RECONCEPTUALIZING A HORIZONTAL CAREER LINE: 
A STUDY OF SEVEN EXPERIENCED URBAN ENGLISH TEACHERS 
APPROACHING CAREER END

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for 
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate 
School of The Ohio State University

By 
Judy Erskine Lawton, B.S., M.A.

The Ohio State University
1997

Dissertation Committee:
Maia Pank Mertz, Adviser
Pamela Highlen
Kenneth Howey
Nancy Zimpher

Approved by

Adviser

College of Education
ABSTRACT

This primarily interpretivist-constructivist study contains special features for researchers: three indexes--by subject with cross-references, poem title, and name; a detailed road map of project design/methodology; a meta-review of literature on conducting literature reviews; recommendations for training qualitative researchers; and reflexive accounts in the continuing "Researcher's Story," which include writing issues and ethical concerns.

The study--grounded in life-span, adult development, and teacher career stage theories, and in emerging views on wisdom and the value of seeking it--explores how seven urban English teachers experienced the last years of their teaching careers. Sociocultural stories about the teaching profession were gathered via semi-structured interviews, journals, symbolic representations, and self interviews. Based on Richardson's work, individual stories combine to form a collective story, providing a shared consciousness and possibility of societal transformation.

Teachers also met collaboratively to reconceptualize elements of horizontal career design found to be problematic: later years resemble beginning years; strengths of an experienced teaching cadre are underutilized; career end is impersonal and anticlimactical.

Multiple methods of interpretation were used: transactional reading and response, foregrounding intertextuality--based on Rosenblatt's theories; computer-assisted theme/motif identification; writing as inquiry; intercalary introductions; experimental writing modes, including poetry; and a four-level symbolic analysis. A cross-data analysis identified themes for discussion: age-related health/energy concerns; devaluation of education and experience; career wind-down/exit practices; and teacher perspectives of value to colleagues and their board of education.
A synthesis of beliefs and principles provides a **foundation** for future reconceptualization efforts; it contains guidelines, roadblocks, and push-the-limit concepts. The study thus provides a construction and reconstruction of teacher realities as teachers approach retirement.

**Transformational speculations** in scenario form show alternative possibilities to present educational practices and public structures, including: faculty awareness ambassadors; teacher-researchers; a council of experience; preretirement preparation programs; new rituals; and a teacher retreat and contemplation center.

Fifteen detailed **recommendations** include a differentiated job design for teachers modeled on a spiral rather than on a horizontal line.

*Because of the evocative nature of the study, the researcher invites those interested in the research to have a personal transaction with the text.*
To

Betty Erskine Drenning & Glenn Max Erskine,

my earliest and finest teachers,

to

Tiberiu D. Dabo,

personification of independence of thought,

my inspiration,

and to

future generations of teachers
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My thanks—more than I can convey—to the following individuals without whom this particular dissertation would not have been possible:

To Members of My Committee

--Dr. Maia Pank Mertz, for her mentoring and friendship, detailed guidance, unflagging support and enthusiasm, remarkable commitment to students, and major investment of time and energy in my doctoral program and in every phase of this dissertation research;

--Dr. Pamela Highlen, for her encouragement, guidance in methodology, modeling of experiential learning and empathetic listening skills, sharing her research library and transcribing equipment, faith in my abilities, and extensive comments on drafts of this document;

--Dr. Kenneth Howey, for years of support and inspiration, decades of brilliant scholarship, exemplary teaching, enthusiasm, confidence in my abilities, and introduction to the professional development research base;

--Dr. Nancy Zimpher, for her excellent classes, direction and modeling when I was her research assistant, years of inspired leadership, and creative and collaborative efforts to improve the professional development of teachers.

To the Teachers Who Participated in This Research

--Though their names remain confidential, this dissertation could not have been written without the English teachers who shared their professional life experiences and thoughts to further this research. They spent enormous amounts of time conversing with me in interviews and telephone conversations, creating symbolic representations, recording their thoughts in journals, providing comments and suggestions on portions of the dissertation, planning and spending a full day in collaboration with each other, and supporting these research efforts in the service of the profession. They are the teachers the public hoped for. To them, my profound respect and gratitude.
To My Professors and Teachers

--Dr. David Citino, for his marvellous class in poetry writing and his nurturing and assistance and in my development as a writer;

--Dr. Phillip Clark, for his thoughtful introduction to and discussions on the psychology of creativity and for his assistance in narrowing a research topic;

--Dr. Josue Cruz, for his insightful introduction to research in teacher education;

--Dr. David Hothersall, for his inspired and enlightened interdisciplinary teaching and his support for my development of a cognitive map for meaning-making and integrating knowledge among disciplines;

--Dr. Dorothy Jackson, for her instruction in developmental psychology on maturity and aging and for sharing her understandings;

--Dr. Patti Lather, for her brown bag lectures, permission to audit her over-crowded course, provocative comments in class, and modeling of ethics in research;

--Dr. Larry Miller, for his thorough introduction to quantitative research and his belief in me as a future researcher;

--Dr. George Newell, for his individual attention to my development as a scholar, his extensive hours spent with me in independent study, his guidance in my study of literary theory;

--Dr. James Pearsol, for his solid introduction to qualitative research, his perceptive comments on research journals, and for inviting J. J. Scheurich to be a guest teacher in our class;

--Perry K. Smith, my high school English teacher, for introducing me to literature, for singing "Moriah" in English class, for asking me to think creatively when putting pen to page;

--Dr. Anna Soter, for her cheerful encouragement and assistance in writing for publication;

--Dr. Allegra Stewart, my first English professor, for setting standards to which I still aspire.

To Inspirational and Provocative Writers

--I am grateful for the work of all those cited in this document and feel a deep sense of gratitude to those works which have most informed and inspired this research, especially the brilliant writing of Milan Kundera and the provocative work of Patricia Kennedy Arin, James Howard Kunstler, George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, Laurel Richardson, and Betty Steffy.
To My Spiritual Mentors

--Dr. Eugenia Dabo, for her belief in me, her profound dignity, and for sharing her wisdom;

--Dr. Tiberiu D. Dabo, for his intellectual integrity, his inspired teaching, his deep caring for all citizens of the world, his perseverance, his daily and unwavering support of my doctoral studies and dissertation research, his role as devil's advocate, his stretching of my boundaries;

--Dr. Carol Ann Hall-Hackley, mentor, whose amazing energy, generous friendship, and words of encouragement to pursue and complete doctoral studies have guided me for 16 years;

--Dr. Laurel Richardson, for writing Fields of Play, her pioneering work in the development of experimental writing modes in research, her comments and guidance on portions of this document, her informative indexes in Fields of Play which served as a model for the indexes in this dissertation, and for her permission to use excerpts of her copyrighted work in this text.

To Special Contributors

--John Reque, for his writing, his long distance conversation about Mary Taft and his own teaching career, and his permission to use letters he received in response to his 1986 column;

--Dr. Betty Steffy, for her long distance conversation about career stages and her permission to cite it, her speculations, and for her early efforts in reconceptualizing the teaching career, especially the last years and exit experiences of career teachers;

--Arnold Plummer, for obtaining video equipment and for assistance on the internet.

To Colleagues & Friends Who Have Supported & Contributed to This Research

--Barbara Bain, for hundreds of telephone calls to check on and verbally reward my daily progress, for creative brainstorming, for sharing her experiences, and for playing devil's advocate;

--Linda Lough Eastham, for her life-long friendship and assistance in locating Betty Steffy;

--David Fawcett, for assisting in the development of pilot questions and providing feedback, for his thoughtful deliberations and support, for being a credit to the profession;

--Sandy Feen, for providing extensive critical feedback on many portions and drafts of this dissertation, for her exceptional empathy and heartfelt responses, and for listening to my poems;

--Jill MacDonald, for asking the right questions at the right times, providing a retreat for my writing activities, sharing her library, and for continuing to support my efforts through the years;
--Dr. Pamala Pritchard, for her advice in writing the dissertation and for her local and long distance calls of encouragement for a period of 10 years;

--Sandy Robiano, for assistance in developing the pilot instrument and for her sharing;

--Vicki Saunders, for uncounted conversations, devotion to sharing literature of high quality, commitment to high standards of professionalism, and assistance in making meaning.

To Fellow Graduate Students

--Eugene Caslin, for his enthusiasm, discussions on methodology, sharing of research materials and resources, and for introducing me to Fields of Play;

--Dr. Leisa Clymer, for her perceptive comments on drafts of this document;

--Dr. Cheryl DoBroka, for her invitations to grow, for her assistance and nurturing;

--Tom Oliver, for reading partial drafts of this document, for discussions of research methodology, and for debating educational and professional issues for more than 17 years;

--Dr. Elizabeth St. Pierre, for her spirit of adventure, assistance in finding a research topic, and discovery of response data.

To My Family

--Betty Erskine Drenning, my mother, for her unwavering support—material, moral, and spiritual—for more than half a century, for nurturing my writing, for giving me the lifetime gift of music, for attending all of my graduation ceremonies, for her faith in me and her abiding love;

--Glenn Max Erskine, my father and spiritual mentor, whose compassion and innate wisdom belong in the category of awesome, whose contributions to my life and efforts are so profound that they remain just beyond the reach of words;

--Gerry Erskine Raymer, fellow teacher, life-long friend, sister, for her moral support and for sharing both her experiences & her cottage in Michigan for uninterrupted writing and studying;

--Janelle Erskine Shields, fellow teacher, life-long friend, sister, for an unlimited source of sun-shine, moral support, and for sharing her first-hand experiences with boards of education.

--Anna Lott, my grandmother, whose independent spirit refused to be confined by artificial walls and boundaries and who provided my first brush with the wisdom of experience.
VITA

September 7, 1945..............................................................Born in Columbus, Ohio

1967.................................................................................B. S. in Education
Butler University

1974..................................................................................M. A. in Education
The Ohio State University

1967-1997...........................................................................English teacher, writing
instructor, and journalism
advisor in rural, suburban,
and urban school systems;

1980-1989, 1994-95...............................................................Adjunct faculty, Columbus
State Community College

1987, 1988, 1994.................................................................National Fellow for Study in the
Humanities

1990-91, 1994-95..............................................................University supervisor, research
assistant, and instructor

PUBLICATIONS

(1), 3-6 & 13-14.

Lawton, J. (1990). The significance of the Anna Karenina motif in the Unbearable
lightness of being. In R. Silbajoris (Ed.) Teaching the teachers: Personal encounters with
Dostoevsky and Tolstoy (O.S.U. Slavic Papers No. 66). Columbus, OH: Foreign Language
Publications The Ohio State University.

FIELDS OF STUDY

Major Field: Education

Major Areas: Studies in English Education and Professional Development of Teachers

Areas of Significance: literary theory; qualitative research methodology; and psychology--
counseling, developmental, and the psychology of creativity
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dedication</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgments</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vita</td>
<td>ix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapters:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Problem</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approaching the Problem</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Graying of the Teaching Force, Broadly Defined</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Intersection of Theories: Age-Related, Life Span, and Adult Development Theories</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Career Stage Theories</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Effects of Stress/Working Conditions on the Experienced Teacher, Especially in the Urban Context</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current Views on Wisdom and the Value of Seeking it in Teachers</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implications for the Professional Development of Teachers in Career Wind-Down</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The Methodology Story: A Journey</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods: The Short Version</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods: The Longer Version</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Researcher's Story, Part 1</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paradigm Issues</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Researcher's Story, Part 2</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design Strategy and Data Collection</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Researcher's Story, Part 3</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Analysis and Synthesis: Methods of Data Analysis</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Researcher's Story, Part 4</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Researcher’s Story, Part 5: Post-Fields of Play</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experimental Writing: Issues and Explorations</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. An Extension of Awareness: A Sociocultural Story Analysis Utilizing Multiple Writing Modes

The Way It's Supposed to Be: Introduction to Lee Anne's Story
   Coffee and Conversation: Lee Anne's Story
   The Significance of Lee Anne's Story: A Composition
Letting Go of a Teaching Career: Introduction to Maxine's Story
   Speaking of Things That Matter: Maxine's Story
   The Languages of Letting Go: A Discussion
The Teacher Glows/Sometimes She Burns/She Gives a Lovely Light:
   Introduction to Betty's Story
   A Tale of Individuated Light: Betty's Story
   Basking in Betty's Incandescence: A Discussion
The Ritual of the Banquet: Introduction to Vanessa's Story
   The Last Year of an English Teacher's Career: Vanessa's Story.
   The Rituals of Career End: A Discussion
Heart as Essence: Introduction to Nathan's Story
   Nathan's Story: The Heart of a Teacher
   Listening to Nathan: A Discussion of the Issues Raised in the Data

Introduction to the Stories of Tess: Penciling It In
The Stories of Tess: A Sociopoetics
   One Little Remark
   Do You See What I'm Saying?
   I Have Loved My Colleagues
   The Holly and the Ivy: A Song of Many Voices
   Undelivered Lecture
   Dorothy
   On the Cusp of Retirement
   Retirement

The Shadow of the Umbrella: A Discussion
Object Lesson—Patterns: Introduction to Felicia's Story
   Felicia's Story In Her Own Words
   To All a Pattern: A Discussion of Felicia's Story
Retirement Banquet

Teacher...Te
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

In 1986, three years before I entered a doctoral program at The Ohio State University, an article in *Education Week* (Reque) caught my attention. I clipped and saved it, and over the years, have pondered it. In the article, John Reque, an English teacher for 31 years in Illinois, reflects on his decision to retire from teaching. He, too, had clipped, saved, and periodically thought about an article written by a retiring teacher which had been published in the *New York Times* in 1980. In that 1980 essay, Reque noted, an English teacher had decided to retire because of "a strange alien attitude coupled with resistance to learning that...makes teaching no longer a noble, joyful profession" (p. 17). Reque, at age 53, wonders if anyone cares, if he really makes a difference, if there has been much point to 31 years in the classroom. Why does he think of retiring? He says he is bored:

> I have followed the same work routine three-fifths of my life. School opens in September, it closes in June, several vacations interrupt it, summer's a time for study or travel. I've taught *Macbeth* and *The Grapes of Wrath* a hundred times each. I read four or five file drawers of papers a year and students still...don't know it's from it's (p. 17).

He says the task of public school teaching is horizontal, that teachers do it "over and over and over," that the only thing he can look forward to is the possibility of an advanced-placement class, that he has exhausted the changes that can spice up his job. He reflects that he lugs home on Fridays essays that will take 20 hours to grade while the gym teacher leaves empty-handed. He teaches in what he calls a "cultured community" and he likes his students, but he writes that he doesn't want to end up like the English teacher Mary L. Taft: "Honored at a retirement dinner after 42 years, she stood up and said, 'I hope you'll never have to work as hard as I did,' sat down, and died two weeks later" (p. 17). When Reque wrote these words, he was in the late stage of his teaching career. He is not alone in his sentiments. I don't want to end up like Mary Taft at the end of my teaching career. Neither do my colleagues.
The Problem

“No memory of having stared
Atones for later disregard,
Or keeps the end from being hard.
Better to go down dignified...."
Robert Frost (“Provide Provide,” 1956)

Background

For many, the end of the teaching career resembles far too much the beginning of it. For some, the “strange alien attitude coupled with resistance to learning” has increased over the years, making teaching in current classrooms even more difficult than it used to be. In my own school system, an urban public school system in the Midwest, the “graying” of the teaching force has been an increasing phenomenon—in the nation, more than 800,000 of 2.5 million public school teachers are “moving into their retirement years” (Geiger, 1996, p. 2)—resulting in teachers moving from an “older sister” or brother role to a parental role to a grandparent role, while “pupils stay relentlessly young, year after year” (Huberman, 1989). Significant implications for the teaching profession are inherent in the identification of an aging teaching force, but have been basically ignored in the literature (Mathis, 1987). Because of a dearth of information on the aging of teachers in the public schools, Bumbarger, Nixon, and Seger (1987) have called for more research on topics related to teachers approaching retirement.

My personal interest in the subject is increased by the fact that I have spent more than 29 years as a teacher in English classrooms and am concerned about the effects of my increased age, and distance from the age of my students, as these and related factors affect vital engagement in the classroom. Now that my own career exit is nearing, I have noticed my attention increasingly drawn to this coming event and away from long-term planning and long-term involvement in my school system, still committed to teaching and learning, still designing new courses and units of study, still working late at night—but with less enthusiasm than even two or three years ago. As I approach the close of a teaching career, I feel a sense of anticlimax. What will characterize the remaining time? What is left to accomplish? What will happen to the “wisdom of experience,” the best of my best teaching ideas, the best of my vision? How will my particular strengths be utilized by my school system at this stage of my career? Will my years of contribution, in the end, have been filled with “....sound and fury, signifying nothing,” or nothing important enough for my school system to want to capture in the form of materials made available to younger
teachers—in short, nothing important enough to want to utilize during the remaining years of my career in the service of the profession? Will my increased formal and informal education, my growth and integration as a human being, my insights after years of energetic involvement in schools and classrooms be utilized differently from those of a teacher entering the field? Or will these benefits of age and experience be unnoticed, maybe even by me?

It is Huberman's (1989) research I now ponder along with John Raue’s article (1986). Huberman found that teachers “older and further along in the career cycle” who described going through a career crisis, a “…resulting awareness—that teaching wears you down, that everyone muddles through…that in (later) years I may be like some of the shriveled-up sleepwalkers I see in staff meetings…” (p. 46). Disturbingly, Huberman found that unless novelty and challenge are introduced every five or six years, “one will succumb to increasing lethargy and cynicism, to a slow erosion of the spirit” (p. 47). I have found that novelty alone is not enough. At this stage of my career, the novelty must be engaging, growth-oriented, challenging, complex. It is, essentially, because of a slow erosion of the spirit that I begin my research, seeking to identify it when it exists, to intervene in its progress, ultimately, to find ways to prevent it. I would like the end of a teaching career to be spirit-enhancing.

Statement of the Problem

“…the most interesting aspects of the discipline, and the reason scientists continue in it, are the areas where questions, problems, and mysteries remain” (Mayher, 1990, p. 109)

Pondering the end of a teaching career is not something I have devoted time to until recently; it simply was not a relevant concern. Like where I might want to travel 10 years from now or where I might be living in my seventies, closing a career and retiring occupied only the fringes of my awareness, too far in the future to spend significant time thinking about. More pressing matters have impinged. Not now. I find that I have an interest in synthesizing, in creating, in contributing something to the field in which I have spent my adult life that is more lasting than another daily lesson plan. And I find that the school system in which I have worked for most of that time lacks structures and mechanisms—and interest—in exploring that potential in its teachers. It would prefer that I and others continue to do what we have been doing “over and over and over.” I find this state of affairs to be problematic, restrictive, and wasteful—anticlimactic, thoughtless, and
cold. Sheehy (1995) wrote: "We seldom make time to process even the most meaningful experiences of our lives; we just speed through them" (p. 8). My sense is that closing a career, leaving it behind, moving on, is one of those most meaningful life experiences, more meaningful to the individuals walking through the career exit door than to the organizations the individuals have spent significant time with. My sense is that something is fundamentally out of balance, that it is time to create time to look more in depth at how teachers view the last few years of their careers. This is one of those meaningful experiences I don’t want to speed through.

While my research interest is in the very late stages and close of the secondary teaching career, the problem of valuing and maximizing the engagement of individuals prior to career exit is not limited to the teaching profession. Within our current society in the United States, there are few formal structures for—and limited interest in—systematically capturing our collective “wisdom of experience.” People retire from life-long occupations with minimum, if any, fanfare beyond a few well wishes, and without others tapping their expertise for purposes of enriching the organization or for easing the induction of the young. At one level, the attitude is “out with the old, in with the new,” and not a beat in the heartbeat of the organization is skipped. In this regard, people fill slots and are quickly replaced, a phenomenon which is actually true for many throughout the career span. The specific contributions of the exiting individual may be remembered in the minds of a few, but for most, quickly evaporate—with no benefit to the organization and no opportunity for the exiting individual to reflect, to contribute, to honor those potentially valuable years of experience.

The research problem, then, is situated in the larger context of broad societal attitudes in the current zeitgeist which neglect the wisdom of experience and in social organizations such as public urban schools which place little value on the specific contributions of the individual.

**Purpose of the Study**

The general purpose of this study is exploratory (Marshall & Rossman, 1995) and constructive (Guba & Lincoln, 1994); it might even be considered partially generative and developmental. Specifically, I seek to explore and to understand how English teachers experience the last stage of their teaching careers in urban schools systems prior to career exit. To wit, how is this stage experienced as different from other stages? To what extent do teachers perceive that they possess “wisdom of experience” or “wisdom of practice,” and to what extent do they feel it is utilized and/or would like it to be utilized. I am also interested in exploring what
participants would like to improve within this career stage so that it might become both more productive in the service of the profession and more rewarding in the lives of individual teachers. My ultimate purpose is to facilitate the beginnings of a reconceptualization of the last years of the teaching career.

Significance of the Study

My own concerns would remain personal issues were I the only one to have them. Actually, in the state of Ohio, approximately 14,700 certificated educational personnel were eligible for retirement during the 1996-97 school year (Bowers, 1991). If only 10,000 of these are teachers, and if each of those teach 120-150 students per year, then potentially, multiples of tens of thousands of students in the state of Ohio alone could be affected by how dynamically engaged these teachers are in the process of teaching and learning during the last years of their teaching careers. Further, an STRS counselor verified that a surge of retirements is expected to begin by 1999 and to double by the year 2007 (J. McKinley, personal communication, November 5, 1997). The study is significant, in part, because of the number of individuals potentially affected.

Further, as my review of the literature in the following chapter will establish, such research has the potential to be significant to all teachers, most certainly those who are in or about to enter the career wind-down stage as well as those who will find themselves entering it in the future. Those who are experiencing diminished energy or enthusiasm or increased job alienation might benefit from an awareness of the need for a more supportive context, from the recognition of their specific developmental needs, and from a more promising conception of career end. My review of the literature will establish that these issues have generally been ignored in the literature and research on public school teachers, particularly those in urban settings. Based on the research currently available, more research on these topics is advised at this time. Hopefully, teachers participating in the study will benefit by reviewing their careers, critically assessing their utilization, and considering what they might like to contribute to their school systems or profession, if given the opportunity. Society may benefit from a more dynamic approach to career wind-down in the teaching force, as it almost always benefits from the actions of highly engaged teachers. Furthermore, it is possible that reconceptualizing career end might also apply to other fields, thus benefiting an even larger segment of society.
As Hughes (1983) observed in *Culture of Complaint: The Fraying of America*, "America is a construction of mind" (p. 12). So is a teaching career (Huberman, 1989) and the way it unfolds and eventually closes. What has been constructed can be altered, even reconstructed. Or so I believe.

Approaching the Problem

**A Review of the Current Literature On Conducting a Literature Review**

**Brief Rationale**

From the beginning, one of my goals in working on this research project has been to be as rigorous as possible in every aspect of the research process, to be as conversant on the literature about research as on the literature pertaining to the topics under study. In order to accomplish that goal, I plan to periodically review the literature pertaining to research at every stage of the process. I begin by reviewing the literature on the topic of conducting a literature review in order to understand the "state of the art" and in order to make the purposes of my literature review explicit.

Thus, for the purpose of placing my study of teachers in the late part of their careers on solid ground via a literature review, I searched current research sources (Ary, Jacobs, & Razavieh, 1990; Balian, 1994; Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Janesick, 1994; Krathwohl, 1988; Lancy, 1993; Marshall & Rossman, 1995; Morse, 1994; Patton, 1990; Schumacher & McMillan, 1993; Strauss & Corbin, 1994) to determine the purpose, scope, and methods of conducting a literature review in qualitative research. Following is a brief review of that literature base and its relevance for my own review of the literature.

**Conflicting Approaches**

Balian (1994) gives perhaps the most exhaustive guidance for conducting the literature review of any of the sources I consulted. Although Balian acknowledges qualitative research in various parts of his text, he instructs from the background of a quantitative researcher. Balian urges doctoral students to establish a "universe list" of all databases and journals "even remotely relevant to...(the) research topic" (p. 17). He then lists a compendium of resources which he denotes as a "partial" listing and which includes no less than 360 databases and specific sources
for the graduate student to consider and perhaps explore. I found the list itself to be rather intimidating, especially in view of the fact that Balian urges that the final literature review contain "a maximum of 30 entries" (p. 41)—reinforcing the quantitative/positivist orientation of the text. Balian might be considered at the high end of a continuum regarding the length of time to devote to a literature review as well as breadth of scope, especially during the planning stages of the research process.

Denzin and Lincoln (1994), in their 586 pages of text written by some 48 qualitative researchers and theorists, devote less than four scattered pages to discussing the literature review—placing them at the other end of the continuum. Denzin and Lincoln themselves mention the review as pertaining only to positivist qualitative research although Morse's chapter (1994) on designing qualitative proposals for funding devotes three paragraphs to the topic. Morse urges a review of the literature to identify research problems and questions and to become familiar with "the state of the art" (p. 221), and Morse cautions the researcher not to spend too much time in the library, suggesting that one could spend a whole career simply trying to learn all that is known about a given topic, an observation I have come to agree with. In another section of the text, Strauss and Corbin (1994) speak of the necessity of linking one's study to previous theories but caution the researcher to review previous work "in the back and forth interplay with data that is so central to this methodology" during, not prior to, engaging in the research itself (p. 282). Doing both makes the most sense to me. Janesick's chapter (1994) mentions the need for a researcher to determine the place of theory in a study but does not specifically denote a review of literature per se. Overall, in the Denzin and Lincoln text, the concept of a review of the literature appears to be either taken for granted, treated as an integral part of ongoing research rather than as a separate facet, or treated with a form of benign neglect.

While most of the other literature is in agreement that a review of literature on the topics being studied is a vital part of qualitative research, there is disagreement about when such a review should occur, and in some of the literature, about its relative importance. Krathwohl (1989) urges that a thorough review take place during the planning stage, not at the end of research as a kind of afterthought. Bogdan and Biklen (1992), however, call "a long review of the literature...usually inappropriate" (p. 75) in qualitative research. Some researchers, Bogdan and Biklen say, caution neophytes to avoid a review of substantive literature before data collection in
order to prevent a predetermination of themes and focus which might then predispose researchers to a view they otherwise might not have taken, thus curtailing inductive analysis. Bogdan and Biklen even advocate doing away with some graduate department requirements of completing research methods and literature reviews prior to approving research; their alternative is to have doctoral students write what can only be considered "highly speculative" methods and review chapters to demonstrate that one is "conversant" (p. 76) with the literature. Patton (1990) recommends that the literature review take place after data collection so as not to bias the thinking of the researcher—or alternatively, both during and after fieldwork. Otherwise, Patton says, the work will be incomplete and perhaps deplete the time of the researcher in an activity which will still need to be conducted (and parts of earlier reviews probably discarded) because of what issues will emerge during the course of the actual research. Patton urges his readers to consult Marshall and Rossman’s 1989 text, Designing Qualitative Research for more information about the interplay between working in the field and reviewing the literature. Instead, I have consulted their 1995 edition.

While Marshall and Rossman (1995) suggest that the research process is nonlinear, they do not express a concern that a review of the literature prior to data collection will either bias the researcher or waste his or her time—suggesting that they may have modified their 1989 opinion. Instead, they urge the qualitative researcher to provide a "thoughtful and insightful discussion of related literature" (p. 29) during the research design phase for purposes of making explicit underlying assumptions, demonstrating the researcher’s knowledge about related research and intellectual traditions, identifying gaps in previous research, and refining research questions. Moreover, Marshall and Rossman advocate “creative reviews” which synthesize material from multiple disciplines.

Lancy (1993) does not devote a section of his text to the literature review; the interested student must find relevant references scattered about in seven different sections. Ironically, Lancy urges a “thorough and critical review of the literature” as a necessary first step in research, noting that it is “a step not advocated in the how-to literature for teacher/researchers, unfortunately” (p. 205) while failing to include a “how-to” section in his own text on qualitative research in education. Nevertheless, he cautions researchers not to assume they have broken new ground before they “adequately ascertain just where the old ground has already been
broken" (p. 201). Lancy also advocates literature reviews for relating current research to previous studies and for providing theoretical, political, and historical context.

Ary, Jacobs, and Razavieh (1990) do not specify when the literature review should take place, but they do instruct the novice in the steps of the process. Further, they delineate seven purposes of a review including defining the frontiers of one's field, making one aware of contradictory studies, finding useful methodologies, avoiding unintentional duplication of effort, and establishing perspective and significance. Their tone is one of encouragement and suggestion rather than dictation of limits and conditions.

In my assessment, it is the text by Schumacher and McMillan (1993) which offers the most relevance and assistance to my own research efforts. They are in agreement with the above purposes of a literature review, distinguish quantitative from qualitative reviews, and offer criteria for the novice researcher to keep in mind when writing the review. They offer options such as a preliminary review before research begins and acknowledge the need for ongoing review during the research process "because the exact research focus and questions evolve as the research progresses" (p. 140). Their numerous concrete examples reinforce their guidelines and perspectives, unlike any of the other sources.

Relevance to My Own Literature Review for Dissertation Research

Application. The sources discussed in the above section have been or will be relevant in my own literature review on my research topics. In the spirit of Balian (1994), I constructed a universe list even though I generally found it to be overwhelming in terms of follow through. Finding and sorting through all the relevant literature in the "universe" is too lofty a goal for this researcher. Attempting to meet this high standard for awhile, however, was useful in that I uncovered resources I might otherwise have overlooked, such as Barber's 1927 thesis on Ohio's teacher retirement system; I anticipate that my "universe list" will also be useful in my ongoing review during actual research. Following Balian, Morse's admonition not to spend one's entire career in a library is apt. I plan to incorporate ideas from the above sources in preparing a preliminary review of the literature (Ary, et al., 1990; Krathwohl, 1988; Lancy, 1993; Morse, 1994; Schumacher & McMillan, 1993) and and the guidelines of others (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Patton, 1990; Schumacher & McMillan, 1993; Strauss & Corbin, 1994) when conducting an ongoing review during the research process. Further, my review will be what Marshall and Rossman (1995)
call a creative review in that it will call upon multiple disciplines, specifically education, psychology, sociology, and occasionally, law, history, philosophy, literature, and popular literature. My review will also include relevant studies and opinions from other cultures and countries.

**Summary of purposes.** Finally, based on the sources documented above, my preliminary review of the literature, Chapter 2 in this dissertation, will attempt to accomplish the following purposes:

1. To become familiar with the state of the art in my research topics; to define the frontiers of the field (Morse, 1994; Ary, et al., 1990);
2. To demonstrate that I am conversant with the literature (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992);
3. To provide theoretical, historical, and, sometimes, political context; to place research questions in perspective (Ary, et al.; Lancy, 1993);
4. To check against unintentional duplication or replication (Ary, et al.; Schumacher & McMillan, 1993);
5. To identify gaps in previous research (Marshall & Rossman, 1995);
6. To identify and provide insights into contradictory results and/or theories (Ary, et al.);
7. To become more aware of useful methodologies (Ary, et al.; Schumacher & McMillan);
8. To find implications for the professional development of teachers broadly defined (K. Howey, personal communication, June, 1995);
9. To suggest further research (Schumacher & McMillan);
10. To establish the significance of my own research (Ary, et al.).

**Moving on.** Having clarified the purposes of the preliminary literature review in Chapter 2, it is time to move there. The significant literature pertaining to this research topic rests on the following foundational categories: the graying of the teaching force, broadly defined; age-related/life-span/adult development theories; teacher career stage theories; the effects of stress and working conditions on the experienced teacher in the urban context; and current views on wisdom and the value of seeking it in teachers. The chapter closes with a look at the implications of the existent literature for the professional development of teachers in career wind-down as well as an identification of emerging themes across categories.
CHAPTER 2
RELATED LITERATURE: A CRITICAL REVIEW

While this chapter contains a form of preliminary review of the literature, usually indicating its completion prior to data collection (Schumacher & McMillan, 1983), it could more accurately be named an "inter-data-collection" preliminary review. It was begun and completed immediately after a pilot study and the first round of interviews with participating teachers and before a refinement of the research design and the bulk of data collection. The advantages to the timing of the review include the following: an informal awareness on the part of the researcher of early emergent, tentative themes and teacher concerns which assisted in the selection of some categories of literature for inclusion in the review; an additional relevance in conducting the review as part of the research effort rather than as separate from and prior to it; an immediate check against unintentional duplication or replication; and an identification of gaps in previous research which guided, but did not limit, subsequent efforts. A conscious effort was made on the part of the researcher to utilize the early data collection as a guide but not as an arbiter on the categories of literature selected for review. Finally, at the completion of the review of related literature, this portion of the research was set aside for approximately two years while an ongoing review of additional literature continued as an integral part of the research process, inter-woven in the text of the two data analysis chapters. I anticipate that an ongoing review of related literature will continue to the last seconds of this research effort. Meanwhile, the review of literature in this chapter provides context and perspective, extends the knowledge base of the researcher, and becomes a useful reference in its own right. This "inter-data-collection" preliminary review of the literature begins with a look at the data base on the older, grayer, more experienced cadre of the nation's teachers.

"Then autumn comes, with its first flush of youth gone, but ripe and mellow, midway in time between youth and age, with sprinkled grey showing on the temples."
(Ovid, 43 B.C. - 17 or 18 A.D., In Cole & Winkler, 1994, p. 28)
The Graying of the Teaching Force, Broadly Defined

Ducharme (1988) refers to growing numbers of older teachers as those who are "staying but graying" (p. 45), a significant group of cohorts with their own developmental issues and critical needs as they move toward retirement. He implores that we hear and heed the "heart's cry" of these teachers by changing their work environments and by considering their needs when looking at staff development, morale, and professional growth. At the same time, he suggests that younger faculty might benefit from the experiences of these professionals who are "growing old in place" (p. 46). What data-based literature supports these contentions?

Demographics

"Teaching is no longer a young person's profession," write Auriemma, Cooper, and Smith (1992, p. 8) in their publication Graying Teachers. In support of their statement, they cite the mean age of public school teachers in New York state as 44 years in 1990 and the largest cohort (34.5%) between the ages of 41-48 years. In 1988, 1,833,300 of the nation's teachers were age 40 or older, according to statistics Auriemma, et al., cited from a 1990 report from the National Center for Education Statistics. Further, in 1988, teachers age 30 or younger were "outnumbered by those over 50 (310,901 to 416,857)" (p. 9). The older teaching force may in part be a reflection of retirement systems that are working, acting as a "golden handcuff, inducing teachers to stay in the same school systems for their entire careers...the plans reward longevity and punish mobility" (p. 13). Auriemma, et al. report that the national attrition rate from teaching was only 5.6 percent in 1987-88, compared to 21.7 percent in 1960.

In Ohio in 1991, the average age of certificated personnel was 42.7 in an employee pool of 122,201-79,179 of which were teachers, according to data collected since 1976 by the Ohio State Department of Education (Bowers, 1991). Bowers concluded, "It can be seen that there is not a large number of certificated staff about ready to retire" (p. 11), a conclusion he based on the average years of experience of certificated personnel. My own conclusion, based on his data, is different: When years of teaching experience are distributed on a graph, a tidal wave of retirements, cresting in the next nine years before leveling off, appears to loom in Ohio public education. During the 1996-97 school year alone, approximately 14,700 of Ohio's certificated personnel will have 30 or more years of experience and thus be eligible for retirement (if some
don’t retire this year)—12% of the certificated force. But whether those eligible for retirement choose to do so or not, the faculties in Ohio’s public schools will be grayer than they used to be—and the resulting implications deserve attention.

Related Research

My search of databases has found much research available on the phenomena of the aging professoriate (e.g. Allen, 1993; Avery & Jablin, 1988; Bader, 1995; Bechman, 1993; Heim, 1991; Karp, 1986; Krauss & Julius, 1993; Lozier & Dooris, 1991; Murray, 1991; three college contract agreements which contain provisions for pre-retirement reductions in annual workload; and others), but relatively little regarding the aging public school teacher. I find those which are available to be compelling.

The earliest study pertaining to the aging of teachers in Ohio which I found is Barber’s unpublished Master’s thesis (1927) from the University of Akron on the Ohio State Teachers’ Retirement System. Barber found the first instance of a teachers’ mutual aid society to have occurred in New York City in 1869. It began with teachers collecting money to pay for the funeral of a teacher who had left no resources for the expense. Because of that incident, Barber wrote, Vanderbilt, a young teacher, helped to organize the New York City Teachers’ Mutual Life Insurance Association, the members of which agreed to pay one dollar whenever called upon to finance the funerals of other teachers with the assurance that their own funerals would also be financed at the appropriate time. From this base grew teacher retirement and annuity associations. In Ohio, the first was established in Cincinnati in 1891; from this evolved the State Teachers Retirement System. Prior to these efforts, it appears that many teachers taught until they neared death: “…many of these teachers would still be in the employ of the city although unable to do satisfactory work because of ill health or the infirmities of age” (p. 6). Barber’s history indicates that prior to the development of Ohio’s retirement system, teachers taught under “the shadows of coming adversities” (p. 6) with no relief in sight. Barber argued that older teachers deserved a plan which was “humanitarian” (p. 29). I include this study because it brings perspective to the current situation. While there are numerous valid concerns pertaining to the aging teaching force, teachers today do not teach under the same shadows as their predecessors.
Mathis (1987), in a review of more recent literature, noted that the aging of teachers in the contemporary teaching profession has "significant implications for the educational system, yet...generally ignored in the reform literature" (p. 82). In an extended discussion of our aging society and the image of teachers as working in undesirable conditions for low pay with little authority in the classroom, Mathis surmises that teachers might 'have a diminishing enthusiasm for their work as they grow older' (p. 89) unless working conditions and salaries improve, thus affecting the overall quality of educational efforts. Mathis wrote that the age of teachers is not a concern per se, since experienced teachers may possess skills which younger teachers don't have, but that dysfunctional classroom environments and resulting stress, rather than changes due to age, may cause more older teachers to leave their classrooms.

Mathis (1987) concludes that teacher values and attitudes about work will change as the average age for teachers increases, but that there is no reason to expect an adverse effect on maintaining competency in teaching (p. 98); he cautions that factors other than the age or personality of specific teachers should be monitored, such as amounts of dysfunctional stress. Teachers will need a supportive context for their changing developmental needs, and "ways of maintaining generativity throughout a teaching career will need to become a part of professional expectations" (p. 80).

Mathis (1987) also notes that he knows of no research which addresses the issue of age and competence of public school teachers, that although college faculty have student ratings of instruction as an indicator of successful teaching, public school teachers do not. Mathis cites a 1986 study by Blackburn and Lawrence of college faculty which found no strong relationship between teaching effectiveness and age. I located a more recent study (Kinney & Smith, 1992) which provides a somewhat complex look at age and teaching effectiveness in higher education, using student ratings over a period of 17 years of tenured faculty members whose ages were known. Kinney and Smith noted that student ratings were influenced by factors other than the quality of instruction—factors such as the specific discipline (humanities and fine arts teachers tend to get higher rankings than do social or physical science teachers), level of the courses, expected grade in a course, and class size. In statistically analyzing a large sample of evaluations over time, Kinney and Smith found a small but significant curvilinear relationship between age and teaching effectiveness which varied among disciplines (but they emphasized that class size influenced
ratings more than did age). In the social sciences, for example, they found that student
evaluations rise until instructors are about forty-one years of age, "fall until about the age of sixty-
four, and then begin to rise again" (p. 295). While such data may be useful to have for general
feedback, no such data is available for beginning to determine a relationship between teaching
effectiveness and age in public school teachers.

A study was conducted, however, to examine student perceptions regarding age and the
ability of public school teachers to teach (Martin & Smith, 1990). Twenty-eight seventh-grade
science students were shown photographs of six teachers (described as young, middle-aged or
old) and asked to evaluate them in terms of organization, classroom management, motivation,
communication, sensitivity, imagination, and competence. Middle-aged pictures were rated
higher than the other two groups on organization and imagination; otherwise no significant
interactions were found. Martin and Smith speculated that students may perceive that old
teachers have less enthusiasm than middle-aged teachers. While the study is an interesting
attempt to link age and teaching effectiveness in public school teachers, the study has several
limitations beginning with the small sample size (N = 28). Further, the specific ages of teachers in
the photographs is not given. How old is old? We don't know from the study. Further, the
research was conducted only on 7th graders. Whether or not more mature high school students,
even in a small sample, would rank teachers in similar ways is not known. The test also may reveal
more about the personal biases and experiences both in and out of school of individual students
than about teaching effectiveness since the experiment asks them to respond to photographs of
teachers unknown to them.

Research, even though there is a paucity of it, suggests there may be a general
relationship of some kind between age and teaching effectiveness whether in higher education
or in public schools, but is highly inconclusive both about the nature of the relationship and about
factors other than age which impact on teaching effectiveness. Of more relevance to the
educational enterprise may be the attitudes and retirement intentions of teachers themselves.

Kitty and Behing (1985), from the College of Social Work at The Ohio State University,
conducted a study in Franklin County, Ohio, which compares four types of professionals—
attorneys, social workers, high school teachers, and college professors—on their attitudes toward
their jobs and their retirement intentions. In their sample size of 457 respondents, the mean age
was 43.79 years; data from questionnaires was statistically analyzed. They found that high school teachers differed the most from the other professions on plans to retire at younger ages. Part of that result they attribute to teachers beginning their careers at a younger age because they generally need less formal education for entry-level jobs. They also erroneously state that the teacher’s pension system tends “to force people into retirement after a long period of service, such as 30 years” (p. 226). Actually, the State Teachers Retirement System permits retirement after 30 years, but does not force teachers to retire at that time; on the contrary, it has incentives in the form of higher retirement pay for those who teach longer (Auriemma, et al., 1992).

Overall, Kitty and Behling (1985) found that job alienation variables in the study were the best predictors of retirement intentions at younger ages and speculate that when work begins to have limited meaning and interest “or has become too consuming of time and energy” (p. 226), that individuals will be more likely to want to leave their professions via retirement. The study is relevant in that it raises the issue of job alienation applied to older teachers, an issue that I will examine more in depth in the career-stage literature in a later section. One other study (Pearce, 1993) suggests that teachers and administrators may feel unappreciated by their employers, another factor which might contribute to feelings of alienation. Pearce studied retired teachers’ attitudes toward retirement and found that many respondents felt that their former employing organizations neither regarded them highly nor respected them. More than 25% of those surveyed said that they did not enjoy their job situations in the year prior to retirement; nearly 30% felt that their districts turned them out and gave them no further thought; 57% said they felt relief and satisfaction at having left the job. The Pearce study has implications for the need to reconceptualize the late stage of the teaching career, and I will return to it later.

One Canadian study makes a contribution to the topic of “graying teachers”; I found no comparable studies conducted in the United States. One reason the Canadians may have shown an early interest in the topic may be because their minimum (and maximum) retirement age for teachers had been set at age 65. In the mid-eighties, however, human rights legislation extended the retirement age, prompting “vision of an aged teaching force who will demand the services of the buses for the handicapped to deliver them to their assigned responsibilities” (Bumbarger, Nixon, & Seger, 1987). Otherwise, they, too, have been noticing the rising age of the teaching force.
Bumbarger, et al. (1987) chose a large urban system for their study of public school educator attitudes toward their jobs and retirement; the average age of teachers was 44 years and 47% of the teachers were over 40 years old. The researchers noted that teaching may have become a dead-end job for some and that enthusiasm for teaching may have dwindled after years of experience. Canadian teachers who contemplated a career change said the following incentives appealed to them: personal challenge (64% of respondents); higher salary (41%); and current boredom and frustration with present position (33%). Bumbarger, et al., also noticed a commonality in the responses of educators that "their full ranges of talents and expertise were not currently being utilized" (p. 22). Many expected that their physical and/or mental health would improve if they were able to retire. One respondent noted the stress of being "impacted upon by too many people" (p. 23). The study also found that many desired early retirement for the following reasons: Nature of school clientele, lack of caring by administrators and personnel departments, and "the decline in personal energy combined with the ever increasing demands made on educators" (p. 24). The teachers themselves seemed to feel that their energy levels had declined with age a factor that their expertise could not totally compensate for: "They felt that the daily school activities with their attendant energy drain were taking a toll on their health" (p. 25). The researchers concluded that more concern for educators approaching retirement and more research on these topics "is appropriate at this time" (p. 36).

This section of the literature review has established the following relevant foundation for my research: There is an increasing aging teaching force in the United States and in the state of Ohio; there are issues worthy of study as they relate to older and experienced teachers—such as the possibility of diminished energy and enthusiasm and of increased job alienation as well as the validity of a more supportive context for teachers, one which addresses both their developmental needs and their physical/mental health; these issues have generally been ignored in the literature on public school teachers; and, based on the recommendations of the literature, more research is advised.
The Intersection of Theories: Age-Related, Life Span, and Adult Development Theories

"It will be interesting to see to what extent psychologists in the future will be able to free themselves from their own perschial vision, and thus behold more clearly the complexity of the problems they are confronting." —Csikszentmihalyi (1991).

This section begins with a caveat, expressed succinctly by Pratt and Norris (1994):

Age, in and of itself, is not an explanation of anything. Instead, we must observe individual variability exhibited by persons at all ages, the explanatory factors...which may be linked to these. The natural emphasis on age/stage-related descriptions of adulthood has tended to obscure this fundamental point (p. 8).

Another fundamental point is that both theories and research results need to be viewed as expressions of individuals living in a particular culture and society at a given time. What seems cogent in the evolution of thought today may seem irrelevant, even ludicrous, in the years ahead.

To illustrate the point, I refer to work by Maddi (1972). In his comprehensive comparative text on personality theories, Maddi cites a 1939 study by Phillips and Greene who studied 143 women teachers and found "an initial rise in neuroticism (measured by the Bernreuter Personality Inventory) up to a peak at age 30, and a decline thereafter" (p. 260). A study by Strong in 1943 is cited as evidence that change in personality in males is generally positive from age 15-25 and negative from 25-55—in such categories as influencing others and occupations involving writing. Kuhlen's 1945 study is also cited showing a decrease in the importance of sexual activity and vocational success in men before the age of 35. Maddi cites these studies in support of the conclusion "that radical changes in personality do take place beyond the childhood years" (p. 260)—a relatively new idea at the time, but bordering on the ludicrous when viewed in the light of today.

These studies were a product of the individuals who designed, implemented, and reported them during the zeitgeist, before and after mid-century, and they reinforce the point made above by Pratt and Norris. In the literature which follows, it is well to remember that each selection was written through a particular lens and reviewed through another, just as the studies cited above from Maddi.
Age-Related/Life Span/Adult Development Theories

Life span theories may not have been carefully articulated by academic standards until the 1950's, but Shakespeare’s “seven ages” speech in As You Like It (circa 1599-1600) is surely the most eloquent:

All the world’s a stage,
And all the men and women merely players;
They have their exits and their entrances,
And one man in his time plays many parts,
His Acts being seven ages…. (p. 87)

Shakespeare describes “middle age” (his fifth age) as “…And then the justice,/In fair round belly with good capon lined/With eyes severe and beard of formal cut,/Full of wise saws, and modern instances;/And so he plays his part”—or maybe to Shakespeare of the age of graying teachers was the sixth age: “With spectacles on nose and pouch on side…. " (Act II, sc. vii, p. 87).

Life span theories were formed by those in developmental psychology as early as the 1950's and were built on through the 1970's (Knowles, 1990). Bradbury (1975) calls Carl Gustav Jung the true spiritual father of life-cycle theory and of modern adult developmental psychology. Jung believed that “development continued as long as life itself” (p. 12), and that sometime after the age of 40, the main task for the growing adult is inner growth and development. Although Jung theorized as he worked with clients, he made no systematic studies, according to Bradbury, but others did.

Bradbury (1975) cites Bernice Neugarten’s work begun in the 1950’s and comprised of some 80 studies as “probably the largest examination of adult life” (p. 24) to date; Neugarten and her colleagues cross-examined thousands of men and women. She found middle age to be a turning point in life—the point at which adults “become poignantly aware that they are no longer young” (p. 25). Neugarten found that socioeconomic status was related to perceptions of aging; the upper middle class defined middle age at 50 whereas unskilled workers defined it at 40. Schlossberg (1985) cites a 1982 Neugarten study which found that as people got older, their variability, or individuality, increased—thus life stages cannot be linked to specific ages.

Schlossberg (1985) summarizes life span perspectives as those which consider change over the life span and variations in how different groups experience adulthood according to variables of socioeconomic status and racial and ethnic differences. She distinguishes life span
Theorists from those who use chronological age categories, categories which she says are not supported by commanding evidence. Cruickshank and his colleagues (1966) lump life span and age-related theories together in a category called "life-span development." They report that research shows that humans have potential for change throughout life and that change occurs in both personal and professional contexts which interact with and influence one another. I have retained the terminology "age-related" in this category because while age is not definitive in understanding adult development, it is, I believe, relevant.

The concept of the process of "aging" is also relevant. Schultz and Ewen (1993) define aging as "changes that are caused by processes within the individual and which significantly decrease the probability of survival. These changes are universal and inevitable" (p. 5). I prefer the definition stated by Willie and Howey (1980): "...aging is a physiological process beginning at conception, continuing across the life span...." (p. 34). Willie and Howey provide a succinct review of what is known about the physical aspects of human aging. Of interest is their conclusion, still applicable, that physiological changes should be considered when viewing teacher development over time. For example, they note that most inservice for teachers occurs at the end of the school day "when the physical resources of all teachers, and especially older teachers, are spent" (p. 35). In another perceptive observation, they note that a teacher's self-concept can seriously be distorted and accompanied by stress due to outer physiological changes:

Consider, if you will, the effect of a deteriorating appearance accompanying the aging process...on a teacher who year after year faces a continuing wave of youth. Teachers spend the larger part of their waking hours in a world populated by young people who serve as a sharp contrast and constant reminders of the passage of one's own time (p. 36).

Teachers, as I will argue later, may then experience an accelerated sense of aging.

One of the most profound sources that I found for this section is Experiencing the Life Cycle: A Social Psychology of Aging (Clair, Karp & Yoels, 1993), a text which presents a theoretically integrated, interdisciplinary, symbolic interactionist view of aging. A basic premise of the text is that the meanings given to age are contextual as well as socially constructed, with expectations for appropriate behaviors defined according to differing situations: "In short, our age is a critical factor in determining how others define us, how we define ourselves...." (p. 4). While
the author-sociologists speak of biological/chronological aspects of aging, they include “behavioral, social, psychological, cultural, and historical dimensions of the process” (p. 4) as well. The country’s demographics are relevant. Clair, et al., mention the 76 million Americans in the baby boom generation; this generation alone comprises almost one third of the population in the country and “more than 43% of all voting-aged Americans...this generation...has thus far redefined the dominant issues and concerns of American society each time its oldest members have passed to a new life stage” (attributed to Longman, 1987, p. 6). Of relevance to my study is that the oldest baby boomer teachers are entering the late career stage; if Longman’s speculation is correct, they may well transform the approach to career-end and exit.

The authors remind their readers that conventions which suggest age-appropriate behaviors are arbitrary social constructions which are deeply embedded in the consciousness of a society (Clair, et al., 1993). The symbolic interactionist viewpoint holds that people’s reality is socially constructed and “to understand human behavior, we must inquire into those processes through which persons create and transform their social worlds” (p. 15). This concept is important in my research as it applies to the effort to reconceptualize the late career stage of teachers. Of interest also is that the authors apply their theoretical concepts to disengagement theory (attributed to Cumming & Henry, 1961), the notion that people automatically withdraw from active involvement in society as they age. The concept has been applied to teachers as they approach retirement by referring to a career withdrawal stage. Clair, et al., argue that such a process is neither inevitable nor universal, that disengaging from any of life’s roles, including the process of retirement, will depend on the subjective meanings that individuals attach to given roles and situations.

Work itself has socially constructed meanings, and according to Clair, et al., one’s sense of aging—as well one’s sense of identity, social value, and feelings of self-esteem—are tied up in the work one does during one’s lifetime. The authors cite a 1992 work by Kearl and Gordon: “What people do at work has broad bearing on how they act, think, and perceive things in general. In more formal terms, work produces individuals’ primary form of consciousness” (p. 96). How the larger society perceives the value and expertise of teachers, then, affects teachers deeply.

Of particular relevance to teachers also is the observation that a “lack of movement, change, and novelty, will influence persons’ conceptions of aging at any level of the work
structure. A sense of restricted opportunities at work is intimately bound up with a sense of aging (Keel & Gordon, 1992, p. 99, cited in Clair, et al., 1993)). Whereas academics, those instructors working in higher education institutions, have a career path marked by benchmarks such as moving from assistant to associate to full professor, public school teachers do not. As the literature has shown, teaching has been characterized as a horizontal and repetitive job (Rieke, 1986); its retirement system, which prevents teachers from working under a shadow of future adversities (Barber, 1927), nevertheless constrains teachers by the "golden handcuff" which punishes mobility (Auriemma, et al., 1992). Further, as Huberman (1989) has noted in "The Professional Life Cycle of Teachers," echoing the words of Willie and Howey (1980), teachers grow older, but their students remain the same age—"relentlessly young, year after year" (p. 35). According to Clair, et al., "Once occupation enters into our consciousness as a cue for interpreting our movement through the life course, it alters our conception and experience of the life course itself" (p. 106). For these reasons, teachers, as I mentioned earlier, may well experience an accelerated sense of aging as a result of staying in the teaching career.

Finally, Clair, et al. (1993) further document the need for the research I plan to do. In their chapter on "Work, Careers, and Aging," they refer to a "paucity" of in-depth research on how people view work during the period of time preceding retirement, particularly in the 45-55 age group. The authors also conclude that there are very few studies about the anticipation of leaving work, especially as it contributes to people's feelings about their own aging. Two studies are cited which help to establish part of the conceptual grounding for my research: 1) Atchley's work in 1991 which establishes a preretirement period in careers and which has both a remote and near phase; and 2) Karp's work in 1989 which found an "exit consciousness" in professional workers approaching retirement. Clair, et al, establish that little is known about how people experience and define the near phase; the exit consciousness of teachers is part of what I will be exploring in my research.

The Work of Sheehy: Provocative and Controversial

Sheehy's work (1976, 1995), found in the literature of the popular press, reinforces the notion that meanings given to age are socially constructed, a function of their place in history, contextual, and subject to individual perspective and bias. In Sheehy's New Passages: Mapping Your Life Across Time (1995), the sequel to her well known and popular Passages: Predictable
Crises of Adult Life (1976), Sheehy points out that age norms have shifted since the earlier work, that what was considered normative then is no longer so—a point of view consistent with Neugarten's concept of the "social clock" developed in the 1970's whereby an individual "assesses his or her progress through the life course" (Pratt & Norris, p.119). Though Sheehy still adheres to a belief that people pass through predictable stages or passages in adult life, she postulates that a ten-year shift in when they will occur has transpired in the almost twenty years since her earlier work was published. For example, in her earlier work, midlife for women began at about age 35; for men, it was noticeable at about age 40. In New Passages, Sheehy writes: "Middle age has already been pushed far into the fifties—if it is acknowledged at all today...Fifty is now what 40 used to be" (p. 4). She further reflects that her 1976 perspective was filtered through the lens of a woman in her mid-thirties who couldn't imagine her life beyond the age of 50; thus, in her earlier work, due to her own perspective and bias, she stopped defining passages in adult life before the age of 50. This incident is a good example for the researcher to keep in mind; it is important that one's biases be made explicit, insofar as that is possible, and it is equally important to become aware of implicit or explicit biases which may be present in the work of researchers.

Before discussing the relevance of Sheehy's work (1995) to my intended research, I would like to discuss the criticism by Clair, et al. (1993) of Sheehy's approach and conceptualization. Clair, et al., take exception to Sheehy's 1976 work, calling its popular appeal historically naive, a reflection of "the ahistorical character of thinking predominant in American behavioral science" (p. 26). They charge that the public responded to the work so favorably because of the influence of developmental theorists such as Piaget, Erikson, and Levinson, who had shaped the public consciousness about what is normal during adulthood. Further, they, albeit gently, admonish those in scholarly disciplines to be concerned more "with developing historically sophisticated, broadly-based interdisciplinary theories of human development rather than seeing development as involving only successions of events" (p. 26). This criticism seems to me to misconstrue specifically, by inference, the nature of Erikson's stages and their theoretical value for viewing adult life as well as to commit the fallacy of equivocation in the use of "events." Further, when considering Sheehy's work, Passages does not seem to have been informed by a historical perspective, but her recent work is so informed—at least in terms of twentieth century
American cultural history. Thus, her 1995 work might not receive the same criticism either in
degree or in kind.

Clair, et al., evoke Sheehy (1976) again in a discussion of midlife later in their text, attributing her book as a key factor in popularizing the concept of a midlife crisis—a concept they say may only provide some adults with justifications for excessive drinking or extra-marital affairs. That may be true. What isn’t clear to me is the authors’ position on developmental stages that one might expect to encounter during the course of a life. Clair, et al., view concepts such as
childhood, adolescence, and middle age as social constructions rather than as objective realities and/or universal experiences. They note that the concept of childhood was invented during the 17th century in Western Europe, that the concept of adolescence did not exist until near the turn of this century, that middle age is a twentieth century construction, and that how we define these constructions affects our experience of being in the age linked to them. Having clarified that point for the reader, however, I find what appear to be inconsistencies, or maybe a lack of clarity, in the work. While discussing the social construction of age categories (in a chapter by the same name), the authors claim that if (emphasis, mine) “today’s experience of middle age” is one of
“introspection and existential examination” (p. 54) it is because of our historical situation and that people at midlife have reason to give attention to questions about life’s meaning—but the authors do not explicitly confirm or disconfirm that this is what happens during the social construction of
middle age. In their later discussion of midlife mentioned above, especially regarding a crisis in midlife, they write that they are “wary of any view of human behavior postulating rigidly uniform human experiences” (p. 116) even though they agree that “persons in mid-life probably will be
motivated to reflect on the congruence between what they hoped their lives would be like and its
actual reality” (p. 117)—suggesting a rather uniform human experience. The distinction here is a
fine line, maybe one of semantics, but I find the authors to be sitting on a proverbial fence, speaking out of both sides of their proverbial collective mouth. In a discussion of career stages “normally experienced by everyone regardless of their particular occupation” (p. 107), Clair, et al., caution the reader not to “lose sight of the fact that there are general cultural regularities that cut across and transcend the unique experience of persons” (p. 107). What these regularities are remains unclear.
Certainly, Sheehy (1995) attempts to document some of the "broad, general stages of adulthood with predictable passages between them" (p. 13); however, Sheehy's latest research has convinced her that there is no longer a standard life cycle and that age norms which once signaled major life events have become elastic. Grounding her current work in the theories of Erik Erikson and Daniel Levinson, Sheehy defines a developmental stage as an "underlying impulse toward change that signals us from the realm of mind or spirit" (p. 12). She uses the term "passage" to indicate a turning point, "a crucial period of decision between progress and regression" (p. 12) to signal a new developmental stage. For purposes of my research, Sheehy's last period of adulthood is of interest—the period she calls Second Adulthood which begins at the age of 45. At the beginning of this period is a new passage, the "Age of Mastery," experienced between the ages of 45 and 65. Sheehy calls this passage, the focus of her book, a "bonus stage—truly new territory" (p. 9). The passage is precipitated by a new kind of awareness of one's mortality—much like the midlife crisis described in her earlier work. A new integration of one's identity will hopefully occur relatively early in this phase. This period is a time of making changes, if one desires, in one's life and habits in preparation for, hopefully, many decades more of life. It is this "many decades more" of life to live which is new in our lifetime. The age of mastery is a time for reinventing the self, for re-visioning the future. Movement through the first part of this passage tends to result in alterations in the following perceptions: time and its value; authenticity; aliveness/stagnation; and safety/danger. Ten chapters in the book deal with this passage.

While Sheehy (1976, 1995) is an author and self-proclaimed political journalist, she is neither an academic nor the holder of a graduate degree; her work does not appear in professional journals and may not be as highly regarded as research which is published by academic presses. Nevertheless, Sheehy's 1976 work is cited by multiple respected academics for various reasons (e.g. Bents & Howey, 1981; Clair, et al., 1993; Knight, 1990; Willie & Howey, 1980—and many others). As another example of Sheehy's influence, in a discussion of career stages, Steffy (1989) uses the term "passages" (p. 183) in quotation marks but does not cite Sheehy, suggesting that the concept has acquired generic usage or perhaps that it is so widely recognized that it no longer needs explanation.

(As a brief aside, I think that Ellen Goodman's (1995) review of New Passages was unworthy of both Goodman and Sheehy. Goodman's glib brush-off of the work as undeserving of
a reader's time makes me surmise that Goodman "skipped lightly" over the whole book and not just the section on the late life cycle, as she claimed. Her closing insult, that Sheehy is herself not "grown-up," speaks more about Goodman than about Sheehy. While the book deserves a critical look at its shortcomings, it does not deserve this kind of invective).

I believe that Sheehy's 1995 work is worthy of critical attention. Of interest to me is how Sheehy arrived at her conclusions. Her methods of data collection are impressive: She conducted nearly 500 personal interviews with adults ranging in age from 20 to 70; she utilized U. S. Census Bureau data in a novel way to create a "pseudo-longitudinal data set" which allowed her to trace various cohorts during their lifetimes over a fifty-year period beginning in 1940; other Census Bureau data was used to track the birth years of the cohorts she used, beginning with 1914; she designed an instrument she calls the "Life History Survey" and managed to get 7,880 men and women from all over the country to respond to it; she obtained 1,000 more survey responses from a popular magazine reading panel "weighted to approximate a representative national sample" (p. 19); and she worked with a social research organization in the reanalysis of data. Further, while synthesizing all of her material to find patterns, she met with experts in numerous academic disciplines—what qualitative researchers would call a form of triangulation. A more detailed description of data analysis was not published in the book. The effort to conceptualize the project, collect, analyze, and synthesize data took her more than six years to complete.

For purposes of my research, two of the cohort groups are of interest: The "Silent Generation" born between 1930-45; and the "Vietnam Generation" or "Baby Boomers" born between 1946-55. Sheehy (1995) gives general cultural and socio-historical characteristics of each group, providing a context for viewing how their developmental experiences differed depending on year of birth. As part of her description of current life in America, she describes an "economic and electronic revolution...Indeed, with our E-mail boxes and our fax and phone machines always 'on,' we have invaded our own solitude with an accelerated demand for immediate action and reaction" (p. 8). Her sometimes chatty tone may appeal more to the mass market than to the scholar, but several of her themes reinforce and can be linked to scholarly work. One example of such a theme is Sheehy's version of possible selves, referred to as linking a past
self to a future self or integrating an idealized self with a real self. Two academics, Cross and Markus (1991), studied the concept of possible selves as a psychological resource.

Cross and Markus: Possible Selves

The concept of "possible selves" has potential usefulness in my research of teachers, especially in terms of reconceptualization of the self and of one's role as teachers approach the end of their teaching careers. The term indicates "those elements of the self-concept that represent what we could become, what we would like to become, and, very importantly, what we are afraid of becoming" (Cross & Markus, 1991, p. 231). Linking their work philosophically to the work of Abraham Maslow and William James, lifespan researchers assume the possible self to be a useful resource in "negotiating the changes and transitions of adulthood" (p. 231); preparing for retirement is specifically mentioned.

In a sample size of 173 students and adults, Cross and Markus (1991) analyzed responses to several measures, one of which was to list all of their hoped-for and feared possible selves that they could currently imagine. In terms of hoped-for selves, respondents in the 40-59 age group listed such hopes as "to grow older gracefully and with dignity" and "to be philosophically at peace" (p. 237); in terms of feared selves related to occupation, they listed "failure to reach work goals before retirement" (p. 239). Of interest in the 25-39 age group in the occupational category of feared selves were "having a dead-end, boring job" and "not becoming the kind of teacher I would like to be" (p. 239). Those in the 40-59 group, according to the researchers, focused on desires to feel both enjoyment and achievement in their fields. They speculate that this interest in completing their careers successfully may be indicative of a shift in perspective on time. Alluding to Neugarten's oft-quoted "Life is restructured in terms of time left to live rather than time since birth" (p. 241), they note that those in the 40-59 age group "expressed a sense of the shortness of life" (p. 245).

Further, Cross and Markus (1991) link their results to Erik Erikson's developmental stages in later adulthood. Pratt and Norris (1994) discuss these in more detail, noting that Erikson's seventh stage is characteristic of midlife. The seventh stage is the often-written-about crisis of generativity vs. stagnation. Generativity refers to "the formation of a capacity to be useful to others in society, and in particular, other generations" (p. 118). This concept is important to my research in that while many might argue that a teacher's whole career life is geared toward
contributing to the development of future generations (through their students), and there is truth in that observation. I will also look at teacher opportunities to contribute to the next generation of teachers.

Cross and Markus (1991) speculate that there may be a reciprocal relationship between current and possible selves and life satisfaction; it is important that one's current self be somewhat positive in order for respondents to imagine solid positive future selves. This study (along with Sheehy, 1995) describes the general characteristics of the age group I plan to work with during my research; in addition, citing 1984 work by Ryff, the researchers call for more studies of individuals "from the inside out" (p. 251). The concept of generating possible selves can be applied to my research in asking teachers to generate possible ways to conclude their careers, offering an opportunity for synthesis, creativity, and motivation to reconceptualize their experience of the career cycle.

The Comprehensive Integrating Work of Sprinthall, Thies-Sprinthall, and Oja

No discussion of "age-related/life-span/adult development" theories, especially as applied to teachers, could be considered minimally adequate without including at least some of the immense integrating work on adult development contributed by Sprinthall, Thies-Sprinthall, and Oja.

Sprinthall and Thies-Sprinthall (1980) discuss cognitive developmental theory which is built on Piaget's cognitive theories, Kohlberg's morality development theories, Loevinger's ego-self development theories, Hunt's conceptual theories, and Perry's epistemological theories—a synthesis of which might be characterized as theory which considers varying adult stages of intellectual, psychological, and spiritual or moral/ethical growth. Cognitive development theory makes assumptions which are encouraging to those in the aging teaching force, even though optimism is not listed as one of its aims. These assumptions are summarized in the words of Sprinthall and Thies-Sprinthall:

1. All humans process experience through cognitive structures called stages--Piaget's concept of schemata.
2. Such cognitive structures are organized in a hierarchical sequence of stages...
3. Growth occurs first within a particular stage and then only to the next stage in the sequence...a major quantum leap to a significantly more complex system of processing experience.
4. Growth...occurs only with appropriate interaction between the human and the environment.
5. Behavior can be determined and predicted by an individual's particular stage of development. Predictions are not, however, exact (p. 279).

They cite Hunt's 1978 "Theorists Are Persons, Too: On Preaching What You Practice," for upping "the ante to what may be the penultimate if not the ultimate level" (p. 285) of complexity by applying cognitive development theory not only to stages of pupils, teachers, and even educational materials, but further, to teacher educators and researchers—implying an inextricable intertwining, thus suggesting that development in any of these components affects and is affected by development in the others, or, I might add, by lack of development.

Thies-Sprinthall and Sprinthall (1987) continue their work in developmental stage concepts by citing their 1984 study of teachers as mentors and teacher educators. They refer to a novel, Percy's The Moviegoer, to illustrate that without new experiences, people do not grow. This reference reminded me of the movie Groundhog Day, in which the lead character is forced to endure the repetition of a day in his life seemingly ad infinitum, and which illustrates the opposite of the above—the possibility that people change regardless of the nature of their experiences. No matter what the main character does, the day repeats itself as it had occurred on one particular February 2. While there is an obvious comparison in the repetitive nature of teaching, the movie illustrates that individuals can also learn and grow from repetition; the repetition actually gives them a chance to learn from previous mistakes, a chance to "get it right." The lead character in Groundhog Day obviously makes "a major quantum leap" in the way he processes his experience—after which he is able to break out of the repetition and go on with his life—a worthwhile goal for anyone, certainly for those engaged in the horizontal teaching career.

Thies-Sprinthall and Sprinthall (1987) look at inducing developmental change in teachers, specifically during a study they conducted on teachers learning to become mentors. They concluded that when teachers were "placed in slightly more complex roles with appropriate reflection, balance, and continuity, some developmental stage movement was evident" (p. 72). Thus, it appears from their research that by giving teachers new roles to enact, increased responsibility, and experiences of guided reflection, gains can be realized in individual teacher cognitive, psychological, and moral growth.

The guided reflection component of inducing developmental change in teachers received even more attention in the work of Reiman and Thies-Sprinthall (1993). Zying in on
the benefits of promoting developmental growth in experienced teachers, these researchers
determined some of what is currently known, according to them, about facilitating the process of
psychological growth: Experience must be examined or else it "forfeits the potential for growth"
(p. 180); personal support and challenge must be blended during the growth experience; and 6
months to one year appears to be the minimum amount of time for an in-depth experience with
support and guided reflection to result in psychological growth.

My response to their assertion of a need for guided reflection is not at all that it is a poorly
founded idea per se. Rather than an invariable requisite for psychological growth, however, it
seems to me to be a way to document and note, if not to inspire, developmental growth in specific
teachers. To what extent such teacher growth occurs at random without such support is simply
not known. In my opinion, to assert that psychological growth in teachers cannot occur without
"carefully guided reflection" is at best premature; at worst, it is condescending if not damaging in
the view it furs of teachers as incapable of quantum growth without the help of other
professionals. Maybe a more positive suggestion would be to up the ante, as in the earlier
reference to Hunt's 1978 work (Sprinthall and Thies-Sprinthall, 1980) and to include the necessity
of guided reflection for growth to occur in researchers as well—even if only to prevent further
teacher stereotyping. If cognitive developmental theory holds, then the developmental stage of
researchers will affect their eventual impact on teachers as well as all of their research work—That
is, what they choose to study, how they decide to study it, how they analyze their data, what they
are capable of finding—a conclusion actually well supported throughout this section of the
literature review.

Further support for my conclusion regarding the Reiman and Thies-Sprinthall (1993)
mmandate for guided reflection can also inadvertently be found in the work of Collinson, Sherrill,
and Hohenbrink (1994). Collinson, et al. studied self-initiated change in veteran teachers as a
source of teacher renewal. Teachers who have acquired a habit of seeking alternative solutions
allow change to be systematic rather than a "cacophony of fads" (p. 5). Citing Bolin's 1987 work,
Collinson, et al. include the observation that each new class of students provides an opportunity
for new possibilities. These researchers did case studies of two urban teachers, exploring their
self-initiated personal and professional experiences with renewal and growth. Among other
observations, Collinson, et al. found that these teachers were able to change in spite of
hierarchies and time constraints found in the schools’ bureaucratic structure. They did find, however, that these self-initiators often operated in isolation from their colleagues and changed without the support of mentors, factors which make such individual and professional growth more difficult for those who are not self-initiators. Nowhere in the study was guided reflection noted as a requisite for the growth of these teachers; however, this study suggests the desirability of radically changing school structures to support teacher development over time.

In truth, when I compare the work of Reiman and Thies-Srinhall (1993) to Collinson, et al. (1994) and Oja (1990), I am more comfortable with the work and tone of the latter two. Oja’s work is especially appealing. Oja worked closely in her early years with Norman Srinhall as his doctoral advisee; she continues to utilize frameworks begun then for her views on adult development. Oja’s sensitivity is exemplified to me by her observation that the value in knowing developmental theory as well as in being aware of individual differences or individual “world-views” is that such knowing “can help one to be less dogmatic about any one solution for everybody” (1990, p. 17).

In contrast to the Reiman/Srinhall (1993) assertion discussed in the previous paragraph that significant psychological growth takes six months to one year, Oja found that teachers already functioning at high developmental stages (One might ask how they managed to get there without reflection guided by others) did not exhibit “vertical change in developmental stage” within a two year period: such change occurred only in the teachers judged to be functioning at one of the “conventional” stages of development.

The terminology utilized by Oja (1990) to describe types of adult developmental stages is derived from moral development theory and includes conventional and post-conventional classifications; the terminology she uses to describe teacher stages of development are terms derived from the ego development theories of Loevinger—self-protective, conformist, conscientious, individualistic, autonomous, and integrated (Oja & Pine, 1987; Oja, 1990). Post-conventional stages are the latter three. Oja has expanded her teacher stage conceptualizations through the years.

I also like Oja and Pine’s qualitative research design (1987) for studying collaborative action research, and I am comfortable with the way they describe their research process as “ongoing tentativeness,” assuming “no conclusions but rather ongoing, indeed infinite, revisions” (p. 105). Their research design included audio recordings and transcripts, written
documentation by participant observers, teacher logs, pre- and post-questionnaires, and interviews throughout the research process. My own research design is similar to theirs. As Oja and Pine studied teacher perceptions, they found reflections of the various stages of adult development of individual teachers—suggesting a strong relationship between one's evolved stage and one's view of things. While Oja and Pine would seem to be in agreement with the later work of Reiman and Thies-Sprinthall (1993) regarding, for example, the value of collaboration, they frame it and other ideas (including reflective thinking) differently. For example, when Reiman and Thies-Sprinthall talk about collaboration, they include "teacher educators, policymakers, and school district personnel" in the action; nowhere do they specifically mention teachers as collaborators. They are more likely to refer to teachers as "subjects" or "control groups," a posture in line with their quantitative methods and mode of research. In contrast, Oja and Pine see university researchers and teachers as equal partners in the research enterprise, from problem definition at the outset to co-authorship at the conclusion. Equally promising in terms of my own research is the Oja and Pine view of teachers becoming "agents of their own change...no longer static or dependent on others for professional progress" (p. 110).

Oja's continued work (1990) with teachers and their adult developmental stages suggests why awareness of developmental stages is so useful: It helps others to know what teachers in various stages are likely to be able to implement as well as what they are likely to be able to learn; such awareness also allows the creation of "educational environments and staff development options in which teachers at different stages can choose to become involved and can grow personally and professionally" (p. 1). Such a view makes possible the notion of continued professional growth over time regardless of what stage of development one has reached. Oja is interested in creating educational environments which foster such growth and in becoming aware of how present school environments may tend to limit the kinds of change possible for those who work in them. That Oja has begun to match particular challenges and supports with different stages of development to facilitate maximum growth in teachers both as professionals and as human beings reinforces age-related/life span/adult development theories, for me, as a nearly irresistible frame of reference.
Section Summary

This section on age-related/life-span/adult development theories, the longest section in this review of literature, has helped to provide a theoretical foundation for my study of teachers approaching the ends of their careers. Life-span and adult development theories appear to be more compelling than do theories which rely on chronological age categories. However, the concept of aging remains a useful construct (Willie & Howay, 1980). While it would seem obvious that people change and grow in various dimensions throughout their life-spans, earlier research and socially constructed norms (a construct more fully developed by Clair, et al., 1983) until fairly recently supported an opposing conclusion. The work of Bradbury (1975), Schlossberg (1985), Cruickshank, et al. (1986), and Knowles (1990) have helped to put work by Jung, Neugarten, and others in a perspective which strongly supports that change occurs throughout the life cycle. A description of the characteristics of the two cohort groups I will draw my research participants from has been developed by both Clair, et al. (1993) and Sheehy (1995). Particularly exciting to me is the notion that those known as the baby boomers or Vietnam generation may help to redefine the socially constructed meaning and nature of career end. Throwing another spin on the subject is Sheehy’s conclusion that age-norms have shifted in our society, maybe by a full decade, and that the society is not yet fully aware that this shift has occurred.

I have proposed and found some support for the notion that teachers may experience an accelerated sense of aging due to a sense of restricted opportunities and few, if any, benchmarks at work; the repetitive nature and lack of mobility in most teaching careers; a shift in awareness of the passage of time; and the eternally youthful clientele of teachers which acts as an interpretive cue against which teachers may measure their own sense of increasing age. Whether or not this observation has direct relevance to my research remains to be seen. Further, some research efforts (Clair, et al., 1993; Cross & Markus, 1991) have established that in-depth research on how people experience and view their work prior to retirement is lacking. My research exploring the exiting consciousness of teachers may help to fill that gap.

The usefulness and applicability of Erikson’s developmental theory as it applies to teachers approaching retirement has been suggested (Cross & Markus, 1991; Sheehy, 1995; others). Adult stage development theory has been shown to provide a useful theoretical background for my proposed study when applied to teachers (Oja & Pine, 1987; Oja, 1990;
Sprinthall & Thies-Sprinthall, 1980). Support has been found for the notion of continued professional growth over time for teachers, regardless of stage of development, and for the observation that school environments tend to limit, although not to prohibit or eliminate, the kinds of change possible for teachers (Collinson, et al., 1994; Oja, 1990).

Finally, several research efforts (Clair, et al., 1993; Goodman, 1995; Sheehy, 1976, 1995; Reiman & Thies-Sprinthall, 1993) have directly or indirectly reinforced a need to be aware of biases in all researcher efforts, including my own.

Teacher Career Stage Theories

The history of teacher career stage theories apparently begins with the pioneering work of W. Peterson in 1964 (Huberman, 1989) who looked at teacher age in institutional settings and Frances Fuller in 1969 who focused on preservice teachers as a stage in teacher development although Unruh and Turner’s efforts in 1970 have been cited as “among the first to propose the notion of career stages” for teachers (Fessler, 1992, p. 22); a 1981 contribution by Richard Bents and Kenneth Howey has also been cited as one of the “first attempts” at researching the development of teachers throughout their careers (McDonnell, Christensen, & Price, 1989). Career stage theory in general, however, began in the early 1950’s particularly in the 1951 work of Ginzberg and his colleagues and in the 1953 and 1957 work of Donald Super; they are credited with conceiving of career development in terms of developmental stages (Cruickshank, et al., 1986; Minor, 1985).

Over time, career stage theories in general, and teacher career stage theories in particular, have become more complex. Burden (1980) in his 1979 dissertation, found three stages in a teaching career, the third stage beginning with the fifth year of teaching and continuing until retirement—a simplistic and underdeveloped conception in terms of contemporary theories, but which ultimately “provided refinement in the labeling and characteristics of teacher careers” (Fessler, 1992). Another early attempt at identifying career stages was that made by Christensen, Burke, Fessler, and Hagstrom (1983). Using a three-stage model, they proposed early, middle, and late stages with “The Later Years” defined as those during 20-30 years of teaching experience. They found the existing literature on the later years of teaching to be
contradictory, citing a 1979 study by Ryan, Flora, Burden, Newman, and Peterson at The Ohio State University which found that teachers in this stage "expressed discouragement and dissatisfaction with teaching...complained of weariness, lassitude, and professional boredom" (p. 5) and a 1980 study by Peterson and Watts which found that mature teachers viewed this stage as one of peak performance, openness to change, flexibility, and pride in a job well done. Overall, Christensen, et al., concluded that the teaching career generally ends along one of the two career paths—that of confidence and satisfaction or that of "discouragement, disillusionment, even depression, especially in the middle and final professional years" (p. 17)—a finding consonant with that of Michael Huberman’s 1989 studies which I will discuss shortly.

DeMoulin and Guyton (1988) proposed a teacher career development model with four phases based upon data obtained from principals and teachers: provisional, development, transition, and decelerating. DeMoulin and Guyton asked principals and teachers to identify stages of career development based upon their experiences and observations. The researchers cite their own 1987 study in support of transition and decelerating stages which found that “teachers expanded their level of effectiveness to a culmination point independent of age; then, barring any rejuvenation practices, declined to a level of ineffectiveness. Further this decline often happened before age 50” (p. 4). While the decelerating stage and its characteristics identified in this study pertain to my intended research, both the study and its findings have limitations: The number of teachers and principals surveyed was not indicated in the paper, and characteristics describing each stage were limited. Further, a four-stage career model lacks complexity and differentiation.

During the same period of time, other researchers continued to define teacher career stages. Burke, Christensen, Fessler, McDonnell, and Price (1987) proposed an eight-stage model based on a study of a random sample of 3,600 teachers selected from the approximately 1,500,000 teachers in the United States at that time. Their actual sample size was 778. Of particular interest to my research is the Burke, et al., stage identified as career wind-down:

This phase describes the conditions present when a teacher is preparing to leave the profession. For one, it may be a pleasant period, reflecting upon positive experiences and anticipating a career change or retirement. For others, it may reflect a bitter period, one in which a teacher resents forced job termination, or alternatively cannot wait to get out of an unrewarding job (p. 10).
Expanding on the above model, McDonnell, Christensen, and Price (1989) look at environmental influences, both personal and organizational, as part of the dynamics of career progression, a point of view consonant with my own. Further, they consider important aspects of the teaching career such as the "relative flat and goalless career line...Functions of teaching are basically undifferentiated. The first year novitiate and the 40-year veteran perform essentially the same task" (pp. 3-4). The bureaucratic nature of the career is also recognized in their literature. In addition to the fact that to progress in money or status, teachers must become administrators and leave the classroom, McDonnell, et al. note, "The bureaucratization of the school has resulted in teachers having little control in the actual conditions of the work environment" (p. 4). This point should not be minimized. McDonnell, et al. write, "No wonder teachers who do stay report a feeling of alienation for the work place. No wonder they resent the lack of autonomy, the little control, and the absence of leadership they have in the school" (p. 4).

In the current popular literature base, Gerry Spence (1995) offers a more passionate reflection on the devastating effects of bureaucratic organizations, calling them:

...rule-bound, nonbreathing, soulless...The bureaucracies do not know the people...They do not think, or feel or care or love. They do not know pain. They cannot empathize...They move by their own force like glaciers, as slowly as glaciers...If we were to devise an ultimate evil, we would doubtless choose the bureaucracy" (p. 251).

The flat career line and the bureaucratic nature of schools have implications for the wind-down career stage which I plan to address in my research.

Fessler and Christensen (1992) have identified four growth needs of teachers who have chosen to be in the career wind-down stage, reflecting "the overall desire...to share the expertise they have developed with others in the profession—to give a return on the investment they have made to the profession" (p. 208). The needs are identified as knowledge production, teacher preparation, mentoring, and leadership. These needs translate into activities such as writing curriculum or producing handbooks, serving as clinical "professors," chairing committees in the system or in professional organizations. Fessler and Christensen have also identified four kinds of incentives for teachers in this career stage: tangible, such as a comfortable work environment; recognition and promotion, such as the "titular designation" of master teacher or being selected as a mentor teacher; and support in the form of flexible work days, aides, released time for
knowledge production or culminating activities "that would leave them with the feeling that they have left a mark of the profession" (p. 213).

Another recent discussion on the stage called "Career Wind-Down" is by McDonnell and Burke (1992) who have written a whole chapter on the subject. Of particular interest to me is their characterization of the stage as one, more than any of the others, "marked by unpredictability" (p. 193). It is marked by mixed emotions, by excitement and worry, by regression or enlightenment, even by "one last burst of professional energy" for some (p. 193); it is marked by introspection, sometimes by a retrospective career life review. Personal factors affecting an individual teacher's experience of the wind-down stage include family influences, vocational interests, individual dispositions, life stage and developmental influences, and individual crises. These personal factors, according to the researchers, play a critical role in teacher's continuing job performance. Organizational environmental influences—which can be positive or negative—include school regulations, administrative management style, professional organizations, public trust and societal expectations. McDonnell and Burke specify that teachers in this stage have special growth needs. As this review will show later, the growth needs of teachers in this career stage are generally ignored by administrators and school systems as a whole. The stage McDonnell and Burke (1992) call career wind-down is called disengagement in Michael Huberman's work.

Huberman's (1989) study and analysis of "professional life cycles" remains among the most articulate and thoughtful I encountered in my search of the literature. His study of Swiss teachers resulted in two models, the second of which addresses teachers in late career stages. His perspective is in harmony with that adopted earlier in this paper regarding the fluid nature of adult lives and the need to adopt historical/sociological points of view in interpreting data, including examining cohort and period influences (e.g. Sheehy, 1995). Huberman views a "career" as a conceptual lens, again in line with earlier sources who would agree that the concept of career is a social construction (Clair, et. al., 1993). Huberman also makes clear that he considers career stages to be neither invariant nor universal. Finally, he cautions others to view his findings as "normative constructs enabling us to keep analytic order in our minds until we can handle more differentiation and complexity" (p. 53).

Huberman (1989) substantiated much about the late part of teaching careers, such as "a gradual loss in energy and enthusiasm is compensated for by a greater sense of confidence and
self-acceptance... (and) increased feelings of serenity go hand-in-hand with the sense of greater relational distance vis-a-vis pupils" (p. 35). Huberman noted that 43% of the secondary teachers in his sample considered leaving teaching as a career at some point in time (even though those in the study did not leave the career)—probably primarily because of "quality of workplace" factors. Some reported being worn down by routine; others were restless. He reports that one of his most "chilling" findings was that of experienced teachers who encountered a career crisis, fewer were able to resolve it than those who were not. He describes the perception of these teachers: "The resulting awareness—that teaching wears you down, that everyone muddles through...that in twenty years I may be like some of the shriveled-up sleepwalkers I see in staff meetings"—seems to come suddenly, one night, like the blow of a hammer" (p. 46). Huberman says the basic message is that one must consciously introduce novelty and challenge into one's teaching career every five or six years or risk succumbing "to increasing lethargy and cynicism, to a slow erosion of the spirit" (p. 47). Huberman builds a case for a disengagement phase in his model which occurs during the last decade of the career (in Switzerland, those with 31-40 years of teaching experience). He reports that older teachers became "considerably less active" and that "a trend toward disengagement was consistent and strong" (p. 52). Disengagement was experienced as basically serene or bitter—a finding in agreement with those of Christensen, et al. (1983) and Burke, et al. (1987).

Huberman's study is cited in other literature. In Fessler (1992), Huberman and Vonk (another European studying teacher career stages in 1989; Vonk calls his pre-retirement stage "The phase of running down," p. 28) are credited with offering sophisticated, multidimensional views which are more complex than earlier models.

In an even more recent and provocative study, Rusch and Perry (1993) examined teacher stereotypes to see whether or not older teachers were resistant to change. They quote from Huberman's 1988 work: "Over time...teachers see themselves as less willing to invest as heavily in their careers" (p. 8) and "For older teachers, notably the shift seems unequivocal: less energy; less activism, less involvement, less idealism, more skepticism, more pessimism" (p. 8). They also cite Evans' 1989 study of faculty at mid-career, particularly the comments: "At midcareer all professionals, including teachers, are prone to demotivation (boredom, loss of enthusiasm, diminished job interest) and a leveling off of performance. The growth curve flattens out.
particularly for those who do not move into new roles or change jobs; and energy flags” (p. 8). Rusch and Perry build a case for suggesting that these “researched behaviors” --particularly of these two researchers, contribute to stereotyping and could be construed as labels which could be viewed as pejoratives. In fairness to Evans, Rusch and Perry pounced on only part of what he said. They ignored his qualifiers such as “prone to” and “particularly for those who do not move into new roles” (p. 8). They do make a point worthy of reflection: There is a danger in the social construction of career stages and in the characterization of people who pass through them that these may influence people to see characteristics such as those described above as normative and thus become a cause of behavior and not merely a description of it.

In fairness to Huberman, however, I would like to point out that not all of Huberman’s older teachers fit the examples quoted above. Rusch and Perry (1993) did not include Huberman’s 1989 report which cautions readers from the beginning that not all careers “will play out in the same progression” and not “all members of a given profession will pass through them” (p. 32). Nor do Rusch and Perry include Huberman’s observation that his results do not appear to be a reflection of American schools where there is even more change and career mobility than in Europe. Nor do they mention that many of Huberman’s teachers experience a serene rather than bitter disengagement. Finally, they do not mention that Huberman writes, “It just may be the case that there are institutional environments in which teachers do not disengage, do not end up tending uniquely their own gardens, do not feel the stale breath of routine... (p. 54).

In fairness to Rusch and Perry (1993), they researched an important topic—the relationship between experience and perceived resistance to change in schools. Their findings are intriguing that 1) the stereotyping of older teachers was fairly widespread and that 2) younger, even midlife, teachers perceived older teachers as resistant to change but that older teachers did not see themselves as resistors. That they call attention to the fundamental attribution error of assuming that younger teachers are enthusiastic and that older teachers are detached is important and needed in the literature. They were perceptive to include Goffman’s 1963 concepts found in Stigma which are relevant to any discussion of marginalizing or discounting others. Goffman’s theory postulates that once someone is stigmatized, the group doing the labeling, through a variety of actions, “effectively, if not unthinkingly, reduce his life chances” (quote attributed to Goffman). To an extent, that phenomena does seem to be happening in the
schools studied in this research. Rusch and Perry give examples from their interviews showing teacher attitudes toward older colleagues: "A lot of teachers say, 'two more years'; it's not fresh and new anymore...Many older teachers are just counting the days" (p. 10). To their credit, they also brought the perceptions of several older teachers to light; for example, older teachers were "dismayed" that their fellow teachers weren't interested in "reviewing and researching all their past experience" (p. 11). Obviously, the older experienced teachers felt they had something worthwhile to share. The researchers also make an important point: Age and career stage "are no longer parallel pathways" (p. 13). While individual differences in development are an obvious explanation, Rusch and Perry call attention to the fact that more people are entering the teaching career at a later age. In the schools in their study, teachers with less than 10 years experience were often 40 or older.

I found a few other conceptual limitations in this study. In researching their topic, Rusch and Perry (1993) found, in their own words, a "reification of stereotypes of people at certain ages and stages of a teaching career. This reification of knowledge may actually represent the biggest barrier to organizational change...." (p. 1)—a finding that raises red flags, begs one to sit up and pay attention, but which, I believe, was not supported in their study. Their position that "research informs practice in ways that frequently result in socially constructed stereotypes of people...and reinforce embedded notions...." (p. 2) is a possibility worth becoming sensitive to, but their conclusion that labels and definitions for older staff members found in research and theory both create and solidify the stereotyping of older teachers and legitimate it via a professional conversation oversimplifies the problem and creates a new scapegoat: research and theory.

The professional literature base did not invent age stereotyping; nor is age stereotyping in and out of professional literature a recent development. Although it would not be difficult to document this claim, I refer to one salient reference who also offers a plausible explanation of the phenomenon. Almost 20 years ago, Nathan Roth (1978) wrote that attention to our aging population has helped to stereotype the concept of aging. Roth points out that the problem is at a national level, that ours is a youth-oriented country, that in the United States, "the elderly are frequently bombarded with evidence that they are considered to be of little value" (p. 553)—a factor in reducing one's self esteem. This reduction is significant because "self-esteem is the psychological equivalent of self-preservation in the physical sphere" (p. 553). Roth posits that
communities express their disregard for the dead prematurely to older people by devaluing them—because of a fear of aging and dying. Even more strongly, Roth calls this undervaluation “malignant.” Roth closes his article by calling for a utilization of the wisdom of our older citizens to prevent the “waste of valuable human resources” (p. 559). I believe we are wasting a valuable resource by underutilizing experienced teachers; older teachers have renounced their claims to wisdom of experience and knowledge—as Roth implies. This kind of loss is difficult to identify because any awareness of it remains just outside our consciousness. That is, we don’t know that we don’t know about it.

In the end, Rusch and Perry make an important contribution to my thinking by reminding me yet another time to attempt to make explicit any biases—of my own or of my research participants—that I can better out. The researchers also applied the problem of age stereotyping to the schools—a matter worthy of attention. Finally, they introduced me to a career stage theorist I had been unaware of and had not seen cited in the literature—Betty Steffy.

Steffy’s (1989) career stage theory is based neither on age, nor development, nor years of experience; it is primarily based, according to Steffy, on attitude (although Steffy concedes, “There is an overlay of the age component” [p. 19]). Steffy posits five stages: anticipatory, expert/master, renewal, withdrawal, and exit. According to Rusch and Perry (1993), her middle three stages are dependent upon a teacher’s motivation/competence level: “Steffy does not see adults moving through stages on a pre-set continuum. She believes late career teachers are not necessarily master teachers” (p. 8). Steffy’s exit stage refers to any teacher who is about to leave the system at any point during the career. I am interested in the part of her theorizing which looks at exit prior to retirement.

Steffy (1989) says most teachers experience and exhibit changes in attitude and behavior prior to retirement in the following areas: commitment to the district and professional development; increased nostalgia; increased desire to express opinions about teaching and about their school systems. Steffy rightfully points out that the exit stage is often ignored by administrators, “a mistake, because the exit stage offers administrators an opportunity to show to the entire staff that the human being and her commitment are valued by the organization” (p. 33). She also claims, and I agree, that “teachers should leave their profession with dignity and respect, even if it takes some doing on the part of the board and administration to project those feelings”
One of Steffy's strengths is her creativity in proposing alternatives, projecting other possibilities for the teaching career. I will return to Steffy during my discussion of the implications of the literature for the professional development of teachers, and immediately below, on the topic of stress/working conditions in the public schools.

Briefly, this section of the literature review has traced the evolution of theory on teacher career stages and noted that over time, both career stage theories in general and teacher career stage theories in particular have become increasingly complex. Support for the notion that teachers automatically culminated in their level of teaching effectiveness and then declined sometime before the age of 50 was not found. The eight-stage teacher career stage model which includes both personal and organizational influences (Burke, et al., 1987; McDonnell & Burke, 1992) is the model that shows most promise for my research; it includes a career wind-down stage and was empirically derived. The bureaucratic nature of the teaching career and school organizations alluded to in the previous section (Collinson, et al., 1994) and its negative effects was noted (McDonnell, et al., 1989; Spence, 1995). Huberman's (1989) sophisticated model of the teacher career life cycle was reviewed and criticisms of it discussed along with the devastating effects of the stereotyping of older teachers and of the possible contribution professional literature may make to such stereotyping. At the same time, it was noted that research and theory should not become the scapegoat of those who would seek simplified cause and effect explanations. The loss to all of not capturing and utilizing the wisdom of our older citizens, including teachers, was noted; part of this theoretical loss occurs because we are not aware that we are not actively seeking, and therefore, not finding it. Steffy's (1989) work highlights the general lack of attention to the career wind-down stage by administrators and proposes alternatives for viewing this teacher career stage. Finally, research in this section reinforces the need to identify, insofar as is possible, biases in researchers and their participants.

The Effects of Stress/Working Conditions on the Experienced Teacher,

Especially in the Urban Context

"The dull routines, the paucity of opportunities for growth or promotion, and the absence of appropriate recognition often result in lives of quiet desperation." (Burr, 1986)
There is so much material in the "universe" on this subject that I am reminded of T. S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," written in 1917: "Then how should I begin/To spit out all the butt-ends of my days and ways?" With no answer forthcoming, the question recurs: "And how should I begin?" (1958, p. 1086). After being in this holding pattern for a more than sufficient length of time, I have decided to begin with some general stressors in the teacher workplace and move quickly to those which affect the older, experienced teacher in urban schools.

**General Stressors in the Teacher Workplace**

We begin with the observation of Mayher (1990) that forces at work in the nation during the 1980's had a net effect "to limit, not enhance, teacher autonomy; to downgrade, not celebrate, teacher competence; and to make schools less enjoyable and exciting places in which to work" (p. 251)—all factors contributing to stress. NEA Today's cover story "Are you Tired of Being Tired?" (Lytle, 1992) adds another relevant backdrop to this discussion, documenting that many secondary teachers spend 52.2 hours—or more—per week handling their work loads. But the hours per week spent do not reflect the full picture. It is what happens during those hours. Teaching schedules are described as "stress-filled," and the comments of one secondary teacher exemplify the compounding of the problem by adding school restructuring to the workload: "I come home from work night after night feeling exhausted" (p. 4). A comparison of this data with NEA survey data cited in Lorrie (1975) shows that hours per week have increased over the decades. In 1967, secondary teachers worked an average of 48.3 hours per week.

Further, Lorrie cites research by Jackson in 1968 which found that teachers "make well over two hundred decisions hourly" (p. 103). Bausch's (1981) dissertation research on educational stressors cites a 1979 study by Scrvens who found that teachers "make thousands of decisions in the course of an average day...the net effect is to sap their energy" (p. 22). Bausch observes that few professions have such numerous sources of stress as do public educators:

Simultaneously, teachers are actors, entertainers, scholars, keepers of the status quo and the designers of social change. They answer to, and seek favor of, administrators, parents, principals, students, boards of education, politicians, special interest groups and their peers; it is a tightwire balancing act from which many fall (p. 2).
Bausch identified 46 job stressors in her survey instrument such as student behavior problems and fear of violence, and teacher respondents added 63 additional stressors which caused "an extreme degree of discomfort" (p. 121)—such as demands on teacher time and lack of proper facilities—totaling at least 109 different stressors affecting the daily job. Among "common and persistent" stressors in secondary education were those related to some students and their behaviors described as "apathetic, abusive, disinterested, demanding...malicious, defiant, disrespectful, unprepared for class...." (156). Ten years after Bausch’s dissertation, a secondary Texas school teacher describes the situation somewhat graphically:

"I often feel stuck...Let's say two kids are talking...so loud that others, including me, become distracted. Or sometimes...insulting each other...threatening each other or someone else, taunting—that kind of thing...if I don't step in, I may soon have a fight on my hands...So, I'll start shouting. You know, the "how dare you stop other kids from learning" type of thing. Of course, then I'm likely to get back, "Who gives a damn about your stupid class anyway?" And I can't pretend it doesn't get to me...It does. It takes a lot out of me..."(Farber, 1991, p. 214).

Steffy (1989) has a good grip on less volatile working conditions in schools which contribute to stress, plenty of which, she says are "demeaning and nasty" (p. 165). She mentions the lack of flexibility in such matters as going to the restroom during the school day, a lack of "down-time" when the individual teacher perceives a need for it, and a "relentless" work routine. She calls teaching "100% active duty," calls teachers educational air traffic controllers, observes that most teachers lack offices in which to do paperwork, lack secretaries, lack any personal support staff—"something even the lowest middle management non-professional working in any other environment has access to" (p. 166).

While these general stressors are widespread, this verbal portrait is not intended to imply that they apply to every teacher every day in every school. They present a slanted view of the workplace insular as positive factors are not presented to balance the picture. Caution: This view should not become reified in the mind of the reader, nor contribute to stereotyping, as Rusch and Perry (1993) have ably warned. Nevertheless, these factors do affect most teachers during the course of their careers to some extent—more in urban schools than in others.

**Workplace Stressors in the Urban Context**

*Newsweek* magazine captured the essence of modern professional life with its one-word cover headline "Exhausted" early this year. In the follow-up article, the nation's "toughest jobs" --
those which place the most stress on individuals—included inner-city teachers along with air-traffic controllers, doctors, lawyers, police officers, and seven other occupations. Inner-city teachers were listed as an example of frustrated idealism, a type of job that “can sour when the work seems to make little meaningful difference” ("Breaking Point," 1995, p. 60).

Chance (1985) compared 226 experienced inner city and suburban secondary teachers’ perception of stress in the workplace; results were statistically analyzed. She found the top stressors for both groups to be student absenteeism and student and parent apathy. Teachers expressed frustration that they could not teach students who weren’t there; I would expect that, if polled, teachers would also express the difficulty of trying to provide makeup work for absent students who return to school while continuing to move the rest of the students forward. Chance also found that inner city teachers identified 20 of her 40 factors as more stressful than did suburban teachers—and that inner city teachers experienced stress with more intensity. Inner city stressors included lack of administrative support, verbal abuse, gang members, shortage of materials, students with different values, and generally, what other studies have found. The study suggested further that inner city teachers, after a period of time, accept these stressors as a way of life. At the time of her research, Chance reported no previous study in the literature base specifically comparing the two populations for stress indicators.

Weiner (1989, 1990), a former English teacher in New York City high schools is concerned with improving urban teacher education. In a study of student teachers in urban schools, Weiner (1990) reported her concern that many of them would not choose to teach in urban schools after their experiences in them. Many of the student teacher comments were poignant and captured some of the stressors of the urban working environment for teachers: “Discipline problems... were much worse than I expected” (p. 267) and “I’m dealing with a breed that won’t be quiet” (p. 268). Weiner cites an editorial in a 1967 Urban Review that suggested three types of authority available to the urban teacher, the first two challenged more in urban schools than in others: personal, uniformed, and technocratic. In arguments put forth in another publication, Weiner (1989) supported the notion that conditions in urban schools, especially those in the inner city, “causes ineffective teaching to flourish” (p. 153)—including large classes, inadequate materials, building construction during school time, and other intrusions that “demoralize and defeat” teachers. She cites 1988 work by Haberman which posits that work is so demanding in urban schools that
realistically, teachers should not be expected to last more than five to eight years. Teaching in urban schools is characterized both as “supernatural” and “Herculean” (p. 153). Again, the evils of bureaucracy are mentioned in the literature as being obstructive and destructive to educational efforts.

Farber (1991) devotes a chapter in Crisis in Education to teaching in an urban setting. Farber compares data largely obtained from the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching on urban, suburban, and rural schools and notes that teachers in urban schools deal with or experience more of the following than do teachers in other kinds of schools: more stressors and less positive feedback, the two forces that when combined produce burnout; children engulfed in hopelessness; bureaucratic incompetence; administrative and parental disrespect; decaying surroundings; student apathy; absenteeism; student turnover; disruptive class behavior; vandalism; theft; violence against both students and teachers; racial discord; threats; low academic skills; welfare and low-income families. While Farber cautions that all inner-city schools do not reflect all of the problems associated with the underclass, he notes: “There is still a wide gap between acknowledgement of the social pathologies that exist in inner-city neighborhoods...and the recognition of their impact on teaching and teachers” (p. 239). Teachers who endure in these environments, says Farber, are “surely deserving of more encouragement and admiration than society currently grants them” (p. 245).

Howey (1992) exhorts those who will listen to stop “looking the other way” when it comes to teaching and learning in the urban context, a workplace context he alludes to as “especially...difficult to teach in” (p. 6). Citing data which suggests that American society is becoming increasingly stratified, he notes that approximately 20% of children in the United States come from homes officially classified at a poverty level, a chunk of the population which is larger than any other industrialized country. According to Howey, the majority of teachers in preparation programs do not want to teach these minority students—nor do they feel prepared to do so.

Howey calls for a multi-pronged plan to address this “tragic circumstance,” one prong of which is to create “more civilized conditions in urban schools” (p. 9). Howey, Arends, Galluzzo, Yarger, and Zimpher (1994) continue to look straight at the problem by examining efforts by those in higher education to collaborate with those in urban contexts. They found a “constellation of barriers” to such efforts, the most often cited barrier being, yet again, bureaucracy--a condition “magnified” in
larger urban districts. Of enablers, they cite both individual and collective will, the need for “collective commitment to a cause” (p. 39). The common theme of inadequate resources to address problems in urban education is also mentioned in this study as a “significant problem,” and I infer, these inadequate resources amount to a collective stressor, not only to those addressed in this section who are working in urban schools, but also to those who are paying attention and who are expending energy to address the multitude of urban school problems.

Applebee’s study (1993) of the teaching of literature in the nation’s schools found differences in teaching conditions in urban and suburban schools which amounted to unequal teaching conditions and different social and cultural contexts. Suburban schools were characterized as having an “embarrassment of riches” (p. 20), urban schools as having inadequate resources. A case study observer reported large classes, high absenteeism, low student motivation, and students who were “bored, unmotivated, or just plain tired” (p. 22). All of these conditions affect teaching in the urban context and amount to stressors for teachers.

Ducharme’s (1994) compelling look at possible scenarios in future schools provides more material for reflection. His school situated in a mythical “West Ideation” contrasts sharply with the school in “Innervania.” Students in West Ideation enter “lush school grounds”; eat nutritious food and vitamin pills; work on individualized and collaborative projects in art, science, and language centers; have lunch with instructors who discuss with them which plays should be included in an upcoming Shakespearean festival while Mozart plays in the background; and check their homework assignments through Internet. Students in Innervania enter school past guards and walk into “litter-filled halls”; eat sugar doughnuts and cokes for breakfast; attend 47-minute traditional classes which “come and go” and in which students pretend to listen or act up; run to fast food restaurants for lunch; wait in line for a few minutes on a reconditioned computer donated to the school; and have no direction when they leave the school grounds. Ducharme’s actual description of these two scenarios is far more gripping than my brief summary here; he claims these contrasting situations “reflect the persistent differences in educational opportunities for the nation’s youth” (p. 75) and cautions that widening gaps may occur, depending on whether one has high or low socioeconomic status, due to disparities in exposure to technology. Current schools, suburban and urban, “range from centers of near-luxury to outposts of poverty and isolation” (p. 80). Part of the problem, he says, is our current national and individual lack of a
sense of moral purpose. He calls for educators to "point out the incongruities in the economic system: how to reconcile a trillion dollar national output with urban decay, inner city deterioration, the neglect of the poor..." (p. 82, cited from Nash & Ducharme in 1976). Most school buildings, especially those found in urban districts, are called "outrages to the spirit" (p. 83).

Other literature supports the information in this section about conditions and stressors teachers face in urban schools (e.g. MacLean, 1992; Wilson, 1993). Concorcan, Walker, and White (1988) also provide an excellent in-depth look at teaching in urban schools; the works cited in this section tend to reinforce one another. Of interest at this juncture is how these conditions and stressors affect the experienced teacher.

Section Summary

According to the literature in this section of the review, teachers not only make thousands of separate decisions on a daily basis but have at least 109 identified stressors which may impact their daily jobs. Teachers in the inner city urban schools experience more and, sometimes, different stressors with more intensity than do teachers in suburban schools; at least one source posits that individuals should teach no more than five to eight years in urban schools under present conditions. Bureaucratic conditions are cited again in this section as factors which contribute to teacher stress. Disrespect of all kinds especially plagues urban teachers; little research has been done to show the effects of the social pathologies of inner city neighborhoods on teaching and teachers. More civilized conditions in urban schools have been called for both by Howey (1992) and Ducharme (1994). Several studies found the phenomenon known as burnout to increase with teacher age or years of experience or both. Farber (1991) hypothesizes that because more teachers are staying in education longer than in previous historical periods, their opportunities for feeling increased stress and/or burnout are greater. I suggested that a study of such teachers as they approach career end might be beneficial. Finally, a lack of moral purpose in the current zeitgeist was suggested as one reason the problems in urban schools have been talked about but not addressed head-on in the country.

Research on Stressors and Years of Teaching Experience

Several studies have suggested a relationship between the stressors in the teaching workplace and years of being subjected to them as a teacher. Friedman (1991) studied school
culture and teacher burnout in public schools in Israel, defining burnout variously as "feelings of failure and being worn or wrung out, resulting from an overload of claims on energy...or on the spiritual strength of the worker" (p. 325) and/or as a form of "psychological distancing" from the realm of work. Friedman found burnout to rise with teacher age, years of experience, and level of education. Only elementary teachers were studied, however, limiting the usefulness of these results for my research. In a study in contrast to the Friedman research, Divers, Guermere, Snell, and Livers (1991) researched both elementary and secondary teacher perceptions of their quality of work life and found that in general, elementary teachers were less stressed than were secondary teachers. They also found that older and more experienced teachers in secondary schools were more stressed and dissatisfied with their quality of work life than were younger teachers. Divers, et al. studied only 68 teachers, however, suggesting caution in generalizing their results.

Some believe that burnout is a slow deterioration, that it results over time from being in conditions which strain one's resources, in conditions which are overwhelming and discouraging (Zehm and Kottler, 1993)—especially in jobs wherein people feel a lack of control and have a high involvement with people (Lowenstein, 1991). Bausch's earlier work on teacher stressors (1981) found that the most experienced and older teachers felt distress due to their perceived lack of control over conditions in the workplace; they also reported low self esteem due to "professional stagnation." Mclean (1992) cites 1989 work by Prick which found that teachers become increasingly dissatisfied with activities related to teaching between the ages of 45 and 55 and that "older teachers" report being stressed more than ex-teachers at the same age. Hipp's and Halpin (1991) studied job stress in teachers; they identified the following stressors related to educators: job overload; relationships with administrators, students, and peers; and salary and compensation. They found a positive relationship between burnout—their definition attributed to Farber as "the final step in a progression of unsuccessful attempts to cope with negative stress conditions" (p. 2)—and age. Because of low statistical indexes, they caution readers about interpreting their results.

Logic alone would suggest that those subjected to high amounts of stress over long periods of time would be affected negatively by it. Farber (1991) suggests that very thing for teachers in the contemporary workplace: "Because teachers are now staying in education longer,
they have greater opportunities for feeling stressed and burned out than their counterparts from earlier historical periods" (p. 50). To look at how urban teachers experience the stressors of the workplace over time is one of the intents of my study. Given that work dissatisfaction increases people's desire to retire from their jobs, it would follow that urban teachers who have "stayed the course," opting for "job subservience" over job satisfaction (Turner & Helms, 1989) in some degree or another, after experiencing decades of stress, might possess unique perspectives valuable to others—and which might be shared with others as these teachers approach retirement.

Current Views on Wisdom and The Value of Seeking It in Teachers

"Throughout the new paradigm on teaching, the centrality and wisdom of the teacher is reaffirmed, which is welcome and proper." (Ornstein, 1995)

During this preliminary review, which is at this point getting lengthy, I want only to indicate the growing literature base on the concept of wisdom and its applicability to my research. During my ongoing literature review as part of the active research process, I plan to spend more time understanding and reflecting on the concepts found in the literature as part of continuing to establish the foundation for my study.

It was Sasser-Coen's "Qualitative Changes in Creativity in the Second Half of Life: A Life-Span Developmental Perspective" (1993) which alerted me to Sternberg's (1990) recent comprehensive work, which I will briefly discuss shortly, on wisdom and of its applicability to my research. Work such as Sasser-Coen's and Sternberg's suggest that while teachers at every developmental stage and age have something unique to offer, so do teachers at career wind-down—for some, perhaps a special kind of wisdom. Sasser-Coen posits that mature integrated thinking, one of the fruits of a life-time's experiences, may result in a unique "expertise in handling everyday, practical matters of living and being" (p. 23)—a fundamentally different mode of thinking which, along with creativity, shares "in a very fundamental way integrative, dynamic, dialectical thought fueled by life-experience" (p. 25). Sasser-Coen cites 1980 empirical research by Basseches which indicates the possibility that this type of thinking increases with age. If so, those teachers who have taught for decades would be more likely to have developed it than other groups of teachers.
Turner and Heims (1989), linking work by Erikson, Levinson, Gould, and Maslow, cite the work of Peck in expanding on changes that occur in adults somewhere around middle age, although a specific age is not delineated in the work. In addition to emotional and mental flexibility and a shift from "sexualizing" to "socializing" in relationships, Peck posits that adults begin to value wisdom over physical prowess. Wisdom here is conceived as quite different from intellectual capacity: It is seen as an "increment in judgmental powers that living longer brings" (p. 259); my focus would be on that not only which results from living longer but that which results from teaching longer.

Merriam (1993) has put together a powerful collection of essays, literature reviews, and perspectives in *An Update on Adult Learning Theory*. She, too, cites Sternberg's (1990) work on wisdom, noting in that work that wisdom, "the pinnacle of cognitive development" (p. 8), is bound by its culture and is defined experientially--thus both context and life experience are relevant in the consideration of any "wisdom." While I intend to revisit this text during my ongoing literature review, I find the concept of transformational learning or perspective transformation as both intriguing and relevant. Transformation learning is what I hope happens for both me and my research participants during the data production, collection, synthesizing, and analyzing process. Clark (1993), drawing on the work of Mezirow, Freire, and Daloz, has contributed a chapter on transformational learning to the Merriam text. The values espoused in transformational learning are those I embrace: knowledge as a human construction rather than objective truth; a humanistic orientation; and a democratic vision "in which individuals are responsible for their collective futures" (Clark, p. 53).

The key tenets Clark (1993) has culled from Mezirow's work might be summarized as follows:

1. People structure meaning systems from their experience; these structures both make experience coherent and distort it by what Mezirow terms "habits of expectation that limit perception" (Clark, p. 48);
2. The transformation process includes identifying meaning perspectives, assessing them critically, and reformulating them during a period of critical reflection, which is characterized as incremental;
3. Individual transformations in perspective precede social transformations;
4. Transformational learning can be furthered by "journaling, analyzing metaphors, doing life histories, and using literature to stimulate critical consciousness" (p. 55). The above tenets dovetail well with my research plan. Tenet #1 addresses problems of bias and stereotyping raised earlier in this review. It also raises the issue that our current expectations, specifically for teachers in career wind-down, may be limited. Tenet #2 speaks to one of the goals of my research—reconceptualizing the way teaching careers end. Tenet #3 indicates the need for reconceptualization at the individual level before it is possible to make a significant difference in larger arenas. Finally, tenet #4 calls for methods which are built into my research design.

Sternberg’s *Wisdom: Its Nature, Origins, and Development* (1990) is seminal in its contribution to contemporary understandings of wisdom. According to Sternberg, the topic of wisdom is in an "early developmental stage in which theory and research really get going and people try to set paradigms and convince others of the worth of their paradigms" (p. ix). Concepts in this work will continue to receive my attention, but one particular chapter illustrates the book’s provocative content: "Wisdom: The Art of Problem Finding" (Arfin, 1990). While problem finding has been a process I have engaged in for the basic research idea, there is more to be done. Arfin defines wisdom as "the means by which one discovers, envisages, or goes into deeper questions...not the gift of one who simply knows the surface features of a domain but does not suspect the deep structures that are to be found beneath" (p. 230). In defining wisdom as the art of problem finding, Arfin looks at what wisdom and problem finding have in common—features which I see as vital in every stage of my research:

1. the search for complementarity;
2. the detection of asymmetry in the face of that which appears...in equilibrium;
3. openness to change: its possibility and its reality;
4. a pushing of the limits, which sometimes leads to a redefinition of those limits;
5. a sense of taste for problems that are of fundamental importance; and
6. the preference for certain conceptual moves (p. 231).

The greatest commonality problem-finding and wisdom seem to share has to do with "relativity of solutions" offered to questions found under "conditions of uncertainty" (p. 231).

A few studies illustrate Sternberg’s (1990) assertion that wisdom as a topic is in an early developmental stage in which theory and research "get going." Scott (1990), a senior lecturer at
The University of Melbourne in Australia, advocates that social workers begin to state their wisdom of practice as testable propositions, conduct integrated qualitative and quantitative research, and develop a “new epistemology.” Scott believes that tacit knowledge used in practice is lost to the profession as a whole; neither may it be advisable to continue. She advocates researching practice wisdom in order to strengthen the profession. Nielsen (1993), a professor in the College of Social Work at The University of Illinois, Chicago, came to similar conclusions though her work does not acknowledge a familiarity with the work of Scott. She, too, advocates translating practice wisdom into empirical terms so that it can be validated, if appropriate. While Scott calls for a new epistemology, Nielsen calls for a new generic language. Nielsen’s work is more detailed than Scott’s in its suggestion of a single-system research design and in its extensive examples of the use of practice wisdom. Both researchers are in a stage of trying to convince others of the worth of their new conceptions.

In Germany, Smith and Baltes (1990) conducted a study of wisdom-related knowledge. They conducted interviews with participants in a think-aloud format, asking them to share their thoughts about solving various life problems. Half of the participants were secondary or “tertiary” teachers; half were drawn from engineers, business managers, or civil servants. Trained raters analyzed the protocols before the results were statistically analyzed and factors such as age were correlated with the responses. Their criteria for judging whether responses were wise included categories of expertise and meta-level wisdom criteria such as life-span contextualism and relativism. While older adults were the subjects who produced “top, wisdom-like answers,” Smith and Baltes did not find an automatic increase in wisdom with age. They did find that adults are “wiser” in topics specific to their age and life circumstances. It is difficult to see how Smith and Baltes arrived at that conclusion since, for example, teachers were not given teaching or education-related problems. Another limitation of the method is that the researchers assumed that raters could recognize wisdom even if they were not wise, an assumption which may or may not be accurate and which could affect the ratings, at least in overlooking or not recognizing some forms of wisdom.

In the United States, Stahl (1993) called for a national oral history project to capture the wisdom of experience of the generation of reading teachers nearing retirement before it is lost to others. Arguing that classroom teachers are less likely than university educators to put their
knowledge or reflections in any written, enduring form such as manuscripts and other documentary records, he writes: "It is time to preserve the richness of the wisdom of the past for current and future professions...." (p. 4). By focusing only on state-of-the-art theory and research, Stahl argues that we miss both past accomplishments and "equally important" failures with which to inform the future. The paper was presented to the College Reading and Learning Association at an annual meeting, but I found no evidence that the proposal was either funded or carried out.

A study of retired educators in Western Canada (Ralph, 1994) looked at wisdom of practice knowledge in order to offer guidance to novice teachers and colleges of teacher education and to see what other general comments emerged. Participants submitted written responses to questions which were then coded and analyzed. Ralph called the results "grounded wisdom." His report of the research is rich in comments from these educators who spent full careers in teaching, illustrating the value of asking to hear the wisdom of experience. Ralph also found that prior to his study, no such study had been conducted. Referring to the fields of developmental and life-span psychology, Ralph observed that research has shown that those nearing retirement seem keen on contributing something to their profession. Citing the work of Ryan and Kokol in 1990, he shared the observation that veteran teachers are eager to contribute to their school communities in ways that offer new avenues for growth, in ways which rekindle their spirit.

Implications For The Professional Development Of Teachers In Career Wind-Down

"Professional development for teachers should begin at recruitment and end at retirement." (Riley, 1994)

Staff Development vs. Professional Development

Staffy (1989) calls her view of professional development programs human development: "Human development activities can be synthesizing to the organization, creating a synergy which can dramatically transform the work environment and vastly improve the number of master teachers in the organization" (p. 36) by helping teachers move toward their human potential. Typical staff development activities, behavioristic in orientation, deal with the formal needs of an organization, treating all teachers essentially the same, whereas human development models take
into account both formal and informal needs, offering differentiated staff development options based in part on career stage (Steffy). Steffy’s name for the stage of the teacher in career wind-down is the “exit stage.” In a human development view, the teacher at career exit need not leave “unwept, unhonoured and unsung”—or as Steffy says, leave with a “wealth of knowledge that can go unused, unrecognized, and unrewarded” (p. 130).

Fessler and Christensen (1992) likewise distinguish between staff development and professional development, attributing the distinction to work by Duke in 1990. The former, designed for groups which move forward in a common direction, leads to improved skills or new concepts; the latter, designed for individuals to cultivate unique strengths, leads to increased personal constructions/awarenesses. Their literature supports personalized professional development to meet individual needs as well as to maintain a vital organizational climate.

While the concepts elucidated by Steffy (1989) and Fessler, and Christensen (1992) are current, they are not new. Others have provided the foundation for them including, but not limited to Lindbloom, Eberhart, Howey, and Zimpher (1966), Perl and Wilson (1986), Bents and Howey (1981), and Hall and Loucks (1978). Certainly Ducharme’s (1981) relatively early conception of “faculty development” deserves mention in this discussion. He called for a vision not only of “improved professional performance” but also of “personal growth within an educational organization...a growth that includes acknowledgement of...changing life stages” (p. 30). Ducharme contended, when considering faculty members, that both personal and professional growth had to be present for either to occur. Finally, Zimpher and Howey (1992) have elucidated what could be considered the most encompassing definition of professional development in the current literature. It moves beyond concerns with “technical and performative aspects of teaching” to include “the more personal, interpersonal, and artistic dimensions of teaching” and “broader professional responsibilities and...career development concerns which extend beyond the classroom” (p. 47).

Professional development broadly defined, in the context of this review, refers to a conception of teachers as evolving professionals and complex individuals throughout the course of their teaching lives. Professional development broadly defined includes supports and activities found in the category of what is usually referred to as staff development as well as different notions of teaching roles, purposes, and developmental needs for those in career wind-down.
Implications

Due to the growing length of this very preliminary review of the literature for grounding my proposed research as well as the plethora of implications which it is possible to derive from the literature, I will attempt to be brief. I would also note that many implications have been mentioned in the summary sections at the end of each major category of literature. Within all the implications below, the individuality of specific teachers should be both respected and valued. Generally, as implied in the literature, the professional development of teachers as defined above could be vastly improved if its conceptualization were more directly informed by the following:

1. Greater numbers of older teachers are currently employed in the nation’s schools; greater numbers of teachers will be approaching the time when they can retire than those in previous historical periods. The time is ripe to look at how those teachers approach the end of their careers and the resulting impact on teaching and learning as well as on the perception of the profession (or quasi-profession) as a whole.

2. The perception uncovered in the literature that many retiring teachers feel undervalued and lowly regarded by their school systems is sad state of affairs, to say the least. Undoubtedly this perception did not suddenly accrue at career end. The implication is that this area alone deserves further study, probably beginning at earlier stages of the teaching career.

3. The literature uncovered a teacher perception that teacher expertise is currently being underutilized. The meaning of that for individuals should be further explored and addressed in professional development designs.

4. The literature suggests that a career withdrawal stage, sometimes referred to as disengagement, is not inevitable. With appropriate opportunities and supports, the literature implies that teachers may be vitally involved in teaching and learning during the entirety of their careers.

5. The literature suggests to me that teachers may experience an accelerated sense of aging; Sheehy’s work, on the other hand, indicates that age norms have been pushed back at least a decade, that middle age may not be acknowledged currently until the age of 50-something, if at all. The current shifting perception of what it means to grow older in our society may need to be reconciled with earlier perceptions. The implication I draw
from these opposing viewpoints is that something transformative may be happening currently which could alter views of professional development for older, more experienced teachers.

6. Several sources in the literature, when considered together, imply that teachers approaching the end of their careers are in an ideal position to reconceptualize it: Smith and Battes (1990) found adults to be wiser in topics specifically related to their age and life circumstance; Sheehy's (1995) concept of a second adulthood begins in the mid-forties with an “age of mastery” and is described as a period of re-visioning the future; Cross and Markus (1991) in their study of possible selves note an interest in people wanting to reach their work goals before retirement and know that they have contributed something to their fields. Work on reconceptualizing career end could heighten their sense of generativity by making a real and significant contribution to future generations of teachers.

7. The literature has documented a distinct teacher career stage known as career wind-down which is experienced in both positive and negative ways by teachers, generally depending on success earlier in the career—or conversely, a lack of it. The stage has been researched and personal and organizational influences have been identified. Suggestions have been tentatively made for professional development activities and growth experiences during this stage. Oja (1990) has also contributed to a growing body of information related to this stage.

8. The literature shows that age and career stage are not “parallel pathways” and should not be assumed to exist in either a direct or linear relationship to one another. Further, those in a career wind-down stage may be in different adult development stages. All of these varying lenses should be looked through when considering professional development options and activities appropriate for those in career wind-down. Finally, if the process of aging has resulted in decreased energy levels for some teachers, these, too, should be addressed.

9. The literature substantiates the need to view the needs of teachers in urban schools through a slightly different lens—maybe a tinted lens—than that used to view the needs of teachers in suburban schools. Differences have been noted in degree and in kind. The literature strongly suggests that more stressors are present in urban settings—from
decaying buildings to vocally disrespectful students. Professional development programs should address the needs of career wind-down teachers in urban settings in conjunction with those elements mentioned in #8 above.

10. The growing body of literature on wisdom is provocative. If certain kinds of thinking, such as "mature integrated thinking," increase with age, teachers in career wind-down may have a unique contribution to make. Both transformational learning and the art of problem finding have been mentioned in the wisdom literature. If individuals are indeed responsible for their collective futures, then reconceptualizing career end may help to make future possibilities a more certain reality. Further, if individual transformations precede social transformations, then it is time to begin.

**Cross-category Themes**

Certain recurring themes beg to be named in this body of literature. The first is a solid affirmation that human growth continues throughout life along multiple dimensions. This life-enhancing theme was present throughout the age-related/life-span/adult development section and occurs frequently in the section on wisdom.

Another recurrent theme was the valuable insight to make biases explicit whenever possible, whatever the context. The literature review included age stereotyping and stigmatizing, biases inherent in society during various *zeitgeists* which limit not only what is sought but what is found, personal and covert/implicit researcher biases which tend to affect a wide range of factors from hidden assumptions toward those being researched to matters of tone in final reports, and an awareness that knowledge of all sorts is socially constructed—with the implication that, when desirable, it can be reconstructed.

A third theme concerns the nature of bureaucracy and its pervasiveness in our culture—so pervasive that it recurred multiple times in almost every major section of literature reviewed. It merits further reflection, especially, but not only, as it applies to my research topic.

A fourth theme concerns matters of the human spirit. Mary Taft, the teacher who died two weeks after retirement, suffered from a soul which had been drained by decades of hard work; Huberman (1989) talked of the slow erosion of the spirit that occurs in too many teachers; Spence (1995) called bureaucracies "soulless"; Collinson, et al. (1994) highlighted the periodic need to
renew the spirit; Ducharme (1994) called many building environments in which education is conducted "outrages to the spirit."

A fifth theme might be called the imperative to pay attention. Howey (1992) called it "Stop looking the other way." And so did others in every section. Even every recurring theme denoted in the previous four paragraphs relates to and can be included in the fifth theme.

In this review of the literature, I have attempted to become familiar with both the evolution and the state of the art in topics related to my proposed research and to demonstrate that I am conversant with relevant literature. I have attempted to place my research focus in perspective, to establish its significance, to provide theoretical grounding, to become more aware of useful methodologies. I have looked for gaps in previous research and suggested areas where further research is needed. I have attempted to look at the literature critically, to note contradictions, to highlight strengths. Finally, I have attempted to note implications for the professional development of teachers inherent in the literature. Though no literature review can hope to be infallibly comprehensive, I have tried to be thorough. Finally, I remind the reader that this review should be considered preliminary, an "inter-data-collection" review completed early in the study. An ongoing review of the literature will appear throughout other chapters in this document.

In closing, the literature has shown that secondary teaching is, on the whole, a horizontal career; the end of the career is much like the beginning of it. The novice teacher continues to be considered an adequate replacement for a teacher who has spent thirty or more years in the classroom, even though there are vast differences between the two, at least in developmental experiences and in career stages—and even though voices in the field have begun to articulate the differences in developmental needs that characterize these very different locations in the life cycle of teachers (Howey, 1988; Huberman, 1989; Reiman & Sprinthall, 1993). The end of the career, for many, is anti-climactic. Reconceptualizing the stage identified as career wind-down, within a broad definition of professional development, has the potential to revitalize the career as a whole by making not only the end of the career significantly different from other stages and both more meaningful and spirit-enhancing than it currently is for those approaching it, but also by providing those in earlier stages something substantial to reach for, work toward, anticipate—with something akin to pride and with something resembling dignity. The years at the end of the career could become years of integration and innovation, years of well-earned celebration.
CHAPTER 3

THE METHODOLOGY STORY: A JOURNEY

"Strange, is it not? that of the myriads who
Before us pass'd the door of Darkness through
Not one returns to tell us of the Road,
Which to discover we must travel too."
(The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam, LXIV, 5th ed.)

Methods: The Short Version

This qualitative research project can be located primarily within an interpretivist-constructivist research paradigm. Participant-collaborators are seven urban English teachers, six females and one male, all Caucasian, all either within three years of retirement eligibility or five years of actual retirement at the beginning of the research, all 48-66 years of age.

The research design or road map, created after I had conducted a pilot study, provided a flexible plan which accommodated emergent research methodology. Data collection, spanning a period of more than one year, consisted of a combination of in-depth interviews and a modified form of cooperative inquiry. I utilized multiple methods in the analysis and interpretation of data, including the following: computer-assisted coding with analytical features; data immersion; transactional reading and response; sociocultural--sometimes polyvocal--story reporting and interpretation; writing as a form of inquiry, including experimental writing modes; symbolic analysis; cross-data analysis; synthesis; and researcher reflection and reflexive accounts. Finally, I applied multiple methods of legitimation and/or standards of adequacy to the research.

Manifesting this particular dissertation required the intersection of the following elements during the years 1995, 1996, and 1997: assistance from those who have been engaged in deep thinking, research, and writing for long periods of time; the contributions of the specific teacher-participants; two and one-half years of intense work; much reflection on 30 years of teaching and more than 50 years of living and learning in the second half of the 20th century.
Methods: The Longer Version

...I had to figure out what I was studying and how I was going to measure it. I venture to say that this is the single most difficult problem shared by all creativity researchers (Amabile, 1995, p. 425).

The Researcher's Story, Part 1

Figuring out what I was going to study for my dissertation research was a long time coming—five years into my doctoral program, after numerous side journeys which amounted to valuable, informative, even exciting, diversions but no dissertation topic. Colleagues who urged me to look at areas of passionate concern helped me to eventually find and name this particular project—so figuring out what I was studying and clarifying the topic was a difficult problem, echoed in the words above written by Amabile (1995). Measuring what I am studying, however, does not apply in my qualitative research; rather, I seek to discover, to identify, to describe, to interpret, to analyze, to discuss, to construct, to hypothesize, to propose, maybe to transform. How do I go about doing these important things? Attempting to answer that question has been—and continues to be—my most difficult problem during this research process, which includes the writing, which includes here and now.

Coursework in qualitative research has helped. Voracious reading of research texts and journal articles has helped. Much reflective thinking, journal writing, discussion with professors and researchers and many others has helped. Even tracing my earliest memories of "knowing the world" has helped.

One of my early memories at the age of eleven is of asking an authority figure in my life how I could know that something was true. An inquisitive creature, I was seeking proof. The answer, as I recall, was that I couldn't "know" some things; some things would have to be accepted on faith. On faith alone? On faith. The answer seemed incomplete to me, a cop-out. I rejected the answer. If I couldn't prove something, either materially or logically, I would have to reject a belief in its truth value. I could withhold judgment. I could proceed tentatively. But I could neither advocate nor adopt as my own anything not proven to be true by my standards. In high school science classes—biology, chemistry, and physics—I found a name for this stance: the scientific method.
By the time I was enrolled in undergraduate courses, I had begun to equate college courses with knowledge and to equate knowledge with truth. More courses equaled more knowledge equaled more truth. I still think there is a grain of truth somewhere in this, albeit limited, approach. Formal coursework has been a powerful stimulus and support in my quest for knowledge with which to understand the world, or my portion of the world, and it has given me the vocabulary necessary to enter an academic conversation. Still enrolled in courses (after all these years), I have found an academic name for the stance I had adopted in high school. The name is “positivist.”

During the last thirty-some years, however, life has intervened, shaking my faith, usually below the level of my awareness, in the scientific method as the ultimate arbiter of truth. Gradually, I can see that I began to accept other ways of knowing as valid or as possibly valid—like intuitive, contextual, or experiential knowledge. Truth might be found in literature, in the arts, or even in a metaphor. I began to see that much truth/knowledge is partial or a product of its position in history; much truth is tentative, open to revision, open to interpretation, open for discussion and negotiation. Open. Lately, I’ve come to think that some truth may be a construction, a product of one’s particular worldview which is shaped not only by factors such as one’s sex, race, age, socioeconomic status, occupation, geographical location, value system, and the like, but by the zeitgeist into which one is born and in which one lives. Lately, when I’ve been wondering about the nature of truth, I’ve been asking myself how much of my “truth” may be based on a kind of faith in some philosophical system of thought, on faith in some particular research paradigm, on faith in the ability of the human mind to assimilate, discern, and create. On faith! Imagine my surprise.

Paradigm Issues

I begin the methodology section with a brief discussion of the qualitative research paradigm by which the study will be most informed because I agree with Guba and Lincoln (1994) who urge researchers to begin at this point—and with Highlen and Finley (1996) who call such a consideration “an essential prerequisite” to any discussion of qualitative data and its analysis. In the words of Guba and Lincoln, “Questions of method are secondary to questions of paradigm, which we define as the basic belief system or worldview that guides the investigator, not only in choices of method but in ontologically and epistemologically fundamental ways” (p. 105). In the
words of Highlen and Finley, "Therefore, qualitative investigators must begin at the macro level, since it is the paradigm that will frame the study's design, strategy, data analysis, and report of the results" (p. 190). I also offer the caveat that paradigms are imperfect human constructions, evolving even as these words find themselves upon this page. The following, then, represents my best attempt at this time to make my research stance explicit.

My guiding beliefs and values are most consonant with the research paradigm known as "constructivist" or "interpretive/constructivist." It "assumes multiple, apprehendable, and sometimes conflicting social realities that are the products of human intellects, but that may change as their constructors become more informed and sophisticated" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 111). During this research, I have looked at relevant career stage realities as constructed by secondary English teachers sometime during the last five years of their teaching careers. These constructions have been altered/amended during the course of the research inquiry.

Epistemologically, this paradigm is transactional and subjectivist; knowledge is created in human interactions; in my research, the nature of knowledge consists of the individual constructions and reconstructions that emerge during the period of the inquiry. Within this paradigm, it is understood that "Multiple 'knowledges' can coexist when equally competent (or trusted) interpreters disagree, and/or depending on...factors that differentiate the interpreters" (Guba & Lincoln, p. 113).

The methodology has been characterized as hermeneutic and dialectical (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Schwandt (1994) cites work by Taylor who "defined the activity of interpretation...as a hermeneutical undertaking analogous to the interpretation of a text" (121). When considering transactional interpretations of texts, as illustrated in the writings of Rosenblatt (1978 & 1938/1983), the analogy is apt. Rosenblatt (1978) defines "transaction" as "an ongoing process in which the elements or factors are...aspects of a total situation, each conditioned by and conditioning the other" (p. 17). Whereas Rosenblatt's readers evoke their responses to texts and then interpret their evocations (p. 70), Taylor's interpretive inquirers "attempt to establish a certain reading or interpretation of the meaning of social action" (Schwandt, p. 121). I adopted the dialectical nature of the methodology, "...of the iteration, analysis, critique, reiteration, reanalysis, and so on...." (Schwandt, p. 129) in my inquiry methods as the participants and I viewed the topic of inquiry from different angles at successive stages during the inquiry process.
Other relevant matters at the macro level of this paradigm include issues of knowledge accumulation, values and ethics, inquirer role, and voice. In short, knowledge builds through the process of ongoing constructions; it is transferred, in part, via vicarious experience (e.g., sociocultural stories; case studies). I have embraced democratic, egalitarian, altruistic values; they are an intrinsic part of this research effort. Aware of the need to maintain high ethical standards, I have adopted to the best of my ability a code of ethics which includes the following: accuracy in recording, reporting, and documenting data (Patton, 1990; Richardson, 1997); full disclosure of purposes to participants; concern for the welfare, confidentiality, and anonymity of participants which makes me responsible to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Punch, 1994; Richardson, 1997); and a full disclosure of ethical concerns as they emerge during the research process. During the inquiry process, my primary role has been that of "orchestrator" and "facilitator"; my voice, that of restrained "passionate participant" (Guba & Lincoln, pp. 114-115) and collaborator. Currently, I am the analyzer-synthesizer-writer.

The Researcher's Story, Part 2

"Though this be madness, yet there is method in't."
(Shakespeare, Hamlet, II, ii, 207-208)

I have been blessed with a sense of the importance of organization from early childhood (although my mother might well dispute that), especially when it comes to planning projects. I like to plan, to know what I'm doing, to think through every detail—a typical Virgo, some have said. This part of me continually wars with my creative side which revels in the disorder of not knowing what lies ahead, of not knowing where a particular thought or action will lead. The first propensity provides comfort, the second, excitement. Both of these spirits have been active during this research.

My method of learning about research methodology has been multi-faceted, formal and informal. I bring to the research enterprise experience in interviewing. Trained in graduate journalism courses, I have applied that training during the last 15 years or so by interviewing teachers and various members of the community, by using the interviews to write news articles for publication, and by teaching these skills to high school newspaper students. Later, assisting in educational research at the university came almost naturally. As an English teacher, I have spent
years analyzing various literary and expository texts and also bring this background to social science research. Formal coursework in research methodology further honed some of these data gathering, organizing, and analytical skills.

During the last seven years, I have been a consumer of research courses, research literature, research conferences, "brown bag" lectures, and dissertation conversation groups. I have traveled to Stanford University to meet and talk with professor and researcher Lee Shulman and to purchase research texts being used at Stanford. Periodically, I have visited the George Washington University bookstore in Washington, D.C., combing its shelves for current literature, bringing volumes home to my growing research library. Right now I count 30 research methodology-related textbooks (and literally hundreds of research articles on methodology) in my personal library, all of which I have either studied carefully (and often outlined) or read in the planning and execution of this research project. I am grateful to all those researcher-writers who have taken the time to share their methodology, as well as their research concerns, in print.

Sifting through so much material may itself be a form of madness, but doing so has allowed me to feel oriented to the "field," to find my own theoretical and methodological comfort zone, and to proceed with a wide range of techniques.

I think I met my first theory in an undergraduate physical education course at Butler University more than three decades ago. In this class, students were taught to bowl by theory. Theoretically, as I recall, one could bowl a strike every time the ball was thrown at the pins. We were also taught methods grounded in the theory: I learned how to stand, how to balance the ball in my hands, how to walk forward to release the ball, where to aim the ball as it began its journey down the lane. Theoretically, if the ball rolled over the second little triangular marker to the right of center (with maybe a little English spin on it), a strike would result. I remember sharing my newfound theory with my family amid much good-natured laughter as my bowling ball often missed the mark or, just as frequently, found its way to the gutter. Occasionally, I executed the theory successfully, just enough to keep me from discarding it, just enough that I still believe in its utility. The difficulty was not particularly in the theory; the difficulty was in its execution. Thus, from my first encounter with a formal theory, I learned of the well-known gap between theory/method and practice.
In this dissertation research project, I have continued to expand my theoretical and methodological comfort zone enough to invite my creative spirit into the process. In the previous portion of this chapter, I elucidated my theoretical orientation. In the next section, I will give a detailed account of my planning and methods and how they found their way into research practice.

Design, Strategy and Data Collection

The Road Map.

Marshall and Rossman (1995) call the overall research strategy “a road map, an overall plan for undertaking a systematic exploration of the phenomenon of interest....” (p. 40). My overall qualitative approach or strategy was a multimethod combination of in-depth interview studies followed by a modified form of co-operative inquiry. The personal experience methods outlined by Clandinin and Connelly (1994) were important to me in devising my research strategy/road map. These methods call for a multiple focus on internal conditions, external environmental conditions, and temporal conditions—that is, a full experience includes an awareness of these dimensions. Teacher-participants gave voice to their internal thoughts and feelings; they described the external environmental conditions relevant to their career experiences and the meaning these conditions had to them; they located themselves temporally, discussing the relevance of the fourth dimension in their professional lives. Within that framework of internal, external, and temporal conditions, Clandinin and Connelly suggest the following “field texts” created by participants: oral histories, life timelines, photographs, research interviews, journals, autobiographical writing, letters, conversations, and field notes (p. 419). Field texts in this study include oral histories, research interviews, journals, conversations, symbolic representations, and field notes.

My research road map guided me throughout the research process, though it required revision when I reached unmapped territory. My road map was like a Triptik, charting the general direction over known highways, which from time to time requires a more detailed local map for smooth navigation through specific locations. When I arrived at a juncture requiring a local map not in my travel folder, I paused for more information, understanding, nourishment, or restoration.
When I had obtained or generated the needed guidelines or resources, I moved on. The research itself, from start to finish, has been a treasured journey starting on familiar ground and venturing into unknown territory. The road map contained four major strategic phases: A pilot study, in-depth interviewing, cooperative inquiry; and final analysis and synthesis (For a copy of the road map, see Appendix A).

A Pilot Study

In phase one, I conducted a pilot study to field test emerging questions and to refine the research topic. Three urban English teachers were interviewed utilizing various research techniques. Although telephone interviews are generally used for highly structured interviews with specific and somewhat inflexible guidelines (Fontana & Frey, 1994), I conducted one of my pilot interviews via telephone with flexible guidelines. The other two pilot interviews were face-to-face; one had no time limit; the other enforced a one-hour time limit.

During the first pilot interview, I did not respond freely to my interviewee’s responses; I listened and encouraged primarily via nonverbal communication. I approached the second interview by asking the teacher to choose one or more questions from the same list I had used in the first interview; this strategy allowed me to see which questions held the most interest for the interviewee. I was more interactive and participative during this interview, utilizing interviewing and questioning techniques from Patton (1990)—including probing. This method was more stimulating for both of us; the probing increased the depth of responses. The telephone interview was also positive with its own special comfort zone of increased anonymity, but I missed the synergy of being face-to-face and the nuances available in non-verbal communication. Thus, the pilot experience helped me to compare not only potential interview questions but also various interviewing techniques for their effectiveness.

Questions during these interviews included the following: “Please speak to the energy demands of being a teacher;” “How do you view your career during the last five years—your satisfactions and dissatisfactions?” “How do you think your school system envisions the last years of the teaching career? What mechanisms are in place to best utilize teachers during their most experienced years, presumably at their highest points of growth and integration as human beings?” and “What are your most significant unresolved or unanswered questions/problems/mysteries about teaching and learning—or about any aspect of the topics related to this interview?”
The teachers talked easily about these and other subjects, and often, at great length. At the conclusion of each interview, they gave feedback regarding the questions—suggesting the elimination of a few questions and a few minor modifications in wording. Generally, they said that they enjoyed responding to the questions; most had not previously been asked to speak at length about their involvement in their careers. All indicated, in some form or other, that participating in the interview had enabled them to think about themselves and/or their careers in a different way. The pilot interviews were tape recorded and transcribed for preliminary analysis.

I was struck by the individualistic ways in which the teachers responded to various questions. One teacher saw his career development—and benchmarks or turning points within it—in terms of his changing and evolving relationship with students. Another viewed his development over time in terms of opportunities to inspire others. The third teacher framed her development in terms of quality collegial relationships. All mentioned significant life events that had affected their teaching lives. All felt the end of the career was anticlimactic and expressed a desire that it not be so; all mentioned the tremendous energy demands that seemed to increase with the years. Ending the career was viewed with mixed feelings, but overall, with a sense of relief. Many similar perceptions appear and have been documented in my review of the literature (See Chapter II).

The pilot interviews excited me about beginning the actual research journey. Looking at career end seemed to strike a major chord; there was a strong personal interest in these related topics. My sense was that I had found a topic worthy of exploration. During the interviews, I was humbled by the teachers’ willingness to share so openly what had made their lives in education significant—for to reflect on the meaning of decades of teaching is to talk about a core part of one’s self. The daily intense interactions, the years of sustained strenuous effort, the willingness to take one’s being—again and again and again—into the urban classroom for the opportunity—maybe today—to make a difference, had affected these individuals deeply. I had invited teachers to talk to me. When we met, they invited me into territory that I—and maybe they—had not anticipated. The only word I continue to have for this experience is sacred.

Selecting participants

With the experiences of the pilot study in my consciousness, I began the second phase by searching for participants—secondary urban English teachers judged to be successful by their
peers who were either approaching the end of their teaching careers or recently retired. Utilizing Blumer's criteria for selection, as cited by Fontana and Frey (1994), that participants be "acute observers" and "well informed." I noted his observation that such a group, even a small one, "is more valuable many times over than any representative sample" (p. 385). I began by calling three teachers I had met or worked with during my own teaching career; they recommended/nominated others. In the end, seven practicing or former English teachers, all of whom shared the value of wanting to make a contribution to the field whether or not they could personally benefit from it, made a commitment to participate in the research. All group members are Caucasian; six are female. The age spread among participants is 18 years (49-67). At the beginning of the study, three of the participants were retired teachers. By the end of the study, another had retired.

**Data collection**

I utilized a multimethod approach to data collection including in-depth interviewing, quasi-structured interviews, self interviews, unstructured interviews (such as creative and polyphonic interviews, Fontana & Frey, 1994), journals, poems or other symbolic representations, and finally, the methods of cooperative inquiry which included participants meeting as co-researchers and engaging in brainstorming, reflection, group interviews, and interpretive interactionism (Fontana & Frey; Schwandt, 1994).

First I utilized the method of *in-depth interviewing* consisting of several phases over a period of time in order to uncover and explore participant perceptions of this stage in the career life cycle and their perceived opportunities of the utilization of their "wisdom of experience." I asked teachers—both those who were retired and those who were still engaged in the classroom to keep a weekly journal during a month's period, reflecting on the essential questions and capturing their feelings and thoughts on the topic as they were further evoked by current students, job demands, or other stimuli (Richardson, 1994). In another effort to uncover affective components, I asked each teacher to express feelings pertaining to the topics in poetic, visual, or other symbolic form—and then to reflect on what those representations meant to them. The cooperative inquiry session toward the end of the study was both audio- and videotape recorded.

Before meeting with the first participant for an in-depth interview (phase two of my research), I renewed my commitment to utilize our time together as efficiently and wisely as possible. I also revised interview questions and reviewed the research literature for direction.
Thus, I utilized numerous sources which establish interviewing as a respected method of acquiring information about people’s perceptions and experiences and which provide ample guidance for framing various kinds of interview questions (Eisner, 1991; Mishler, 1986; Patton, 1990; Schumacher & McMillan, 1993). Eisner calls the interview “a powerful resource for learning how people perceive the situations in which they work” (p. 82)—reminding researchers that anything which “is relevant for seeing more acutely and understanding more deeply is fair game” (p. 82). Eisner, along with Clandinin and Connelly (1994) reminded me to stay open to new ideas and methods during the evolution of my research, advice which I heeded. Knowing that interviewing participants would generate one of my main sources of data, I was pleased to read Marshall and Rossman (1995) who helped me clarify my purpose: To uncover the subjective view of teachers in career wind-down and not to identify objective, generalizeable data. The trade-off, they remind, is depth instead of breadth. For interviewing to be effective as a research method, the interviewer must be skilled at listening, interactioning, framing questions, and probing; interviewees must be both comfortable and willing to explore the topic of interest.

Scheurich (1995) calls for “new imaginaries” of interviewing, conceptions which engage ambiguities inherent in the interview process and the interpretation of it. Before his imaginaries have been imagined, Scheurich advocates that interviewers highlight the “baggage” they bring to the interview—the known biases, their backgrounds, their institutional requirements which bound the study (See Chapter 1); his second recommendation is that the interviewer “foreground” the open nature of the interview process by demonstrating flexibility during the interview, a willingness to follow the path the interviewee seems inclined to take. Such willingness, Scheurich says, should, if nothing else, remind the researcher that an interview is not a fact-finding venture; data reduction neither simulates nor creates reality. I included this reference to remind myself and readers of this study of the limitations of interviewing from the outset. Catching the words of an interview and bringing them home for analysis is one of the best methods available to date for understanding the perspectives of others, but it is limited in its ability to provide a full look at the complexity of any situation.

One promising method incorporated in my research process is the “critical incident technique” (Amabile, 1995). The researcher asks the teacher being interviewed to give an example of, say, the most beneficial aspect of being at his or her age, career stage, and level of
maturity in terms of being a teacher and then asks for the least beneficial aspect—letting the
teacher know that anything that stands out in their minds is of interest. This technique is
especially valuable in that it gets at what the interviewee considers important and avoids
interjecting the researcher's personal beliefs. A list of the research questions utilized during the
first in-depth interviews can be found in Appendix B.

Both interviews (the initial interview and the follow-up interview approximately one year
later) were conducted in a mutually determined setting—in restaurants, coffee houses, dining
rooms. One interview occurred over breakfast, six during lunch, two accompanied by dinner, four
over afternoon coffee and sometimes, pastry. The sessions were thus relatively comfortable and
nourishing at multiple levels. Wolcott (1990) recommends lunch (not necessarily for interviewing
participants in a research project) "in the sense of getting away from interruption and from locales
where status is fixed," where conversation tends to be less stilted and "ideas have to fend for
themselves" (p. 31); the interview settings contained those advantages. At the beginning of
each interview, a microcassette tape recorder was placed near the teacher-participant as was a
copy of the research questions. Interviews proceeded in an informal conversational manner,
interrupted occasionally by a waiter or waitress or by a coffee grinder, or when the interviews
occurred out-of-doors, occasionally by passing traffic. I confess to enjoying all aspects of the
interview situation—meeting with teacher-colleagues, discussing matters of mutual interest and
importance, listening carefully to perspectives of which I otherwise would have remained unaware,
spending time together over food and drink, the symbols of communion.

Following the interviews, I captured initial impressions on paper in a kind of self-debriefing
exercise, typed up field notes, and transcribed the tapes—a painstaking process which
nevertheless offered the gift of reliving the interviews and in doing so, thinking about what had
taken place. At irregular intervals, I entered my thoughts (and frustrations) in a dissertation journal
and began interim analysis—a search for motifs and themes, preliminary sense-making. Between
the first and second interviews, I created individual profiles based on the initial interview. These
were presented to teachers for verification and modification if appropriate. In addition, follow-up
questions were generated from initial interview transcripts in which participants had been given
pseudonyms (chosen or approved by them). Meanwhile, outside readers reviewed transcripts,
identified possible themes, and provided oral and written feedback which became part of the data
being collected—response data—identified by St. Pierre (1997) described as "data that are often critical and that may even prompt us to significantly reconstruct our interpretation as we proceed" (p. 184).

Cooperative Inquiry: A Collaboration

During the third phase of my research—cooperative inquiry—which was intertwined with the second phase, the teacher-participants became collaborators (Mishler, 1986)—that is, full participants in reconceptualizing career end. Reason (1994) refers to collaborators as co-researchers. There are four stages in "co-operative inquiry." First, the exploration of some aspect of the group’s experience or the setting of a goal to “seek to change some aspect of their world” (Reason, p. 326)—in my research, teacher-participant-collaborators explored their experiences and feelings regarding the end of their teaching careers during the interview process, a phase Reason termed “propositional knowing” (p. 326). The second stage consists of the application of some of the generated ideas to everyday work in order to achieve “practical knowing”—in my research, teacher-participant-collaborators ferreted out their practical knowing in journals kept during the “everyday work” year; they brought these to the follow-up interview. Reason’s third stage calls for an immersion in the area of locus to “see their experience in a new way,” resulting in “experiential knowing” (p. 327)—in my research, teacher-participant-collaborators created symbolic representations to tap into their feelings about career end; these were also given to me at the follow-up interview. The fourth stage calls for collaborators to gather together to consider, modify, reformulate, reject, and adopt new hypotheses—in this research, collaborators spent a full day together sharing information and ideas, reflecting on various aspects of experience, generating hypothetical answers to relevant questions, and reconceptualizing career wind-down and career end with the hope that their effort would contribute to a transformation of the way career end is experienced by teachers in the future. Prior to the day-long session, collaborators agreed to devote their energy to certain areas of inquiry and development. Schon (1983) called this phase "problem setting,” something too often ignored, “a process in which, interactively, we name the things to which we will attend and frame the context in which we will attend to them” (p. 40). The plan for the day was designed with the input and feedback of all participants over a month’s period of time. The final plan/agenda, as modified and amended by participants, was mailed to each collaborator prior to the session.
Because one of my goals was for creativity to flow during this group process, I was mindful of environmental factors found to inhibit creativity (Amabile, 1995): perceived apathy toward the target project (Those who were apathetic declined to participate in this portion of the research); unclear goals (Goals were modified and clarified by the group in advance); distraction (A comfortable and quiet setting—a lodge-like home on a lake—provided minimum distraction); insufficient resources (not a problem); overemphasis on the status quo (At this point, we had identified the status quo and were ready to move beyond it); and time pressure (This factor was the most difficult to eliminate for teachers during the school year, so the group session was held during the summer).

According to Hackman (1995), the following characteristics are present in “well-composed groups”: high task-relevant expertise; no larger than necessary to accomplish the goals; interpersonal and task skills; and a moderately diverse membership (pp. 406-07). Six collaborators were present, including me; the group was “well composed” in Hackman’s terms except for the last characteristic of moderate diversity. All group members were Caucasian; five were female. The age spread was 8 years. Four were active teachers; two were retired teachers. All were, or had been, secondary English teachers in an urban school system. My role during the day of collaboration, in addition to facilitating the process, was to become a full participant in both morning and afternoon sessions.

The various activities of the day were recorded by audiotape in the morning, when teacher-participant-collaborators became acquainted or renewed their acquaintance and shared their various points of view, and by videotape in the afternoon—when all six of us gathered to collaborate on a reconceptualization of career end. Videotaping the afternoon session permitted accurate identification of speakers when creating transcriptions at the conclusion of the day’s activities.

The day of working together in stage four began with a brief introductory session in which collaborators shared brief career histories and thoughts pertaining to career end. After distributing tape recorders and tapes to each person, people met together in dyads for a series of 15-minute conversation/discussion sessions based on focus questions or topics according to a schedule distributed in advance. Both participants in a dyad were asked to record their session as a safeguard against mechanical malfunction. At the end of each session, collaborators switched
partners, so that by the end of this portion of the day, each individual had met with every other individual (See Appendix C for interview schedule). These mini-sessions were tape recorded and later, transcribed. The focus questions for the mini-sessions follow: What advice would you give to the board of education or superintendent, if asked? What suggestions do you have for colleagues who are tired, uninvolved, lacking in enthusiasm, or otherwise having a hard time? What guidelines, principles, and values do you think should guide us in rethinking how we end our careers? Collaborators wrote their responses to these questions on large notepads.

In addition, three "galleries" provided focus topics. I prepared the galleries weeks in advance, the result of a suggestion made by a teacher-participant. One gallery contained collaborator symbolic representations, displayed in frames or on easels, as in an art gallery. Another display contained highlights from the interviews each collaborator had participated in before this day as well as a listing of the figurative language and symbols that had appeared in the speech of the English teachers during the interviews. A final gallery displayed excerpts from the professional literature base on the topic of faculty retirement and how other educational institutions are dealing with it. The symbolic representation gallery is shown in Appendix D.

After lunch, each teacher-participant-collaborator spent approximately 20 minutes in individual quiet time in various locations. Some walked down to the lake, some lounged on decks, some walked in the yard, some stayed in the house. Some people took notes; a few tape recorded their thoughts on the topic of reconceptualizing career wind-down and end. At the end of this time, participants gathered together to generate "dream scenarios" and to share final thoughts. This session was both video-taped and audio-taped for later transcribing.

The afternoon session might be thought of as a "reconceptualization think tank" in the spirit of the "think tank mission of the universities" (Hamilton, 1994)—generating ideas for what to do now that various aspects of the career wind-down stage had been brought to awareness, hypothesizing what a more ideal situation might consist of, offering their best suggestions for improving the last career stage and for better utilizing teachers' wisdom of experience. The goal for the afternoon session is supported in the work of Schön (1983) whose review of related literature suggests "that all occupations engaged in converting actual to preferred situations are concerned with design" (p. 77). Schön's discussion of frame analysis is also useful here: When practitioners become aware of their frames, they also become "aware of the possibility of"
alternative ways of framing the reality of...practice" (p. 310). The afternoon session was devoted to the finding and naming of alternative frames.

Within the week following the session, teacher-participant-collaborators conducted self interviews in which they responded to open-ended questions about the research project, including how the project may have affected their lives or stimulated their thinking (See Appendix E for self interview schedule). Utilizing Amabile's (1995) critical incident technique, self interviewees responded to the most and least liked facets of participating in the research project. These self interviews were tape recorded; the tapes were mailed to the researcher for transcription and analysis.

The road map I had devised during the writing of my dissertation proposal had proven an invaluable guide through all phases of the project design, "data collection," and interim analysis process. It kept me on the main highway as I reached the destinations of pilot study, two in-depth interviews, and cooperative inquiry. This is how I see what happened in a general way: Teacher-participant-collaborators and I spent time together and increased awareness of our frames. We gained a heightened awareness of the internal, external, and temporal dimensions of our professional lives. We searched for deeper meaning through the creation of field texts such as journals and symbolic representations; we thought about how to improve the urban system in which we had worked, about how to maximize or redesign the linear nature of our careers; and then we pushed the limits by considering and reconceptualizing career wind-down and career end.

The fourth and last phase called for on the road map is a small category labeled "Final Analysis and Synthesis" with two tiny sub-categories: making meaning from data; and making conceptual and theoretical coherence. Finally arriving at phase four, part of me concluded that the bulk of the journey was over even though at least one troublesome thought was nipping at my mind. In a research course I had audited, Dr. Lather had shared an observation, to wit: "Most dissertations are under-analyzed" (class lecture, The Ohio State University, March 10, 1992). Prior to this time, I had not questioned why that might be so. I did not question it now. I simply determined that my own dissertation would include rigorous analysis by multiple methods. I had faith that what I didn't already know, I would find in my abundant collection of research literature. I could begin to pack up my data, begin to think about some serious relaxation after a month or so
of writing. The "Final Analysis and Synthesis" phase would be completed by the end of the summer...No problem. But I was seriously wrong about all of that.

The Researcher's Story, Part 3

"Data analysis is the black hole of qualitative research."
Lather, P. (class lecture, The Ohio State University, February 18, 1992)

When Dr. Patti Lather made the above remark more than five years ago in a qualitative research class, it intrigued me enough to become part of my class notes. I didn't know what it meant exactly, but to me, a future researcher, it sounded a little scary. Since then, I have learned something about black holes, such as that they are generally understood to be collapsed stars "from which no light can escape" (Kaku, 1994, p. 223), a definition which resonates with my understanding of collapsed coding categories. My initial understanding of Lather's remark was that data analysis is the "weak link" in the qualitative research chain, that once a critical amount of data is collected, it might just disappear in a kind of vacuum from which some of it never returns—or maybe researchers themselves might be sucked into the black hole of data analysis and not find their way out. My current research experiences suggest that all these meanings apply to data analysis.

If data analysis is considered to be a "weak link," it is probably because there are few specific guidelines available in the literature for the researcher—whereas general guidelines abound. Richards and Richards (1994) observe another: "A weak link will always be the adequacy of the coding process" (p. 456), but I have found that suggestions for coding are among the most well developed ideas in the analysis literature. Schumacher and McMillan (1993) offer: "Most qualitative researchers have learned that there is no set of standard procedures for data analysis...." (p. 482). Thomas (1993) calls the interpretation of data a "defamiliarization process" which raises "havoc with our settled ways of thinking and conceptualization" (p. 43). Yes, yes.... Marshall and Rossman (1995) describe my own experiences well in their definition and introductory explanation of data analysis:

... the process of bringing order, structure, and meaning to the mass of collected data. It is a messy, ambiguous, time-consuming, creative, and fascinating process. It does not proceed in a linear fashion. It is not neat (p. 111).
Bogdan and Biklen (1992) sum up the state of affairs when they say that "...in the qualitative research literature, analysis has never received enough attention" (p. 153).

Data management guidelines, on the other hand, are well developed, clear, detailed (See Highlen & Finley, 1996; Huberman & Miles, 1994; Marshall & Rossman, 1995; Schumacher & McMillan, 1993). Application of these ideas can ameliorate but not totally alleviate the problem of some data disappearing into a black hole of no return.

Highlen and Finley (1996) cite Patton's (1990) astute observation that "...qualitative analysis ultimately depends on the analytical intellect and style of the analyst. The human factor is the great strength and the fundamental weakness of qualitative inquiry and analysis" (p. 185). Another potential weak link. Schumacher and McMillan (1993) agree: "Making sense of the data depends largely on the researcher's intellectual rigor..." (p. 482). In the data analysis literature, the researcher is another potential weak link, another potential strength. It seems undeniable that quality data analysis depends in large part on the intuition, skill, acuity, and interpretive ability of the researcher. This notion coupled with Stake's (1994) insight that the "whole story," or phenomena being studied, "exceeds anyone's knowing, anyone's telling" (p. 240) tugs at me, moves me into the gravitational pull of the data analysis black hole. I grab hold of and cling to a kind of olive branch, a reminder that firmer ground--something more solid--may be in the vicinity if I can but find it, also a reminder to the researcher to develop "a tolerance for tentativeness of interpretation until the entire analysis is completed" (Schumacher & McMillan, p. 482). A reader of this manuscript provides perceptive response data: Even when the analysis is completed, the interpretation remains tentative--one of many possible responses, a filtered point of view.

Today I re-read Hyperspace (Kaku, 1994) which contains several interesting speculations related to black holes. One speculation, based on the work of Karl Schwarzschild which I have already alluded to, is that near a black hole, a "point of no return" exists after which objects too close to it will "inevitably be sucked into the black hole, with no possibility of escape" (p. 224). Another speculation, based on the work of mathematician Roy Kerr, is that a black hole might actually be a gateway to another universe. A less comforting speculation is that near a black hole, radar creates an "illusion of objects that aren't really there" (p. 227). Kaku's final speculation regarding black holes is in the context of a discussion about the death of the universe (Almost everything about this subject is both intriguing and somewhat scary to contemplate) when
"Intelligent life... will face the prospect of extinction" (p. 305). In this distant future when the
temperature of the universe approaches absolute zero, black holes might become "life
preservers" because "Intelligent life would necessarily congregate next to these black holes and
extract energy from them..." (p. 306).

Now, midway into my own data analysis, Dr. Lather's casual remark intrigues me anew. I
have my own speculations to make. Kaku's (1994) work extends Lather's black hole analogy. The
"illusion of objects that aren't really there" fits my own perception that definitive guidelines for data
analysis do not exist, that beyond the helpful and encouraging--mostly general--guidelines
available in the research literature, the individual researcher is basically on her own. That is an
insight I will continue to try to live with; tentativeness will be my round-the-clock companion, my co-
researcher, my soul-mate.

Again, I look to Kaku's (1994) work. I have sensed for awhile that I have indeed stumbled
through a gateway to another universe, the universe of data analysis. Now that I am here, much
exploring remains to be done before I will feel comfortable. My research road map has led me to
this universe, but I find no local map in the travel folder. No matter. The natives are friendly. Even
the specter of a black hole becomes tolerable if viewed as a life preserver providing energy to
intelligent life when familiar terrain is irrelevant or unavailable. I take a deep breath. I am ready to
embrace this new universe, this dynamic hybrid process, this black hole of data analysis where
there is no firm footing and no turning back.

Addendum: Before I return to an accounting of the methodology used in this research
project, I want to clarify an important point: My current review of the data analysis literature
suggests that many researchers are taking the time to create written guidelines and suggestions
for beginning researchers; these shared suggestions are invaluable, and I am grateful for them. I
think Bogdan and Biklen (1992), for example, know in part what I am going through; they've
moved through the gateway to the universe of data analysis, and they remember the experience
of being a novice on unfamiliar territory. They even know about the sometimes friendly presence
of Procrastination, with whom I have more than a nodding acquaintance:

Novice writers are big procrastinators... Even when they get themselves
seated at their desks, they always seem to find diversions: make the
coffee, sharpen the pencil, go to the bathroom, thumb through more
literature.... (p. 185).
I find myself alone for the moment, but I know that others have been here. Today, my house is clean. My correspondence is up-to-date. There are no weeds sprouting in the garden. Let the research log show today's research activity: Today I pondered the meaning of a black hole.

Final Analysis and Synthesis: Methods of Data Analysis

After the day of collaboration phase four of the cooperative inquiry process, weeks were spent in transcribing, reading transcripts, making notes in margins, and the like. An entry in my dissertation journal captured the moment: "I am flooded with data, swamped with data, inundated with data, overcome with data...." Data management reared its head, demanded attention, and received it. Files were rearranged; new files were created to house raw data and artifacts. Research logs, the dissertation journal, filed notes and memos—all these were updated according to guidelines in the research literature (Highlen & Finley, 1996; Huberman & Miles, 1994; Marshall & Rossman, 1995).

Preliminary and interim data analysis or sensemaking (Feldman, 1994; Highlen & Finley, 1996) had been a part of my strategic road map from the beginning—including the use of reflective notes in a dissertation journal (and on random scraps of paper), memos, and side comments during the transcription of interviews. Ongoing discussion with others became an interim method of analysis resulting in "response data" (St. Pierre, 1997), to be used in further analysis. I also employed most of the suggestions by Bogdan and Biklen (1992) which included making decisions which narrowed the study's focus, planning data collection based on previous findings, playing with metaphors and concepts, using visual devices, and exploring literature while "in the field" (pp. 154-164).

Coding, chunking, categorizing, collapsing

The next step, a kind of data management-organization-analysis, was coding the data—or as Feldman (1994) called it, chunking the data into thematic categories. It is my sense that traditional coding practices in qualitative research are falling under scrutiny, that coding is fundamentally quantitative and positivistic—but it is still being utilized by respected researchers, for example, in the analysis of transcripts from tape-recorded interviews (Amabile, 1995), and so I
proceeded with it, optimistic that it would be valuable for systematic organizational and analytical purposes. The processes which immediately follow were performed on two sets of data: that obtained during individual interviews with the researcher, self-interviews, and journals—and that obtained during the cooperative group session. In order to organize my data, I utilized HyperResearch (Hesse-Biber, S., Kinder, T. S., Dupuis, P. R., Dupuis, A., & Tomabene, E., 1993), a computer research program to code data by topics and to group topics “into larger clusters to form categories” (Schumacher & McMillan, 1993, p. 486). Initial topics were derived from the interview questions as well as from my research journal entries which provided a record of preliminary and ongoing analysis; other topics emerged when combing through the data. My master list of codes went through several revisions with the final list containing 143 master codes and subcodes. Multiple codes were attached to units of data when applicable. Finally, topics were combined to form categories and/or themes of relevance. From these, I generated documents which contained textual material from the categories for further analysis and organization. As mentioned before, this coding, collapsing, and generating procedure was performed separately on both sets of data.

With coding-chunking completed, I got a mandatory break from the data with the beginning of the school year; the break lasted six months. Bogdan and Biklen (1992) discuss the advantages and disadvantages of such a break. I did benefit from the advantages of distance from the material and an opportunity for putting things in perspective, and I experienced the disadvantages of losing touch with the content of my notes. I did not experience the most serious drawback mentioned, however, of a need to return to the field only to find that subjects have moved or that the field has changed. As Bogdan and Biklen aptly note: “Discussions of how long breaks should be and the advantages of putting data aside are esoteric to those who have obligations and deadlines” (p. 165.) During this period of time, I continued to review relevant literature.

The third major phase of data analysis began with a reimmersion in the data—re-reading transcripts and reports, reflecting and writing in my research journal, completing frequency counts, and analyzing my coding system. The frequency counts done by code and by individual participants were beneficial for the following reasons: They highlighted areas emphasized during interviews and during the group session, foregrounded characteristics of individuals, and
provided a method of crystallization (Richardson, 1994) for theme generation. To further analyze my coding system, I used categories generated by Bogdan and Biklen (1992), placing my 143 codes and subcodes (eventually collapsed to 32), insofar as possible, within their 10 suggested categories, and adding another category of my own: analysis codes, codes I had generated which assist in analysis (e.g. contradictions and paradoxes, message via actions, and project-participation comments, among others). This process was useful in making more explicit the underlying organization of my previous work. For example, under the Bogdan and Biklen coding category “Relationship and Social Structure Codes,” six of my collapsed codes found a home and an additional connection to one another.

The Researcher’s Story, Part 4

This is the story of why you are going to read about teacher “stories” instead of about “case studies”; it is the story of why, during one of the last revisions of the dissertation, I removed case study terminology from the text. Earlier versions of this chapter would have proceeded to explain that I begin the next phase of data analysis by completing mini-case studies—which is what I did four months ago. But I have grown uncomfortable with framing the lives and contributions of the participating teachers in terms of case studies.

Here’s what happened: An experienced researcher who read parts of the evolving dissertation pointed out that a person is not a case. While I agreed with that particular response, I did not act upon it. Case study methodology has a long and respectable tradition, and I had chosen it carefully; it suited the purposes of this research project. But the phrase “person, not a case” was not so easy to dismiss from my mind. Gradually, some of the implications of the terminology became more pronounced. For example, the whole notion of a case study is a human construction, a device to present the lively and subjective human interactions which comprise interview data and observation in an objective, manageable form; a device which, advertently or inadvertently, separates the researcher—and the readers of the research—from the lively, complex human beings participating in the research. A case becomes something that (theoretically) can be viewed as a specimen is viewed, something to be held under a microscope by those trained to do so. A case can become something which lives in a file cabinet. These kinds of thoughts began to create dissonance in my mind at an unacceptable level.
I remembered a short story that I had taught in English classrooms on numerous occasions over the years: "Paul's Case: A Study in Temperament" (1905), written by Willa Cather, most often appearing in textbooks as "Paul's Case" without the subtitle. It is a poignant story of a boy who can't find a way to adapt himself to other people's expectations in what he considers to be a drab and unimaginative world. It is also the partial story of the other people in Paul's life—his father, school principal, teachers, and others—who do not understand Paul and who separate themselves from him and his humanity through their judgments: "There is something wrong with the fellow" (p. 195). They view Paul not as a unique human being with something to offer, but as "not a usual case" (p. 194) and as "a bad case" (p. 203). Meanwhile, Paul is "always glancing about him, seeming to feel that people might be watching him and trying to detect something" (p. 194). In Cather's story, Paul's inability to connect with his world and the people in it—and his inability to find a better world to live in—culminate in his successful suicide. The story ends, and the case is closed.

Of course, "Paul's Case" is not a real case study. Paul is not even a real person—unlike the teachers who participated in this research. Containing their teaching stories in case studies won't work for me any more. Those stories began before I entered the lives of the teachers as a researcher-participant; their lives—and their stories—are continuing now that I have relinquished that role. Their stories are not to be filed away in a manila file marked "case study" with a "case closed" pronouncement at the end of this research. In fact, I think therein is a problem with too much research. It gets filed away, buried in a dissertation or journal article, read and dispensed with instead of acted upon and widely shared. But that's another story for another time.

For now, I just wanted to inform the readers of this document that I am revising its language—a response to another ethical dilemma appearing during this research. You will read teacher stories or non-fiction stories—or sociological stories—none of them fully resolving the problems discussed in this "Researcher Story," but all of them representing my best solution at this point in time. Please remember, as I will, that you are reading about complex and dynamic human beings who donated a small part of their lifetime and a few of their life stories to this inquiry. I respect and appreciate that.

Now there is a fair amount of revising to be done. To demonstrate what I mean, in the paragraph following this one, I'll use my typing technology to "strike through" the former language
before adding the new. Each time I do that, I’ll remember why I’m doing it. After that, you’ll probably not even notice.

Analyzing the First Five Cases Stories

A fourth phase of data analysis began with the decision to work on the case-study data provided by the individual teachers. I decided to begin by viewing the data from each participant as material for a mini-case-study career story, then made some writing decisions and reorganized the material. After completing a file for the material from each of the seven case-study teachers and checking to see that all data and supporting materials were present, I focused on the material for one case-specific teacher—reading and thinking about it, recording thoughts and insights, re-reading and again re-reading, immersing in the data for that particular person. I read the data not as texts to be decoded, but as Mayher (1990) eloquently stated, “meaningful encounters” (p. 39). Reflection was assisted by the use of a tape recorder and transcriber, as I spoke thoughts aloud, attempting to capture more fleeting impressions than I am able to capture when merely thinking and writing (Higley & Finley, 1996), unencumbered by the mechanics of typing and the unavoidable censoring and shaping that occur when transferring from mind to page. These oral writing sessions were transcribed for immediate use.

As the individual themes began to emerge, I checked the frequency count analysis mentioned earlier for confirmation and/or expansion of the themes. I then generated teacher-specific computer searches which located and retrieved data based on these themes for use during writing. I looked at teacher-specific artifacts. Sometimes I listened to tape recordings of interviews in order to hear the teacher-participant anew, to hear tone of voice, the emphasis and pauses—the rhythm of speech. Then, I tried to hear what each teacher was communicating as a whole, asking: What is the essence here? I decided to invent a writing device, the one-page intercalary introduction to be interposed between the stories of the teachers, based on the intercalary chapters used by John Steinbeck in The Grapes of Wrath (1939). The intercalary introductions would serve as more than introductions to the teacher stories; they would be an analytical tool for clarifying the essence of each.
Transactional reading as data analysis method. During this phase, I sometimes re-read literature from the literature review or continued to find additional relevant literature for study, a process which played a significant role in the discussion/analysis section for each teacher. Sometimes the literature reinforced a developing theme; sometimes it framed a discussion and/or helped to place the discussion in a larger context. These readings and their influence on my thinking and writing constitute a method of analysis which I would characterize as “transactional” in the spirit and tradition of Louise Rosenblatt’s transactional reader-response theory (1938, 1964, 1978, 1982, 1993). As John Mayher (1990) notes, a “feature of transactions as distinct from interactions is that they change both parties to the transaction, while an interaction can leave each party as it was originally” (p. 166). The literature I read changed me, either in noticeable or subtle ways, and it affected my interpretation of the teachers’ stories; the literature is changed during a reading transaction in the sense that a reader’s perception of it changes at different points in time (Mayher, p. 167).

The transactional paradigm of Louise Rosenblatt (1964) describes the process of a specific reader engaging with a specific text at a specific point in time creating what Rosenblatt calls a “poem”:

A poem, then, must be thought of as an event in time. It is not an object... it is an occurrence, a coming-together, a penetration, of a reader and a text. The reader brings to the text his past experience; the encounter gives rise to a new experience, a poem. This becomes part of the ongoing stream of his life, to be reflected on from any angle important to him as a human being—esthetic, ethical, or metaphysical (Rosenblatt, 1964, p. 126).

During the reading process, the reader evokes the literal and/or figurative “poem” and then responds to that evocation as he or she continues to construct meaning; the text acts as a stimulus during the evocation and as a control during interpretation. An encounter occurs at a specific point in time between a reader and a text, a text which does not exist except as “simply paper and ink until a reader evokes from it....” (Rosenblatt, 1978, p. ix) . English education Professor George Newell (personal communication, June 12, 1997), during a discussion of transactional reading as a method of data analysis, made another important connection when he noted that the coding process may belong in this category. The essence of coding is an evocation-response of the researcher to the data in transcripts during the generation of codes. It accurately describes the process which occurred during my coding of the transcripts.
An extension of this process is what I used during the analysis and discussion of each teacher’s story. The process of “evoking” from various outside readings (texts—e.g. Women’s Ways of Knowing, Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger & Tarule, 1986—used in a discussion of Betty’s story in Chapter 4) and responding to the evocations in terms of their application to the particular story, in combination with the evocations and responses that I had to teacher-specific interview transcripts and artifacts (texts), constitute the heart of this analytic method. I also employed Rosenblatt’s two criteria of validity: “...first (that) a reader’s interpretation not be contradicted by any element of the text and, second, nothing be projected for which there is no verbal basis” (Athanasas, 1993, p. 269). Rosenblatt’s criteria of validity use the text as a control, a “means of avoiding arbitrary and irrelevant interpretations” (Rosenblatt, 1976, p. 282).

I found that I read all texts (outside literature, transcripts, and artifacts) both effertently and aesthetically—that is, sometimes focusing on specific information to be retained at the end of a reading and sometimes focusing on my own “unique lived-through experience or engagement with a text” (Beach, 1993, p. 50). Mayher (1990) calls the choice of effertent or aesthetic stance the “relevance selectional role” of the reader explained by transactional theory (p. 167); I am extending the use of the “relevance selectional role” concept to the researcher when referring to transactions with various texts, including data. If the researcher is transacting aesthetically with literature/texts, more is going on than if the researcher is engaged in relatively straightforward effertent reading. During aesthetic transactions, the literature affects the researcher, comes to life within the researcher, echoes within the interpretations of the researcher, becomes part of the ongoing discovery of the researcher. To summarize, I consciously used transactional reading and response, sometimes effertently and often aesthetically, within the bounds of Rosenblatt’s validity criteria as a method of interpretation and meaning-making during data analysis.

More analyzing occurred during the writing process itself as the ideas began to have a shape and form, as the uniqueness of each teacher’s story began to achieve clarity. The process was neither neat nor linear. I found it to be messy—just as Marshall and Rossman (1995) had said it would be—somewhat unorganized, painstakingly slow, always intense. In the end, constructing and interpreting each story took approximately two weeks or more of full-time effort. The analyses were both empirical and humanities-based, literal and figurative; I hoped they were evocative, maybe provocative as well (the latter hinting at minor conflicts with my research paradigm, a rumble.
not demanding immediate attention but not evaporating politely either). At the completion of each case, the participant read the case report and discussion, offered revision ideas, verified information and intent. Taken as a whole, this phase was demanding, uplifting, challenging, and exhausting. During this entire writing process, I was frequently reminded of the words of an anonymous writer: "Writing is easy. You just sit down at your desk, open a vein, and bleed on the page."

Reconsidering the Terrain: Reconnaissance

At the completion of five sociocultural stories, I felt a need to pause, to reconsider the whole business of data analysis. I re-read my abundant data analysis research literature, reviewed the notes and memos I had previously made about that literature, touched base with my research paradigm issues, looked again at my research proposal. I found more articles to read and consider. Huberman and Miles (1994) listed 13 tactics for making meaning from data—ah, some firm ground, I thought. These tactics include the following: noting patterns and themes, "seeing plausibility—making initial, intuitive sense (p. 431), clustering, making metaphors, counting, working with variables, and ending with building a logical chain of evidence and making conceptual/theoretical coherence. Some of these tactics I had already employed; some didn’t apply to the purpose of my research; I was not ready for others. Talk of variables reminded me of quantitative research; themes and variables did not strike me as synonymous. Generally, the Huberman and Miles strategies for cross-case analysis (I would come to think of it as cross-data analysis) seemed promising, and I highlighted them for later use. I sensed that I needed either a more rudimentary breakdown of available data analysis methods or I needed methods that were not available in my current research literature base. I had not found the firm ground I felt I needed to proceed. In my evolution as a researcher, I had reached a time of transition. Writing the teachers' stories in a transactional mode had changed me, and thus, my outlook. I didn’t know how to move forward, and going back was not an attractive option. I felt the gravitational pull of the data analysis black hole; I tried to improve my relationship with tentativeness.

Serendipitously, at this time, a fellow graduate student invited me to read his research journal, an assignment in his qualitative research class. His journal talked about a newly published text which intrigued me because of my acquaintance with the author's work. I bought a copy of the text the next day, eager to read it. The writer is Laurel Richardson (1997). The text is Fields
of Play: Constructing an Academic Life. As I read the pages, I had the sense that Richardson was speaking directly to me. I highlighted and underlined, made notes in the margins. I re-read and outlined, wrote the thoughts the text had evoked, had a serious transaction with the text. In terms of the evolution of data analysis in this research project, Richardson's text is major. In short, Fields of Play opens doors, blurs boundaries, offers options, creates new methods, and inspires researcher-writers. At this point in my data analysis, transacting with Fields of Play transformed the road map.

The Researcher's Story, Part 5: Post-Fields of Play

My first reading of Fields of Play: Constructing an Academic Life (Richardson, 1997) was accompanied by states of enjoyment, excitement, and something akin to fear—the latter probably the result of a perception like that of Bronwyn Davies on the book's jacket: "It is...magnificently terrifying in its power." My first reading was primarily aesthetic—a fully engaged, unique, lived-through experience with the text. My level of satisfaction on Jack Thompson's terms (cited in Mayher, 1987, p. 218) would be at the top level: I consciously considered my relationship with the author; I recognized the textual ideology (explicit within the text—feminist, poststructural, interpretive); I increased my understanding of self; and I increased my awareness of my own reading processes. In Thompson's terms, I would describe the intensity of my interest at the far end of the continuum in the "strong/active" category and my degree of response sophistication at "developed and subtle" (p. 219).

When Richardson (1997) wrote of writing issues, I responded with my full background as an English teacher, writing instructor, and would-be writer of research. I admired the depth and breadth of her knowledge about the language and process of writing. As she wrote about the complex, multifaceted issues encountered by the qualitative researcher, I—neophyte researcher and highly experienced student—was rapt. Richardson talked about and demonstrated relatively new genres of writing, "experimental representations" (p. 91), to be considered in the writing of qualitative research—especially the genres of poetry and drama. She further demonstrated how to position the self in research writing. Prior to transacting with Fields of Play, I had held the goal of fleshing out my perspective for readers of the research but with no vision for how to proceed. After reading her words and responding to my evocations, I began to understand a way to convey my own position through the creation of a device I call "The Researcher's Story," interjected
throughout many of the chapters in this dissertation, an example of what you, the reader, are reading now. It remains an imperfect device, since in fact my presence cannot be totally separated from any part of the work. "All texts are personal statements" (Lincoln & Denzin, 1994, p. 578) rings true for me. "The Researcher's Story" is my attempt to be more explicit than I would have been otherwise.

Richardson (1997) writes of "shaping sociological interviews into poems, rather than into prose representations" (p. 140) and of her related exploratory experiences:

During my off-duty quarter, I enrolled in an intensive, advanced poetry workshop at the university. I was fully immersed in poetry for three weeks: every day, three hours a day in seminar, three hours writing poetry, and another hour or so reading it, and only it....(p. 149).

During that workshop, she was working on shaping an interview transcript into poetic representation, and she brought drafts of "Louisa May," her first transcript-turned-poem, to class for feedback.

I, too, was enrolled in that poetry workshop. It was the summer quarter before I had enrolled in my first qualitative and quantitative research courses. It was the quarter before the language of research paradigms--replete with competing ontologies, epistemologies, methodologies, values, ethics, and voices--was in either my conceptual framework or my working vocabulary. It was before I could understand, let alone participate in the basic conversation. In Richardson's (1994) words, published several years after the poetry workshop, "What something means to individuals is dependent on the discourses available to them" (p. 518). So although I understood that Dr. Richardson was writing ground-breaking poetry for research purposes, and although I perceived that "Louisa May" was a moving highly effective, polished poem, I did not comprehend the significance of what Richardson was doing. I did not know that I was seated next to a revolutionary spirit. Nor could I have guessed that seven years later, this revolutionary spirit would again communicate with, upset, rearrange, inform, and inspire my own.

Actually, Richardson's 1994 work had been guiding me for awhile in the writing of this dissertation. I had read and re-read "Writing: A Method of inquiry," transacted with it, referred to it, listened to it as early as two years ago: I had noted her rationale for writing as "a method of discovery and analysis" (p. 516), though beyond journal writing and field notes, I was unsure how to proceed. I had noted her identification of five evocative experimental writing forms (the
narrative of the self, ethnographic fictional representations, poetic representation, ethnographic drama, and mixed genres—pp. 521-22), but had not considered them for use in the dissertation even though they had great appeal to the writer in me; they were just too risky. I even engaged in several of the writing exercises elucidated in Richardson’s chapter (pp. 524-27). What this chapter most directly influenced me to do was to make a decision, almost from the beginning, to attempt to make the writing in this dissertation highly readable, as engaging as possible within the constraints of dissertation requirements. Richardson wrote:

I have a confession to make. For 30 years, I have yawned my way through numerous supposedly exemplary qualitative studies. Countless numbers of texts have I abandoned half read, half scanned. I’ll order a new book with great anticipation—the topic is one I’m interested in, the author is someone I want to read—only to find the text boring (pp. 516-17).

I did not want to write a dissertation which would have those willing to read it yawning and nodding off.

As I again read “Writing: A Method of Inquiry” (Richardson, 1994) and consider it along with Fields of Play (Richardson, 1997), I now feel ready to apply what these revolutionary works have to say. In the remaining data analysis, I will even more consciously use writing as a method of analysis and explore the use of evocative experimental writing forms, including mixed genres—the literary, artistic, and scientific (1994, p. 522). I move forward with respect for the pioneering work of Richardson, Ellis and Bochner (1996), Austin (1996), Donmoyer and Yennie-Donmoyer (1995), Emihovich (1995), and Rose (1993), among others. As mentioned earlier, my first reading of Fields of Play was primarily aesthetic; the second and third readings, primarily afferent. Much of what I carried away during afferent readings will follow in this continuing methodology story.

Experimental Writing: Issues and Explorations

A Brief Justification

The road map revised, I proceeded to locate the data for the remaining two teachers, but not before exploring other discussions in the research literature about the use of poetry and other experimental genres in research writing. Benson’s (1993) Anthropology and Literature seemed a promising text for exploration—and it was. In Benson’s volume is a provocative essay by Bruner (1993) which discusses alternative writing forms in ethnographic writing:

The basic issue is how best to describe and understand other peoples...
The problem is often phrased as a question about the extent to which the personal and the poetic should be inserted in the scientific scholarly text,
as if there were an opposition between the scientific and the humanistic, between the academic and the poetic, between the scholarly and the literary. I reject these binaries....(p. 2).

Bruner comments on Rose’s (1993) contribution to this volume: “Parts of it are wild and outrageous; it begins as prose and ends as poetry...Not only does Rose suggest that ethnography should use multiple genres but his work does what he suggests, it employs multiple genres” (p. 22). And so I eagerly read Rose’s essay, “Ethnography as a Form of life” in which his demonstration of multiple-genre writing concludes by predicting the future of research writing practices; these predictions include “a poetic will also join the prose” and “...the junctures between analytic, fictive, poetic, narrative, and critical genres will be clearly marked in the text but will cohabit the same volume” (p. 218). Following his radical poem, “After the Death of Ethnography,” Rose writes, speaking, perhaps inadvertently, to some of the deepest fears (of perhaps both gatekeepers and novices) about not following the more prescriptive, traditional, and safer canons of writing:

At the very instant of death of an old ethnography we witness the birth of its feral child who grows up improperly socialized, without parental-canonical-guidance....(p. 223).

The “old ethnography,” however, has not been pronounced dead--maybe undergoing change, maybe becoming more aware of ambiguities, maybe accepting more writing genres (Bruner). Rose himself calls the evolution of ethnographic practices over the last twenty years a “sea change” or “a momentous reconfiguration of the cultural sciences” resulting in a “new textual formation” (p. 216).

Richardson (1994) reminds researchers and gatekeepers both: “Social scientific writing, like all other forms of writing, is a sociohistorical construction and, therefore, mutable” (p. 518). There is no need for a budding researcher to “grow up improperly socialized” even when engaging in experimental writing. Guidance is available, and more than one of the gatekeepers is “accepting more genres of our writing from poetry to short stories to ethnographic fiction....” (Bruner, 1993, p. 25). Richardson (1997) cites numerous gatekeepers and gatekeeping organizations which are publishing, teaching about, or showcasing alternative ethnographic representations; these include respected journals; university presses; social science
conventions and conferences; and university interpretive programs run by distinguished academics such as Norman Denzin and Andrea Fontana (p. 94).

Here and there a caveat appears, such as this one from Emihovich (1995):

...the impressionist tale takes the most dramatic license with ethnographic descriptions. (Warning! Since it involves risk, this form is not for novices. It is the form you experiment with when you have tenure.) This form is characterized by a heavy use of stylized rhetoric and literary conventions such as using allegories; writing scripts, including poetry; or using multiple perspectives (p. 41).

Richardson raised a similar concern in 1994 and repeated it in 1997: "Should only the already tenured write in experimental modes?" (1994, p. 523; 1997, p. 93). Richardson’s thoughts on this and related issues do not add up to a definitive "no." She urges writers to consider their purposes, to stage presentations with an awareness of the rules, to write responsibly. I include these references to demonstrate a respect for and an awareness of the cautions and major issues involved in utilizing experimental writing modes in this dissertation. Thus, early in the dissertation (e.g. Chapter 2, the review of literature), I demonstrate my acquaintance with the rules of academic socialization in research writing—what Emihovich calls “using the right jargon... Students learn how to embark on programmed writing (first an assertion, then a reference)” (p. 42). I have also attempted to demonstrate my understanding of traditional textual organization (in the dissertation as a whole) and ability to utilize the standard conventions of the realist tale, those “most familiar in the ethnographic literature... (including) a documentary style of reporting... (and) heavy use of quotes and verbatim transcripts...” (Emihovich, p. 41) as will be seen in the first five teacher stories. Finally, as an additional advantage, experimental representation may be one way to address one of Lincoln’s (1997) concerns about the critical interpretive abilities of graduate students in qualitative research courses:

Finally, how do students come to understand that texts, any text, are less a matter of what is (merely) printed on the page, and as much as a matter of the sights, the silences, the deliberate discretion, the blind spots, the calculated withholdings of authors? (p. 163).

As Richardson (1994) wrote: "...experimenting with format is a practical and powerful way to expand one’s interpretive skills... poetry helps problematize reliability, validity, and "truth" (pp. 521-522). Richardson’s discussion of writing “sociological interviews as poetry” (p. 522) includes the writer’s need to become aware of what is selected, what is left out. Thus, one positive result of
writing in experimental genres can be a heightened awareness of ethnographic writing production processes in general.

Sociopoetics: An Alternative Method of Data Analysis

"Poetry is a fundamental way of expressing human emotion and thought. Janus-faced, it looks both ways across the ancient chasm between heart and mind, belief and empirical observation, intuition and understanding."

(Frye, et al., 1985, pp. 355-357).

Because Tess, one of the research participants, a teacher-poet, had shared numerous poems written during her teaching career (collected as artifacts) and had created a poetic symbolic representation, applying many of Richardson's (1994, 1997) principles of sociopoetics to Tess's interview transcripts seemed timely. It also seemed appropriate because poetry has been called "a practical and powerful method for analyzing social worlds" (Richardson, 1994, p. 522). Some of the advantages of "writing sociological interviews as poetry" follow:

When people talk,...their speech is closer to poetry than it is to sociological prose...Writing up interviews as poems honors the speaker's pauses, repetitions, alliterations, narrative strategies, rhythms, and so on. Poetry may actually better represent the speaker than the practice of quoting snippets in prose. Further, poetry's rhythms, silences, spaces, breath points, alliterations, meter, cadence, assonance, rhyme, and off-rhyme engage the listener's body, even when the mind resists and denies it (Richardson, 1994, p. 522).

Richardson—the first researcher to shape "sociological interviews into poems, rather than into prose representations" (1997, p. 140) and to have them published in a respected research journal—both demonstrates and explains her purposes and methodology in the fourth section of her book, Fields of Play: Constructing an Academic Life (1997). Following her courageous example, I have attempted to convey "The Stories of Tess" by shaping her interview transcripts and journals into a series of four narrative poems and one lyric poem rather than into prose. The short lyric poem, "On the Cusp of Retirement," captures an epiphany (For an extended discussion of the use of lyric poetry as sociological writing, see Richardson, 1997, pp. 179-183). Further, five of Tess's own lyric and narrative poems, written about and during her teaching career, are interspersed in this series—creating literally a polyvocal text. The intercalary introduction to the
stories of Tess is one of the poems written by Tess: it is the only time that the introduction was written by the teacher-participant.

In creating narrative poems from transcripts, I applied, insofar as possible, the methods which Richardson (1997) explained in much detail: I used Tess’s voice, diction, and tone. I used only words, phrases, and sentences which she had spoken or written in her journal entries. I wrote her experiences in the words she had used when she told them to me. I wrote in her pauses by using the poetic conventions of line breaks and spaces between stanzas. Whenever possible, the context (spoken or written) was indicated in the poem—as when Tess said: “One more little remark, then I’ll stop,” or in the title: “A Journal Entry (21 May 1996)” (Richardson, pp. 140-144). The one lyric poem in “The Stories of Tess” also adheres to these guidelines.

The exception to the above occurs in only one narrative poem, “The Holly and the Ivy: A Song of Many Voices.” In that poem, I took Tess’s words and some of my own from our second interview transcript and blended them into one narrative. In addition, I created my own implied editorial comment on what Tess told me by intertwining the lyrics from a song traditionally sung as a Christmas Carol, or, to state it another way, the occasional appearance of the song and some of its lyrics is my response as a researcher to hearing a shocking story. In this polyvocal poem (for in addition to Tess’s voice and my voice, there are the second-order voices of other teachers and their experiences which we discussed during the interview), I considered the postmodernism claim that “our self is always present, no matter how much we try to suppress it—but only partially present...” (Richardson, 1997, p. 91) when deciding to let my own voice enter this poem directly as it participated in a conversation with Tess (in the first two stanzas) and as it responded to that conversation and to the story Tess shared (in the last three stanzas) via the song lyrics and the reverberating music of the song.

The story of how the song came to be a part of the poem follows: The song itself came to mind because the name of the substitute teacher referred to by Tess during the interview occurs in that song’s title. Upon reviewing the lyrics to the song (which I had begun to hum throughout the day), I saw that they reinforced and extended the meaning of the narrative poem, placing it in a larger context. In addition, the version of the song floating through my mind was its melody in minor key—a touch which highlighted the message of the original story by contrasting sharply with
the closing lyrics of the song ("Sweet singing in the choir"), providing irony and conveying the
massage, I believe, more powerfully.

"The Holly and the Ivy: A Song of Many Voices," included in the stories of Tess, is almost
a one-poem example of what Dan Rose (1993) may have been referring to when he predicted
"...the junctures between analytic, fictive, poetic, narrative, and critical genres will be clearly
marked in the text but will cohabit the same volume" (p. 218); the poem contains poetic, narrative,
and critical elements as well as music; this discussion has been an attempt to clearly mark them.
The addition of the song to the multi-vocal narrative poem relies on the technique of literary
counterpoint: "By analogy with music, a technique in literature whereby independent elements
are woven into a harmonious whole" (Frye, et al., 1985, p. 125). Rose, in his discussion of
multigenre fiction and poetry, cites Milan Kundera who refers to "a new art of novelistic
counterpoint (which can blend philosophy, narrative, and dream into one music)..." (p. 218).
Kundera (1988) also notes "Another important lesson from music. Like it or not, each passage of
a musical composition conveys an emotional expression" (p. 89). In short, "The Holly and the Ivy:
A Song of Many Voices" is a multigenre, narrative, sociological poem combining the voices of the
researcher and the teacher-participant with the independent element of a song conveying an
emotional expression and acting in poetic counterpoint. Rather than being a "feral child," its
genesis reveals at least a modicum of socialization: In adding the song, I have considered trifoid
purposes--to deepen the implications of the poem, to convey my response to what Tess told me,
and to heighten the emotional response of the reader/listener. I have staged this sociopoetic
presentation with an awareness of the rules, and I have attempted to act responsibly while
extending them.

While the intercalary introduction and "The Stories of Tess" are presented entirely in
poetic form, the discussion section employs the methods used in the first five sociocultural
stories--the reading and re-reading of transcripts, the use of computer coding reports, the
identification of themes or motifs, the attention to artifacts, the use of transactional reading and
response, this time utilizing Csikszentmihalyi's (1996) Creativity: Flow and the psychology of
discovery and invention.
The Final Story: An Impressionist Tale, An Extended Poetic Metaphor, a Symbolic Analysis

The intercalary introduction to Felicia, "Object Lesson: Patterns," is a kind of impressionist tale (Emihovich, 1995) or ethnographic fictional representation (Richardson, 1994). It places the teacher (Felicia) in a fictional classroom based on information in her interview transcripts. The poem within the fictional representation was written by Felicia and posted on her bulletin boards in various classrooms during her teaching career. The reference to the Kunstler (1993) text, The Geography of Nowhere, is included because Felicia gave me that provocative book to read on the day of our interview, saying that it was relevant. I read the text, transacted with it, outlined it. Later Felicia and I discussed it. Passages from that text were also included because they relate to her extended garden metaphor (soon to be discussed) and they reinforce Felicia's enigmatic poem:

To all a pattern.
That we do not perceive it
does not alter it.

Finally, passages from The Geography of Nowhere used in this way deliberately create a kind of intertextuality, "...as the reader utters new texts in response to old, new pages moving on from their predecessors" (Frye, et al., 1985, p. 365) and as the reader takes "account of the interrelatedness of linked texts" (Lincoln, 1997, p. 163). The "heavy use of stylized rhetoric" in the impressionist tale (Emihovich, 1995, p. 41) is meant both to evoke and to foreshadow the later references to the Biblical Garden of Eden in the extended garden metaphor. Thus the intercalary introduction, to be read again by the reader at the end of the discussion of Felicia's story, acts as introduction and conclusion, becomes part of the pattern in the organic whole of the piece.

Felicia's "story" is in her words entirely—in the form of her extended narrative-poetic metaphor which she created as a symbolic representation of her career, and of her thoughts and feelings about retiring from it, for this research. As such, Felicia's story is the only one in this study written by the teacher-participant. It is also the briefest, comprising less than two pages of text.

The discussion/analysis section of Felicia's story was accomplished by utilizing a medieval mode of criticism called the "Four Senses of Interpretation," a technique "in which a work is examined for four kinds of meaning" (Frye, et al., 1985, p. 201). Each level of meaning becomes more abstract, beginning with the literal and ending with the universal. Beyond the literal level, the symbolic analysis begins with the specific meanings Felicia held for all the aspects of her
garden metaphor presented in the form of a glossary—a technique adapted from the work of Milan Kundera—his "A Short Dictionary of Misunderstood Words" in The Unbearable Lightness of Being (1984) and his personal dictionary entitled "Sixty-three Words" in The Art of the Novel (1988). The symbolic analysis of Felicia's extended metaphor then proceeds to the level of allegorical analysis (again including ideas from Felicia's interview transcripts), and it culminates in an analogical or universal/spiritual layer of meaning (also with connections to Felicia's transcripts). The last two levels of analysis were supplemented by the use of symbolic meanings attributed to the imagery and objects in Felicia's metaphor as documented by scholars of symbolism; relevant background information was also obtained from those who had specialized in gathering information on such germane subjects as garden flowers, the history of the Solstås, and herbs. I would describe the method as painstaking research of the symbolic meanings, a classification of and labeling the layers of meaning, the creation of a multi-tiered working outline, and an application of the data combined with tentative interpretations at each level of meaning. Felicia herself acted as a check on the interpretations—reading them, validating them, refining them, giving a full response to them. In summary, the methodology used to interpret Felicia's story combined multiple genres of writing, the deliberate use of intertextuality and polyvocality, and techniques of literary criticism (Frye, et al., pp. 129-132) which served to guide the process.

Cross-Story Meanderings: Following an Intricate, Winding Path

Chapter 5: Multiple Methods

Having viewed each teacher’s contributions as a distinct entity, I sought methods for analyzing the material across the contributions. Given that my research had a strong collaborative component, culminating in a full day of collaboration among participants, I considered my purposes while reviewing analysis methods in the research literature. Schumacher and McMillan (1993) helped me clarify at the outset that collaborative research has "the least interest in theory-building and a special emphasis on problem identification and solution" (p. 507), and, aside from a strong desire on my part to bring the experiences and perceptions of the participating teachers to life for readers of the research, the thrust of the project was to identify and clarify problematic issues in the current conceptions of career wind-down and to generate a reconceptualization, facilitating a movement toward tentative solutions. A theme or motif analysis seemed the most
appropriate in terms of highlighting the major concerns of participating teachers. Thus, several sources provided guidance, primarily Highlen and Finley (1996), Huberman and Miles (1994), and Schumacher and McMillan.

To identify major themes, I looked at coding categories and the previously generated frequency count, and reviewed Chapter 4 in its entirety. In addition, I looked at all the data as a whole, including the transcripts from the collaborative group day, reviewed my interim analysis notes, and spent a week in mental meandering—reading, re-reading, reflecting, sorting, and clarifying. Having identified the major concerns of participating teachers, I generated more computer-assisted reports which provided supporting text from transcripts, journals, and the like.

After grouping major concerns into three categories, I looked for additional ways to analyze the data. In the end, I used a multiple-method form of analysis. First, I again employed transactional reading and response, adding new literature to the mix (especially necessary, I felt, given that my review of the literature had been completed two years prior to this point). I continued to view writing as a form of analysis, and utilized experimental writing genres when they seemed appropriate. In the first section, composed of three categories, I used material from the “analysis codes” I had previously generated, specifically the codes of “Contradictions/Paradoxes” and “Message in Actions.” The code for contradictions and paradoxes was originally generated for two reasons: first, because some of the teachers labeled their comments as such and I noticed additional contradictions and paradoxes while coding; and second, because of Arlin’s (1990) hypothesis that wisdom and problem-finding have in common the “detection of asymmetry” or a “lack of balance where the casual observer...finds a conventional explanation to be satisfactory” (p. 232). It was my hope that in flushing out contradictions some useful material would result. The message in actions category is based not only on the maxim that actions speak louder than words but also on Stetly’s (1989) reminder to administrators: “In the end, the message we give teachers is by our actions, not by our words” (p. 165). This category highlights how teachers interpret the actions and practices of those who are directing and managing the school system. One of its uses might be for system administrators to see if these are the messages they wish to be sending.

Finally, it seemed logical to me, after looking at individual stories and at all of the stories and their interpretations as a whole, to review Chapter 2 of the dissertation, the review of the
literature, in order to see how my interpretive cross-data analysis compared and contrasted to previously published works on the same research topics, to see what, if anything, seemed different or new. This portion of the analysis was completed after all the other procedures described in the previous paragraph. I found it to be an interesting and educative component since, as noted earlier, I had literally neither consulted nor visited the literature review for a two-year period. To provide continuity for the reader, the comparison/contrast with selected research component of the analysis is included in the text at the end of the discussion for each of the major categories, even though it was completed separately and last. Among other benefits to this “review of the review” was re-reading the summary list of recurring themes in the literature which provided the foundation for this study. One of these was the overwhelming need for researchers to make biases explicit whenever possible. Accordingly, I decided to review the document to data, looking for inexpert biases which need to be clarified.

In considering the process of analyzing the material across all the data, I see that there was more to it than meandering down a winding path. Going through the material, sorting, sifting, and examining what is found must be a lot like mining through material substances to find what is valuable. Accordingly, the title of the chapter will be “Cross-Data Analysis: Mining for Gems.”

As a further check before proceeding to the next section of the cross-data analysis, I utilized the hypothesis testing feature on the computer program which is set up using Boolean logic and an “if...then” chain of logic known as an inference path. This feature served as an informal reality check or guidance system to me in the ongoing analysis. The hypothesis testing feature assists in determining whether or not the data supports assumptions and inferences being made in the study (Hesse-Biber at al., 1993). For example, my working hypothesis that the reconceptualization of the career end of English teachers is needed can be supported by my data, according to this testing feature. My logic chain was built on three working hypotheses, each of which was supported by data: first, that the utilization of experienced teachers is ineffectual; then that the 30-year requirement for retirement is sometimes detrimental both to individuals and the profession; and finally, that the system at large does not treat teachers with respect. In the back of my mind were the caveats about using computer software in qualitative data analysis: a computer is a machine and cannot think; a machine cannot reliably insert new codes and check their appropriateness with a text (Richards & Richards, 1994).
The second section of Chapter 5, focusing on experience-based teacher perspectives that might be useful to others in the field, was generated by a repetition of the coding and collapsing, reviewing, and reflecting processes used so many times before during this research as well as using the notes various teachers made on the day of collaboration; “recursive” is an apt descriptor for the research processes.

The Researcher's Story, Part 6: Another Look at Positioning the Self

During the writing of the entire chapter, I struggled with an issue I thought I had already resolved: how to position myself not only as researcher-facilitator-writer, but as teacher-participant-collaborator. I had used the first-person point of view from the first page of the dissertation, identified myself as a fellow teacher among my peers, the teacher-participants. I had created “The Researcher’s Story” in this, the methodology chapter, to be more explicit about my development as a researcher. I had explained earlier in this chapter my role on the day of collaboration as a collaborator and “full participant.” In Chapter 4, I had even allowed my own clearly labeled voice to enter one of the sociological poems, “The Holly and the Ivy: A Song of Many Voices,” in “The Stories of Tess” and to include a symbolic representation: “Researcher’s Song” in Chapter 5. I had remembered and been influenced by Richardson’s (1997) words: “We are always present in our texts, no matter how we try to suppress ourselves” (p. 2). Therefore, I was implicitly omnipresent in the text, I thought—is that not enough?

Well, no...because in Chapter 5, unlike earlier chapters, my thoughts and words from both the day of collaboration and my own follow-up self interview are an integral part of the data. I am a voice in the transcripts, a colleague of the teacher-participants. I am one of “them” as well as the researcher, and my experiences as an urban teacher approaching the end of a career in the same school system are part of the mix. In Chapter 5, then, a relatively simple solution presented itself (with the assistance of my major advisor, Dr. Maia Pank Mertz): My voice, my experiences which had become part of the data, would be explicitly identified as mine for the reader. In Chapter 5, I am the “Researcher-Participant,” and the data presentation now clearly says so.

I am more satisfied than I had been, but notice that my thoughts will not let go of the subject. Calling myself a “researcher-participant” helps to clarify part but not all of what is going on here. There is something more in the text that I want to identify even as it remains elusive. There
is more blending here than meets the eye, I think, more blending than the "I" of the "researcher-participant" who is both staging (Richardson, 1997) and becoming intertwined with the text.

I re-read Richardson (1997) who writes, in a discussion of postmodern social theory: "...individuals have multiple identities, diverse experiences, and are locally situated...The 'stuff' of 'events' is not situated in the events but in microlevel experiences and meaning making" (p. 121). The meaning that I make from her words applies to this issue that I continue to struggle with. I see that both I and the teacher-participants in this study have multifaceted identities operating within this research project. Teacher-participants are teachers, writers, collaborators, creators of symbolic representations, sometimes parents, and the like. I am a teacher, a researcher, a participant, a facilitator, a collaborator, a writer, a creator, and the like. Above all, we are persons, human beings, members of the species. All of us are locally situated; all of us have been involved in making meaning based on our diverse life experiences and our experiences within a locally situated urban school system. All of these factors and all of these identities are part of all of "that"—the research data, the interpretation of meaning, sometimes the presentation. Nathan said during one of our conversations: "You can't separate the person from the teacher." At this moment, I am still having trouble clearly separating "me" from "them," me as researcher from me as participant, their ideas and experiences from my ideas and experiences—because in our sharing, part of "them" has become part of me. My thoughts now include their shared thoughts, their shared ideas.

I would even ask the reader of this research: As you transact with this text, creating meaning from it based on your own multifaceted identity and locally situated experiences, has it not become a part of you—at least of your thoughts, of your view of the world—in some way? Are you not participating in this research effort by critically reading it, accumulating the information contained within, deciding if it applies to your own experiences and understandings, asking in some small way if it applies to your life as a human being? And now the question pops into my mind, though I know its words were expressed by someone else and though I cannot recall who or where or when: How could it be otherwise? When one walks into a room, one becomes a part of it. Does the same thing happen when one enters a text? As I write, I am thinking of the teacher-participant experiences, including my own, and I am also thinking of you, the reader-participant. I
have invited you here, and if you are still reading, you have accepted the invitation. So are you also a part of this text? If you are not, why is it that I feel your presence?

But I digress (perhaps). For now I feel a need to return to what Huberman (1989) called "normative constructs enabling us to keep analytic order in our minds until we can handle more differentiation and complexity" (p. 53). In considering the issue of positioning the self in the research, I have also begun to consider what Richardson (1997) calls "the moral quagmire raised by postmodernism regarding authorship, authority, and appropriation of people's lives" (p. 123). At this point, I am considering the quagmire of appropriating some of their ideas. In doing so, I have expanded my point of view and experienced the partial collapsing of a few more dualities, such as self-other, researcher-researched (Richardson)—and maybe, my ideas—their ideas as well as writer-text—or, figuratively, photographer-photographed or director-play or sculptor-sculpted. For I have framed the picture, staged the research presentation, and shaped the content. But even though I have constructed this particular research project, I did not create this text by myself. Nor do I like this persistent feeling of hiding behind the research camera or remaining off-stage. In Chapter 5, I become an active member of the cast; my own experiences become a part of the drama; and I become one of the "teacher-participants" I am writing about, which I have been all along. Lincoln and Denzin (1994) wrote:

> The false division between the personal and the ethnographic self rests on the assumption that it is possible to write a text that does not bear the traces of its author. Of course, that is not possible. All texts are personal statements...
The goal is to return the author to the text openly in a way that does not squeeze out the object of study' (p. 576).

This development of more openness feels liberating. I neither have to feel apologetic for being a fellow teacher, nor feel vaguely guilty that I have appropriated other people's ideas without giving them proper credit, except in occasional citations. I am now hereby proclaiming the presence of all the shaping influences that have become an integral part of my thoughts in that sacrosanct area of the mind where I am "both product and producer" (Richardson, p. 2).

So there is plenty of room on the stage—for the teacher-participants, the previous researchers and writers, for the advisors of this research project, for me, even for you, the reader-participant. To you, I say, if you have felt outside the text up to this point, please step inside,
where you have been all along. You, too, have been influencing the development of this research.

Who am I to say all these things? I can tell you—because today I know who I am. I am the researcher-teacher-participant, and today I am speaking with my teacher-participant voice.

---

**Synthesis: Chapter 6**

The methods in this chapter are nearly the opposite of those used in the case study and cross-data analysis chapters. I say "nearly opposite" because computer-generated coding reports were helpful in retrieving data. Otherwise, I looked at how to combine beliefs, values, and concepts contributed by the teachers and by me as researcher-participant. Thus, after looking at the relevant coding categories, I again reviewed transcripts, especially those from the group collaboration day and self-interviews and including some of the earlier interview transcripts, especially when I remembered a conversation that seemed relevant. An initial organization of the data resulted in 24 single-spaced, 10-point, typed pages of relevant contributions for further synthesis. The synthesis process took 7 days of full-time concentration, and the result is rewarding: A foundation for reconceptualizing career wind-down and exit consisting of a philosophical statement and beliefs, 10 purposes for reconceptualization, and values; principles; guidelines; and roadblocks—a kind of informal, unofficial manifesto. Two of the teacher-participants assisted in the synthesis—either reading the 24-pages of data mentioned above, sharing reactions, and making recommendations, or reviewing the completed Chapter 6 at least twice and concurring that it provided a comprehensive statement which represented the spirit of the teachers' efforts and will hopefully be useful to others.

**Standards of Adequacy: Authority Claims**

**Crisis of Legitimation**

The methodological journey almost complete, it is time to present the standards of adequacy which make this research project an acceptable one—in other words, is this research valid, authentic, worthy of trust, and the like. Lincoln and Denzin (1994) call the current state of
affairs on the standards of adequacy issue a "crisis of legitimation" (p. 578). To me, it is also a personal paradigm identity crisis.

Of the interpretivist/constructivist research paradigm out of which I have operated, Guba and Lincoln (1994) write: "The issue of quality criteria in constructivism is nevertheless not well resolved, and further critique is needed" (p. 114). They also note that paradigm differences themselves are not well resolved: "A resolution of paradigm differences can occur only when a new paradigm emerges that is more informed and sophisticated than any existing one" (p. 116). Further, Guba and Lincoln state: "The basic beliefs of the paradigms are believed to be essentially contradictory" (p. 116). From my first qualitative research course, I have understood that inquirers need to be clear about which paradigm guides them in their research (e.g. Highland & Finley, 1996). I have attempted to remain within the interpretivist/constructivist paradigm during this research because it best captures my research stance—and it is also true that this paradigm has not fully accommodated the way this research has developed.

I find myself wandering outside the boundaries of my chosen paradigm. "Transformation" is a concept often applied to critical theorists, for example, yet transformations are the focus of my concluding chapter. Experimental writing genres and deconstructing the authorial position are linked to poststructural feminism—and I have ventured into that territory. The crisis of legitimation includes for me issues which stem from apparent differences in research paradigms, so I have attempted to be explicit about the emerging development of this research effort. In the end, this dissertation is a kind of hybrid, an example of a "poststructural interpretive social science" (Lincoln & Denzin, 1994, p. 578). Within that framework, I will now discuss legitimation.

**Legitimation Criteria: Validity Claims**

"The recognition of the plurality of ways to know the world is an invitation to open not a Pandora's box, but one's mind"  
(Eisner, 1991, p. 108)

The notion of crystallization recognizes a plurality of legitimate ways to both know and approach the world, and it has a good fit with this multi-method, multi-writing-genre, multi-voiced research project. Richardson (1994), who coined the term, writes: "...the central image (for 'validity') is the crystal, which combines symmetry and substance with an infinite variety of shapes, substances, transmutations, multidimensionalities, and angles of approach...What we see
depends on our angle of repose. Not triangulation, crystallization.” (Richardson, 1994, p. 522). Highten and Finley (1996) write: “Crystallization deconstructs the traditional idea of triangulation in that no single truth or fixed point exists” (p. 183)—a factor that makes crystallization appropriate in this research which adopted the epistemological view that multiple knowledges coexist and that knowledge is not a matter of finding single truths but of constructing them over time.

Further, from the beginning, I have approached the research aspects of this dissertation from numerous angles, each of which makes its own contribution toward building credibility, trustworthiness, and the like. The category of data analysis, for example, illustrates the multidimensionality of the research. The contributions of each of seven teacher-participants were approached rigorously and individually, each from a different angle, each telling his or her own story on his or her own terms. These stories were framed and discussed or analyzed based upon what emerged during work with the data; thus, a multiplicity of methods was the result, including computer coding and frequency counts, transactional reading and response, discussion of symbolic representations, experimental writing genres, sociopoetics, and a four-level symbolic analysis. Several analytical tools were utilized during the cross-data analysis as well, including classification techniques, the identification of contradictions and paradoxes, a search for the underlying message in actions, and comparisons with select previous research. In addition to analyzing the data, I also synthesized it. And I have also employed legitimation strategies based on the recommendations of other researchers.

Angles of Repose

One “angle of repose” was my own, ongoing self assessment was another method I employed to check the quality of the emerging work (See Eisner, 1991, p. 112). Schumacher and McMillan (1993) have generated detailed guidelines for evaluating the quality of qualitative research, including questions to ask for a review of the literature, research design, and ethnographic methodology in order to meet their standards of adequacy. During the course of the research, I have been aware of these guidelines and have performed rather systematic self assessments of the developing work based on their sample questions, discarding those which don’t fit my research design—for example, when Schumacher and McMillan refer to “days in the field” (p. 401) or “How long was the field residence?” (p. 437). However, questions such as “Were multiple data collection strategies recognized?” (p. 437), “Does the (literature) review critically
evaluate previous findings and studies...?" (p. 53), or "Are multiple perspectives presented?" (p. 68) were helpful, especially at the beginning of the study. Later, Marshall and Rossman's (1995) 20 criteria for assessing trustworthiness and value in qualitative research (pp. 145-146) provided another, more sophisticated method of self checking.

Eisner's (1991) "angle of repose" includes structural corroboration as a factor in legitimizing research. He defines structural corroboration as "a means through which multiple types of data are related to each other to support or contradict (an) interpretation..." (p. 110). In this research design, types of data include individual, group, and self interviews; symbolic representations; journals; various artifacts; response data; scholarly literature and references; letters and reports published in the media; telephone enrichment interviews; my own documented personal experiences; and an observation of a retirement banquet. In addition, the data were collected over a period of more than one year, the perceptions of the teacher-participants and me modifying and deepening during that time period. Further, the study was based upon multiple cases and multiple teacher-participants.

In the sense of member checks and outside readers (seven participating outside readers, including my major advisor), consensual validation (Eisner) is another technique I used to corroborate data. Teacher-participants were given self profiles based on the interview data and asked to verify them for accuracy of statements, intent, and relevant personal information. Each teacher was also given the completed version of his or her case study and discussion and asked for input and verification. Five of the teachers corrected minor inaccuracies, added new information, or otherwise suggested modification for clarity; this feedback was used when making final revisions of the text. Two of the teachers corroborated the text without modifications. In addition, member checks were used for the text of Chapter 6; two of the teachers assisted in that validation. Outside readers played "devil's advocate" (Marshall & Rossman, 1995, p. 145), critically questioning analyses, interpretations, research methods, and meaning, as well as offering response data.

Referential adequacy, Eisner's third category for credible research, will be judged by the readers of the final document. Eisner writes: "...work is referentially adequate when readers are able to see what they would have missed without the critic's observations" (p. 114). The key question in this last category is does the work enlarge understanding? (p. 113).
Altheide and Johnson (1994) offer another "angle of repose" when they observe that "few researchers give reflective accounts of their research problems and experiences" (p. 494) and suggest that doing so helps to increase confidence in the work:

...our work and that of many others suggests that the more a reader (audience member) can engage in a symbolic dialogue with the author about a host of routinely encountered problems that compromise ethnographic work, the more our confidence increases. Good ethnographies increase our confidence in the findings, interpretations, and accounts offered (p. 494).

Such has been my intent when writing this methodology chapter, that is, to trace the methodological journey in great detail, to be explicit about developments along the way, to include a reflexive account of my resolutions to or at least my struggles with significant research problems I encountered—such as being overwhelmed with the amount of data collected, the difficulties in locating and making sense of data analysis strategies, the recurring problem of how to position the self, the concern of how to give credit to the teacher-participants for their enormous influence on and contributions to the development of the text, even my unease when I sensed that I was venturing out of my research paradigm. All of these efforts have been an attempt to take the reader along on the journey and to enable the reader to understand how this researcher got from one place to another. Altheide and Johnson write: "Good ethnographies show the hand of the ethnographer. The effort may not always be successful, but there should be clear 'tracks' indicating the attempt has been made" (p. 493). There are tracks here for those who are interested and tracks for those who may want to read the literature which informed the research methods or to experiment with these research methods themselves.

**Paradigm Travelogue**

Since I have granted myself a passport to travel to foreign paradigms while a citizen of my interpretivist/constructivist homeland, any standards of legitimation for this research project need to include, it seems to me, some of those standards from all the paradigms visited—a kind of "cross-cultural"-paradigmatic strategy for validation. This attempt coincides with what Lincoln and Denzin call the "The Fifth Moment" (p. 575), the title of their closing chapter in *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). The fifth moment is the present which recognizes two tensions in the field among the constructed research paradigms—"a broad, interpretive, postmodern, feminist, and critical sensitivity (and)...more narrowly defined positivist, post-
positivist, humanistic, and naturalistic conceptions” (p. 576). Further, they note, all contributors to the handbook have attempted to locate themselves in the present moment by discussing their topics in relation to previous paradigmatic “formulations” (p. 576). This last part of the discussion of legitimation will borrow from the concept of crystallization while viewing the epistemological validity of this research project at the present moment by looking at validity criteria from the different angles of repose offered by differently constructed research paradigms—thus reinforcing and demonstrating the belief that there is no single truth or fixed point, even in criteria for legitimation. Epistemological validity refers to “...the text’s authority...established through recourse to a set of rules concerning knowledge, its production, and representation” (Lincoln & Denzin, p. 578). The sources of the criteria I will use for evaluating the quality or soundness of research within each paradigm are Guba and Lincoln (1994), Highlen and Finley (1996), and Marshall and Rossman (1995).

Both Highlen and Finley (1996) and Marshall and Rossman (1995) acknowledge criteria developed by Lincoln and Guba for assessing the “truth value” or “trustworthiness” of interpretivist/constructivist research: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility, according to Marshall and Rossman (1995) means that “…in-depth description showing the complexities of variables and interactions will be so embedded with data derived from the setting that it cannot help but be valid. Within the parameters of that setting, population, and theoretical framework, the research will be valid” (p. 143). Such complexities have been embedded with data in this research project. Prolonged engagement, persistence, member checks, the monitoring of researcher progressive subjectivity, and looking for exceptions among teacher-participants are also features of credibility which have been a part of this project (Highlen & Finley, 1996).

Thick description (Highlen & Finley), multiple cases, multiple participants, and multiple data gathering methods are present in this research and address transferability or “the study’s usefulness for other settings” (Marshall & Rossman, p. 144), including, maybe, other fields. This study demonstrates dependability by accounting for changing conditions in the inquiry process as they unfold during the research. Confirmability is demonstrated in this study by showing how the data led to implications drawn in the study and by multiple records kept during the research which could be used for research audits.
In addition, the authenticity criteria developed by Guba and Lincoln as cited in Highlen and Finley (p. 180) apply to the legitimization of this research: an attempt at fairness when honoring the different constructions of the teacher-participants; an elaboration of both the teachers’ and researcher’s personal constructions for ontological authenticity, educative authenticity, as when collaborators share their constructions with each other; catalytic authenticity as in the transformational learning evidenced by teacher-participants; and tactical authenticity, as evidenced in the teachers’ contributions to reconceptualizing the last 3-5 years of the teaching career. Within this interpretivist/constructivist paradigm, as noted earlier, there is no sense of resolution regarding these standards. Guba and Lincoln (1994) recommend further critique of them; to me, that recommendation also becomes a springboard for looking at the criteria used within critical and poststructural approaches.

The facets of this research which give it a relationship to critical theory are its multivocality, its collaborative component, and the fact that it is “grounded in the lived experience of participants” (Highlen & Finley, 1996, p. 180). While the research does not focus on ethnic or gender elements, a hallmark of critical theory, it does take into account social, political, economic, and cultural elements. Further, the research encourages others to take more notice of what have long been two ignored career stages—career wind-down and exit—and in that sense, perhaps, it “acts to erode....misapprehensions” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 114). The last criterion in this paradigm is well met by the research project in the last three chapters of the dissertation: the providing of “a stimulus to action, that is, to the transformation of the existing structure” (p. 114).

Some of the elements of this research which make it poststructural are its deconstructive passages (the retirement banquet, the operations of the personnel office at the microlevel), its reflexivity (of the researcher accounts), its use of polyvocality, its use of experimental writing genres, its breaking down of dualities (Richardson, 1997), and its attempts to be emancipatory not only for teachers but for others in society. As such, I believe that it meets aspects of most of the criteria for goodness as reported by Highlen and Finley (1996): ironic validity, especially in the identification of paradoxes which reveal contradictory and ironic versions of reality; neopragmatic validity, as when teacher-participant conversations enter the text without the presence of the researcher or when teacher interpretations appear in the text, destabilizing the researcher's privileged place as master of knowledge; rhizomatic validity, as heard in the nonlinear presentation
of multiple voices which destabilize authority from within—not only in “The Stories of Tess” and “Felicia’s Story,” but in the boldfaced words of the teachers in Chapter 5 which introduce various motifs and topics; and situated validity which privileges experimental writing genres, a feminist influence.

I have resolved my own personal paradigmatic identity crisis for the time being by trying to honor and acknowledge the multiple voices of different paradigms within myself and within this dissertation and by meeting their various constructed criteria for legitimation as the criteria apply to various parts of this research project. I feel like Mike Rose (1989) must have felt when he wrote in his introduction to Lives on the Boundary, explaining his attempt to present “the brains as well as the heart” (p. xi) of his message by mixing vignette, commentary, reflection, and analysis together instead of writing straightforward exposition. Rose said: “I didn’t know how else to get it right” (p. xii).

**The End of the Methodology Story, the End of a Journey**

The writing of this chapter began two years ago, developing along with other parts of the dissertation. I have the sense of completing a very long journey—an odyssey, actually. Just now I’m feeling a little tired and a little relieved, and if truth be known, a little amazed—amazed at the complexity of venturing into the world of research methodology, of applying the theories of research to the practice of research, of finding what appears to be solid ground only to find it shifting before me, of revisiting the massive amount of research literature to find what earlier explorers have recorded, and finally, of pausing again and again to look at the terrain with my own eyes and to ask: What is going on here? Demanding, challenging, engrossing, fascinating—Doing research is all of that. For now, however, it’s time to fold up the road map, time to stop for awhile. Before I rest, I want to list the limitations of the study. I want the reader to know about them, and I don’t want them to interrupt the flow in the remaining chapters.

**Limitations of the Study**

1. This is one specific, locally-situated study undertaken by one specific researcher from 1995 to 1997—the interpretations apply, if at all, to the participating teachers in one urban school system and are not intended to apply to other urban school systems. Neither does the study constitute a permanent or comprehensive record of the teachers’ perceptions or needs.
2. The teacher-participants, only seven in number, consist of six females and one male, all Caucasian, all now 50 years of age or older. This study looks neither at gender issues nor minority populations nor at teachers in age groups other than those specified.

3. The methods may be partially transferable though they—and the interpretation of the data—are not generalizable.

4. The interpretation of the data is tentative, one of many possible responses, a filtered point of view.

5. This study, like any qualitative study, is limited by the intuition, skill, acuity, and interpretive ability of the researcher at this point in time (Highlen & Finley, 1996; Patton, 1990; Schumacher & McMillan, 1993)—and probably by the intuition, skill, acuity, and interpretive abilities of those who read it, as well as by the time available for doing so.

6. The study is limited by attitudes, perceptions, practices, and beliefs in the zeitgeist at the current historical moment as well as by the perimeters and parameters which are specifically mentioned throughout this document.

7. The study is limited by current conceptions available in the research literature for guiding the researcher and by the researcher's ability to comprehend them and/or to create viable alternatives to them.

8. Even the limitations on this page are limited by the researcher's ability to identify them during the course of the inquiry process; otherwise, they are potentially limitless—as are the recommendations at the end of the study.
CHAPTER 4

AN EXTENSION OF AWARENESS: A SOCIOCULTURAL STORY ANALYSIS UTILIZING MULTIPLE WRITING MODES

Introduction

In the following pages, you, the reader, will be entering the lives of seven English teachers who speak of their experiences at the present historical moment as it intersects with the close of their careers in urban secondary schools. Although their stories are autobiographical, replete with details of everyday life in a public world, they are also cultural stories about their chosen profession. Taken individually or as a whole, their stories form a "collective story" or narrative which, in the words of Richardson (1997):

...displays an individual’s story by narrativizing the experiences of the social category to which the individual belongs...Although the narrative is about a category of people, the individual response to the well-told collective story is, "That’s my story. I am not alone" (pp. 32-33).

Some of the early readers of these stories and the discussions following them—primarily teachers and professors—have, in fact, responded to them with words such as, “Now I don’t feel so alone” and “These are my concerns, too, you know” or “I really identify with these teachers.” Richardson wrote:

People do not even have to know each other for the social identification to take hold. By emotionally binding people together who have had the same experiences, whether in touch with each other or not, the collective story overcomes some of the isolation and alienation of contemporary life. It provides a sociological community, the linking of separate individuals into a shared consciousness...and therewith, the possibility of societal transformation (p. 33).

The following stories and discussions are dedicated to that possibility, if only in a small portion of society. Gruenfeld (1997), in his best-selling novel The Halls of Justice captured the spirit of the notion in a recounting of some advice from a fictional colleague:

He said that the best that most ordinary people could do to make the world better was not to go after the whole planet at once but to make sure they did as much as they could in their own little corner of it (p. 475).
Each teacher-participant’s story contains its own emphasis or focus, adding a dimension to the collective story. The stories are presented in a simple linear order beginning with those who continue to be fully immersed in their careers as they approach the close of them to those at the moment of retirement to those who have moved beyond their careers and have achieved some emotional and intellectual distance from them. I chose this order of presentation not only for its simplicity but because, as your reading of them will illustrate, the perspectives of the teachers move from the concrete to the abstract—the further the distance from the career, the more abstract the perspective.

Each story begins with a literary device which I call the “intercalary introduction,” one page which attempts to capture an essential theme and which I discuss in the methodology chapter. These intercalary introductions are modeled after the intercalary chapters created by John Steinbeck (1939) in *The Grapes of Wrath*. Steinbeck used these chapters to provide historical background and data which enlarged the fictional setting of the Joad family as they journeyed from the dust bowl of Oklahoma to what they hoped was a better life in California. My intercalary pages serve both to bring each story in focus for the reader and to provide an analytical tool for me as researcher and writer. Lather and Smithies (1995) use “inter-chapters” or “inter-texts” which “serve as both bridges and breathers” (p. xix); the intercalary introductions are intended to serve those purposes as well. Following these one-page introductions is each person’s “story” which is continued in a discussion/analysis section.

The first story is Lee Anne’s. Hers is the only example in my study of a teacher closing her career with the opportunity for actively synthesizing her decades of career experiences and disseminating them in a generative way extending beyond the doors of an individual classroom. Her increased opportunities for making a contribution have caused her to postpone naming a specific retirement date whereas, at our initial interview, Lee Anne thought she might retire upon reaching eligibility. Lee Anne’s story is entitled “The Way It’s Supposed To Be” because it provides one model of alternative teacher utilization during what has been identified as a “wind-down” stage (McDonnell & Burke, 1992) in the career life of a teacher. “The Way it’s Supposed to Be” is not the way it usually is.

Maxine’s story, “Letting Go of a Teaching Career,” describes her own style of ending a meaningful part of her life, a life which has included a classroom which she calls “my home away
from home." Of the seven teachers in this study, Maxine is the only one who has spent her entire career teaching middle and junior high school students. With her wry sense of humor, she shares her thoughts about choosing to teach English in urban middle schools:

Sometimes I think: It's like I asked somebody, what's the hardest course to teach? and they said, well probably reading or writing, something like that. So I said, well, what level would be hardest? and they said, probably middle school; the kids are crazy. I continue: What kind of school is the hardest? Well, probably an inner city public school. So I say: I'll take that!...like some kind of masochistic idiot...Oh, sign me up!

Maxine's sense of humor has served her well during her tenure with middle school students whom, she says, "I grew inordinately fond of." As she sees her career moving toward closure, she describes her method of dealing with it as "not just weaning yourself away...not just slowing down...." She compares approaching career end to driving an automobile at maximum speed: "When you see that the end is in sight, you'd better start applying the brakes." And so she has been consciously "slowing down" on her involvements outside the classroom by relinquishing her extra responsibilities—"letting go of one thing at a time," while continuing to contribute to the school in which she works. Maxine's story is about the complexities of attempting a gentle release within an expanding frame of awareness.

"The Teacher Glows/She Does Not Burn/She Gives a Lovely Light" is the title which captures Betty's story of a teacher who is "absolutely not burned out." She "just can't quite grasp" that her career in schools is coming to an end, a fact made more poignant by her observation: "I've spent my whole life in schools." Betty has no shortage of ideas for improving urban school systems from "We need professional educators on boards of education" to "identifying people who have skills that could be better utilized." She is an example of a "constructivist" teacher (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986) who experiences herself as a creator of knowledge and who exemplifies a morality of caring.

In Vanessa's story, "The Ritual of the Banquet," retirement rituals—and the lack of them—are highlighted. Vanessa experienced at the end of her career what Watzlawick wrote about in 1967, the year she began to teach:

It is probably one of the basic illnesses of modern time that in our left-hemispheric hubris we have banished ritual from our lives. For while we apparently succeeded in performing this excision, the age-old longing for the mystery of rituals remains unfulfilled and...contributes to an
Vanessa encountered the “empty vessels” of a system whose minimal acknowledgment of its retiring teachers via form letters evokes Joseph Campbell’s words in *Myths to Live By* (1972). Campbell called the practice of going through the motions via meaningless form “dry and hard, authoritarian and cold...a disaster, ritual and decorum being the structuring forms of all civilization” (pp. 50-51).

“Heart as Essence” is the story of Nathan, a dynamic, highly evolved teacher whose career had an “abrupt and unforeseeable end” due to emergency coronary triple-bypass surgery. Nathan’s sudden retirement provided him with time to reflect deeply about his career in an urban school system; his willingness to share deep feelings and his command of the language adds immensely to the richness of the collective story. He said of his journal entries for this research: “I didn’t face anything new, but I did bring (my thoughts) into such sharp focus that my own words flew back to my mind with talons and have clawed me ever since.” One of Nathan’s basic beliefs is that people need to make decisions and to act with an awareness that people are connected to each other, that what one human being does affects all others. To view teachers—and others—essentially as commodities which merely serve a need and can be easily replaced is to say, “It is perfectly all right for you, whoever you are, to be depersonalized right to the end of your working life.” Nathan’s story is about organic systems and about what happens when they bypass the heart.

Tess’s Story is told in a series of poems—hers and mine. “Pencilling It In” serves as the intercalary introduction and sets the tone for “The Stories of Tess: A Sociopoetics.” Richardson (1997) calls “A ‘socio-poetics’...both framework and method for representing the sociological” (p. 144) and it is Richardson’s work which I have used as both inspiration and foundation for presenting the contributions of Tess. Four of the poems (mine) are created verbatim from interview transcripts and journal entries written by Tess: “One Little Remark,” “Do You See What I’m Saying?” “The Holly and the Ivy: A Song of Many Voices,” and “Choice: A Journal Entry (21 May 1996).” I modeled my method for creating these poems from Richardson’s pioneering method, selecting actual words and phrases from transcripts and building upon:
That these poems did recreate conversations with Tess I judge solely on Tess’s response to hearing them. She said with some enthusiasm, “It’s like listening to yourself on a tape recorder.” Five of the poems were written by Tess, a teacher-poet. “Retirement” was written as Tess’s symbolic representation for this research project; the others were written at various points during her career as an English teacher. In the discussion section, the three major motifs identified in Tess’s transcripts are elaborated: The relationship of energy and age during a teaching career; innovation and creativity; and alternative ideas for career wind-down.

Felicia’s intercalary introduction, entitled “Object Lesson: Patterns,” is a fictional representation—based on transcripts and conversations—of Felicia in a classroom. “InnisWood Metro Garden, Volunteer’s Log,” less than two pages in length, is Felicia’s metaphorical story of her career in education. The discussion of Felicia’s story is based on a four-level symbolic analysis: the literal, the tropological or figurative, the allegorical, and the anagogical or universal/spiritual (Frye, Baker, & Perkins, 1985). Of the seven stories in this chapter, Felicia’s is the most abstract, and its analysis, perhaps, the most complex. Suffice it so say that reading it allows one to touch the intangible, to hold for a moment what is usually elusive.

The intercalary introductions, story presentations, and discussions took more than five months to conceptualize, analyze, and create in written form. Each teacher’s introduction, story, and discussion is an entity. When reading, I recommend at least a brief pause at the end of each discussion, like a refreshing break along the banks of a stream when on a long journey, or like cleansing the palate and pacing oneself between the separate courses of a seven-course meal—all the better for appreciation and digestion.
The Way It's Supposed To Be: Introduction to Lee Anne's Story

She began her teaching career in an urban high school in 1968, young, eager, dedicated. At the school she was assigned to, 25 other first-year teachers (What happened to them?) shared the newness. These teachers bonded in and out of school. For seven or eight years, they supported each other, shared the day's teaching concerns over lunch or dinner, were "best friends, went to Europe together, did everything together." Days passed swiftly. Lee Anne remembers those times as a great way to begin her teaching career.

Months and years continued to flow. Time filled with teaching and serving as department chair, working with student teachers—then graduate school and publishing her writing (How did she find the time?) Lee Anne joined professional associations, conducted writing instruction workshops, served on summer curriculum writing teams led by an inspirational language arts coordinator. She served as a university consultant; she chaired a textbook selection committee.

Twenty years into her teaching career (Where did the years go?), Lee Anne's contributions continued: University supervisor of student teachers; adjunct university faculty member; curriculum writer; course of study developer; state and national workshop presenter; regional accrediting association evaluator; honored scholar. For awhile, she became a teacher on special assignment, working with teachers new to the system and assisting experienced teachers.

Back in the classroom at an urban high school, Lee Anne again served as department chair, as faculty representative for her local education association, and as participant in a teacher appraisal pilot program. During the current school year, she taught seniors and a creative writing workshop before again joining those teachers on special assignment who assist other teachers.

Throughout these decades of professional service (Where did the decades go?), Lee Anne has remained devoted to her students and classroom teaching—her top priorities.

After one more school year, Lee Anne will be eligible for retirement (Where will she go?) In all likelihood, she will retire while sharing the benefits of her professional expertise with many teachers in her system, providing an affirming model of career wind-down, utilizing her rich and diverse experiences to benefit the profession—thecoically, the way it is supposed to be, or in the words of the students of James Herndon (1968), whose book about first-year teaching was in its seventh printing the year Lee Anne began her career, "the way it spozed to be."

"A brief history of Lee Anne's professional activities as an educator in an urban school system.
Coffee and Conversation: Lee Anne’s Story

We are meeting in a coffee house where a machine grinds fresh coffee beans and whips milk in the background. Before we are seated, Lee Anne begins to talk about teaching. Her voice conveys a passion for her work; her words transport me into her world:

Most of us have a big sort of file in our heads where we put things all the time. I look up and I see that map, “Countries of the World,” and I think about it in terms of a classroom. Could it be involved in something? I can’t help it, and I can’t imagine not thinking that way.

We find a seat near a window, away from the incessant grinding and whirring. Lee Anne says that she is either teaching or thinking about teaching almost all the time, “even when I’m asleep.”

Year after year, she tries new ideas in her classroom and is “always looking” for more. “You have to juggle so many things when you’re teaching,” she says, “and think about so many things at one time.” Some people want to talk about teaching by category—curriculum, lesson plans, classroom management—“like you can separate those things...if you’re half a teacher, those things are all going on at the same time, and that is very, very demanding, always.”

She sips her coffee:

I can’t imagine being a teacher who didn’t care about every aspect of what you are doing...My first month of teaching, I remember thinking: I can’t do this job. I worked until midnight or 1:00 every morning trying to keep up. Now the emotional and physical demands are very different, but they’re still huge....

She talks of focusing on “tasks, tasks, tasks, tasks, tasks, and when those tasks are done, I’m thinking about next year’s tasks, tasks, tasks....” She talks about classes that have “good chemistry” and the pleasures of working with them—“where there is a kind of electricity and everyone is aware of it...That’s the best when it works and becomes something worthwhile and valuable...You know, I never thought of doing anything else, once I became a teacher.”

These feelings make it difficult for Lee Anne to think about retirement a few short years away “because I’ll be leaving behind a very important part of my life.” She looks out the window, stares up at the sky, and considers another rewarding aspect of teaching: “On those occasions when you get personal feedback as a teacher, when a kid says to you: ‘I’m going to do this because of you...When that happens, for me, it’s worth everything...everything.”
When she makes eye contact again, her mind is focused on a present concern—the difficulty of reaching today’s students and the lack of support for doing that in her school system:

"For example, people who get jobs like teachers on special assignment, and I’ve been one, so I have a sense of what that is about. I see people in the classroom, for the most part, working their brains out. Then I see these other people who seem to be spinning in their own orbits at various levels. They’re busy all day, and they work hard and they mean well, but all that has precious little to do with what’s going on in the classroom...."

Lee Anne believes that even if teachers are working for the district in non-teaching assignments that they should continue to teach a few classes while doing so both in order to retain their credibility and because many of them are “dynamite classroom teachers, and I think that’s where they belong—in school buildings where they can reach kids and provide leadership by example to other teachers.” To Lee Anne, “The only place to save our district is in the classroom.”

She acknowledges the difficulty as a teacher of retaining respect in the system: “If you’re still in the classroom after “x” number of years, it’s like you haven’t been promoted, a real negative sort of image.” Still, to Lee Anne, the joys of teaching outweigh the reduced stress of out-of-classroom jobs: “Those people spend all of their time going to meetings” and in completing paperwork to justify their jobs. Lee Anne thinks that once teachers leave the classroom, “...people forget. It doesn’t take very long to forget what it’s like to be a classroom teacher.”

Administrators also fall into the “whole milieu of those people in their own orbits,” many of whom do not consult teachers, even when an administrator is new to a building. Another spin on the respect issue comes from other teachers: “Most teachers at the schools don’t even value the expertise of their colleagues....We don’t value our own expertise even though we value it more than anyone else...That’s a really sad commentary.” And in the system at large, teacher sagacity is all but ignored:

I may be missing a big chunk here, but I don’t see anything....I’d be really surprised if a fellow teacher said: “Oh yeah, I feel really valued. They call for my expertise all the time.” I’d be astonished!

She reminisces of a time in her school system when English teacher expertise was valued by an especially effective system-wide coordinator who organized summer course design and curriculum writing teams, who made it a point to tap creative talents, who provided multiple opportunities throughout the school year for mutual support for English teachers:
I became a part of that Language Arts network...and I felt what it meant to be valued for my practices and my ideas. It was wonderful....Those summer teaching teams--I did them for years and years--were stimulating....
I gave up too much time for them, I know, but I never regretted one minute of it. The whole experience made me confident about what I had learned about teaching.

Lee Anne is both angry and sad as she continues to recall the past, especially being the chair of a curriculum revision committee a decade ago during “the famous curriculum wars” under a former superintendent. Because teachers disagreed with “the superintendent’s henchwoman,” a consultant brought in from another city, they found themselves engaged in ideological battles, experiencing intimidation and “veiled threats.” As Lee Anne wrote in her journal a year after our first interview:

Now I've made myself start thinking about that whole era again. I really don't like to go there in my thoughts, because it's such an ugly time to me...Although I think the evil empire crumbled without destroying us completely, we were badly shaken, and Language Arts suffered most because there was an obvious effort to dismantle our support system...
It's been rough for those of us who had been around long enough to know what we've lost, but it's been much rougher for the younger teachers who have had little or no leadership and support. There have been new curriculum materials, really, for ten years or so, and it's been a real loss to the system...
What a help they were. What a pity for younger teachers not to have had them at all.

In fact, Lee Anne says that she has seen “really strong young teachers” come and go in the last ten years for lack of leadership and support: “We just don’t utilize our human strengths very well. They don’t know who you are from one year to the next downtown.” For Lee Anne, the most frustrating part of her job is working in a system which:

...doesn’t have a clue where it’s going. To look for leadership in our system is a misnomer. We don’t have any. As I said, there has even been a diabolical attempt to dismantle some of the leadership we did have...
It’s the system that has me so disgusted.

While non-practicing teachers in the system, including administrators, continue in their own spheres, Lee Anne would like to see more of their attention revolving around the nucleus of the classroom:

In our present system, how is it possible to reach 36 kids at one time, kids who learn in different ways....kids who don't have a work ethic, kids who don’t see any value in education, even to look at it and see it as something to go through to get someplace else...How is it possible to reach a tenth grade girl I have who has two kids, lives in subsidized housing that costs her 26 dollars a month, gets free child care, and
many other benefits? She thinks she is independent. She'll never get through high school. She'll never get off of some kind of public assistance; she doesn't even know there is something else out there....

These are the kinds of things that need more attention. Lee Anne continues:

We don't know what in the world we're going to do with our schools, certainly the public schools, certainly the urban public schools who, even with all the attention on them, have more serious problems than anybody really has given voice to....An unresolved question to me is What in the hell do I do in terms of restructuring what it takes to be a teacher, in terms of making it possible to teach for 30 years? I started in 1968. I don't see how somebody who started in 1995 could go through 30 years.

I want to know why. Lee Anne responds:

Because it's just too hard. It becomes more difficult all the time. Just the kinds of things we've been talking about, the lack of support systems. I don't see anybody lasting....I think they'll be lucky to last ten years. I don't know how to address these issues. I think nobody has a clue where we're going--maybe in your own classroom, but bigger than that, I don't think anybody knows--certainly not the people downtown.

I ask Lee Anne what she would like to contribute to the profession before she retires, what educational problems in her school system she would like to address. She doesn't respond, and so I'm not sure she hears my question. Then she looks at me: "I found myself thinking, staring off, instead of looking at you--but I'm thinking, I'm thinking...." Finally, she says.

I don't know. And the reason I say I don't know is that I don't know. But in our system right now, what I see happening is sort of like hanging stained glass windows in a condemned building. To isolate a problem or two at this point seems to me almost ludicrous....

Within a few minutes, however, Lee Anne identifies several areas of interest. One thing she would like to pursue, if more time were available, is "a good study of humor because I'm concerned about the things we laugh at in our society. Some of our laughter is cruel." Another is looking more closely at how to reach kids who currently get overlooked in crowded classrooms. But the main thing she would like to do is "revise the entire curriculum" with other colleagues:

I would want to revise the high school curriculum so it's not broken up into discrete little units so that teachers aren't compartmentalized and students aren't compartmentalized by subject matter or necessarily by age. I would want to get rid of meaningless restrictions, add stimulating literature, think more about what an urban school system ought to be.... Our system has gone backwards, but it doesn't have to be that way.
We run out of coffee and time. I ask Lee Anne to speak about her retirement feelings before we leave. She says:

One retiree in my building said over and over that she would get to enjoy August again, which I thought was real telling--because most of the career teachers I know take June to come down from school, and then in August, get keyed back up again. That's when I find myself having anxiety dreams...and when you're retired, you get Sunday night back, too.

She notes the way her system recognizes retirees in a perfunctory manner and says:

I have no illusions about being missed by the system. Look at the way the system hires people. They look for someone with no experience so they can pay them less. That tells you how much they value your experience. They don't.

Retirement thoughts are infrequent but they occur more often to Lee Anne than they used to. Lee Anne says, "I think about retiring more when I get really tired and worn out. There have been times the last two years when I got to the spring and thought: I actually don't know if I'll get through this year."

As we leave the coffee house, Lee Anne expresses some anxiety about retirement:

"Most of the career teachers I know have a great sense of themselves as teachers, and when that self is gone, it's hard to know what will be left...I wonder who I'll be when I'm not a teacher any more."

In a later interview and in her journals, Lee Anne had more to say. Approaching her 29th year of teaching, Lee Anne wrote:

I think kids expect two things of their teachers: they must know their subject matter and they must enjoy being with young people...I know I will begin next year with the hope that it will be the year when I can be certain that my students will all learn and that I won't let any of them down. I don't expect much from this system any more. I just hope that it holds on for two more years....

On improving teacher recognition and sense of career advancement, she said:

I think that career demarcations make a lot of sense so that you're not just looking at this long, unbroken stretch of 30 years...This sounds really corny, but I would like to see some sort of physical representation of where you are in your career. You think of military careers where people have a chest full of medals. I think I should have a chest full of medals so people can see what I've accomplished during my career.
Of her own retirement, Lee Ann wrote:

I think retirement will be tougher for me than for some people because I get so much from my job...I think I'll always think of myself as an English teacher...thinking about the system during our interviews has made me more aware of how angry I am. It might not be good to be angry, but it's good to know about it. It's reinforced something that I knew before, and that is how much I care, and that is, again, because of how important my job is to me.

Of the system's treatment of retiring teachers, she said:

It's the failure of a system who can replace you with somebody else...My concern is that teachers are not valued in terms of what they do every day, and nobody gives a damn about how hard they work...There is never any record or statement of what you contributed of value to the system. You go. That's all. You just fade away.

The Significance of Lee Anne's Story: A Composition

The Solid meaning of life is always the same eternal thing—the marriage, namely, of some unfantastical ideal, however special, with some fidelity, courage, and endurance; with some man's or woman's pains....”

William James (1892)

Lee Anne's focus throughout her career has been on the work of the classroom—reaching the students she has been charged with teaching. To that end, she has been a vigilant collector of materials, ideas, and knowledge as well as a generator of them. She has entered battles, as during the "curriculum wars," to ensure both meaningful and high quality literature in her school system and has invested her salary in classroom sets of novels for her students. She has also been devoted to the improvement of student writing as evidenced by the following: her design of writing courses with innovative methods; her development of materials to teach writing and to improve writing instruction for the school system; her conducting composition workshops for other teachers; her graduate work resulting in her increased knowledge of the writing process; and her own personal writing, some of which was published in a composition textbook subsequently adopted by her school system. This discussion, then, suggested by some of Lee Anne's contributions, will be framed within the formal types of writing and methods of idea development which English teachers present to their students.
Personal Writing: A Bridge Into a Life

Personal writing, perhaps the least formal kind of writing taught in schools, provides a way to engage students in the writing process and to generate ideas for more formal papers. It is also viewed as a bridge into the life of the writer (Memering & O'Hara, 1984, p. 30). Lee Anne's personal journal writing provided such a bridge during this research, as in the following excerpt about her 28th year in the classroom:

...The other salient feature of this year has been my having four preparations. I have always had this feeling that I can march in and do about anything, but four preps has been my limit. It has been really hard for me to keep up... (and I've) been awakening at four a.m. every morning since spring break, this morning thinking about art work for the (literary) magazine... Our department chairperson is retiring this year, and I will take over that responsibility for next year. So I guess that for all my talk about retirement, I still want to be involved right up until the last minute.

In addition, Lee Anne's personal writing evokes the words of John Mayher (1990), a professor and author of Uncommon Sense, who said that a major learning experience that students "ought to be getting in school (is) contact with teachers' minds and hearts... (teachers who) read and write with power and acumen, who care about the world they live in and its problems,... who are in short, learners themselves..." (p. 270). The following is an excerpt from Lee Anne's personal writing which was made available to her students. The subject is one they can identify with—a visit to a dentist's office:

Halfway through last summer's People magazine, I am pulled to consciousness when the smiling one asks, "Do you want to come back now?" in a monumental dedication to self-restraint and my mother's etiquette lessons, I don't answer... Once again I am invited— I react as if .357 magnums are trained on me—and slide meekly onto the long, tan chaise, a curious mix of hair salon furniture and electric chair... With a vacuum tube hanging from my mouth, I recite the last stanza of "Thanatopsis" in a final attempt at death with dignity....

From reading the above passage, one can come in contact with Lee Anne's mind and heart as well as be exposed to a model of powerful humorous writing. Most of Lee Anne's writing and talking during my research, however, focused on problems in the educational world she continues to care so much about. James Herndon (1966) defined a problem as "something which is not supposed to happen, something which happens all the time of course, or it wouldn't be a 'problem'" (p. 18). The problems Lee Anne talked about were not one-time occurrences. They happened frequently, or in Herndon's words, almost "all the time."
Throughout her interviews, Lee Anne referred to school and system-wide administrators, most of whom were not as effective as she had assumed and hoped they would be when she began her career. During at least the last decade, she has worked with administrators who are "hard headed" or "out of their element" or "patronizing." Of the many teachers who become administrators, she said:

There has always been this perception that principals are people who wanted to get out of the classroom, who were ineffective there in the first place, and I think that's true now more than it ever has been...I find it remarkable that some of the principals we've had these last years ever got out of high school as students, let alone that they're acting as administrators....

And in her personal writing, her journal, Lee Anne wrote of a recent experience on a search committee interview team which "has given me a close-up look at some administrators I hadn't known before." Of these administrators, she wrote:

1. Administrators seem to think they belong to a select club. I see them as people who have made different choices than I have, and that's it. I give them no credit because they are in the positions they are. When I see them in action in a meeting or wherever, I make a judgment based on that.
2. Many of them do see themselves as superior to the lowly teacher. One woman whom we interviewed for a principalship was visibly shaken to learn that there were teachers on her interview committee. She could not hide her discomfort at all. She looked absurd to me....

Lee Anne marveled at the transformation of those once "lowly teachers" who find themselves wearing the shoes of administrators and who seem to forget the hard work and contributions of those who remain in the classroom, hard work that they themselves supposedly were engaged in. How is it possible, she wondered, that they who should well know the challenges involved in reaching students in the classroom, don't "look at serious teachers and think: Ah, these people have something to offer." Finally, Lee Anne said, "I resent working with people who don't have any respect for me."

**Other Kinds of Writing: Developing Ideas**

Beyond the above examples of personal writing are more formal kinds of informative writing and methods of development taught in secondary and college composition classrooms, including Lee Anne's. Their mastery results in an increased repertoire of approaches for the expository writer who may combine many methods of development within a single piece of writing—such as in this discussion of Lee Anne's story, which is itself a form of analysis.
The introduction to Lee Anne's story ("The Way It's Supposed To Be") is a kind of process writing which broadly traces many of the professional activities she engaged in as her career developed. Within the personal writing section above, developing an idea by definition is evidenced as when Lee Anne surmises that administrators define themselves as special creatures, a definition with which she takes issue. Elements of persuasion, even argumentation, can be traced in Lee Anne's interview data on the "curriculum wars." Development by analogy is illustrated in Lee Anne's reflection that what her school system is doing to address overwhelming problems amounts to "hanging stained glass windows in a condemned building." In the remaining discussion, I will utilize three types of composition and methods of development that English teachers frequently teach and which are suggested by Lee Anne's data: classification, cause and effect, and comparison/contrast.

Classification: Self as Teacher

Lee Anne classifies herself as a teacher in at least three ways: Self as younger teacher, self as older teacher, and self projected as retired teacher. As younger teacher, Lee Anne says that she thought that administrators were chosen because of their competence. She is glad she felt that way at the time because if she had perceived them then as she perceives them now, she says, "I wouldn't have lasted." As a young teacher, Lee Anne observed a tendency to take one's self too seriously: "I don't think it would be possible to take your job too seriously, but you dare not take yourself too seriously...particularly if you work with kids all day long. If you take everything they say to heart, you know...." Finally, she says, "Young teachers don't have a sense of what experience does for you." She recalls that the year she became a teacher in an urban high school, 25 other first-year teachers were on her staff. This year, as she considers the other English teachers in her system, she says: "Where are the young people?"

As an older teacher, Lee Anne finds "a thousand advantages" to being more mature, such as knowing with more certainty which battles are worth engaging in, "knowing when to intervene, what to get upset about, what to let go by...." Lee Anne has observed that "all day long, teachers are making judgments" without any "hard and fast" rules to govern them. As an experienced teacher, she finds that she is less prone to rash and ineffective judgments whether in her classroom or in her school: "If you have any brains about you, you're wiser than you used to
be, and that makes a big difference.” As a younger teacher, she found herself surprised more by developments in the field, “like being one of those people who thought they could finish the career without learning the computer? and then got fooled?...I might get surprised again, but I don’t think so.” She also finds herself being more candid in professional matters due to an increased sense of security.

To Lee Anne, the advantages of being an older teacher are greater than the disadvantages, “except for the physical demands and the toll they take...which may be impossible to understand unless you’ve been a career teacher.” Sometimes she is so involved in her job that health concerns receive little attention: “I may go for a few days, then it will occur to me: Oh, now that I think about it, I’m sick, I’ve been unaware, that kind of thing.” Our second interview took place in May, about three weeks before the end of the school year. Lee Anne quietly described her energy level: “I don’t have any.”

At this interview, Lee Anne brought her symbolic representation of her feelings and thoughts about herself as a retired teacher. It is a colorful, computer-generated page of art and words. The top of the page is filled with a suitcase decorated with national and international travel stickers, a jet airplane, a beach chair, and handcuffs which have been opened by a key. The words “hurray,” “freedom,” and “The Future” are scattered among these symbols. The bottom of the page contains symbols of teaching—a school house, a bell, students at a bus stop, a teacher in front of a chalkboard. In the middle of the page is a pensive woman, a ribbon of her thoughts forming a diagonal across the page; the ribbon is severed by scissors which bear the word “retirement” illustrating a sharp break. Pre-retirement thoughts are represented by words like “students” and “identity.” Retirement concepts are suggested by phrases such as “Free from treadmill” and “New challenges” (See Appendix D).

Lee Anne says she has conflicted feelings about retirement, recognizing that time will be available for activities which she loves but that “I’ll be leaving behind a very important part of my life...I’m a little bit fearful of wondering who I’ll be when I’m not a teacher any more.” She speculates that she will miss her students, even school bells, and all their attendant problems. “I still have a lot of teaching left in me,” she says and shifts the subject back to a current concern—the unintended effect caused by the way secondary schools are classified in her school system.
Cause and Effect: Misidentified Causes, Unintended Effects

In Lee Anne's view, classifying some schools as academic magnet schools and others as regular or comprehensive schools has caused the traditional secondary schools to be inadvertently undermined:

The kids at my high school have an attitude that they go there because they can't go somewhere else, which is really a shame... Most of them don't have a clue about what it means to go to school anyway, but they have a sense that they would be different if they went to a different school, that somehow if they were in one of the academic magnet schools, they would all of a sudden be academically motivated, have different skills....

Lee Anne is not opposed to students and parents choosing which schools to attend, but balks at some being labeled as the "academic" schools:

If they are academic, what are the rest of us? You know, we beat our heads against the walls trying to be as academic as we know how to be. The perception that somehow the magnet schools are more academic or the teachers more academically inclined is a lot of garbage...The worst part about it is that parents whose kids don't get into an academic magnet school think they have to send their kids right to the parochial system or one of the private schools.

Another unintended consequence occurs when effective teachers leave the classroom, sometimes for the rest of their careers, to engage in other jobs for the school system:

The danger I see is in taking people out of the classroom. I think it is important for somebody who is connected to education to be a teacher. I feel very strongly about that...whatever other choices are there for teachers, there has to be some teaching involved...When people get disconnected from the classroom for a very long time, they develop an attitude about what is doable...They come up with ideas that are simply not practical in the classroom.

A third cause and effect relationship can be found in Lee Anne's perspective that the wrong causes have been identified with educational ineffectiveness:

I read an article the other day which said that people have to stop apologizing for awarding the control of schools to businesses because educators have messed it up so badly. The more I think about it, the angrier I get because the implication is that it has been in our hands all along, and you and I know that it has not been in our hands.
She identifies outside sources which she believes have impeded her ability to deliver effective education in the classroom:

There has been more and more government control and business control and political concern that has guided what we can and cannot do for a very long time, and as that control has grown, our effectiveness has diminished. I think there is a direct relationship...I think we'd have a different situation if we just didn't have to jump through so many bureaucratic hoops....

One bureaucratic hoop that lowers teacher morale occurs in the spring of every school year when lay-offs and staff reductions are announced by bureaucrats far removed from individual schools. By the start of the new school year, most of those affected by lay-offs will have been re-employed within the system; other teachers will have been removed from former schools, disrupting existing programs, and reassigned to new schools. Their former teaching assignments will be filled with different people—not for any educational purpose, but at random, according to bureaucratic and contract guidelines—in other words, teachers will be shuffled about by a process which is arbitrary and routine. Lee Anne writes a satiric piece about this subject:

It is infuriating to think how bogus all the projected numbers are, and people's lives are thrown into turmoil because of the incompetence of the people who make those decisions. Would anyone downtown care if my number came up?...Number 111-11-1111, your time is up. Do not pass GO—report to our hastily thrown together workshop for the pitiful—it will show you how caring the system is.

The remainder of this excerpt echoes Lee Anne's feelings about "working with people who have no respect for me" and who "don't know who you are from one year to the next down there" as well as her perception that the system operates without intelligent judgment, almost mindlessly:

Now let me see—where is that workshop—I know we put someone in charge of that—there must be a highly paid administrator whose job list includes such activities. Oh yes, it's Mr. X, whom some of you teachers may remember as an incompetent teacher and a less competent administrator before he was bumped downtown into a position where no one knows if he's competent because no one knows what he's supposed to be doing anyway.

**Comparison and Contrast: The Way It's Supposed To Be—Or Is It Spozed?**

The final portion of this discussion, a comparison/contrast section, will summarize the salient motifs in Lee Anne's data and will draw upon Hemdon's (1968) *The Way It Spozed To Be*. Hemdon's autobiographical book about his first year of teaching found its way into this discussion by virtue of the fact that the title would not remove itself from my mind. As I read and re-read Lee
Anne's data, analyzed and re-analyzed, the words, "the way it should be" and "the way it's supposed to be" kept inserting themselves in my thoughts. Lee Anne has loved being a teacher, working in the classroom with students—an example of "the way it's supposed to be" for those choosing to become teachers. Her career started on a positive note with many others in her cohort group, and her responsibilities in her school gradually expanded as she gained experience; she continued to be a learner herself as she sought relevant graduate school courses at a local university. Her influence reached beyond her school to others in her school system and then beyond that as she presented her ideas in state and national conferences. Even the end of her career is unfolding "the way it should be" since she is in a position to share the benefits of her diverse educational experiences with other teachers prior to retirement.

Because of these persistent perceptions, I located and read Herndon's (1968) book for the first time. Based upon dates given in the books' epilogue, I calculate that Herndon's teaching career began in the 1958-59 school year, ten years before Lee Anne's career began—a bit of information which might seem irrelevant but is, in fact, striking considering the parallels in the concerns he had then with the concerns Lee Anne has now almost 40 years later. An out-of-touch bureaucracy made Herndon's teaching job more difficult than it already was: "...the absolute key to getting through school, namely, that you must understand and somehow satisfy the bureaucracy..." (p. 92). Those who had been in the classroom only a short time advised those in the classroom how to do their jobs even though they "had less contact with these students than I, knew less about them, mistrusted them more, thought less of their capabilities, and disliked them, as they were now, utterly" (p. 107). Although the following passage refers to Herndon's students, it could also refer to teachers who currently try to survive and be effective in Lee Anne's school system:

...being bottled up for seven hours a day in a place where you decide nothing, having your success or failure depend, a hundred times a day, on the plan, invention or whim of someone else, being put in a position where most of your real desires are not only ignored but actively penalized...may you can do it, and maybe you can't, but either way, it's probably done you some harm (p. 188).

Throughout his book, Herndon (1968) compared and contrasted the way some educational matter, theoretically or ideally, should have been with the way it actually was—such as when his students said and wrote "spozed" instead of "supposed." James Herndon cared
enough about students and about conditions in education to wage his own curriculum wars and to write a book about it; his caring strikes me as comparable to Lee Anne’s as revealed in her actions over the last three decades or in her words: “I can’t imagine being a teacher who didn’t care about every aspect of what he or she is doing.”

This closing comparison/contrast section needs qualification: It does not reflect the exceptions to the overall situation that Lee Anne mentioned during her interviews. Over the course of her career, Lee Anne has experienced effective leadership in her system, has worked with knowledgeable administrators, has received reinforcement for her efforts. A complex picture of Lee Anne’s experiences would reflect these things. The point is that these are the exceptions, not the norm. The closing section is an attempt to reflect what seems to me to be more common than not in this teacher’s data.

The data in Lee Anne’s interviews, journals, and symbolic representation suggest Lee Anne’s view of the way things are supposed to be in her urban school system: First, the superintendent of the system should be a leader with vision who can articulate that vision to others, who “has some intellect going for him or her,” who does not “cave in to every special interest group appearing at his or her door,” and who can guide the system by clarifying “what an urban school system ought to be.” Second, administrators should be selected for expertise in administrative matters and should be viewed as educators who have made different choices from classroom teachers but not necessarily better choices. Teachers should not be valued less than administrators and perhaps, should be valued more since they are doing the most difficult and crucial job in the school system—interacting with, guiding, and attempting to deliver effective education to the system’s clients. Younger teachers should be nurtured and supported more than they are; effective, older, more experienced teachers should be supported and valued, not just for their endurance but for the attributes and expertise that their endurance has forged. Their contributions should be acknowledged, maybe a written record kept of them, maybe acknowledged by “medals” or other outward forms. Third, all educators should continue to educate in some form or other, maintaining an intimate knowledge of the conditions and demands of the classroom and continuing to contribute directly to the system’s clients. To do otherwise is to lose touch with the core of the enterprise. To do otherwise is to “forget.”
The above view, however, does not describe the way things are, on the whole, in Lee Anne's urban school system. Instead of leaders with vision, Lee Anne sees leaders "who don't have a clue." Instead of administrators selected for their expertise, Lee Anne sees many administrators who were often inept teachers, glad to escape from the classroom, and proud, if not pretentious, now that they no longer are "lowly" teachers. Instead of working in a dynamic system which inspires and supports effective classroom instruction, Lee Anne perceives that her system is on the verge of collapse as when she compares it to a "condemned building." Instead of engaging in productive behaviors, she sees a system filled with "gamesmanship," "cut throat" tactics, and wasted energy; a system more interested in dismantling support systems than in creating or nurturing them. Contributions made by individuals in the system receive little attention with the result, in Lee Anne's words, that the career "begins and ends with little note to anyone but yourself."

A Brief Conclusion and Haunting Question

In spite of these conditions and after 28 years in urban classrooms, Lee Anne maintains a high degree of motivation for working with students; retains dignity and pride in being a teacher; finds the energy needed to cope with a demanding schedule before, during, and after the school day; focuses on "tasks, tasks, tasks, tasks, tasks" and reflects on needed improvements; and continues to contribute to others in her system right to the end of her 30-year career. Although retirement will soon be an option for Lee Anne, her attention wanders not to the future but remains riveted on the concerns of the classroom: "I still want to be involved right up until the last minute."

A nagging question for me is why, near the end of a long and productive career, would Lee Anne "be astonished" if she and/or fellow teachers were to be either consulted for their expertise or valued for their contributions by those who are managing the school system? Like the title of Herndon's (1968) book, the question continues to reverberate in my mind. As this discussion ends, it is I who am astonished.
Letting Go of a Teaching Career: Introduction to Maxine's Story

"To those who in the love of Nature holds
Communion with her visible forms, she speaks
A various language..."
"Thanatopsis", William Cullen Bryant

"Come, let us dine together, old friend. Let us break bread in the spirit of communion, and while we are thus engaged, let us speak of things that matter in languages we have come to understand. We have been teachers, are teachers, and the time is coming when that will no longer be so. What say you?"

"I say that I, too, have grown aware that a time is coming to bid farewell to classes and classrooms and schools. Already I have begun to say those goodbyes, as if preparing to depart on a journey though I know not its destination. And so I have been thinking about my stay in this career, remembering how it was, looking at how it is...."

"And what say you about these things?"

"I say that I am pleased with my time in this career, and I am concerned about how it is unfolding now. I am aware of pervasive losses. Do you not feel them, too?"

"Aye. And when I am alone with my thoughts, I feel them even more. But tell me, how do you plan to leave this thing that has framed your life, waking and sleeping, for nearly thirty years?"

"I will tell you in the languages I have lately begun to speak."

"And what are those?"

"They are awareness, memory, esteem, loss, and desire."

"Are there more?"

"Aye, one more. It has been called amorphousness."

"I would like to hear these many languages."

"Then we will speak in the taken-for-granted words of the ordinary. You shall find them there."

"Then let us begin."

---Imaginary conversation with Maxine---
Speaking of Things That Matter: Maxine's Story

"I've been thinking about my career coming to an end," Maxine said during our first interview:

Last spring, when the sixth graders came over for orientation, I thought: These will be the last little children I have. I welcomed them all with open arms: "Welcome to my school! I've been waiting a long time for you. You and I are going out together..." That's when it really hit home.

Maxine's heightened awareness of her career nearing its close has resulted in "cutting down" on some of the extra things she has been doing, such as chairing her department and being responsible for the school yearbook. "This is not so that I can skate into retirement," Maxine said. "But to attempt a smooth transition in the school when I leave." Maxine plans to continue as the writing competition coach for at least another year and has accepted the responsibility of being the faculty representative in her building for the local teacher's association, a position which will allow her to assist other teachers in her building with professional matters.

At the time of our second interview one year later, Maxine had taught English for 28 years in middle and junior high schools within an urban system. She recalled that at the beginning of her career, she had requested placement in a senior high school; the personnel office, however, assigned her to a junior high school. She found that the age group suited her. When the system eliminated junior high schools and switched to a middle school concept about halfway through her career, she remained with middle school students; she liked their freshness, their enthusiasm, their sense of humor. Teaching them was challenging. And it was fun.

Now, however, Maxine finds that much of what she liked initially has disappeared over the years. At this point, when parents ask her if she would send her own children to the school where she teaches, Maxine says she would not:

I just don't think I would. There are too many kids there bullying each other, and I would want my kids to have fun in school. I don't think it's fun there. I wouldn't want to be a student there. The teachers used to have fun teaching, but they don't any more. They haven't for awhile. I'm not sure what that's all a function of, but the last time I remember having fun there was when we had a principal with a sense of humor and a fun personality—and that makes a big difference.

Part of her disenchantment has to do with the nature of the job itself—doing the same thing year after year after year:
...like grading all those papers that get on your nerves after awhile...Part of the reason that a lot of teachers can’t wait to leave is the the end of the teaching career is the same as, you know, it’s just more of the same. There’s nothing more interesting or better about it than any other year, and people get worn out.

It is disheartening, Maxine says, to work with students who show little interest and to whom success is defined as a D grade, as in “My goal is to pass,” and working with teachers who, in Maxine’s view, “don’t do their jobs.” Part of it has to do with her age and stage of life:

Part of it is me. There is so much in the news about what some women around the age of 50 experience with menopause. You think about some of those symptoms, and it’s like death for a teacher—like lack of organization, forgetfulness, being much more emotional. And that comes at the end of the career...For whatever reasons, it’s harder for me to be a teacher now, and I think that’s true of almost everybody I know who is my age.

Maxine also noticed that she has less patience: “Over the last few years, I have less energy, less of everything, stamina, patience...” Everything about the job seems to take more effort, whether it be developing a new teaching unit, trying a different activity, or doing anything extra in the school.

In spite of these difficulties, Maxine describes herself as “somebody who keeps working, keeps doing the extra stuff, keeps going to workshops.” She says that doing the minimum is not for her: “It makes me nervous when I don’t see things being done that need to be done.” She continues to collaborate with other teachers on new units and was recently a key member of her school’s reform team, a contribution that “took enormous amounts of time.” She is glad that those reorganization efforts are now “pretty much done” so that she can “ease” her way out.

The job is harder than it used to be for Maxine for another reason—the changing characteristics of the students which Maxine defines as a lower maturity level, value systems radically different from her own, and degenerating behavior. That decreasing student maturity seems to occur at a time when teachers are experiencing a higher level of maturity in their careers may increase the frustration: “I resent having to do all those little baby things with them. I say, ‘Now this is the eighth grade,’ and these kids still want to pencil fight. That’s when they take their pencils and fight with them like swords. You find these broken, half-pencils all over the place.” Sometimes Maxine wonders if teachers “coddle” students too much: “We need to support them, but we don’t expect them to do much on their own...and they don’t.”
Her husband, a retired principal for five years, was recently called back to be the acting principal in Maxine’s middle school for the close of the school year when the former principal abruptly died. Her husband’s impression, according to Maxine, was that the student body had undergone a negative metamorphosis:

He said he couldn’t believe the immaturity and the language, and it had only been five years since he had retired—the way they curse at teachers and at each other, the way they run from adults in the halls, an almost total lack of inhibition in their behavior.

Feeling out of touch with her students is also unpleasant for Maxine, compounded by a weariness in working with students she cannot easily identify with:

The gap is widening... I understand less and less of the kids’ slang and their references to movies and television shows that I really don’t want to spend my time watching... There are very few things we can discuss together. I do watch once in awhile just so I have a clue what’s going on, and I still have to scramble to figure out what they’re talking about. The shows are horrible, just horrible—like “Beavis and Butt-head.”

In an attempt to understand the causes for this lack of commonality, she speculates that there is an increasing fragmentation in our society, that her life little resembles the lives of the students she teaches whether in regard to music one listens to or leisure time activities—or much of anything else. For example, Maxine is puzzled at why one of her favorite leisure activities, reading books, is not more popular with today’s students. Four years ago, three classes of eighth grade students read a total of 1,265 books during the school’s Bookworm reading program; this year, according to Maxine’s records, three eighth grade classes read only 562 books. She has stopped the practice of publicly listing names of students who have read five or more books during a nine-week grading period because “there are only one or two who do that, so here I am worrying about how to motivate independent reading” and wondering about the loss to her students if they can’t or won’t participate in one of the more uplifting and beneficial activities available in our society.

The nature of the lives of her students causes Maxine to be concerned for their welfare and frustrated in not being able to help them more. In the last few years, more students in her school come from what she calls “rough neighborhoods” with a gang influence: “Those kids are always at each other, and it takes extra energy to deal with... just another change for the worse.” And neighborhood conflicts spill over into the life of the school. During the last two years, the school has invoked two “lockdowns,” an attempt to protect the majority of the students from a
violent or potentially violent situation by locking classroom doors and keeping students inside. A lockdown means that someone has been spotted with a serious weapon, more than likely a gun: "...and that scares me," Maxine said, "I think someone could be shooting somebody somewhere in the building, and I don't know what is going on."

But there is more to be concerned about including a degenerating sense of morals and poor physical and mental health in the student body:

I think their moral sense is much less than it used to be. I get papers from kids all the time about how they took money or beat somebody up. They know I'm going to read it...They're writing it down, making it public, and that didn't used to be the case...and having babies, one girl last year with two babies. Another girl said she could have any boy she wanted to stay over night at her house, that it was okay with her mom....

Maxine says she worries about the students not being physically fit because of their poor diets and health habits:

I've never seen so many kids so sleepy and grossly overweight or thin as rails...so many children on Ritalin, and so many emotionally disturbed children, so many...some disturbed enough that they should be in somebody's care besides the English teacher.

All of these factors make teaching for Maxine and her colleagues more difficult than it used to be. Yet another factor is the cluster of adults who are crucial to the school—parents, fellow teachers, and building level administrators.

While Maxine did not discuss parental involvement, a bare-bones minimum at her school, at length, she did highlight its importance: "It probably makes a difference if you have some parents who are interested...just sing your praises a little bit...if you just have a few parents...." She sees the lack of parental presence in the school as reflective of the society in its "wider and wider divisions between the have and have nots." But what makes her particularly sad is the increasing number of grandparents who are raising children; she meets them on parent-teacher conference days, people who are trying to do what they can to get their grandchildren through school—something that occurred less frequently in the past.

Maxine spoke highly of like-minded colleagues who continue to work hard, give of themselves, and hold high professional standards. She was displeased with a growing number of those who seem to want to contribute "precisely the minimum":
They’ll arrive at school at the last possible second you’re allowed to
get there and leave at the first possible minute. The attitude is more
like a factory job or something. It’s less like a profession and more
like a job. You know, it’s not in the contract.

These teachers are not interested in doing the extra things that make a school special, unlike
teachers in the early years of Maxine’s teaching career when many people were eager to advise a
student council or guide the development of a yearbook: “In the past, you didn’t have to be
rewarded for every little thing; it was not something that had to be negotiated.” Now her school
has no intramurals, no science fair, and part of the reason is that teachers are not willing to
organize them. She also observed that some colleagues receive supplemental contracts for
sponsoring extra activities which, in fact, never occur: “People got paid, but they didn’t do their
job. Nobody watches them.” She was further discouraged when in recent years several people
on her staff nominated a teacher for educator of the year because the principal didn’t like her.
They thought it would be amusing if the principal were obligated to take that teacher to the awards
banquet. Maxine called the incident “embarrassing,” the action of an “immature” staff. Maxine
yearns for more professional kinds of interactions with her colleagues, such as those she hears
among suburban teachers when she takes her students to writing competitions: “Those teachers
actually want to talk about teaching methods; they actually talk about teaching.”

Of interest was that Maxine’s criticism of fellow teachers did not apply to those nearing
retirement:

Although I’ve noticed many teachers who seem less responsible than
they should be, none of them are my age or nearing the end of their careers.
Overall, it seems that teachers in their last years are perceived as deadwood
or something. One might expect that they would succumb to the temptation
to coast, and I’m sure there are some who do, but at least at my school, the
older teachers seem to be the ones most interested in bettering themselves
or trying new methods. When I’m looking for someone who would like to
attend a workshop, I look among the others nearing retirement.

She speculated about the reasons for this continued involvement in professional growth:

Maybe it’s because top women candidates for jobs stopped going into
teaching so much when the women’s movement came along in the seventies.
I’m not saying there are no top level teachers among those under 40 years of
age, but I’m sure that there are fewer now than there were when the only other
viable career choice was nursing.
When Maxine began her career in teaching, she and others considered it a noble calling. Over
the years, she has seen that perception slip away:

That’s an old fashioned idea any more, that there is such a thing as a calling
or a profession, and that’s too bad. I’m sure we’ve gotten a lot of advantages
from negotiating down to the fine points of every little aspect of our careers.
but when I see my colleagues not doing anything they don’t have to do,
there is a loss... We’ve lost something.

To Maxine, even administrators seem less responsible than they did in the earlier years of
her career:

At my school, no one even tries to keep the teachers in check. If they arrive
take, give the kids “free time,” don’t show up at their duty assignment, don’t
leave plans for a substitute, or leave early, nothing happens. No one seems
to be watching the administrators very closely either—all of which leads to low
morale, less and less interest in doing the extras that make a school unique
and interesting.

Even in the classroom, teachers receive little or no attention from administrators. Teachers can do
whatever they want, hopefully something productive and effective: “The sad thing is that it
doesn’t make much difference what you do. The last ten years or so, I’ve been observed maybe a
sum total of 40 minutes at the end of the school year. It’s pathetic.” The head administrator in a
building makes a big difference in teacher productivity and morale, according to Maxine:

People understand that a principal doesn’t have to like them in order for them
to know they’re doing a good job. I’ll hear them say, “I don’t respect this guy”
or whatever, but every little nuance in what he says affects them. And we just
got a new principal who doesn’t seem to care much about what goes on in the
building, so that makes it hard—harder to teach than it was.

All of the factors in Maxine’s story—the degeneration in the quality of the school; the
repetition of the job; the mismatch of the job requirements with her age and stage of life; the
growing distance from her students with their overwhelming social problems, troublesome
behaviors, and needs; the lack of parental involvement; the dearth of like-minded colleagues; and
the absence of dynamic leadership—make it easier for Maxine to think of retiring in the not too
distant future. But Maxine’s story is not finished.

Maxine would like to see the end of the teaching career changed for the better “even if it’s
too late for me to benefit from.” During our last meeting, Maxine shared “a little dream of mine.”

Maxine proposes that the last two to five years of the teaching career have a structure
different from the other years. The key factor would be a reduced teaching load with the freed-up
time being utilized for a variety of staff support or school improvement functions, examples of which include site-specific research to share with the staff; opportunities to work with students out of the classroom; mentoring relationships with younger teachers; taking a more active role at the university with prospective teachers; or even contributing something to the system at large. Whatever use would be made of teachers nearing retirement, Maxine believes teachers need to have something to work toward and something to look forward to.

During the close of our second interview, and before Maxine had created a symbolic representation embodying her feelings and thoughts about retirement, she mused about what she would miss when she were no longer involved in her urban school system. She thought she would miss her students' sense of humor, her colleagues, even her classroom. Most of all, she thought she would miss planning classroom and school-wide activities. In the end, she wasn't sure:

On days like this one, near the end of the school year, it's awfully hard to imagine what I'll miss about teaching. I'm too busy praying for June 7 to arrive.

June 7 marked the last day of the school year before summer break, a valued period of restoration and planning before the subsequent school year.

The Languages of Letting Go: A Discussion

What began as a search for pre-retirement lingo led me to see the equivalent of different languages occurring in Maxine's speech. To speak some languages comes naturally, like the first language learned just by being born and developing in a specific cultural environment. At some point near Maxine's career end, the languages of letting go seemed to come naturally. Being fully present in a career, as Maxine is, means to use the language of awareness. Staying in a career builds a language of memory, and succeeding in a career can provide a language of esteem and affirmation. Knowing that the career will end gives birth to a language of loss followed, sometimes, by a language of desire. Sometimes, during a multi-lingual conversation, what once seemed clear can begin to slip away. William Bridges (1980) expressed it well in Transitions: Making Sense of Life's Changes:

It is as if we launched out from a riverside dock to cross to a landing on the opposite shore—only to discover in midstream that the landing was no longer there. And when we looked back at the other shore, we saw that the dock we left from had just broken loose and was heading downstream (p. 4).
Bridges (an apt name for one studying transitions) views transition as "the natural process of disorientation and reorientation that marks the turning points on the path of growth" (p. 5). While moving between these turning points, the language of amorphousness can express what is not yet understood.

**Awareness, Esteem, and Memory**

Maxine's first language might be called one of awareness as she recognizes at her career is nearing its end and begins to "pave the way for a smooth transition—so others will be ready to take over when I leave." Transition takes its own toll—physically, mentally, and socially (Bridges, 1980). Maxine's word choice mirrors her perception that she, and others like her, have less energy than in their younger days: "I'm trying to ease my way out," "Some might succumb to the temptation to coast," and "I'm trying to cut down." Other phrases reveal contradictory impulses—"from anticipation, as in "teachers can't wait to leave," to dread, such as "death for a teacher." Her language acknowledges prevalent stereotypes of older teachers when she refers to "deadwood" or "skating into retirement" even while she asserts that in her building, it is the older teachers who continue "to innovate and to do the extras that make a school unique."

Another language is present when Maxine speaks of her recent contributions to the school, such as her role in reorganization ("There is so much of me in the school"), her continued efforts to coach a writing team ("We compete surprisingly well with the suburbs"), and her design and implementation of a staff recognition program ("It worked really well, boosted morale, I think"), among others. She is pleased enough with the motivational quality and effectiveness of some of her teaching materials that she would like to share them widely, maybe publish them. These kinds of statements form a language of esteem, of pride in a job well done. Bridges (1980) wrote that people tend to identify themselves with the circumstances of their lives (p. 13), and in that sense, Maxine's esteem is balanced by her awareness of limitations:

...because of the different value systems—Mine is so different from the kids'...And look at the dominant work ethic of the kids: There is none. Why couldn't I get them to do their assignments, participate in activities. Why couldn't I make them interested? These things make me doubt myself even though I feel reasonably successful most of the time.

Further she has separated her feelings of success growing out of her own contributions from her feelings about the limited success occurring in her school system: "There are so many things I still
like about teaching, and overall, I feel successful when I think of my career, not about the school system in general, but about what I've done."

When Maxine speaks in a language of memory, she looks at her career as a whole, describes patterns and trends, compares conditions in her school today with conditions in the past, and classifies a multitude of problems facing her students. As Maxine speaks, her concern for her present students emerges along with a fear that their unprecedented problems are not being solved, even with all the massive efforts at school reform: "I just don't know if we're changing fast enough to get them to move in a better direction...." Maxine's awareness, not only of her career nearing its close but also of the deteriorating conditions and overwhelming challenges in her school, lead her to a kind of disenchantment which even pride in her own contributions cannot overcome. The disenchantment is present when she cannot recommend her school highly to parents and when she says, reluctantly but openly, "I wouldn't want to be a student there." It is also present when she is reluctant to recommend her career to young people:

I really can't advise them to go into teaching in the urban public schools, and I hate that! I certainly wouldn't advise that for the sons and daughters of friends of mine. I would advise them to work in the suburbs or private schools where there is some hope of relating to the kids.

**Losses: Private and Public**

The language of loss also permeates Maxine's conversation: the loss of easier relationships with students; the loss of more professional colleagues; the loss of youth, energy, stamina, patience, fun; the loss of something to look forward to in the career—the loss of joy in most of what comprises her work life. Perhaps this language cannot be helped; after all, those nearing retirement are on the verge of losing their careers. Judith Viorst (1986), humorist and author of several books, writes of the inevitability of life's losses:

I have tried to talk about loss in a number of different languages:
The scholarly and the vernacular. The subjective and the objective. The private and the public. The funny and the sad...Losing is the price we pay for living...We have to deal with our necessary losses (pp. 365-66).

The loss of youth may be necessary, and at some point, even the loss of a career, but are the others necessary? Is it necessary to lose joy in teaching in today's urban schools? Most of Maxine's losses are both unnecessary and unacceptable to her.
Part of the loss is one of mutual understanding, a matter, perhaps, of semantics. To Maxine, academic success does not mean a "$D" evaluation mark; to her students, academic success means not failing. To Maxine, an acceptable classroom activity would be reading and the discussion of literary works; to her students, an acceptable classroom activity is pencil fighting. To Maxine, professionalism means contributing whatever is needed to make a school a special place even if it takes extra time, even if one is not reimbursed for it. Professionalism means growth as a teacher, arriving on time, making sure that students are productively engaged, implementing new strategies. To some of Maxine's colleagues, professionalism means following the minimum of contract requirements. To Maxine, designation as educator of the year should be an honor; to some of Maxine's fellow teachers, the designation becomes an opportunity for a joke. To Maxine, administrators should set the tone in a building; to some administrators in her school, it is enough if they are physically present. To Maxine, her teaching files, filled with teaching ideas and useful handouts for classroom activities, are a valuable resource, one she would like to share with younger teachers or with the teacher who will eventually replace her: "The files are full. I have four full file cabinets. I just hope somebody will get to take advantage of them." To Maxine's school and school system, the files are a matter of no concern. To Maxine's school system, an individual teacher's collection of effective teaching strategies over the course of a thirty-year career have no meaning at all.

Although the losses mentioned above are not exhaustive, at least one more deserves attention in this discussion—the loss of a safe teaching environment. While attempts are made both to detect and remove weapons brought into the school by students, the efforts are not always successful. During our second interview, Maxine recalled that earlier in the year a student pulled out a gun and cocked it in a hallway in such a way that a teacher was in between the boy with the gun and the one being pointed at. "It turned out the gun wasn't loaded," she said, "but how do you know that? So it was scary." The two lockdowns in Maxine's school occurred because at least one significant weapon, such as a gun, was present in the school and that the situation was not under control. During a lockdown, Maxine said, "Kids are nonchalant about it, but there is some kind of threat in the school...and that scares me...I don't know exactly what's going on."
The Amorphous Organization: The Indeterminate Future

Not knowing what is going on, not understanding the shape of it, leads to another language—the language of amorphousness. Maxine expressed a sense of no one being in charge. She spoke of administrators who don’t discipline students when students swear or scream in the hallways, of no one keeping an eye on teachers who are late or who don’t otherwise fulfill their responsibilities, of no one “watching the administrators very closely either.” Maxine said that it is so difficult to get rid of poor teachers or even give one an unsatisfactory evaluation that the system breaks down. According to Maxine, this is what remains: “A lot of people getting away with everything they can while others grumble and wonder aloud why they’re working so hard when no one seems to care.”

The situation reveals provocative metacommunications in Maxine’s school which show a breakdown in an meaningful system of accountability. Paul Watzlawick’s work (1967), Pragmatics of Human Communication: A Study of Interactional Patterns, Pathologies, and Paradoxes, offers a way to view the messages being communicated in the paragraph above. One relevant axiom is the following: One cannot not behave; therefore, one cannot not communicate. Both the content of a message and the perceived relationship between participants is communicated in every action, nonaction, or verbal message. When students swear in a hallway and an administrator does not address the inappropriateness of the behavior, the students perceive that they can continue to swear and curse without significant consequences; students themselves end up defining what behaviors will be acceptable in the school situation. The same is true when no clear and firm message is delivered to teachers who “get away with everything they can.” At one level, the contract between school employees and the board of education is followed almost to the letter, but the spirit of the contract is violated both directly and around the fringes.

Generally, the structure of the school day imposes an order on the participants: Bells ring, people move to their designated rooms for a variety of “educational” activities, and the day continues to its end. The schedule is relatively clear to all. However, mutual respect and mutual goals between students and teachers, students and administrators, teachers and other teachers, teachers and administrators, even administrators and other administrators, appear to be elusive.

These preliminary comments raise questions but do not attempt to provide answers in this brief discussion. What exactly is being communicated by these various actions and nonactions?
In Maxine's class, students complete writing assignments even if they are writing about illegal or morally questionable behavior in their lives, sometimes in an argot Maxine does not understand. Extracurricular activities quietly disappear from the school's offerings. Principals, some who seem not to care about the school, come and go. Maxine's words reverberate: "It's harder to teach now than it used to be." "We've lost something." "The system breaks down."

The language of anomalousness extends to the concept of the teaching career itself which has no distinguishing shape other than a straight line. Like the structure of a school day, the career begins and it ends, though often without bells to mark its passing. As Maxine's career moves to its end, she tries to see the shape of what is to come, tries to identify her feelings associated with the looming changes in her life which will occur upon her retirement. To do so, she created a symbolic representation—a kind of game board with ten pros and ten cons of retirement around the periphery and a spinner in the center.

The game board is a type of visual that she might have created for use in a classroom, and it embodies her sense of humor. The positives anticipated in retirement can be categorized in a kind of approach-avoidance split. Five factors indicate relief at avoiding unpleasantness associated with teaching in her school: "No more contact with gangs and guns; no more papers to grade; no more apathy and attitudes; no more school stress; no more 5:00 a.m. alarm." The other five positive attributes of retirement are appealing on their own; three of them have to do with more available time: "Time for hobbies; time for grandchildren; time for house and garden; winters in Florida; long-awaited trip to Europe." The negatives associated with retirement have a 6/4 split; more than half of the cons indicate that Maxine will miss various aspects of her teaching job. She will miss organizing and planning, the facet she has grown to enjoy the most. She will miss seeing kids catch on to new concepts. She will miss professional and personal interactions with her colleagues. She will miss the 'kids' humor and fun" such as when one student flunked the state proficiency test but demonstrated a talent for diagramming sentences:

A lot of the students like diagramming for some reason. One of them was Ron, a little boy that I just loved last year. He'd say, "Okay, okay, give us one." I'd look at them like they're my grandchildren and say, "Okay everybody, here's one" and write a sentence on the board. Ron would be the first to put his hand up. Once he put his hand up, and I called on him and he said,"Are there any jobs you can get like doing this?"
Maxine wonders if she will miss the sense of purposefulness she has enjoyed as a teacher. Finally, she thinks she will miss her classroom. Maxine wrote in her journal:

That may sound odd, but I've spent some time fixing it up... I painted my room a pastel orange, my desk and bookcases brown. My husband helped. It took us three or four days that summer, but now my room is cheery and bright—much better than the institutional gray-green-yellow of most classrooms. And I've gathered familiar things around to make the atmosphere homier for me and the students. I make coffee in the room, have supplies of art materials, board games, videos, tools, cleaning supplies... two hanging baskets and six potted plants. Once this year during a lock-down mode, one of my students said: "Man, we could stay in this room a long time. We've got everything we need." I'll miss my home away from home.

The symbolic representation alone suggests that Maxine's mixed feelings about retirement slightly favor continuing to teach. When combined with other interview and journal data, however, the balance shifts. Right before creating her symbolic representation, Maxine had said: "...On days like this one near the end of the school year, it's awfully hard to imagine what I'll miss about teaching." And in her journal, Maxine wrote:

So is it a trend over my career that students have become less mature?
All I can say is that it seems to me that my students have, and I really don't know what to do to lead them in a more productive direction....

The Desire To Alter Career Syntax

Eventually the language of amorphousness becomes uncomfortable; out of it grows a yearning and a language of desire. Some of Maxine's desires can be seen in her actions as when she continues to take her writing team to competitions outside her school district, when she designs and implements a staff recognition program in her school, when she agrees to assist her staff by serving as its building representative—even when she paints her room a pastel orange to make it less institutional. Some of the language of desire has occurred throughout this discussion, as in Maxine's wishes for more parental contact, more like-minded colleagues, more administrative leadership. But nowhere, perhaps, is the language of desire more pronounced than when Maxine expresses "a little dream of mine," the wish to change the syntax in the system at the end of the teaching career. The current order and arrangement in the assignment and utilization of teachers as they approach the end of their careers is unresponsive to needs, wasteful of talents, lacking in appropriate recognition, and otherwise almost totally unremarkable.
Maxine’s desires translate into a reduced teaching load for the last few years—maybe a half day of classes with the remaining time utilized to benefit either the school in which she works or the system at large. Certain needs in the system could be targeted, or maybe teachers could present their own ideas for consideration: “Maybe people would have to apply for these positions, but if I knew I were going to be able to do that, I’d be thinking about it for years and years.” If the opportunity were available to Maxine now, she would propose something like the following:

Something like organizing better language arts classes for the urban middle school—maybe pairing a language arts teacher with an art teacher or something. It would be something that I’ve been doing that I have some knowledge about and working on that. I wouldn’t want to do something that didn’t have immediate practical application.

Or maybe these educators could form a core of master teachers who would work with groups of young people with specific needs or interests in non-classroom situations: “The opportunity would make you want to have something worthwhile to say. It would be a real motivating thing and good overall for the profession.” Or, Maxine said, pair a teacher in the last few years with a teacher in the first few years in a team teaching situation to make mentoring a less informal process. She would also like to spend some significant time with the teacher who will replace her when she retires (“I’d like to have a hand in selecting this person, share my materials, be available for consultation.”) One thing the system could improve upon, Maxine said, is simply “asking teachers what they care about improving.”

**Letting Go: Minimizing Loss**

Throughout the time I spent with Maxine in two interviews and in reading her journals and thinking about her symbolic representation, I was most aware of the many facets of letting go of a career. First comes an awareness that the career will end, is ending. Assessing one’s present position involved a process of reaching into the past, of remembering it, of seeing who one is and who one has been, of letting go of the past and its losses while continuing to live in the present. Entering a transition period signifies that the shape of what one has known is changing but not necessarily the shape of what is to come—thus, the concept of amorphousness. This transition period offers opportunity for change and renewal, as Maxine illustrates by her desire to make the current unremarkable process of ending teaching careers more remarkable.
Bridges (1980) wrote, "As the ancients knew, transition is the way of personal development" (p. 88). He identified four parallels between "old passage rituals" and "our own unritualized experience" of natural endings: disengagement, disidentification, disenchantment, and disorientation (p. 92). These parallels can be seen in Maxine's experiences—from her gradual release of responsibilities, to her separation of her own identity from that of her school system, to her perception of significant losses within her profession. Some disorientation can be seen in the nature of her symbolic representation, the game board which leaves the player in the current stage of her career spinning around—reluctant to leave, reluctant to stay. In his study of endings followed by beginnings, Bridges wrote: "Although it is very advantageous to understand your own style of endings, there is some part of you that will resist that ending..." (p. 16).

As Maxine moves forward, she continues her own style of ending—gently releasing her career, as if she understands that letting go of the career gradually is a way to minimize its loss. But there is still a loss. Moving into the shapelessness of it at career end is part of becoming proficient in the languages of letting go.
The Teacher Grows/Sometimes She Burns/She Gives a Lovely Light:
Introduction to Betty's Story

Betty: I just want to make it clear that although I'm tired, and although I feel that I work awfully hard, and I'm very frustrated that so many people don't seem to recognize that, I also absolutely am not burned out. I don't know exactly why not.

Researcher: Do you see a lot of burned out teachers in your current school?

Betty: I see even relatively young people, people who have ten or fifteen years to go counting down the days to retirement, not just people who have been there almost 30 years—relatively young people who have totally lost their enthusiasm for the job—and I talked to Heather about this a little bit, and I've been thinking....

Researcher: Heather?

Betty: A university supervisor of student teachers. She said she thought she could tell from the journals who was going to have trouble down the line. Those who were not adjusting well during student teaching focused in their journals on "me." Me, me, me, me, me. The student teachers who were doing a wonderful job wrote about their students. They were not self centered. They were student centered. ...All I know is that I see people who are perfectly intelligent having a hard time. I don't know why they have gotten burned out and I haven't. I haven't been able to really figure that out yet, except I think it has to do somewhat with your outlook on life in general. Like, I'm an optimist by nature. I want to see the glass as half full...if I'm going to spend 8 hours a day every day of my life in this job, by god, I'm not going to hate it...and if I need to do something to make it better, if I need to make a change, if I need a new class, a new book, a trip during the summer, I will do whatever I need to do to maintain my enthusiasm. To some degree, I think it is a decision you make. I think that happiness, in a way, is a choice.

Researcher: So you think, in part, that not being burned out is a kind of life orientation?

Betty: Yes.

Researcher: That people bring into their jobs.

Betty: I do.

—Excerpt from interview transcript with Betty
Betty has had a rich and varied career, teaching in three urban high schools and in college classrooms, working closely with student teachers as both a university supervisor and a cooperating teacher, writing and editing for a professional newspaper and advising two school newspapers, and engaging in a host of related professional activities including active membership in professional organizations, committee work, and travel with students.

At the beginning of our first interview, I asked Betty to describe what it is like for her to be an English teacher in today’s urban high schools. She began:

I think it's very much like it's always been. I remember, after my first year of teaching when I just kind of started to work on a master’s degree, writing a paper about what that year had been like. The title was something like, "The Most Wonderful, Awful, Terrible, Frustrating, Rewarding Year of My Life." And that's still how it is...I feel the same thing that I've always felt about it in that I think teaching is really important work--even though it is largely unappreciated by society, and sometimes, by my students.

To Betty, the work is important, in part, because it fulfills an important function in society, something Betty calls "necessary and needed." The job is also important because, in Betty's view: "You can really put all of yourself, your whole heart and soul into it, go in there every day and do the best job that you can do because you really do affect people's lives." Once Betty even opened her home and family to share with a student who needed another place to live; her support enabled the student to graduate--and she knows of other teachers who "have had a kid live with them for one reason or another." Betty believes that English teachers get emotionally involved with their students perhaps more than teachers of other subjects do because of the emotions and human interactions explored while studying literature as well as because of the personal communication through journal and other writing: "It's a very emotionally involved life."

One of Betty's frustrations in trying to do an effective job in the classroom is the "terrible load of problems" students bring with them through the classroom doors: "At any moment of the day when I try to teach English, I can't deal with all those problems." She offers a few examples:

I have a little girl with no parents. She's been through a series of foster homes and now lives on her own. Instead of a mother, she has a caseworker. If she doesn't show up at school for two or three days, I get worried about her. I wonder where in the hell she is, what's she doing. I have another kid who is on parole. If he gets in trouble, he goes to jail. He has done no work in my class; I can't seem to get through to him. I have another kid who is bright. She needs more individual attention. She gets bored in my class, I know, because she's so far ahead of everybody else. She's lived in some foster
homes, now lives with her dad who is disabled. She comes and goes as she pleases. She's so smart, but she hangs around with a bad crowd; she's going to end up in trouble. I have a kid who comes to school every day smelling like marijuana. I mean, on and on and on and on...and it wears you out trying to meet everybody's needs and keep up with the subject matter and paperwork. You know, I'm on a couple of committees; we have teachers' meetings. It's an absolutely exhausting job.

In addition to being aware of the problems students face and being concerned for the students even after the school day ends, Betty notes that some problems manifest themselves in disruptive classroom behaviors:

I have really good kids in my classes, really smart kids who get short-changed because I'm too busy saying "Antonio, please be quiet" or "Sandra, please sit down." You know, "Please stop kicking the back of her chair, please...." You have to deal with so many stupid little discipline problems that you can't teach. It's infuriating...Physically, emotionally, and mentally, teaching is a very demanding job.

Betty says that in the last few years, she has experienced a growing awareness of her students as individuals, "each one separate, each one special, each one full of needs and feelings and problems...It's overwhelming." She feels frustrated when a student drops out of school and experiences a sense of failure when she couldn't prevent it, or "Some kid turns up pregnant, some kid goes to jail, some kid just refuses to do any work, and you feel like you failed them because you couldn't get through to them."

Acknowledging that many of her students come from a segment of the population that others in our society have "written off," Betty speaks of another frustration:

It's not enough that I have to deal with Walker who's on parole and Hazel who has no parents and Jameeka whose mother just died and Sasha who is pregnant, I have to deal with all this criticism from people who don't know what they're talking about.

She is referring to the media, the public at large, and even to the university. Of the media, she said:

I've got to read in Time and in Newsweek and in our local newspaper about what a terrible job we're doing? How the schools are failing? It's like I'm knocking myself out day after day. I know some teachers don't do it right, but most people I have known over the years, most of my colleagues, are the finest people in the world who go in there and try to do the best job they can possibly do for these kids—and what do we get? Grief. Grief from everybody from the school board to the state legislature to parents to the media and even grief from kids. Some days, you just want to go home and sit your wrists.
Although Betty has taught journalism and is not an advocate of censorship per se, she wonders why the media has abdicated its sense of responsibility in terms of influencing the young in our society:

The glorification of violence, the preoccupation of it, is absolutely detrimental to our young people—there is no doubt about it. I think that anyone who thinks that television doesn’t have an effect on young people should stand in schools and listen to students mouthing all this Bart Simpson crap.

Betty’s perception is that people in business and industry don’t respect teachers very much. She observed that many critics of public schools have not spent significant time in today’s schools, so they have no idea of what teachers are actually dealing with:

I feel like I could look any human being in the city in the eye and say: I work hard, I earn my money, I’m doing a damned good job, and if you don’t think so, follow me around for a week. Just come and see what I do, and then talk to me. Damn it, if anybody’s got a good suggestion, let me hear it. Otherwise, leave me alone. Better than that, give me a little support, you know?

Even the university where Betty has recently spent significant time earning a doctorate degree is not exempt from handing out grief to practicing teachers such as Betty:

It’s ironic, but I think that universities in general tend to give prospective teachers the notion that everybody out there practicing in a classroom is some kind of terrible old logey. I have sat in education classes where current teaching practices are denigrated and the teaching profession is pretty much denigrated, as if the only people who have good ideas, or who know what is going on or who are with it, are people who are at the university.

It makes Betty’s job harder when she meets student teachers who have been led to believe the current teaching force doesn’t know what it is doing:

I don’t know why the university seems to feel compelled so often to put down the very people who, after all, were trained in their institution—maybe not even very many years ago. It seems that once you become a practicing teacher, that you lose respect even from your own university and from your colleagues there...or your former colleagues there.

But Betty’s experiences have taught her that support for classroom teaching is not going to come from any external force. As she said, “Many of us have given up on the system...Support is going to come from the individual in the individual school.” Teachers need to support each other more, Betty said, “instead of everybody disappearing into their own classrooms and struggling on
alone." Most often, Betty has found, individual teachers need to find ways to support themselves. Over the years, Betty has done "whatever I need to do to maintain my enthusiasm."

She has continued to take graduate level coursework, attended numerous professional workshops, entered and won various writing competitions, joined and been active in professional organizations, developed and taught new courses, travelled with and without students. Some years she would advise the school newspaper; some years she wouldn't. One summer she wrote course guides for a new course to be taught in the fall. One year she and a friend went to an NCTE convention. Student teachers often gave Betty a sense of renewal and continue to do so. Sometimes a new administrator gave positive energy to a school; sometimes a new educational challenge would appeal to her. More than once, a boost came from something positive in her personal life. "All these things," Betty said, "contributed to my not being brain dead" and to her ability to deal with the frustrations of classroom life. She recalled, however, "a stage of being pretty discouraged" after 23 years in teaching:

I remember at least one year, every morning when the alarm went off, I didn't want to get out of bed and go to work. It took real willpower to force myself out of bed in the dark on those cold winter mornings... Every morning, I thought: I don't want to do this... My job seemed like a dead end. That's when I started thinking about applying for other jobs.

And so she applied for jobs in another school, in another school system, and in another kind of educational program. None of them worked out, and the process "hurt my ego at the time."

Some teachers may have found these experiences to be sufficiently discouraging; some may have given up. Not Betty. She continued to search for a way to regain her enthusiasm:

When I got really desperate for a change, I thought of a sabbatical leave. About the only way you can get a sabbatical is to go back to school. Well, I've always liked being a student, so I applied for a sabbatical to work on my doctorate.

After a year of sabbatical leave during which she studied doctoral level coursework, taught both a methods course and seminar, and supervised student teachers, she returned to another high school teaching assignment in her urban system. The students were younger than her previous students, and their behavior was out of control. Betty found herself in another discouraging situation: "The year was so terrible that I just knew I couldn't stay there." In typical fashion, Betty began to think of alternatives. She decided to apply for another sabbatical leave in order to
complete her doctorate program, she was granted the leave. Of those two sabbatical years in
graduate school, Betty said:

    The years in graduate school were just what I needed. I got
rejuvenated a little bit. I got a new lease on life. All of the
changes, including the high school where I am now, have
turned out to be good ones.

Betty continues to teach in an urban classroom, continues to work as a cooperating
teacher with student teachers, continues to try new ideas, continues to ask questions:

    As an eternal optimist, I keep trying to feel good about my teaching
career. One hundred students or more for 25 years...I must have
done some good for at least some of them. But sometimes, I still
feel discouraged. I see my student teacher struggling with the same
problems I had as a new teacher. Why don't we seem to make any
progress in public education?

As Betty thinks of the schools in which she has taught and of the conditions teachers continue to
face, she ponders the notion of progress:

    I'm still trying to find a major area in which I can say, "It looks like I made
some progress here." But that's not the case. In urban schools where
I have spent my life, it is largely undeniable, things have gotten worse,
and that is very sad, and I really hate that. We have a policeman in the
building now. We didn't used to. We have kids carrying guns to school
now. When I started teaching school, it wouldn't have entered anyone's
mind. We do have more kids getting pregnant now; it's not just something
that I read. I'm not just making these things up. These are facts....

During the current school year, Betty is again the chair of her department. She wants to
create a feeling among the English teachers of "cohesion and collaboration and comradeship,"
qualities which are missing at this school. She plans to try a variety of strategies to engage her
colleagues, hoping to boost their sagging spirits—and adding a self-imposed responsibility to her
job:

    We don't often think that it's our job to motivate or assist a colleague
because we're all supposed to be experts. But I think we should. I
think it's necessary. Who knows what could happen? Maybe some
new things will give people a spark of enthusiasm. Maybe we'll get
some new young people in. Maybe they'll be really glad to have these
opportunities. We'll see....It's going to be an interesting year.

Betty knows that her career is drawing to its close and is determined to do her best job
right to the end of it: "I would rather quit on a note of enthusiasm rather than feel that I'm dragging
my tail feathers behind me, you know?"
Basking in Betty's Incandescence: A Discussion

The allusion in the title of the introduction to Betty's story is from Edna St. Vincent Millay's poem "First Fig." It seems apt when thinking of Betty's experiences as a teacher. Although Millay's candle "will not last the night," Betty's light has continued to glow during a long and challenging career. The candle as symbol represents both the life of the individual and individuated light (Cirlot, 1995, p. 38); in this example, the teaching life of Betty and the individuation represented by her story. Betty's energy, which might be called luminous, is a beacon to others to do whatever they need to do to maintain their enthusiasm throughout the teaching career. Light, in another symbolic sense, means "a translation of a state of mind which has overcome the subjection of the individual ego" (Julien, 1989/1996, p. 243) as Betty has demonstrated on numerous occasions, particularly when she refers to unrewarded efforts which temporarily "hurt my ego at the time" but which did not impede her progress toward a solution. And light has been identified with the human spirit and with direct knowledge (Julien, p. 242), both of which can be applied to Betty.

Constructivist Teacher: A Shining Example

Another way to illuminate Betty's story is to view it through the constructs discussed in Women's Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice, and Mind (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986). Such a viewing is appropriate both because Betty used it as a seminal text in her dissertation and because Betty herself is the embodiment of a constructivist woman and teacher—that is, a woman and teacher who has evolved to the point of viewing knowledge as contextual, experiencing herself as a creator of knowledge, valuing both subjective and objective approaches in the identification of knowledge (p. 15), and as I will discuss later in this piece, posing questions and problems as a prominent means of inquiry (p. 139). Betty views her knowledge about teaching in the context of her urban school system, acknowledging that the context is significantly different in suburban schools or in private schools; her knowledge of these alternative contexts comes from doing research and from her first-hand acquaintance with the private school her teenage daughter attends. Betty has experienced herself as a creator of knowledge by completing an original research project which culminated in a dissertation. Finally, Betty values both subjective and objective learning strategies as evidenced when she found
ways to renew her spirit within herself or when she utilized procedural knowledge during graduate school experiences, illustrating that she is also a "practical, pragmatic problem solver" (p. 99).

Belenky, et al. (1986) distinguish between separate, connected, and constructed knowing. Separate knowing refers to the use of impersonal reason, critical thinking, rational methods, public language, argumentation, academic positioning (pp. 104-108): "Separate knowers learn through explicit formal instruction" (p. 115). Connected knowing, however, occurs through empathy and refers to "truth that is personal, particular, and grounded in firsthand experience" (p. 113). Constructed knowing refers to the integration of the two previous forms of knowing, leading to a position described as "All knowledge is constructed, and the knower is an intimate part of the known" (p. 137). The integration of the first two positions can be seen in Betty’s story as well as in her unique intimacy with the known—the teaching career, the urban school, its classrooms, its students.

When Betty alludes to a barrage of negative criticism from "people who don’t know what they’re talking about," she is also referring to the various critics’ lack of intimacy in varying degrees with the known. These critics included people whose careers are in business and industry, state legislators, reporters, media commentators, and even those associated with education who are not in the classroom, specifically parents, school board members, and university professors. She invites them to increase their intimacy when she says, "...follow me around...come and see what I do...." While some of the critics might be classified as separate knowers, such as those in universities or those working in the media, others appear to be connected knowers, such as parents. Indeed, maybe one reason so many groups feel able to give legitimate criticism of schools and teachers is that all of these critics perceive themselves to be connected knowers via their own personal, first-hand, K-12 experiences in urban, rural, suburban, or private school systems. None of these, however, are current public school students or teachers; thus their context lacks the value of currency. Moreover, none of these are long-term career teachers, even though some of them may have acquired a few years’ teaching experience before moving on to other careers. If those most intimate with the current urban classroom, namely teachers, have knowledge which it is impossible for others to have, then it becomes imperative for those who desire improvement to listen more carefully to what teachers have to say. It is possible that Betty’s words, as a constructivist teacher, deserve undivided attention; it may be that Betty’s efforts
deserve undiluted support—on Betty’s terms, not on terms generated by those less intimate with
the urban classroom.

**Betty’s Morality: An Emanation of Caring**

Betty’s moral stance as revealed in her words and actions also locates her within the
constructivist position wherein the moral imperative found in *Women’s Ways of Knowing*
(Belenky, et al., 1986) can be characterized as consideration for how outcomes will affect
everyone involved, commitment to live by one’s opinions and beliefs, and an absorption with
moral and spiritual dimensions of life (pp. 149-150). In short, Belenky, et al., found that for
constructivist people, “...the moral response is a caring response” (p. 149).

Betty’s caring for her students is evident throughout both interviews—she is profuse in
mentioning students by name, revealing an awareness of their individual problems; she is
concerned when students fall in or out of the classroom, projecting blame on no one in particular,
accepting responsibility even over circumstances she cannot control as when she expresses her
feelings of failure because she “couldn’t get through to them.” Betty even cares that the public
not view her students as the “worthless, useless party animals” they are sometimes portrayed to
be. She sees her students “by and large” as people who care about issues and other people with
“decent minds” and “good hearts.” She loses sleep at night worrying about their problems,
wondering if they are all right when they are absent from her class. Her concern with how
outcomes of actions affect others extends to those responsible for television programming. It is
her wish that they become aware of the detrimental effects of broadcasts chosen with the goal of
attracting large numbers of viewers no matter the cost to the development of the young or to
society as a whole. Her commitment to live consonant with her beliefs is evident throughout her
interviews and journals but is no where more striking than in her own determination to “do
whatever I need to do” to maintain her positive life orientation in order to continue to help others.
Further, Betty’s concern with the spiritual dimension of life is evidenced in her words: “I have a
mystical streak...I think, in the long run, things work out for the best.”

**Teaching Career as Journey: A Lambert Sketch**

During our second interview, Betty brought a symbolic representation of her thoughts
and feelings about her pending retirement, a multi-colored crayon sketch of a long, curving road
coming to an abrupt end with a question mark staring back at the road. An automobile, airplane,
flower, bird, "abc," and "words" are the images in her drawing. The road represents Betty's teaching career, her journey through adult life up to retirement. The road is multi-colored, like Betty's career, "because all kinds of different things have happened, some good, some bad, some bright moments, some dark moments, and the road has been up and down, some peaks and valleys. and then it stops... I mean, you walk out the door and boom! Everything is different."

The objects represent future travel, gardening ("my passion"), bird-watching ("a minor hobby"), teaching ("hopefully in a college"), and working with language ("I plan to do more writing."). She summarizes her feelings: "One of the nice things about the teaching career is that you can retire after 30 years. You're still a relatively young person, and you can have a whole new life...I'm looking forward to my new life." In retrospect, Betty says she would add a book to the images because she also plans to do a significant amount of reading. And the representation lacks her feelings about aging: "Of course, I hate getting older, dammit, and I think people who say they don't are lying." She would also make the road much wider at the end to illustrate the growth and learning that occurred during the 30 years. Finally, she would like to find a better metaphor than a road that simply ends, "something that would encompass one thing ending and a host of things opening up." She alludes to a spiritual aspect of the process when she says that a Phoenix image is more negative than what she is looking for:

Not a Phoenix, because the end of the teaching career is not ashes or death... My school will be there whether I am or not... My leaving is just going to make a little blip in the radar screen... There will be some sadness, and it's a little scary, but death is too negative for this. I don't feel negative about it. It's more of a reincarnation kind of thing where you just go out of one cycle into another one.

Betty says that thoughts of death are on her mind, however, when she thinks about retirement: "It's hard to separate how I feel about my career coming to an end and how I feel about my life in general coming to an end." Overall, this symbolic representation reinforces Betty's orientation toward life as optimistic, moving from one cycle into another, accepting both peaks and valleys, living in the tunnel but "seeing the light at the end," as Betty said during our second interview.

The Fifth Stage of Thought: Making Problems Visible

Betty's vast experience in urban public schools combined with her intellectual curiosity cause her to generate numerous questions toward the end of her career, and again place her in
the category of constructivist in Women’s Ways of Knowing (Belenky, et al., 1986): “Question posing and problem posing become...strategies that some researchers have identified as a fifth stage of thought beyond formal-operational or logical thought” (p. 139). Her question posing can be traced throughout the two interviews. The following is a sampling of her questions:

1. Would students benefit from smaller classes?
2. What can we do to motivate students who won’t do their work? students who won’t even try?
3. In what ways and when would we benefit from some gender grouping?
4. How can we improve the student teaching experience?
5. When are we going to understand that we need professional educators on boards of education? (“I can’t think of any other important system that is run in this manner. The A.M.A. is run by physicians; the legal profession is run by lawyers. Why are people who are not educators on boards of education running the schools?”)
6. What, if anything can we do to prevent teachers from burning out or from giving up or from withdrawing from participation in the school? “What makes the difference between teachers who are burnt out and bummed out at the end of their careers and those of us who are still in there struggling and fighting and loving as well as hating our jobs?”
7. How can we better utilize teachers who have accumulated a vast amount of “expertise that apparently nobody needs? How can we get that experience respected and put to work?”
8. Why don’t we seem to make more progress in education?

Research Opportunities: Turning Up the Searchlight

Betty, trained to do educational research, gets excited when thinking about the possibilities of some released time for doing research as part of her job as she ends her teaching career:

That would be wonderful, really wonderful. It would put a whole new slant on what you’re doing for the last few years...Not only would it be gratifying for me personally, but I also think we could find some answers, find some things that our educational system could benefit from, make us more effective—i’m talking about useful information that doesn’t require legislators or drastic changes in the popular culture or society as a whole...I’m talking about solvable problems.
Completing her doctoral degree three years prior to retirement was an achievement that Betty took pride in; the degree took her four years to complete, two of which involved full-time study while on sabbatical leaves from her teaching assignment. She called the sabbatical leaves "one of the nicest things my school system ever did for me." Although Betty felt "a sense of triumph and a sense of relief" when the degree was completed, she was disappointed but not surprised that her school system did not utilize her educational achievement to benefit itself: "They’re not utilizing me at all." While she did not complain about how she was placed in teaching assignments on return from her sabbatical leaves, she did mention that the current personnel system fulfills its role mechanically:

It’s just the luck of the draw...That’s what personnel is concerned about. You’re just a peg to put in a hole. There is absolutely no concern about whether you fit in this hole or might be better in another hole. Treating somebody who has just earned an advanced degree as just another person in the pool does not make you feel very appreciated.

Betty expressed the importance of identifying some ways that the school system can benefit from her "four years of hard work...besides just putting me back in a tenth grade classroom." Betty said that the school system is not set up to notice specific expertise:

The system, because it’s so large and so impersonal, does not make distinctions in its utilization of teachers...Nobody gives a damn that I got my Ph.D. just like nobody gives a damn whether I’m a good teacher or a bad teacher.

It’s difficult to get respect for expertise, she added, when administrators are happy if teachers “just show up for school every day and don’t let the kids throw chairs out the windows.” Another troublesome thought surfaces: “At a university, people honor Ph.D.s, but in a public school system, I feel pretty much sneered at.”

I wonder where Betty’s ongoing efforts either to advance her knowledge or to deliver inspiring instruction are going to receive any recognition, respect, or reinforcement. The personnel office ignores her advanced qualifications; other educators minimize the accomplishment; those at the university seem to respect her position less when she is back in a public school classroom; numerous students show disrespect by creating "stupid little discipline problems"; and the media continues to downgrade the efforts of teachers. In the face of so little
affirming recognition, Betty's inner strength must be awesome. In the face of so much negative feedback, it is humbling to see her continued productivity, effort, and positive energy.

Earlier Betty said that as her awareness of the individuality and specific individual needs of her students grows stronger, she feels more overwhelmed. Maybe that's the feeling the school system's personnel administrators would have if they were more aware of the individual talents, backgrounds, and capabilities of its teaching force. Sophisticated computer programs might assist in compiling a data bank and in retrieving information at lightning speed at needed intervals; maybe it would take a staff of people whose sole business is to know more about its teachers' strengths and to keep ever-expanding relevant information up to date in order to match such information with a more differentiated identification of system needs. To echo Betty, I'm talking about a problem that is soluble, at least in part.

Involving teachers in highlighting, addressing, and generating solutions to soluble problems would help educators make progress, the lack of which was one of Betty's persistent concerns during her two interviews. A review of the data gathered during those interviews suggests a few reasons for a lack of more measurable progress in Betty's terms: As teachers retire, school systems discard their teaching materials along with their experience, just as systems disregard specific experience and talents regularly throughout the teaching career, a practice especially conspicuous to teachers with long careers who are placed in new teaching assignments without regard for their expertise like "a peg to be placed in a hole." It's like working in the dark, or maybe the Dark Ages. If the nature of one's teaching experience, the specifics of one's formal education during the career, and one's personal proclivities and talents are nontable for all practical purposes in a school system after one is hired, it is no wonder that progress seems elusive. A rich and valuable resource is being identified and treated as an ordinary commodity with limited use. A rich and valuable resource is being disregarded and then discarded, omitted rather than emitted.

In summary, Betty shines as a model of an evolved, constructivist teacher—a valuable and underutilized resource. She values both subjective and objective approaches to knowledge which she views as contextual; she sees herself as a creator of knowledge, combining separate and connected knowing into constructed knowing; problem-posing and question-posing are part of her nature; and she embodies a morality of caring. She is committed to teaching at a high level
because she believes that teaching is important work, even if others in society seem to provide little more than lip service to the notion. She has learned not to wait for classroom support from external forces, to find support within herself; now she hopes to find ways to extend that support to others. She would also like to enlighten boards of education by providing them with teacher members who have first-hand knowledge, who are intimate with students and classroom conditions. Finally, she would like teachers, those most intimate with the known over a long period of time, to participate in the creation of relevant knowledge which could ameliorate ongoing educational problems and hopefully result in progress.

In a personal sense, Betty's story is about rising above the bonfire of destructive, ill-informed criticism; it is about the opportunity to become more than a blip on a radar screen. In a practical sense, Betty's story is about illuminating solvable problems. In a symbolic sense, it is about increasing the luminous range of evolved teachers. In a spiritual sense, Betty's story is about the reincarnation of hope as she approaches retirement, an affirmation of her orientation to life, a kind of appenglow:

What is so positive is not only about what I'm going to do in the future, but about what I've done in the past. I think I've done good work. By and large, I think I can be proud of my career. There have been times when it has been a real struggle, and certainly there have been failures along the way, but I can look myself in the mirror. I can sleep at night feeling that I have done the best I could. I had an important job to do, and I did it to the best of my ability. Always.

"...till the Moon
Rising in clouded Majestie, at length
...unveil'd her peerless light,
And o'er the dark her silver mantle threw."
—Milton, Paradise Lost, Book IV, 1.606
The Ritual of the Banquet: Introduction to Vanessa’s Story

They arrive in banquet dress—flowing, stylish dresses and dark tailored suits—at one of the finest hotels in the city ready to honor colleagues and themselves in six professional award categories, one category being their own retirement from a teaching career in an urban district. More than 500 people gather at the event which has taken place for decades, find tables with colleagues and relatives or friends, purchase a glass of wine, and listen to music performed by students of the district in which they, the teachers, have spent the primes of their lives.

They dine on tenderloin of beef with cabernet sauvignon sauce, compliments of their association, before reading instructions prepared for retirees: “When your group is asked to come forward, please take the seat with the number corresponding to the number next to your name on this list...just like high school graduation...remember?” Seventy-five teachers determine whether they are in Group A or Group B; when Group A is called from the loudspeaker, half of them walk to the front of the banquet hall and sit on a chair with an appropriate number.

One by one, the retirees, who collectively embody more than 2,000 years of service in public education, walk across the front of the hall to receive a single flower and to have a photograph taken with one of the assistant superintendents in the school system. Each name is read aloud followed by the total number of years the person has spent in the teaching career, how many of those years are with the current urban system, the specific schools in which the person has spent his or her professional life, the hobbies and future plans of each retiree. Each also receives a paperweight as a memento of the occasion.

The process proceeds smoothly until feedback in the sound system creates a piercing noise, drowning the words of the moderator, who pauses before continuing to read the information before him. Only one teacher’s personal summary is garbled—#9 in Group B. The ceremony proceeds smoothly amidst the random applause and ongoing mingling of the guests.

When all the retiring teachers have been recognized, crowd applause is followed by other awards to educators who remain in the field. Here and there, individuals and couples rise and begin to float slowly toward the doors of the banquet hall, step through the portals, and enter the night.

---A Description of Vanessa’s Retirement Banquet
The Last Year of an English Teacher's Career: Vanessa's Story

No other teacher interviewed for this study illustrates so openly the sense of joy, of jubilation, of overt freedom to be found in the preparation for and celebration of the retirement experience. Our first interview took place during the summer before Vanessa's last year of teaching; our second occurred one week after her retirement. I attended her formal retirement banquet mentioned in the above intercalary description; I learned the rest of the story during our interviews.

Vanessa began her career with a solid academic background, the only one of our group to obtain a Master's degree in English literature (including the writing of a thesis) before beginning her teaching career. At first she was an idealist: "I think everybody was an idealist. Why else would they become teachers?...But I don't think it takes too long to change any more, ideallyistically." Her first years of teaching were positive: "The students kept me on my toes." But that hasn't happened for a very long time. As more and more her teaching schedule was overloaded with lower level classes and unmotivated students, Vanessa's chosen career became less fulfilling. Her academic preparation became increasingly irrelevant:

Nothing I had studied was of any use...Kids come roaring into your room with carryover from home, with carryover from the neighborhood...lights at 7:00 on Monday morning...I don't know how many of my kids say they couldn't do their paper because they think they're pregnant or they couldn't get into their houses, or they were in the emergency room...I used to help them, spend whatever time after school, any kid that asked...but now, so many kids going into masonry, autobody...Of what relevance is "The Minister's Black Veil? the wife of Bath?"

At one point, Vanessa made a serious attempt to leave the career:

I tried to leave after my 12, 13 or 15 years. It was a bad time. I looked at other jobs, but nothing worked out...I had all kinds of doubts, so then you just get sort of sucked in, you know, with benefits of retirement, and you say, well, I've got 15 years. Maybe I'll change schools. Then you have 20, only one third left, so....

In spite of the frustrations, Vanessa says she begins every year with hope, continues to try to reach her students—even though she has often felt more like a day care worker than a teacher.

One of the unpleasantries is being referred to as one of the "old fogies" by younger teachers:

There is a little clash at my school between the young teachers and the major aging teachers—the five years until retirement group. One of the younger teachers was overheard by an elderly (at least 50, I'd say) Latin teacher referring to other teachers on a reform committee as the 'old fogies.' Now that got around to the old fogies rather quickly....
Another unpleasantness is being older than some of her students' grandmothers: "How cool can they expect us to be?" Sometimes, during classes, she would find herself thinking: "When is the bell going to ring? I mean the final bell...."

One More Year to Go:

Vanessa was clear about her retirement intentions at least one year in advance, though it had been on her mind "for a long time." At our first meeting, she said that one way or the other, after one more year, "I'm ready to get out" and "I'm not going back." Although she had taught for only 28 years (and 30 are needed for retirement before the age of 55), she hoped to buy back a year's worth of credit for working for the federal government while in college. She was, in fact, able to do that.

Vanessa held some firm principles which would guide her last year and some general ideas for how the year might be played out. Of retirement, she was planning to leave her classroom one day and simply not return. Already she was looking forward to different sleep hours: "I'm a night person, and I have to get up at 5:30 a.m. every school day. I will never, ever, ever, ever get used to that...I just think it's so uncivilized...Look at animals. Even my cat doesn't want to get up at that time." She was also looking forward to using her evening and weekend time for something besides schoolwork:

I hate the pile. I just hate taking so much stuff home, but I do it. If you're an English teacher, you have to. Now I think: No more bags biting into my fingers from carrying all those papers and notebooks home, no more little spiral things all over my floors...You know, there is always something, always. I may not always do something, but I always have something to do.

She had no other plans except those for attending the formal retirement banquet at which she planned to have her photograph taken with the superintendent of the school system.

She recalled examples over the years of teachers she had observed departing from the school system and was determined not to engage in some of those actions which had negatively affected the school. One teacher, she said, "look at least a day a week off, and that created chaos." She would not do that. She would also not resort to meaningless paperwork:

Some have gone to what I call "shutup sheets." That's what the kids like...Those textbook companies have come out with such elaborate masters, teachers just copy them. Some copy them at the end of one year for the next, so in the fall, they can just start laying the paper on them.
Other than that, she planned to maintain academic standards. One teacher who knew that Vanessa was thinking of retiring asked her if the next year would be her last. Vanessa's response was an enthusiastic "Yes, yes!" That teacher told Vanessa that she was sorry to see her go because Vanessa was one of the few teachers left who still had some standards. Vanessa reflected on that:

"It's true. I do push the kids...and I continue to carefully read and mark all their papers, even if many teachers don't and even though many classrooms resemble day care centers or holding tanks...I'm not going to do anything differently, even if it is my last year. I might feel a little different thinking...my last opening staff meeting, the last time I have to do—whatever—my last homecoming assembly. I might be more buoyant of a Monday because you can count down Mondays.

Vanessa also planned to begin her last year as she had begun previous years—with hope:

"Teachers tend to be optimistic; I do think so. I see older teachers still working away at it. Even I, as cynical as I am, begin each year thinking the best—I'll try some new approaches, some new ideas... Maybe this year will be better...and sometimes they are. I never fail to marvel at how well behaved the kids are. They can terrorize people on the street. Then you put them in a class, and they will read things they don't want to read and pay attention to bells... Sometimes a kid will say: "That's the best thing we've read all year," or "I didn't know I had learned so much." Those moments are good.

Vanessa planned to leave quietly at the end of the year because, in part, of the way she had observed others being treated in the past. At one school, she said a man who had taught 30 years received no recognition whatsoever except as part of a school lunch when someone paid for free pizza and salad. A banner hung in the faculty lunchroom which said: "Happy Retirement, You Lucky Dogs!" Shaking her head from side to side, Vanessa said, "I don't know if that computer printout banner made them feel any better. I'd rather just slink off, myself." Another example occurred during her first or second year of teaching:

The 'old folks' who had taught 35 or 40 years were given a little figurine, and I'm not talking about a Royal Dalton...a golf umbrella, and things like that. It is so demeaning, the way people go out...I think we should get a gold watch. I really think we should...It's so pitiful...."

Exiting the Career

One year later, one week after the school year had ended and Vanessa's retirement was official, we met for a second interview. She had enjoyed her last year of teaching, in part by
looking toward retirement all year long. Her year-long awareness acquired its own momentum. "I had reversed my ideas," she said when referring to how she had ended her career:

"I had such fun cleaning things out, throwing them away. Every week I'd carry big armloads of my files and dump them in the recycling bin in the xerox room, and I'd throw them up in the air... People had a hard time being around me toward the end; you know, I'd announce my last parent conference day, last whatever, but I was having a good time.

Instead of quietly fading away, Vanessa celebrated with five retirement parties. One was the formal banquet which she attended with a friend and close relative. One was a dinner party given by a relative for friends and family members. The social committee of her high school had a 45-minute party sandwiched in during a lunch period. Her English department had a gathering, and, on the last day of school, she and another retiring English teacher gave a luncheon party in a banquet room at a local restaurant for the entire high school staff. The latter event was the most unique celebration in that she and the other retiring teacher were so joyous that they picked up the tab—more than $400 each—instead of the more customary practice of asking each guest to make a financial contribution (a practice Vanessa called "chintzy"). More than 75 faculty, administrators, and staff came to the retirement luncheon given not for those retiring but by the retirees. The two English teachers sent out invitations; the only requirement for attendance was "no presents, no speeches, no ceremony." Vanessa called the party "a great one."

By the time of our second interview, Vanessa was already embracing her post-teaching life. She had enrolled in a graduate program to enter a new career and to stimulate her intellect. She resolved never again to participate in anything that resembles a teacher's meeting, and she spoke enthusiastically about her future—this, in stark contrast to her tone at our first interview.

Although Vanessa had indicated that she was not interested in creating a symbolic representation expressing her feelings about retirement, she brought several artifacts—one of them fitting the category of symbolic representation. Vanessa had made a collage on the 8 1/2 x 11 inch retirement certificate she had received from central office. She shared the certificate, still with perforated edges, with fellow faculty members who laughed uneasily at it. The collage contained a small piece of onion dropped there by accident when the certificate was passed around during lunch. It further contained an Eddie Bauer sticker, a partial copy of her official letter
of resignation, her teaching schedule, an administrator comment made on an evaluation form, and a local newspaper clipping.

Her notice of retirement letter began: "With the lightest of hearts, I hereby resign from actual teaching." Vanessa said that she worded the letter that way because "so many teachers aren't actually teaching any more." The newspaper clipping quoted a local judge who had referred to the school system as "another chaotic environment (name withheld—a youth offender) had been subjected to." Vanessa's plans were to frame the certificate—now personalized—and to hang it in her basement.

Another artifact was a 5 x 8 wooden plaque with the inscription "95-96," the current school year, given to anyone planning not to return to that particular school the following year. Vanessa called it "cheap." She had been in that school for more than a decade and received the same inscription as a teacher who had been there for one year. Also from her school, Vanessa received a gift certificate to a bookstore and, by her own request, a golf umbrella. Teachers asked her why she wanted a golf umbrella since she does not play golf. She said:

"Because in my second year of teaching there was this guy who had put in 40-some years, and when he retired at the end of the year, they gave him a golf umbrella. And I was sitting there saying, 'They...gave...him...a...golf...umbrella...after all that time.' So that's what I asked for...and it was a nice golf umbrella, too."
The Rituals of Career End: A Discussion

"Everything we do in our growing up has been done before. But it needs recognition and validation each time for each one of us—public, private, and secret. The rituals must be observed. The rituals are calm marking the path behind us and ahead of us. Without them we lose our way."

Robert Fulghum (1995, p. 23)

Ritual is one of the “most important areas of experience in our everyday lives (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 230)…In performing them, we give structure and significance to our activities, minimizing chaos and disparity in our actions” (p. 234). In Vanessa’s story, rituals emerge as a topic of significance: rituals of public and private celebration and rituals relating to work.

The Retirement Banquet: A Micro-analysis

The most public ritual that Vanessa participated in as she approached retirement was the ritual of the banquet, an event that she attended in the company of her mother and her closest friend. Several of the elemental ritual items were present: water, bread, wine, and sugar, salt, and pepper. In addition, individuals were expected to behave in a mannerly fashion—their “most graceful ritual behavior” (Fulghum, 1995, pp. 98-99). The vast majority of those in attendance were educators, their presence reflecting both the significance of membership to this community and the significance of the moment—honoring retiring and practicing teachers. We can stipulate that the intentions of the evening were honorable and that many, maybe all, in attendance appreciated those intentions which created a pleasant evening. Having said that, a closer analysis may reveal how limitations in the event itself make it fail to rise to the occasion—not for the group as a whole, but for the individuals ending their careers.

One limitation is the sparse time available to honor each person, a kind of conflict between efficiency versus efficacy. Fulghum (1995) proposes: “Rituals are timed by beats of the heart, not ticks of the clock…Heart time is not clock time—rituals should never be hurried” (113). Each individual teacher at the banquet, however, received one minute, more or less, recognition—after 30 years, more or less, of service. Considering the typical 7 1/2 hour school day (not including extra daily, evening, or weekend time spent working on school-related matters) and the 180 day school year, a conservative estimate yields the startling ratio of one minute of personal career recognition versus a minimum of 2,430,000 minutes of service in the educational career. While the brief remarks made at the banquet were based on information gathered from the individuals
involved, few, if any, indicated the professional contributions, the innovations, the achievements, the actual efforts of the teacher during a career lifetime. No opportunity was provided for the teachers themselves to share a few parting thoughts. Of course, those at the banquet were not the only teachers retiring in the school system. Several chose not to attend; others would make the decision to retire over the summer and receive little or no attention at all, not even a name published in a fall newsletter. For many at the banquet, the brief words spoken by the association leader was the only system-wide recognition they have ever received. At Vanessa’s banquet, one teacher’s fleeting moment was brutally usurped by a failing sound system.

The directions to the retiring teachers for participating in their recognition appeared in the program and contained what was probably intended as light humor: “...just like high school graduation...remember?” The reference is unfortunate, however, and inadvertently demeaning. For example, it is generally understood that many secondary teachers, as part of their professional lives, attend high school commencement ceremonies regularly when their students graduate each year, but the same is not true for middle and elementary teachers; thus, the reference must refer to one’s own high school experience some 34 or more years in the past. The implication of “remember?” is trifid: one, that the teachers’ own high school experiences were so long ago that they must be very old people now; two, they may be too senile or forgetful to remember; three, they may be otherwise unable to comprehend the directions. At a time when people may be concerned about advancing age, the reference is unfortunate. The comparison of the two ceremonies misses the mark. While both are milestones and rites of passage, completing a high school education is a goal of youth; completing the complexities of a career can only be an achievement of age. Further, a high school graduation ceremony was not the last ceremony teachers participated in. All have been eligible to attend at least one graduation ceremony (before being qualified to teach), and many have attended one or two additional graduation ceremonies at institutions of higher learning where graduate degrees have been conferred upon them. If such comparisons must be made at all, at least the reference to a university graduation would come closer to indicating the degree of respect these people have surely earned. The objections made here are more to the underlying attitude, albeit unintended, which made the comparison possible. Actually, culminating a career takes more life time than fulfilling the requirements for any
graduation ceremony. The directions were perfectly clear to anyone who can read. Why not treat the retirees with more dignity?

Vanessa said she enjoyed going to the retirement banquet, that it was “nice.” Although she didn’t complain about it, she did note that retirees had to pay for their own wine—and that to get wine during dinner, one person at their table had to go to another area of the hotel to obtain it. She also missed having her photograph taken with the superintendent of schools, one of the main reasons she attended the affair to begin with—but the superintendent was inexplicably absent. No reason was given to the group for his lack of attendance; no message was delivered from him to the retiring teachers—no thanks for a lifetime of service, no benevolent wishes, no words of goodbye. The message in this inaction? Some might infer that honoring retiring teachers was not significant enough to warrant a Saturday night from the superintendent of schools.

Vanessa’s friend in attendance at the banquet noted that Vanessa was the only practicing teacher who listed entering a new career among her future plans. This observation concurred with my own, although I noted that an educator on special assignment, who was no longer a classroom teacher, said that she planned to do consulting work. Vanessa’s future plans also included “Never again to hear the 7:00 a.m. news on my car radio” referring to her day-by-day dislike of beginning the school day at an “uncivilized” hour and its accompanying ritual. Vanessa’s future plans are indicative of her desire to step down from teaching in this urban system and to proceed with a more gratifying way of living.

Celebrating Career End: “No Big Deal”

The four other celebratory events that Vanessa attended further illustrate her positive attitude toward leaving this career behind. Of the dinner party given by a family member, Vanessa expressed surprise that her brother with a heavy work schedule who lived out of state came to the event:

He came out of the blue because he thought it was a big deal...like being invited to a wedding...He thought it was important enough to come, so he did...I guess it could be considered a defining event, but most people don’t treat it that way.

This attitude is not surprising given Vanessa’s response to an interview prompt which asked how her career had affected her concept of self:
Sometimes it has lowered my self concept...Of course it does. Sometimes you feel a total failure. You look at student test results...I don't think anyone can avoid that at least sometimes. Oh sure. It has. It does...Really I'm a classroom grub; that's what I've always been. They treat us the lousiest and pay us the lousiest.

Another factor suggests the importance of retiring to Vanessa—the "How many more years?" factor. In our first interview, Vanessa said that teachers were asking each other and her, "How many more years until you can retire?" At the time, she had 15 years to go. Now, she said:

Everyone talks about it. How many more years do you have to do? How many more years? Day after day, they wonder whether it's doable or not. Everyone tells a teacher who has been in five years, "Get out now. You can't last."

Others interviewed during my research mentioned the same phenomenon. An administrator, who received no recognition at all from the system upon retirement, said during a telephone interview: "I notice that people are getting out as fast as they can. The more years you have in, the more likely you are to hear about people wanting out. The typical greeting teachers give is, 'How many more years do you have?'" One of my peer reviewers who is not a teacher gave the following response to reading the "How many more years?" part of Vanessa's transcript: "Sounds like a jail sentence, not a career."

Thus, Vanessa's actions confute her words. Leaving her role as a teacher behind was a "big deal" indeed. Why else would she say that almost everybody is stressed by teaching in the current conditions? Why would she say, "Everybody's life is being shortened by continuing to teach"? Why else would one attend five celebrations upon leaving a school system? Why else would one throw a luncheon party for 75 people? What seems fundamentally wrong is that the retiree should have to provide the party to ensure that there is a party worthy of the event.

The luncheon given by the social committee at her high school was "as nice as it can be when you have 45 minutes to eat." This salute to retiring teachers again violates the principle of rituals being "timed by beats of the heart, not ticks of the clock" (Fulghum, 1995, p 113). Vanessa's request for a golf umbrella, however, was motivated by beats of the heart and a 27-year-old memory in honor of the teacher whose own 40+ years as a teacher ended not with a bang, but with a whimper. Her choice of an umbrella drives home with poignancy the lack of value
placed on 30 or more years of career service...something she learned during her second year of teaching and did not forget.

The Form is the Medium: Therein Lies the Message

Vanessa's actions and artifacts illustrate again and again in our society at large and in educational institutions in particular the preoccupation with form vs. substance. Vanessa was so discouraged by teacher's meetings and staff development sessions that she declined to participate in the collaborative session planned for this research:

I don't know if I can stand it...I mean, it sounds like a teachers' meeting...I just don't like to talk about those things. The last teachers' meeting I went to was the classic one; after that, I thought I wouldn't go to any more. At the last one, somebody from downtown came to talk to us about cooperative learning. It was so...I couldn't believe it...I was losing it. I'm going to retire, and somebody from downtown...I've got to leave.

The lack of appropriate content and/or meaningful substance in meetings was something Vanessa could no longer tolerate. Neither did she attend the last faculty meeting of the year at her school. The luncheon party given by Vanessa and another retiring English teacher changed an accepted form by asking those in attendance to honor a covenant: to give "no presents, no speeches, no ceremony." The substance of the gathering was in the spending of time together, the pause in a busy day for communion and relaxation.

Among artifacts, the plaque given to Vanessa at her school fulfilled the requirements of form but no personalization. The retirement certificate sent her from central office was an expression of form; her transformation of it was a matter of substance. The golf umbrella appeared as a token gift; its substance was its quiet message. Vanessa and other retirees also received a paperweight, a traditional parting gift, at the retirement banquet. William Stafford (1991) wrote of this practice in "Toward the End":

They will give you a paperweight
Carved out of heavy wood with black letters
That say everyone likes you and will miss
So steady and loyal a worker...

And oh the years of hovering anger
All around when each day reluctantly
Opened and then followed like some dedicated
Stealthy, calculating, teasing assassin.

Now you can walk into the evening... (pp. 213-14)
But Vanessa's paperweight did not say that her loyal and steady work would be missed; the paperweight, not expensive and not very heavy, fulfilled the requirements of form. When one looks at Vanessa's story as a whole, it is easy to draw the conclusion that retirement is important enough that some recognizable rituals and practices have been established to draw attention to it; what is missing is meaningful substance in a ritual of "goodbye," a ritual which Fulghum (1995) calls "basic to all relationships between people" (p. 265).

Another impression I have as a researcher is that an academic mind and talent has been misused or underutilized, if not wasted. Vanessa's Master's degree, completed before her teaching career began in the 1960's, was earned at a private college with rigorous standards which required the mastery of a foreign language "and it couldn't be Spanish. It had to be German or French," and the rigorous standards mandated a thesis on an aspect of English literature. This academically talented teacher was, for most of her career, mismatched with a clientele whose values and abilities were disparate from her own. The loss goes beyond the personal; the students, the school system, and the society it serves lost an important human resource.

Finally, celebrations may require "lament for aspects of life that are irrevocably lost" (Cole 1994, p. 11). Citing an Hasidic saying, Cole and Winkler share that the highest form of mourning is the song. Even though it was not in Vanessa's character to sentimentalize, I think she would approve of what I am going to say. Our first interview took place in a Chinese restaurant where we were presented with fortune cookies at the end of our meal. Vanessa read her fortune aloud: "Optimism—A cheerful frame of mind that enables a tea kettle to sing when in hot water up to its nose." She laughed and said: "This is definitely related to what we are talking about. This is a description of a teacher! I think you should include that in your report of this interview." I don't know if Vanessa was mourning or not, but I can hear the song in Vanessa's heart as she threw her files into the air and the recycling bin; I can hear it in her five retirement parties. I hear the original words of the song's beginning: "With the lightest of hearts, I hereby resign...." and as I type these words, I am reminded of the eloquence of poet Siegfried Sassoon (1920/1963): "Everyone suddenly burst out singing...the singing will never be done" (p. 878).
Heart as Essence: Introduction to Nathan’s Story

You know, I would never have thought that they could carry me out on a stretcher some day. They do with some teachers. It’s pretty pitiful. They carry out younger teachers. They’re carrying out some my age. They should have carried me, by all reasonable standards.

For nine days, I taught with numb hands and arms. For nine days, with uncontrollable chest pains, I taught. I told my family doctor the symptoms: dizziness, nausea, pain, then severe pain. He said I had nothing to be concerned about: “You’ve probably got a virus.” So I continued to go to school, and I continued to have chest pains, pain that would wake me up at night and keep me awake.

After three nights, I stopped my evening workouts because during them and for an hour after completing them, the symptoms occurred. I would go for a walk or to a card shop...Even these activities caused discomfort. The pain would start again.

One Monday, I went to school with three class sections of journals in my bookbag; carrying them was an effort. Later that morning, after moving 30 grammar books from a table in my classroom to a bookcase, I couldn’t breathe. I had a pain surge so bad that another teacher called my physician. This time I had an X-ray and an echogram, resulting in referral to a cardiologist. On Thursday, I arranged class coverage in order to see the cardiologist and had planned to return to teach the rest of my classes after the appointment. I never would have guessed that the finality of my career loomed imminently the moment I left that classroom.

The physician I saw that day just listened. He didn’t want to see the EKG results or conduct an ultrasound. He just wanted the story. He listened carefully, and then he put me in the hospital immediately. He said he was flabbergasted that I had not had a heart attack. What I had was severe blockage of the arteries. I still had not made the connection that when my heart accelerated, the pain occurred. I had not made the connection that blood was trying to get through.

That night, before triple bypass surgery, the severe pain started again, so they tried nitroglycerin pills. Once, twice, three times—nothing happened. They began a nitroglycerin drip, then brought out a heart pump. That’s when I had the thought: “I think I might die here.”

—Reconstruction of Nathan’s recollection of the critical incident which precipitated his decision to retire from teaching

174
Nathan's Story: The Heart of a Teacher

My first interview with Nathan took place one week after he had mailed his official letter of resignation to his school board and four months after his heart surgery. The decision was still new and had been accompanied with mixed feelings and soul searching. His recent brush with death had tipped the scales. Unlike Vanessa, his retirement intention letter might have begun: "With the heaviest of hearts...."

During his career as an urban English teacher in both a junior high school and high school, Nathan has been a productive professional and active writer. Ten pages barely contain a list of his special projects, workshops, publications, prizes and awards. Within the first eight years of his teaching career, he earned a doctorate in education, writing a dissertation on consciousness in the classroom and on the value of intuitive knowledge. Some of those ideas shaped his classroom presence:

> If I may be permitted a double negative, you can't not influence in the classroom... In my dissertation, I used it to differentiate between what you exude from yourself, what comes by way of furniture and carpet–atmosphere. In a classroom, even if you just stand there, you exude influence. You raise an arm or say a word, any word, you create an influence, and for any teacher to deny it is unreasonable.

During our first interview, Nathan maintained that there were few conscious people in our world, that if there were, more people would commit to behavior that would build rather than destroy our society. In schools, Nathan wished that more teachers "would understand that they are the atmosphere in a room, that out of them comes enough to make or break a kid."

The above beliefs and Nathan's notions about the energy requirements of being a teacher reveal his perception of the demanding nature of his job:

> I always say this out of amazement, amazement, that if there were something like a thermometer that you could hook to a teacher's belt or ankle, you could measure two things: a pull on your energies and the resulting stress level. Print those figures to the public-- First they would gasp, and then they wouldn't believe it.

He believes the energy drain applies to any educational setting, even a university setting—"There you would just get a lower rumble." He speculates that maybe only those in the profession know about this constant draw on energy, even when standing in a hallway. When teachers get actively involved, they increase the draw on their energy as they become more available to students:
You can go into a school building and feel the draw, because all the kids are takers for the most part because that's what being a teenager means--like when a little bird falls out of his shell. It's not going to get up and lay an egg for you. It's going to need, need, need. In schools, it's all day long: Take my money, pick my brains, take my time, pick my presence, my emotions, my answers. Take my life. Take everything...It's a taking situation, and if you're lucky, you get back, but never equally or enough. You're got to be your own dynamo, your own generator....This is not a begrudging statement. As a teacher, you know it, accept it, and move on....

Nathan describes the school day as a "constant bombardment. The number of minds that one intersects with every day is staggering. Even a psychiatrist doesn't have to deal with 35 psyches at one time." In addition to teaching, he is active as an unofficial counselor and in promoting numerous writing competitions: "I pump all month long. That keeps me at beck and call...at lunch, in the parking lot, it doesn't matter." At night, in addition to preparing lessons, evaluating student work, and the "regular array of duties" that come with being a teacher, Nathan writes 30-40 student recommendation letters a year: "Even using the computer, cutting and pasting, you still find yourself at 11 or 12 at night working on them. And that's year after year after year after year." And that is with a work day that begins with rising five hours later.

For Nathan, the recipient of numerous teaching awards, the decision to retire from an active career was abrupt, final, and difficult: "It's a huge loss...I'm going to tell you how painful it is. I would never have thought this decision would be so hard...I'm shocked." The decision was partly intuitive:

The ideal career is like your whole life. You were born into this, and you were an infant, literally. You feel that. Then you mature. Then you decide it's finally time to move out of it all. It's time...I thought: Now how do I know that?...I don't know if it's intuition or just something that you recognize...It wasn't like statistics on a chalkboard. I had to pay attention to my own sense: You're dead here and this whole thing is dead. You're not dead as a teacher, but you're dead as a teacher here. You couldn't go on being what you were...It may take another week or a month, but it's dead...death again, and you sense it about your career.

Nathan's primary pro-retirement reasons were health concerns and deterioration in the school system: "I reduced it to this: If you knew you were going to die in three months or eight more weeks, would you want to do it in the halls of my school?...I love my job. I absolutely love it. I've loved it more and more every year. I just love it, but you have to be sensible."
Being sensible, however, did not coincide with Nathan’s perception that during the last few years in his career, he had become more valuable as an educational resource, partly as a result of getting beyond age as a reference point with his students:

You move beyond the peer role. Gradually you get way beyond it to the point you could be your students’ grandfather. Eventually, you begin to see there is a whole different reference point, a reservoir of information and knowledge and wisdom—a resource. That’s what you finally turn in to. You don’t turn into a 40-year-old or a 50-year-old or a tired and ugly guy. You turn into somebody who is valuable.

Nathan said that after 28 years of teaching, he noticed a self-assurance “that had evolved over time but which was new...I knew that I was finally qualified” in ways that he could not have been as a younger teacher:

If you have been aware and analyzing, you develop. The filing cabinets of your brains are full...Maybe all teachers get wiser, maybe not, but making an effort, you benefit more. For me, the perception crystallized: I know what I’m doing...I felt like a sage.

When his students asked questions about subject matter or about life, Nathan noticed that he knew both “exactly what to say and that it was worth saying” whether it be what colleges to recommend, what books to read, or how to approach life’s problems. While he had spent his teaching life being available to students, he now felt he could be there for them “in depth.” In short, Nathan said, “I felt like I had been around—and it mattered...Experience should make a difference—and it did.”

Ironically, it is at this point in his own personal and professional development that Nathan’s teaching career has come to an end. His tone conveyed sadness and disappointment as he said, “I still feel resourceful, energetic, full of ideas, a large creative bent, all of it, you know, and I’m just putting it on the shelf— I’m putting it on the shelf.”

At our second interview almost one year later, Nathan presented me with a symbolic representation of his feelings about ending his career and beginning his retirement, a poem which conveys his continuing feelings about being put on the shelf, his sense of inhabiting a state of uselessness when compared to the active professional life he had led. One year after retirement, the adjustment period continued—the round-the-clock focus on the business of school replaced by a focus on health, the too busy schedule replaced by a monotonic stillness.
During this interview, I asked Nathan if he felt his school system had utilized his talents and abilities well during his tenure there. He gave a negative answer with one exception; early in his career an especially effective subject matter coordinator had tapped his creativity. Was his advanced degree ever utilized in the service of the profession? No. Were his advanced research skills utilized? Never. Had his writing talent been tapped beyond his own classroom? Did his school system utilize his capabilities well toward the end of his career at the peak of his development? Had he been utilized in any way since retiring from his classroom? Again, no.

Nathan compared working in his urban system with working in a doughnut shop:

...making sure everything's scrubbed and making sure you've got the best doughnuts in town with the most flair and the best deal, and your boss comes in reeking like he hasn't had a bath in a month, sits down, stuffs his face, lets the crumbs drop on the floor, rats get in the place. Then he leaves, and you have to clean it up again. I don't get this. This is your shop. You spend the rest of the day working hard and asking yourself, "What's wrong?" I don't get this.

But system administrators seldom solicit input from teachers; they neither ask nor listen. Nathan said that never had a school official asked what he needed to make his class better: "...an overhead projector? five days off in March? a set of books? what? a paint job?...what?" From Nathan's point of view, like that of the other teachers in this study, the administration in this system, when it is not actually hindering classroom instruction, has shown little interest in helping it. And it has been highly ineffective in utilizing the expertise, the potential, and the increasing professional knowledge base of its teaching force. Of system-wide administration, Nathan said, "For an ongoing creek that flows by, it's costing quite a lot of money with very few fish in it."

One year after an abrupt departure from the school system and with thirty years as a teacher in public education, Nathan had received nothing recognizing his personal contributions over the years from his school system. To borrow an expression from Nathan, his anonymity remained intact. The postal service delivered its standard retirement certificate, with perforations still attached, and "a letter that contained a pat and formulaic congratulations. Right to the end, the system treated me with utmost detachment and disregard."

Nathan had "a set of sadnesses" that grew out of the way in which his retirement had occurred: "...not just how I had to deal with it because of personal health reasons, but how my school and my system didn't bother with me." His sadness included not being recognized as a
resource "who could continue to serve this system in another capacity" even though he could not continue to do so in the classroom. Nobody asked him not to retire. Nobody said, "We still need you." All Nathan said he really needed was "just to have one person from downtown, someone I have some respect for, saying something nice to me." At one point, Nathan's voice trailed off: "I think that's very painful, to spend a whole life...." The journal entries Nathan brought with him to our second interview indicate the depth of his feelings on the subject:

Why then shouldn't I feel, not surprise, but more than a little resentful that I could retire from this system and know incontrovertibly that I am not missed? I feel very much as if I were, not unlike any other retiree from this system, the proverbial cog in a wheel and that even my number is no longer significant.

Neither did Nathan feel that he is alone in these sentiments:

During the last 10 years, I have been recognized, albeit infrequently, by downtown administrators, and those moments have largely screamed indifference, obligation, anonymity, and politics...More and more I have seen and felt the distance grow between the downtown people and those in the classroom....I think I'm symbolic, typical of anybody. We have a lot of talented people in this system, and it occurs widespread—the loss. They never shed light on you voluntarily; they do it only when they must. Everybody feels the indifference of downtown....They do not give a hoot. They do not care. They do not care, and that's the truth. And they should, and they could.

Nathan also expressed his awareness of a larger issue—the connections between human beings.

A teacher's sense of an impersonal system extends:

...to our students, their feelings of anonymity as human beings, to their parents, to people in other professions...We all must feel insignificant in this multi-billion population world.

Nathan was uncomfortable with the limited career alternatives present at this point in his career—continue with a full-time teaching schedule or get out of the career—particularly because of his contradictory perceptions that 1) He should continue to make a contribution in his career since he had finally become an even more valuable resource than he had been as a younger teacher, and 2) To continue in the classroom would literally jeopardize his life:

There comes a time when it is totally legitimate to stand up and say to yourself and your friends and your students and your administrators, "I don't want to do this any more. I can't take it any more, my body can only take so much, my mind can only take so much. I have to be done. I love it, but I have to be done"...So it makes total sense that there ought to be a position for people who should irrevocably be making a contribution, but for numerous reasons can't continue to be in a classroom—can't be,
shouldn’t be, shouldn’t want to be. Nobody should want them to be because it’s not humane. It’s just not humane.

After nearly a year to reflect on his career as a whole, Nathan looked at some of the darker issues of his career choice during the second interview. Even though he frequently spoke of his love for teaching throughout both interviews, and even though he once referred to himself as “probably a born teacher,” he allowed other contradictory truths to emerge. One of these concerned a sense of obligation coupled with the pressure of holding oneself to a high standard:

There have been moments when I have considered my career something to be through with so that I could get to my real life. It never made me do less, but I always felt that my job was a homework assignment that I had to get an A+ on and hand it in. Does that shock you? It shocks me.

Another apparent contradiction is that while Nathan has respect for other dedicated, competent and talented teachers, he has misgivings over associating himself with those who are not:

Another stain is I’m in a profession that has so many people in it who are incompetent and unaccountable for what they do. I was telling this to a friend recently, and she said, if you were making a list of who you are, teaching would not be high on that list. That’s right. I don’t think it is high on my list.

Nathan’s perception that many in our society do not respect teachers or what they do (“Because they’re going to make more in a day, week, or month that you do in a year, they say you’ve got a joke job”) reinforces these feelings.

He puts another spin on the topic by the following explanation:

I was thinking that I liked most, if not all, of the tasks of a teacher from the pseudo-authority to the grading papers to knowing that I had an incontrovertible, lifelong influence to sorting things in my desk drawer. I liked the tasks of being a teacher, but I don’t think I liked being a teacher. I don’t mean performing as one. I mean being one. I think I mostly felt embarrassed... More than not, it’s been an embarrassment.

Nathan believes that materialism affects not honoring career people in large systems, but says, “It’s more than that. We don’t have time for that. Our values are so skewed, we don’t even think about it.” Nathan hopes that in the future, things will change so that individuals will be able to continue to make a contribution even if it can’t or shouldn’t be in the classroom, “to start toward retirement with a sense of worth and appreciation at an entirely different level.”
For Nathan, and maybe for many others, his career closed with mixed and sometimes dualistic feelings, but as his journal entries indicate, his feelings toward his school system and those responsible for running it are clear:

I have nothing more to say. All I would be able to write would be more negative words about the system and how they treat teachers, administrators, and students. In having written the five previous journal entries, I have solidified what I suspected had been fermenting in me for many years: a very angry attitude about these public schools. I am glad not to have to write any more about this system. I am happy to be finished with it.

To put this lack of system recognition and appreciation in context, Nathan's professional activities include numerous national, state, and local presentations and workshops; selection as the keynote speaker at conferences; service on multiple system-wide committees and assessment projects; and leadership roles in projects at four universities. His exceptional teaching had been honored with awards on multiple occasions by his local schools, by his school system, by local media, and by the state when he was selected the Ohio Language Arts Teacher of the Year. His writing has been published in more than 100 magazines, books, and journals—nationally and internationally—and his writing awards take five or more pages to list. These professional contributions and accomplishments contrast sharply with his school system's treatment of them as irrelevant at career end.

In a follow-up telephone interview during Nathan's second year of retirement, he says that he continues to think about various career issues, among them whether he would choose to enter a teaching career in an urban school system if he had it to do again. Some days, he thinks, "I would never become a teacher again...Never." Other days he remembers assisting his students; he values those interactions and those opportunities for making a contribution. As a "dispassionate observer," he reflects that during his career, his expertise, professionalism, and commitment both expanded and "grew stronger to the last second." They ascended or grew in a positive direction. Concurrently, his attitude toward and his disillusionment with both the school system and his profession, expanded and descended, or grew in a negative direction. They have continued to grow even after retirement, and as Nathan said during our telephone conversation, "That growth continues still."
Listening to Nathan: A Discussion of Issues Raised in the Data

My first few attempts to analyze Nathan’s data proceeded logically with grouping material into categories, identifying salient motifs, and even beginning to discuss the ramifications of these. Each attempt left me feeling dissatisfied as a researcher, feeling as though I had missed what is essential, and so I eliminated drafts, eliminated approaches—none of which seemed to capture what can be learned from Nathan’s case. I remembered Nathan’s perception that central office administrators do not attend to input from teachers; I thought of Nathan’s cardiologist who wanted not to study charts and test results but to be mindful of what Nathan had to say. I was reminded of Nathan’s words at the close of our first interview: “I think I covered the territory I saw out there, and I mapped it out for myself. Did I ultimately accomplish what could be accomplished here? But the bigger question is did I really see all the territory? Or did I miss something?” It was as if I weren’t really hearing Nathan. And so I began to listen.

Connections and Reflections

Nathan said that all people are connected to one another, not only materially:

People make decisions as if they were in a vacuum...They don’t understand that they’re not separate from everybody else. Not only are they in the same society where visually you can see that they are, but philosophically and spiritually and psychologically, they’re attached. They’re all attached. You know, I push down the sidewalk and the whole planet gets jerked. The problem is not if that’s true or not. That’s the way it is. The problem is that people don’t want to recognize that...because if you make your decisions accordingly, you won’t make the same ones—and that includes how we treat people as they end their careers.

He believes that many processes and actions occur in cycles or circles: “Maybe everything is circular.” He included our interviews in this notion; everything we had been talking about, from beginning to end, had been forming its own circle. The key question, he maintained is, “Where do you want to make a change in the circle? Where do you break into it?” Regarding the current approach to teachers nearing retirement, he said:

I can’t believe that systems haven’t understood how profitable it could be, and how we might wipe out a lot of engineering problems in terms of brain tapping to come up with solutions to real problems by using that resource (experienced and retired teachers). That’s an exciting idea, because how could you miss completing the cycle here, the circle, making a circle instead of making it so linear—where you go to this school, that school, then they kick you out.
Finally, Nathan views every object, person, or phenomenon as a microcosm or macrocosm of more than itself. The view extended to Nathan himself: “I think I’m symbolic, typical of anybody.” Because everything is connected, everything is a reflection of something else.

**A Symbolic Representation: A Former Teacher in Stasis**

With these principles which form Nathan’s worldview foremost in my mind, the discussion begins—first with a brief summary of Nathan’s symbolic representation, a poem written during his first year of retirement, expressing his feelings about ending his career and about being retired. The text of this poem, at Nathan’s request, will not appear in this dissertation.

Nathan referred to the work as a “poem of contrasts.” The poem portrays an individual looking out a window or wandering about inside his home as a new day begins in the spring of a year. He is aware that it is a privilege to be at home instead of being part of the busy traffic outside his window, but it is a privilege which evokes feelings of separation and abandonment. He remembers other days, days when he was in a classroom engaged in a teaching career. Now that those days are in the past, he is left with days which are broken bits and pieces, the remnants of a career which has been dismantled. From his window, he observes students moving toward a destination he no longer shares, and when they move beyond his vantage point, his focus moves inward. His current questions deal with how to become a part of this new life, how to get beyond the routine, those mundane tasks which fill the morning with monotony. Spring moves forward, but the former teacher does not.

Considering Nathan’s worldview and his earlier remarks, Nathan’s symbolic representation may symbolize the experience of many retirees, especially those who sense an abrupt separation from their lifetime careers; who feel they’re putting valuable expertise “on the shelf”; and who feel, for an indeterminate period of time, useless. The poem may also be seen as a reflection of a society which values youth and newness infinitely more than it values maturity and experience. But there is much more in the Nathan data to be heard.

**Health Condition as Microcosm**

In many respects, Nathan’s health condition can be viewed as a microcosm of the school system in which he has spent his professional life. In Nathan’s case, the following phenomena can be observed in relation to career wind down and exit:

183
1. The effects of teacher depersonalization;

2. The active devaluing of education by the educational system itself;

3. A false dilemma, forcing early career wind-down and exit;

4. A system which literally and figuratively ignores its health, and the health of its teachers, placing it—and them—in peril.

**Teacher depersonalization.** Imagery of depersonalization occurs throughout Nathan's interviews and journals in such words as: "I was a commodity in that school," "I'm not a robot, not a robot," "Teachers are just one insignificant cog in this machine," "I'm not a machine," and "We're numbers." Nathan said he had grown weary of those in our society not recognizing "that the best teacher ideally to sustain what the public expects would be a machine." Daniel Dyer (1997), a retired Ohio English teacher recently echoed those thoughts:

> But these discomfited thinkers (those in statehouses and gubernatorial mansions) have hit upon a notion both profound and breathtakingly simple: if machines can't replace teachers, why not make teachers into machines? Into robots?...I don't know why we've decided to train children instead of educate them. And I don't know why we want our teachers to behave with robotic efficiency and predictability...Even the Tin Woodman knew that without a heart he was worthless.

Nathan believed that teachers and others in the society can't go on this way “without an irreplaceable and significant psychological and physical loss.”

Nathan's demoralization at the end of his career is one of the most devastating effects of systematized depersonalization practiced by Nathan's urban school system. This devaluation of teaching employees is part of a larger circle in which the employees seem to devalue the system which treated them with disregard. It is the opposite result one would hope to achieve at the end of a long and successful teaching career, and the opposite of what Nathan hopes will be the case for others "to start toward retirement with a sense of worth and appreciation...."

**The devaluing of education.** When carefully listening to Nathan, it is difficult not to draw the surprising and bitterly ironic conclusion that the educational system in which Nathan was employed actively devalues education itself. This devaluation occurs not so much in visible acts of commission, but in those of omission, the lack of which is visibly felt. At first glance, this would appear not to be so. After all, teachers who obtain master's degrees are rewarded with a slight raise on the pay scale, as are those who obtain a terminal degree. Further, some educational
positions require graduate school coursework, such as those in guidance counseling and administration; it appears that education is valued solely in terms of utility as one earns graduate credits in order to become qualified for these positions. Thus superficially, the educational system appears to value education. But what happens when one looks more carefully at the practices of the system?

What happens amounts to a shocking disregard for the substance of a teacher's education, and this disregard can be seen in Nathan's case. Although Nathan earned a Ph.D. some 22 years before his retirement, system personnel not once made an attempt to utilize his knowledge or expertise during his employment. A form letter was sent to him from central office when the degree was conferred, nothing more. In acquiring the ultimate academic degree available in the field of education in our society, Nathan spent years of energy and effort beyond the school day to expand his knowledge and to make a contribution to the field in the form of new knowledge via his dissertation—a remarkable achievement for a young, full-time classroom teacher. Was Nathan's research skill employed by the system? Was his talent tapped for the benefit of other teachers? Did anyone notice that an exceptional resource was available for the asking? These omissions by those who manage personnel in this urban system reflect an attitude that a person's individual education is not important. In this system, Nathan's potential was placed on a shelf along with his dissertation.

The system continued to devalue Nathan's education as well as his experience when it failed to acknowledge his individual contributions to the school system upon his retirement: A computer-generated letter to mark the event was considered to be sufficient; a perforated certificate of retirement satisfied the requirements of form. Neither did the school system utilize Nathan in ways which might have tapped his vast experiences and education as his career neared its close, and, as mentioned earlier, nor did it attempt to find a way to keep his energy in the school system when health concerns demanded that he discontinue full-time classroom teaching. From beginning to end, the circle remains unbroken. One is tempted to call it a circle of ignorance; certainly it is a circle of waste.

A false dilemma: Either teach at a predetermined pace or save your health. Finally, viewing Nathan as an individual raises the issue of health and the ignoring of it to one's own peril. Nathan exemplifies the need for strong health—due to incredible demands on one's energy—
when engaged in classroom teaching. At the risk of stating the obvious, health concerns need to be underscored when discussing career wind down.

Often teachers are so engrossed in the demands of the job that they minimize or ignore symptoms that can be serious, or as in Nathan's case, life threatening—a not surprising phenomenon when one works until midnight and rises after five hours of sleep. Teaching schedules with their concomitant physical demands are structured with the same demands for beginning teachers as they are for those who have taught for decades; in other words, the twenty-one-year-old teacher and the fifty-year-old teacher are expected to perform at peak physical levels with identically structured teaching schedules. Likewise, the logistics of scheduling students for coursework drives teaching assignments and schedules rather than considerations of individual preferences and/or needs, such as what times of the day are low or high energy times for specific teachers. Pausing to consider health issues as they relate to experienced teachers may at least call attention to the subject for consideration and further discussion. When the discussion does occur, I hope it will note that the only current choices for secondary teachers are either to keep going, no matter the cost to individual health, or to quit teaching completely, with or without retirement benefits. Offering only two alternatives to teachers when more exist (or could easily exist) is the literal and moral equivalent of the "either-or fallacy," also known as a false dilemma (Troyka, 1987, p. 137). Given only two options, Nathan chose to retire. The toll on his health, particularly on his heart if he continued to teach in the current conditions, was more than he could afford to pay.

The heart of the teacher, the heart of the system. Listening again to Nathan's message, I hear the words "reflection," "microcosm," "connection." And again I view Nathan's heart condition as a physical manifestation of a non-physical state of affairs that, when seen as a microcosm, extends at least to the school system itself.

The various meanings attached to the word "heart" in our society have a long history. Even though Aristotle was incorrect in concluding that, as a bodily organ, "the heart is the seat of thought," he was closer to the truth with his belief that "a wound to the heart is invariably fatal" (Hothersall, 1990, p. 24). Fifteen hundred years later, William Harvey's research began a "demystification of the heart" when he discovered that the heart pumps blood which circulates throughout the body to be pumped again (Hothersall, p. 35). Over the years, the heart has
acquired various figurative meanings, including "capacity for sympathy, feeling, affection," "spirit," "the innermost or central part of anything," and "the vital or essential part" (Webster’s New Universal Unabridged Dictionary, 1996, p. 882).

Another background connection needs to be made for purposes of this discussion. The early Greek scholar and physician, Galen, was in error when he developed his theory of personality based on the four humors, but he was perhaps the first to note that "bodily health can be affected by the suffering of the psyche" (Hunt, 1993, p. 42). While the term "psyche" currently refers to "the human soul, spirit, or mind," over the years, it has also meant "universal consciousness" and in Greek, literally "breath...hence, (to) live" (Webster’s New Universal Unabridged Dictionary, 1996, p. 1560). Literal connections between mind, spirit, emotions, and body continue to be established by modern science (e.g. Moyers, 1993). There are figurative connections to be considered as well.

Nathan's language was generous with references to the heart. For example, of himself, he said, "I pump all month long." When he said, "You've got to be your own dynamo, your own generator," did he also mean you have to be your own heart? At another time, he noted when discussing the direction of the school system, comparing it to the proverbial sinking ship, "My heart is in somebody's hands...I feel like someone has my heart in a hand and I feel the weight around it, the grip...." as if his heart might be sinking along with the school system, as if he were experiencing "the heaviest of hearts." Still later, he said: "I don't want my life blood to be wasted." In his journals, he wrote: "...For as long as I have taught in (this school system), I have never for a moment fooled myself into believing that the system had any of my best interests in mind or at heart" and "By last year I could no longer deny the system had sunk to a new low in terms of its concern for its teachers and/or students. By the time I decided to retire, I knew there wasn't one person left in an administrative position outside my high school who cared if I retired or not." As Nathan knows so well, and as his urban system has perhaps only forgotten, the heart is an irreducible minimum. To ignore the warning messages from the heart is to risk everything.

Nathan's physical heart problem was, in his own words, "the result of a combination of high cholesterol and family history." The pain to his heart was caused by high cholesterol blocking his arteries, inhibiting blood from flowing freely throughout his circulatory system. Symbolically, this phenomenon had occurred throughout his career in an urban school system. When the
findings in Nathan's dissertation and their potential for use in the classroom were ignored by his school system and thus prevented from circulating freely throughout the system, the system functioned as if it had a blockage in its arteries. When the system placed Nathan in a teaching assignment with no further regard for how it might utilize his particular background or individual talents, and when it does so with most teachers, it again creates sluggishness within itself, a condition that might be alleviated, even prevented, by not only permitting but actively fostering the circulation of teacher strengths within the system. System sluggishness continued to the end of Nathan's career in its minimal acknowledgement of his leaving, and in another lost opportunity to benefit from a translusion of Nathan's wisdom of experience, his life blood, the distilled essence of three decades of inspired teaching.

As I listen to Nathan, I hear the voice of an elevated consciousness; I hear the joy of one who has had meaningful contact with other human beings over an extended period of time. And I hear the unshed tears of a psyche which has suffered: the "set of sadnesses" that Nathan experienced as it became apparent that the school system in which he had spent his teaching life, upon receiving the news of his retirement, was going to treat him "with utmost detachment and disregard"; the anger at how he and others had been treated over the years—like a robot, a machine, or a number; the pain of being oxymoronically recognized for achievement with "indifference, obligation, anonymity...." It is somehow not surprising that the first symptom of the health crisis which precipitated Nathan's retirement was severe chest pain emanating from the heart.

___________________________
Introduction to the Stories of Tess

Penciling It In

by Tess

The Schaefer is gone.
The gold-tipped Parker's
relegated to the drawer,
its decisive black
used only on checks.

The felt-tip is abandoned
as too indelible.

For a time the blue automatic pencil
shot words off its tip.
Now its occasional care and feeding,
its hardened eraser
are too much.

He has become a pencil person.
The Number Two is all he pockets.
Its yellow (eraser worn with indecision)
can be forgotten if dropped,
tapped to splinter
snapped in anger.

Light and hesitant, its words
make less and less impression,
weaken blurrily as they
reach the bottom
of a page
or a life.

—The Words of Tess: Symbolic Representation
The Stories of Tess: A Sociopoetics

One Little Remark

So this is the third summer being free.
One more little remark, then
I’ll stop.
Without this home on the lake,
this retreat, as you say,
I wouldn’t have stayed in teaching.
I couldn’t have stayed in teaching.

I could come home,
get my feet back on the ground,
communicate with something different
from that forty-two minute
frenzied kind of bell ringing, ha ha, that
Pavlov’s dog-salivation sort of thing.

I would never have survived
the last five years without my lay reader, okay?
Believe this or not, my lay reader stayed,
asked, “When are you going to retire, Tess?”
I told her. She said,
“Okay, I’ll stick it out with you.”
The moment I retired, she retired.
Such loyalty, I was aghast at,
essentially,
but I would not have been able...

It was the paper load that got to me—
Two cataract operations, and
simply spending Sunday,
every Sunday,
every (single) Sunday
with papers.
That was ritual.
Like you said,
the very idea of a Sunday
when the world shuts down,
like when I was a child,
Sundays...lasted...forever.

I’m in touch with probably
some 40 to 50 students,
whom I see
with some regularity.
Students, some 45 years old,
people I taught in school
dropping by.
Well, without those kids, as I’ve said,
I wouldn’t have stayed....

I miss the excitement of planning,
getting materials together,
starting a new course,
that kind of thing,
yeah.

It’s that 5:30 ride in the morning,
it’s the grading load,
it’s every Sunday,
it’s the sudden telephone call
in the middle of the
damn night
by some kid who is an
extremist.
Those things I do not miss, okay?
I do not miss.

—Narrative poem using Tess’s words and phrases from interview transcripts
Do You See What I'm Saying?

Call it what you like—fate, chance, luck.
It's existential, but I'm a risk-taker, always have been.

It was a dangerous time:
He was in a fighter squadron in the middle of the Korean War. We had five days to get married. People said: Stay home.
Your parents are here, your friends are here, you have a good job, what the hell?
You'll be 1,300 miles from everybody in a town you don't know, and he won't be there anyway.
But when the commander heard we had just been married, he left him on the base.
If I had not gone with him, he would have been sent away. Maybe he would have not come back. Do you see what I'm saying?
(I have loved him unconditionally.)

As I look back, the hundreds of kids in and out of this house—because they wanted to visit or because they took drugs or because they had run away from home or they needed help or acceptance—have done nothing but enrich my life and the lives of my husband and children. Every day a pearl: personal presence, telephone calls....
Did I learn more from my children about my students or more from my students about raising children?
Who knows how these things go?
(I have loved my students unconditionally.)

When I became a teacher, I chose not to get tenure. That was one risk among others: standing in a picket line, speaking out publicly on unpopular topics, changing schools again and again and again. Just like before we had a car, no place to live, no furniture, no jobs...People said: you're out of your cotton-pickin' minds! Well, we weren't. Do you see what I'm saying?
(I have loved life unconditionally.)

I remember a student—terribly bitter, terribly wicked, drove me up the wall. I said to him: "I have always loved you unconditionally." He burst into tears. He said: "That's what every person in the world is looking for, the one thing you've always given me, and I've known that."

I guess I've known that, too, that there were people around who loved me no matter what.

When you have unconditional love, you can take risks; you can ask: "What am I going to do next? What would be fun? adventuresome?"

Call it what you like. I call it a courage maker.

--Narrative poem using Tess's words and phrases from interview transcripts
I Have Loved My Colleagues
by Tess

The jars of aromatic paste,
the blue-lined paper
are yesterday's
like the sixty-four Crayola colors
or lunchboxes filled with scents
of elementary fruits.

With them, into some wastebasket
of a deserted classroom
lie the love of story,
the wonder at oneself.

Innocence, even surprise, are become dross.

To begin again before that black board
to relight with white words
a world, closing, closing
is miracle the saints might quail before.

And yet, when her Bell rings,
It is performed:
the bread and wine of word and mind
reach, mingle, become.

Her rite creates the unity forgot,
turns with the motions of her hand
and her heart's pain
the loss to life
claiming no other name but teacher.
The Holly and the Ivy: A Song of Many Voices

(The music to "The Holly and the Ivy" in minor key could be played or hummed in the background pianissimo during the reading of this performance poem)

(Sing: "The Holly and the ivy, When they are both full-grown")

Tess: Sometimes students make life miserable:
rob you of pens and money,
steal your purse,
threaten you with personal harm.

Researcher: mimic the way you walk or talk,
call you names not fit to print.
sully you.

(Sing: "Of all the trees that are in the wood, The holly bears the crown.")

Researcher: I should have warned him: Never, never
take anything important to you
to schools.

Tess: I should have told her: Find another way
to earn a living.
She said: "But who's going to
take care of these kids?"
That's the thing.

(Sing: "The holly bears a blossom, As white as lily flow'rz.")

Tess: Thinking of my friend,
a blind substitute teacher,
competent, compassionate, courageous,
you couldn't have asked for more.

(Sing: "The holly bears a berry, As red as any blood.")

Tess: Two students screamed in both her ears
at the same time,
gave her a push,
she
went
down.
No one saw or heard,
no one would admit to
seeing or hearing.
No one was reprimanded
or scolded
or brought to the office.
She, now with tinnitus,
no medical insurance,
no worker's comp.,
no work.

Who's going to take care of her?
That's the thing.

(Sing: "Sweet singing in the choir, Sweet singing in the choir")

--words taken from interview transcripts
Undelivered Lecture
by Tess

I give you my brains.
Can't you see them?
Spilling over the desk?
Splattering the blackboard?

If you were minded
If you were minded like cannibals
You'd scoop them up on paper plates
And stuff yourselves.

You are repulsed...

You've never minded drinking
My heart's blood from paper cups.
You want the heart whole now?
You'll find it
Dessicated from your draw
But, curiously, still fist-sized
And in its proper place
No thanks to you.
Tired of teaching,
beleaguered by costs of kids in college,
I was offered a job that would have
paid more money,
shortened my work-week, and
eliminated the caretaking
my students required,
(especially when
in extremis).

Euphoric at the dinner table,
no more (heart-pounding) rush
at summer's end:
the flight of (my own) children in and out;
old students at the door
with their own August panic;
the (overwhelming) budget crisis in educating four.

So when I sighed with (premature) relief,
my husband looked at me
across the table,
asked (seriously, almost pityingly):
what are you going to do
without your kids?

I looked at him (sharply),
wondering where that comment had come from.
Then I realized: It had come from concern,
the concern I might have used if his
computers were to go out.
What would he do without them?
They were his handle on so much of his life:
problems he loved to create and solve;
experiences on the cutting edge;
fascination with complexity and rapid change;
and on, and on.

Choice, when it presents itself,
does not always mean change, but rather
reaffirmation of the status quo.
Once it has been examined.
Once we see
what binds us to it.

—Narrative poem using Tess's words and phrases from transcripts
We point them into the forest,
We send them into the rain.

Dorothy
by Tess

Her yellow brick road
has led her on beyond Oz
with not even a hint of afterglow.

Who knows why she floundered into slow
flowered paths where no lion roars.
Seduced by fragrance
or by what she thought she'd memorized
of that map some other showed her long ago?

Two paces or ten years of miles?
She cannot (care to) tell.
It is only home she needs.

My makeshift sign arrests her
long enough for a smiling goodday
then goodnight and she is gone.
The weathered arrow points her on.

Hollow as tin, I lean against
the post in a fine rain
grateful I may not melt.
I may not yet melt.
On the Cusp of Retirement

Shouldn't they be saying: We're NOT putting the cork in the bottle, we're asking you to fizz a little?

—Lyric poem using Tess's words from an interview transcript
Retirement
by Tess

"Don't you feel sorry you can't ride?"

The roller coaster (dual, racer) looms above his blondness in the July sun.

"I used to love them: Palisades, Coney, Idora Park, Euclid Beach...."

I was a first-car rider.

The yellow of his ticket in my hand sends me up the clacking hill, ratchets in my ears on the slow pull.
Then the plunge, the sitting on air, body side-flung around curves, hot acid metal in the mouth, the heaviness of standstill like pulling the body into air after a long swim.

Once, even, riding with black-berated Montgomery-jacketed (lost at Pouilly) paratrooper, an evening of kisses amidst a dozen weightless drops....

Now I see in the height and curve only the vertigo spun of nostalgia.
"Aren't you sorry you can't ride?"

"No. Well, only when I stand here.
It is only fleeting, this leaving-off."
“Older teachers are not given easier schedules; incompetent teachers are given easier schedules.”
—excerpt from Tess transcript

The Shadow of the Umbrella: A Discussion

During our interviews, Tess spoke in a language rich in images, metaphors, and symbols—a factor that suggested sociopoetics as a method for conveying multiple stories of her teaching life. She referred to the end of her career as the “shadow of the umbrella,” a vivid image conveying a shift from sunrise to sunset, a literal and symbolic awareness of a shadow at the end of a day, and maybe, as Tess expressed in “Penciling It In,” at the end of a life.

Motif #1: The Relationship of Energy and Age During a Teaching Career

Within this frame of awareness, Tess discussed her perspective on the relationship of energy and age during her teaching career, one of three salient motifs identified in her data:

I have always viewed my teaching career as one which depended on two things: energy and experience—and that energy and experience had a certain cycle...When I was totally inexperienced, I was all energy. You make so many mistakes and you have to keep correcting them with energetic whatevers. It's like you're on a treadmill and you're not getting very far, but when you start getting the experience and you still have energy, then you ride it--like a downhill roller coaster...then when you get to the bottom of that, the age takes the edge off. The experience can no longer make up for the decrease in energy, and so it has to be that the next hill is the real tough one to climb up....

Three central images—the treadmill, the down-hill roller coaster, and a hill to climb—designate the three cycles or phases of Tess's career in teaching. For Tess, it was a career that began following a decade of work in the field of journalism. From the beginning, Tess was ten years older than most other beginning teachers; toward the end, when she was 64 years old, Tess recalled: “I was the oldest teacher on the staff. Let’s face it: I was the oldest English teacher in the city—and I still could compete with teachers 10 years my junior!” At the age of 55 or 56, when Tess was “on the downward slide, well past the age when most teachers retired,” she accepted a job at an academic magnet school and taught there nine more years. It was toward the end of these years that Tess encountered that last tough hill to climb:

Please understand...I have an enormous amount of energy. I run a twelve-room house, have raised four kids, and I have a good bit of other stuff on the side, but I feel the last few years—the physical demands—were very, very tough.
Part of the problem of waning energy could have been addressed through scheduling, but as Tess said in reference to a schedule which had her teaching six periods in a row without a break, "I don't think schedules are made with human beings in mind. Even in the lowliest factory job, you get ten minutes to go to the bathroom." In Tess's opinion, her school system ignores the physical needs of the older teacher: "Older teachers are not given easier schedules; incompetent teachers are given easier schedules."

The chairman of a North Central Evaluation Team—a high school principal and former student of Tess—said in his formal report about the academic program in which Tess taught: "You have a champagne program on a beer budget. It makes up the difference out of the hide of its teachers." The observation was true for Tess throughout her career whether she was creating a model for North Central accreditation evaluations to be used state-wide decades ago, writing a serious or humorous piece for some professional function, or designing new courses during her lunch period. One year, she designed and implemented ten different courses; it was a year described as "...most hectic and most horrible and most tiring."

During the last few years, Tess's health started to deteriorate. "I taught many days when I should not have gone to school," she said, "but I was determined not to go out limping. I was determined to go out swinging, to go to the end of the bout." Since retirement, Tess reports that she has not had one day of sickness. The week after she retired, she scheduled "a battery of tests" with her physician who "could find no other cause for my falling apart those last two years of school aside from chronic fatigue and stress." For Tess, cutting back on the quality of her preparation or the intensity of her engagement with students was not a coping option: "You either take it out of yourself physically, or you don't do the job—and I couldn't not do the job."

Other than noticing a decline in physical energy and well being, Tess could find no other negative changes related to age and her teaching—"not in interactions with students, not in lesson planning, not in professional involvement." Tess said, "I was as excited over projects I taught the last year as I was the first year I taught." To her, increasing age and decreasing teaching competence have no relationship "unless, of course, you quit trying or were lousy to begin with."

Motif #2: Innovation and Creativity

The second major motif in the Tess data is innovation and creativity. Tess continued to describe her last two years in the classroom:
I pushed at it, innovative stuff in the classroom...I kept writing. I think I designed 75 courses during my career, 60 of which I taught. The creativity remained; I don't think it ever peaked.

She recalled several times during her career when the school system itself or the administration in individual schools took actions which suppressed teacher creativity:

The nadir, I think, came when in a misguided effort to get equality for everyone, we were expected to be on the same page of the same text on the same day—an exaggeration, of course—but what was gone from the system was flexibility, innovation, creativity, the ability to make decisions. What I felt was the lack of challenge...I felt the walls closing in.

She talked of “being pressed into a cookie mold, like every other teacher in the system.” of locking her classroom door to the outside world in order to preserve a breath of academic freedom. Nine years before she retired, when a window of opportunity opened to teach in a school known for its innovation, Tess made the move to a new school. For a period of time, she enjoyed an environment which encouraged both solid academics and innovation. Sadly, she noted the effects of staff reductions and program cuts: "But that, too, constricted, began to close, and went firmly closed by the time I left."

Her experiences are consonant with at least two of Csikszentmihalyi’s (1996) observations based on his latest study of creativity: 1) “...CEOs report that this is not an age for innovators but for bookkeepers, not a climate for building and risking but for cutting expenses” (p. 11), and 2) “Creativity must, in the last analysis, be seen not as something happening within a person but in the relationships within a system” (p. 36).

Csikszentmihalyi (1996) and his colleagues interviewed 91 individuals, all of whom had made a difference to a major domain of culture, were still actively involved in a domain, and most of whom were at least sixty years of age. By analyzing the traits of these individuals, Csikszentmihalyi derived ten dimensions of creativity, each dimension containing a pair of “apparently antithetical traits that are often present in such individuals and integrated with each other in a dialectical tension” (pp. 57-58). While I find evidence of each of these ten dimensions present in Tess, I will apply the five dimensions most prevalent: physical energy/periods of rest; smart/naive or convergent/divergent; humility/self-assurance; traditional and conservative/rebellious and iconoclastic; and openness to pain/enjoyment.
Physical energy and periods of rest. Perhaps the first integrated quality evident when one meets Tess is that of her abundant physical and psychic energy. It is palpable in her enthusiastic rate of speech, in her focused attempt to clarify thoughts, or in the way she attends to multiple stimuli within the same breath. It is manifold in her career accomplishments, in the proliferation of her poetry, and in the hundreds of people with whom she maintains contact. Her abundant productive energy has been balanced by a retreat in a wooded area on a lake that she calls home, without which, as she said during an interview, "I wouldn't have stayed in teaching." Another example of this integration of periods of energy combined with rest occurred during her writing a symbolic representation for this research project, the poem entitled "Retirement." After its conceptualization, Tess took needed time for its incubation and for the development of insight before again using focused energy for the poem's evaluation and elaboration. The same process, the traditional steps identified in the process of creativity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996, pp. 79-80), enabled Tess to design courses and engage in the work of teaching for decades. More details about Tess's energy were elucidated in the first section of this discussion. Toward the end of her career, the structure of her job did not allow for adequate periods of rest—that is, for some disengagement from physical and psychic classroom demands—causing an imbalance in this dimension.

Smart/naive or convergent/divergent. The second balanced dimension of creativity, smart/naive or convergent/divergent, is also apparent in Tess. Evidence of her convergent thinking—thinking which involves solving rational problems (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996, p. 60)—can be found throughout her career or simply in the fact that her education and expertise allowed her to be certified to teach four academic subjects: English, French, social studies, and economics.

Divergent thinking—fluency and quantity of ideas, flexibility, shifting perspectives, originality (p. 60)—was manifest in her interview transcripts as she viewed topics from different perspectives or brainstormed alternative ideas for ending a teaching career (elaborated on later in this discussion). The balance of these traits can also be seen in the poetry of Tess; without this balance, poems could not be well crafted. One characteristic of divergent thinking, "originality in picking unusual associations of ideas" (p. 60), occurred seemingly at random as Tess spoke of being "on the cusp of retirement" or when, describing the end of her career, she said with no preface: "Those last years, flowers stare back at you."
Humility/self-assurance. Tess displayed the dimension of humility/self-assurance often during our interviews, sometimes in the same breath, as when she would speak of reaching a goal followed quickly with “I think I did, I hope I did.” Like those in Csikszentmihalyi’s (1996) study, she knew that the contributions of others made her own accomplishments possible as when she referred to teacher-mentors or supportive administrators or numerous others in her life who had helped her learn or create. Like others in the creativity study, she was aware of the role that luck played in her achievements: “I can’t say that I’ve had a wonderful career because I’m a superior person. I don’t believe that. I think there’s an element in there of fate, chance, luck...It’s just the luck of the draw.”

Finally, like other creative individuals, she was so focused on the present and future that her past accomplishments were no longer of paramount interest. This point was illustrated poignantly in the note I received from Tess which accompanied a list I had requested of the professional highlights of participants’ careers. The note said: “It is hard to remember some of these. I’m always embarrassed, for some reason, to recall them....” The list came from her memory. The most important recognition was being selected as the runner up for the National Teacher of the Year Award, among five finalists in the United States; that year she had also been named Ohio Teacher of the Year. The next group of awards she mentioned consisted of the teacher of the year awards at individual schools. One school selected her “five or six times or maybe more”; another school gave her that recognition the year she retired. A local university twice recognized her with “Honoring Excellence in the Teaching Profession” awards; in four different years, her poetry won excellence in writing awards in the teacher division of a city-wide competition. The list includes a decade of serving as English department chair; five kinds of district-wide committees she had served on, often more than once; twenty or so visitation evaluations she had performed for the region’s accreditation association; countless seminars, study groups, workshops, and speeches she had given locally and throughout the state—often at her own expense: and much, much more. I enjoyed reading about her service on a publisher’s editorial review board in New York City. Following that item, she included a parenthetical note, as if recalling a fond memory: “...got to stay at the Algonquin.”

Traditional/conservative and rebellious/conoclastic. The fourth salient dimension is that of traditional/conservative coupled with rebellious/conoclastic. From Tess’s “poetic stories,” a
strong love of family and its attendant traditional values is a clear theme. She further exemplified the traditional values associated with teaching the nation's young: caring, service, role modeling.

Her mastery of the traditional domain, beyond the level needed for teaching secondary English, economics, or humanities courses, was evident during our interviews and verified by her colleagues who say they consulted her frequently when they could not locate a source, questioned a grammatical construction, or needed other assistance related to the subject matter they were teaching. Within this theme of tradition, her rebelliousness clearly creates a counterpoint. Her decision not to receive tenure is one example: "I wanted to teach where I wanted, what I wanted. If they didn't want me, they could fire me. I wanted to stay on my own merits, not on the strength of the number of years I had taught." Her refusal to bend to the forces of standardization, her speaking out publicly on controversial educational issues, even her determination to climb that last tough hill the last few years of her career, are other examples of her rebelliousness. She had an independent streak, maybe always, but at least from the beginning of her adult life as illustrated in "One Little Remark." Her iconoclasism burst through from time to time as she punctuated her praise of specific system personnel with criticism of the system:

> It's almost as though this particular system punishes in the later years the utilization of educational opportunities—as though it does not want its teachers to do anything except sit behind a desk and go to sleep: their process of being very niggardly about granting sabbaticals, the punishment they deal out to teachers who do take them by putting them in the worst possible teaching situations they can find....

Among other criticisms of the system was the lack of options for when an individual teacher could choose to leave the classroom:

> When that physical capacity no longer sustains people, when it becomes a physical battle, they should leave....I know the system has to do it by the number of years a person has taught, but it ought to be more of an individual decision, something that it is not. When a teacher gets to the place where teaching is getting on a person's nerves and the person is just putting in the years, something is wrong with the system.

**Openness to pain and enjoyment.** Openness to both pain and enjoyment is the fifth dimension of creativity that applies to Tess. She frequently spoke of the excitement and "sense of adventure" that accompanied her work—whether it was starting a new school, teaching the first humanities course in the system, or motivating students; laughter and soft smiles provided a backdrop for recalling these kinds of experiences. She spoke of great enjoyment in working with
language in the classroom: "The word is my thing. That's where I'm the happiest—it could be an historical word, a psychological word, an anthropological word, an archeological word..." Her awareness of the suffering of others, however, such as the blind substitute teacher in "The Holly and the Ivy," caused her pain as did the indifference of some students illustrated in "Undelivered Lecture." She further spoke of the personal pain in the loss of a sense of adventure and challenge within her school system, a loss felt more sharply when contrasted with a time when an effective language arts supervisor provided "a particular kind of vitality" by being "enormously supportive, enormously supportive" of innovation. As she recalls, he provided opportunities for teachers to lead workshops, design curriculum, share ideas, be involved in film festivals, experiment:

What gets to you is not having those creative, exciting moments...when they can occur only with difficulty or when they can't occur, when you are constantly fighting the mainstream. And you think twice when you realize there is not the understanding for the necessity of creativity either from the administration in your school or from those who control the district itself. Even so, I don't think others can totally suppress creativity—because it just happens!

Motif #3: Alternative Ideas for Career Wind-Down

The third and last major motif follows from the previous two—the relationship of energy to age and the importance of creativity and innovation. The third motif is the generation of alternative ideas for making better use of teacher personnel during career wind-down. Tess reflected:

I don't think there are any mechanisms in place to utilize teachers well in their most experienced years, to utilize them in thoughtful ways which tap their education and experience. Currently, teachers are placed in system positions based on seniority or by manipulation of openings and deadlines...There is nothing in place in the public school system that treats teachers as individuals, and those are the people who view large numbers of students as individuals on a daily basis—yet they are not treated that way by their employers. The system is adamant about this.

To Tess, good teachers have earned the right to be able to look forward to making a contribution during the last years of their careers:

They need to know there are some rewards. You want to go out with a bang in the academic sense. I would have liked to have felt that I had important work to do to benefit kids, to be a part of something larger than my own classroom.
When asked what shape that might take, Tess responded immediately with: "I would love to spend a couple of weeks in every high school in the city teaching material which is an academic necessity, offering options that kids could sign up for." After expanding on the idea further ("...maybe teaching material I've never taught before but which I have the background for"), Tess remarked: "What an adventure that would be. Wouldn't that be a great adventure?"

At about this time in the conversation, Tess said: "Shouldn't they be saying: We're not putting the cork in the bottle. We're asking you to fizzle a little?" And other ideas began to flow: spending more out-of-classroom time with individual students; working more with creative writing; being paired with a younger teacher ("because the value of all that experience is going to be lost unless it is tapped and passed on to younger teachers...it bogs the mind!"); facilitate agreement among teachers for a coherent progression of content and method in instruction ("because some strategies are not effective at a certain age and, if introduced too early, then, when students are capable of doing it, the novelty and excitement are gone"); or writing for the profession. The key, Tess said:

...is to look at the teacher as an individual so that a process might be created within the system for submitting ideas a few years in advance for some innovations you would like to try your last year or two...You know, getting people to look beyond next week, beyond the status quo... It might help put excitement back into learning for kids, and it certainly would for teachers. It would for this teacher.

The notion of arriving at a consensus among teachers "for a coherent progression of content and method" is especially appropriate for at least two reasons: First, because when passing knowledge to the next generation, its organization is especially important (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996, p. 340) and "...the way knowledge is transmitted should be appropriate to the skills of the learner... Whenever the information is untrue, illogical, superficial, redundant, disconnected, confusing, or—especially—dull, the chances of its getting across to students is diminished...." (p. 341). Second, those in secondary education most likely to have mastery of a domain are those who have spent a career lifetime studying and teaching it. Thus, those nearing career end are in a uniquely effective position for facilitating the process.

After the day of group collaboration in which six of us gathered to reconceptualize career end, a day which occurred three years after Tess had retired from teaching, Tess sent me her tape-recorded self interview which began:
After you left this evening, I think you saw my student come roaring into my driveway on his motorcycle, and I was reminded of how everyone in our group today seemed to care not only for students, but for those who are off the beaten track...I hadn’t seen this student in five years, so it was nice to end the day with an old student.

There she was, still touching and being touched by students, able, finally, to spend more time with individuals when both she and the student were no longer in the system. Her self-interview continued with her usual touch of creativity as she talked about the need for innovation at career end, revisiting her motif of energy and experience, using a different metaphor this time around:

I viewed my career as requiring a lot of physical energy when I didn’t have the experience. Then you get the experience and have the energy, and it is a real wave to ride, and when the experience can no longer make up for the ebbing of that wave, then a kind of sea change needs to occur.

Toward the end of the tape recording, Tess said, “I’m a bit worn out at the moment, but it is a good tired....I loved the day with its sense of purpose and movement and beauty and fun...the coming to grips with problems that were couched in so many different yet cogent ways....”

Now in my role as reflective researcher, an inhabitant of the fifty-years-of-age decade, I think that it might be inevitable that those in their fifties or sixties do not have the same physical stamina that they had in the twenties or thirties. It might be inevitable that one is more aware of moments when one is “worn out” or feeling tired. But if it is inevitable that moments of tiredness will occur, is it too much to ask that those moments be filled with a “good tired,” the kind of tired that comes from productive interactions with other professionals, from generating valuable creative ideas, from making a contribution without, in the words of Tess, “running the teacher into the ground—which they did me”? Tess would like to see more choices, more opportunities for teachers in the last years of their careers because:

When you totally eliminate risk in any career, then you also have eliminated hope, upward spiraling, and the necessity to have the energy to move on...I’d like us to return to the gold standard, to know that those teachers who leave the teacher’s desk behind can take the gold, not the tarnish, with them.
Object Lesson—Patterns: Introduction to Felicia's Story

The student, studying the walls of the classroom, found a little poem on a bulletin board:

To all a pattern.
That we do not perceive it
does not alter it.

And the student smiled with the delight of discovery. To the teacher, the student said, "Please, tell me more," and the teacher smiled.

"Let's read about garden patterns," the teacher said. "Turn to page 251 in our textbook, The Geography of Nowhere." And the student followed the words while the teacher read aloud:

All the (good) patterns had certain qualities in common. They were based unconsciously on deep human emotional and psychological needs: the need for greenery, sunlight, places to be with other people, spaces to be alone, spaces for the young and the old to mix, for excitement, tranquility, and so on....

"I wish schools were like that," the student interrupted. And the teacher read on:

The best patterns also held in common a quality called 'aliveness'...A garden gate that is 'alive' supports the good qualities of the garden and also of the path leading to it...it allows you to peer over to see the roses...Patterns that were alive promoted stability...in a universe of living patterns. Patterns that were dead caused instability and disintegration. They spread a poison....

"So some patterns are alive, and some are dead?" the student asked.

"I would agree," responded the teacher, "Does that make sense to you?"

"I don't know...." the student said quietly, "I need more time to think about it."

"I wish we had more time," the teacher reflected, "but we need to cover the rest of today's lesson. Such is the pattern in schools. Let's read a poem by Amy Lowell." And the student read:

I walk down the patterned garden-paths
In my stiff, brocaded gown...
I too am a rare Pattern....

Finally, the last lines of the poem: "For the man who should loose me is dead/... In a pattern called a war./Christ! What are patterns for?" And they sat in silence, and the bell rang, following the pattern of school bells. The student hurriedly gathered books, ran to the classroom doorway, and paused:

"Teacher, what are patterns for?"

And the teacher was pleased.

--Fictional representation based on conversations with Felicia
Felicia's Story: In Her Own Words

InnisWood Metro Garden, Volunteer's Log

March 20:

Today we began. Training wasn't much. ________(?)(somebody) issued the InnisWood manual—philosophy, history, some tips on the "well-made garden" and the words of Penelope Hobhouse: "Follow the eternal principles gleaned from the green outdoor rooms of Renaissance Italy. Study the old formal ways and absorb them like a grammar.

Kind of boring actually—When do we start?

April 26:

To all a pattern.
That we do not perceive it
does not alter it.

Ojani

I requested the arbor to tend—the robins find it most appealing and I like the shape of it. When I spoke to Bart, the head gardener, he was busy and just said, "Sure, whatever. Don't forget to record your hours."

I can't wait to get to it! I'm tired of planting the annuals.

June 20:

The annual "Garden Party" was lovely. Herbal teas and cucumber sandwiches—how civilized!

The perennial borders were perfect. The unity of them—restrained palettes of blue-gray lavenders, rosemary, lamb's ears—drifts of them. Only an occasional stately lythrum demanded us to stop and give homage. It makes me smile to think of it.

It does bring to mind that I must get back to the arbor. Someone called my attention to some of the tendrils snaking their way to the Gertrude Jekyll antique rose. Pardon me, oh venerable one!

Oh yes—A few people I don't know got some kind of service pins toward the end.
Sept. 22:

The book said, "Hack it back."

Easy enough.

Prune it to the arbor. Cut hard here, snip there. Maintain the structure, the line of it. "Blooms will be abundant."

Today when I stepped out of the cool depths of shade under the bower into the glare, I could not find the arbor. What happened?

When did I lose control of it—the hard gray lines of cedar support lost in the twisted mass of wisteria, clematis, some indigent vine I do not recognize.

Was it in May when I stopped to let a dove nest undisturbed 'til young spotted wings took flight? Was it in August when the cool mass gave me shelter and a verdant window to observe the butterflies flitting among silly zinnias, bee balm and cosmos?

Perhaps I never really saw "the line," the mass and weight of wisteria already in place when I arrived.

In the spring Bart said, "Here are a few tools—do what you can."

Yesterday he said, "No matter—move on to the rose bed where you can do some dead-heading. I'll get the new guy—I forget his name. He's great with a saw."

Tomorrow I must remember to wear a hat.

---Symbolic representation created by Felicia
“InnisWood Metro Garden, Volunteer’s Log” embodies Felicia’s career in education. It is her metaphor, her symbolic representation. It is her story. After 25 years as an educator, Felicia retired from the field. Her plans for the future were to “put my hands in soil, to reconnect to nature...Maybe I’ll plant an herb garden.” And so she did. She further designed and planted a floral garden with numerous paths; it has become an extension of her home. She created the poem “InnisWood Metro Garden” while sitting, walking, and thinking in her garden. Our first interview was in an outdoor garden-like setting at a restaurant. Her self interview took place in her garden and began with the words:

I’m sitting here in my garden. This light is incredibly beautiful. It backlights everything, and you can see the skeletons in the leaves and the wonderful things in the natural world which I love so much.

It seems not only fitting but essential to discuss Felicia in relation to her garden metaphor.

Felicia spoke of the multiple layers of meaning in her metaphor, making any interpretation of it polysemous—that is, each interpretation of the text is “justified by the different possibilities of signification inherent in words and their arrangements” (Frye, Baker, & Perkins, 1985, p. 360). Accordingly, as a method for discussion and analysis of Felicia’s story, I have adopted the “Four Senses of Interpretation,” a mode of medieval criticism which examines a work for four different kinds of meaning: the literal, the tropological or figurative, the allegorical, and the anagogical or universal/spiritual (Frye et al.).

The Literal Level of Interpretation

At the literal level, “InnisWood Metro Garden, Volunteer’s Log” is a kind of journal, documenting a volunteer’s work experiences from March 20 to September 22 during part of a year. Training for the job was minimal and perfunctory. Within 36 days of beginning to work in the garden, the volunteer writes some provocative and unexplained words about a pattern and asks for a new job. Summer is an exciting time to the volunteer and she comments on the lovely “Garden Party” amid the flowering perennials; weeds need attention; service pins are awarded to a few people toward the end of the party. Autumn brings an urgent need for pruning, since the volunteer has apparently been sidetracked during the spring and summer, allowing a “twisted mess” to grow unchecked. The volunteer wonders when she lost sight of the arbor, the area she
had asked to tend back in April; now she wonders if she ever really understood the task she had requested. Some new person will be assigned her old job, and she receives an assignment of lesser importance. As the journal closes, her only thought is to remind herself of a decision she has just made, mundane but practical—tomorrow, she wants to wear a hat. At the literal level, the volunteer is anxious to get to work in the spring, happy to be a part of the metro garden in the summer, and pensive about the whole experience in the fall. At the literal level, InnisWood Metro Garden is a metropolitan garden.

**The Tropological Level of Interpretation**

In the next level of interpretation, the tropological or figurative, the garden is a microcosm which tells the story of Felicia’s career in education. At this individual, figurative level, Felicia explained the meaning of her symbols during an interview (in an outdoor setting) which she began by reading “InnisWood Metro Garden” aloud. One of her purposes in writing the poem, she said, was to figure out a metaphor that worked for her:

> In the years that I have lived on different levels, it has finally come to me that I’m most comfortable in the natural world, so I must make metaphors that work in that world and hope that I can negotiate enough meaning with you and others to make them work for you....

Based on the interview transcript, I have created a glossary of Felicia’s meaning for the images and symbols in her metaphor and for the story they tell. These terms are defined in the order they occur in the poem; they convey Felicia’s intended meaning and are in Felicia’s own words.

**Felicia’s glossary of meaning.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Metro Garden:</td>
<td>The public school system, open to everybody, and it’s free;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not a vegetable garden, but a world; what schools have to get at, too—not just feeding us physically, but aesthetically and intellectually—all the things that the garden does in the next level. Fundamentally, you have to have public education or our system, our way of living, our culture, cannot survive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer:</td>
<td>Notice I am a volunteer, under the category of missionary zeal or ardor: the majority of people who go into education feel that. This is not about sitting in a cubicle; it’s a different mind-set from the outset. I went at it as if I could make a difference in the whole of it by tending my little patch, whatever that patch might be.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 20:</td>
<td>The vernal equinox; the passing of the old, the coming of the new; for teachers, it is their first day—the first stage of their careers, of my career.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
InnisWood manual: The first thing administrators do is give us a manual and you go over the philosophy and history of the school and the mechanics of how to run a "well-made garden"—a classroom.

Penelope Hobhouse: She is a real person, one of the most respected gardeners in the world; she has written many books on the art, the skill, the structure, the design, the technique—everything about what a garden is. These are her words, and I thought: how appropriate that she would see a grammar, guiding principles that structure a garden or our institutions or our lives.

April 26: Arbor Day. Also shows movement in the career.

poetic stanza: A Japanese haiku. I wrote this poem and had it on my classroom walls countless years. Remember? I had art and poetry every place. It was a highlight for me when kids would get it; then I knew that they would be all right because they were paying attention to the things around them. The haiku also introduces Eastern thought in the garden.

tend the arbor: I requested the arbor because even in the early years of my life in education, I wanted to get at the underpinnings of why we're here. This is an arbor, not trellises. It's the structure, the large statement. The natural world likes the arbor, robins like it, it's part of the order.

Bart, head gardener: Administrators. Bart—because I see that Bart Simpson represents the mentality "they" want administrators to have.

"Sure, whatever": Administrators are Wendy's managers: Don't bother me, I'm busy ...just put your time in; put it on the card...whatever.

annuals: A splash of color. They last for a short period of time, have a finite existence and limited purpose. You want them to break the monotony, stick them in a vase. They'll do that for the short term, like what they give us when we begin to teach—They give us the "dudes", classrooms where all you have to do is maintain or raise the reading level a fraction.

June 20: The Summer Solstice, a time change and the pinnacle of light. Every day thereafter becomes shorter. That's why the garden party is now: Everything comes to fruition, all things are at their peak in June. A gradual deterioration occurs by late July.

"Garden Party": All the pieces of ceremony we go through in education from PTA meetings to graduations.

cucumber sandwich: You've got to have some age on you to appreciate a cucumber sandwich. You can't do it when you're 12 or 15.

"the unity of them": I hope that in this section the tone has changed, is changing... there is an appreciation of nuances, of subtleties.
butterflies: I see myself here as I create my own realities. I’m on task, but kind of like a butterfly that fits around trying to get the essence of everything and sometimes missing most of it.

lavenders: Lavender has many properties, not the least of which is its beauty—these gorgeous purple flowers on this gray blue-green shrub—but it’s also an herb with soothing properties. Lavender is also a scent. It gets at almost all of your senses. You want to experience it in a very special way, like one of the best things I’ve had in my life. It was in San Francisco—a chocolate cake in lavender sauce. It was divine.

“drifts of them” One of the garden principles is that you don’t plant one of anything. You let it have its right habitat, and then you plant lots of them. Knowing what should be planted where and how many of them should be planted in one place is a cardinal rule in gardening—and in education.

rosemary: The herb for remembrance. It’s a master of remembering where you have been and what all the things you have experienced have brought to your life and in transplanting or sharing those with other people so that they can benefit in some way. The lamb’s ears are those experiences.

lamb’s ears: Those gray poodles of plants that are real fuzzy and they send up a spike—the very end kind of plant that you want to experience in a very physical way, so tall and spiky... like when I took on a school building as a project. It was an old, cruddy building that no one gave a damn about. I said, “This will not do.” We are going to have an environment that people want to come to, so I pleaded and begged and cajoled; the building was painted and it had art and plants. And the kids responded to that. I loved those kids.

makes me smile: That paragraph or stanza is meant to describe that I do have a clue of what it’s all about, it’s been awhile coming, but I’ve got it.

“back to the arbor”: Where I choose to be

tendrils snaking: Tendrils are those creative ideas that tend to come once we have our feet on the ground with what we’re supposed to be doing. Tendrils are also the children—it’s their nature, their growing habit to move and wrap around everything. Part of the school process is the “pruning,” the socialization, the conforming.

antique rose: Gertrude Jekyll is another incredible woman, like Penelope Hobhouse. There are roses named for her, English roses, shrub roses that bloom under any conditions and they become huge.

service pins: I knew you would get this one. Once you get the first part, the second part....
The autumn equinox...and this is the password, like when I talk about losing control....When we reach the autumn of our careers, just before we're ready to get out of the business, we do step back and wonder what is going on...and all those bright colors!

Even though I thought I had the wisteria under control, I didn't. Wisteria blooms as a hardy vine that becomes a tree, and they have those purple flowers that hang down. Bees, butterflies, all the critters love it. You have to fight all the things in the natural world for it.

The latest "canned approach" or fad for classroom success.

Because in teaching, there is a nurturing quality.

Like a clown flower...frightening red things come out of the top of it like clown hair. Hummingbirds and butterflies like it; they flit around bee balm like children...

An airy pink flower, an annual, gone at the end of the season. It self-seeds. All these flowers seed themselves, so there are flowers everywhere. They're carried in the wind wherever they will go, like our students...They grow up and they're gone.

Perhaps I never saw it—we don't have a clue. Our worth here is just nothing, absolutely nothing, so what's the point? When I left, I thought I saw what needed to be done; I just didn't have the strength to do it. It takes youth and stamina to get the job done, even if you finally understand the job at this point. You just get to the point where you don't want to tolerate the silliness...like power, or pursuing it...you don't want to deal with it.

Tending the wisteria on the arbor is an important job; you're messing around with the structure of it, and when they tell you to go cut the dead flowers off—they move you to places of seeming insignificance—your worth seems lessened because that is not a significant job. Yet it is a necessary job because if you don't cut the old flowers off, the new ones won't come. The plant assumes it is finished, and it dies...in truth, I overestimated what I could contribute to the system; I thought I was going to change it in some way, like the wisteria in the garden. In reality, the system is a whole lot bigger than anything I had imagined.

This marks when I realized that I had very little control over my professional life. When I was an administrator, they moved me around in the middle of the year, never mind the effects on an disrupted program. People are constantly being shuffled around and rearranged, blown about by the political winds. The message? Instructional development, faculty development, student scheduling, continuity, are not important. Individual schools are not important. The new guy is going to hack the hell out of the wisteria or cut the arbor down, maybe both. So I chose
to go back to the classroom, and shortly after that, I chose to leave education altogether.

"I forget his name": How typical of administrators! Not only does he not know the name of the new guy, he doesn't know mine. He never once addressed me by name...because they don't look at teachers as serious beings; they don't look at teachers at all...They look at the bottom line, efficiency, how much it is going to cost...They need to realize that these are people—not children...I hate to think that for the rest of time, the system will deal with the aging teacher and retirement—not doing what you have spent half your life doing anymore—with a seminar on financial planning.

"tomorrow, wear a hat": The last line took me five or twenty-five years to come to...I have been “retired” for five years now. It is what I should have realized from the very beginning, but it took me a long time to see that perhaps my real role is doing whatever I need to be doing at the appropriate time. I could not, for example, prune the wisteria on September 22 when it might be scheduled; I needed to prune it in April. But that is part of the natural order of things. There is a natural order and a pattern to it all, and just because I didn't see it when I was young doesn't mean it wasn't there.

Other interpretations: There are other meanings buried in my metaphor—the whole issue of the choices we make, for example, and personal responsibility. Or it could be very Biblical...the Garden of Eden, the fall, the tendrils snaking...And there is a darker side of not following the natural order.

Note to reader: You are invited to read again “InnisWood Metro Garden, Volunteer's Log” at this time to experience how your awareness of Felicia's expanded meanings increases the complexity of your response to her metaphor.

The Allegorical Level of Interpretation

Felicia's remarks about other meanings buried in her poem invite other interpretations. The third "Sense of Interpretation" is allegorical: "The allegorical meaning is the particular story in its application to people generally, with emphasis on their beliefs as opposed to their actions" (Frye et al., 1985). This section will attempt to explicate Felicia's symbolic representation allegorically as it applies to teachers generally, emphasizing the beliefs or thoughts which are suggested within the extended metaphor.

At this level, I suggest three ways for viewing the garden, all operating simultaneously: as symbol, as setting for the allegory, and as belief system. As symbol, the garden is "...where Nature is subdued, ordered, selected and enclosed. Hence, it is a symbol of consciousness..."
which corresponds to the basic symbolism of landscape” (Cirlot, 1995, p. 115). The garden, then, symbolizes consciousness; the landscape provides the setting for the allegory where inner forces unfold as forms in the outer world (p. 177). Taken together, these suggest our civilization, its history and its current state of development as manifested in an urban school system. As belief system, the garden exemplifies notions from our intellectual ancestors: humankind is a part of nature, not its master; concepts of space and time can be understood only in their relation to the natural world; one’s own position in the universe can be understood only in relation to the natural world (Fontana, 1993). In short, the garden represents our conscious awareness of our civilization over time seen in relation to the natural world of which we are an integral part. The volunteer, or teacher, locates or positions the self within this urban garden.

Time in this allegory is conveyed by the passage of the seasons in the natural world which correspond to stages in the development of civilization, cycles of individual human life, diurnal cycles in the passage of a day, or, for my current purposes, stages in a teaching career. The seasons in the allegory are indicated by equinoxes or solstices, regarded by ancient people as “significant moments of the year” and as “times of intense change” (Heinberg, 1993, p. 12). These time designations can be read as significant markers or turning points in the unfolding of an urban teaching career during the present historical moment.

The traditional meaning of the seasons includes the following:

1) spring as departure on a journey, symbol of the renewal of life, and hope for the future (Gibson, 1996; Julien, 1989/1996)—all of these meanings apply to the teacher beginning her career. In spring, the allegory’s main character, an unnamed teacher (referred to as a volunteer), departs on the journey which is her career in an urban school system. The teacher is hopeful, as befits spring, even though her preparation for the career “wasn’t much.” Nevertheless, she has a background in Western civilization, having absorbed it “like a grammar,” and she begins to teach basic classes of students, the annuals who change every year in substance but not in kind. In fact, Felicia said, annuals lack substance though some teachers prefer their quick flowering even though they also fade quickly. The “true gardener” prefers the perennials, but a perennial garden requires more planning: “You’ve got to know people, their habits, when and how they bloom.”
2) summer as a test to ensure energy and mastery, symbol of approaching one's prime, and happiness and well-being (Gibson, Julien)—the teacher can be seen here as feeling energetic, expressing mastery of aspects of the environment in which she works, and enjoying the whole educational process including the celebrations of success.  
3) autumn as the most ambiguous season with memories of summer's warmth and anticipation of winter's chill, symbol of maturity, and preparation for renewal (Gibson, Julien)—The teacher remembers what she had learned about teaching from her education ("The book said, 'Hack it back.") and sees that the methods are no longer working. Before she can reflect on her experiences, an administrator, anxious to implement a solution, sends her off to accomplish a necessary but minor task without asking for her input and without giving the matter sustained thought herself.  

There is no winter in this allegory, no end to the journey begun in the spring, no time of coldness or death, no sense of hopelessness. There is, however, a sense of resignation and acceptance even as there is no vision and no sense of closure.  

The only marker of the passage of time in the allegory which is neither season nor equinox nor solstice is April 26, Arbor Day. Arbor Day is a day in the spring designated for the planting of trees, mainly for ecological, and sometimes for scientific or educational, purposes. Among various symbolic meanings attached to trees, one of humankind's "most potent symbols" (Fontana, 1993, p. 100), are those of fraternity and knowledge (Julien, 1989/1996). Trees further suggest foundations, roots, and grounding (Telesco, 1993). Wood, the main substance of trees beneath the bark, is mentioned in the "hard gray lines of cedar support"; cedar has the specific symbolic connotation of inner potential (Telesco). Although the metro garden of the allegory is named InnisWood, trees are assumed or inferred rather than made explicit. Both knowledge and foundations are assumed to be in the garden. Fraternity can be inferred as well, although the head gardener is the only character with a name. The volunteer exists throughout the metaphor without a name as do the "new guy," the "Someone" who called attention to the tendrils, and the "few people I don't know" who received service pins. Service pins are given for token recognition of culturally approved contributions; ironically, both the contributions and the recognition are anonymous, unexceptional, and indicate little more than a well-intended expenditure of time and energy. The pins symbolize awards which are really non-awards, lacking both personalization and
distinction, just like the humans who have earned them. Significantly, on Arbor Day, there is no record of trees being planted.

Nor is it a coincidence in Felicia’s allegory that on Arbor Day, the volunteer makes a request to tend the arbor—the main structure, the main shaft or beam, or in the words of Felicia, “the large statement...the underpinnings of why we’re here.” On Arbor Day, in the spring of the career, the teacher’s ardent is high. She has been contemplative enough to write a haiku poem, though the meaning eludes her. She wants to increase her understanding of the very foundation of her urban educational system, perhaps to make it even more effective. The administrator is busy, remains unaware of the value of this kind of interest on the part of the teacher, wants no more from her than the required hours. By the autumn of her career, when the foundations (“hard gray lines of cedar support”) are no longer visible to anyone, the teacher’s ardent is diminished, and the inner potential of the teacher is lost along with the cedar support which shows its age in the color gray.

In addition to the passage of time in the allegory, elements from civilizations past (and their influence on the present) abound. Influences from Western or Occidental civilizations appear in references to Penelope Hobhouse and Renaissance Italy, garden parties, cucumber sandwiches, and Gertrude Jekyll. Influences from Eastern or Oriental civilizations appear in Japanese Haiku poetry and herbal teas. Both Eastern and Western influences appear in the multiple symbols of nature which have historical and current meaning in cultures around the world (Cirtot, 1995; Fontana, 1993; Gibson, 1996; Julien, 1989/1996), but the influences are neither balanced nor equal.

While Eastern influences are present, they are few in number. This garden was built on Western principles and is primarily a commentary on Western society and/or Western educational institutions and practices. In contrast, Japanese gardens are based on asymmetry, not on the symmetry of unified perennial borders as in the metro garden. In the “incompleteness” of the Japanese garden, there is space for the expansion of the imagination (Julien, 1989/1996, p. 177). In the metro garden, however, when the volunteer passes time in imaginative reflection, as when she pauses to nurture newborn doves or observes the flitting butterflies, things get out of control. Ironically, it is in August, near the end of her career, when the teacher takes time to observe the butterflies “flitting among silly zinnias.” Zinnias suggest “the power of youth, joy, and
the simple pleasures often overlooked" (Telesco, 1993, p. 225). This is consonant with the symbolism associated with butterflies. In terms of imaginative reflection, the butterfly is a positive symbol, standing for the power of transformation (Fontana, p. 78); the ancients viewed the butterfly as the soul "breaking the bonds of the material world" (Julien, p. 51). But there is no time for reflection or simple pleasures in the modern West where the butterfly symbolizes "lightness and fickleness" (Julien, p. 51). In the West, one must be vigilant in maintaining the structure of the material world; otherwise, "the new guy" will take over. Or perhaps the problem is that the volunteer in the allegory was distracted by focusing on issues of transience in Western culture (another meaning associated with butterflies) instead of more culturally defined significant issues.

Other elements of nature present in the allegory can be interpreted symbolically. Flowers are associated with transitoriness and spring (Cirlot, 1995), with beauty and the "development of highest faculties" (Schaefer, 1988, pp. 22-23), and with the "realization of latent possibilities" (Julien, 1989/1996, p. 161). It is just when the perennial borders seemed perfect, when perhaps the teacher was in the prime of her career and/or when every aspect of the school in the "well-made garden" was operating smoothly, that the volunteer’s attention is drawn (by whom?) to a matter that needs immediate attention—tendrils are "snaking their way" to the antique rose. The rose "almost always signifies something magnificent" with elements of both happiness and suffering (Julien, p. 161). Considered one of the most important floral symbols in the Western world (Gibson, 1996), the "rose is to the West what the lotus is to the East" (Julien, p. 354), including aspects of time: "the past through its buds; the present through its flower; the future in its seeds" (p. 249). Further, as Telesco (1993) stated:

The history of the rose, the queen of the flowers, is closely tied with our own. It has associations with everything from sacred Indian rites and Roman warriors to political events such as the War of the Roses in fifteenth century England....(p. 158).

Snakes (as in "tendrils snaking") offer self knowledge, positive and negative, and can represent "the power and responsibility of leadership and balance" (Telesco, p. 222); snakes symbolize life or death (Julien). The tendrils, which if left unchecked may choke the life from the rose, suggest the necessity of responsible leadership if balance is to be maintained. Perhaps the rose suggests the venerable classic curriculum, rich in Western civilization, which gets increasingly diluted in modern urban schools. Maybe it suggests the traditional values which in times past provided, if
not a clear direction, at least the illusion of one. What will take the place of the antique rose if its seeds are not permitted to germinate? What are leaders doing (or not doing) to preserve, cultivate, and put to good use the Gertrude Jekyll antique rose? What can one volunteer do when one of her jobs seems to be keeping creative ideas and self-knowledge from reaching and co-mingling with the magnificence of the rose? Indeed one might ask why a relatively inexperienced and minimally trained volunteer is put in charge of the antique rose, one of the most precious plants in the garden.


Unfortunately, if the hackers don’t know what they’re doing, if they hack hard enough, often enough, plants will die because they no longer have the green needed to produce food for their root systems.

In the autumn, the last part of the career, the volunteer becomes aware that the foundations have been lost—lost in a “twisted mess” of vines: wisteria, clematis, and “some indigent vine I do not recognize.” Wisteria, a vine which invites ambivalence, produces a “lovely odor” and a strong wooden trunk which “can wreak havoc” if not heavily pruned (Bailey, 1985); it suggests the wildness of nature left unchecked—perhaps what happens when inner forces are ignored but nevertheless manifest themselves in the outer world. Clematis, a rope-like vine, has stamens which, in the autumn, develop silvery “filaments like grey hair, hence...the name, old man’s beard” (Schefler, 1988, p. 72). Vines also indicate selfishness and vanity as well as leadership qualities (Schefler, pp. 170-171). Have the leaders failed to keep the foundations intact? Have the leaders (locally and/or nationally) been selfish or vain or lazy—like the “indigent vine”? Do they even grasp the significance and scope of the task at hand? Has the garden, or the urban school system, reached the autumn of its development, leaving those in charge wondering what happened to the abundant blooms it had expected in the spring? In the spring, the head gardener gave the volunteer a “few tools” and told her, “do what you can.” Did he think both the tools and expectations were adequate to the task? Will the “new guy” be able to do enough with his saw before the winter sets in?
Only a few items mentioned in the metro garden do not automatically occur in the natural world—the log and a tool with which to write, books or manuals, the haiku poem, the arbor itself, teas and sandwiches, service pins, pruning tools such as a saw, and the hat at the end. All of these objects are human-made, the result of human effort in a more or less progressive evolution of the implements and refinements which make possible civilized living—the epitome of which is represented in the garden party, a rare moment of celebration. The log records experiences for future benefit; books and manuals preserve information for other humans to be utilized in both the present and the future as well as provide instruction. Poems represent abstract thought in an art form as do the unified perennial borders, shaped by human hand. The arbor represents the foundation or structure of a garden, institution, or system. Teas represent healing potions, nourishment, civilized social interactions, and refinement. Sandwiches, invented and named in the 18th century, are made of bread which symbolizes cultural development and psychic nourishment (Julien, 1989/1996). The saw is a crude pruning tool, symbolizing primitive methods, perhaps the best that have been developed for use in the urban garden; the saw’s basic purpose is to cut or divide. Finally, the hat, a human-made covering for the head, suggests protection. The head, considered the most important part of the human body because it contains the brain, is a symbol of wisdom (Gibson, 1996), an unrecognized and untapped resource in the urban garden.

The conscious beliefs which seem to be illustrated in the allegory are about the present historical moment. The following is my interpretation. Our civilization in the West has reached a flowering of its current, most elevated ideas: We have libraries of books and manuals which a minority of our citizens read (the others unwilling or unable to do so); we have expressed aspirations, both sacred and profane, in works of art; we have created structured systems and institutions which embody our finest values and ideals for societal organization and preservation—though these systems and institutions currently seem to contain few reasons for celebration or sustained joy...our sandwiches obtained chiefly in “fast food” establishments which provide little nourishment for either body or psyche, our “teas” indulged in rarely, more a remnant of a fading past than an integral part of the present or future. If indeed we are in the autumn of our cultural development, it would seem that we have arrived at a “twisted mess.” Surely the non-natural mechanical objects in this technological era which further separate us from the natural world are
hidden in the mess of the vines—the electricity which drives the day and night instead of the sun and moon; the telephones which allow us to visit without seeing or touching other human beings; the televisions which consume leisure time and program our thoughts usually below the level of our awareness; the computers which increase efficiency and affect our evolution in ways we don’t yet understand; the automobile and its demands for concrete superhighways and roadways and crude oil on which we shower our resources while proportionally being unashamedly stingy with our nation’s schools. Not only are we largely cut off from the natural world, our best tool in this civilization is symbolized by the saw. Our best is still primitive and crude—good for cutting or dividing but not for building or unifying. As we move toward the winter solstice of our current civilization, we need not do so with mindlessness. We can affirm the positive, celebrate the flowering, and seek available wisdom before continuing to employ the saw which, indeed, may have outlived its usefulness.

Note to reader: You are invited to again read “InnisWood Metro Garden, Volunteer’s Log” to experience how this allegorical interpretation—or your own—increases the complexity of your response to Felicia’s symbolic representation.

The Anagogical Level of Interpretation

The fourth and last level of interpretation is the anagogical, defined as a work’s universal or spiritual significance (Frye, et al., 1985, p. 201). Perhaps it is only coincidence in Michael Hart’s The 100: A Ranking of the Most Influential Persons in History (1992) that among his top six selections, five are spiritual teachers whose lives and teachings continue to influence both Eastern and Western regions of the world: Muhammad, Jesus Christ, Buddha, Confucius, and St. Paul. Whether or not others agree with Hart’s specific rankings, it seems undeniable that spiritual ideas have had enormous influence in shaping our current civilization, even though our society minimizes and de-emphasizes spiritual aspects of life. President Jimmy Carter, for example, “told Americans the truth and they hated him for it. He...diagnosed the nation’s spiritual condition as a ‘malaise’...” (Kunstler, 1993, p. 109). Benjamin Spock, as cited in Csikszentmihalyi (1996), calls the United States an “unspiritual country” even as he underlines the spirituality inherent in creating the kind of symbolic representation which Felicia wrote for this research: “It takes a high degree and a high type of spirituality to want to express things in terms of literature or poetry, plays, architecture, gardens....” (p. 230). From Felicia’s early statement that she is “most
comfortable in the natural world," to her inclusion of cosmos among the flowers in her metro
garden, to her references to the Garden of Eden and the natural order, Felicia has indicated that
her symbolic representation lends itself to an anagogical interpretation. There is precedent for
doing this as well when nature symbolism is utilized in an artistic creation:

Of all symbolic sources, none has provided greater inspiration than the
natural world. Its universal constituents...are common to all cultures and
to all people. In trying to find answers to profound questions...in ascribing
significance to...phenomena of the natural world, humankind was
expressing its belief that each had a part to play in the cosmic drama
and that their individual symbolism collectively mirrored and constituted
the universal whole (Gibson, 1996, p. 89).

At the anagogical level, the garden operates as a macrocosm rather than the microcosm which was
illustrated at the tropological level (Cirtot, 1995). At the macrocosmic level, the garden is the
"center of the cosmos, Eden, paradise...an archetypal image of the soul" (Julien, 1989/1996, pp.
176-77). Fontana (1993) expands upon the meaning of garden as human soul by saying that the
soul "like the garden, must be cared for and cultivated" and reinforces the meaning of garden as
paradise and "fields of the blessed" (p. 105).

The Garden of Eden is perhaps the most widely known garden in Western mythology.
Even Shakespeare utilized its symbolism in one of his "very rare ventures into allegory" (Frye et
al., 1985, p. 13) in Richard II. Asimov (1978) calls the gardener a "man of Adam's original
prolaction" (p. 298) who was put in the garden in order to tend it and keep it prospering.
Although the garden scene in Richard II refers to the pending downfall of King Richard II due to his
neglect of England and its human resources, the speech of the gardener could well be applied to
our nation's urban students:

Go bind thou up yon dangling apricocks,
Which, like unruly children, make their sire
Stoop with oppression of their prodigal weight,
Give some supportance to the bending twigs" (II, iv, 29-32).

Or it could be applied to the nation's teaching jobs which need pruning and paring down:

Lest, being over-proud in sap and blood,
With too much riches it confound itself.
Had he done so to great and growing men,
They might have liv'd to bear, and he to taste
Their fruits of duty (II, iv, 59-63).
Regardless of application, the Garden of Eden resonates in Felicia's symbolic representation. The gardener's name is Bart, rather than Adam; the volunteer has no name but suggests the presence of Eve, the helper of the gardener. The herbal teas echo "...thou shalt eat the herb of the field" and in the cucumber sandwiches can be heard, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread...." (Genesis 3: 18-19, Revised Standard Version). The last line of the poem, "Tomorrow I must remember to wear a hat," evokes "...the Lord God...clothed them" (Genesis 3: 21).

The Tree of Life (arbor vitae) and the Tree of Knowledge (arbor philosophica) mentioned in Genesis have, over time, been represented symbolically by vines (Fontana, 1993; Gibson, 1996; Julien, 1996); in the metro garden, Arbor Day is a significant marker of time, and the vines have resulted in a "twisted mess." The Tree of Life signifies regeneration while the Tree of Knowledge offers intellectual awakening and denotes creative evolution (Gibson, pp. 117-118) as well as wisdom; the Tree of Knowledge symbolizes the growth of a force, an idea, or a vocation (Cirilo, 1995). According to Cirilo, the symbolism of the tree is synonymous with the life of the cosmos—"its consistence, growth, proliferation, generative and regenerative processes," and the "two-tree symbolism in the Bible" are "merely two different representations of the same idea" (pp. 347-348). That these vines—intellectual awakening, creative evolution, the promise of generative processes, wisdom—are not flowering productively in the metro garden is profoundly disturbing.

When the volunteer in the metro garden steps "out of the cool depths of shade (provided by trees or vines)....into the glare", she experiences a revelation in the blinding light: She cannot find "the lines of cedar support." Maybe, she now speculates, she never really saw "the line." At this point, the number two, as above in the two-tree symbolism, appears again:

In its association with the line, which has two points, the number two (the binary) represents both balance and the passage of time....in Taoist belief the cosmos is made up of two forces—yin and yang—which, although in opposition to each other, are also complementary...the number two is an ambivalent symbol of duality...Both parts must be perfectly balanced to avoid disharmony...two symbolizes wisdom (Gibson, 1996, p. 86).

Further, the solstices divide the year into two parts according to the waxing or the waning of the sun, and the equinoxes divide the two parts into halves, denoting points of balance as well as times of intense change (Heinberg, 1993). Again further, the boundaries between complements:
are ambiguous, neither this nor that...they serve as gateways between dimensions, realities, and states of consciousness... (The solstices and equinoxes) were times of danger and opportunity; times for special alertness and aliveness (Heinberg, p. 11).

At this juncture, this autumn equinox in our development as a society, we arrive at a gateway between states of consciousness. If we are especially alert, we can see the cyclic results of the ideas which have dominated our urban schools over the last decades. Felicia noted during her self-interview:

Finding the time when the climate is right (to pass a school levy) says that we are no longer sure of our status in the community—or perhaps we are. We know that it is pretty low. If we're paying attention to how really off-target the whole system of education is, we have to reflect on the fact that this very public spent their early years, the formative ones, with us. Clearly we didn't have the impact we hoped we would. In reality, we kind of dehumanized the public, saw them as objects when they were students, treated them as such, threw some activities at them to get the results we wanted—as if those grades were actually reflecting our efforts. Now the public is screaming at us, telling us to wake up about a system that wasn't working then and isn't working now. So what we have in our society are the long-term results of that kind of system.

Felicia said that this awareness leaves her feeling a "profound sadness," that our society dehumanizes almost all its members, and that "our psyches can't stand up to it." At this juncture, because of our increased awareness, we have the opportunity to restore balance.

The interplay of complementary principles can be observed throughout the metro garden regardless of whether the garden is viewed as the planet Earth, the Garden of Eden, a human soul, or even an urban school system. As we have seen, these principles are illustrated in the representations of Adam and Eve, of both the Tree of Knowledge and the Tree of Life, of the "line" or basic foundations, and of the solstices or seasons. In addition, these complements are illustrated in the snake and in the rose.

Asimov (1981) traces the development of the interpretation of the serpent in the Garden of Eden:

...the serpent's evil is motiveless or, at best, arises out of mere delight in mischief. The Jews of post-Exilic times made this seem more reasonable, however, by equating the serpent with Satan, who is the spirit of Evil as God is the spirit of Good...Actually, the tale of the serpent is quite un-Biblical in atmosphere. Only here and in one other case do the Hebrew scriptures mention talking animals. It seems quite likely that the tale of the serpent is extremely primitive and represents a remnant of nature myth (p. 31).
Later, Asimov expands upon the meaning attributed to serpents or snakes:

The fact that a serpent moves in so quiet and hidden a fashion and strikes so suddenly and so unexpectedly with so poisoned a fang, makes it an obvious representation of cunning and evil...Then, too, the serpent is looked upon as symbolizing immortality... (p. 175).

When combining Asimov’s interpretation with those of others, the snake is clearly an ambivalent figure, symbol of all the “aggressive powers, positive and negative, which rule the world” (Cirilo, 1995, p. 287); of life or death (Julien, 1989/1996); of the “seduction of strength by matter (as Adam by Eve)...of the process of involution; and of how the inferior can lurk within the superior, or the previous within the subsequent” (Cirilo, p. 286); of the unconscious which includes both the rejected and misunderstood as well as latent possibilities; of “aggression at a lower level, and power and wisdom at a higher one” (Julien, p. 386). In the metro garden, the tender’s snake their way toward the rose, another dualistic symbol. The symbolism of the rose at the universal level includes both happiness and suffering (Julien), both life and death as well as rebirth (Gibson); it is also the symbol of completion, consummate achievement, and perfection (Cirilo).

The progression of the teaching vocation, seen at the macro-level, has evolved, proliferated, and reached a level of completion as embodied in the rose. In any large sense, the overall public conception of the career seems to have solidified sometime within the last half of this century; it is defined mechanistically by specific predetermined tasks to be accomplished within predetermined time frames. Like Kunstler’s (1993) observation that “Eighty percent of everything ever built in America has been built in the last fifty years, and most of it is depressing, brutal, ugly, unhealthy, and spiritually degrading” (p. 10), teaching careers have been shaped and defined in depressing and limiting ways. Teachers have limited responsibilities and authority, restricted possibilities for growth and advancement, and an income confined to fixed amounts based on the quantity of days on the job rather than upon the quality of accomplishment. I believe it is no simple coincidence that Ducharme (1994) called most school buildings “outrages to the spirit” (p. 83), for the buildings are the manifestation of public consciousness, the inner forces unfolding as forms in the outer world. In the words of Kunstler, “It was our very inability to see past objects in the landscape and understand the relationships at work between them that had led us to create such a symbolically impoverished everyday environment” (p. 250). The public—and professional—consciousness currently specifies the scope, tasks, and basic understandings
needed for teaching and nurturing the precious youth of the nation with the same "job" definition for twenty-one-year-old teachers as for fifty-one-year-old teachers, whereas the latter should be viewed as roses in the urban garden rather than as its weeds or indigent vines. The kind of thinking which has resulted in the public conceptions mentioned above has allowed one of the most important flowers in the garden, the antique rose, to provide the seeds of its own destruction. Untended, it will die.

The tendrils snaking toward the rose suggest, among other possibilities, that this conception is myopic, that parts of the career have been misunderstood, ignored, or hidden from view. Hopefully, the latent possibilities in the snake at the higher level, those not currently manifesting in the public consciousness, may come forward at this propitious time when regeneration and creative evolution are so badly needed. For, in Felicia's words, "The soul of the teaching profession is dying."

We may discover some of the latent possibilities by tapping our collective wisdom—represented in the metro garden by the Tree of Knowledge, the snake, and the interplay of complementaries which we could seek to bring in balance within the natural world in which we live. We in the West might also see what could be learned from Eastern traditions in which "youth and age are seen as two complementary aspects—innocence and wisdom—of the one reality" (Fontana, 1993, p. 126). Indeed, one of the last vestiges of sustained cross-generational bonding in our culture is occurring in our nation's schools which few would describe as harmonious or in balance. Yet the quality of these interactions and transactions make a great contribution to the opportunities, the quality of life, the very foundations for present and future generations. They—the human interactions, the school environments, our "metro gardens"—deserve our closest attention, our best nurturing and cultivation, the utmost generosity of our most evolved human and material resources, and the highest level of our wisdom. As Felicia said:

There is a way that we can look to the future and say that our educational system is not like a steam locomotive that is going to be retired to the scrap yard with Amtrak taking its place. We don't know the shape of Amtrak in the future...It scares me to think of that future—if we don't participate in the shaping of it now.

Felicia believes that wisdom comes with life experiences that come only with years of labor and living, even as she recognizes that "only a convoluted reasoning will say that we—as older,
experienced educators—have value in a society which worships youth...We have to put aside the notion that kids are the fountains of all the truth there is in the world. They are what they are, and that is very young, very inexperienced.” At this stage of her life, Felicia says that she feels both acceptance and resolution and that these increase the more she becomes aware of her place in the universe as a creature of the natural world:

It comes back to the hat. Only when we put the hat on in respect and deference do we know our place in the cosmic order. Life’s experience accumulates with years of living, and some wisdom comes with that. I no longer feel the arrogance of my youth. Now I think that this structure that was placed here, that we work within, was pretty arbitrary, and that includes the knowledge base. It is an artificial kind of knowledge, but we work with it because that’s what we do. We need to understand that in a single moment, the cosmic order can take over, and all our artificial structures are nothing. I respect that. When I put my hat on, I respect that. The hat shades me, too, because once you have that understanding of the way the cosmos works, you can’t stand in the light all the time...We need to have some shade.

Note to reader: You are invited to read again “Object Lesson” and “InnisWood Metro Garden, Volunteer’s Log” at this time.
CHAPTER 5
CROSS-DATA ANALYSIS: MINING FOR GEMS

This cross-data analysis is divided into two sections. The first section, "Sitting Through Conversations: The Remains," contains the following analytical features: contradictions and paradoxes that appear in the data which bring into sharp relief policies which do not take into account the teacher-identified realities of teaching for decades; a "message in actions" section which attempts an interpretation of the unspoken message in the actions of various stakeholders in the school system being studied, questions the desirability of the message, and highlights a problem or area of concern for further study by management personnel or researchers; and comparisons and contrasts to select research studies—an analytical category which identifies how the cross-data analysis reinforces previous efforts and/or contributes additional information or perspectives to the research base. The second section, "Weighing the Findings: Finding Value in Experienced Teachers' Perspectives," presents teachers' experiences and perspectives that may be of interest to their colleagues and to their board of education.

In this chapter of the analysis, I am the researcher-writer, and I sometimes enter the discussion of the data as a participant—especially because I conducted a self interview which is part of the data, and because during the day of collaboration, I was a fellow teacher-collaborator. When such blending of roles occurs, my contributions will be clearly labeled for the reader as "researcher-participant" data. Primarily, the research data comes from the teachers whose stories were presented in the previous chapter.

Sitting Through Conversations: The Remains

The focus question for me in identifying key motifs during this phase of analysis was "How do teachers describe their lived experience and/or their concerns as they approach career wind-down and career exit?" The identified motifs are grouped within three broad categories: the ignored, the subtle, and the unremarkable. The purpose in such a grouping is to notice what
teachers perceive to be ignored in the design of their teaching jobs; to make more obvious, if not conspicuous, what teachers perceive to be subtle and worthy of more attention in the practices of the school system; and to find what is noteworthy in the otherwise unremarkable career wind-down and exit stages of the career.

The Ignored Factors in Teachers' Experience of Career Wind-down: Increasing Age, Increasing Health Concerns, and Decreasing Energy

Hey, ho, teach, explore. Progress primogenitor. Hear these pleas Before It doesn't matter. (Researcher song, verse 1)

Increasing Age: A Multifaceted Marker

At the end of the study, the chronological age of all teacher-participants was fifty or more years. As the teachers agreed, indicating one's age signifies no more than the number of years since birth. Psychologists have identified at least three other ways of considering age: biologically—where “people are relative to the maximum number of years they could possibly live”; psychologically—the “functional level of the psychological abilities that people use to adapt to changing environmental demands”; and socioculturally—“the specific set of roles individuals adopt in relation to other members of the society and culture to which they belong” (Cavanaugh, 1997, pp. 14-15). These biological, psychological, and sociocultural views depend upon comparisons with others in varying age-related groupings. For example, biological age is related to the physical health of an individual; an active individual would probably be “functionally younger biologically than a lifelong couch potato” (p. 14). A secondary English teacher, at the beginning of the teaching career would be psychologically older than his or her peers who were not thrust into jobs demanding that their psychological abilities be developed enough to display mature judgment while influencing the lives of 150 or so students. Teachers, who can often retire from the career in their early fifties, might be considered socioculturally older in this respect than their peers who will not be eligible for retirement for at least another decade. And so it goes. In this discussion, age-related observations may refer to the chronological, the biological, the psychological, and/or the sociocultural.
Teacher-participants had no trouble identifying the teaching advantages that came with decades of experience in learning, teaching, and living, an advantage that comes only with interacting with one's environment for a significant period of time such as for half a century. All spoke of perceptions that had occurred "within the last two or three years" of classroom teaching, all generally found, as Betty did, "more advantages to being my age than disadvantages." The teachers generally felt an increase in freedom—the freedom to speak one's mind, the freedom to occasionally say no to joining expensive professional organizations, the freedom to choose their battles, more freedom to try new techniques because the fear of failure is not overwhelming, freedom to admit discouragement when it occurs. They felt calmer when responding to the daily crises inherent in schools, less likely to feel personally offended by outrageous behavior in their classrooms. Some felt they had learned how to better cope with inconveniences, such as "an imperfect schedule," because they had learned that such hardships are temporary and will probably change the following year. All expressed a sense of increased competence in subject matter and classroom management, in designing curricular units and learning activities, in decision-making and judgment, literally in all areas related to teaching. This sense of mastery seemed to be one of the greatest advantages of teaching for decades. Whether the career wind-down period was described as "peak years" or whether they were characterized as years with more integrated, in-depth understanding of teaching, Lee Anne's remarks typified the perceptions of most teachers in this study when she said: "I feel wiser than I used to be" as did Nathan's: "I've turned into somebody who is valuable."

While teachers maintained that they were not sensitive about their increasing age in general and that they did not see age as a meaningful reference point, their transcripts show mixed feelings on the subject of growing older—and some clear disadvantages. Betty succinctly stated: "Of course, I hate getting older, dammit, and I think anybody who says otherwise is lying!" External aging, those aspects of physical change which are visible, were particularly vexing—like wrinkles and gray hair. Vanessa noticed, for example, that students had begun to perceive her as a much older person when one boy who was working at a local nursery offered to get her a discount there: "He said, I'll tell them that you're my grandma...I was not happy...I said, your grandma? He said, okay, okay, my aunt."
Six of the teachers spoke of a growing culture gap between them and their students, a
gap that they attribute only partially to age. Maxine called it having "less and less common ground"
whether referring to language use, music, movies, television programming, commonly accepted
manners, or references to current events. Steinberg (1997) reported, "Television is losing its
largest viewing audience...Americans over the age of 50 are beginning to tune out because
programming is too violent, vulgar, boring, youth-oriented and insulting to their intelligence" (p.
89). In addition, all found that the older they get, the harder it is to deal with students who have no
motivation or work ethic or with those who have radically different values. "The gap is widening,"
Maxine said. All except one teacher in this study specifically referred to urban teaching as a
"younger" person's job. Felicia expressed it this way: "There is a point when the students look at
you and they don't see you anymore; they want younger teachers. They automatically accept you
when you're young." Tess perceived that some students and younger teachers "discount" or
minimize the value of older teachers--because of their age and the fact that they appear to be
older. Vanessa didn't care to be referred to as an "old fogy" by a younger teacher, and several
concurred with Lee Anne when she said:

We all see young teachers who don't think that older teachers know anything...as we get older, when we see new teachers come in, we see two things:
We marvel at their energy and enthusiasm, and we get turned off at their arrogance because they think they know everything already.

Thus, having mixed feelings about age and its relationship to teaching in secondary
schools best describes the responses of the teachers in this study. Overall, teachers concurred
with the assessment Lee Anne when she said: "I don't think age has to be an issue except for the
physical demands." The physical demands, however, were significant. As Nathan said, "They tip
the scales." A lack of stamina, a reduction in available energy, and inadequate sleep were
attributed to physical demands over a period of many years. I, as researcher-participant, recorded
the following observation during a self interview:

Now I have to get up in the morning at 4:30 or 5:00 a.m., 5:30 at the latest, because I can no longer get up and dash and run. I used to get up, grab a
cup of coffee, jump in the shower, dress, and out the door, but I can't even think of doing that any more. It's just too stressful to rush around like that--That's something I noticed with age. And I have to go to bed earlier at night in order to get up, and going to bed earlier is really hard on my natural rhythms, if I have any natural rhythms left...I feel tired much of the time.
Indeed, research has confirmed that older adults have more trouble falling asleep than do younger adults: "Webb [1982] documented that it took women aged 50 to 60 twice as long to fall asleep initially as women aged 20 to 30" (Cavanaugh, 1997, p. 131)—and that older adults awaken more frequently during the night. The negative effects of not getting enough sleep include losing one’s temper and tiring more easily, and these effects increase with age (Cavanaugh). Further, "stress is hazardous to your sleep" (p. 132) and once disturbances occur in one’s circadian rhythm, one’s sleep-wake cycle, "an optimal sleeping time may never exist...leading to chronic moodiness and fatigue" (p. 133). Every teacher-participant in this study mentioned a decline in physical stamina and/or a lack of synchronization with the sleep patterns required for arriving at schools near 7:00 a.m. every day; all but two teachers specifically mentioned being able to sleep past 5:00 or 5:30 a.m. as an advantage they either looked forward to, or were already experiencing, during retirement. Every teacher mentioned that with increasing age came increasing tiredness during the school year, though they felt that the tiredness was due less to being a specific age than to the cumulative effects of the demands of urban teaching over the years—cumulative demands which can have an impact on one’s health.

Increasing Health Concerns and Biological Aging

“My particular age is 52, and I think that I’m probably right on target according to actuarial tables. Physically, a lot of changes are taking place, and I don’t have the stamina I used to have.” (Felicia, Self interview)

Biological aging deserves special attention in this discussion because “biological age accounts for many health-related aspects of functioning....” (Cavanaugh, 1997, p. 14). Tumer and Helms (1989) refer to “internal aging,” bodily changes which cannot be seen (p. 218). While each individual ages somewhat differently, due to genetic and other factors, some commonalities deserve mention. For example, breathing capacity decreases by 25% between the ages of 30 and 50, hearing capacity may be on the decline as early as age 40, and vision, “the sense we most depend upon, changes noticeably during the middle years” (Turner & Helms, p. 219). McLaughlin (1997) reported that “nearly everybody gets presbyopia, a vision problem” by age 50 (p. 3B)—which means that glasses are needed for reading. Those who have not needed glasses earlier in life will need them now: “Needing reading glasses means you have presbyopia, which means you’re old. It’s how granny glasses came to be associated with grannies” (p. 3B). Most
vision problems can be corrected with glasses, but not all. Other internal changes affect people as they approach 50 years of age: The amount of blood pumped by the heart decreases 20% between the ages of 30 and 50; blood pressure has a tendency to rise during middle age; the heart loses muscle fibers; and, for many people, “arteriosclerosis, or hardening of the arteries, gradually begins by middle adulthood” (Turner & Helms, p. 218). This brief listing is included in this discussion to provide some context for the teacher’s remarks about their health. It is meant to be suggestive, not definitive.

Health, most often connected with internal aging—those changes which cannot be seen, was a subject that found its way into the interviews of every teacher in this project. Nathan retired because of triple bypass surgery. After surgery, his cardiologist asked him if he would return to teaching. He said, “No. I know how the body creates cholesterol from stress and other toxins...I just can’t take the risk.” Felicia retired when, after weeks of being on sick leave to address multiple physical symptoms related to stress, she said, “I didn’t have the stamina any more, I didn’t have the strength for it. I just knew that I couldn’t go on.” Vanessa expressed concern that teaching in the current conditions is so stressful that “everybody’s life is being shortened by continuing to teach.” Both Lee Anne and Vanessa, on separate occasions, said that the demands of the school day kept them from being aware of being sick, that they often didn’t notice they weren’t well until they went home at the end of the day; then a headache or the onset of flu symptoms became apparent. More than half said that they had taught many days when they should have been home in bed, and all were concerned about the physical toll that was being exacted by continuing to teach.

Betty is experiencing a steady deterioration of the auditory nerve. There is no treatment for the condition; as she said, “There is absolutely nothing to be done except to wear progressively stronger hearing aids.” The condition affects her ability to talk to parents via telephone, and at this point, she cannot hear bells ringing to begin or end classes. It is a fact of her life to which she has adapted. Her only concern is that her hearing hold out until retirement. Tess’s ophthalmologist recommended eye surgery, but the teacher postponed the surgery until retirement, not wanting to miss numerous days at school; in the meantime, she had difficulty grading papers and driving to school in the dark. I have chronic colitis, a condition which has worsened over the years; physically getting through a school day when the condition flares up is
an additional challenge to an already challenging day. More than one teacher has added a periodontist (and gum surgery) to the list of medical specialists visited with increasing frequency, another manifestation of growing older. During a telephone interview with another seasoned teacher to enrich the data provided by the participants, the teacher mentioned being afflicted with adrenal exhaustion—a condition which occurs when the adrenal glands overproduce adrenalin for long periods of time. Her physician, she said, was not surprised to learn that she, the patient, was a secondary urban teacher.

Cavanaugh (1997) reports that stress "occurs most when people must be extremely vigilant, perform complex work, and meet time demands placed on them by others" (p. 116), conditions which apply to urban secondary teaching on a consistent basis. As mentioned in the previous section, stress may be hazardous to one's sleep, and it can be hazardous to one's health: "This...research suggests that stress lowers the ability of the immune system to fight infection" (p. 120). Other research affirms the above and includes the nervous system, hormone levels, and metabolic rates among bodily responses to stress as well as 11 stress-related disorders (Turner & Helms, 1989). All teachers mentioned multiple job-related stressors endemic to their teaching assignments in urban schools. As mentioned in Chapter 2 of this dissertation, along with other numerous references documenting high degrees of stress on urban teachers, Newsweek magazine reported that inner-city teachers have one of the "toughest jobs" in the nation, one of the jobs which "put the most stress on American workers" ("Breaking Point," 1995, p. 60). Lee Anne, nearing retirement, phrased the concern this way: "You can't put your finger on (all the stresses) at any given time...but you want to retire and still be healthy."

Decreasing Energy

"Chi is energy. In both Eastern and Western philosophy, everything in the universe is made up of energy."

(Carradine & Hakahara, 1995, p. 19)

All teachers in the study spoke of the "incredible energy demands" of being a secondary English teacher and the difficulty of communicating what that means to non-teachers. Nathan hypothesized on three separate occasions that if there were a device, such as a thermometer, that could be attached to teachers to measure the draw on their energies and concomitant stress...
levels, that the results would be astonishing: “The draw is constant, always there.” During the collaborative group session, he shared the following:

How many physicians sit in a room and try to diagnose 25 or more patients at a time? How many surgeons? How many psychiatrists lay 25 bodies on a couch at one time? To show another contrast, when I visited the State Teachers Retirement System a year ago with Teacher X, we had the same reaction: Why can’t we work in a place like this? No one was calling anybody a name. Everybody was going about their business calmly. There was a sculpture in the hallway... My point is that every job has its drawbacks, but not all jobs require the energy drain that teaching requires. And sometimes, the public as well as teachers and administrators themselves don’t know it... don’t know how dangerous the waters are....

Each of the teacher-participant stories and discussions contributed more information on this topic, painted a complex picture of the different kinds of job demands the teachers in this study encountered on an hourly, daily, weekly, monthly basis—as Maxine said, “year after year after year.” Teachers described their days as filled with overwhelming interactional demands and secretarial tasks in addition to the ongoing planning necessary for classroom instruction—typing on computers, copying classroom materials, collating, cleaning and redecorating rooms; checking school-wide attendance reports with class rosters, filling out daily cut slips period by period, writing up discipline reports and following through with conferences; routine grading and marking papers, book-keeping, responding to requests from the guidance department or the office for individual attendance reports and assignments to be sent home to absent students or to tutors; managing homerooms, distributing and collecting textbooks, assessing fines for book damage and more record-keeping; days interrupted at any time by drop-by parent conferences, student behavioral problems in hallways and classrooms, admitting new students and filling in forms to accommodate the transfer needs of withdrawing students; duty periods filled with monitoring or filing as directed by the office, calculating interim progress reports and quarterly grades, making parent telephone calls, working on school- or district-wide committees, attending faculty or department meetings, writing letters of recommendation—and then the heart of the job, classroom teaching and giving extra help and counseling to students after class as well as sponsoring student groups or coaching academic or athletic teams.

The teacher stories echo with phrases: “teaching or thinking about teaching, even when I’m asleep,” “very demanding, always,” “get worn out,” “takes extra energy to deal with,”
"continually on duty, every minute of the day," "absolutely exhausting," "...there is always something, always," "more and more tired," "a constant bombardment," "...at 11 or 12 at night, still working," "overstimulated all the time," "whole lot of work for a low return," "most hectic and most horrible and most tiring," "...out of the hide of its teachers," and "just couldn’t do it any more...."
The teacher with adrenal exhaustion described her days as being "...in perpetual shell shock. It's life in the trenches, on the front line--while maintaining a positive, informative, patient, nurturing attitude."

All these comments are the more remarkable because of the nature of the teachers selected for this study--committed, professional, successful, positively oriented career teachers who describe themselves generally as possessing above average to high energy levels. They are teachers who have been recognized by their fellows and by professional organizations for noteworthy work and dedication. They have been leaders in their school buildings. They are teachers who offered these phrases as descriptors, rather than in a tone of complaint. They are teachers who have willingly exerted much energy over time in the service of their profession.

Hoagland (1995), a molecular biologist, has this to say about energy: "Incredibly, all the chemical processes of life and, indeed, all the energy and matter in the universe obey two simple laws: the laws of thermodynamics" (p. 40). The first law says that although energy can be gained or lost in processes, it can’t be destroyed: "Income and expenditure of energy have to balance" (p. 40). The second law says that energy "is transformed from more usable forms...to a less usable form" (p. 40), that with "persistent repairing and rebuilding at the molecular level," (p. 42), energy is again transformed to a usable form. And, Hoagland reminds, "...we begin with the basic truth that life never contravenes, outwits, or otherwise gets around the fundamental laws of nature" (p. 40).

The collective message seems to be that in contemporary urban secondary schools, the expenditure of teacher energy necessary to address the multiple facets of the job at a quality level is not balanced by a like income of energy, resulting in a kind of energy depletion over time. The point is not a surprising new finding. The point is that those not doing the work of teachers over long periods of time join in the discounting, minimize what they have not experienced, underestimate the wear and tear of factors they can only partially understand.
Contradictions/paradoxes.

"So we agree: At least two things need to happen at about the same time toward the end of the career—a better utilization of our years of experience and a kind of tapering off of the work load." (Betty, in a discussion with Tess, Group Collaboration Transcript)

One main paradox presented itself in this section. The teachers in this study who have spent their lives in urban school systems find it ironic that at about the time they notice a decline in their energy levels, they also perceive an increase in their understanding of what is needed in urban schools and classrooms. In the words of Felicia, "it may take youth and stamina to get the job done, even though you understand the job at this point...It comes at a time when many younger people think you don't know what you're talking about—even though you do." Part of the problem, according to Felicia, is the dominant value system in the present society:

We are teachers, yes, but our society values the young and what the young want and think, and until we don't value only the young, only a convoluted kind of reasoning will conclude that we have value...Until then, it doesn't matter what we do. When we are perceived as older teachers, or when we retire, we're no longer even associated with the young...as if only in that association do we have value.

Message in actions.

"There ought to be a way to continue to do this without running the teacher into the ground."

(Tess, Collaborative Group Transcript)

By giving no consideration to increasing age and health-related concerns and the decreasing physical energy level of teachers in the last three to five years of their careers when designing the facets of a school work day, school systems send a message of disregard for the welfare of teachers who often find themselves exhausted by 2:30 in the afternoon on a daily basis; the best possible interpretation of the message is one of benign neglect. The teachers in this study did not say that they consider 50 years of age to be old (except in comparisons to teenagers); nor did they say that they feel debilitated on the job. They seem, rather, to be saying that living for half a century is something worthy of notice, that the effects of both external and internal biological aging deserve some attention, that the perception of having less energy to spend in classrooms with large numbers of active, often volatile, adolescents is relevant. The current conditions for teaching until retirement eligibility in urban schools do not include a structure which permits...
adequate repairing and rebuilding between extraordinary expenditures of physical, emotional, and mental energy. It is as if urban school systems feel exempt from the “two simple laws” of thermodynamics.

Comparisons/contrasts to selected research. When discussing age-related factors as they apply to teaching, the teachers in this study agreed with Pratt and Norris (1994): “Age, in and of itself, is not an explanation of anything” (p. 8). But within the context of teaching urban secondary students, the sense of growing older was a mixed bag—an increased sense of mastery (which reinforced Sheehy’s 1995 identification of an age of mastery) combined with an increased sense of distance from their students, the latter, teachers said, primarily the result of a growing gap in shared values and shared culture. These perceptions reinforce Huberman’s (1989) findings. In addition, five of the seven teachers mentioned a sense of being “discounted” either by students and/or by younger educators due to their visible signs of age, as if increased age brought with it increased irrelevance. Rusch and Perry (1993) included such discounting in a discussion of the stereotyping older teachers as resistant; they found that the stereotyping of older teachers was fairly widespread. In addition, teachers in this study concurred that few within their school system viewed their increased experience as valuable—often, perhaps, because of the points of view of those who had not yet been alive long enough to appreciate the fruits of age and experience coupled with the values of a society that “worships youth.” Most of the teachers in the current study seemed to agree with Nathan: “You get beyond age as a reference point” and with Betty: “I find I have more to offer now.” The problematic age-related issues for teachers in this study were primarily physical—those connected to health and those attached to a drain on available energy.

Generally, the teachers in this study reinforced information in the research base when talking about health concerns and job-related stressors, although they did highlight health issues near the end of the career more than previous research I have reviewed on the subject as well as provide health-related information in more depth as it applied to their teaching situations. They also mentioned the equivalent of sleep deprivation, something not specifically noted in the earlier research that I reviewed. The Bumbarger, et al. (1987) study of Canadian urban teachers mentioned health as a concern of older teachers, though it included few details. The current study also adds to the early admonitions of Willie and Howey (1980) that physiological changes
should be considered when viewing teacher development over time. This area of concern assumes even more relevance when coupled with Farber's (1991) observation that more teachers are staying in teaching longer than teachers in previous historical periods. Taking into consideration all the information presented in the health concerns section, I arrive at a question for which there is presently no clear answer in the research literature but which, I think, is well worth asking: While teachers of all ages are subject to the deleterious effects of high stress when teaching in urban, inner-city schools, what happens to the health of teachers when these effects intersect and combine with the effects of physiological aging over long periods of time?

The teachers in this study reinforced earlier research studies which noted a decline in physical energy levels of older, more experienced teachers, especially when combined with increasing demands placed on educators (Bumbarger, et al., 1987; Rusch and Perry, 1993). Every single teacher in the current study emphasized a desire for more personal energy and an awareness of frequently feeling tired or exhausted—as illustrated in coding frequency counts, more than 80 different times.

In truth, much data has been available for long periods of time regarding the high energy levels needed to engage in classroom teaching. In the review of literature, research completed in 1968 (cited in Lortie, 1975) found that teachers make more than 200 decisions hourly, and research completed in 1979 (cited in Bausch, 1981) found that teachers "make thousands of decisions in the course of an average day...the net effect is to sap their energy" (p. 22). Further, research (cited in Howey & Strom, 1984) found that interactions between teachers and classroom students were conservatively estimated to occur at the rate of 100 times per hour—another energy sapper. More current research published by the National Education Association captured the sentiments of teachers in the current study with its title, "Are You Tired of Being Tired?" (Lytle, 1992) and the statement of a teacher who said, "I come home from work night after night feeling exhausted" (p. 4). Information regarding the extraordinary personal energy required for the multifaceted aspects of the job of classroom teaching has been available for about 30 years, and it has been consistent over time except to note that demands on teachers are increasing rather than decreasing and that inner city teachers experience the stressors of the job with more intensity than do suburban teachers (Chance, 1985).
Other research reinforced by the teachers in the current study regarding energy demands and stressors which sap energy includes that reported by numerous others (Applebee, 1993; “Breaking Point, 1995; Corcoran, Walker, & White, 1988; Divers, et al., 1991; Ducharme, 1994; Farber, 1991; Friedman, 1991; Hipps & Halpin, 1991; Howey, 1992; Howey, Mattes, & Zimpher, 1987; Lowenstein, 1991; Maduck, 1992; Staffy, 1989; Turner & Helms, 1989; Weiner, 1990; Wilson, 1993; Zehm & Kottler, 1993). The energy drain was especially noticeable to the teachers in this study during the last two or three years of their teaching careers. Thus a question begs to be asked: Why—with all the consistent and continuously growing data available for at least a 30-year period on the subject of the energy demands of teaching in urban schools and their draining effects, especially on teachers nearing the close of their careers—is this issue essentially being ignored in school systems as manifested in job designs and daily expectations for older, highly experienced teachers? Current policies are neither enlightened nor humane.

The Subtle: Systemic Devaluation of Education and Systemic Depersonalization

Hey, ho, teacher I am.
No one seems to give a damn.
Who am I?
No one!
It doesn’t matter.

(Researcher song, verse ii)

Systemic Devaluation of Education

While at least two of the teacher-participant stories brought this issue into sharp focus, the motif of devaluing the substance of a teacher’s education applied across the data—devaluing, except in superficial ways, such as the beginning requirement of certification in some designated area or areas for employment, or the “anemic” boosts in pay for earning additional graduate hours or further degrees. To the system in which the teachers in this study have been employed, these educational achievements are matters which define utility; that is, they determine in broad and general ways how individual employees can be utilized—for example, as guidance counselors, administrators, or grade level/subject matter teachers.
One size fits all.

"I'm not a robot, not a robot, not a robot."
(Nathan, Interview Transcript)

In the school system in this study, once the degree(s) and/or graduate credit hours are obtained by teachers, the appropriate pay and the matter of general utility determined, the substance and quality of an individual's education—the specific background coursework, relevant educational experiences, the degree of mastery—become nearly insignificant. To this school system, certification is all. Teachers are assigned positions without regard for whether they have specific background coursework or experience in the subjects in their field—and at the appropriate grade level—that they will be asked to teach. Teachers in this study, for example, at the beginning of their careers, had been randomly placed by the personnel office in middle schools when their student teaching experiences had prepared them for high schools, and vice versa.

Within school buildings, they have seen English colleagues who have spent 25 years in middle schools assigned to teach seniors in high school, colleagues with no coursework in British or world literature—the very subject matter they would be teaching—while those with extensive preparation in that area have been assigned to teach more generic, ninth and tenth grade courses. Administrators, often not former English teachers, determine teaching schedules and assignments within buildings. It is not common practice in this urban school system to look at an individual's university transcripts and curriculum vita—or prior teaching experiences—when making academic scheduling decisions, according to the experiences of the teachers in this study. Neither is professional growth and additional acquired expertise during the career relevant to administrators when assigning teachers to teach specific courses. Thus, the individual teacher's talents and strengths are not specifically tapped, except sometimes informally and randomly, from the beginning to the end of the career. The individual complexity of teacher backgrounds, their preferences, their areas of expertise and talent, are ignored and thus devalued. Once one has "obtained" the minimum level of education to acquire certification, the education itself has no meaning within this urban public education establishment. Chittister noted in 1991:

Western culture and its emphasis on academic degrees...(has) made the words 'graduation' and 'education' almost synonymous. We measure achievement in academic credits. We discount experience, depth...(Cited in Vaill, 1996, p. 191).

All that is required is the proper paperwork. It is a "one size fits all" mentality.
The value of additional education and experience.

"I think the question is, how much do we value ourselves? How much do we value our education, our experience, our incredible efforts? It makes me think of teacher appreciation week when an administrator or committee plans one little thing for each day of the week. It makes me think that teachers are pitiful because if someone brings in a doughnut, we fall all over ourselves: Oh my gosh, someone thought to bring us juice! Not that I'm ungrateful, but we feel so grateful for being appreciated so little, that it's disgusting." (Lee Anne, Collaborative Group Transcript)

In a materialistic culture such as ours, value is equated with remuneration, with material rewards. Indeed, this principle is followed in the salary schedules of teachers. Pay for teaching is increased by additional years of experience and by additional college or university credit hours earned. Surely this is proof that the educational system values the educational level of its teachers. The teachers in this study, however, referred to salary boosts accompanying additional education or experience as "insignificant," "a mere token," "anemic," and "emaciated."

The system's regard for master's degrees held by substitute teachers is illustrative and sets the tone; they are paid two dollars more per day than are substitute teachers with bachelor's degrees. According to information published by the local teachers' association, the 1997 contract calls for full-time teachers with a Master's degree and 27-30 years of experience to be compensated $27.22 (gross) per contract day more than those in the same category of experience with a bachelor's degree. Those who have acquired 45 graduate quarter credit hours at a college or university beyond the master's degree are paid an additional $5.29 (gross) per day. Finally, the active teacher in this study who has earned her doctorate degree is compensated even further; she is paid almost $17.46 (gross) more per day than the previous category for acquiring the highest academic degree possible in the field of education. The figures illustrate in measurable terms the material value accorded to graduate education by this urban school system in its latest contract, and it is not impressive.

Of what material value are years of experience? Teachers with 27-30 years of experience (the category which includes all the active teachers in this study) are compensated almost $25 (gross) pay per day more during their last three years of teaching—than they would be receiving with only 15 years of teaching experience.

Obtaining additional credit hours or degrees—or teaching for more than an additional decade, however, does not affect the ways teachers are utilized either in teaching assignments or
in what they are expected to accomplish during school days. It has been said that teaching is the only major profession that asks people entering the field to take on the same responsibilities and workload as those with decades of experience (Grossman, 1997). While steps are being taken to better address the needs of beginning teachers (Grossman; Sternberg, 1997), little or no attention is being given to the utilization of teachers near the ends of their careers; likewise, little or no attention is given to the utilization of those who have substantially increased their education over the years—either those with post-master’s credit or those with the Ph.D.

The two classroom teachers in this study who had earned doctoral degrees said that they were utilized in no manner differently from those teachers without doctorates, or for that matter, from teachers new to the profession. No interest was shown in their advanced educational research skills, their specific topics of specialization or research abstracts, their advanced coursework that might have been useful in staff development, their familiarity with innovative developments in the field, their findings or recommendations entombed within their dissertations. At the time these teachers earned their degrees, central office personnel sent an impersonal form letter congratulating them, information was supplied to the treasurer’s office for a salary adjustment, and thus ended the school system’s interest in any newly acquired expertise within the teaching force.

Half of the teachers in this study speculated on the reasons why increased education on the part of teachers, especially at the doctoral level, was neither widely respected nor utilized to the benefit of the system. Betty said:

I guess it’s just human nature... I always told the student teachers I was supervising at the university: if you have good cooperating teachers, they will want you to be good in the classroom—but they don’t want you to be better than they are. We are all so insecure, that for someone to have achieved something that we have not makes us a little huffy. And there is a sense that earning a Ph.D. is almost overkill for a public school teacher.

Others saw it as a failure of leadership: a “lack of thought,” a “system that does not care,” even a lack of understanding of what it means to have earned the degree. Three teachers, based on their observations of actions and attitudes on the part of system personnel and other educators, called having the doctorate a drawback, a negative, and an embarrassment. One teacher said that the system’s attitudes reflect attitudes in the larger society: having a doctorate is not necessarily a
useful thing to have. "But in an educational system," Betty reflected, "that attitude is pretty bizarre." On the day of collaboration, Betty said:

...instead of making fun of you if you're interested in a doctorate, and then behind the backs of people who have that particular degree, saying: Well, do we have to call him "Doctor" now? You know, that kind of snide remark, and others who show a total lack of respect for education...If that's how we feel, then I don't think we should call ourselves teachers—or schools or educational districts—because it's a farce.

Nathan summarized the topic succinctly: "The idea is, we are in an educational system here, and the system itself, especially the people running it and some of the people in it, do not value education."

Systemic Depersonalization and Devaluation of Accomplishments

"The school system is just as guilty of perpetuating this whole perception of people as commodities as our society is at large...Right now, there are no mechanisms to help utilize the experienced teacher. There just aren't any."

(Felicia, Interview Transcript)

To depersonalize, or to make impersonal, is to function without regard for the individual as a human being, to make decisions without concern for an individual's needs, desires, even unique or special qualities, or human attributes other than those minimums needed to accomplish some end by an organization or system. In an educational system, all the people in it are in a sense depersonalized as soon as their appropriate label is affixed: superintendent, personnel director, principal, teacher, guidance counselor, secretary, student. Once people have their appropriate labels, and thus their appropriate status and function, established expectations, rules, and procedures govern much behavior. As Lee Anne said, "That's how systems are. That's how they are able to function." Nathan observed:

The very word system connotes to me a group of people whose collective identity to anyone outside themselves, and often even to each other, remains mostly anonymous and distant. Therefore, I have never been surprised that central office people have felt remote and far removed from what is going on in my classroom...I know that my feeling of being only a number is no more or less at the end of my career than it was when I entered this public school system.

Although teachers in this study understand the overall nature of the system, they nevertheless seem to have expected that over the years, the individuals in the system would begin to be regarded as unique persons—that dedicated teachers would eventually establish an
identity, that the identity would have some meaning in the central office of the system, that educational accomplishments would be viewed as an asset to the system, that after decades of service, these accomplishments would receive—not raves, not fanfare—but some notice. They seem to have thought that their status as teachers had value within their educational system and that their contributions would be valued beyond their utility as momentary political currency. Thus, the realization expressed by Felicia that “Our worth here is just nothing, absolutely nothing...” is particularly appalling. Lee Anne observed, “Everything, everything in this school system depends on what direction the political winds are blowing.” Nathan said that his infrequent moments of recognition by the board of education had “screamed indifference, obligation, anonymity, and politics.” Of fellow teachers who “exert themselves daily but with no feedback or recognition,” Nathan speculated that they must feel “horrified to be so laden with anonymity and disregard.”

In spite of their understanding of the impersonal nature of the school system in which these teachers have worked, the realization of what that means to them as professionals seems to hit them anew toward career end. Nathan said, “As practicing teachers, we are not in touch with these emotions. This disregard is painful, however much we understand how systems are.” Lee Anne noted the recent actions of a principal who apparently holds teachers in low esteem:

On the last day of school, the principal thought she would provide a catered luncheon, but when she learned that the luncheon would cost five dollars per person, her comment to the vice principal was: They don’t need that. That gives you an idea of how valued you are right in your own building. Now take one, just one percent of that, and that’s a generous estimate of how much teachers are valued downtown: They don’t need that. Teachers don’t need anyone to recognize them, to value them, certainly not to spend five dollars on them.

Nearly every teacher had had unpleasant experiences with officials in the personnel office of the system, some during the last years of their careers. Lee Anne noted: “They don’t know who you are from one year to the next down there,” and Nathan added: “They don’t know where you are.” Other comments from teachers included, “That is exactly the reason I left, that detachment. They need to realize that these are people they are dealing with, not machines. These are people,” and “Not only do they not know you or appreciate you, they don’t make any attempt to know you as a professional. They have mastered the art of indifference.” During one of the dyadic conversations on the collaborative meeting day, the following conversation
(obtained from transcripts) took place which illustrates how most teachers in this study said they feel about dealing with the office of personnel in this school system:

**Betty:** It would really help if teachers felt that someone in the personnel office would treat them as human beings with real needs and real skills, if they would just make a little more effort to match people with the right job. That would be so helpful.

**Nathan:** Yes, just with teacher placement. For example, I want in a high school, I want in a middle school, I want in this school and not that school...just where you do your job. But there's no consideration at that level.

**Betty:** Exactly.

**Nathan:** In fact, I've been made to feel that I was being offensive just for asking for placement in a certain building as opposed to another building. What's missing here is the concept of synergy. The system benefits from your skills and who you are and what you have to offer that's special, and obviously you benefit from being able to use your skills and pursue your educational interests and call it your job. And there it breaks down. They don't care what your special attributes are.

**Betty:** Exactly, exactly.

**Nathan:** They just don't care about your preferences. It's like you are not an individual—but you are.

**Betty:** And it really makes a difference whether you teach ninth grade or twelfth grade...buildings vary a lot from one school to another, departments vary a lot—because they are filled with unique people.

**Nathan:** Right. What is hard to understand about this?

**Betty:** I understand that they can't place people perfectly, but there's no effort made. They don't even try. They won't even talk about it. They're not even polite in the personnel office.

**Nathan:** No, no...I had taught in this system for 15 years when I was staff reduced. I didn't know until after the fact that parents had gone to the board to try to keep me in that building because I had been very successful there. But at the time, I tried to talk to somebody downtown, and I was insulted for calling.

**Betty:** Oh god...

**Nathan:** This was my initiation into the impersonalization of the system, how undervalued I was by personnel.
Betty: We had a wonderful young man one year in a long-term sub position, and he was down at personnel fairly often, looking at openings. I saw him down there one day, and they were treating him terribly. On this day, they were being their usual rude selves, and I said to him: Don’t feel bad. They treat everybody like this. It’s not because you’re young. They treat me like this, and I’ve been here for more than 20 years....

Nathan: Right. Are teachers just so plentiful that we are just numbers to fill in a slot? Clearly that’s the message. That’s how they view us.

Betty: I hear there is a teacher shortage looming, so maybe that will help them appreciate teachers. But it’s going to be too late for us....

**Personnel office: The impersonal microsocial practices of the functionary.**

“Nobody expects anything from the career. After all, we’re just one insignificant cog in this machine. In fact, the ideal teacher to do what is expected by the public and by this school system would be a machine” (Nathan, Interview Transcript)

While thinking about what the teachers had said, as well as my own experiences of impersonal treatment in our urban school system, I was reminded of the words of one of my favorite writers: Milan Kundera. Kundera (1988) could have been speaking of the personnel office in this urban school system, but in *The Art of the Novel* he was speaking of the works of Kafka. He wrote of the character Gregor Samsa:

...he’s an employee, a functionary...as one human possibility, as one of the elementary ways of being. In the bureaucratic world of the functionary... there are only orders and rules: it is the world of obedience. Second, the functionary performs a small part of a large administrative activity whose aim and horizons he cannot see: it is the world where actions have become mechanical and people do not know the meaning of what they do. Third, the functionary deals only with unknown persons and with files: it is the world of the abstract (pp. 112-113).

To paraphrase the next words of Kundera, to place teacher assignment in the hands of the personnel office is to place it in this world of obedience, of the mechanical, and of the abstract, where the only human adventure is to move teachers from one school to another with no regard for them as specific individual professionals with varying educational backgrounds, talents, and desires seems to run counter to the very essence of education—the acquisition of information combined with the utilization of thought.

Teachers in this study spoke of personnel confusing them with other people, placing them in jobs for which they were not certified, assigning them to jobs which didn’t exist, and
generally conducting their business with little responsiveness to experienced teachers needing placement. In this system, teachers with continuing contracts may need new placements for a variety of reasons—such as staff reductions within a building, having programs cut, being in a school which has been closed, or returning from a sabbatical leave or other leave of absence.

Betty, returning from a leave within the last few years, said:

The personnel office is concerned about finding a body for every classroom... You're just a peg to put in a hole. There is absolutely no concern about whether you fit in this hole or might be better in another hole... and I think the whole business of treating a teacher who comes back with a Ph.D. as somebody who is just in the pool does not make you feel very appreciated. I mean, you are sent to a new school, which is hard enough, but you also get all the courses that nobody else wanted. That's really not even fair.

The contract governs the process for placement, though there seems to be little, if any, accountability for how actual placements are accomplished. For general teaching vacancies, during the time the teachers in the study were employed in this school system, seniority allowed experienced teachers a degree of choice, albeit a minor one; the contract adopted during the 1997 school year, however, minimizes seniority as a basis for placement and may or may not offer some improvement in the process.

The following recreated telephone conversations (based on transcripts, response data, and my own personal experiences) with the personnel office during times of teacher placement illustrate some of the teacher frustrations over the years. The conversation, Nathan said during an interview, is the one which introduced him to the impersonality of the system.

**Telephone Conversation #1—(Recollection of Nathan with 12 years experience in the system):**

Nathan: So I'm calling to see if any new openings are available for the fall....

Personnel: Who is this? Who did you say you are?

Nathan: I'm the English teacher who was staff reduced at School X.

Personnel: What's the problem? Don't you like the assignment we gave you?

Nathan: I didn't realize I had been assigned to a new school. Which one is it?

Personnel: You mean you don't know?

Nathan: I've never talked with you before. Did you send me notification by mail?
Personnel: You know, I'm getting tired of all your phone calls. You need to be patient.

Nathan: But I've never called before.

Personnel: You've never talked with me before? Ever?

Nathan: I've never talked with you before. I would just like to get started on planning for the school year.

Personnel: Well, don't call again. Wait until we call you.

The next conversation is a reconstruction reported by Lee Anne of a colleague's experience, this time with a different representative of the personnel office. Lee Anne was present in the room with her colleague when the telephone conversation occurred. The personnel office remarks were summarized for her by the participating teacher.

Telephone Conversation #2—(Teacher with 20+ years experience):

Teacher: That's right. I'm on staff reduction status.

Personnel: I have one job to offer you. It would be for half of the day at School Y and half of the day at School Z.

Teacher: That sounds like a lot of driving between schools. How long would it take to travel from one school to the other?

Personnel: I don't know.

Teacher: My guess is it would take at least 30 minutes if road conditions are good and if traffic is flowing smoothly.

Personnel: That sounds about right.

Teacher: I'd really rather not be split up between two schools. That makes it difficult attending both faculty meetings, really feeling a part of either school, knowing what's going on, attending parent conferences, getting materials duplicated, being there for students, carrying resources back and forth, and just doing the job well.

Personnel: Well, you'd better accept something, after all the jobs you've turned down.

Teacher: What? This is the first position you've offered me.

Personnel: It certainly is not. I've offered you several.

Teacher: No. This is the first.

Personnel: Wait a minute. Who am I talking with? Oh...well, maybe you're right.
The following telephone conversation is my attempt, as researcher-participant, to reconstruct one of my own telephone experiences with the personnel office following a sabbatical leave. The personnel representative was friendly in tone while conducting business. The conversation is included to illustrate the differences between my concerns as a teacher and the concerns of the personnel office during the placement process.

**Telephone Conversation #3—(Teacher-participant with 24 years teaching experience):**

**Personnel:** I'm afraid you're going to have to accept one of the two schools available now. Which one would you like?

**Teacher:** But these are both middle schools. I'm really a high school teacher.

**Personnel:** There are no high schools available. You are the last English teacher I need to place.

**Teacher:** If I accept one of these schools, am I still eligible to apply for other openings as they appear?

**Personnel:** Yes, but there won't be many more openings. School starts in one week.

**Teacher:** I don't understand why there aren't more choices. We've had all summer, but no one has called before now. I know there were many unplaced English teachers this year, and I have a lot of seniority.

**Personnel:** You can be sure that I followed the contract on all placements. That's one of my priorities. I always follow the contract. You must choose one of these middle schools. Which one will it be?

**Teacher:** Can you tell me anything about them, their programs, what grades I would be teaching, or maybe the differences in educational climate?

**Personnel:** No, I don't have that information. None of that pertains to placement. I can tell you the area of town where they are located. I know that both of the schools have reading and language arts classes on their schedules.

**Teacher:** But I'm not certified in reading. These kids need someone who knows how to teach reading at an elementary level. So many of them are not passing the reading proficiency test.

**Personnel:** That's not a problem. English teachers with your certification are grandfathered in. You don't need to be certified in reading to teach reading.

**Teacher:** But that doesn't mean that I will be able to help kids with reading problems. I feel strongly about this. It's not right—for them or for me.

**Personnel:** Which school will it be? I need to have your answer.
The practice of "grandfathering" referred to above means that a teacher is certified to teach a subject without the requisite coursework. On another occasion, after the program I had been working in was eliminated due to financial cutbacks, and after being available during the ensuing summer but not being assigned to a school, I was able to choose a school among three choices on the basis of seniority—but not until the first work day for teachers at the beginning of a new school year.

Upon arrival at my chosen school, I learned that the teaching job had been filled the previous week. After spending the morning clarifying that situation, I was again offered a choice, this time between the two schools remaining—with no accompanying information regarding what courses I would be teaching, what reform efforts were going on in those individual buildings, or other educational parameters with which to guide my decision. I was given one minute to make this important choice. I arrived at my new school one and one-half days before students were scheduled to arrive—leaving me one-half day to prepare my classroom, learn what my three class preparations would be—two of which in my 30 years of teaching were new to me, obtain textbooks, begin to write class syllabi, familiarize myself with school practices, meet my new colleagues, orient to an unfamiliar building, and the like—and one full day to attend scheduled school meetings.

I include these experiences not to point the finger of blame at individuals who work in the personnel office, but to provide an additional illustration of common practice within this urban system, with the hope that such practices will be more closely examined and then modified. It is hard for me to imagine a more stressful way to begin a new school year, difficult to imagine a more impersonal way of determining where a highly experienced teacher should be placed during her 30th year of walking into classrooms.

In summary, the personnel office claims to follow the contract, the world of obedience, when placing experienced teachers in new job assignments, and teachers understand but do not necessarily like the constraints of the contract. As Betty said during an interview, "It's not like someone planned to give me a worse job when I returned from a sabbatical. It was just the luck of the draw." A few years later when Betty was placed in yet another school, she said that being placed in a new school late in her career was a "kind of freeing experience, and I'm very happy there." Betty credited the personnel office with "being very nice about explaining what (her) options were."
While details such as educational climate, reform efforts, school philosophy, grade level and specific courses to be taught, adequate planning time during the summer, and other such factors seemed relevant to teachers in this study who were making job decisions, the only relevant factors in the personnel office appear to be areas of certification—and those expanded with grandfathering provisions whether or not the teacher has expertise in the area grandfathered, years of seniority, and building location: it is the world where actions have become mechanical and people do not know the meaning of what they do. Even in this area, teachers had empathy for the personnel office, given the thousands of teachers in the system (“They don’t deliberately plan to mismatch teachers with jobs”); however, teachers generally felt the personnel office made no attempt to provide minimally adequate information about specific positions (“They don’t even try” and “They simply don’t care.”)

When the personnel office is unfamiliar with the teachers it is talking to or placing, or when it gets teacher identification numbers mixed up, or when it places teachers without regard for them as specific individual professionals with varying educational backgrounds, talents, and desires, it is operating in the world of the abstract. It is a world which teachers describe as totally indifferent to the humans whose lives are affected by their actions. It is this area that at least four teachers in the study found unacceptable, more so toward the close of their careers. As Tess said, “It’s as if all those years of experience are irrelevant. Why doesn’t the system utilize the education and experience of its teachers in some concrete way?” Nathan called these placement practices “a particularly conspicuous slap in the face for taking a sabbatical,” and Lee Anne said, “The people downtown don’t know you and don’t appreciate you.” Upon recently reentering the personnel placement system after a program cutback, I—again as researcher-participant—captured the following thoughts on tape during a self interview:

Coming back in, watching and noticing, it hits you in the face: Oh, you’re an English teacher? We’ll find you a slot. So you say, but I’d like..., I’m really better at..., I have this to offer.” And they say, “Excuse me, that doesn’t really matter.” Well, it matters to me.
Contradictions/Paradoxes

"This is bigger than our system. If you want to teach in a different school system, they'll pay you for five years of experience—no matter how much experience you have. They prefer to hire someone with no experience, and sometimes no master's degree, so they can pay them even less. I think that tells you how much they value your experience and education. They don't."

(Lee Anne, Interview Transcript)

The first paradox that emerges in this section is the perception that the urban educational system itself devalues education—the very raison d'etre of the system. It does this in subtle ways pertaining to teachers. At the district level, teacher personnel attaches no importance to the specific educational backgrounds of its teachers when placing teachers in schools; at the building level, administrators do not generally give attention to specific educational backgrounds when designating specific teachers to teach specific courses. The system devalues education further by financially rewarding teachers who have education beyond the bachelor's degree in minuscule amounts. And attitudinally, according to the teachers in this study, educators in all levels of the system tend to discount advanced degrees in the teaching force as well as minimize the educational awards and honors of others.

The second paradox is that while teachers are expected to personalize and individualize instruction, the system itself does not personalize and individualize teacher placement and utilization. In other words, it doesn't walk its talk. According to Tess, for the system to ignore its own sound educational policy when managing its personnel makes no sense:

Each teacher walks into a classroom and meets each kid one-on-one. That's the way it works. Each student is a unique person. Any educator knows that. Yet there is nothing in place in the public school system that views teachers as individuals, the very people who on a daily basis individualize for multiples. I've never seen a school system do that...It is adamant about it.

Betty agreed: "It's not like we work with a bunch of machinery, and of course, that's what makes for the basic rewards and frustrations. And we're not machines." And, as Maxine said, "We're not people, we're numbers...and they're number crunchers."
Message in actions.

"People ask me: So are you going to use your Ph.D. now? Like I'm not already 'using' it, like I haven't just spent the last four years of my life working like a crazed person, like I just bought a new home appliance, or like I don't care that much about it. I tell you, it's hard to know how to respond to that." (Betty, Interview Transcript)

The teachers perceived that their urban school system functions as if education itself has little or no meaning. The system treats education as a commodity, a product to be obtained, or in business terms, a product to be sold to the public—not by its public words, but by its actions. The system ignores the specific educational backgrounds of its teachers; it treats the educational level of its teachers as if the level has little meaning or relevance to the job. By omitting specific educational backgrounds—that is, specific university coursework as delineated in transcripts, summer workshops, advanced degrees and their specific areas of study or specialty—from the process, the system devalues them. The message: Specific education is irrelevant, not important enough to merit even a moment’s consideration. In addition to the teacher speculations in the previous section about why this phenomenon exists, Felicia offered:

It's a matter of consumption. You consume hours of credit, you put in your desk time, and you get some sort of paper that says you have an education. But you are not necessarily educated. Obtaining credit hours is not the same thing.

Looking at the school system as a microcosm of both the society in which the system is embedded also yields a suggestion of how an educational system might come to devalue the very "product" it exists to "distribute" or to foster for the good of the society. Six of the teachers shared the perception that teachers are not highly valued in our society, and Nathan mentioned the oft quoted George Bernard Shaw: "Those who can't, teach," adding, "As with any cliche, there is a germ of truth in it." George Will (1997), in a recent column, demonstrated that this attitude continues to live in our present society by separating primary and secondary education majors from those majoring in the liberal arts; he called the education majors "vocational," as if this were an established truth, categorizing them differently from those preparing for professions.

Those who teach in and administer the current school system were socialized in this very culture, as were the parents of today’s students. Society’s lack of respect for teachers is thus reflected in the system’s lack of regard for them as well as in their own occasional lack of regard.
and it is reflected in the apparently low regard in the system for the education teachers have acquired. Perhaps this low regard explains part of the void of differentiated utilization throughout the teaching career. If teachers are viewed as commodities, as ordinary means to an end, and not as truly unique and valuable resources, then how can the education they are imparting to students be viewed as very valuable? "Education" then becomes, or continues to be, a means to an end throughout the society—the passing grade on the proficiency test, the diploma, the college degree(s), the paper of certification, the opportunities these things will hopefully provide rather than for the value inherent in the educational process, including the professional and personal growth of teachers who continue in graduate school. Betty, recently awarded a doctorate in education, offered:

If our educational system operates on the premise that more education makes one a more valued teacher, if the system honored Ph.D.s—or the M.A. plus—in some significant way, then perhaps people would change their attitudes about education. More education would be something to strive for, and then perhaps we could change the general attitude and public perceptions by beginning with some change in the school system. But since that support is not there, certainly nobody in the system that I know of much respects it.

Some teachers speculated that the size of this urban system was the major factor in determining its impersonal nature; Lee Anne, that the system's focus remained on responding to "one crisis after another," or on its basic survival needs. A professor of education said that the system's preoccupation with survival meant that it could never reach a development mode.

Finally, from the transcript of Felicia's self-interview:

The whole operation is filled with incompetence, politics, pettiness, public relations, image. Those in responsible positions don't seem to have a clue. Throughout the system, there is a lack of time to do things the way they ought to be done. There are too many special interest groups. The system is too large, too cumbersome. It has no integrity....

Lee Anne, speaking to another teacher in one of the dyadic groupings on the collaborative research day, suggested an additional message in the assessment of the system by participants:

It's interesting to me that members of this group have found almost nothing positive to say about the current school system, because we are talking about a group of professionals, teachers who have put a lot of years in, who have put their hearts into the system—not a group of malcontents, not people who have given a lot of trouble to the system—people who are well respected for
what we have done. And yet, we have all these really, really negative thoughts about the system. We're almost surprised at the intensity of them....When you've got some of your most productive and talented professionals with these kinds of perceptions, you've got problems....

**Comparisons/contrasts to selected research**

My earlier literature review establishes the "soullessness" of bureaucratic organizations and locates large school systems within the category of bureaucracy (e.g. Collinson, et al., 1994, McDonnell, et al., 1989; Spence, 1995), and thus, within the realm of the impersonal treatment of persons within the organization. The current study, I believe, contributes additional information to the research base by providing a close look at the impersonal policies and practices of the personnel office in a large urban system as experienced by the participating teachers. In addition, the perceptions of the teachers that they are viewed as "numbers," "cogs," "machines," and "robots" contrasts sharply with their mission as teachers and with that part of the mission of the school system which accepts responsibility for nurturing the human beings within it for the greater social good and for the continuity and development of present and future generations. The prevalent mechanistic metaphors used by the teachers to describe their treatment within the school system not only reflect and contribute to their sense of demoralization and alienation, they suggest that we've begun to confuse people with things pervasively. Indeed, in the school system studied, depersonalization affects virtually everyone at times. Hopefully, the focus on teacher depersonalization will make the phenomenon more explicit, show that it is more worthy of attention, eventually help to make it less pervasive.

The motif of the devaluation of education within school systems is not something I found specifically identified as such in the review of relevant literature. Though it may be implied in other categories, such as lack of respect for teachers and the work they do, it has not been identified as the devaluation of education and applied to the educational backgrounds of teachers. Nowhere in the previous literature did I encounter this phenomenon nor its wastefulness specifically as shown in a system's lack of utilization of its teachers with doctoral degrees—an example which brings into sharp relief this subtle practice of devaluing education. As such, I believe it contributes a new, or at least different, conceptual lens.
At the beginning of this study, participating teachers were positioned at the following places in their careers relative to retirement: Three would be eligible for retirement after three more school years, one was eligible for retirement within one year, one had retired one week before the first interview, and two had been retired for 3 and 5 years respectively. During the study, one teacher retired. During the 1997-98 school year, the remaining teachers are eligible for retirement. If the description of a career wind-down stage is "when a teacher is preparing to leave the profession" (Burke, et al., 1987), only one teacher in the study was actively preparing to do so when the study began. The other active classroom teachers were aware of the approach of retirement eligibility and considered themselves to be in the last years of their careers, and the three retired teachers remembered in detail their last years of teaching in the urban system. It is the last three years of the career that I refer to as "career wind-down."

Current Practices—Singularly Unimpressive

"It seems we view the teaching career in this one way: the number of classes a teacher is going to teach... forever." (Tess, Interview Transcript)

The teachers found nothing particularly noteworthy about the last years of their careers in this urban school system. At least two of the teachers found themselves, during their last year of teaching, assigned to teach courses they had either not taught before or had not taught for more than 14 years, a practice they thought was wasteful in that all the resources and familiarity they would gain with the material would not be used again, and, as Maxine pointed out, someone new will have to go through the entire process the following year. Nathan observed: "Who wants to make some dramatic change in the last seconds of a career?"

Three of the teachers in this study, including me as researcher-participant, had been moved around the system during their last seven years an average of 3.7 times each, precipitated initially by their willingness to seek a growth opportunity. Felicia reflected, "After all you've done, after you've acquired more knowledge and skills, they move you to places of seeming
insignificance." Betty is not displeased with her current placement, but showed some concern when her present school was temporarily chosen to be closed. Had that closing occurred, she would have been placed in a new school, yet again, during her last year of secondary teaching: "I just don't want to deal with moving again. The last three years, I've established some continuity, adapted to my new school, established working relationships with new colleagues, become department chair. All of that will be scrapped. My last year I would like to work with people I know." I, the third teacher in this group, described taking a sabbatical leave as a wonderful benefit and substantial growth experience. In a self interview, these were my thoughts:

I like a high degree of novelty, and so, after 12 years in one school, I took a sabbatical leave...but in our school system, the price for a sabbatical is high. You must give up your job, your colleagues, and your professional identity in your old school forever...You don't know it at the time, but you're making a deal with the devil. When you return from a sabbatical, you see that you've become chattel....

All of the teachers in the study agreed that there is nothing to look forward to during the last years of a teaching career. The years at the end were described as "at best, anticlimactic." They were also described as "unremarkable," "nothing different from the first year of teaching," and "wasteful of human resources." As Betty said, "There is no progression, no feeling of making progress...." "Instead," observed Felicia, "the system seems to look at teachers in the last years of their careers as people to be ushered into retirement and removed from the system as soon as possible. Why don't system leaders look at their teaching force and ask: What can these people contribute to our organization?" Lee Anne recalled a time when she became aware of how routine can dull even highly motivated teachers who have been teaching for years and years:

I remember feeling, during a really good year, that I had just been doing the same thing too long. I was writing something on a blackboard one day, and I remember thinking: This is boring me to tears right now.

Maxine, too, had thoughts on the subject:

I think it's true that a lot of teachers can't wait to leave, and part of the reason is that the end of the career is the same as...you know, it's just more of the same. There's nothing more interesting or better about it than any other year, and people get worn out.

And Tess summed up the general perception of the group as a whole: "Simply, there are no mechanisms in place to utilize teachers well in their most experienced years."
Only Lee Anne did not object to the ways she is being utilized during the last years of her career: "Rather," she said during her self-interview, "I object to the lack of respect from administrators and from the public for what we do in the classroom."

The Desire to Make a Contribution

"There comes a time when you want that little patch you've been tending all to yourself to become part of a larger territory."

(Nathan, Interview Transcript)

Preliminary Ideas. Six teachers in this study expressed an interest in making a generative contribution near the end of their careers, one that would be, said Tess, "a real service to your fellows." Her early thoughts on the subject were expressed during our first interview:

Do you think anyone says, now you are a senior teacher. Now we will utilize your education and give you a few extra bucks? I would have liked them to say, for heaven's sake, honey, teach four classes instead of five. Spend that fifth period with kids who think they want to become teachers, or go help younger teachers, or do some professional writing, or something. Utilize my experience somehow, you know, say well done, good and faithful servant.

At least two of the teachers attempted to be of service within their buildings by serving as their association's building representatives. Said Lee Anne:

It takes a lot of extra energy, but I've had many people tell me that I've been able to help them with their professional concerns. Buildings need someone who is able to work behind the scenes to resolve issues, to give support, without getting hysterical. It has been a good way to utilize my years of experience and understanding of the system.

Maxine suggested having a teacher designated as a building mentor in every school building; such a teacher would teach for half a day and assist others during the second half:

Think of it—if you could take professional and classroom issues to that mentor, where you could get advice, feedback, suggestions. A person who would arrange classroom observations for fellow teachers, who could cover a class so that someone else could observe or who could model techniques right in the building...a person who could be a major resource, help with innovations, assist other teachers in a multitude of ways.

Betty remembered:

One of those rare times when I felt my professional knowledge was being effectively tapped was when I was invited to speak to a student teaching group at the university. And that's something I would gladly do again. Their university instructor really had little knowledge of what
is going on in our urban school system, and you don't want student teachers getting information that is not current, and maybe, not correct.

Others were interested in exploring more effective teaching that fellow teachers would eventually benefit from. Integrating subject matter was mentioned as one possibility; teaming with other teachers in the same classroom was another. Some thought that near the end of a career was an especially good time for experienced teachers to be teamed with less experienced teachers.

Maxine said:

At a time when physical energy seems harder to come by but your ideas are peaking, it might be advantageous to everyone to team a teacher in her last few years with a teacher in her first few years. The new teacher could benefit from the guidance and modeling of the older teacher and both could benefit from sharing their different perspectives. I would look at it as a formal way of mentoring, as a way to pass on your best teaching strategies and materials.

Maxine also desired an opportunity to work closely with others for interdisciplinary purposes:

Integrating subjects is not a new idea, but we are never really encouraged to do that sort of thing—with the consequence that there are few models available to show how it can be done. Most students take subjects which are presented in unrelated ways. How can we expect them to make meaningful connections if we keep presenting subjects in isolated chunks?

Some teachers were interested in working with the structure of the teacher's daily job.

For example, Tess wanted to be a traveling teacher:

I think it would be great to spend a few weeks in every high school in the city. I'd have several mini-courses to offer, things that would be tied to their curriculum, with high expectations for student performance. Students could choose among a few options. I could tailor these courses to what specific buildings need, put some excitement into learning for kids. Now wouldn't that be an adventure?

Out of that idea grew another—that teachers might submit plans for such innovations a few years in advance so that necessary planning and coordination could occur for those innovations selected by the system to be implemented. The main value would be establishing a mechanism whereby teachers nearing the ends of their careers would be encouraged to develop a valuable idea based on career-long experience. Maxine said and Tess agreed: "If I knew that such an opportunity existed, I would be planning for years and years, really working on something to contribute before I retire." Four teachers expressed an interest in conducting educational research—perhaps for one full day a week or during half of a school day—even working with a research partner. Betty envisioned having one day a week to work on research projects for the school system, to design
new courses, to engage in a variety of professional development activities—even half of every day
toward the end of the career, with the other half devoted to teaching:

I would love for the last year or two to have about half of every day
devoted to working on specific educational concerns in my district
that I could address in the form of research that I have been trained
to do, and working with a partner on this appeals to me, too.

Tess expressed the desire to make a contribution in the most general way:

I would have liked to have somebody say, hey, now that you’ve taught for 27
years, what would you like to work on, what would you like to get started before
you go, what would you like to experiment with, how would you like to put all that
you’ve learned to use in the school or the school system?

The importance of leaders with vision for tapping teacher expertise.

"Some have called it the Camelot for English teachers.
That was a time I was really proud to be a teacher in our
system. Ray Jameson saw the potential for what might
be, and he helped us to get part way there. He told us we
could do anything we wanted to do—All we had to do was
create it and think it through. You know, we lost that...."
(Lee Anne, Interview Transcript)

This category was extremely important to the teachers participating in this study. All of the
teachers, in their interviews, in their conversations with each other, and in the collaborative group
meeting, mentioned again and again the importance of having leaders with vision. Their
reference point was an exceptionally effective language arts coordinator who organized English
instruction, tapped their talents, and provided innovative programs for professional growth during
the first half of their careers. Nearly a decade ago, that teacher network and coordinating position
were lost during administrative restructuring. More than 37 times in the data, on 14 difference
occasions, this coordinator, who will be identified as Raymond Jameson, was mentioned as a
support, an inspiration, a mentor, and a teacher of teachers. In addition, one superintendent,
identified here as Dr. John Enlight, received much praise; he was a superintendent who worked
closely with Mr. Jameson. Felicia stated:

I believe that if we still had John Enlight, and if we still had Ray Jameson,
that they would actually take the time to listen to me now. Dr. Enlight
knew that you had to have the very best minds—like Ray—in the system
trying to put together a program—not a program, but a concept—a concept
that would work and that would go on after he was gone and after all
of us are gone.
Nathan added, "So much depends on the individual in charge. We haven't had it in the country since Jimmy Carter, and we haven't had it in the system since Ray Jameson. He attempted to humanize the system in the best ways." Lee Anne said, "If you've worked with Ray, you've been nurtured. You know what is lacking in the system now because you know how it can be different. You've experienced the vitality of an innovative leader, and you feel the loss." Ray Jameson was described by Tess as "enormously supportive of innovation," of providing "a model of leadership that should always have a high profile in a school system." Most devastating to four of the teachers was that during their careers, they were seldom asked by anyone in their system to apply their intelligence to educational problems—except when working with Jameson. Said Nathan: "He is the only supervisor during my whole career who ever asked me to use some of my brain."

Almost every teacher had experienced effective leadership in the system, but that effectiveness was described as "all too rare." Said Nathan: "You have to have bona fide, qualified people who are sparked and who can spark others, like Ray. You know who these people are when they cross your path. They just don't cross your path in our system very often." Leaders were described as "not caring about the students in their schools," "not giving a damn about teachers and not understanding how to tap our expertise," and "causing more problems than they solve." These perceptions were relevant in terms of teachers in career wind-down because the teachers believed that they would not be able to make a more significant contribution to their school system and to the field of education unless those in power recognized the untapped potential of its experienced teachers. Lee Anne said: "You have to have at least one leader who recognizes that value. Now there is a total lack of regard for what we have to offer one another or the system at large." Again Nathan referred to Ray Jameson:

If the system could treat all teachers the way Ray treated language arts teachers, then we would be where we need to be as a system. That's the only place we got recognition, rewards, encouragement, even motivation. We should have been getting that from the whole system. Ray had a microscopic version of the bigger thing that (should have) existed.

During the group session on the collaborative work day, the teachers affirmed their desire to have a more meaningful role in improving both their profession and their school system and their belief that more leaders who foster, in Tess's words, "symbiotic relationships and synergistic
groups" are needed to make that happen in any ongoing way. An entry in Nathan's journal again illustrates the value to teachers of working even with one exceptional leader:

Hooray for Ray, a brilliant leader, innovator, teacher. Every system should be so blessed as to have such a man in their ranks, and any person who has worked with him must have felt the zing of good fortune...Without him and his influential teams, I think life in this system would have been undeniably dismal.

When Should Teachers Exit?

"I know a teacher, who shall remain nameless, who was totally worn down. Several of us said that for her, coming into school must be like getting crucified every day, but she couldn't afford to quit, and she had seven years to go before she could retire."

(From Lee Anne, Group Collaboration Transcript)

Although all but one teacher in this study expressed enthusiasm about making a more significant contribution before exiting the career, the teachers also believed that not all of their teaching colleagues would share their enthusiasm—and that making a different kind of contribution should be an option, not a requirement. As expressed by Maxine, "Different people have different things to offer. We're talking about individuals here. That's the point." They even doubted that in the future, large numbers of teachers would continue classroom work under conditions like the current ones for 30 years. Not one teacher in the study believed that a rigid 30-year requirement to qualify for some immediate retirement benefits was in the best interests of students, school systems, the profession, or of teachers themselves. Vanessa thinks that new teachers will last for a whole career unless teaching conditions change drastically in urban schools.

Lee Anne referred to a journal written by a student teacher:

She asked me to read her journal, and one thing she talked about over and over again was how much experience I had, and how she could not imagine sticking it out for such a long time, as much as she had enjoyed it. And I see more teachers leaving the career much earlier, because our job has gotten tougher and tougher and tougher....

All the teachers in the study supported earlier retirement options and more flexibility in determining their own retirement dates. From Nathan's story in Chapter 4, the words echo:

There comes a time when it is totally legitimate to stand up and say to yourself and your friends and your students and your administrators: I don't want to do this any more, I can't take it any more, my body can only take so much, my mind can only take so much. I have to be done. I love it, but I have to be done.

265
Nathan also observed, “It’s not a matter of changing interests. Look at the occupational hazards of certain jobs. Police get damaged. They can’t keep doing it indefinitely. In teaching, there’s a loss, a significant recognizable loss....” Vanessa believes that it would be better for everyone if teachers were able to exit the career with some retirement benefits when they “just don’t have the heart” to continue teaching at high standards or when they feel they need to be doing something else. Both Vanessa and Felicia retired before the 30-year experience mark. Felicia expressed her feelings this way: “There is no reason why educators should not be able to exit the career with honor after they have given all that they have to give at a particular time in their lives.”

If the length of a public school teaching career ought not to be based on a minimum 30-year requirement, what should be determining factors? The teachers thought that overall, it should be up to each individual, but that two factors, if they appear, should signal serious consideration for exiting the career or at least taking a leave of absence. Health concerns topped the list and included chronic fatigue, chronic stress-related health problems, or as Tess said, “when that physical capacity no longer sustains you, when it becomes a physical battle.” The second factor might be called the loss of desire—the awareness that one has been doing the same thing for too long—as Vanessa said, “when they don’t like the kids any more and they don’t like the job any more, and they really need to be doing something else.” Tess, who was not ready to stop teaching even in her fifties, said the decision needs to be made by the individual, “not by the number of years...When a teacher gets to the place where teaching is getting on a person’s nerves, and the person is just putting in the number of years required, something is wrong with the system.” Tess also reflected:

...but when we talk about some teachers just going through the motions, I wonder if they might have been more valuable teachers if someone had told them that they were valuable, if someone had told them that what they do is important.

Continuing to teach when one has lost one’s enthusiasm for the work is, according to Betty, “not good for anybody—not good for the teacher, and certainly not good for the students.” Felicia called this factor the loss of purpose: “Do my efforts have value? Can I continue to do what I think needs to be done? Am I doing more than trying to keep a lid on? Do I know why I am here beyond my need to earn a living?” Along that line, she said:

When a teacher would prefer to be doing something else, it’s time to leave. Teaching involves human beings and human lives in a fundamental way that
many careers do not. There is a shaping, molding function during crucial developmental years for kids; so many kids are not getting direction from the other adults in their lives, that any teacher who can’t be truly there for the kids should just get out. And there should be some financial incentives after an established minimum number of years to encourage people to make such responsible decisions—and not to have to leave in defeat.

And Felicia believes that any person who has devoted “a significant number of years” to working with the young people in our society deserves more than a simple “thank you” on the way out:

We need to say that educating the nation’s young is a process, and that leaving the profession should not be determined by a finite number of years. When a person impacts the system, has been productive, has tried to make a difference, and if it is time for that person to move on... then for those years, for the kids whose lives were positively impacted, for the faculties they were a part of, they deserve some compensation for that. That’s all.

Felicia expressed that people who felt a need to move on should be supported by the system in doing so, that assistance in finding a different job would be appropriate as well as advantageous for the system. She also thought that if, after a number of years, a former teacher desired to return to the system in order to make an additional contribution to young people, that the system should welcome them back: “We need more flexibility, more cooperative exchanges with businesses in the community, more gratitude in the form of remuneration and support. We’re a community here, and we’re all in this together, and it’s time we get clear on that.”

When to exit, according to teachers in this study, should be determined by factors other than strictly financial ones. The nature of the job is too important, the lives affected too precious, to have inflexible actuarial tables dictating when teachers should leave their classrooms, and often their careers, behind.

Career Exit: The Desire to Mark the Event

“...Unwept, unhonour’d, and unsung”

(Sir Walter Scott, “My Native Land,” 1805)

For those who have made teaching a life-long career, in this study defined as staying active in the field 30 or more years, exiting the career is a major life transition. Teachers noted that the school system itself does next to nothing to mark the event—a formal letter with a stamped signature, a perforated certificate of retirement—and, Nathan observed, “...certainly nothing of a
personal nature." Vanessa noted a $750 bonus she received for announcing in February that she intended to retire in June; teachers who announce retirement intentions even one day after the deadline forgo "the reward." The teachers' local association holds an awards banquet which features a brief minute of recognition for each teacher in attendance, and without fail, those who had attended the banquet called it "nice," "pleasant," and "well-intended," but not fully adequate in terms of closure or professional recognition. All teachers noted that individuals sometimes honor each other with retirement dinners and parties, and Lee Anne commented: "When it comes to leaving, unless you have some friends to engineer some sort of big shindig for you, you don't even have that." Betty said:

Compared to 30 years of your life coming to an end, whatever kind of celebration you have, however much fuss people make over you, it can hardly adequately commemorate what's going on here, which is that your entire adult life as you've known it is coming to a halt....

Vanessa, as discussed in Chapter 4, attended five retirement celebrations, one which she and another teacher initiated and financed themselves—a luncheon at a local restaurant for the entire faculty. Otherwise, even from the individual schools where the teachers had taught usually for years if not decades, the common practices for recognizing retiring teachers were characterized—even if well-intended—as basically cheap, demeaning, and insufficient. These practices were typically computer-generated banners, small gift certificates, and luncheons of sorts squeezed into 42-minute lunch periods during a busy school day, during which those who had worked in school buildings one year or less were given almost the same recognition—which is to say, not very much—as retiring teachers. Each teacher found the scraps of retirement recognition from within the system to be inadequate. The group sentiments are captured in the following words expressed by Lee Anne:

It's the failure of a system who can immediately replace you with someone else. There is never any record or statement of any value, any contributions you made to the system... You go. That's all. You just fade away....

And more than half of the teachers used one word to name what is most missing during both career wind-down and career exit. The word is "dignity."
Contradictions/paradoxes.

"This is a kind of paradox, really, because you have no place for teachers to go except from the classroom to administration, or rarely, to a special assignment slot. As a teacher, you have the latitude at any time to decide if you want to move in an out-of-the-classroom direction. But others, with all kinds of hidden agendas, determine if you will get such a job. So, superficially, you have some decisions to make. In actuality, you have very few, if any." (Felicia, Interview Transcript)

The first two paradoxes in this section of the data analysis concern the school system's policies regarding sabbatical leaves, especially as the policies pertain to highly experienced teachers in the system. First, an explanation: Of the more than 5,000 certificated employees in this system, 15 can be granted a sabbatical leave during a school year. During a sabbatical leave, according to the terms of the negotiated contract, the system provides a reduced salary, tuition fee waivers at a local university, continued insurance benefits, and retirement credit. In exchange, the educator agrees to follow an outlined plan during the sabbatical and to return to teach or work in the school system for at least one year following the sabbatical—or to reimburse the system for the benefits and salary. In addition, the teacher or administrator, by taking a sabbatical leave, understands that his or her teaching assignment or position in the school system will not be available when reentering the system. The teachers view the sabbatical leave provision as a positive option, but few seek to take one. The most common reasons given for lack of participation in the sabbatical provision are two: the severely decreased income, and the uncertainty of assignment upon return to the system. The two teachers in the study who had taken sabbaticals late in their careers found the assignment process to be impersonal and their new assignments not always compatible, and I, as one of those teachers, found the process to be demeaning and disturbing.

The first paradox is that although the sabbatical leave was perceived as "the nicest thing my school system provided me" by both teachers taking them, there is the high cost of giving up a teaching assignment if one likes one's school and colleagues, of temporarily losing one's professional identity by entering rather anonymously a new faculty, of being assigned to that new school by a random process, and of teaching the "leftover" courses in the new assignment—as Betty said, the "courses that nobody else wanted to teach." Tess, a teacher not interested in utilizing the sabbatical provision, called the terms "professionally punishing."
The second paradox is that although the school system policy endorses the sabbatical leave as a professional development growth experience and partially supports the experience financially, it neither honors nor utilizes the additional knowledge, skills, or expertise of returning educators. No one in any official capacity even inquires about the areas of study or interests pursued during the sabbatical. No one provides opportunities to share or spread the newly acquired information or perspectives gained within the system. As Betty said, "It defies logic. Why would you pay educators to spend a whole year in professional study and not want to benefit in some concrete way upon their return?"

A third paradox is that while teachers report having both untapped expertise as an extension of their years of experience and a willingness to contribute it to their school system, those who manage the school system appear uninterested in using this asset to its advantage. As Tess said, "Instead of recognizing that teachers' accumulated experience is a valuable asset and developing guidelines for utilizing it, basically, they just send us out the door." Betty described it this way: "I've always said that one of the major frustrations with teaching is that there is almost nowhere to go in the school system if you don't want to become an administrator—which I don't. So, ironically, at the end of your career, you've accumulated all this expertise that nobody seems to need." An extension of this irony is that in spite of "expecting nothing from downtown," as Lee Anne said, the teachers in this study were willing, with a touch of imaginative leadership and an invitation, to "move full speed ahead," to participate in improving their school system and profession.

A fourth paradox in the data in this section is that those charged with leadership in the school system demonstrate little understanding of what it means to lead, according to the teachers. They were described as "leaders without vision." Even referring to top administrators as leaders was called a "misnomer" in the study. Telephone interviews with two principals to enrich the research data also suggest that top administrators were often ineffective in providing adequate leadership and support to their own school principals. One principal said that he didn't know of an administrator in recent years who didn't "leave with his tail between his legs, people who have been competent their whole lives...being told too often that they're not doing a good enough job, leaving practically in shame...." The other principal, when asked how administrator contributions are honored or acknowledged at career exit, said simply, "They're not." The
perceived lack of vision among top leaders is not confined to their views and practices applied to the teaching force, but unfortunately, shows consistency affecting their own ranks. And the teachers who knew what is was like to work under the "gifted leadership" of Ray Jameson still feel the void.

A fifth paradox is that this particular urban system provides no early retirement option for teachers, even though the teachers perceived that the system would like its older teachers to retire, and even though early retirement options are permitted by state law. The lack of options, including those which would result in reduced teaching schedules, means that some highly experienced and highly paid teachers struggle to remain both effective and physically healthy in the system's classrooms—teachers who, for a combination of personal and professional reasons, would otherwise choose to retire.

A sixth paradox is that although retiring from a teaching career was perceived by the teachers to be a major life event, there is little recognition of the event within the school system. The lack of personal recognition at the time of retirement is out of balance with or disproportional to the nature of the personal contribution of the teachers in this study.

Message in actions,

"It is disturbing to think that you could spend 30 years of your life in a place, give really dedicated service, work really hard, and then next year, you're just not there. And nobody seems to notice...."

(Betty, Interview Transcript)

The message, as perceived by the teacher-participants, in the actions and policies of the school system at large as exemplified by those charged with leading it, specifically as they pertain to career wind-down and career exit of certificated employees, is that lifetime contributions merit neither attention, consideration, utilization, recognition, nor more than an impersonal, perfunctory, computer-generated thanks. The message might be stated: The status quo is thoughtless, monotonous, wasteful of human resources, and undignified. Long live the status quo.

Comparisons/contrasts to selected research. The topic of this study, experienced career teachers approaching and reaching career end, was grounded in previous research which had identified both a career wind-down and career exit stage—or stages with similar names such as decelerating, withdrawal, pre-retirement, or phase of running down (especially Burke, et al., 1987;
Fessler & Christensen, 1992; Huberman, 1989; McDonnell & Burke, 1992; Steffy, 1989). The teachers in the current study, with individual variation, experienced career wind-down in ways similar to teachers in previous studies—that is, with mixed emotions, introspection, a loss of energy coupled with a sense of confidence or competence, and the like.

Although the teachers in the current study might be described as leaving along one of two career paths—confidence/satisfaction vs. discouragement/dissillusionment (Christensen, et al., 1983); or serene vs. bitter (Huberman)—it would be more accurate to say that almost invariably, they are leaving (or have left) with a combination of the above. I would describe their positions as confident in their professional abilities, at least somewhat satisfied at having chosen a worthwhile career, discouraged with present conditions in schools and society, and disillusioned—sometimes angry, even bitter—about their school system and the treatment they had received from it, including their treatment during career wind-down and exit. This latter characteristic was consistent among these teachers and worthy of note, especially because none of them would recommend a career in urban education to people they cared about. With the exception of one teacher who remained engaged in her classroom but not in activities outside the walls of her classroom, all the teachers in the current study are (or were) actively engaged in their classrooms, their schools, and their profession, and plan to remain that way until the day they retire or discontinue working for their system because of their personal and professional commitment and their morality of caring.

The teachers in the current study viewed themselves as not being utilized in thoughtful ways by their school system in accordance with their experience, education, and expertise and as having much more to offer than they were being asked to give—in line with the language used by Bumbarger, et al. (1987) that "their full ranges of talents and expertise were not currently being utilized" (p. 22). The current study also reinforced work by Fessler and Christensen (1992) in identifying growth needs for teachers in the career wind-down stage—knowledge production, teacher preparation, mentoring, and leadership—as exemplified by activities such as writing curriculum, producing handbooks, serving as clinical instructors, or chairing committees. The teachers in this study add the following to the Fessler and Christensen examples: serving as association representatives or mediators within school buildings; experimenting with innovative teaching structures and ideas of their own design based on career-long experience; and
conducting individual or collaborative research which would benefit students, the school system, and/or the profession. The teachers expressly mentioned a desire to work on innovations or research in some sort of collaborative structure.

Furthermore, the teachers were not interested in high profile leadership roles for themselves so much as they were interested in having "leaders with vision" in their school system. This "desire to make a contribution" motif was generative in spirit, in sync with Erikson's generativity vs. stagnation stage of adulthood (Cross & Markus, 1991), Ralph (1994), Riley (1994), and others, including Mathis (1987) who urged that professional expectations include ways of maintaining generativity until career end. Finally, the teachers in the current study identified as a detriment to the profession the ongoing practice of designing teaching jobs in a flat, undifferentiated design which does not take into account that "teachers in different stages have different things to offer," reinforcing findings by Huberman (1989) and McDonnell, et al. (1989) and underscoring the Holmes Group statement in 1986 that teachers of the 20th century continue to work with a 19th century job description (Rowley). I think it is significant to note that not one teacher felt well utilized during the last years of the career, except for the teacher who now has an out-of-the-classroom assignment.

Regarding career wind-down, in addition to the work options mentioned in the previous paragraph, teachers in the current study were interested in more and earlier exit options, which supports research that urban teachers should not necessarily be expected to last for 30 years in the career (Steffy, 1989; Weiner, 1989) as well as that various options are needed to meet individual needs (Oja, 1990). Steffy (1989) proposed 20- and 25-year exit options, given the tremendous amounts of energy required to be in the teaching profession (p. 137). Unsolicited, four of the teachers in the current study mentioned their interest in earlier retirement options even with less retirement income, and three said that they would definitely have utilized such a program had it been available. The key word for the teachers in the current study was options, a combination of exit choices and differentiated job designs for teachers which would benefit both teachers as growing individuals and the system as a whole. One option not found in the literature base but identified by teachers in the current study was for systems to systematically pay attention to the advanced educational level of its teachers and to utilize it well. This option should include better use of teachers returning from growth experiences such as sabbatical leaves.
Just as the “growth needs” of teachers in career wind-down are “generally ignored by administrators and school systems as a whole” (McDonnell & Burke, 1992), so is the exit stage (Steffy, 1989). Steffy calls ignoring the exit stage “a mistake” (p. 33) and so did the teachers in the current study. Retired teachers in the current study mirrored the perceptions of retired teachers in Pearce’s (1993) study that their employing organizations neither regarded them highly nor respected them and that, upon retirement, the districts gave their former teachers no further thought. The teachers in the current study, however, provide a more detailed look at the system’s actions at the time of their retirement than do the previous studies I have reviewed as well as suggest how those practices might be improved. The teachers in the current study also reflected that the retirement practices in their school system tend to be a part of the attitude in the current zeitgeist which is focused on the concerns of youth, the financial bottom line, and thought processes which seem to occur in brief sound bytes about relatively petty daily concerns rather than in sustained reflection over matters of substance.

Closure for “Sitting Through Conversations: The Remains”

The data suggests that the structures in this large urban system do not take into account some obvious information—such as health concerns, the high stress of working in urban schools, or the dehumanizing effects of bureaucracy—which has been available during the careers of the teachers in this study, the ignoring of which is destructive to the system as well as to the professional human beings who work within it. To wit:

1. The job design for teachers is an anachronism.

2. The not-so-subtle, rampant depersonalization of human beings within the school system is painful to individuals and harmful to the system. It is an energy-sapper for teachers and thus directly and indirectly affects the students and the quality of the educational program they are receiving.

3. The more subtle practice of devaluing the education of certificated employees undermines the entire organization and its mission. It can be viewed as another self-destructive component of an entrenched system which lumbers along, seemingly more powerful than the collective human beings within it, oblivious to them.
Indeed, each of the components in the categories of this data analysis work in tandem. If education has little or no inherent value, there is no need to attempt to utilize a lifetime of it; neither does the end of a career need to be honored with the currency of attention and time. The computer-generated letters and perforated certificates will continue to suffice. Most disturbingly, the attitudes and values of a society schooled within such systems will be thus reinforced.

At career end, even teachers themselves go quietly into the night. One can almost hear Arthur Miller's Willy Loman in Death of a Salesman (1949) whispering, "Isn't that remarkable?" But to the teachers in the current study, the policies and practices which accompany the death of a teaching career are so common that they are almost not remarkable at all. To paraphrase Huberman (1989), as teachers leave the career, the resulting awareness—that a lifetime contribution is neither to be noticed nor utilized nor missed by one's school system—"seems to come suddenly, one night, like the blow of a hammer" (p. 46). By then, of course, the damage has been done, and as some of the teachers in this study said, whether approaching retirement or having already retired, the damage can be greater than that already anticipated.

What is perhaps most remarkable about the teachers in this study is that, having identified problems within the system and areas of concern of some of the most experienced teachers in the urban school system, these teachers were willing to meet for an unpaid day of collaboration during the summer and to conduct follow-up self interviews in an effort to begin to ameliorate these unsatisfactory conditions for others. They have demonstrated a spirit of hope, a willingness to join in efforts to improve their school system and their profession, or at least to offer their "wisdom of experience," and if not their wisdom, at least their best ideas. One of their observations was that there is no vehicle currently for tapping into one's increased expertise as teachers approach career end and exit the career. More than one teacher suggested that perhaps we don't know how to identify this expertise, that because we don't know what it looks like, we don't even know that it might be valuable or that we are wasting it.

The cross-data analysis will now look at how these teachers, and this researcher, attempted to clarify this most elusive thing which some call "wisdom" as we began to reconceptualize career wind-down and career end. In terms of the mining process metaphor in this data analysis, the next stage might be thought of as, having separated the remains, identifying what might be valuable. Then it will be time to cut and polish.
Weighing the Findings: Finding Value in Experienced Teachers’ Perspectives

During a Day of Collaboration

From a Collegial Perspective: Worth Sharing with Colleagues

During the morning of the day of collaboration, one of the discussion prompts for dyads was to identify what strategies for renewal and enhancing job success had been effective during their own teaching careers, strategies which might be useful to others in the field, especially to those who are struggling to maintain their enthusiasm. The strategies were obtained from 15-minute brainstorming sessions and are richly suggestive of what might be obtained with more time devoted to the effort and with more participating teachers. Lee Anne captured the heart of this challenge at the beginning of her brainstorming session when she observed:

I have some advice for young teachers who are having some problems. Advice for older teachers is tougher, especially if they’ve become embittered and have a lot of anger to deal with...and you can’t counsel somebody to get out of the profession when they’ve invested 24 years and can’t afford to leave....

In part, the suggestions and strategies obtained through this process represent the kinds of insights available to the profession as a whole by tapping into the insights of experienced teachers, even though there is no formal mechanism for doing so at present. These strategies for renewal, combined with a few others found in interview transcripts, can be classified in two broad categories: becoming a positive force and seeking growth opportunities.

**Becoming a positive force in individual school buildings**

The teachers in general believed that being involved in their schools in positive ways is vital for the kind of climate in which they wish to teach and learn. The teachers had observed that sometimes negativity in buildings gets passed around, becomes a norm, feeds on itself; therefore, they seemed to ask, why not make positive energy the norm?

Part of creating and maintaining a positive climate is valuing and respecting the efforts and expertise of colleagues, something the teachers perceived did not occur frequently enough, something they wanted to do more often. One way to do that, they said, was for colleagues to honor each other’s teaching awards and recognitions, maybe by showcasing these within buildings; another was to look for ways to give more affirmations to each other for various positive
contributions made in individual buildings. Nathan underscored the importance of building more systematic ways of recognizing faculty contributions into the practices of the school system:

The research shows that many teachers perceive that their employing organizations do not regard and respect them... I think that everybody here would say that. At present, if you want regard as a teacher, you'd better get it for yourself because you're not going to get it from anything in the system... The question becomes, what can we do to get some recognition and some stimulation and some support built in, so that you don't have to go it all for yourself....

Suggestions for immediate improvement include the following: initiating faculty recognition programs in individual school buildings—something Maxine had implemented which eventually included most of the faculty and which, she said, improved morale; making oneself available to listen to the concerns of colleagues and to offer assistance—like Lee Anne, Maxine, Betty, and Tess had done in their buildings; maintaining a strong sense of humor and sharing it with others—like Vanessa and Maxine; initiating conversations of substance about educational issues and innovations—like Nathan and Tess and others; improving drab building conditions by painting, decorating, and planting—like Maxine and Felicia. Betty noted that it is not normally part of one's job to help boost the morale of others, she planned to address that issue in the hall by involving more members of her department in collaborating on subject matter concerns and by inviting them to participate in a variety of social engagements prior to school events at nights or on weekends. "I can try," she said, "because ten years is too long for teachers to be counting down the days."

According to the data, performing at high standards of excellence is another way teachers can become positive forces in school buildings. The teachers said that doing the best job they felt capable of doing each and every day gave them at least a sense of pride and accomplishment, regardless of what else transpired during the day. Performing at high standards included having something of substance with which to teach and engage their students, viewing the classroom as a vital place for learning rather than as academic day care, fulfilling related job responsibilities in a professional manner, responding to daily crises with maturity and compassion, and maintaining personal integrity—to which Maxine and Nathan added, being on time, performing assigned duties, and fulfilling supplementary contract agreements in full, and to which Tess added, "not looking the other way when kids need help." As Nathan said, "There ought to be a certain level of
quality that you feel responsible for if you've chosen the profession." Lee Anne observed that performing at high standards had the benefit of providing positive role modeling: "I would suggest that role models are important for other teachers, no matter their years of experience...." As these teacher comments reveal, performing at high levels is deemed necessary both for maintaining personal morale and for being a positive influence on others—and it underscores the need for renewal.

**Seeking Professional Growth and Renewal Opportunities**

The teachers in this study expressed the belief that, at present, a proactive stance is the only way to approach professional growth and renewal in the career; waiting on the system or on others to create opportunities or to make desired changes meant simply that most changes would never happen. The first step, said Nathan, is for individuals to seek growth as human beings, or to evolve:

> There is personal evolution and there is species evolution. Personal evolution sometimes contributes to species evolution. Here's what I would say to others and to myself: Seek to evolve as a human being; seek to raise your level of consciousness. I start with this: How can certified professionals sit in a lounge and make petty and destructive comments? How can a policeman take a graft? How can a doctor perform surgery when he knows it is not needed? How can people ignore others in a gutter? How can teachers be other than upright and righteous and truthful and honest? The only answer that I have that makes any sense is that we are all on these different levels of consciousness, of evolvement. Most of us never evolve....

Nathan continued:

> All of it boils down to the individual, to what quality of person you've got in the profession, in the classroom in the school, in the cafeteria next to you at lunch. You can't separate the person from the teacher or from the administrator or from the board member.

Next, Nathan said, "...find your passion. Maybe it's for saving sea turtles. Whatever it is, get in touch with it. Bring your passion for life to your work."

One insight gained over the years by several of the teachers is the importance of taking some risks. Lee Anne stated, "In your life, it's a big risk not to take a risk...The risk that you take is total boredom and failure and a life of inconsequence." I offered:

> I would say to others, take more professional risks with your career. If you are dissatisfied in your building, take some risks to make it better. If that isn't possible, seek a job in another school—even in another school system if you think that this one can't offer you career satisfaction, even if it is difficult....
As one gains more years of experience, renewal might mean, in Lee Anne's terms, "making it a habit to alter your habits." Lee Anne suggested an analytic approach: When a teacher feels overwhelmed, she advised, "Step back and review how you organize your related work activities. If you don't like what you see, make some changes. Do something a different way or at a different time... For example, take a course." When Lee Anne signed up for a computer course, deliberately placing herself in the role of student, she noted her response to an insensitive instructor: "I found myself wanting to turn out the class. What a valuable insight!" Others recommended taking courses for intellectual stimulation and for noting both effective and ineffective instructional practices.

Teachers shared other growth experiences which had been successful for them. Maxine enjoyed finding workshops to attend with at least one other colleague, sometimes in a different locale: "It was refreshing to get out of town," she said, "and revitalizing to encounter new ideas. Some of the workshops are getting pretty good, too, not just a waste of time." Six of the teachers had found attending professional conventions or being presenters an effective way to obtain renewal and to grow professionally. Five, who had experienced a boost upon having their writing published in various professional texts and journals, recommended putting successful teaching ideas or philosophies in writing and sending them off for publication. Two had been reporters for a professional newspaper, and Betty had been an editor. For English teachers, Lee Anne called writing for publication "practicing what you teach"—another recommendation in its own right. Two recommended taking sabbatical leaves. Nathan recommended visiting other schools, "even in other states and in other countries, or become an exchange teacher... Our school system could make exchange teaching more attractive and a possible alternative for your later years if they removed the threat of losing your school."

Other ways for renewal that have been helpful for this researcher, and which I shared with fellow collaborators, include Nathan's suggestion of finding ways to interact with teachers from other school systems and other states—to broaden professional associations and to feel more deeply connected to the profession. One way to do that is to apply for National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Seminars and Institutes for Teachers, programs guided by individual professors or teams of professors who are experts in the topics studied. Over the course of my career, I have also found travel—domestic and foreign—to be stimulating and refreshing, and
extended travel during the summer has been a great reward for an exhausting year of work.

Finally, I suggested creating your own small group retreats and recalled an experience of doing that with an English department:

And so we gathered at one of our homes for the weekend...planned our meals, went out to breakfast. We created our own agenda, relaxed together out in nature, and came up with really creative ideas—several of which were implemented the following school year because we also worked out the administrative details in advance. It was one of the best things our English department did together. I’m saying, you can create your own work environments...of course, we had to give up a weekend, and we weren’t paid for our time....

The key in seeking professional growth opportunities, the teacher comments suggested, is to identify those which would be personally and professionally rewarding—and then to find the energy to engage in them. In Nathan’s words:

The question of renewal is essential in this career, probably in all careers, but especially in this career because...of the incredible energy drain and stress levels of this job...and when you engage in extra activities on top of the job, you’re asking for triple jeopardy. But you’ll also be in jeopardy if you don’t regenerate, so it is absolutely essential that teachers and administrators find high quality ways to renew themselves.

To do so may take determination the strength of Betty’s (see Chapter 4):

If I’m going to spend 8 hours a day every day of my life in this job, by god, I’m not going to hate it...and if I need to do something to make it better, if I need to make a change, if I need a new class, a new book, a trip during the summer, I will do whatever I need to do to maintain my enthusiasm....

Of interest, months after the day of collaboration in this research project, after the tape-recorded sessions and conversations had been transcribed, Betty called my attention to the September, 1996, edition of *English Journal* because, she said, it reminded her not only of this research project, but also of the kinds of things mentioned during the day of collaboration regarding renewal. Fifty-three pages of the September edition were devoted to “Veteran Teachers: The Challenge of the Long Distance Runner.” Many, though not all, of the perceptions and strategies suggested by the English teachers in this research project were voiced by 22 other English teachers around the country. Taken together, the commonality of the ideas suggests there is a body of information available from experienced teachers and that it is worth sharing. All one need do is ask. Each teacher had discovered these successful avenues
for renewal on his or her own, without much assistance. One thing that is needed is a vehicle for fostering more sharing, for providing that assistance and support in a systematic way.

From a Teacher's Perspective: Worth Sharing With the Board of Education

Another prompt on the day of collaboration was "What advice would you give to the board of education, if asked?" The "if asked" portion of the prompt is significant because there is no form of exit interview or exit questionnaire for retiring teachers—or administrators—when they retire from or leave this school system. According to the teachers, the lack of such an exit device carries its own message: We are not interested in whatever you might have to say. That message is so much taken-for-granted among teachers that Lee Anne observed:

The system seems so unresponsive to what we know and to what we think or feel at any given time, that on the one hand, I'm thinking: They should listen to this. On the other hand, I'm thinking: They don't hear...which is to take us back to where we started.

The topic also prompted comments about the nature of boards of education ranging from laments that board members lack expertise and knowledge of the classroom and many educational issues, to the fact that its membership changes too quickly for continuity, to the perception that board members are too political, to recommendations to eliminate such boards altogether. Nathan said, "I would replace the board of education or minimize it with maybe a superintendent... I would minimize it, to say the least." Tess added that she would like to see more accountability on the parts of boards of education. Betty noted that school boards are basically comprised of "nonprofessional educators," with business people "who are more interested in the financial bottom line than in educational concerns." She mused, "Think about governing boards in other professions. I can't think of any other that is run in this manner."

"At least add a teacher as a full voting member of the board," Nathan said, "View it as a strengthening of the educational expertise of the board, not as a conflict of interest. The current adversarial stance is unproductive toward having an enlightened educational system. If necessary, change the state law to allow this to happen." It asked, and the teachers wished that they were, here is a sample of the recommendations and suggestions the board would have heard from the retired teachers and those nearing retirement, according to the data in this study:
A Recommendation to Create a More Personal Tone in the System

The teachers suggested taking a long-term look at the feasibility of breaking the present school system into four or five separate systems that can be more responsive to the people in them. In the short term, Tess suggested reducing every school to a size of 600 students, and Nathan added: "Hand pick the personnel for each site and pay them well." The teachers also suggested devising a mechanism for better knowing the identities of specific teachers as well as their accomplishments. Lee Anne commented, "I don't think most board members know who their teachers are, and neither does the personnel office...If board members and administrators care about the kids, they have to care about what's going on with the teachers, because teachers are directly affecting the kids, after all." So are substitute teachers, I would add. Nathan wondered aloud:

We do we have this wrong concept that we've all grown up with, and that the business world has perfected to an art form, that you're more effective and more successful, and that things run better if you're totally impersonal. I don't think it's how we should operate. We should make being personal an art form—starting at the top.

The message, overall, is that the tone for the system emanates from the top of the organization's structure, and that a more caring tone would be highly beneficial to the system.

A Recommendation to Increase Outward Signs of Respect for the Teaching Force

All teachers in this study perceived that classroom teachers are respected far less than are certificated personnel in non-teaching positions, such as administrators and teachers on special assignment. The following comments are illustrative: Vanessa said, "Really I'm a classroom grub; that's what I've always been. They treat us the lousiest and pay us the lousiest." Felicia observed, "They don't look at teachers as serious beings. They don't look at teachers at all." Or from Lee Anne: "I resent working for people who don't have any respect for me." Five of the teachers who had been in non-teaching positions for a period of one or more years said that the difference in respect is palpable. Maxine, for example, recalled her experience of being a teacher on special assignment for two years: "I couldn't believe it," she said, "when I went back to the classroom, I was not respected as much by anyone." Lee Anne noted the irony of teachers who become administrators quickly adopting a "superior or patronizing" attitude, maybe because "instead of viewing themselves as educators who are now functioning in a different role, they see it as a
better role. They see it as a promotion, so they see people in the classroom as those who haven't been promoted...it's a real negative sort of image." The message to some teachers in this study is that no self-respecting person would remain in a classroom, and they would urge board members to question the underlying assumptions in such an attitude and to establish priorities which would change the message sent to teachers. The message to Nathan is, "I have not been valued beyond my capacity simply to fill a slot as a teacher in their system." Nathan said:

Nothing phases them downtown. You might as well be invisible. You could have won the Walt Disney award for national teacher of the year, arrive at central office on a float. It wouldn't make any difference.

Lee Anne said that she understands that she is just one employee in a large system:

I learned long ago that everyone is expendable, so I don't have any illusions about what it would mean to the system to lose me...apparently it doesn't either. It doesn't even feel a need to go through the motions to make me feel valued and respected as an employee.

"The message sent is important," Felicia said, "I dare say, we would have fewer people who are teaching from the file cabinets or running the Xerox machine until it can no longer print, and we would have more people who want to work in schools because they would know, at any time, the system is going to say to them: You did a good job. You are engaged in important work, and for that, you have earned our respect and appreciation." Several people in the study expressed regret that these words even need to be said.

**A Recommendation to Take a Closer Look at the Diversity of Student Needs**

In a school system of more than 50,000 students, the needs of the student body are complex. Teachers in this study expressed concern for students along all points of a broad spectrum. For example, Maxine perceives that many of her middle school students are "psychologically and behaviorally" unable to cope with being in a classroom, and that this factor impacts her ability to reach many of them as effectively as she thinks is necessary. At the high school level, Vanessa urged those in decision-making positions to:

Look at your raw material. You have high school students who think they are getting an education who cannot read, write a grammatical sentence, or recite basic multiplication tables. What can one teacher be expected to do with these students when they appear in high school classrooms in unmotivated groups of 30 or 35 and are expected to be able to complete work at the high school level as specified in the course of study?
Other teachers also expressed concern about students at the opposite end of the continuum. Betty expressed her concern this way:

Our best students are being ignored. We talk about honoring diversity, but we do not. Our kids are highly diverse in terms of their interests and capabilities to learn. We need to honor our best students with appropriate programs as much as we try to attend to students in trouble...The primary reason I pay more than $2,000 a year for my girl to go to a private school is that there are 15 students in a class, and nobody's needs get overlooked. It is important in our urban system to take another look....

Nathan said that attempting to meet such diverse needs in present classroom groupings and results not in equal education for all students, but an "equal mediocrity that is deadening to everybody." Whatever the solution might be, teachers hoped that board members would become more aware of the diversity of student needs and that they would support improving the structures for addressing those needs.

**A Recommendation to Find Mechanisms for Utilizing Professional Expertise More Effectively**

A more personal approach in the system would result in more individualized teacher placements, or so the teachers hoped. They recommended that placements be made on the basis of individual strengths, specific educational backgrounds, and the like, rather than on unrelated issues or apparent randomness. They recommended finding mechanisms to utilize those with more experience and/or more education in ways which maximize those strengths. In Lee Anne's words, "Teachers at different levels in the career and at different levels of experience and education have different things to offer. Why don't we look at tapping the strengths of people at different levels in the career?" Among other suggestions in this category were to reduce the secretarial demands of current teaching jobs by hiring more secretaries and aides specifically for teachers; to seek systematic ways for the system to benefit when teachers complete significant professional growth experiences, such as those gained during a sabbatical leave; and to scout for qualified and knowledgeable retired teachers to be hired as paid consultants to address system concerns.

**A Recommendation to Honor Retiring Teachers and Administrators**

Practices in the current system do not include a substantial recognition of retiring certificated personnel. Personal attention to this matter is important to the teachers in this study.
In addition to heartfelt words of appreciation, the teachers felt that something of substance should accompany exiting personnel. In the words of Nathan:

A system this huge ought to be able to negotiate something appropriate for retiring teachers, like a gold watch. My neighbors, after merely 10 years with a local telephone company, received a choice of a gold watch or a television set. Are teachers so much less valued?

Nathan continued: "Yes, I gave them dedicated service for more than 30 years, and then I retired during the summer and have not heard one word from them since. If that doesn't reinforce a need to focus on how people exit their careers, I don't know what does." Tess contributed, "Inadequate ceremonies and inadequate closure tend to denigrate the profession and the individual," and Maxine added, "You could say it is the antithesis of what we ought to be modeling in public education." Betty's point of view was that all of us are so involved in our own lives that we sometimes miss important moments in the lives of others:

When I left (that school), nobody made a big deal out of it. Nobody mentioned that I would not be back again. I don't mean that nobody cared, and I don't mean to be petty. It's just that people were caught up in their own lives. They're tired, ready to go on vacation, thinking about their own plans. We're all so self-absorbed. And maybe, if you're not the one retiring, the ramifications don't hit you. But if you are....

Collectively, the teachers in this study agreed with the assessment of Steffy (1989) who urged boards of education to find ways to honor their exiting professionals with dignity and respect:

For those who have invested more than twenty years of their professional lives in the system, the need for recognition is especially strong. They need a little slice of immortality from the system. They need to know that the countless hours of dedicated service were noted and appreciated (p. 33).

These recommendations represent a sampling of the kinds of responses teachers gave when asked what advice they would give to board of education members, if asked. Since the practice of obtaining teacher input is rare in the present school system, the responses reflect a preliminary sample, not the responses of those who have had a longer time to reflect on what they might say. The teachers also indicated that giving input to the board should not be limited to retiring teachers. They would have appreciated throughout the years the following question from board members at regular intervals addressed directly to them as individual teachers: What do you need to reach your students more effectively? A videocassette player? A computer? Five days off in March? A set of books? What? A paint job? What do you need?"
CHAPTER 6

DISTILLATION AND CLARITY: A FOUNDATION FOR A RECONCEPTUALIZATION

"Distillation: ...a concentration, an abstract, or an essence;...a process...used especially for the formation of new substances."


This chapter attempts to lay the groundwork or foundation for a reconceptualization of career wind-down and career exit for secondary teachers, primarily in urban school districts. Some of the ideas for this foundation were generated during the group collaboration day; others were distilled from previous or follow-up transcripts. Chapters 4 and 5 presented an analysis or interpretation of the data obtained by processes which are characterized by their separating function: considering individual teacher stories apart from one another; dividing the data into component parts—themes, motifs, kinds of advice or recommendations. Chapter 6 presents a synthesis of the data obtained by a process characterized by an integrating or combining function: bringing together separate and collaborative contributions to form a unified entity. Such a foundational rubric may be useful when pursuing future reconceptualization work or discussion on the subject. It is offered as a major cooperative contribution by the teacher-participants, including me, as researcher-teacher-participant-synthesizer.

Statement of Philosophy

The afternoon session of collaboration day began with a period of quiet reflection during which group members went off by themselves in various natural, out-of-door places for thinking and organizing their thoughts. When the group convened, Tess shared the following thoughts which she had written on a yellow piece of paper:

I'm sitting in the yard watching the water of the lake change and move with the wind and with wind and wave, an inexorable force of nature and of a career. I'm also sitting next to a yet-to-bloom golden rod, the kind of color of rare stone tablets and pencils and fall—all bittersweet markers, remembrances of classrooms which have claimed the greatest portion of my years....
Different comments from group members occasionally interrupted the reading: "Yes, it makes a difference to us as English teachers to work on this, using a different language," and "it's so poetic." Tess continued reading:

I'd like to return to the gold standard, to know that those teachers who leave the teacher's desk behind can take the gold and not the tarnish with them...How to mine it, refine it, I'm not sure. But I think that contrary to Frost's line, "Nothing gold can stay," I truly think it can—that through choice and opportunity, through respect exercised by those in places of decision given to retiring teachers in the form of real change in the way the last three to five years of the teaching career and the routines play out...Could we have hidden treasures like the Japanese have national treasures? Could we allow those treasures to continue to work, to teach other teachers? Could we give a sense of closure ahead of the word "retirement" and formalize it?

"It's what is missing in our system," Nathan said, "You've certainly captured the heart of it." When Lee Anne remarked, "You've just written the underlying philosophy of our effort," there was unanimous agreement.

As the collaborative group meeting continued, Lee Anne organized the ideas offered by teacher-participants by writing them on a large poster board for the group to consider and revise. The remaining presentation of teacher contributions to reconceptualization were gleaned when I later donned my researcher-writer hat and once again sifted through all the data in this research project—categorizing, recategorizing, and synthesizing. The emerging categories, in addition to the philosophy explicated above, follow: related beliefs and values which support the philosophy; purposes of a plan for reconceptualization; principles and guidelines to inform such a plan; likely roadblocks to be removed; and concepts which "push the limits" of current thinking to be utilized during the reconceptualization process.

**Teacher Beliefs Guiding Reconceptualization**

Teachers in this research project shared four basic beliefs which are part of the foundation of the reconceptualization effort:

1. Unlike data presented earlier in the study which suggests that teachers near retirement may have less to offer the profession than do new or younger teachers, the teachers in this study affirmed that they had something more and different to offer than they did as younger teachers. Further, the teachers seemed to perceive that such devaluing of older, highly experienced
teachers is rooted in broad societal attitudes which generally favor younger ages over older ages and potential over experience. More than one teacher observed that, fortunately, societal attitudes in the United States of America toward middle aged and older adults seem to be in a period of transition—particularly as a larger segment of the population arrives at the age of 50 or so. The first belief underlying reconceptualization might be stated as follows: Because the larger society tends not to value older, more experienced workers, information and examples need to be provided to help others enlarge their vision.

2. It is as if our "Throw-Away Society," as identified by Toffler (1970) in Future Shock has escalated its practice of quickly using up and throwing away products and things to using up and throwing away people and their cumulative ideas in unprecedented numbers. In short, in many aspects of our society, and in the field of education in particular, too much knowledge and experience gets discarded before its usefulness has been either identified or assessed. All the teachers in the study used the imagery associated with disposal when speaking of leaving the career: "...the accumulated wisdom of my teaching career. It can't just all go in the trash, can it?" and "I can't just throw it away. It's thirty years of my life!" and "It took me two weeks to get rid of five--are you ready for this?--five garbage pails full of lesson plans, teaching ideas and materials...." Nathan captured the essence of this belief: "It takes a lifetime to get a reservoir of experiences like I have now. I want to use that reservoir...." In short, the specific and general accumulated knowledge of the generation of teachers nearing retirement is going to be lost—which seems not to cause many in the field to gasp. And Lee Anne perceptively remarked: "It seems that we believe that experienced teachers have something special and different to offer. My cynicism says, 'Fat chance that anyone will be interested.' On the other hand, we are the ones who know what we have to offer. We are the ones who need to communicate it." The concern of the teachers in the study is that what these and other teachers have learned during their long careers is going to be lost before we even know what we're losing. I would add: Is no one else curious?

3. Teachers expressed in various ways the belief that the positive actions of a few have the potential to affect many members of a culture. Betty reflected during her self interview after the group collaborative session:

There is so much power and energy and creativity that we had in that small group of people today, so much food for thought, so much thought for change....that it's kind of awesome. I think that teachers as a group--good
teachers, caring teachers—have it within our power to make some changes
for the better....

Nathan maintained, "You can't not influence, whatever you are doing, however you are doing
it...teachers must take responsibility for that," and "Consider how the actions of one affect the
whole...We're all connected, all attached." The belief was also expressed by Felicia who said,
"Things would improve greatly if we would just work at improving our own little corner of the
system," and "It scares me think of the future if we don't participate in the shaping of it now."

4. A perception that our culture generally ignores the working life-time contributions of
most adults seemed to lead to the following sequence of thought: Current inadequate
ceremonies of closure tend to denigrate both individuals and their professions; things could
always be different from how they are; honoring retirees should be manifested differently from
how it is. A common hope was expressed by Tess during the day of collaboration: "I would like for
everybody, not just for the people I love, that sense of satisfaction that comes with being valued
for what we do, for what we have done...for what is concrete, measurable, palpable...." The belief
that grows out of this and like thoughts expressed by the teachers might be stated as, When
people reach the end of a long career, more attention should be paid and more recognition and
honor given to individual contributions than are currently given in common practice.

Summary of Teacher Beliefs Guiding Reconceptualization

1. Because the larger society tends not to value older, more experienced workers, 
information and examples need to be provided to help others enlarge their vision.

2. In many aspects of our society and in the field of education in particular, too much
knowledge and experience gets discarded before its usefulness has been either
identified or assessed.

3. The positive actions of a few have the potential to affect many members of a culture.

4. When people reach the end of a long career, more attention should be paid and more
recognition and honor given for individual contributions than are currently in common
practice.
Values Built In To Reconceptualization

A common core of values can be identified in the data to guide reconceptualization:

1. The worth of a human life and the contribution to our society made by individuals;
2. The end of a career as a major life event, a significant moment worthy of recognition;
3. Challenge and adventure built into the work life of professionals;
4. More personalization added to school systems to counter the dehumanizing effects of bureaucracy;
5. Symbiotic and egalitarian relationships rather than purely mechanistic, manipulative, or utilitarian relationships;
6. Collaboration and interaction with other professionals to counter the isolation of the classroom teacher.

Identifying Purposes of Reconceptualization

An analysis of the data shows the following nine purposes for reconceptualizing career wind-down and career exit in the teaching profession:

1. To foster a more creative utilization of human resources within school systems by developing mechanisms to identify talented people and to make their enhanced contributions systematic and ongoing;

2. To reinvigorate the last two or three years of the teaching career by making the career path less linear and by providing a significant number of flexible options for teachers;

3. To stimulate ongoing professional growth which continues to the end of the teaching career and which culminates in opportunities for individuals and collaborative groups to make more contributions to the profession;

4. To provide a rationale for specialized staff development during the last two or three years of the teaching career;

5. To get more minds working on significant educational problems and essential questions by bringing the practitioner into the larger conversation;

6. To increase respect for those who teach in urban secondary schools at the current historical moment both locally and nationally;

7. To contribute to an increased respect for cumulative experience in the current society by modeling how it can be identified and put to work;

8. To foster a more humanizing, professional career exit which provides affirmations of worth and dignity to exiting teachers;

9. To identify ways in which teachers retired from classroom teaching can continue to make paid contributions to educational efforts.
Principles, Guidelines, and Roadblocks

An analysis of the data suggests the following principles and guidelines be utilized during reconceptualization in order to accomplish purposes:

**Principles to Honor During Reconceptualization**

1. Teachers at different levels and career stages have different things to offer; the standard full-time classroom schedule is only one way to utilize experienced teachers;

2. **Options** are important if not vital to the effort; the more alternatives available to meet individual and collective needs, the better.

3. Any problem or issue facing the school system or which relates to instruction should be fodder for experienced teachers to study and contribute to solving or resolving;

4. Teachers engaged in classroom or other educational research have the potential to make a valuable contribution to their school systems and to the profession;

5. Whenever possible, new structures should be more in harmony with the natural world and with the physical needs and concerns of individuals.

**Guidelines for Developing a Plan**

1. Reconceptualization is at the beginning stages; a group of interested professionals need to be given structured time for continued and sustained thought on the matter in order to develop a detailed, flexible, workable plan;

2. The plan should contain mechanisms—not restrictions—within the system so that options for teachers become part of the process and not a random event;

3. Begin to ask more people to identify their “wisdom,” their integrated and cumulative knowledge which might be of value to themselves and others. (Many in the study remarked that they had never been asked to do so and thus had not given the matter much thought);

4. The plan should be phased in over a period of years.

**Identified Roadblocks to Obtaining Widespread Support for a Reconceptualization Project**

1. The tendency of the existing school system to be operating in a relatively short-term survival mode rather than looking at long-term development;

2. The values of the current society which tend to value youth over experience and short-term materialistic goals over less materialistic human development goals;

3. The difficulty of demonstrating the value of a reconceptualization project in concrete ways to those in decision-making positions in order to obtain their support;

4. The scarcity of financial resources for both development and implementation—in the words of Felixia: “...because the school system doesn’t run on cotton, the cotton of my dreams and thoughts.” Some suggested that there would be wisdom in first developing a plan and then locating necessary financial resources.
Reconceptualization Concepts Which Push at the Limits of Current Thinking

"Before I built a wall I'd ask to know
What I was walling in or walling out...
Something there is that doesn't love a wall."
Robert Frost (1913, "Mending Wall")

It was Arlin (1990) who defined wisdom as the art of problem finding and who identified "pushing the limits" as a component of wisdom in the sense that some "...decisions, solutions, and judgments are often acknowledged as wise because they push...standards to their limits or create meta standards that redefine the acceptable" (p. 233). I have examined the data in an effort to identify some of the concepts offered by the participants which might be viewed as "a pushing of the limits, which sometimes leads to a redefinition of those limits" (p. 231) in terms of current professional policies and practice and current conceptions of public schooling.

In the largest sense, the teachers pushed at the kind of linear thinking which is manifested in such notions as beginnings, middles, and ends; the horizontal teacher career line; and container metaphors (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) which structure much thinking in modern life, including the academy, in this country. Container metaphors allow us to separate things, people, and ideas in an attempt to understand and manage them; they represent, perhaps, the most efficient means in the Western world to structure a society to keep total chaos at bay. They also tend to create rigid boundaries which, once established, limit further movement or progress unless such progress falls within the boundaries. At least four points of view expressed by the teachers "pushed the limits" regarding linear thinking. The first two points of view remind that, within existing frameworks, there is more potential to be actualized. The third and fourth points of view move beyond current boundaries.

The first point of view extends the notion of defining human relationships not only on the basis of family lines, gender or racial identification, or role definitions in differing situations, but on the basis of a broader human connection: "We're all connected...all attached," Nathan says. That awareness, he maintains, should govern all decision-making, policies, and actions in the public domain. While his point of view is not new—that is, it is actually a form of the "golden rule"—his point is that it is not widely practiced in most domains, including the field of education. If human relationships were viewed in this more connected, broader sense, then the job design for teachers, the lack of options during the career, and the lack of appreciation and recognition at
career end might be approached differently, with more regard for the people involved.

A second point of view was furthered by Betty who “pushed the limits” by advocating the questioning of assumptions which seem to be dictating both policy and practice in the field. As an example, she mentioned heterogeneous grouping, a practice which enjoys much political support from special interest groups as well as support from educational research. Her experience, she says, does not fit the prevailing wisdom, and three other teachers in the study vocalized their agreement with her during the group’s day of collaboration:

I know that tracking has been badly misused, and I know that labeling can be devastating to people, but I know that in our efforts to treat everybody equally, we have created equal mediocrity, it seems to me.

In agreement, Nathan said, “Research shows that in heterogeneous grouping, the brighter kids will help the slower kids and that the brighter kids will reinforce their own learning. In the classroom, however, I don’t see that happening....” Betty continued:

I’m not advocating tracking, I’m saying that we need to take another look at how we group kids for instruction. Perhaps it can be further refined; maybe there are alternatives we haven’t considered; maybe we need more adults working with heterogeneous groups or maybe we need smaller classes.

The point, teachers seemed to be saying, is that whereas some educational matters seem to be solved theoretically, they are not working in practice. Such practices—and the theories which inform them—should go back under the microscope, be looked at more carefully, be redefined or pushed further. I, as teacher-collaborator, questioned assumptions involved in making trade-offs as a way of life in educational systems: “Realistically, of course, there will probably always be some trade-offs, but must there be so many? Some of these are devil trade-offs—like negotiating class size as if it were a dental insurance option.” Whether they concern contract negotiations, classroom textbooks, or the start of the school day, teachers suggested that more common practices be closely examined, their underlying assumptions questioned, their limits renegotiated or made less limiting.

A third example of pushing against limits is found in the following point of view as expressed by Nathan:

Understand, I think that teaching is maybe the most important job in the world, but it is not treated that way. If we did view teaching as one of the most important jobs in our society, who would become our teachers?
The question is provocative, and I would like to play with it for the rest of this paragraph. If teaching were viewed as more important to everyone's welfare, would the country's experts spend more time in schools working directly with the nation's most talented youth? Would elected politicians teach government courses? Would esteemed writers teach their own published works or works-in-progress or would they critique student writing? Would scientists make some time each week to share information about the field—maybe even the state of current research—with young minds? Would actors teach courses in theater? What would happen if more of our respected achievers and community members respected the role of teacher enough to adopt it from time to time? What would happen if our professors taught, even for one four-week period a year, one high school course? Would we win back the minds of the young? Would we make more progress faster? Would our schools become greater sources of pride? The question provokes answers which tug at the current boundaries of our collective thinking about schools, and it dovetails nicely with the last example of "pushing the limits."

The fourth point of view begins with Felicia's statement, "I think we're going to have to have a total change in how our society thinks. Period." This teacher-participant continues:

I think the school system perceives teachers in the same way the industrial phase in our society perceived product, and that is that there is planned obsolescence, that there is an assigned number of years for a person to be productive, just like a washing machine or a refrigerator or a car...We need to move beyond this way of thinking in the ways we work with people. Until we see that there is value in people based on their experiences and body of knowledge, then we are not going to move forward in how we treat the person who is coming to the end of a career—which is a concept I wish we would drop altogether.

This teacher would like to see careers that are more fluid than they are now, based on the mutual emerging needs and desires of both businesses or institutions and individuals—and not based on years of experience in an organization or, necessarily, on job titles. She says:

Container metaphors structure our view of teachers and students and people in general...and the concept of career is tenuous, too. We tend to think of it as linear, put it in a container, treat the container as an entity. But a career is an idea, not a thing...Why does it need to have a defined end?

This former teacher believes that the classroom "can't be a box any more. It has to be bigger than that." She says classrooms need to be "community-based and computer-based and classroom-based, but not so that the classroom container holds all the knowledge that there is to be available
Her vision extends more fluidity to everyone—community members, teachers, and students, too. As an integral part of it, schools would be "more vitally intertwined with the world" and the world more intertwined with schools. Some teachers would utilize their facilitative skills in the business world during significant breaks from teaching and "become mentors in a larger way.

They would also have portable retirement packages that would follow them wherever their career paths lead—not always back to a school. This fourth point of view encompasses the third one, mentioned earlier, and at the same time, addresses current trends toward increased teacher preparation, certification requirements, and licensing: "A lot of people who do not now hold teacher certification could and should participate in the classroom in a major way. They have much valued information and experience to offer our school systems—and we have much to offer them."

More fluidity and flexibility, more mutually beneficial exchanges and transactions, fewer containers and restrictions, different boundaries—these characterize this fourth example of pushing the limits.

**Summary of Reconceptualization Concepts Which Push at Limits**

Some of the ideas touched upon by teachers during this research project seem to fall within Arlin's (1990) definition of "pushing the limits." Although the teacher comments and ideas occurred during many different points during data collection, and although they were voiced by more than four teachers, the ideas tend to be interconnected and to reinforce one another:

1. Engage in all decision-making and actions as if all human beings affected directly or indirectly have a connection to or relationship with one another—because they do.

2. When practice is ineffective, regardless of who is espousing it, look at the underlying theory and question its basic assumptions; take a fresh look at the practice itself with the intent of reducing its limitations or of finding an alternative.

3. Ask the question: Who would become our teachers if we viewed teaching as one of the most important jobs in our society? Think of how such a perception could alter not only schools but society as a whole.

4. Become aware of and eliminate container metaphors or make their "walls" more permeable when viewing the overall structure of the current society; assess the value of designing schools and systems which are more intertwined with the world of which they are an integral part. Use the same thinking process when viewing the structure of careers, and for purposes of this specific research effort, especially when viewing the structure of teaching careers.
In addition, the four concepts evoke the words of Frost (1913), which appear at the beginning of this section, in “Mending Wall.” It has been written of the poem that it embodies a “correlative recognition that all (humans) are essentially alone and all (humans) are essentially one” and that “...the ‘I’ of the poem...wants (fences or walls) only when they serve a dear purpose” (Foerster & Falk, 1960, p. 910). In reference to a neighbor who “has a blind faith” in walls (p. 910), the poet says: “He moves in darkness as it seems to me,/Not of woods only and the shade of trees” (p. 910).

And so, as this chapter closes, I pause in the writing of this dissertation just for a moment reflecting on the words of Robert Frost. I wonder—and invite the reader to wonder: In what ways—pertaining to teaching careers and schoolhouse walls, and the lack of manifested interest in exploring the wisdom of highly experienced adults, and the separation of formal education from the life of the larger community and world—do we yet move in darkness?
CHAPTER 7
CODA: INCREMENTAL TRANSFORMATIONS

"Fragments of truth can create illusions and divisiveness. Learning to see the whole picture of the nature and purpose of something within the life context of a human being leads to great leaps of wisdom. This is the difference between the scientist and the wise person: A scientist can be a wise person; but a wise person is never merely an objective investigator of facts.”
(Small, 1992, pp. 243-244)

In many ways, this dissertation research is about closings and openings—the ways in which teaching careers come to a close within the context of a human life and the unrealized opportunities to be opened before and after teacher retirement, opportunities which have the potential for transformation. This closing chapter is entitled “Coda” for at least four reasons: As in music, a coda serves as a “more or less independent passage, at the end of a composition, introduced to bring it to a satisfactory close,” and in a “conventional form,” it serves as a “summation of preceding themes, motifs...” (Webster’s New Universal Unabridged Dictionary, 1996, p. 397). A third reason might be that, as in the research findings, closings are complex, often mental constructions that shape realities, often defining transitions rather than absolute endings—it is in this sense that I bring the dissertation to a close with an “independent passage.” And there is a fourth reason, perhaps the most compelling: a coda for the teaching career has been the metaphorical center of this dissertation.

The subtitle, “Incremental Transformations,” is meant to foreshadow the organization of topics in this chapter—transformational learning, structural transformations, transformative recommendations, and researcher transformations—and to echo Clark’s (1993) characterization of change in Maziror’s critical social theory as “incremental” (p. 52). It also pays homage to Maziror’s belief that individual transformations in perspective precede social transformations (cited in Clark, p. 52). An analysis of the data in the dissertation research suggests that
incremental changes in individual perspectives, or transformational learning, occurred during participation in this research project. Teacher-participants hoped that their efforts would contribute to positive changes in the perspectives of others, not only to benefit fellow teachers, but ultimately, to benefit people engaged in any career.

Transformational Learning

Transformational learning, or perspective transformation, is defined as learning which produces more far-reaching changes in people's attitudes, skills, knowledge, or beliefs than does learning in general (Clark, 1993), changes that "have a significant impact on the learner's subsequent experiences. In short, transformational learning shapes people" (p. 47). One of the tenets of transformational learning identified in Chapter 2 was that people structure meaning systems from their experience, and that these structures make experience coherent as well as distort it by certain habits of expectation (Clark).

At the beginning of the research, teacher-participants identified their expectations for (or related their experiences about) how the teaching career comes to a close in their urban school system. Those who had retired shared experiences which demonstrated that the career continued with "more of the same" teacher utilization that had taken place throughout the career; all felt tired or exhausted or in ill health at the end of it. Those still teaching expected to continue in the same kinds of activities that they had engaged in for decades. Retirement from teaching, as mentioned throughout this dissertation, merited almost no attention and no appreciation from the school system itself. Although the teachers felt that they had been or were being utilized poorly— or at least unimaginatively—during the last years of their careers, none had given serious thought to alternatives during the culminating years. According to teachers, by the end of the research—after assessing meaning perspectives and reformulating them, after creating symbolic representations, and after keeping journals and collaborating as a group—their perspectives had changed, for many in ways that would continue to have impact on subsequent experiences. In other words, it appeared that for most participants, some form of transformational learning had occurred as a result of participating in this research effort. In a self interview, Nathan said:

I think that the influence from this project is going to be a permanent part of my thinking and not just something that will pass through...but rather a continuing influence from having worked with this project—thinking more

298
positively about my retirement and looking to the future to see that some people have a better shake...The influences of the project are important and life-shaping....

Tess, during the day of collaboration, said that she would have given her “eye teeth...to have been able to come to a group like this” before she retired. Later, during her self interview, she reflected:

I could have known that I’m not dealing with the same ambivalences alone. There are many people out there who have the same sensibilities and sensitivities and who are dealing with the same concerns as mine...I loved today (the day of collaboration), the sense of movement, so that as we talked in duets or as a group or went off singly to think—that there was a sense of purpose and beauty...and a backbone of support and understanding that I thought was much narrower than it is.

She said that working with the project provided a way to synthesize her thinking: “I have thoughts floating around that I would not have taken the time to write down, but I did them for this project. Good things....”

Teachers still active in the classroom noted subtle changes in their levels of awareness about the approach of retirement. Said Maxine: “I have been thinking about retiring more, and I have noticed that the school year after our last interview is different from the last two years...This year is much more positive. So much depends on the nature of students passing through the grades, and on the teacher’s perceptions...I think the ideas we’ve been discussing could change the whole career.” Betty said:

Working on this whole project has definitely made me think about and focus on all my feelings about my approaching retirement. I mean, if I weren’t doing this with you, I would pretty much just be going along...teaching is such an absorbing thing to be doing day-to-day, that I would just be going along, and all of a sudden, the last day would be there! But I’ve been thinking more deeply because of our conversations and because of the journal writing, and I’m continuing to learn about myself through working on this project...It has been an affirming experience.

Vanessa found herself approaching retirement differently after our first interview: “I’m not saying that there was a cause and affect here because I don’t know, but during that last year, I found that I had changed my thinking entirely...I celebrated in a big way instead of slinking off quietly like I had planned.” Lee Anne felt less impact from participating in the research than did the others: “I’m just not as discontented about the way I’m being utilized. I’m discontented about the lack of respect we get for what we are doing...and I must admit that I didn’t do the journals and symbolic
representation too gladly this spring because I was so worn out and so busy." Lee Anne continued during her self interview:

I enjoyed all the interviews and conversations of the project, and it’s nice to think that somebody is interested... I hope that others will look at the results. They could be of use in the professional development academies, something experienced teachers might want to explore, something of great value system-wide for a whole lot of people... It’s funny, but the value might be greater for younger teachers because it would give them something to look forward to and to build on during their careers... For us, the advantage is the satisfaction of having made a contribution.

Felicia, during a self interview, said that this dissertation research was a model of “what we need to be doing”:

You are helping us define where we go from this point forward... asking us to identify what it is that is going on, to grasp the essence of it, to share those things with other people... You are asking us to see that we are not alone, and that we need to have an empathy for it all... and in each of our lives, to see that there is a common thread here. We would not be doing this. We would be blundering along... and small wonder that you wanted us to think in metaphors, because there’s the connection for us. And I just have this profound respect for this work... (it is) what we need to be doing with experienced resources in our community.

Transformational learning, or perspective transformation, can be glimpsed in numerous teacher comments scattered throughout the data from the day of group collaboration or in the follow-up self interviews: “The project has helped me focus on my own retirement in ways that might change it,” or “I feel a bit more fulfilled about retiring now,” or “In the process of looking for answers to significant questions, I find that I’m working at all the levels, including the philosophical... it has been valuable way to get in touch with the whole retirement idea, beyond just the financial aspects... I don’t want it to end here.” But perhaps the clearest example of perspective transformation is illustrated in the words of Nathan:

Our need to look at all that we are brings us here... The thought that we’ve put into this, and the conclusions we’ve come to, the insights, and our experiences about retirement—the amalgamation of all that has helped me to re-live my pre-retirement, the whole period before, during, and after. It’s almost as if I’ve become part of the picture I’m painting. I’ve walked into it and enjoyed the scenery. The question pops into my head: Which experience is the real one? They’re both in my head... and the result of working with the project, to have another experience of retirement, carries with it emotions and a kind of tone, as if it were a real set of things I had done. It’s almost like having a second chance to do it all again in a way that really feels better... Working on the project has affected me deeply, and I carry it with me now....
Speculations and Implications: Structural Transformations and Protean Teachers

Rationale

To immerse in conjecture is what I propose to do in the following section by engaging in what might be described as transactional speculation. That is, I propose to engage in transactions with the literature reviewed throughout this dissertation and with all the data obtained from the teacher-participants including their specific suggestions for alternative ways to close the career, to respond to what is evoked, and to manifest these responses in a series of speculations regarding a reconceptualization of career end. In Rosenblatt’s (1964) terms, the manifestations would be poems. As cited in Chapter 2:

A poem, then, must be thought of as an event in time. It is not an object. It is an occurrence, a coming-together, a compenetration, of a reader and a text. The reader brings to the text his past experience; the encounter gives rise to a new experience, a poem. This becomes part of the ongoing stream of his life, to be reflected on from any angle important to him as a human being—esthetic, ethical, or metaphysical (p. 126).

As before, I will employ Rosenblatt’s validity criteria: speculations will not contradict elements from the data or interpretations, and speculations will not make projections “for which there is no verbal basis” in the data (Athanases, 1993). In addition, speculations will attempt to embody—as well as be “contained” by the philosophy, beliefs, purposes, values, principles, guidelines, and concepts which “push at limits” as identified in the research data in Chapter 5. To extend what I said in Chapter 2 regarding aesthetic transactions in this present endeavor, I will be aware of how the data affects me, the researcher—how it comes to life within me, echoes within my interpretations, becomes part of an ongoing discovery process. As such, these manifestations may “push the limits” of dissertation research; thus they are labeled speculations and implications rather than findings or even tentative conclusions. They may be viewed as compenetrations, as a series of events in time which are implied in the data and which often contain the specific suggestions and ideas of the teacher-participants as well as the recommendations and ideas from some previous research efforts.

Ideas from Select Previously Published Sources

“...when I say teacher development, I’m talking about what you do from the time you recruit a person into teaching to the time they retire.”

(Zimpher, in “A Conversation With Nancy Zimpher, 1997, p. 21)
During the morning of the day of collaboration, teachers spent time in three different
gallery displays, one of which featured work by previous researchers on the topics of career wind-
down and exit. The recorded teacher-participant conversations while visiting this gallery show that
teachers had a favorable response to these ideas. Thus, these contributions, part of a small but
growing body of information on topics related to this research effort, informed the afternoon
group brainstorming and collaborative session. They will echo in the speculations which follow,
and they deserve specific credit before proceeding.

A few of the prior research efforts on display suggest practical improvements, such as
those found in "A Teacher's Gift List" (Efron & Joseph, 1991) based on a survey of teachers: one
full day of planning per week; a secretary for individual teachers or departments; and more time for
faculty collaboration. Murray (1991) proposed assigning classes when individual teachers are
most alert. Newmann, Onosko, and Stevenson (1988) reported findings that at least four hours
per week during the teacher work day are needed for professional development if intended
change is to have long-term impact on a school.

Several researchers recommend the adoption of various sabbatical leave structures.
Meling and Broberg (1974), for example, proposed a national sabbatical system available to
every person in any occupation every seven years for the purposes of renewal and engaging in
educational activities throughout life. Had the plan been adopted, people on sabbatical leave
throughout the country would have received tax-free income equal to whatever the mean per
capita income happened to be. Dumser (1991) proposed mini-sabbaticals lasting 6-8 weeks
during the school year for teachers to work on professional projects, with their findings or results
to be shared with faculty upon return. Franse (1994) reported that public school teachers in New
York City are eligible every 14 years to take a semester-long sabbatical leave at 70% of their
current salary; he endorsed the practice for others.

Scant research was available on how people prepare to disengage from their careers
(Avery & Jablin, 1988), but Dennis (1986) praised organizations who provide comprehensive pre-
retirement programs for their sense of social responsibility and interest in employee satisfaction.
Heim (1991) found that personnel policies which reflect thoughtfulness and concern through pre-
retirement programs both enrich retirement for former staff and enhance morale for active faculty
members. Pre-retirement reductions in workload, such as those implemented in community
college districts in California, were also of interest to teacher-participants ("Agreement Between Lassen," 1988). One of these allowed faculty members to teach half-time and have other employment if they so desired during that same 3-5 year period prior to retirement ("Agreement Citrus College," 1988). Last in the category, Burr (1986) had developed a pre-retirement series of workshops for easing the transition to retirement which included developing plans of action for the future; the outline of his workshop topics was displayed in the gallery.

The last category on display featured findings based on surveys of retired teachers. Ralph (1994) concluded that retired teachers represent a rich resource for the teaching profession but that they are currently underused. He also reinforced the notion that many teachers nearing retirement are interested in contributing something worthwhile to their profession. Pearce (1993), who compiled the results of a survey of 260 retired educators, found that many compared the process of retiring to processes engaged in when suffering a major loss. Two of the salient recommendations in this study are that districts should provide expanded preretirement orientations and that districts should recognize service and express appreciation in a well-planned and executed ceremony.

The Voices of the Teacher-Participants

While the researchers mentioned above have a role to play in the following transactional speculations, more important is the role of the teacher-participants in this study who are present in the speculations both in word and in spirit. In the words of Lee Anne, we'll be looking at "various points on a spectrum"; Maxine might view these points as "incentives," "badly needed options," or "carrots, not sticks." To Betty, the speculations would be "food for thought" or "interesting opportunities." Vanessa might call them little bits of optimism or "vestiges of hope". To Nathan, they might be "diverse projections" or letting the "mind sprout possibilities." Felicia might view these efforts as "tinkering with the arbor, tinkering with the line of it, tinkering with the whole notion of what a garden, a system, should look like." Finally, the speculations will be generated in the spirit of Tess, the risk-taker—and, like all the teacher-participants in this study, these speculations have at their root a deep and abiding affection for the profession. To paraphrase the words of Tess, "Call them what you like." I'm going to call them scenarios.
Transactional Speculations: Scenarios

Scenario #1

Tinkering with the line of it: new roles, grass roots initiative. An urban school system, the board of education working in collaboration with the teachers' association, adopts an incremental transformation structure, exploring ways to better utilize its highly experienced personnel. During this exploratory first year, it adds ten positions which offer growth opportunities to its list of personnel needs: three Faculty Awareness Ambassadors, two Teacher-Researchers, and six members to serve on a newly formed Council of Experience. The council is composed of three teachers employed within the system, all of whom have 25 or more years of experience, and three well-paid retired teacher consultants.

Protean teachers engaged in productive work. Teachers are called "protean" in this model in reference to the god Proteus who was given "the power to utter the truth, and the ability to change...form." To be described as protean implies versatility and the ability to assume many roles (Lass, Kiremidjian, & Goldstein, 1987, p. 208).

For purposes of making more personalized job placements, honoring teachers at career exit, and becoming more familiar with the quality of faculty members, the Faculty Awareness Ambassadors—comprised of one elementary, one middle school, and one high school teacher—gather curricula vitae from every teacher in the school system and scan each vita onto a computer retention system. In addition, they utilize a state-of-the-art, hypercard-like software program to code specific information for retrieval: formal education and relevant coursework, all certification areas, professional and related experience, extra-curricular service, school- and system-wide committee and task force work, professional presentations, publications, individual accomplishments, grants or fellowships, teaching awards, individual talents, innovations, career goals and interests, and other relevant professional information. They also devise a systematic method of updating the information on an annual basis—perhaps through individual teacher web pages or sites.

During the first year, special attention is paid to teachers planning to retire at the end of the year. The teachers are photographed; affirmations from colleagues and students are gathered. Each teacher approaching retirement receives a quarter-to-full page spread in the city's major daily newspaper honoring their years of service and accomplishments and including a
reflective statement from each teacher. The daily newspaper sponsors these "profiles" as public service announcements and adds words of community appreciation.

The Council of Experience—given a large office, conference room, and secretarial support—is charged with designing differentiated human or staff development options and preparing them for implementation, specifically targeting programs for teachers within 3-5 years of retirement. Their "think tank" mission includes a reconceptualization of career wind-down, career exit, and roles for teachers retired from the classroom. The council is given total freedom to determine its work schedule. In an additional experimental move, the council selects one of its members to serve as an honorary board of education member.

The Teacher-Researchers, highly trained in research methods at a local university, contribute to the reconceptualization effort by tracking the progress of both the Faculty Awareness Ambassadors and the Council of Experience, sometimes attending "think tank" meetings. Their data is enriched by interviews and questionnaires with faculty members not directly involved with these groups. They explore early snags as well as successes in the processes engaged in by the groups, gather faculty input for the future—including the future of teacher research within the system, monitor the honorary board of education experiment, and present findings and recommendations near the end of the school year.

An unanticipated ground-swell movement by teachers, beginning during the first quarter of the school year, results in the donation of five dollars from each teacher in the system to honor their retiring teachers, with the intention of continuing the practice each year. The effort raises nearly $25,000—enough to create two travel awards, one in the amount of $10,000, one for $5,000—and to invest the remainder for future use. The names of all retiring teachers with 25 or more years of professional experience are gathered, two names to be drawn for the awards at the teaching association's retirement banquet. One of the organizing teachers is heard to say: "We may not be able to give substantial, material appreciation to all retiring teachers, but by honoring a few of us, we can demonstrate a symbolic respect for all of us."
Scenario #2

Tinkering with the line of it: expanding efforts, revising policies. By the third year of the evolving, incremental transformation structure, the urban system offers Innovation Opportunity Grants and Fellowships to experienced teachers, opens a Department of Research and Development—where many teachers "engage in research and development that contributes to their knowledge base" (Howey, 1988) and to system-specific knowledge, revises and expands its sabbatical leave policies, and experiments with alternative work schedules.

Protean teachers engaged in creative work. The Innovation Opportunity Grants and Fellowships, funded by the school system at current salary levels, were designed for teachers with 25 or more years of experience who desire time within the work day to pursue the development of educational innovations or to engage in action research on topics of interest and potential benefit to the school system. The grants provide up to half of a teacher day of uninterrupted time for pursuit of the grant-sponsored topic, the remainder of each day to be spent in teaching and related activities. Fellowships are designed for full-time release from teaching responsibilities to pursue the locus of the fellowship. Both grants and fellowships may be applied for singly or in collaboration with one or more teachers.

Recipients are selected by the newly added Department of Research and Development, an outgrowth of the effectiveness of the two Teacher-Researchers who documented results during the first year of the incremental transformation structure. The Council of Experience has found a temporary home within this department, whereas the Faculty Awareness Ambassadors have become an integral part of the more humanistic personnel department. Grant and fellowship applications selected for implementation include the following: one teacher to pursue gender grouping research, based on her dissertation; a collaborative group of three teachers to prepare a series of faculty development workshops for teachers nearing retirement in coordination with the Council of Experience; one teacher to implement an action research project to study the kinds of humor appearing in her classroom; two teachers to prepare an innovative teaching schedule to be implemented during two subsequent years in which they will become traveling teachers for month-long specialized writing seminars in each high school in the city, while regular classroom teachers are freed to attend professional development academy programs at other locations; one teacher nearing retirement to create a series of videotapes for use in creative writing courses and
another for teachers who want to learn his highly successful approach; one teacher to develop a
cognitive mapping strategy for students to utilize in integrating their knowledge gained over the
years. The latter idea, the teacher wrote on the application, is based on understandings she
developed for herself late in her career.

Another incremental transformation is evidenced in revised sabbatical leave policies, a
result of recommendations from the Council of Experience, which provide more incentives for
teachers to apply for them. Teachers interested in returning to their previous schools may now do
so. In addition, work pursued during the sabbatical—including dissertation research—is examined
for possible use within the school system. Teachers returning from sabbatical leave submit a
precis of areas studied or researched and their possible application to the school system to the
department of Research and Development, who review materials before recommending that the
newly acquired expertise be shared via faculty workshops; presentations to administrators,
teachers, even parents or students; classroom experimentation; or other appropriate follow-up
pursuits. Sometimes recommendations are for teachers to build on sabbatical studies by applying
for Innovation Opportunity Grants or Fellowships; sometimes teachers with advanced research
skills are invited to head a major research project on a topic of interest to the school system. This
additional coordination will hopefully reduce the loss of educationally viable ideas to the school
system.

Alternative work schedules are experimented with during this school year. For some,
high school classes meet Tuesdays through Thursdays on a standard schedule; on Mondays and
Fridays, half of the teachers teach double-period classes while the other half have uninterrupted
planning time with no teaching responsibilities. One school teaches shortened classes on Friday
mornings, the last half of the day devoted to faculty planning and collaboration. Another high
school experiments with variable starting times—for some, the school day begins at 7:15 a.m.; for
others, the day begins at 9:15. The variable schedule allows for both students and teachers to
better work, teach, and learn at their high energy times of the day.

All of the innovations were studied by a team of Teacher-Researchers from the
Department of Research and Development, and their recommendations were shared with the
Board of Education and other interested parties.
Scenario #3

Tinkering with the line of it: new exit options, differentiated human development. To better meet individual needs, inclinations, and fit with the organization, a wider variety of exit options are made available to teachers and administrators as well as a differentiated human development plan which focuses on the last 3-5 years of the teaching career.

Protean teachers engaged in human development. For some teachers, 20 years as an urban classroom educator marks the point when, in their individual lives, it is time to leave the teaching career—with respect, dignity, and appreciation—and to explore another one. Thus, one option developed by the Council of Experience is the 20-year reduced retirement plan, the amount of retirement benefits determined by actuarial tables, so as not to place a burden on the retirement system. Most of these teachers will move on to a new career or find another way to earn a living; indeed, under this plan, most will find a new source of income to be a necessity. Nevertheless, it is an attractive option to many who have made a 20-year contribution to working with the nation’s youth and who desire to walk down a different path. Two other related options are the graduated reduction-in-teaching-lead program at proportionally reduced pay and the job sharing option. Both of these are available for up to three years with no reduction in retirement benefits; in addition, they allow teachers to work in other fields for pay during those years—a feature which makes career exit a smoother transition for many teachers.

Differentiated human development programs for highly experienced teachers have the dual effect of assisting in the retirement transition as well as benefiting the individual schools of retiring teachers. The previous year, a series of seminars modeled after Burr’s (1986) work on the theme of preparing for a changing lifestyle were developed by the Council of Experience, given a field test by interested faculty members, and the results documented by teacher-researchers. During the current school year, four secondary schools have opted to offer the “Preparation for a Changing Lifestyle” seminars for teachers within 3-5 years of retirement who want a professional development alternative to the traditional monthly staff development meetings available in most schools. The seminars feature an assessment phase during which teachers identify ways in which their educational expertise has broadened, deepened, or otherwise changed during their careers; the phase ends with the articulation of individual strengths as well as ideas for how individual “wisdom of experience” might be utilized within the school system or within individual
buildings prior to career exit. As a result of this phase, some teachers are encouraged to apply for an Innovation Opportunity Grant or Fellowship. Another phase deals with planning how teachers want to end their careers, what they want to accomplish prior to retirement. A final phase ends with a flexible transition plan for a changing lifestyle at career exit. These seminars do not provide financial planning or guidance since programs already available offer that service. Another human development program available to teachers during the last year of their careers takes place at the building level. All interested retiring teachers who want to collaborate on a year-long educational project to benefit the school will work together during monthly staff development time, guided in their planning by a video and materials developed by the Council of Experience. Near the end of the school year, they will make presentations to their faculties in individual schools. Those participating in the graduated reduction-in-teaching-load program as well as those engaged in job sharing arrangements are eligible for participation in these human development programs.

Teacher-Researchers continue to gather and interpret data on these initiatives.

Scenario #4

Tinkering with the line of it: more public interest and awareness, fewer “walls.” Due to multiple influences (among them increased international business connections and accompanying interest in other cultures, resulting in needs for a more informed national populace; a growing desire for a more educated public among leaders in the nation concurrent with a growing desire in the public for wiser leaders; a continued and still-growing awareness that public schooling is falling short of its potential to effect positive growth in the society, resulting in careful attention given to successful practices in other countries; a growing desire at local, state, and national levels for a society which can be prouder of itself at the core; and other changes in the zeitgeist), additional attention to the nitty-gritty of learning moves public education to the forefront of public interest. Increased communication and discussion among educators leads to more public forums, among them televised talk and debate shows; educational news networks; regular newspaper columns written by teachers; and the like. More citizens desire to assist the young. Teacher-Researchers and the Council of Experience are involved in these efforts; other careers and professions add Councils of Experience to their organizational structures. Experienced
people in all walks of life find that they have something to contribute to the society in which they live.

Protean educators influencing the society. More innovation, collaboration, and sharing among educators within the school system leads to more local news coverage. A daily education column, coordinated by the Department of Research and Development and written by numerous contributors, appears in the city's major newspaper. A local weekly educational talk show is picked up by regional, then national networks—and numerous educators, legislators, and people in other professions join in public debate and discussion, first clarifying and expanding the definition of what it means to be an educated person. Highly experienced educators, many from Councils of Experience, inform these discussions with the result that more citizens get involved not only in increasing their own level of education and understanding but in contributing to a more complex and dynamic education for the young. Educational researchers at all levels contribute significant findings and interpretations to widely broadcast educational news networks; international educational leaders and practitioners participate in the discussions and sharing. New ideas are spawned. Innovations continue. Interest among adults contributes to high interest among the young. Curiosity and wisdom-seeking become contagious.

This development coincides with an awareness that two million new teachers will be needed by the year 2007 ("Bottom Line," 1997; Geiger, 1996), just as "fully one-third of America's 2.5 million K-12 public school teachers today are moving into their retirement years" (Geiger, p. 2). Local and nationwide debates on how to best entice some of the nation's most talented people into the teaching force fill the airwaves and the internet. Local Councils of Experience collaborate with university professors in colleges of education. Realizing that the current population in the country is edging 260 million people (Kindersley, 1994), and that approximately one out of every 130 people alive will need to become teachers, think tanks begin to generate alternative solutions. Among ideas considered are those proposed by former NEA President Keith Geiger (1996):

Why not have the federal government invest an amount equal to 20 percent of what it spends each year recruiting for the armed forces to recruit new teachers? That would be about $240 million. Consider it a modest investment in our national economic security...In addition, there are a growing number of talented people in our society who are running on empty in their current occupations. They want to climb off their treadmills and do something else,
something more meaningful...our colleges of education need to offer programs specifically designed for them (p. 2).

Some teachers nearing retirement as well as select retired teachers find that they have an important role to play in recruiting and preparing mature adults to teach in the nation's classrooms. Colleges of education begin to work with active and retired secondary and elementary "Emeritus" teachers, a designation given to exemplary teachers nearing and continuing into retirement (interview transcripts; B. E. Steffy, personal communication, September 17, 1997). Together, they design and implement intensive, rigorous programs for preparing non-certified and non-licensed, dynamic, capable adults for classrooms in order to meet the looming shortage. In addition to the groups targeted for recruitment by Geiger—that is, teacher paraprofessionals, "talented...career-changers" (p. 2), and current K-12 students—some Emeritus teachers recommend recruiting non-certified individuals with successful, even part-time only, community college teaching experience and dynamic non-certified substitute teachers with at least one year of substitute teaching experience. Many of the new teachers are teamed with Emeritus teachers in classrooms of no more than 40 students during their first year of full-time teaching while they participate in university coursework with an assessment component regarding their development as teachers (Howey & Zimpher, 1994). Emeritus teachers find this unanticipated opportunity especially rewarding; they are able to contribute to the future of the profession and to mentor adults experienced in other fields of work.

The Department of Research and Development finds that the less linear career line, the more flexible daily schedules, the increased options for making contributions, the revised sabbatical leave policies, the various exit options, and the more personalized individual placements in job assignments, have made teaching more attractive to many. The researchers also find that the "Concepts Which Push at Limits," identified in an earlier research project, are highly relevant during this ongoing process of recruiting new teachers and preparing them to teach—especially those which call for reducing limitations in and finding alternatives to present practices; viewing teaching as one of the most important jobs in our society—not just giving lip service to the notion; and making "walls" more permeable—including those walls and barriers which keep many talented and experienced adults out of classrooms.
Scenario #5

Tinkering with the line of it: Spirit-enhancing facilities. Students of landscape, architecture, and interior design apply their skills to improving public places, beginning with schools and centers for teachers, and utilizing the ideas expressed by Kunstler (1993).

Protean facilities for protean educators and students. Studying Kunstler's (1993) The Geography of Nowhere, students learn that, after World War II, the Modernist factory became the architectural model in America for high schools, hospitals, office buildings, and apartment complexes, that the factory model is evidenced in the "prototypical American junior high school" (p. 68), including beige brick, steel-sash windows, and the "canonical" (p. 69) flat roof. After 1950, according to Kunstler, because American "highways were gold-plated with our national wealth, all other forms of public buildings were impoverished. This is the reason why...public schools look like overgrown gas stations..." (p. 121). The average American citizen, Kunstler says, "went to school in a building modeled on a shoe factory" (p. 245), part of our "symbolically impoverished everyday environment" (p. 250). Considering themselves leaders in a human ecology movement, these students set out to minimize the consequence of "spiritual problems caused by bad building" (p. 252). Adopting Christopher Alexander's "Pattern Language" (p. 251) which recognizes a connection between people and their environments, these leaders of human ecology begin to design and redesign schools consciously based "on deep human emotional and psychological needs: the need for greenery, sunlight, places to be with other people, spaces to be alone, spaces for the young and the old to mix, for excitement, tranquility, and so on" (p. 251)—in short, instead of "jamming all human aspiration into a plain box," (p. 57), the students of landscape, architecture, and design set out to create inspiring educational environments worthy of human affection.

In a related development, a local philanthropist, motivated to increase interest in public education as a career and to facilitate educational improvement, funds a Teacher Retreat and Innovation Center—a dynamic monument to the human spirit—which is built along the banks of a natural spring lake, a former stone quarry, located near the center of the city. The Teacher Retreat and Innovation Center is open from 5:00 a.m. to midnight, seven days a week.

Arriving at the lake, one first encounters a gallery, open to the public. One enters the gallery through a wide hallway, which honors members of a local education hall of fame. The
skylights and many glass walls of the gallery create a sense of openness and connection to nature; it is the setting for displays of innovations, some in-progress, and teacher-created art and literature. One wall features teacher recipients of the travel awards created by the teachers themselves (See Scenario #1), with at least one photograph of the teacher on his or her travels, and an accompanying brief paragraph of explanation and appreciation. In addition, each teacher in the urban system who is planning to retire at the end of the school year is honored with an individual display created by Faculty Awareness Ambassadors. Each display includes each teacher’s career accomplishments, career-best educational practices, and parting statement—a more detailed version of the individual profiles described in Scenario #1, which are published in the city’s daily newspaper throughout the year. Several teachers have also contributed original poetry or artistic renderings to these displays, attempting to capture their thoughts and emotions regarding career wind down and exit.

Leaving the gallery through another wide hallway, one arrives at a multi-tiered, multi-purpose, semi-circular banquet hall/auditorium, built into a hillside with generous views of the lake. Tables accommodating four or more individuals line the tiers, providing comfortable seating and work areas during presentations, and converting to elegant dining tables with linen tablecloths during banquets. When this building functions as an auditorium, it features teacher presentations to other teachers as well as guest speakers, usually from a local college or university or from a local business or community organization. It is also used for plenary sessions at faculty retreats. Often, proposed innovations as well as the results of teacher-based research are shared in this facility with large groups of educators in this urban school system. Interactive national and international satellite conferences on educational practices and innovations are being planned for the near future. When the structure functions as a banquet hall, catered or pot-luck repasts are featured during faculty retreats, new teacher orientations, awards and appreciation dinners, and retirement celebrations.

One leaves this facility through another large hallway and enters the research complex—home of the Department of Research and Development now comprising numerous teacher-researchers, including those doing research supported by Innovation Opportunity Grants and Fellowships. Among its many functions, the department gathers exit interview and exit presentation data from retiring teachers, analyzes the data, and shares it with the Council of
Experience. The two groups, working together, share the research analysis results and make recommendations to the Board of Education via the honorary teacher board member. One wing of the complex houses an extensive education library, featuring a rich collection—updated monthly—of professional books and journals, especially those devoted to research by teachers. One section of the library is devoted to numerous resources for the classroom and includes resource notebooks coordinated and developed by retiring teachers for every course and unit of study offered in the school system. Online resources abound in the adjacent computer center which is staffed with professionals highly trained in desktop publishing, graphics, and internet know-how to assist greater numbers of teachers in acquiring and maintaining a high level of computer-based expertise. An Educational Web-page and E-Mail Directory, developed by the computer professionals, helps to link teachers to national and international educational resources. The large secretarial staff further supports teacher efforts and materials development.

As one leaves the research complex through another connecting hallway, he or she enters the indoor-Outdoor Sustenance Cafe, a bakery featuring breads, fruit and cheese plates, salads and soups, and a variety of juices, teas, and coffees. During pleasant weather, French doors open onto decks and terraces on the edge of the lake, providing a comfortable environment for light dining, socializing, and relaxation.

Another sheltered walkway links the Sustenance Cafe to the Contemplation Wing, home of the Council of Experience. The wing features numerous collaboration/think-tank areas as well as private spaces for extended, uninterrupted thought. At its far end, an enclosed Japanese-type garden—a space designed for reflection, meditation, or renewal—contains winding stone paths, a waterfall, sculptures, flowers, indoor trees, shrubbery, and park benches. The garden is based on asymmetrical principles which suggest movement, and the design “leaves a space in which the imagination of the spectator can expand” (Julien, 1989/1996, p. 177). The garden opens to an outdoor arboretum whose paths wind to the lake where kayaks, canoes, pontoon boats, and sailboats are available for those who want to spend time on the water.

The “Preparation for a Changing Lifestyle” seminars, piloted by the Council of Experience and described in Scenario #3, are held in this wing. At specified times, these seminars are also open to non-educators who have found the seminars to address a need in the larger community. The Council of Experience has also become a model to other institutions and businesses in the
community who are interested in identifying, tapping into, and utilizing the integrated “wisdom of experience” of their most experienced employees. Based on early work by teacher-researchers, businesses and community organizations are finding that providing options for individuals to increase their human potential has expanded the organization’s ability to increase its potential as well.

Finally, the Lifetime Fitness and Health Wing is under construction at the Teacher Retreat and Innovation Center; it should open the following year. Though few details are available, its purpose is to promote health and physical fitness in the city’s teaching force. A natatorium and indoor track are two of its features, music-accompanied exercise sessions are in the planning stages, and some teachers are reportedly sharpening the blades on their ice skates.

The Teacher Retreat and Innovation Center combined with the ongoing redesign of schools are examples of the attempt to create inspiring educational environments, the symbolic and material manifestations of hopeful inner forces. Teacher-researchers are engaged in a long-term project, studying the social consequences of teaching, learning, and working in physical surroundings worth caring about. Part of their research language is based on the language of Kunstler (1993): “…on connectedness, on continuities, on the relation of one thing to another…like the tension between private space and public space, or the sacred and the workaday…” (p. 168). At the Teacher Retreat and Innovation Center, they will include a look at “…the interplay of a space that is easily comprehensible,” such as a gallery or meeting room, “with the mystery of openings that beckon” (p. 168), such as connecting hallways or winding stone paths. And, whether considering the teacher center or the numerous schools in the district, they will look at how the human beings, neighborhoods, and businesses in the district are affected directly or indirectly by the changes—in acknowledgment of the connections among these elements, a salute to the organic nature of the community.

Scenario #6

Tinkering with the line of it: celebratory exits and transitions. Retiring teachers with 20 or more years of experience, having worked in school systems which have fostered symbiotic and egalitarian relationships, feel relatively well prepared for the transition from teaching to a different kind of life—Most of them have participated in the “Preparation for a Changing Lifestyle” seminars
and the differentiated human development programs during which they presented collaborative, often generative, projects to their schools; others have contributed research studies or innovations via the Innovation Opportunity Grants and Fellowship program; and few report feeling the exhaustion that teachers of several years ago acknowledged during the last years of their careers. Now teachers exercise earlier exit options or reduced class assignments when they choose to, experience job placements more tailored to them as individuals, and teach in schedules which are more in harmony with their high energy times and physical needs as well as provide more workday variety for those who desire it. Perhaps more importantly, redesigned schools and an increased respect for knowledge which expands one's understanding of the world have made schools more exciting and joyful places in which to teach students who cooperate in their own learning. In short, the soul of the teaching profession has been rediscovered and reinvigorated. In addition, many teachers have been teaching partners/mentors to others entering the field in collaboration with colleges of education; they have been acknowledged and appreciated publicly and in the Teacher Retreat gallery; and some Emeritus teachers already look forward to continued participation via consulting work on the Council of Experience or as supervisors of teachers new to the field. It has generally been a satisfying and honorable career, and so the closing ceremonies, banquets, and rituals—whether sponsored by teacher associations, boards of education, or community groups—are anticipated as meaningful celebrations.

Protean rituals and celebrations. The Council of Experience concludes that meaningful rituals honoring retiring teachers in academic communities have the potential to be both transforming and generative—like the passing of a torch from a retiring teacher to a new one, the torch signifying truth and intelligence and a place of learning (Gibson, 1996). As the Council of Experience designs rituals for retiring teachers, it keeps in mind the inspirational words of thinkers such as Fulghum (1995), Downing (1987), and Erikson (1964). According to Fulghum,

Rituals anchor us to a center while freeing us to move on and confront the everlasting unpredictability of life. The paradox of ritual patterns and sacred habits is that they serve as solid footing and springboard, providing a stable dynamic in our lives (p. 265).

Downing writes that rites of passage have as their purposes to “reveal the social significance of what might otherwise appear as individual crises...to integrate the personal and transpersonal,”
that participation in them "leads one toward an appreciation of the rhythms of life and gives meaning to the transition as going somewhere...." (p. 70). Erikson wrote that "...if vigor of mind combines with the gift of responsible renunciation, some (older) people...can represent to the coming generation a living example of the 'closure' of a style of life" (pp. 44-45).

The career exit rituals and celebrations developed by the Council of Experience call for retiring teachers, near the end of the school year in which they are retiring, to gather before dawn for a festival at the Teacher Retreat and Innovation Center and to remain until just after sunset. In recognition of the rising sun as "a symbol of hope and new beginnings" (Fontana, 1993, p. 121), retiring teachers gather along the lake at their teacher center and sit in companionable silence amid the sounds of nature while gazing upon the ever-changing hues of the sky as the sun begins its ascent, shining its light on the new beginnings awaiting the teachers upon their retirement. They, and others—members of the board of education, the superintendent, association officers, the city's mayor and city council members, professors of education, teacher-colleagues, students, some parents and family members—who will join the festival of celebration later in the day, will gather at dusk on the shores of the lake to gaze at the setting sun and at the sky—again displaying its glorious hues—symbolic of the closing of this phase in the careers of these particular teachers.

During the day, the teachers will "break bread" three times together in communion with themselves and others: at a breakfast on the terraces of the Sustenance Cafe, during a picnic lunch on the shores of the lake, and while being honored at a light supper in the banquet hall. The three meals symbolize the past, present, and future as well as mind, body, and spirit—and, borrowing from Chinese associations with the number three, they signify endings (Gibson, 1996, p. 86).

A variety of celebratory performances and presentations provide movement to the day—music by symphonic and jazz groups; dance and rhythmical expressions; perhaps a readers' theater designed for the event, featuring excerpts from such works as Shakespeare's (1600) "Seven Ages" passage in As You Like it, Oliver Wendell Holmes' (1858) "Inceptit Allegoria Senectutis" passage in The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table, Mark Twain's (1905) humorous "Speech on His Seventieth Birthday," May Sarton's (1952) poem "Now I Become Myself," or William Stafford's (1991) "Toward the End,"—all of which can be found in Cole and Winkler's The
**oxford Book of Aging** (1994). For many, time is also spent in the gallery of the teacher center where each individual teacher's career highlights are presented in displays.

Throughout the day of the festival, teachers participate in several rituals which are "timed by beats of the heart, not ticks of the clock" (Fulghum, 1995, p. 153), rituals which are "physical enactments of spiritual journeys" (Fontana, 1993, p. 30). Boat rides on the kayaks, canoes, pontoon boats, or sailboats at the teacher center, from one shore of the lake to another, symbolize "safe passage" (Fontana, p. 112) into the next phase of life. Floating around in these boats on the lake—the water representing links to the unconscious mind "which appears calm but can hide much activity beneath its surface" (Gibson, 1996, p. 141), the boats representing ships, "regarded as a symbol of transition and passage...through the sea of life" (Gibson, p. 143)—symbolizes the soon-to-be explored, uncharted territory of retirement or the adventure of a new career. Time spent walking and sitting in the garden of the Contemplation Wing, where classical and other instrumental music provide background atmosphere, remind individual teachers that "...the human soul...like the garden, must be cared for and cultivated" (Fontana, p. 103).

The ritual of gift giving is also significant on this day, a merging of appropriate form and substance. According to Heinberg (1993), gifts are viewed as markers "...of a life transition...of affirming growth" (p. 170); gifts brought to retiring teachers from members of other professions and local organizations also signify appreciation for lifetime efforts which have contributed to a more educated community. Like the sun throughout the day, whose "rain of gold pouring out of it" represents spiritual riches (Julien, 1989/1996), p. 427), the gifts to retiring teachers represent a giving of "riches of the heart" (p. 427). This particular ritual manifests the hope that "...those teachers who leave the teacher's desk behind can take the gold and not the tarnish with them" (group collaboration transcript). Indeed, some teachers receive gold watches, symbolizing both the spiritual riches mentioned above and the passage of time, as well as connoting the new beginnings and opportunities of the future (Gibson, 1996, p. 151). Others receive gifts containing jewels or precious metals—such as red agate clocks signifying the meaning associated with timepieces mentioned above as well as health and longevity, or black agate sculptures wishing teachers "courage, prosperity, and vigour" (Fontana, p. 118). Some teachers receive stocks in local businesses, symbolizing the hope that teachers will have material comforts in the years ahead.
Each teacher also receives a chrysanthemum bouquet, symbol of contemplation and the
onset of autumn (Fontana) as well as "good luck...happiness, wealth, and longevity...and an
easy retirement, scholarship, and amiability" (Gibson, p. 123). Many teachers report that one of
the most meaningful gifts is the packet of letters and notes from former students and colleagues,
gathered for them by the Faculty Awareness Ambassadors. The gifts are presented individually in
a ceremony following the light supper. On each dining table sits a symbolic tribute to a retired
teacher who continues in her quiet way to give much to the profession; on each table is a
centerpiece consisting of a single Gertrude Jekyll antique rose.

In reflecting on the teachers' retirement festival, community members and representatives
in attendance express a desire to see such tributes extended. They set in motion a plan for
retiring workers city-wide to be honored in a performance by the local symphony orchestra during
an evening dedicated to appreciating years of productive work in the community.

Scenarios: Concluding Remarks

Generating transactional scenarios has been an intriguing exercise resulting sometimes in
the creation of little "Ed-utopias," but perhaps non totally improbable ones. The ideas don't
require a different world, just a series of shifts in understandings and priorities in this one. The
scenarios focus primarily on the following factors as applied to educational systems, particularly to
teachers and teaching careers: the creation of different roles and opportunities, more valuing of
individual contributions to society throughout the life span, the use of media and technology for
more educative and human development purposes, the design of public buildings and facilities
which inspire the human spirit, the addition of public rituals and celebrations for honoring the
sacred moments of our lives, and, both stated and implied, a shift in local and national priorities in
the expenditure of our collective human and material resources. The scenarios, taken as a whole,
put forth an example of an integrated plan based on the ideas gathered during this research
project, an example of what Nathan referred to as "the mind sprouting possibilities," an example of
what Felicia might call a "pattern."

---

319
Recommendations With the Power to Transform

Recommendations for Immediate Action

. That exit interviews be implemented immediately for retiring teachers and administrators in school systems which do not already employ them.

. That such interviews begin by gathering information and knowledge learned during the course of a career that might be of use to others in the system as well as suggestions which address the system's ability to better meet the needs of students, teachers, and administrators;

. That such interviews also be utilized as an immediate way to express personal appreciation for decades of service;

. That interviews eventually provide opportunities for sharing relevant subject matter knowledge and expertise related to instructional delivery as well as for generating "imaginaries" (Scheurich, 1995) of schools in the future.

. That school systems such as the one in this study adopt as a goal the creation of a more personalized tone throughout the system in order to counteract the dehumanizing effects of bureaucratic structure.

. That personnel departments make it their business to know the professional identities and ongoing accomplishments of members of their teaching force—including the specific educational backgrounds and experiences of individual teachers—and to utilize that knowledge in facilitating appropriate placement of teachers within the district;

. That principals determining course assignments within individual schools make those assignments in collaboration with teachers and with regard for their individual educational backgrounds and preferences;

. That career exit of teachers and administrators be honored by both the superintendent of schools and boards of education in personalized and meaningful ways which allow career personnel to leave the career with a sense of appreciation and dignity;

. As an extension of the above, that public awareness be increased so as to give more recognition and appreciation to all people for their life-long efforts—not only those who have made significant public contributions, but those who have quietly held organizations together by their steady dedication, hour-by-hour, day-by-day, year after year after year.
That school systems and universities begin to ask their highly experienced instructors and administrators to think deeply about what they have learned during their careers, what they have integrated, what they know that may be of value to others.

That school systems and universities serve as a model of this practice for others in the society;

That people already retired from careers be included in this process.

That immediate attention be given and energy expended to creating a differentiated job design for teachers with the following features:

- Incentives and benchmarks which reward career progress;
- Ongoing human development and professional renewal;
- Utilization of the strengths and talents of individuals;
- Built-in generative experiences, especially near the end of the career;
- Comprehensive enough to address the health concerns and energy needs of highly experienced teachers.

That such a differentiated job design be modeled more on a pyramid or spiral than a straight line;

That such a design be intertwined with options, including various alternative daily work schedules, at least some of which include sustained blocks of time for in-depth reflection;

That such a design eliminate a current dilemma for its highly experienced teaching cadre: Either teach at a predetermined pace or save your health;

That such a design not contain disincentives attached to its growth opportunities;

That such a design include the component of a support staff for teachers—secretarial, computer-related, classroom assistants, and the like;

That such a design look not only at nurturing its seedlings but also at nurturing its mature plants.
Recommendations To Be Implemented in the (Very) Near Future

That work on the reconceptualization of the later years of the teaching career and career exit continue in a timely manner.

That the basic philosophy, beliefs, purposes, and other concepts generated by this study as explicated in Chapter 6 of this dissertation—in combination with the work of others in the field (e.g. Steffy, 1989)—serve as a point of commencement for further discussion and appropriate action.

That the urban school system in this study, and other urban systems which don't have them, employ teacher-researchers both full- and part-time to gather and interpret data on topics of importance to the school system, including those generated by teachers.

That interested teachers who have been university-trained in advanced research skills and who are already employed in school systems be invited to apply for such positions;

That more teachers learn research skills and engage in teacher-based research with the potential to benefit the system directly, and that released time or a reduction in teaching load accompany such projects;

That systems, with the assistance of teacher-researchers and identified retired teachers, develop a series of human development seminars for teachers nearing retirement which consider the following:

Components which address preparation for a changing lifestyle, career reviews, and individual wisdom searches.

Exit interviews as an integral component.

Features from the day of collaboration in the research design of this dissertation which participating teachers recommended: the galleries displaying original teacher representations and researcher recommendations from the research base; a high level of interaction with other professionals; an opportunity to generate ideas for improving the teaching career for others; and a highly personalized tone permeating every aspect of the day.

That at least one teacher serve as an honorary member on boards of education in order to increase the expertise immediately available to and expand the awareness level of boards of education.
. A secondary benefit to this recommendation is the possibility of increasing the level of respect for teachers—a message communicated by the public action;

. To further increase the expertise available to boards of education, another recommendation is to add a university professor of education as an honorary member and/or paid consultant.

**Recommendations for Training Social Science Researchers**

. That multiple methods of data analysis be more fully developed and explicited in the research literature.

. That researchers continue to experiment with writing as a form of inquiry (Richardson, 1994, 1997), that they be open to methods which are emergent during the analytical/writing stages of research;

. That the use of experimental writing genres continue to be explored for their contribution to a more dynamic communication of the research experience;

. That transactional reading and response be examined as a mode of inquiry and interpretation and as a method of increasing intertextuality;

. That methods of metaphorical analysis be further developed with a close look at the pioneering work of Lakoff and Johnson (1980), specifically at their identification of deep, often hidden and embedded, systemic metaphors that we use in our culture—such as orientational, ontological, structural, and container metaphors.

. That students of research methodology be encouraged to conduct meta-reviews of the current research literature to guide them in every phase of research design, implementation, interpretation, and writing.

. That students be encouraged to create indexes at the conclusion of the research, even though the process is time-consuming.

**Recommendations for Future Research and Development**

. That future researchers take a look at the perceptions of additional stakeholders in education regarding career wind-down (or wind-up?), including educators and researchers in higher education, members of boards of education, school system administrators, teacher association officers, and teachers at various developmental stages in the career.
That future researchers look at the perceptions of those in other career fields regarding the ways they are utilized as their careers draw to a close and at their career exit practices.

That future researchers study what happens to the health of teachers when the deleterious effects of the high stress of teaching in urban schools intersect and combine with the effects of physiological aging over long periods of time.

That transformational learning modes be further explored for their potential use in schools at all levels, including higher education.

Significant improvements in infrastructure be developed.

Mechanisms for identifying wisdom in experienced educators should be developed as well as systematic searches for that wisdom;

If it is true that growth occurs as a result of appropriate human interaction with the environment (Sprinthall & Thies-Sprintall, 1980)—and I believe that the transformational learning experienced by teacher-participants in this study gives additional support to that notion—then those concerned with high quality education will need to create environments worth interacting with, especially school environments, specifically: facilities and atmospheres within them which are spirit-enhancing as well as regularly occurring activities which promote human development at all levels;

Within large urban school systems such as the one in this study, I recommend that the following be systematized:

1) a mechanism for tracking the specific accomplishments and increasing expertise of individual teachers and administrators during their careers;

2) a kind of feedback loop within that mechanism so that such ongoing increases in knowledge and expertise be of direct benefit to the system—for example, a way that would provide a teacher returning from sabbatical leave, exchange teaching, or an educational conference an opportunity to utilize that additional knowledge in the service of the system, or at least a way for the system to determine if it can benefit more directly from providing such professional growth experiences.

There is a need to provide mechanisms which enhance collaborative opportunities and sharing of information among professional colleagues at the following levels: within individual school buildings; within individual school
systems; among school systems; between schools and universities; within and
among universities; and among researchers working on similar concerns—locally,
nationally, and internationally.

Such mechanisms could provide the secondary benefit of increasing
the collective commitment to specific causes as well as provide a more
powerful collective voice when addressing those causes.

The Researcher’s Story, Part 7: Researcher Transformations

“...there was an immense gulp of breath,
a seizing in of air...”
(Bradbury, The Halloween Tree, 1972, p. 31).

Transformational Transitions

At this moment, I am beginning a transition, changing from researcher immersed in data
analysis and intense writing activities to researcher coming up for air. At the moment, my sense is
that this dissertation just needs to stop. When I began the data analysis, I made a commitment to
analyze the data rigorously and thoroughly, not to under analyze the data. Now I have a new
concern: that the data analysis will never end—because possibilities for analysis are limited only by
one’s imagination...and time. With more time, for example, I might attempt to develop a tentative
grounded theory or experiment with Donmoyer and Yennie-Donmoyer’s (1995) method of
content analysis and readers theater mode of data display. In the future, I still hope to complete a
deep metaphorical analysis of the data based on the work of Lakoff and Johnson (1980), and if
not with this data, then with some new data. For now, however, this historically-situated, partial,
both “privileged and blinded” (Donmoyer and Yennie-Donmoyer, p. 423) interpretation and
presentation will begin to come to rest. It is time.

And I have had plenty of time—a nonconsecutive total of almost 12 months of nearly
uninterrupted reading, analysis, and writing time over a period of more than two years. In fact, my
perception of the meaning of time has been altered while doing this research, just because I have
had time to think about it. And I have never before in my life spent such a length of time focusing
on one subject.

Prior to doing this research, thinking and writing time had been available to me in blocks of
hours, seldom in weeks or months. It made me realize anew how truly little time there is in a busy
life for sustained thinking; in a teacher's hectic life, there is very little time available, almost none. Small wonder there are not more of Schon's (1983) "reflective practitioners" in the nation's schools. And small wonder that in a nation consumed with producing and selling consumer goods and services, that time for sustained thinking is not part of most job descriptions. I don't think I've ever seen it appear in teacher curriculum guides or courses of study either, something like: The student will spend at least one hour per week in sustained thought.

Thirty years and several months ago, I walked into a classroom as a teacher, beginning a career in secondary education. At that time, retirement was absolutely the furthest thing from the forefront of my thoughts—if anywhere, it was buried in the dim recesses of my mind, somewhere next to thoughts of death, probably. During that first year of teaching, I thought mostly about how to get through the day, or the week, or the year; the indeterminate future had no end in sight. A few years later, in a different school system, an association building representative brought up the retirement subject when he told me I was now "vested" in the state's retirement system. I was 27 years old, had 25 more years to teach before I would be eligible to retire, and at best, a vague sense of what all of that meant. After all, I had begun a 30-year career but had not yet experienced 30 years of life!

Now that those 30 career years are about to become part of the past, I have an experiential sense of what a 30-year span means. I break it down this way. The longest I have been a teacher in one specific school is 12 years. Twelve years is the length of time it takes most people to complete both elementary and high school in our country. How long is a teaching career? At least two and one-half times that long. It is a long time. Further, beginning with kindergarten and counting four years in undergraduate school, I have been in schools as student and/or teacher for 47 years—or 90%—of my life to date...and so have most of my colleagues who plan to retire this year. Perhaps this 90%-of-one's-lifetime factor affects perceptions about the significance of the retirement moment for teachers. I know that it affects mine. If I live for 70 years, I'll have only 25% of my total lifetime left when I retire from teaching. If I live for 80 years, 35%. How long is a 30-year teaching career? A very, very long time. I have a greater sense of that as a result of being engaged in this research.

Another change in my perceptions, related to time, concerns both immediacy and loss in daily experience. We are always living the moment, second by second; time disappears
(practically evaporates) to be replaced by a new second, and so on. The passage of time is taken for granted, just an aspect of being alive, the nature of the fourth dimension. During the research process, however, I gained a new sense of how much gets lost during even an hour or two of a typical day. This new awareness began when I tape-recorded an interview and transcribed it, a process that allowed me to re-live the moments of the interview and to transfer the essence of the interview conversation to paper.

When reading the transcripts, sometimes for the third and fourth time, I noticed that I was still finding material that had not caught my attention before, and I thought: How much am I missing even while it is occurring in my daily life? When most words are spoken, as in a conversation, they dissipate in the air and are gone forever. That's the norm. I wrote in my research journal after becoming aware, during the process of transcribing, that a tape had stopped recording near the end of an interview:

The tape ran out here on what was an interesting conversation, and I can't remember what was said. It makes me wonder how many of our daily interactions get lost forever...We move too fast, we say too much to assimilate. Each minute is full and fleeting and inevitably lost.

And then, because during this time, I have had time to pay more attention to some of my own fleeting thoughts, I remembered Emily and the Stage Manager in Our Town (Wilder, 1938) when Emily wants to re-live a day of her life. The Stage Manager explains to Emily: "You not only live it; but you watch yourself living it" (p. 205)—similar to the process of reviewing interview tapes and transcripts. And Emily's words: "It goes so fast. We don't have time to look at one another...So all that was going on and we never noticed...." (p. 208) captures some of my amazement at the richness of the interview data and reminds me that so many educational initiatives are simultaneously occurring—even within one large urban school system, such as the one in this study—that it is impossible for most practicing teachers even to be aware of most of them, let alone benefit from them in terms of improving the effectiveness of educational efforts to benefit students.

Even the local media, which has of late been both reporting and supporting some university-school collaborations ("College Ties," 1997, p. 6A; Smeltzer, 1997, p. 2C), seems not to have the full picture as illustrated by a very recent letter to the editor written by the Dean of the College of Education at a local university. She pointed out at least seven initiatives in addition to
those reported “already taking place through three decades of hard work and collaboration....” (Zimpher, 1997, p. 9A). The problem compounds when considering initiatives which are occurring throughout the state or in other states throughout the nation.

During this research effort, I have come to see this as a matter worthy of some attention; it represents a transition in my thinking. Two examples may illustrate my point: Maxine’s generation of teacher career stages which will illustrate the desirability of finding mechanisms to increase teacher awareness of ongoing developments in the field--and Betty Steffy’s (1989) work on improving the career wind-down and exit stages of teaching careers which will illustrate the desirability of more mechanisms for sharing educational initiatives as they emerge among researchers themselves.

The first example occurred on the day of collaboration. During her 20 minutes of time for quiet thought, Maxine generated a five-level teacher career stage model, and then presented it to the group. The teachers were excited about it as evidenced in their responses: “That’s great.” “I love that idea of breaking down the whole career,” “It’s inspired,” “It provides incentives,” and “It specifies that teachers at different levels have different things to offer. We don’t have anything like that.” And then someone asked: “Why isn’t this in the literature?” When I said, very softly, “It is,” there was silence, and an unspoken: Why don’t they tell us? or Why don’t they include us? I realized that had I not, rather fortuitously, enrolled in a particular elective graduate course that I, too, would have remained unaware that significant previous thought had been expended on the ways in which a teaching career develops. It was only by chance that I had become familiar with these theories--yet the information seemed valuable, even inspiring, to the teachers. Further, Maxine’s model suggested that teachers earn certain titles or designations during the career--such as apprentice, professional, and mentor--something that other career stage models did not generally provide. Maxine said during her first interview: “I don’t know if we’re changing fast enough to reach most of these students.” I’m wondering if we’re sharing emerging educational theory and research fast enough to reach most practicing teachers. Why don’t they tell us? Why don’t they include us? were silent pleas, and they will not soon be gone from my mind.

The second example, Steffy’s (1989) detailed work on improving both the last years of the teaching career and career exit is, in my opinion, a masterpiece of work showing an uncommon depth of understanding about the daily lives of dedicated teachers as well as an
understanding of administrators and local, state, and national policy-making organizations.

Steffy's book, *Career Stages of Classroom Teachers* was another tortuous find for me, available only through an OhioLINK borrowing service from other university libraries in the state, unavailable locally. As I reread her chapters regarding the latter career stages during my research activities, I was impressed anew at her engaging ideas, her rather pioneering efforts to identify some of the missing elements in the job definition for older, more experienced teachers, the eloquence of her writing.

Who is Betty Steffy, I wondered, and why hasn't this work received more attention during the nine years since the publication of her book? I decided to try to locate her. Through a series of computer-based attempts to find information and a series of long distance telephone calls, I learned that Betty Steffy had been a school superintendent, worked in the Kentucky State Department of Education, taught at the University of Kentucky, and is now the Dean of the School of Education at the Indiana-Purdue University branch in Ft. Wayne, Indiana.

A few telephone calls later, Dr. Steffy and I connect. During our conversation, Steffy speculates that her book has not received wider attention due to two main factors: the lack of wide support for qualitative research ("written from the point of view of the practitioner observing") during the last decade; and advertising which did not reach a wide audience (personal communication, September 17, 1997). Steffy says that the work of developing a differentiated job design for teachers, especially for those who are more experienced, remains at the conceptual stage. Among current efforts, she and her colleagues are developing an Emeritus designation for teachers who meet certain criteria (still in a developmental phase) as they get close to career exit. A revised and updated version of her 1989 text will be published within the next few years as well. She recommends more K-16 networking as well as increasing the strength of the K-12 network and says that leadership and support from those in higher education is essential if significant change is to occur.

So as a result of this research, I am still pondering how more data can be gathered before it gets lost in the immediacy of daily experience, how more relevant information can be dispensed to the teacher-practitioner, and how more educational initiatives can be linked and coordinated. What is needed, I think, is not another level of bureaucracy or the proliferation of even more professional journals, but something which is more easily accessible, vital to more people.
something which has not yet been fully imagined—something that perhaps a think tank of highly experienced professionals, perhaps in collaboration with others, might devote some time to.

Part of the important data to be collected before it is lost concerns the increased sense of mastery that the teacher-participants in this study expressed as an outcome of nearly three decades of teaching experience: For most of this generation of teachers, the components of that mastery which might be beneficial to others, what Tess called "all that experience," is about to be lost. Like a well-kept secret, few even realize that something of interest exists. Like a rich but unrecorded conversation, the underutilized expertise of teachers is about to dissipate into the atmosphere. Like right now, do you feel an autumn chill?

Little pieces of wisdom, multi-colored, vibrant, tall like leaves, scatter in the wind, flutter flutter Whooshhh! _____ gone.

**Transformative Reflections: Looking Into Mirrors**

A little less immersed, I am still inundated with thoughts—thoughts recorded in reflective journal entries, thoughts that flit through my mind waking and sleeping, elusive thoughts that barely whisper their presence but seem nonetheless relevant if I could just grasp them, thoughts arriving and departing in fleeting images as when I walk by a mirror while glancing at its reflections.

**Flashback: May 16, 1996.** A six-hour conversation with Nathan. I not only live it but watch myself living it. It goes so fast. He is saying that our school systems mirror our society, that everything is connected to everything else.

**Flash-forward: June 20, 1996.** I am preparing for the day of collaboration, working on a gallery entitled "What We Said." It is a display sharing anonymous highlights from teacher interviews and some summary statements emerging from the data. To provide a visual representation of Nathan's above statements, I hang a wooden school house ornament at the top of a display board, and next to it, a mirror which reflects the school, and below the ornament and
mirror, the words: “Our schools mirror our society.” When I look at that arrangement from certain angles, I also see myself in the mirror, and think: This school is a reflection of me.

Playing with combinations of the above words, I generate: Our schools are a reflection of who we are, and we are a reflection of our schools; our school systems reflect our society, and our society is a reflection of our schools; our society is a reflection of us, and we are a reflection of our society; and finally, our ways of ending our teaching careers reflect our society, our school systems, our schools, and ourselves.

To present these words on the display board, I cut circles in different sizes out of a silvery, reflective paper, mount the words on the circles, and use rubber cement to attach them to surfaces around the school house ornament and mirror. The finished graphic inadvertently resembles a miniature solar system or maybe a universe. Looking at the graphic, I see myself reflected in all the silvery circles and experience a sudden intuitive flash: a multitude of connections between me and my world that I had neither understood nor been willing to own.

**Flash-forward: October 23, 1997.** Now I see: I am a reflection of all the schools I have attended—in part, a product of those educational environments. And now I see that, even as a student, in some small way, the schools I attended were also a reflection of me—what kind of student I was, how I interacted with instructors and peers, what I contributed or didn’t contribute by my presence. As a teacher, the schools in which I work are partially a reflection of me, too, as is the school system in which I work, as is the society in which I live. Another realization: With awareness comes responsibility. From this angle of repose, it becomes more difficult to detach myself from aspects of my school system that I reject, to comfort myself with the thought that these aspects have nothing to do with me—like bureaucratic depersonalization or inattention to exiting teachers. So all that was going on, and I never noticed. This awareness is simultaneously disconcerting and empowering, two conflicting tensions, pulling me off balance. How much responsibility? After all, what can one person reasonably hope to accomplish? Maybe something, I think, I wonder, I hope.

**Flash-forward: Early March, 1986.** I have been a teacher for 20 years. I am reading John Reque’s (1986) column about his decision to retire from teaching. I am thinking about the English teacher Mary L. Taft who died two weeks after a retirement dinner given in her honor. I am thinking that I don’t want to end up like Mary Taft at the end of my teaching career.
Flash-forward: Late June, 1995. I have been a teacher for 26 years, a doctoral student for five. At last I find a focus for my dissertation. As I gather notes and materials together, I find a yellowed newspaper article. It is the column written by John Reque. I sit down with the column and begin to write. I bleed on the page.

Flash-forward: September 16, 1997. I receive an e-mail message, a response to page 1 of this dissertation: “The reader needs to know how all of this settles out (in?) you. From the gripping first page, we want to know if you have found out how not to be Mary Taft.”

Flash-forward: October 27, 1997. After weeks of thinking about the e-mail message and days of dialing a telephone number in Illinois, John Reque—now a full-time journalism instructor at a Midwestern university—answers. He talks to me about Mary Taft. “She died in 1958,” he says. My mind travels back in time.

Flashback: Late May, 1958. I am sitting in my desk in a 7th grade classroom surreptitiously writing “The Adventures of Priscilla Marie Gordon,” one of my first attempts at fiction, while my teacher reviews the parts of speech. Unbeknown to me, an English teacher in Illinois is preparing to retire. Weeks later, she will be dead. Her colleagues will fund an annual award named after her, and every year for at least the next 39 years, an outstanding student of English will receive the Mary Taft Award. Mary Taft will be described as a classic example of a teacher who was “brilliant, totally dedicated to her work, incredibly influential with her students” but with nothing else in her life. There is no reason why I should be aware of this woman, no connection whatsoever between the two of us. A decade later, though I don’t know it yet, I will become an English teacher. I will attempt to inspire my students to write and to read powerful works of literature, followed by time for reflection and lively discussion (while I keep an eye on their surreptitious activities).

Flash-forward: October 27, 1997. “You’re too young to know what a grass widow is,” John Reque laughs, recalling a time when married women couldn’t be teachers. “I’m 52,” I say—old enough for most things, I think. “Still too young,” he continues, 65 years of age, the minimum age for teachers in Mary Taft’s generation to retire. Reque speculates that there is probably no one like Mary Taft left in the current generation of English teachers “under the age of about 50.” Every year he returns to the high school where he taught for most of his career to present an award which students funded in his honor upon his retirement: The John Reque Award for
Outstanding Journalism. Every year, he says, following his presentation, an outstanding student of English receives the award named for Mary Taft. I feel more connected to her now that I know more about her.

Flash-forward: October 28, 1997. My fax machine begins to click and snap. John Reque is sending eight of 50-some responses to his 1986 column. They came to him from all over the country, letters from superintendents, principals, fellow teachers. I read them as they pour from the fax machine into my study, voices from 11 years ago, forerunners of the themes and motifs generated by the teacher-participants in my dissertation research. Click...click-click...One administrator writes a letter to the editor of a newspaper in California:

...a growing issue in public education: the burgeoning ranks of senior educators at the end of their tether...District offices are places where elephants go to die. Monolithic, monochromatic personalities...Although Mr. Reque says the itch to leave comes from within him, rather than from any faults in his school, isn't his itch really the result of the interrelationship between him and his institution?

Click-click-click...A director of staff development in Massachusetts writes: “Until teachers are allowed to think and are valued for what they do, teaching will continue to attract (many) direction-followers rather than thinkers.” Clickety-click...click-click...An English teacher in Michigan says in a personal letter:

One of my favorite pearls of Robert Frost is his advice to listen more to a person's grief than to his grievance. Your polished article is laden with the grief of an artist whose life's work has gone to a professional world frozen into continuous repetition, where feedback is meager and the challenge seems fossilized....

From Illinois come the thoughts of another teacher: “All across America on a Sunday evening, I imagine a collective sigh as the last paper is marked....” From Colorado: “...we must not be trapped...by limited attitudes about what we can be....”

So, I think, the concerns expressed by Reque in 1986 struck a common chord. They have been the concerns of many for at least for a decade, maybe two, I think, remembering Lortie's (1975) sociological study of teachers. And then I recall Barber's unpublished thesis, written in 1927, documenting the equivalent of “senior educators at the end of their tether” in 1869 New York. Reque's concerns—and Mary Taft's and Betty Stetty's and mine—have been shared by teachers, at a minimum, for more than a century.
Flash-forward: November 1, 1997. I have been a teacher for 30 years. I am writing the closing remarks of the last chapter of this dissertation, ready to consider: Did I figure out how not to become Mary Taft? How does all of this settle within me at this point in time? My answer begins:

I will not become Mary Taft because I have been a teacher during a different period of time in history and because I will not teach in secondary schools for 42 years. Nor have I taught in one school, not even in one school system, for all of my professional life. I will not become Mary Taft because I lack her particular vision and probably, her degree of dedication and persistence. I admire and salute those things that were Mary Taft. To her, teaching and living seemed to be synonymous terms. Not so with me, I think, followed by the thought: Is that true? Teaching and living have been close to synonymous at times in my life, maybe most of the time....

I have loved much of being a teacher; it has consumed my adult life. Symbolically, if my life were a pie, teaching and learning would be all but a small piece of that pie; if it were a meal, teaching and learning would be the appetizer, salad, and main course; if it were my jewelry box, teaching would be the 24-k gold pieces, the gemstones. So maybe I am more like Mary Taft than not. On the other hand, I have felt a need to grow professionally for at least the last 10 years in ways that can’t be accommodated in secondary classrooms or by secondary classroom schedules as I know them. I have needed more professional variety than a teacher’s classroom schedule accommodates. I have not been well utilized by my school system for more than half of the time I have been working within it—especially these last years. So it has been a big price to pay, personally, for doing everything within my power to continue to be dynamic in the classroom and to provide a high quality instructional program for students who are often far less interested than one can imagine—as well as to seek growth opportunities, knowing that my school system would be indifferent to them. The classrooms and school houses I have worked in during the last seven years have been isolated places; I would have liked them to be more intertwined with the world.

At this point in my life, however, I will not become Mary Taft because I will create other options for myself, other ways to make a contribution, other ways to go on living in a meaningful way. I am probably more like John Reque was in 1986, ready to try something else.

But I can say for more teaching years of my life than I would like to remember, like Mary Taft, I hope that teachers will never have to work as hard as I have for so little apparent regard from the systems they have spent most of their adult lives in—even if that disregard is not intentional.
Then again, if the disregard were deliberate, at least someone would have been paying attention. I have not enjoyed being put into a container and shuffled about at the end of my career on the sole basis of my anonymous certification and seniority. That has been an unanticipated disappointment, even though I have long been aware of the impersonal nature of the system in which I have worked. What can I say? I knew but I did not understand how pervasive it was? I knew but I did not understand what feelings such treatment would engender?

I guess I would say, if there were a gathering where I had been invited to say a few words to my fellow teachers, something like the following, echoes of Mary Taft: I hope you will never be treated—after decades of losing sleep, after working nights and weekends to grade at least 30,000-35,000 essays and to attend to the needs of your students, after professional accomplishments which take pages and pages to list on a resume, after doing the extras, innovating and developing areas of expertise, and after taking graduate courses for a 27-year period in addition to teaching—I hope you will never be treated as impersonally and anonymously as I have been by my own school system. And I hope that words such as these will not need to be spoken by the next generation of teachers. That is how all of this resolves.

My professional recognition and encouragement has come mainly from organizations such as the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Council for Basic Education, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, NBC, NASA, Ashland Oil, the Journalism Association of Ohio Schools, an English Department at a local university, even an Innovation in Education award from a school system in Volgograd when Russia was still a member of the U.S.S.R. And these recognitions are buried in random file folders and scrapbooks—along with those most meaningful cards and notes written by students and colleagues and professors and parents and a few administrators. They have helped to keep me going. So has a mutual respect among many teachers and administrators and those synergistic moments of working with dedicated, energized, creative, and caring colleagues. Day-by-day, it’s the interaction with students that must sustain the teacher, and so I am grateful for moments of what can only be called classroom magic and for those times when I know I’ve been able to reach or support some of those youths entrusted to my care. Student smiles are contagious, even in memory. Perhaps all of that should be enough. More than enough. I want to say this as precisely as I can: On some days, it is almost enough.
Postscript

I am coming up for autumn air.

It is crisp and cool and the leaves! the
color of rare stone tablets and burnt orange
classrooms and the air is clean and
crisp we may yet find time to look at each
other everything in the effervescent moment that
goes by so fast whispering
fizz a little,
breathe deeply,
see the territory
(a poetic will join with) the
leaves! abundant and
falling, the color of blood and roses, unbearably
lighter than the weight of the papers you grade or that
paperweight they will give you (so soon), so much
more to offer than anybody wanted (I hope you will
never) so you do what you have to, you must,
you must,
maintain your enthusiasm your
sanity your dignity your
arbors, you will come up for
air in the autumn so crisp and cool and
the leaves! (so much going on and nobody
noticed) with the lightest of hearts I hereby
resign and salute you, each everyone, your
spirit your energy your efforts your decades so
remarkable your all of it goes by so
fast—not even you can grasp—and the leaves! now
you flutter you float you sing you scatter you ascend you
become part of all of it,
you,
the glorious autumn air.

...I can breathe now.

________________________
APPENDIX A

RESEARCH ROAD MAP: TENTATIVE PLAN (11/95)

I. In-depth Interviews

A. Pilot Study (question development & field test, interviews, and transcriptions)
B. File materials with Human Subjects Review Committee
C. Interview Schedule
   1. Identification of participating teachers
   2. Interview #1 with all participants
   3. Interim analysis
      a. preliminary coding and cross-data analysis
      b. search for asymmetry/cognitive dissonance
      c. generation of follow-up questions
      d. prepare participant profiles for verification/member checks
   4. Interview #2 with all participants followed by transcription of tapes
   5. Interim analysis/synthesis
   6. Ongoing review of literature
   7. Invitation to participants for cooperative inquiry, collaborative planning

II. Cooperative Inquiry

A. Self Awareness/Increased awareness phase
   1. Heightened awareness of internal, eternal, temporal dimensions
      of approaching career wind-down: participants keep journals.
   2. Searching for deeper meaning: participants create symbolic
      representations, continue journal writing, list career highlights

B. Collaborative Session:
   1. Getting acquainted/frame awareness/problem setting (audio taped)
   2. Participants meet in dyads, tape conversations while visiting
      galleries and answering focus questions; teachers share
      symbolic representations in Gallery A (audio taped)
   3. Group Meeting (video taped)
      a. Pushing the limits: generation of alternatives for
         conceptualizing career wind-down and exit, including
         personal desires for making a contribution to the profession.
      b. Participants respond to and add to each other’s ideas.
   4. Follow up self interviews; tapes mailed to researcher

III. Final Analysis and Synthesis: Data Management and Writing

A. Cooperative inquiry phases transcribed
B. Making meaning from data: coding, theme identification, analytic methods
C. Making conceptual and theoretical coherence: writing
D. Consideration/Reformulation/Possible transformation
E. Revision and/or validation from participant-collaborators

(Note: Phases I and II above were far less complex and time-consuming than was Phase III,
especially parts B & C—See detailed explanation in Chapter 3.)
APPENDIX B

QUESTIONS FOR IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW #1

Basic Information:
   A. # years teaching experience   B. Sex   C. Year you began to teach
   D. Subject(s) taught            E. Teaching status
   F. Schools where employed        G. Current age

1. Please describe your thoughts and feelings about being an English teacher at this stage in your teaching career. What is it like to be a teacher now? Include as many aspects as you like.

2. Now reflect on your teaching career from its beginning. Do you think there were certain stages or phases you went through? If so, how would you characterize them?

3. Do you see advantages and/or disadvantages to being in your age group in your current teaching situation? Please share your perceptions.

4. How do you perceive your career during the last five years—your satisfactions and dissatisfactions?


6. During your career, what do you consider to be some of your most creative moments?

7. If you have taken educational or professional risks during your career, please highlight them. How do you feel about taking them? What do you think school systems could do to encourage more risk taking—or should they?

8. Describe when and how you began to think about your teaching career coming to its end. What were/are your thoughts, your concerns? Did this realization affect your classroom life? Your engagement in your school as a whole? Your engagement with students? If so, in what ways?

9. How do you think your school system perceives the last years of the teaching career? What mechanisms are in place to best utilize teachers during their most experienced years? What does the system provide which makes teachers look forward to these peak years? Are they peak years?

10. What would you like to see in place for teachers as they approach the end of their teaching careers? What would you like to look forward to? What contribution(s) would you like to make? If the last phase of the teaching career could be reconceptualized, what would it look like?

11. In your opinion, what were the most interesting questions during this interview? Reasons? Can you suggest improvements in the wording of the questions?

12. Any other comments? Topics I haven’t touched upon that should be included in this study?
# APPENDIX C

## COLLABORATION DAY: MORNING INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

*Interviewing/Talking To Each Other*

Very important: Please be sure one of your tape recorders is on.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus Topic</th>
<th>9:45</th>
<th>10:00</th>
<th>10:15</th>
<th>10:30</th>
<th>10:45</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### Living Room

What advice would you give to the board of education or the superintendent, if asked?

(please write main ideas on large pads—provided)

### Upstairs

What guidelines, principles, and values do you think should guide us in rethinking how we end our careers?

(please write main ideas on large pads—provided)

### On Deck

What suggestions do you have for colleagues who are tired, uninvolved, lacking in enthusiasm, or otherwise having a hard time?

### Gallery A: Symbolic Representations

(Art, poetry)

Tess & Nathan

Maxine & Judy

Lee Anne & Betty

### Gallery B: Interview Results

(Summary of What We Said)

Lee Anne & Maxine

Tess & Betty

Judy & Nathan

### Gallery C: Professional Literature Survey

(Summary of What Others Have Said)

Betty & Judy

Nathan & Lee Anne

Tess & Maxine
APPENDIX D

GALLERY PHOTOGRAPH: SYMBOLIC REPRESENTATIONS OF TEACHER-PARTICIPANTS

Photograph of gallery of symbolic representations of teachers on collaboration day. Symbolic representations included a drawing, computer-generated art, poetry, and a game board. The display was created by the researcher.

(Photographer: Tiberiu D. Oabo.)
APPENDIX E

Self Interview Questions:  Me and My Tape Recorder

The Basic Idea: Find a spot to yourself and speak into your tape recorder. This is a closing talk with yourself. As ever, I appreciate your frank and honest responses...

A Few Prompts:

...Right now, just talk about whatever is on your mind.

...Have you enjoyed working on this research project? Which facets did you like the most? the least? Why?

...As you have participated in this project over the past year, have you noticed any effects it has had on the way you think about your own career or about how we end careers? Has it affected you in other ways? If so, would you briefly discuss this topic now?

...What, if anything, would you like to see done with the research results (other than have them tucked away in an obscure dissertation)? Are you interested in furthering these ideas for re-shaping career end and exit? What comes to mind?

...What have you learned about yourself from participating in this project (please share in a way that is comfortable for you)?

...Is there anything else you wish to say or talk about in this self interview? (Please do so now....)

Thank you, thank you, and again, thank you! I hope you enjoyed every part of the day. I'll be in touch. I truly hope that something meaningful to many people will grow out of your excellent contributions.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


College ties: Neighbors want OSU help for area schools (Editorial). (1997, October 3). The Columbus Dispatch, p. 6A.


English Journal, 85 (5), 11-12; 19-73. (September, 1996 edition devoted to experiences of veteran teachers)


Knight, P. J. (1990). *Teachers as leaders: A descriptive study of the peer assistance and review consultant teacher leaders*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, The Ohio State University, Columbus, OH.


McLaughlin, P. (1997, August 19). Aging baby boomers looking for style in reading glasses. The Columbus Dispatch, p. 3B.


Smeltzer, N. J. (1997, September 29). Schools 'magnets' to strengthen OSU area. The Columbus Dispatch, p. 2C.


Viorst, J. (1986). Necessary losses: The loves, illusions, dependencies and impossible expectations that all of us have to give up in order to grow. New York: Fawcett Gold Medal.


Webster's new universal unabridged dictionary (2nd ed.). New York: Barnes & Noble.


Will, G. (1997, April 5). Book on higher education is sobering read. The Columbus Dispatch, p. 10A.


Zimpher, N. L. (1997, October 25). Osu college is committed to help Columbus schools (Letter to the editor). *The Columbus Dispatch*, p. 9A.
INDEXES

Subject Index

academic conversations, 62, 88, 137-138
aging: historical views, 18; in relation to students, 20, 22, 33, 134, 145, 164, 213, 215, 232-233, 239; in relation to younger teachers, 49, 137, 163, 233; physiological, 20, 234-236, 239, 241, 324; relationship to teaching, 13-17, 18, 40, 199, 232; and socioeconomic status, 19; and stereotypes, 40-41; symbolic interactionist views, 20-21, 231
ahaistorical thinking, 23
Algonquin Hotel, 203
alternative work schedules, 307
analysis codes, 81, 97
appropriation of people's lives and ideas, 100-101, 106 (See also ethics in research and reflexive accounts by researcher)
Arbor Day, 213, 218, 219, 225
artifacts (See also field texts and symbolic representations)

baby boomers, 21, 26, 33
Bemreuter Personality Inventory, 18
benchmarks, 33, 36, 68, 121, 321, 328
biases in research, 18, 23, 34, 41-42, 52, 58, 70, 98 (See teacher stereotyping)
black holes, 76-79
board(s) of education, 41, 43, 113, 143, 158, 317; and suggestions for, 281-285, 320, 323; and voting on honorary teacher member of the board, 281, 305, 314, 322
boundaries, 101, 225-226, 292, 296
bureaucracy, 36, 46, 58, 128, 216, 246, 258, 274; and to counteract, 320
Butler University, 65
butterflies, 210, 214, 215, 219-220

Canada, 54
Canadian study, 16
career end, 3, 35; and sense of relief, 68
career exit stage, 55, 267-268; and need to leave with dignity, 41, 320; when teachers should exit, 265-267, 265-67. (See also exiting consciousness)
career stage theories; development of, 34-38; and figurative example, 199
career wind-down stage, 35, 37, 40, 57, 59, 59-267, 302; as defined in this study, 59; deserves more attention, 42, 245, 273, 323; and growth needs, 36
Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 46, 335
case study language, 81-83 (See also language issues)
cedar, lines of support, 210, 218, 219
Citrus College, 303
coda, four meanings of, 297
collaboration day, 96, 247, 276, 286, 302, 322; planning and preparation for, 72, 74, 30-331 (See also cooperative inquiry)
collaborative action research, 31
collective commitment to a cause, 47, 111, 324-325
College of Social Work, The Ohio State University, 15-16.
College Reading and Learning Association, 54
Colorado, 333
community, sense of, 114, 292, 295
comparisons/contrasts, 130-131, 142; to select previous research, 98, 230 (See also Table of Contents)
computer-assisted research, 60, 80, 98; and hypothesis testing, 98
Coney Island, 198
construction of realities, 6, 20, 22, 56, 63, 245;
  by media, 127, 135, 150-151, 159, 214; by
  theorists, 21, 23, 40, 81; career as social
  construction, 37, 39, 227; of adolescence,
  24; of childhood, 24; of middle age, 24;
  shifting, 33, 229 (See also reconstruction
  of realities)
constructivist teacher, 113, 154-160
  container metaphors, 246, 256-257, 293,
  294-295, 296, 312, 335; and definition of,
  292
contradictions/paradoxes, 81, 97, 230, 269
  (See also Table of Contents)
cooperative inquiry, 69, 72
Council for Basic Education, 335
  Council of Experience, 304-310; 313-314;
  316-317
creativity, 50, 228; conditions for, 73, 200-201,
  205, 225; dimensions of, 201-205;
  examples of, 42, 178, 262, 288; in
  research, 64, 66, 69, 76, 301-319
critical incident technique in interviewing, 70
  crystallizing (See legitimation claims)
data analysis methods: allegorical analysis, 96,
  216-223; analogical analysis, 96, 223-229;
  classification, 125; as complex process, 76,
  325; coding process, 76, 79, 84, 97,102
  (See also analysis codes and frequency
  counts); data immersion; interim analysis,
  71, 75; multiple methods used, 60, 71, 86,
  94, 97, 104; and qualities of the
  researcher, 77; recommendations for
  strengthening, 323; sociocultural story
  analysis, 111; theme/motif identification,
  79-80, 96,128, 230; as weak link in
  qualitative research, 76 (See also
  sociopoetics and symbolic analysis)
data collection, 60, 69; and difficulty in
  capturing data, 83, 327; use of audio-
  and/or videotape recording, 69, 71, 73, 75,
  79, 83, 327
data management, 77, 79, 83
demographics, 12-13, 21, 310; and retirement
  projections 2, 5, 310
Department of Research and Development,
  306-307; 310-311; 313
depersonalization, 122, 128, 159, 162, 172-
  173, 178-179, 181, 184, 205, 215, 218,
  245, 246-254, 255, 258, 274, 282, 334
desire to make a contribution, 3, 54, 120, 139,
  146, 205, 261, 300 (See also generativity)
desire for collaboration, 120, 262
devaluation of education, 184-185, 242-246,
  255-256, 257, 258, 274
devaluation of experience, 121, 270
developmental psychology, 19
devil's advocates (use of outside readers), 71
differentiated human development programs,
  308-309
differentiated job design, 273, 321
early exit options, 17, 271, 273, 308
Eastern thought in the garden metaphor, 213,
  219-220, 223, 225, 226, 228
ed-utopias, 319 (See also scenarios)
Emeritus teachers, 311, 316, 329
energy, 236, 238; concern with having
  enough, 121; cumulative demands on, 17,
  43-45, 117, 123, 126, 139, 175, 190, 233,
  234, 236-237, 241; decrease in, 39, 134,
  140, 199, 215, 239; and laws of
  thermodynamics, 238-239
English Journal, 280-281
epistemology, 53, 63
equinox(es), 212, 214, 225, 226
ethics in research, 64, 91, 94, 99, 156, 183
avocations, response to, 63, 84-85, 87
exiting consciousness, 33, 112, 126, 138, 140,
  163, 176, 215, 326
exit interviews, 281, 320, 322
experience, reflecting on, 30; (See also time &
  wisdom of experience)
experimental writing modes, 88-89; examples
  of in this dissertation,116, 133, 193, 208,
  212 231, 242, 259; impressionist tale, 95;
  issues relating to, 89-90, 92, 323;
  pioneering researchers, 87-89, 112, 325
  (See also Index to Poems, The
  Researcher's Story, and Table of Contents)
exiting consciousness, 22, 132-133

Faculty Awareness Ambassadors, 304-306;
  313, 319
fallacy of equivocation, 23
fallacy of false dilemma, 179, 185
field texts, 66, 75 (see also journals and
  symbolic representations)
Fields of Play, 86-89, 92
food and drink: references to, 71, 115, 117, 121, 209, 212, 213, 214, 219, 221, 222, 225, 313, 314, 317, 319, 334; and fortune cookie, relevance of, 173
frequency counts, 80, 97, 241
Four Senses of Interpretation (See symbolic analysis, four-level)
Fl. Wayne, Indiana, 329
future, individuals responsible for, 51, 151-52, 228, 331 (See also collective commitment and personal responsibility)
galleries, 74, 312, 313, 315, 316, 318, 322, 330-331
garden, 208, 211, 314; as metaphor, 39, 95, 208-229 (See also Eastern thought in the garden metaphor)
gatekeepers, 90-91
generativity, 14, 27-28, 57, 225, 273, 321
George Washington University, 65
Germany, 53
glossary, in words of teacher-participant, 96 (See also polyvocal text)
grandfathering, 252-253
graying of the teaching force, 2, 11-13

haiku poem: written by teacher, 209; and interpretation, 213, 219, 222
health issues and concerns, 17, 114, 174, 176, 186-188, 200, 202, 234-236, 266, 321, 324
Holmes Group, The, 273
horizontal career line, 1, 2, 3, 17, 22, 33, 36, 42, 68, 75, 133-134, 144, 152, 182, 227-228, 245, 259, 260, 274, 321, 333
human ecology, 208, 312 (see also human environment and research environment)
human environment, 12, 14, 28, 35, 39, 44-45, 54, 58, 139, 142, 218, 231-232, 280, 314, 331 (See also human ecology & interaction with environment)

human spirit; erosion of, 3, 38, 58; outrage to, 48, 227; revolutionary, 88; and spirit-enhancing, 3, 223
Illinois, 1
immersion: in data, 80, 97
Indiana-Purdue University, branch, 329
Innovation and Opportunity Grants, 306-307; 309; 313; 316
interaction with environment, 201, 214, 227; and growth, 28, 217; with school environments, 32, 34, 37, 46, 48, 145, 167, 228, 333; and creating a more pleasing environment, 145, 214, 315, 324 (See also human environment)
intercalary introductions, 83, 92, 94-95, 112 (See also Table of Contents)
interpretive abilities, 91
interpretivist-constructivist research paradigm, 63 (See also construction of realities and paradigm issues)
textuality, 95, 323
language issues, 81-83, 127, 167; and demonstration in text, 82-83
laws of thermodynamics, 238-239
leaders with vision, 118, 130, 205, 220, 223, 263-265, 271
legitimation claims; and attempt at fairness, 108; authenticity criteria, 108; catalytic authenticity, 108; confirmability, 107; consensus validation, 105; credibility, 107; crisis of, 102-103, 106-107; crystallizing, 81, 103-106; dependability, 107; educative authenticity, 108; epistemological validity, 107; ironic validity, 108; limitations, 108; member checks, 71, 86, 96, 102, 105, 115; multiple methods, 103-109; neopragmatic validity, 108; ontological authenticity, 108; referential adequacy, 105; rhizomatic validity, 108-109; self assessment, 104-105; situated validity, 109; stimulus to action, 108; structural corroboration, 105; tactical authenticity, 108; transferability, 107; triangulation, 26, 104; (cont. next page)
trustworthiness, 105, 107; validity, 103, 301 (See also ethics in research and reflexive accounts)
Life History Survey, 26
limitations, 108, 109-110
literary works, references and allusions to: As
You Like It, 19, 317; The Autocrat at the
Breakfast Table, 317; The Canterbury
Tales, 163; Death of a Salesman, 275;
"Everyone Sang," 173; "First Fig," 113, 148, 154; The Grapes of Wrath, 83, 112;
The Halloween Tree, 325; The Halls of
Justice, 111; Hamlet, 64; "The Love Song
of J. Alfred Prufrock," 43; Macbeth, 1;
"Mending Wall," 292, 296; "The Minister's
Black Veil," 163; "My Native Land," 267;
"Now I Become Myself," 317; Our Town,
327, 330; Paradise Lost, 161; "Paul's
Case, 82; "Provide, Provide," 2; Richard II,
224; The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam, 60;
"Sir Gawain and the Green Knight" or
Arthurian legends, 263; "Speech on His
Seventieth Birthday," 317; "Thanatopsis,"
123, 132; The Unbearable Lightness of
Being, 96; Walden, 42; The Wizard of Oz,
184, 196; "Toward the End," 172, 317;
literature review: as ongoing process, 11, 79,
89, 96; creative reviews, 8; inter-data-
collection review, 11, 59; preliminary, 9-11,
50, 56, 59; purposes of, 6, 10, 98;
recursive process, 98; universe list, 6-7
(See also meta-reviews of literature)
Massachusetts, 333
mastery, sense of, 25, 57, 177, 214, 218, 232,
240
mature integrated thinking, 58; and relationship
to age, 50
mentoring, 36, 139, 146, 203-204, 261, 263
message in actions, 81, 143, 170, 230, 271,
283 (See also Table of Contents)
metaphorical analysis, deeper level needed.
325
meta-reviews of literature, 6-10; 323
methodology, learning about, 64, 78, 88, 91
Michigan, 333
musical references, 47, 93-94, 99, 103, 193,
231, 242
mythological references, 92, 103, 157, 216,
224-227, 259, 304
National Endowment for the Humanities
Summer Seminars and Institutes for
Teachers, 279, 335
National Teacher of the Year Award, 203
New York, 12, 45, 203, 302, 333
New York City Teachers' Mutual Life Insurance
Association, 13
nondata, 160
Ohio Language Arts Teacher of the Year, 181
Ohio State Department of Education, 12
Ohio State University, The, 1, 15, 35, 75, 76
Ohio Teacher of the Year, 203
organism as a whole, 114, 179, 186-188, 208,
224, 226, 256, 275, 292, 315, 319, 320
paradigm issues, 62-64, 85-86, 102-103, 106-
109; critical paradigm, 103, 106, 108; and
personal paradigm identity crisis, 103, 109;
and poststructural paradigm, 103, 108-109
(See also interpretivist/constructivist
research paradigm)
parents, 43, 100, 127, 133, 136, 141, 149,
150, 155, 179, 235, 248, 256, 307, 317,
335
participant selection, 69
patterns, 95, 115, 208-209, 211, 216, 312,
319
personal responsibility, sense of, 114, 136-
137, 151, 153, 164-165, 180, 182, 200,
260, 288, 289, 331
personnel office, 133, 159, 243, 245, 248-254,
320
pilot study, 60, 67; and pilot interviews as
learning experience, 67-68
plants and herbs: bee balm, 210, 215; clematis,
210, 221; cosmos, 210, 215;
chrysanthemum, 319; lamb's ears, 209,
214; lavender, 209, 214; lythrum, 209;
rose, 209, 214, 220-221, 227-228, 319;
rosemary, 209, 214; wisteria, 210, 215,
221; zinnia, 219
poetry, 222; and methods of converting
interview transcripts into poems, 88, 92,
114-115; poetry and gardens, 223 (See
also sociopoetics)
polyvocal text, 92, 95
possible selves concept, 26-27
post-conventional stage of development, 31
practicing what you teach, 123
preretirement preparation programs, 216, 302, 314, 322; day of collaboration as model, 299, 322
preretirement reduction-in-teaching-load program, 302-303, 308
problem finding, 52, 61, 72, 96-97, 158 (See also wisdom)
procrastination and research, 78
professional development: as human development, 54, 278-281; broadly defined, 55; continuing until retirement, 54, 206, 301; implications for, 56, 321
professional stagnation, 49 (See horizontal career line)
Protein teachers: defined, 304; and examples of, 304, 306, 308, 310, 312
pseudo-longitudinal data set, 26
public education, 178, 181, 184, 205, 243, 245-246, 255-257, 266, 292, 309-310; and demanding nature of, 175, 237, effects of current system, 226, 285, 292, 333; need for, 212
public perceptions of teachers, 150-151
purposes of the study, 59, 61
pushing the limits of current thinking, 52, 75, 292-296, 311
readers of this document, 94, 100-102, 105, 110-111
recommendations based on the research, 320-325 (See also teacher recommendations embedded in data)
reconceptualizing career wind-down and exit, 5; activities, 74; as goal, 96; at individual level, 52; concepts which push at limits, 292-295; foundation for, 102, 286-296, 322; guiding beliefs, 287-289; guidelines, 291; link to "possible selves" concept, 27-28; need for, 16; philosophy for, 286-287; principles, 291 (and see 213); purposes of, 290; roadblocks, 291; and social construction, 21; values, 290; (See also reconstruction of realities and scenarios)
reconstruction of realities, 294, 304-319; and by media, 304-305, 309-310; by ritual, 317-319; by socio-historical transformations, 309 (See also reconconceptualizing career wind-down and exit; and ritual)
reflexive accounts by researcher, 61, 64, 81-83, 87, 99-102, 106 (see also "The Researcher's Story" and Table of Contents)
Renaissance Italy, 209
research: design, 66 (See also road map): process as journey, 60, 67, 86, 109; recommendations for training future researchers, 323
research environment, 66, 71, 73 (See also human environment)
researcher voice and positioning, 64, 73, 87-88, 93, 99-102, 106, 230, 286
researcher's story, development of, 87-88;
(See also reflexive accounts)
researcher transformations and reflections, 87 325-335
response data, 81; defined, 72
retirement: experiences of teachers, 166, 176, 183, 196; ideas about continuing involvement with schools, 274, 304, 321; 20-year reduced early retirement plan
retirement practices: demeaning nature of, 165, 167-170, 178, 267; in history, 13; need to leave career with dignity, 59, 170, 267-268; programs as golden handcuff, 22, 163-164, 171, 204; system practices, 171, 218, 267-268, 271, 284-285
rituals, 113-114, 147, 166, 172-173, 213, 316-319; and retirement dinners, 1, 113, 162, 164, 166, 168-170, 268; self-initiated rituals, 166, 268 (See also retirement practices and reconstruction of realities)
roadblocks to progress, 47, 127, 128, 131, 291; ineffective administrators, 118-119, 124, 178
road map, 60, 66, 75, 109 (See also research design)
sabbatical leaves: 152, 159, 204, 250, 252, 254, 260, 269-270, 279, 302; and revised policies, 307, 311, 324
sacred territory, 68, 319
San Francisco, 214
scenarios, 74, 303, 304-319; by Ducharme, 47-48
school buildings and facilities, 48, 145, 214, 227, 312, 316 (See also human ecology & human environment)
secretarial assistance for teachers, 44, 237, 302, 314, 321

367
service pins, 209, 211, 218-219
silent generation, 26
sleep deprivation, 234, 240; and early hour to
awaken on school days, 144, 164, 170,
190, 233-234
snakes, symbolic meaning of, 220, 226-228
socio-historical characteristics, 26, 135, 153,
201, 219, 222, 243
socio-historical constructions, 39, 60, 90, 217,
256, 275, 325, 332 (See also construction
of realities)
sociopoetics, 88, 91-94, 114, 190
solstice(s), 213, 223, 226
Stanford University, 65
State Teachers Retirement System of Ohio, 13,
16
stories: collective, 111; sociocultural, 86, 94,
111; teacher, 82-84, 91 (See also Table
of Contents)
stress and teaching: dysfunctional, 14, 253;
relationship to health, 236, 241; over long
periods of time, 49; sense of increasing
stress, 120; types of stressors in urban
schools, 43-47, 58
structural transformations, 324-325 (See also
transformations)
student absenteeism, 45
substitute teachers, 193, 244
symbolic analysis, four-level: defined, 95-96;
as method, 115, 211
symbolic representations, 69, 72, 74, 115,
126, 139, 144, 156-157, 166-167, 177,
183, 189, 202, 209
synergy, 54
synthesizing, 3, 102, 112, 286
teacher recommendations embedded in data,
130, 138-139, 145-146, 151, 178-179,
182, 205, 261, 328-329
teacher renewal, 30, 38, 113, 148, 152, 278-
281
Teacher-Researchers, 304-307; 309
Teacher Retreat and Contemplation Center,
312-319
teacher shortage, 249, 310-311
teacher stereotyping, 30, 38-42, 140, 240, 260
teacher utilization, 3, 4, 17, 41, 56, 112-113,
116, 159-160, 163, 173, 177-178, 185,
218, 219, 221, 242, 253, 254, 259-260,
272-273, 284, 324, 334
teachers: as collaborators, 72, 96; as
researchers, 158, 160, 304, 305, 322;
characteristics of participating teachers, 69,
73, 100, 112, 238, 257, 259, 272, 275;
concerns about students, 119, 121, 133,
135-136, 149-150, 156, 193, 283;
contributions and recognitions, 116, 122,
140, 149, 152, 153, 159, 175, 181, 200,
202-203; ideas for future research, 120,
158; and identity issues, 121; and respect,
124, 128, 131, 143, 151, 159, 171, 180,
215, 256-257, 261, 277, 282, 283, 305,
323; status within school system, 124;
derived by school system, 56, 118,
122, 171, 266 (See also Protean teachers)
teaching: compared to other professions and
jobs, 15-16, 158, 200, 237, 266, 278, 281,
324
teaching in urban schools: and ability to last for
30 years, 120, 171, 239-240, 265-266,
273; description of, 46, 135-136, 141-
142, 149-150, 153, 165, 193
tentativeness in research, 31, 70, 77, 86
think tank, 305, 330; and mission of
universities, 74
time; and consumption of, 16, 176; the fifth
moment, 106; heightened awareness of,
20, 23, 25, 171, 199, 318; needed for
reflection, 4, 74, 202, 218-219, 318, 321,
325-326; needed for grading, 134, 164,
190; pressure of, 26, 79, 121, 141, 257,
328; sense of passing, 115, 217, 333; shift
in perspective of, 27, 217, 220, 326
transaction, defined, 63, 84
transactional reading and response, as
research method, 63, 84-85, 87 (See
also evocations)
transactional speculations, 301
transcribing activities, 68, 71, 74-75, 83, 327
transcripts: converted to poem, 190-191, 193,
195, 197; excerpts from, 148, 248-249;
reconstruction based on, 174, 250, 251,
252
transferability, possibilities of, 5 (See also
legitimation criteria)
transformational learning, 51, 298-300, 324;
key tenets, 51-52
transformations: in perspective, 57-58, 86, 90,
207, 225; nature of 220 (See also
researcher transformations and Chapter 7)
transitions to retirement, 113, 139, 146-147, 267, 318
travel award, 305, 313
triangulation (See legitimation claims)
troublesome thoughts, 1, 75-79, 81, 85, 131, 207, 242, 268, 293
truth, constructive nature of, 64; and role of faith, 62 (See also construction of realities & reconstruction of realities)

United States Census Bureau, 26
University of Akron, 13

university-related topics, 32, 53, 64, 88, 90-91, 116, 129, 131, 148-149, 175, 203, 243-245, 256, 261, 269, 329, 335; and teacher concerns about, 150-151, 155, 159
University of Illinois, 53
University of Kentucky, 329
University of Melbourne, 53

university-school collaborations: called for, 46; need for more sharing of information, 327-328

Vietnam generation, 26
Volgograd, Russia, 335

walls (See boundaries)
wisdom, 227-228; about to be lost, 53, 206, 288; elusive nature of, 115, 275, 329; failure to seek it, 41-42, 179; grounded, 54; of experience, 4, 74, 177, 213, 216, 232, 275, 276-280, 308, 315, 330; of practice, 53, 72, 125-127, 288; of the teacher, 50, 155, 177, 206, 222, 229, 320, 324; prevailing, 221, 293; problems in identifying, 53, 275, 321; research on, 50-54, 303

working conditions: demeaning nature of, 44; in urban schools, 45, 144
writing: as method of inquiry/discovery, 88, 323; mixed genres, 89, 94; process, 86-87, 123 (See also experimental writing modes)
youth-oriented culture, 40, 183, 229, 239, 240, 288
zeitgeist, 18, 23-24, 48, 58, 110, 274, 309

Index to Poems

"Choice: A Journal Entry (21 May 1996)," sociopoem, 195
"Do You See What I'm Saying?" sociopoem, 191
"Dorothy," by Tess, 196
"I Have Loved My Colleagues," by Tess, 192
"Holly and the Ivy: A Song of Many Voices, The," polyvocal sociopoem, 193
"InnisWood Metro Garden, Volunteer's Log," by Felicia, 209-210
"Little Pieces of Wisdom," by researcher, 330
"On the Cusp of Retirement," by Tess, 197
"One Little Remark," sociopoem, 190
"Penciling It In," by Tess, 189
"Postscript," by researcher, 336
"Researcher Song," by researcher, verse i, 231, verse ii, 242, verse iii, 259
"Retirement," by Tess, 198
"Retirement Banquet," by researcher, frontispiece
"Undelivered Lecture," by Tess, 194

Index to Names

Allen, D. R., 13
Alexander, Christopher, work cited, 312
Altheide, D. L., 106
Arnabie, T. M., 61, 70, 73, 75, 79
Applebee, A. N., 47, 242
Arends, R., 46
Arlin, P. K., 52, 97, 292, 295
Ary, D. K., 6, 9, 10
Asimov, I., 224, 226
Atchley, study cited, 22
Athanases, S., 85, 301
Auromma, F. V., 12, 16, 22
Austin, D. A., 89
Avery, C. M., 13, 302

Bader, J. E., 13
Bailey, L., 221
Baker, S., 115, 211
Balian, E. S., 6, 9
Baltes, P. B., 53, 57
Barber, M. S., 9, 13, 22, 333
Bausch, N. L., 43, 44, 49, 241
Beach, R., 85
Gordon, study cited, 21
Greene, study cited, 18
Grossman, J., 245
Gruenfeld, Lee, 111
Guba, E. G., 4, 62, 63, 64, 103, 107, 108
Guerrero, S. J., 49
Guyton, J. W., 35
Haberman, work cited, 45
Hackman, J. R., 73
Hagedorn, L. S.
Hagstrom, D., 34
Hakahara, D., 236
Hall, G. E., 55
Halpin, G., 49, 242
Hamilton, D., 74
Hart, M., 223
Harvey, William, work cited, 186
Heim, P., 13, 302
Heinberg, F., 217, 225, 226, 318
Helms, D. B., 50, 51, 234, 235, 236, 242
Henry, study cited, 21
Herndon, J., 116, 123, 128, 129, 131
Hesse-Biber, S., 80, 98
Hips, E. S., 49, 242
Hoagland, M., 238
Hobhouse, 209, 213, 214, 219
Hohenbrink, J., 30
Holmes, Oliver Wendell, 317
Hothersall, D., 186
Huberman, M., 2, 3, 5, 8, 22, 34, 37, 38, 39, 42, 58, 59, 77, 79, 86, 97, 101, 240, 272, 273, 275
Hughes, R., 6
Hunt, M., 26, 187
Jablin, F. M., 13, 302
Jacobs, L. C., 6, 9
James, W., 27, 122
Janesick, V. J., 6, 7
Jekyll, Gertrude, 209, 214, 219, 221, 319
Jesus of Nazareth, named as influential leader, 223
Johnson, J. M., 108
Johnson, M., 168, 292, 323, 325
Joseph, P. B., 302
Julien, N., 154, 217, 217, 218, 219, 220, 222, 224, 225, 227, 314, 318
Julius, N., 13
Jung, C. G., work cited, 19, 33
Kafka, Franz, work cited, 249
Kaku, M., 76, 77, 78
Karp, D. A., 13, 20, 22
Keary, study cited, 21
Kerr, R., work cited, 77
Khayyam, Omar, 60
Kitty, K. M., 15, 16
Kindersley, D., 310
Kinney, D. P., 14
Kiremidjian, D., 304
Knight, P. J., 25
Knowles, M., 19, 33
Kohlberg, work cited, 28
Kottler, J. A., 49, 242
Krathwohl, D. R., 6, 9
Krauss, H. H., 13
Kuhlen, study cited, 18
Kundera, Milan, 94, 96, 249
Kunstler, J., 95, 223, 227, 312, 315
Lakoff, G., 168, 292, 323, 325
Lancy, D. F., 6, 8, 9, 10
Lass, A. H., 304
Lather, P., 75, 76, 78, 112
Levinson, D., work cited, 23, 25
Lincoln, Y. S., 4, 6, 7, 62, 63, 64, 68, 91, 95, 101, 102, 103, 106, 107, 108
Lindbloom, D., 55
Livers, J., 49
Loevinger, work cited, 28, 31, 51
Longman, study cited, 21
Lortie, D. C., 43, 241
Loucks, S., 55
Lowell, Amy, 208
Lowenstein, L., 49, 242
Lozier, G. G., 13
Lytie, V., 43, 241
Maclean, R., 48, 49, 242
Maddi, S., 18
Markus, H., 27, 28, 33, 57, 273
Marshall, H. H., 4, 6, 8, 9, 10, 66, 70, 76, 77, 79, 85, 105, 107
Martin, K. J., 15
Mastor, A., work cited, 27, 51
Mathis, C., 2, 14
Matters, W. A., 242
Mayher, J. S., 3, 43, 83, 84, 85, 87, 123
McDonnell, J. H., 34, 35, 36, 37, 42, 112, 272, 273, 274
McKinley, J., 5
McLaughlin, P., 234
McMillan, J. H., 6, 9, 10, 11, 70, 76, 77, 80, 96, 97, 104, 110
Meacham, D., 302
Meredith, D., 123
Merriam, S. B., 51
Mertz, M., major advisor, 99
Mezirow, J., work cited, 51, 297
Miles, M. B., 77, 79, 86, 97
Millay, E. St. Vincent, 154
Miller, Arthur, 275
Milton, John, 161
Minor, C., 34
Mishler, E. G., 70, 72
Morse, J. M., 6, 9, 10
Meyers, B., 187
Mozart, Wolfgang A., 47
Muhammad, named as influential leader, 223
Murray, B. J., 13, 302

Nash, work cited, 48
Nelson, J., 53
Neugarten, B., work cited, 19, 27, 33
Newell, G., 84
Newmann, F. M., 302
Nixon, M., 2, 16
Norris, J. E., 18, 23, 27, 240

O’Hare, F., 123
Oja, S. N., 26, 31, 32, 33, 34, 57, 273
Onosko, J., 302
Ornstein, A. C., 50
Ovid, 11

Patton, M. Q., 6, 8, 9, 54, 67, 70, 77, 110
Paul, S., named as influential leader, 223
Pearce, J., 16, 274, 303
Perl, S., 55
Perkins, G., 115, 211
Perry, work cited, 28
Perry, E. A., 38, 39, 40, 41, 44, 240, 241
Peterson, W., work cited, 34
Phillips, study cited, 18
Pilgrimage, work cited, 23, 28
Pine, G. J., 31, 32, 33
Pratt, M. W., 18, 23, 27, 240
Price, J. R., 34, 35
Punch, M., 64
Ralph, G. M., 54, 273, 303
Razavi, A., 6, 9
Reason, P., 72
Reiman, A. J., 29, 30, 31, 32, 34, 59
Reque, J., 1, 3, 22, 331, 332, 333, 334
Richards, L., 76, 98
Richards, T. J., 76, 98
Richardson, L., 64, 69, 81, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 95, 97, 101, 103, 104, 108, 111, 114, 115, 323
Riley, R., 54, 273
Rose, D., 89, 90, 94
Rose, M., 109
Rossman, G. B., 4, 8, 8, 9, 10, 66, 70, 76, 77, 79, 85, 105, 107
Roth, N., 40, 41
Rosenblatt, L., 63, 84, 85, 301
Rowley, J., 273
Rusch, E. A., 38, 39, 40, 41, 44, 240, 241

Sarton, May, 317
Sasser-Coen, J. R., 50
Sassoon, Siegfried, 173
Scheffer, M., 220, 221
Scheirich, J. J., 70, 320
Schlossberg, N. K., 18
Schon, D. A., 72, 74, 326
Schulz, R., 20
Schumacher, S., 6, 9, 10, 11, 70, 76, 77, 80, 96, 97, 104, 110
Schwandt, T. A., 63, 89
Schwarzschild, K., work cited, 77
Scott, D., 52, 53
Scott, Sir Walter, 267
Scriven, study cited, 43
Sager, J. E., 2, 16
Shakespeare, William, 19, 64, 224, 317
Shaw, George Bernard, cited in conversation, 256
Sheehy, G., 4, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 28, 33, 34, 37, 56, 57, 240
Sherrill, J., 30
Shulman, L., 65
Small, J., 297
Smeltzer, N. J., 327
Smith, J., 53, 57
Smith, L. R., 15
Smith, S. C., 12
Smith, S. P., 14
Smithies, C., 112
Snell, W. E., 49
Spence, G., 36, 42, 58
Sprinthall, N. A., 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 59, 324
St. Pierre, E. A., 72, 79
Stafford, William, 172, 317
Stahl, N. A., 53
Stake, R. E., 77
Steffy, B. E., 41, 42, 44, 54, 55, 97, 242, 272,
273, 274, 311, 322, 328, 329, 333
Steinbeck, John, 83, 112
Steinberg, D., 233
Sternberg, R., 245
Sternberg, R. J., 50, 51, 52
Stevenson, R. B., 302
Strauss, A., 6, 7, 9
Strom, S. M., 241
Strong, study cited, 18
Super, D., work cited, 34
Taft, Mary L., 1, 58, 331, 332, 333, 334, 335
Tartle, J. M., 85, 113, 154
Telesco, P., 218, 220
Thies-Sprinthall, L., 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 34, 324
Thomas, J., 76
Thompson, J., work cited, 87
Toffler, A., 288
Tornabene, E., 80
Troyka, L. Q., 186
Turner, J. S., 50, 51, 234, 235, 236, 242
Twain, Mark, 317
Vaill, P. B., 243
Vanderbilt, 13
Viorst, J., 141
Vonk, study cited, 38
Walker, L. J., 48, 242
Watzlawick, P., 113, 143
Weiner, L., 45, 46, 242, 273
White, J. L., 48, 242
Wilder, Thornton, 327
Will, G., 256
Willie, R., 20, 22, 25, 33, 240
Wilson, K. G., 48, 242
Wilson, N., 55
Winkler, M. G., 11, 317
Wolcott, H. F., 71

Yarger, S., 46
Yennie-Donmoyer, J., 89, 325
Yoels, W. C., 20
Zehn, S. J., 49, 242
Zimpfer, N. L., 46, 55, 242, 301, 311, 328

373