (Fortune Cookie) I can’t pigeonhole her, or any of them, though it is tempting, because it is automatically what we do. I think that maybe maybe I need to—want to—should consider eliminating pigeonholes altogether. The filing away of traits and behaviors and, by proxy, of human beings. Enigma. Mandala. Risk. Fear. Looking back, there were times (like now) when I am so frightened I have taken this great leap into blackness that I can barely think about the future. I just don’t know how to face it. And sometimes the sheer unknown and possibilities are wonderful—thrilling. Risky business, vulnerability.

*(Bialek, 2009, p. 10)*
Summary

This chapter described the research inquiry and shared results of the analysis. The research inquiry began with the selection of three veteran teachers from a pool of volunteers. Each participant’s Introduction story was presented with thematic analysis revealing aspects of Cathrine, Ellie, and Maggie’s identity, such as early school experiences, family influences, and personality aspects. These early insights continued as individual recurring themes for each participant in their later stories and throughout the chapter.

The chapter continued with detailed descriptions of the data gathering process and analysis for Research Question One, which enquired into the lived experience of crisis-like incidents in veteran teachers. Veteran Stories for each participant were presented and analyzed using the four Jungian functions (Thinking, Feeling, Sensing and Intuition) and Transformational Content.

Research Question Two seeks to gauge any transformative changes resulting from or occurring parallel to participants’ and the researcher’s time in the inquiry. Likewise, thoughts, opinions, and reflections from four Resonance Panel readers revealed much about the perceived response of future readers of the stories. The chapter concludes with the Group Story, which uses researcher and participant verbatim speech and journal writings to follow the path of thought through the inquiry, from the researcher, to individual interviews, to the Research Weekend, back to individual interviews, and culminating in the researcher’s final thoughts.

Chapter 5 offers a summary of the study, assumptions, and limitations. I then share implications resulting of the interplay of the inquiry on small, local populations.
including the researcher; the veteran teacher-storytellers; and readers. The implications of the inquiry for the larger sphere of influence are then considered: the impact on teachers in general; the profession; teacher trainers and coaches, Organic Inquiry, and the existing body of knowledge and future research. The chapter ends with the researcher’s final thoughts.
Chapter V

Conclusions and Implications

Figure 5.1. I never knew you were there (4/11/2015)

I was reaching up
  to take them with me
  the young, vulnerable
  and voiceless.
This is the only way I know how
  to serve them
and help them reach their Purpose.
  Today, in reaching,
  I grasped a fingertip:
  A jolt of recognition.
  You?
  I never knew you were there!
Summary of the Study

Due to my own experience with crisis and how it altered my trajectory and beliefs as a teacher, I became interested in how these types of events—crisis-like events (also referred to as critical incidents and crisis)—had the capacity to change teacher identity and philosophy. I wondered about others’ experiences with crisis-like incidents. In addition, as I investigated critical incidents and crisis in the context of teacher’s lives I found that while there is a strong body of research on these incidents, the research focuses primarily on preservice teachers (Meijer, 2011; Meijer & Oolbekkink, 2012; Milner, 2002; Troman & Woods, 2009), and teachers within the first five years of service (Danielewicz, 2001). There are researchers who believe that these types of incidents are under-researched within the context of veteran teachers’ experiences (Meijer, 2011; Meijer & Oolbekkink, 2012; Rolls & Plauborg, 2009). Therefore, my specific purpose within this study was to discover, describe, and understand more about the phenomena, how teachers navigated them and their effects on teachers. My research questions were:

Research Question 1: What is the lived experience of the process of growth in veteran teachers, particularly as it relates to crisis-like situations?

Research Question 2: What might be learned by the researcher, participants, and readers through inquiring into veteran teachers’ stories of crisis-like situations and the process of growth?

To answer my research questions, I used a combination of Organic Inquiry, a transpersonal research methodology, and Narrative Research. I selected three veteran teachers, Cathrine, Ellie, and Maggie, each of whom acknowledged the presence of crisis-like incidents during their careers and through two individual interviews, a
weekend of group sharing and storytelling, and written journals gleaned specific stories of crisis and their effects on these teachers.

Entry Stories (explaining how they came to teaching) and Now Stories (outlining their present teaching assignment and beliefs) formed an Introduction to each teacher, and the emergence of early themes showed foundational parts of their teacher identities. Their Veteran Stories of crisis served to give insights into Research Question One as to the lived experience of these events, as well as what each teacher learned from them. Verbatim stories were compiled and member checked for accuracy. Finished stories were analyzed using Jung’s four functions (Thinking, Feeling, Sensing, and Intuition) and evidence of Transformational Content.

Cathrine’s early experiences as a highly gifted child were fraught with feelings of being ostracized and a “freak,” and these themes frame her teaching life as well. She learned to persevere. Her Veteran Story used the metaphor of birth as a structure, and hidden within the metaphor was the difficult and emotional nature of the experiences themselves. Each phase of her story came with its lesson learned, simple and forthright. Among these lessons were persistence, flexibility, civility, and the need to make her classroom her own.

By contrast, Maggie’s stories were richly detailed and chronological—and in present tense. She relived them as she retold them, which was very emotional. She used all four functions in the telling, and each story focused on a specific function. The first story was emotional, the second was centered on the body, and the third was strongly intuitive. Throughout her pieces the intuitive function appeared most consistently. I believe that for Maggie retelling these stories had the strongest healing effect of all the
participants. In the presence of safe, supportive, and experienced teachers she felt heard and validated. She listed what she learned from crisis-like events at the end of her stories, such as not letting others define her, not sweating “the small stuff,” remaining confident in your truths, and the importance of a student centered classroom.

Ellie’s stories had a strong sense of thoughtful reflection. It was evident that she spent time sorting through her stories as they occurred, through journals and time in her beloved woods. Her stories were balanced in thinking, intuition, sensing, and feeling. She told hers stories in past tense and it is evident that she learned a great deal about her philosophy of teaching and learning and knows she is doing exactly what she is meant to do. She did not list lessons learned as a result of the events she described; she listed her truths that have been solidified, such as: how to trust your gut; care more about the kids than the rules and the work; how to reach out to others; and grades do not mean anything.

The analysis also included ideas and themes that recurred in some way throughout the stories. These included passion for the profession, the existence of or need for change, varying needs for and levels of self-reflection, conflicts of belief and belonging, harmed and healed relationships and the existence of a Core Belief, or Sacred La.

Research Question Two sought to understand shifts in participants, the researcher, and the future reader as a result of or parallel to the research discussions during their time together. Also of importance is the telling of the Group Story.

Participants’ transformational shifts were gauged through Interview Two and their written journals, especially those during and after the Research Weekend. These documents were analyzed for Transformational Content and organized into themes: of
transpersonal themes; themes of interacting with others; healing aspects; and identity. In addition there were themes particular to each participant.

The future reader’s response was gauged using early readers of the stories through a Resonance Panel. For this, four participants were selected from a pool of interested teachers. They were sent the final Veteran Stories and asked to respond to questions of reflection (how the stories were similar to their own), resonance (how ideas from the stories resonate with them), and new understandings (shifts and transformations) as a result of the stories. Their responses were analyzed for evidence of resonance, reflection, interesting and recurring themes were presented verbatim from the responses.

The group story told the chronological arc of the inquiry from the small beginnings in my personal journal to the interviews with the three participants, to the group work of the Research Weekend, back to individual interviews with the participants, finally returning to my research journal. For this I took verbatim words from pertinent documents—my journals, interview transcriptions, journal writings, and story-telling transcriptions—to create a Group Story poem of found words and phrases.

My own shift as the Researcher was also significant. To show this shift, I reviewed my ongoing research journal looking for words and phrases of transformation. In addition, at the end of every interaction with participants, as well as periodically throughout the analysis and dissertation writing period, I performed a 4 Function Self-Analysis. For this analysis I wrote thoughts about my personal reflections on the interactions, keeping in mind the four Jungian functions and drawing a mandala for the intuitive function. Themes, mandalas, and my post-inquiry Veteran Stories comprise the writings on my own transformative change.
Assumptions

This study unfolds within a transformative learning view of experience, understanding and growth, which has its roots in transpersonal psychology. This view assumes that the soul is always in movement toward wholeness or individuation. Integral to this continuous movement is the emergence of the self, or transformation (Dirkx, 1997).

The research activities (individual interviews, story-telling, and group discussions) in this study rely on truthful stories of experience by the teacher participants, which assumes that participants will be forthcoming and honest in their stories of experiences. Steps were taken throughout the interactions to increase the likelihood of participants’ well-being and truthfulness, including setting intentions, discussing confidentiality, and activities enhancing group trust and risk-taking (Piirto, 2004). These include a move from the Bed and Breakfast gathering room when the space presented a threat to confidentiality and risk-taking. The group re-convened in my home. Participants commented later that this change helped them feel more focused and at ease sharing with one another.

My own experience with crisis and my efforts to make meaning of it must be assumed as part of this study. An awareness of this assumption is critical in that the researcher’s experience is the starting point of the study, and often the lens through which she views the emerging data (Clements, 2003). I am aware of the importance of not imposing my frame and trajectory on the experiences of my participants, taking steps to allow their stories to emerge in their own right. This is one of the reasons I frequently use participants’ words in the presentation of results.
It is assumed that the three veteran teachers chosen for the study have previous experience and comfort in a creative realm that gives them a language to express their crisis, and through which they can unearth details of their experiences.

It is assumed that the nature of existential crisis can be ‘mundane’ (Daniels, 2005) as well as extraordinary, therefore it is understood that self-identified experiences of crisis may not necessarily include diagnosis of depression, therapy or prescribed medication.

**Limitations**

This study was limited in size to three participants. Organic and Narrative Inquiries are data-rich and assume the importance of the unique individual experience. A study including more veteran teachers would most likely provide wider and deeper results and take a great deal more time.

The open-ended nature of two data gathering phases (journal writing and the telling of the Veteran Story) may have limited the study. While I provided journal prompts, they were optional. For this reason, the journals were vastly different in their interaction with the material. Providing a few required prompts might have made these journals more similar in their focus. In addition, the telling of the Veteran Story was open-ended, leaving participants to tell the story any way they wished. Consequently they were vastly different. I believe open-ended responses were useful to understand the variety of experiences and coping mechanisms of each participants, but a non-Organic researcher may argue that more precise directions may have led to stories that were more exact in answer to Research Question One. However, I believe that the directions as they
were gave participants the freedom to share from their personal values and motivations, rather than those predisposed by the researcher.

There may have been some limitations regarding the questions and prompts meant to stimulate the oral retelling and meaning-making explanations of the stories. Memory is at best a capricious instrument of study, but I used ritual to open the space, established equality between the participants and the researcher, and shared from my own creative works, which I believe were all useful in drawing out deeper elements of the story. Nonetheless, there are always stories too personal to share.

As a teacher whose experience of crisis is one of the driving forces behind this research study, I realized that I had to gather and analyze data in ways that insured my own story did not overly bias my work with participant stories. Interestingly enough, the transparency I exhibited in Chapter 2 about the shifts in my understanding of existential crisis and critical incidents was useful here. I entered the inquiry with a limited, almost tunnel-like vision of the experience of teacher crisis in that I researched experiences, which paralleled my own. This research became one of my comprehensive exam prompts on existential crisis. During the oral defense of the research I realized, with the help of my dissertation team, the importance of expanding my view of the variety of crisis situations. This realization took me back to the literature, where I dug more deeply into research that acknowledged shifts in teacher identity through challenges and difficulties. The research on critical incidents and other crisis-like experiences emerged from this return to the literature. I wrote regularly in my journal as I interacted with and reflected on different approaches to my topic. For example, this journal entry on Monday, October 13, after a lengthy work session on this project:
The Hero’s Journey works for mine, for my story. But perhaps that’s not the storyline of their crisis. This is definitely something to consider.

In addition, my journal shows that I progressed beyond the term “existential crisis.” When I did a general browse through a text for the term “crisis”—finding “critical moments” (Meijer & Oolbekkink, 2012). The following entry sees the beginning of this shift.

December 16, 2014. The work is going well, right now just back to the research and reading to give me perspective on conflict/crisis & growth. I’m finding good things, real things. I feel like I’m not the only person who cares about this now, but I also feel small and green. I’m wondering how this new stuff might shift my research project.

It is through this series of realizations that my research question shifted from an emphasis on existential crisis to crisis-like experiences.

This progression of my topic taught me that while my experiences are valid and real, I limited my view as a researcher if I did not remain open to other ways of experiencing the world. With this in mind, I used participants’ verbatim words as much as possible throughout the interim and research texts. The Preparation phase of Organic Inquiry with a meditation on Piirto’s (2004) Core Attitude of naiveté encouraged me to see the stories of each participant through a lens of uniqueness and newness toward their experience.

Organic Inquiry seeks to inspire transformation in these three areas: increased understanding of self; increased connection to spirit; and increased desire to be of service. Evidence of my data analysis showed increased understanding of self (and others) and increased desire to be of service (which tends to be inherent in teachers anyway) but no
evidence of increased connection to Spirit. Although this is a slight concern to me, it is not a focus of the inquiry.

This study may have been limited as to the degree of comfort and safety experienced by the participants. At the beginning of the Research Weekend, I determined that the room I had chosen to use for working sessions at the bed and breakfast was a bit too open and exposed for confidentiality. The sliding door, entrance to the kitchen area, and constant presence of other visitors to the B&B made the space feel open and exposed. I immediately moved the group to my home across the street. Throughout the weekend participants commented on how safe they felt to share from their lives. Organic research discourages researchers from holding sessions in their home because it divides their attention from the research as they feel they must play host to the group. With this in mind I gave the group a tour of the house, and invited them to truly make themselves at home for this reason. As teachers they understood this divided nature of care-taking, and went about using the facilities or getting themselves refreshments on their own throughout the weekend.

My team was concerned about the emotional aspects of sharing stories of crisis—and rightly so. I kept a counselor on-call throughout the weekend for this purpose and checked in with participants at the end of the inquiry to gauge their need for counseling services. I continue to believe that this is important for participants. This comment by Ellie in Interview Two is insightful:

*Ellie: Just because something is hard to remember or hard to dig up, doesn’t mean it’s not a worthwhile process, and that there isn’t value in that reflection, I would say that maybe that needs to happen more often in order to be a healthy human being or a healthy teacher. We need to revisit things, whether they were warm fuzzies or not. And I don’t feel . . . that it was a dangerous thing to do. I*
don’t regret it, I’m just acknowledging the fact that that can be uncomfortable, and knowing, at the same time, that I’m sitting here right now and going, Wow, was I harmed by that? No, I was not. Am I worried about it? No, I’m not. I’m just acknowledging what actually was just truth that we go through critical times and those times are hard. But it is through the sharing of those times that you have healing, and I don’t think you can get healing any other way.

Implications: From Global to Local

The implications of this inquiry could extend globally. It is my hope that the effects of this dissertation extend far beyond these pages to impact the existing body of knowledge, future research, the profession, teacher trainers and coaches, and Organic Inquiry. In addition, I believe that the implications of this study also extend locally, impacting participants (the readers, the veteran teacher story-tellers and the Researcher), which can, in part, be gleaned from their spoken and written words.

Suggestions for Future Research

Teachers in this inquiry (both story-telling and reader participants) commented on physical illness as either a direct result of their critical incident or a strong concern to them as they prepared and taught their students. The literature on critical incidents and crisis supports this. Moore (2004) likened illness as a passage that has “the power to remake your personality and your life” (p. 27). Carlyle and Woods (2002) researched the effects of stress crisis on British teachers, including the physical ramifications of stress on absenteeism and long-term health of teachers. The presence of socialized medicine ensures in the United Kingdom means that loss of work through illness and depression can be tracked and teachers can be attended to medically. Research is needed in the United States to explore the connection between crisis-like experiences, illness, and their impact on the teachers and the profession.
The experience of crisis-like incidents often manifests as the conflict between the philosophy of current school culture (which tends toward standardization, rote learning, and test-driven evaluation of teachers) and the individual philosophies of the student-centered teachers. In addition, teacher-to-teacher interaction when the basic educational philosophies of the teachers are dissimilar was the cause (or at least a cause) of teacher-initiated crisis. In short, it is possible that teachers cause crisis for one another when their philosophies differ. An inquiry into the connection between crisis and philosophical differences in the culture and between individuals would be an important step in proving or disproving this hypothesis.

The stories of the three teachers suggest that a basic sense of trust is lacking in their day-to-day interactions with other teachers. Palmer (2003) spoke to the idea of trust as a “‘missing ingredient’ without which schools have little chance of improving” (p. 13). Researchers like Bryk and Schneider (2002) found a correlating relationship between relational trust (trust between staff and between staff and students) and student learning outcomes, yet I believe more research should be focused on relational trust in schools and its relationship to crisis-like incidents in teachers.

I believe in the wisdom of veteran teachers, even more so after this inquiry. Ellie responded to many of the questions I posed for the participant journals, and these were extremely insightful and promising. (The questions appear in Appendix B.) For this reason I believe that an important research venture would be a journal-based inquiry in which veteran teachers share their wisdom about varying themes: undergraduate studies, supporting one another, and collaboration.
It is my opinion that Ellie’s and Cathrine’s experiences should probably be considered critical incidents while Maggie’s description indicates a full-scale existential crisis. Delineating the types of incidents was not the purpose of this study, the lack of which some quantitative researchers may find unsettling and imprecise. Researchers with this line of thinking may wish to use more rigid means methodologies to define the unique differences between crisis and critical incidents.

**The profession.** It is important that school staff maintain positive working relationships. Resonance Panel reader Matthew spoke in depth about what he viewed as the challenges of the school environment and strained relationships between teachers. Human resource personnel, school counselors, and administration should not simply require teachers to work together in collaborative teams, but be proactive in instructing teams on how to work together, support one another, and maintain communication. It is imperative that administration, especially principals, monitor and support teams with time, resources and nonpartisan mediation as needed. It is highly likely that the current culture of standardization, testing, and direct instruction is at odds with true student centered teachers, and teachers experience crisis-like events often as a direct result of this conflict. I believe that school administration, school counselors and human services personnel should be well versed in crisis and critical incidents and employ constant vigilance in identifying and providing resources for staff experiencing crisis. Cathrine suggested a proactive approach to inservice days: workshop organizers and presenters should give teachers time to share with one another—stories, ideas, a tour of their room, resource sharing, and troubleshooting. The teacher storytellers longed for time and space to simply talk about their practice with others.
Implications for institutions and teacher trainers.

Ellie: I cannot think of anything I needed when I student taught. However, to this day I remain unimpressed with my undergraduate studies. They taught things well but when I ask myself today, what did I learn that really helped me? I can’t really think of anything. Teaching is an education in itself. You have to dive into it. Baptism by fire, as they say. You learn to sink or swim while you are doing it. I wish undergraduate students had even more classroom time, way before student teaching. I wish they would also tell them what not to do . . . Don’t forget to take care of yourself. Don’t destroy your personal life by working too much. Remember that the kids will most likely forget most of what you teach but they will never forget you and whether or not you truly cared about them. I wish undergraduate studies included team-teaching experiences. I wish the lesson plans were realistic, not fancy documents that take students hours to write. I wish they would teach teachers how to show respect to their students. I wish they had contact time with parents and even do home visits.

Cathrine: It is amazing to me what teachers can accomplish simply by talking. I don’t mean “collaboration.” We all do that anyway. I mean communication! One of the things I talked about in my journal is—workshops. We go—and whoever’s leading the workshop gets so ticked at us because as soon as you put a bunch of teachers in a room we don’t shut up. And it’s true. And I think that someone ought to one, figure this out, and two figure out a way to embrace it, and use it. You know? OK. It they’re not shutting up, there might be a reason, and I think that’s one thing that was, to me, was the most amazing thing about that weekend was how much we accomplished, how much we learned about each other, about ourselves, about the teaching profession, just . . . by . . . having . . . time . . . to talk. Especially with other people who get it. Teachers need time to talk to other teachers. Not emails. Not PLCs with set agendas. Talk.

It is important for preservice and veteran teachers to establish and revisit their philosophies, to be able to speak them, make decisions based on them and stand up for them. In addition, teachers work in close proximity with others, and it is important to realize that others’ philosophies are just as true, real, and powerful for them. The use of the Annotated LifeLine is invaluable for teachers in identifying early influences (what they bring to the profession), critical learnings, and crisis.
I had a small study of three teachers, and each processed and told her story using different Jungian functions (Thinking, Sensing, Intuition, Feeling). It is important to realize that all teachers are different in terms of how they see and interact with their world. The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (Lawrence, 2001; Martin, 2001) or another recognized personality assessment may be useful in helping staff (not just teachers!) understand their preferences and working among those with different preferences.

It is imperative that teachers understand, recognize, and work through the various phases of change. Undergraduate preservice teachers and graduate teachers could have this topic tied into Educational Psychology course as an extension of child psychology. Districts could organize a book study for collaborate teams. One excellent resource is William Bridges (2004), *Transitions: Making Sense of Life’s Changes*.

Teachers in this study showed that they desire and need time and space to share their stories with others, yet the participants in this inquiry suggested that it might be easier to share stories with small groups of strangers in a safe environment. If this is not possible, it will be imperative to establish specific rules about sharing outside the group.

Teacher colleges and workshop providers should consider the power of individual teacher philosophies as they plan interactions between preservice and inservice teachers, considering the question: How can we prepare teachers to better communicate and collaborate with colleagues who have differing philosophies?

Australian teacher educator David Tripp (1993) compiled a book of critical incidents, collected through stories of real teachers, to assist preservice teachers in identifying and working through difficulties. The stories can be read, role-played, and discussed via university coursework therefore preparing students to face challenges and

**For teacher researchers using Organic Inquiry: Recommendations.**

- Have strong research plans in place, but do not follow them blindly. Every step takes careful thought and the question, “How does this activity inform my research question?”

- The beauty of Organic Inquiry is that it allowed me to balance the Thinking function with more lesser-used functions in the research gathering, analysis, and presentation. It also allowed me to process data in a way I have become comfortable with and reliant on in my own personal and professional work to give me insights; drawing mandalas and free-writing. I believe that the researcher must have a strong spiritual practice in place before attempting Organic Inquiry and practice working the data analysis techniques before working with the “real data.” I performed two short practice interviews and analyses with teacher friends to more fully understand the frame of mind needed for analyzing the data, and this was invaluable.

- Do share a story of your own (or two!) with participants; it is important to establish equality of voice between the group. In Interview One I told my Entry Story to each of the participants: I didn’t read it and as such, each telling was different. Initially I was concerned about this, but in retrospect I believe it helped my story as well as theirs because it was not ‘perfect’ or written out,
when emotional connection can be lost. It was important to me that their stories were told with all of their imperfections and real-ness.

- I highly recommend integrating Organic Inquiry with Clandinin (2006, 2013) and Clandinin and Connelly’s (2000) style of narrative research. They are a natural fit for planning, implementing and analyzing narrative in a way that is transformational to all involved. With that said, I also recommend that narrative inquirers look into including aspects of Organic Inquiry into their research. I would not have seen how participants’ identity and ways of being affected how they dealt with crisis-like incidents without the lens of the four Jungian functions.

Ellie had strong concerns about the verbatim speech version of her Now Story. She thought it was too rambling and confusing, and returned it to me severely edited; an excerpt of her edit appears below, on the left. The story edited for content and verbatim language appears on the right. They are vastly different.
Table 5.1

Ellie’s Edited Stories Compared

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ellie’s story—“Over” Edited</th>
<th>Ellie’s Story—Verbatim Language</th>
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<tr>
<td>While in this position I was allowed to bring together teachers to develop new, thematic course offerings for our students. Our new superintendent and board developed a vision statement for the district about how we’re all going to be innovative and global learners. So, I put a proposal together for STEM science learning that would include after school hours and learning with experts in the field. Students would travel in the summer to do their research. It reflected everything I now believe in as a teacher; how teachers should teach, the research behind it teaching and learning styles, mastery learning, thematic teaching, PBL’s and multi-grade. It broke the industrial model of education and was incredibly successful. Parent and students loved it and the teachers bonded personally and professionally. The teachers became less the distributors of information and more of a support person that could allow the student to learn above the teacher’s own limited knowledge. We embraced the idea that we could learn with the student. It changed my entire way of thinking of how an “education” takes place.</td>
<td>I’ve developed new course offerings. When we got a new superintendent she had this vision statement for the district about how we’re all going to be global learners, that’s a part of her vision statement. And I went, “Hmmm, really…” Just kept saying it and saying it and saying it. I thought, okay, and I went to my friend Bob and said, “I have an idea. I’d like to take kids to Africa. Do you think she’ll buy it?” (Maggie softly chuckles) And he’s like, “Sure! Go for it!” And I put a whole proposal together and I recruited teachers. I’m like, “You wanna go to Africa?” “Sure!” And I said, “Trust me.” So I picked my people and I said, “You’re going to teach, I’m going to organize. Because I know how to organize, and I know how to see what you’ve got to offer and I know how to piece you together as a team.” So I put a PowerPoint together, went to the standards, put the whole package in, what it would be, and I used it as a way to create what I believe in. And it symbolizes how much I’ve changed as a teacher. So everything I now believe in as a teacher, and how I think teachers should teach, the research behind it and the philosophy, assessment to curriculum design, everything I put into that project, and then I sold it. And long story short it was approved which was really amazing! And that’s what I’ve been doing ever since.</td>
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The edited writing on the right is beautifully written, professional and precise. I can tell Ellie spent some time on it. But life, teaching, crisis, interacting with others; these are not precise. They are messy and winding and fascinating. As for her verbatim piece: I love this story! Ellie’s verbal language shows passion, connection with her colleagues, and true ability to drive her ideas straight to Africa! For my part, I should have better prepared my participants to assist in editing the stories. Teachers are very
careful about the writing that leaves their desk, and are used to language that is crisp, to the point, professional, and clear. After telling Ellie that it was the rich language, humor, and personality of the stories I wanted, she re-edited the spoken word stories with only a few changes that only concealed her identity and that of her district. I’m so glad. The stories in their spoken word move us so much more than professional, textbook writing ever can.

For the participants.

- Cathrine: I have talked to my son about being a teacher. We are going to explore some other possibilities but if he keeps coming back to teaching—so be it. I told him that he will become my apprentice, and he will start grading, lesson planning, etc. so he really knows what he is getting into. I was trying to think, within my comfort level, to begin, [creating a pathway through the ravine behind my house] especially for my son, because he is very much like me, very much an indoor person, like my daughter is [always] out in the dirt. I need to figure out how I can be more in tune with that. I don’t know. Technology, too—I have four computers in my classroom and I never use them. I was a computer programmer, this should be a [no-brainer], and it’s not. I need to work on that.

Ellie: That’s a very specific life change.

Cathrine: Change is good. Scary, but good. I was thinking about that. Yes, and it’s both your faults.

- Maggie: I found that being able to share and trust others with my stories unlocked a part of me in a way I didn’t realize was closed off. Through their attentiveness I was able to release much of the darkness associated with those events.

- Cathrine: What is my purpose? To offer light in a stagnant school. To BE the place they want to be. To INSPIRE them to achieve. To make them wonder. To make them question. To make them see it’s okay to swim upstream, when all the other fish are swimming downstream.
  
  I feel respected by all participants and validated.
Ellie: So that was my big takeaway, and I was reminded again of just, my own self-reflection. I thought I was over stuff, and then when you dig that all out again it can still almost be as raw as it was years ago! And that was, that was uncomfortable, I didn’t like that. [laughs] I didn’t like that. And I didn’t like thinking about things I did a really good job packaging, and putting away, and moving on from. But I really did enjoy the teachers in that space and I loved hearing their stories and I loved being trusted with those stories. That was precious. Priceless. I was very honored to share those stories. And I came away with more respect and tolerance than maybe I had when I get in a rush as a teacher for, I’m looking more down the halls as a teacher and thinking, “Do I really know that person? Do I really understand what they’re going through? How could I support them more?” It’s got me. . . . It’s got me reflecting more on what kind of a teacher leader I could be, rather than a closed teacher surviving in a classroom.

For the researcher. The implications of this research on me, my future research, and teaching career are many, and include shifts in my teaching, a stronger valuing of student-formed educational philosophies, increased understanding of my own thinking and validation of my concept of the Sacred La. I include some elements of Mastery Learning in my teaching. Ellie and Maggie’s commitment to and work with these principles had a profound impact on me. I am dedicated to reading more on Montessori and Mastery Learning practices and revisiting my procedures on grading. They just make sense to me. In addition, I did not give the Annotated LifeLine nearly enough credit for providing context and drawing out fascinating stories from participants. This is a tool I will use in the future—with my students and in future research on this topic.

I believe that it is vastly important to give my students (preservice teachers) opportunities to talk to one another about their philosophies, practice talking to others with different philosophies, true collaboration, role-playing, working through critical
incidents, and preparing them to work with parents. The fact that teachers cause critical incidents for one another is disheartening and I am dedicated to finding ways to counterbalance this.

In retrospect, I used to think teacher-instigated conflict occurred because I (or whoever was telling the story, usually someone with whose ideas I agree) came across or conflicted with someone who was “not a good teacher”—which by my own definition was someone with different philosophies or passions than I. As a result of this research I now see that often conflict comes through strength of passion in dissimilar directions and for dissimilar ideas. Not bad or good, but diverse.

As a direct result of the previous point, I am ashamed to admit that I did not always believe that teachers were doing the best they can. I often used my own passion and philosophies as a baseline by which to gauge every other teacher I came across. Tobin Hart (2000) outlined this in his article titled “Deep Empathy,” saying that this way of “knowing is predicated on a split between the self and other” (p. 256), or subject-object knowing. I like the term Deep Empathy, which Hart said is a “loosening of the self-other boundaries” (p. 257), and “awakening of natural compassion” (Dass & Gorman, 1996) or the opening of the heart chakra. This is a powerful realization. As a result of this research I am beginning to view teachers—all teachers—as doing the best they can, and all they can, assuming they’re good teachers before I assume that they are not. This is not only a shift in how I frame my profession, it is an increase in compassion. It is never acceptable to disregard another human being because they are different from me. First rule: Do no harm.
I spoke and wrote these words before undertaking this research, there are many types of crisis-like situations, but I continue to learn exactly what this means. There are so many types of crisis, so many ways of traveling through crisis and so many stages of dealing with them, that this research is simply not generalizable: Cathrine, Maggie, Ellie, and I were all so different, from identity formation to crisis to coping. I learned that critical times are transitional and transitional times are critical. As Ellie states, we can’t not change in the face of crisis.

The Sacred La abides. I believe even stronger now that there is a distinct thread running deep within each of us that drives us. After all of my work with these women, living and working with their words I found that they each have a strong thread running throughout their teaching stories. Cathrine, Ellie, and Maggie: Be Weird; Be Brave; Be Strong.

Cathrine: Be weird. Weird. It’s a compliment. Oh, yes. That is a big compliment in my room, we are all weirdos. My students have huge hearts. These kids find my class as the only place they can be themselves. Most of them are self-proclaimed “weirdos” and they know it’s a total compliment. My principal [told a parent group] how the kids [and I] become a family. I say “You’re weird” and they say “Yeah, just like you!”

Ellie: Be Brave. In her journal Ellie tells this story: It seems like everyone is going through a crisis-like situation these days. We have had several students commit suicide over the last several years. It tore the staff apart. One teacher I knew well put a large hand-made poster over her classroom door. It said “Be Brave.” She talked to all her students about the importance of taking care of each other. She told me that the dialogue with them was honest and open. She encouraged them to Be Brave in a way that would save lives. Tell someone if your friend is showing signs of being suicidal. Ask for help if you need it. She said it was very powerful. Then a parent saw her sign and told administration she wanted it taken down because it promoted religion. Unknown to my teacher friend, the slogan was being used by a local church for a promotion. She had to choose whether to demonstrate “being brave” as she preached to her students or
take it down. The Superintendent wanted her to “consider” taking it down. She was put under a lot of pressure but administration stopped short of making her take it down. The stress it put on her was enormous. She left it up for the entire year.

Maggie: Be Strong. Maggie’s words at the end of her journal are focused on what she does for her students, but I suspect that these words are for herself as well. *I teach with the confidence that I know how my students learn. To make them see it’s okay to swim upstream when all the other fish are swimming downstream. To create, to be wrong, to get back up, and to be strong.*

**Summary**

Through this Organic and Narrative Inquiry I have related stories that illuminate the lived experiences of teachers as they navigated crisis-like difficulties inherent in the teaching profession. Their lives were opened in the name of research, and their words have ruled these pages. I have been touched by their stories, their emotions, their illnesses, and their joyful realizations as they have revisited their storied lives with an eye toward transformative personal and professional change.

It is my hope that this study will contribute understanding to a little known and underserved area of the profession whereby veteran teachers experience challenges that have the capacity to break them or to make them stronger and wiser. The reality is that many teachers leave. The crises of the profession affect most teachers in their softest place: the heart.

Yet there is hope: The teachers represented in these pages have proven themselves resilience, passionate and willing to allow difficulties to change them for the better. And there is one more point to make. As part of this research I made recommendations to
researchers, to institutions and teacher trainers, to schools and administration, but the honest truth is that there were no institutions, no counselors, nor administrators in the small room where we shared our stories—there were only teachers. We were four teachers talking together in a place of compassion where healing work was done. The final lesson is that teachers cannot wait any longer for the institutions to give us what we need. We need to talk to one another. We need to listen. We need to care without fixing. There is hope, and it sits in our own hands. May the words here and their deeper intentions play a small part in sustaining the teaching profession for many years to come.

_God has no other hands than ours._

~_Dorothee Sölle_
Figure 6.1. Oh, day! Oh, mine! (6.3.15)

Oh, day! Oh, mine!
She moves
the land,
the wind and sea.
Oh, day! Oh, mine!
I can see
She moves me
past my own demons.
Always there.
Always strong.
Leading me up and out
toward Heaven.
REFERENCES


Clandinin, D. J. (2013.). *Engaging in narrative inquiry*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.


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qualitative research: Perspectives, methodologies, examples, and issues (pp. 569-590). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.


APPENDICES
APPENDIX A

HUMAN SUBJECTS APPROVAL

NOTICE OF APPROVAL

March 19, 2015

Jennifer L. Gronan
518 Kieffer Street
Wooster, Ohio 44691

From: Sharon McWhorter, IRB Administrator

Re: IRB Number 20150304 “From Crisis to Calling: The Growth Process of Teachers through Crisis-Like Incidents”

Thank you for submitting an IRB Application for Review of Research Involving Human Subjects for the referenced project. Your protocol represents minimal risk to subjects and has been approved under Expedited Category #7.

Approval Date: March 19, 2015
Expiration Date: March 19, 2018
Continuation Application Due: March 5, 2016

In addition, the following is/are approved:

☐ Waiver of documentation of consent
☐ Waiver or alteration of consent
☐ Research involving children
☐ Research involving prisoners

Please adhere to the following IRB policies:

- IRB approval is given for not more than 12 months. If your project will be active for longer than one year, it is your responsibility to submit a continuation application prior to the expiration date. We request submission two weeks prior to expiration to ensure sufficient time for review.
- A copy of the approved consent form must be submitted with any continuation application.
- If you plan to make any changes to the approved protocol you must submit a continuation application for change and it must be approved by the IRB before being implemented.
- Any adverse reactions/incidents must be reported immediately to the IRB.
- If this research is being conducted for a master’s thesis or doctoral dissertation, you must file a copy of this letter with the thesis or dissertation.
- When your project terminates you must submit a Final Report Form in order to close your IRB file.

Additional information and all IRB forms can be accessed on the IRB web site at:
http://www.uakron.edu/research/orssr/compliance/IRBHome.php

Cc: G. Holliday – Advisor
Cc: Valerie Callanan – IRB Chair

☐ Approved consent form/s enclosed
APPENDIX B

PARTICIPANT INSTRUCTIONS

After the First Interview:

1. Read the two provided articles (Crisis-like experiences and Working in the Four Functions)
2. Create an Annotated LifeLine.
3. Write or do creative work in your journal. There are prompts provided on the reverse.

Annotated LifeLine Instructions

- Create a timeline of your teaching career, using mine as a basic example (yours can be totally different! Artistic, creative, narrative, computer-generated... your choice). Include time bands of different periods in your life/career, different schools, grades, shifts, leadership, anything relevant to your teaching.
- Spend time with your Lifeline inserting periods of crisis and/or critical incidents (people, phases). Give each one a title.
- Meditate on or consider one of these titles, (perhaps the strongest? The easiest to remember? The most recent?) and process it in your journal or on the timeline using writing, artwork, doodling, photos, poetry—your own way. Write as many details of the experience as possible, beginning/middle/end. What did you fight against? What did you learn? How did you grow or change because of the experience? How are you different now—as a teacher, colleague, employee, parent or person?
- Consider another of the titles, if you wish, and do the same.
- During the Research Weekend you will be asked to choose one strong story to share with the group and expand on.
After the First Interview: Here are some optional journal and creative work topics. Respond in writing or in other creative ways. You may also journal on any topic you feel is relevant—or even if it doesn’t seem relevant. Use your Four Functions: Thinking, Feeling, Intuition and Senses.

1. Write down any dreams you remember that occur during the time of the study, even those that don’t seem to relate to the work here. Interpret/work through them, or not, as you prefer.
2. Have you seen colleagues go through a crisis-like situation? Tell their story from your point of view.
3. What did you need and did not receive in your undergraduate studies and student teaching?
4. What were the strengths of your undergraduate studies and student teaching?
5. What have you needed and have not received in terms of professional support from your administration? (either now or at some time when you felt unsupported?) What support have you received?
6. What have you needed that you have not received from colleagues? (either now or at some time when you felt unsupported?) What have you received that you needed?
7. What support systems do you have that you cannot live without?
8. What support systems do you need?
9. What are your most difficult challenges? If there is a story, tell it.
10. What have been your most positive rewards? If there is a story, tell it.
11. What are your current challenges? If there is a story, tell it.
12. What are your current rewards? If there is a story, tell it.

After the Research Weekend: Here are some optional journal and creative work topics. Respond in writing or in other creative ways. You may also journal on any topic you feel is relevant (or even if it doesn’t seem relevant!). Use your Four Functions: Thinking, Feeling, Intuition and Senses.

1. Revisit your Novice Teacher story. Think of yourself as a professional now. What impact do you see of this event on you as a current teacher?
2. Continue to write on your dreams, songs, metaphors, creative images that respond to the work of this project.
3. What impact did journaling, meditating, artwork on these past events have on you? How, if at all, did you grow?
4. What impact did talking about these past events during the weekend have on you? How, if at all, did you grow?
5. What wisdom do you have to offer teachers experiencing crisis? Critical incidents?
6. Write about the difference between discussing these types of events with colleagues versus processing them alone or by self-reflection.
7. Write about the difference between learning through crisis/critical incidents versus learning in other ways (watching others, reading, talking).
8. Here are the two questions from the Second Interview, if you want to journal on them.
   (1) What lasting impressions do you have from your experience participating in this research study?
   (2) How have the difficulties or challenges you experienced through your career impacted you as a teacher?
APPENDIX C

RESONANCE PANEL INSTRUCTIONS

You have been selected to participate in the above research study as a member of the Resonance Panel (previously the Resonance Focus Group, but we will not be meeting in person, focus-group style). The purpose of this group is to read the completed teacher stories of crisis-like events and respond in writing to three prompts:

Prompt 1: Write about how the stories reflect (are similar to) your experience as a teacher.

Prompt 2: Write about how the stories resonate with you. (Resonance as qualities of the stories that are personally meaningful or important to you, even if unrelated to teaching)

Prompt 3: Write about any new realization or growth you experienced by reading these stories.

Your directions:
1) Read this document in full.
2) Read the stories I send to you, keeping in mind the prompts and the four functions.
3) Respond in writing to the prompts. I use a PC, please use Microsoft Word or simply type you responses into an email.
4) Fill out the short ResonancePanel_Questionnaire document.
5) Email the Questionnaire and your response to Jennifer.

General information about the project.

Research focus: I am researching the experience of identity growth in teachers through difficulties (crisis-like situations). I am also researching identity growth in teachers as they share and reflect on their experiences of growth through crisis-like situations with other teachers. The purpose of the Resonance Panel is to gauge how teacher readers will respond to the stories of crisis told by the participants.

A crisis-like event is a challenge that forces a shift in teachers’ ideas or beliefs about themselves or the profession. A crisis-like event falls within a continuum ranging from mundane challenges or difficulties (critical incidents) to deep existential crisis.

- Critical incidents in teaching are experiences causing cause existential discomfort as a result of interactions with certain challenges or difficulties that challenge prior knowledge and ways of behaving. It could be a difficult and/or unexpected
moment, phase, event, or person that makes the teacher question himself/herself or his/her ideas as a teacher. Critical events can be sudden or can cumulatively grow over time. They are short-lived, less intense, and occur more frequently in a lifetime than the existential crisis.

- Existential crisis is a deeper, more long-term weakening of the self, often due to stress, until the person cannot continue as they have always done. Many factors can merge—personal, professional, and cultural—to activate a crisis. The lengthier nature (as compared to the critical incident) of the existential crisis may manifest as phases that include loss of joy or purpose, feelings of isolation, and ultimately a re-evaluation of life and purpose. Other expressions are moodiness or depression, body illnesses, exhaustion, or emotional dysregulation.

I will provide you with a digital copy of the finished dissertation upon request. Thank you so much for being a part of my project.

* * * * * * * * * *

The Four Ego Functions
Jung’s Psychological Theory of Types

By Jerry Gilford
http://mythsdreamssymbols.com/fourfunctionsofego.html

According to Jung, the Ego - the “I” or self-conscious faculty - has four inseparable functions, four different fundamental ways of perceiving and interpreting reality, and two ways of responding to it.

Jung divided people into Thinking, Feeling, Sensation, and Intuition types, arranging these four in a compass.

```
   Intuition
  |     |
  Feeling --------- Thinking
  |     |     |
  Sensation
```

The Jungian compass of Ego-functions.

The four ways of interpreting reality are the four ego-functions - Sensation, Thinking, Feeling, and Intuition. These consist of two diametrically-opposed pairs. Thinking is the opposite of Feeling, and Sensation the opposite of Intuition. So, suggests Jung, if a person has the Thinking function (an analytical, “head”-type way of looking at the world) highly developed, the Feeling function (the empathetic, value-based “heart”-type way of looking at things) will be correspondingly undeveloped, and in fact suppressed. The same goes for Sensation and Intuition. Sensation is orientation “outward” to physical reality, and Intuition “inward” to psychic reality.

Jung perceived of these four Ego-functions as making up a kind of fixed dial. The upper part of the dial is shown light, meaning that it is the developed conscious faculty, and the other part dark, meaning that it is the undeveloped or suppressed unconscious
faculty. (Indeed, much of Jung’s work involved recognition of the dichotomy of Light and Dark, Conscious and Unconscious). The faculty which is most Conscious (in this case “Thinking”) is the dominant one, or Principal function, and the other one (“Intuition”) is the secondary faculty, or Auxiliary function. So we have one function in full consciousness and fully developed, another function as secondary to this, a third function, the opposite of the second, as slightly suppressed and unconscious, and the fourth, the opposite of the first, as totally unconscious.

Let us consider each of the Ego faculties in a little more detail. [Note: the following account of the four functions is based mainly on Calvin S. Hall and Vernon J. Nordby, A Primer of Jungian Psychology (1973, New American Library), pp. 98ff].

Basically, THINKING refers to the faculty of rational analysis; of understanding and responding to things through the intellect, the “head” so to speak. Thinking means connecting ideas in order to arrive at a general understanding. The Thinking-type often appears detached and unemotional. The Scientist and the Philosopher are examples of the “thinking type,” which is found more commonly in men.

FEELING is the interpretation of things at a value-level, a “heart”-level rather than a “head”-level. Feeling evaluates, it accepts or rejects an idea on the basis of whether it is pleasant or unpleasant. According to Jung this is the emotional personality type, and occurs more frequently in women.

Thinking and Feeling are both rational, in that they both require an act of Judgment. Sensation and Intuition are both irrational, in that they involve no reason, but simply result from stimuli (whether external or internal) acting upon the individual.

SENSATION means conscious perception through the sense-organs. The Sensation personality-type relates to physical stimuli. But there is a difference according to whether the person is an introvert or an extrovert.

So we could have an Introverted-Sensation type, such as an artist, who experiences the physical world (sensation) from the perspective of the psychic or inner consciousness (introversion). As opposed to this, the Extroverted-Sensation type would be the person who is a simple materialist or hedonist, interested only in physical or pragmatic things. This type tends to be realistic and practical. At worst, one may be crudely sensual. This personality-type occurs more often in men.

Finally, INTUITION is like sensation in that it is an experience which is immediately given to consciousness rather than arising through mental activity (e.g. thinking or feeling). But it differs in that it has no physical cause. It constitutes an intuition or hunch, a “gut”-level feeling, or an “ESP” experience. It is the source of inspiration, creativity, novel ideas, etc. According to Jung, the Intuitive type jumps from image, is interested in a while, but soon loses interest.

With the four Ego-faculties of Thinking, Feeling, Sensation, and Intuition we have a basic classification of modes of consciousness; one that has been postulated under various forms (of which Jung’s is only the most recent) for centuries.

For example, these are the four elements of the Greeks, with which the ego-functions can to some extent be identified with. Indeed, Western occultists have given these elements psychological characteristics for some time. The four elements themselves are more representative of subjective or human psychological and physiological (the four “humors”) than objective “scientific” physical factors.
I invite you to respond to the stories you are reading with all the four functions in mind. Yet, it should be organic and never forced. Use the ideas below to “scan” your four functions to see if anything of importance arises. If it doesn’t, that is fine. This simply gives the research a depth of response not usually available in traditional research design.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sensing</td>
<td>How did my body feel during the interaction? How does my body feel now?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>function</td>
<td>Physical or body responses felt. Use the sonogram, below, if you wish.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intuition</td>
<td>Respond intuitively to the interaction: what images, intuition, metaphors exist in me?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>function</td>
<td>Insights, synchronicities, images, metaphors, seemingly irrelevant ideas. Include mandala, doodle or other creative work, poetry, dream-work; working with the intention of relating my immediate responses to the interaction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thinking</td>
<td>How am I thinking or processing logically about what I just experienced?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>function</td>
<td>Organization (characters, action, details, people, events). Lists, charts, timelines, labels and themes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling</td>
<td>How am I feeling after what I just experienced? What values or emotions are evoked by the story? What resonates/dissonances with me?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>function</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>