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CIRCLES AND LINES: COMPLEXITIES OF LEARNING IN COMMUNITY

A Dissertation Presented

by

SARA SCHUPACK

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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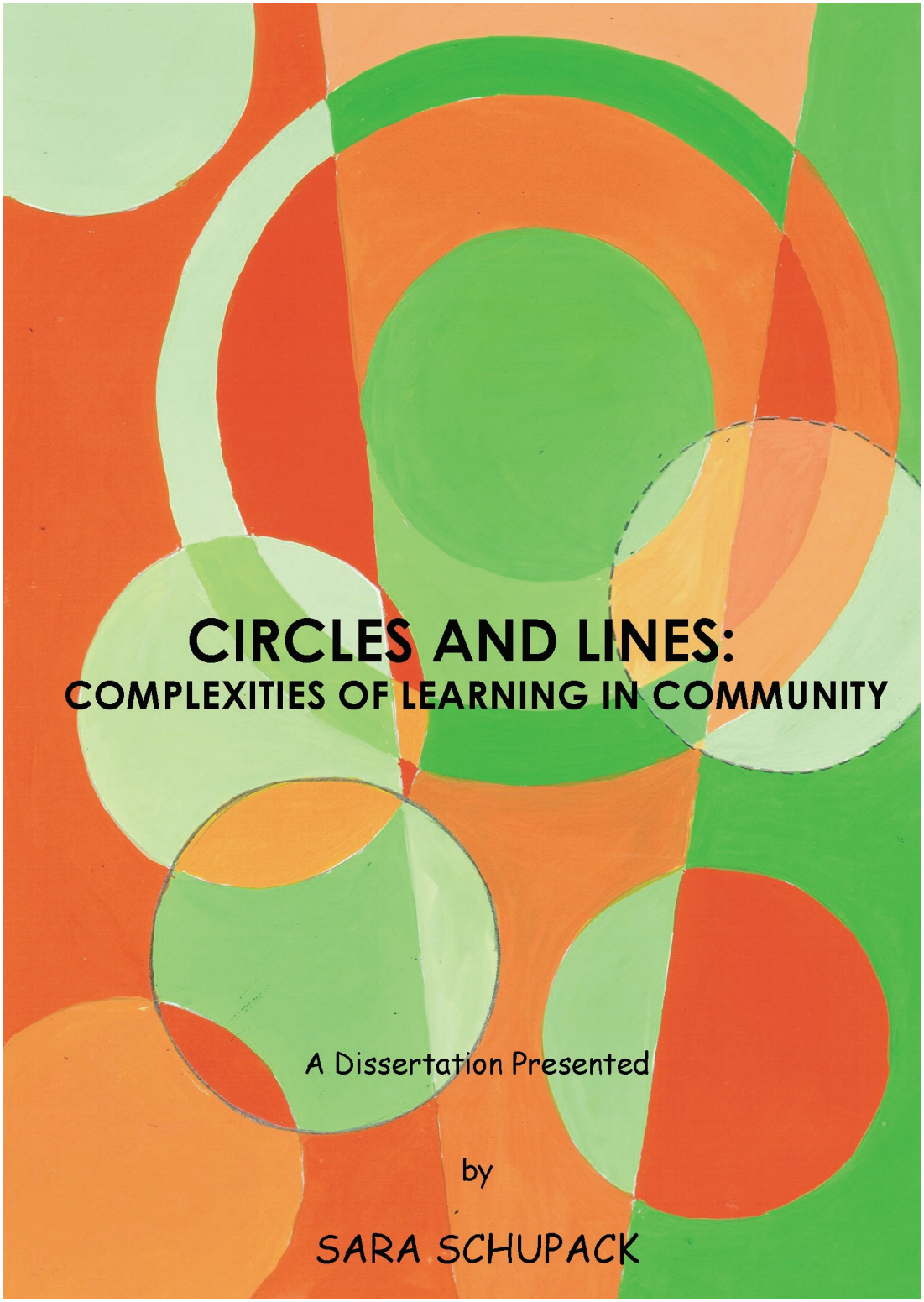

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SARA SCHUPACK

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my mother, Barbara Schupack, my very first teacher, from whom I learned the most lasting, important lessons about teaching; unconditional love was one of the lessons.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you to my committee, for their unswerving commitment to deep, meaningful scholarship and for staying with me. My participants made this. I will always admire their courage, intelligence, and community spirit. I thank my friends and family, who have offered me wisdom, humor, healthy distractions and insightful support. My California family of friends –too many to list, you know who you are -- your love and support carry me through my days. My cohort, Karen Tallman, Denise LaFrance, Danette Day, and Wendy Keyser, we've cheered each other on and I will always be cheering for you. Jana Silver, thank you for your realism and your understanding. We've shared some good laughs and frustrations that have reminded me that I am not alone. The generosity and resourcefulness of you, Jen Dolan, helped me through. If it weren't for you, I might not have known first-hand about learning communities or who the best local practitioners were. Peter Elbow, you demonstrate in all that you do how the mind and heart can both be vibrant, and that one needn't be in competition with the other. Your searching, generous scholarship and friendship will forever inspire and nourish me. Karen Tallman, you have been my steady critical friend, without whom I do not think I could have managed. We have enjoyed such fascinating, probing, life-giving conversations, and our collaboration is not over. I feel honored to call you a friend, and grateful for all of the meticulous, caring, and enthusiastic help you have offered me. I thank the Schupack family - my parents and two sisters, Barbara and Mel, Laura and Karen -- and also Laurent, Maxim, Paul, Jon, and Anna. Willa, Lilly, and Zoe, you too. Jolie, our adventure birdie, I think you've heard my transcripts and lonely ramblings more than anyone else. Your company has gladdened me. So much of what I know about love and community I

learned from my family. All of the physical and emotional help, the good meals and giggles and ideas, they flavor this work; they enrich all that I know and report in this document. And I give an extra big hug of gratitude to my son, Teddy, who has put up with a very distracted mom for a significant chunk of his childhood. Teddy, you keep me going with your bouncy, creative spirit and your happy belief in me. I know you understand that no matter how busy I am or how complicated my life seems, my love for you never wavers. You have taught me about responsiveness, joy, and balance.

ABSTRACT

CIRCLES AND LINES: COMPLEXITIES OF LEARNING IN COMMUNITY

FEBRUARY 2013

SARA SCHUPACK, B.A., YALE UNIVERSITY

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Directed by: Professors Barbara Madeloni and Maria José Botelho

Following is a study that explores learning in community in a fully-integrated, team taught course at a community college in New England. These classes, Learning Communities (LCs) represent rich opportunities for exploring and practicing democratic education. From a theoretical grounding in social learning theories and an exploration into learning and community as active, ongoing phenomena, I present narrative, relational research as enactment. Data from field notes, interviews, focus groups and researcher reflections inform findings and analysis. I represent this as an experience parallel to -- not claiming either to mirror or replace -- the experiences of the other participants. In these findings, I identify a duality of circles and lines, with circles representing open inquiry, community, collaboration, and democratic discourse. Lines represent reification, hierarchical and binary thinking, and the threat of positivism. Long hours, intense interactions, openness to collaboration, flexible pedagogy, and emerging curriculum all make for complicated relationships that allow for questions, confusions and tensions around what it means to know, who gets to decide, and what are the parameters and epistemologies of academic disciplines. I hope, through this text, to report, celebrate, and participate in these conversations.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

From the beginning, I have been interested in in-between spaces and the middle. I am a middle child, one who played the older sister, the younger sister, the diplomat, and the peacekeeper. I rejected competition, which my two sisters engaged in sometimes fiercely. I can't be sure if I failed early on in both their intellectual and physical challenges, and so bowed out and justified that with a moral higher ground, and/or there was something repellant to me about competition from the start, or a little of both, but I have always valued compromise, negotiation, and supportive relationships. I have come to recognize how hard it can be to make these things happen, and how many obstacles interrupt such efforts. In community colleges, I have found teachers dedicated to creating supportive classrooms and institutions, students open to strong community building, and students and teachers together who care deeply about teaching and learning. I started my graduate work interested in investigating community within community college classrooms, and that is indeed what I have done here in this document. What has developed over the past four years, and I expect will continue to change shape for the rest of my life, is how I conceptualize learning and community and the different ways I find for investigating these concepts.

I'm also in the middle of structuralism and post-structuralism, a humanist and post-humanist stance. I was an undergraduate in the '80s. I read psychoanalytic and feminist literary theory way back then, and it must have settled in me in some way, even though I don't think I understood it all and haven't read much of it since. I had a lot of

catching up to do when I returned to graduate school in 2008 in my early forties. I only know what I know. “Information anxiety is produced by the ever-widening gap between what we understand and what we think we should understand” (Gergen, 1991, 2000, citing Richard Saul Wurman, p. 76). I find that certain feelings about what knowledge is, how we learn, what it means to be in community, ideas that just seem to make sense to me, that I think I’m getting to experientially and intuitively, seem to coincide with post-structuralism and post-humanism, yet at the same time, I’m struggling against some older ideas about identity, humanity, and objectivity that have also settled in me. I still like to talk of being human (although the Learning Community (LC) that I observed for this study challenged me to look beyond a human/nature binary to an even larger community beyond human). I think I understand the danger. If I say “I’m only human” or “we’re all human”, what unstated assumptions am I operating under? Why do I get to decide what constitutes human and who or what qualities do I leave out? But I still feel in myself and others a need to seek both commonality and uniqueness, belonging and autonomy, all in a quest to find a self and be true to a self. I can understand identity as historical and contextual to a point, but can’t give up the notion that I have a core self and so do the people I get to know, including characters in literature. This is how I make sense of myself and human relationships. I understand Kenneth Gergen’s (1991, 2000) description of postmodernism as bringing a loss of the self. He connects that with what he calls ‘social saturation’. We are inundated, due to digital technological inventions, with an overwhelming amount of social interactions and sources of information. Too many directions, too many possible selves, can feel overwhelming. I do not agree with his implication that postmodernism is a direct result of technology, but I do share the feeling

that he never directly addresses yet alludes to, of having the carpet tugged out from beneath me. He seems to try to stay positive, but uses a lot of negative language of loss, and that rings true for me.

Many of the theorists whom I read are wary of –isms, as am I. Any idea as –ism becomes stuck, reified, and then taken for granted in some ways, thus running the risk of turning trite or at best unexamined. Postmodernism seems to operate in such a way that, with the emphasis on process over product, it takes a questioning stance that always interrogates itself. It perhaps shouldn't even be expressed as an –ism at all. Still, not all practitioners do this successfully or consistently. It seems almost impossible to question everything. I do not think I always enjoy or fully understand texts that unravel and loop back upon themselves, even though this text does so sometimes. My relationship to postmodernism is an uncomfortable one. This document engages with postmodernism without standing squarely and firmly within it.

Identity and selfhood are troubling terms, I have found, and so is community. I thought of it in entirely positive terms when I started out my recent studies, but have come to recognize legitimate fears, namely around the idea of homogeneity and loss of autonomy. I hold stubbornly to the idea of a solid and consistent self, but am moving in the direction of appreciating multiple, socially defined selves. I hold to a cheery, simple view of community, while moving towards recognition of how its meaning also is contextual and situated, and not always positive or ever simple. I am asking questions that are new to me. Does one give up the self to join a community? If there are many selves or situated selves, what does this mean for community, and does that mitigate

issues of homogeneity and by implication, hegemony? I explore these questions more than answering them in this work, as I expect I will be doing for a long time to come.

I also explore truth and knowing, sometimes craving the generalizations that I grew up with, while learning suspicion of objective and transferable truths. I don't eschew psychological findings that, after data collection, make general claims about tendencies in human thought and behavior. Findings on how basic metaphorical thinking is to us, even across cultures, confirm my own experiences and play a central role in my work. Science is never complete. The findings are open to challenge and revision. A theory that is tested, put into practice, and still proves robust and useful has earned respect and authority, but that does not mean that it represents a dominant or an unwavering truth. Some findings I chuckle at because they seem obvious. I often say that writers are the first psychologists. Freud didn't write *Oedipus* after all. I have always valued aesthetic and literary ways of knowing. What appeals to me about literature is the aesthetic use of language, the power and beauty of unique details, and also a sense of universal truths. I get a jolt of recognition – that's me, or someone I know, or humanity. Creative and analytical writing I believe can merge, but their approaches in some ways are direct opposites. In creative writing, you're supposed to "show. Don't tell". The truths I find in literature occur in my relationship to the text (and therefore someone else might have a different experience of the text). Analytical writing is meant to be as explicit and direct as possible. These divisions represent more of a continuum, I believe, than clearly divided polarities. The tension between the two always exists in texts and in some more than others. This document may contain some ambiguity and prevarication between creative and analytical approaches and humanist and post-humanist thinking. This is

where I am in my knowing as I write. I do not fall passively into these middles, however, out of confusion. My middling stance also represents a conscious resistance to argument and positivism. I embrace questions and avoid closed and finite answers, but these moves meet their own resistance. The authority of the academy and expectations that I perceive as coming from there affect my thinking and my work. I struggle against positivism in myself and in educational theory and research. I struggle against a culture of either/or argumentation.

Deborah Tannen (1998) writes of what she calls our 'argument culture', saying it assumes that:

> The best way to discuss an idea is to set up a debate; the best way to cover news is to find spokespeople who express the most extreme, polarized views and present them as 'both sides'; the best way to settle disputes is litigation that pits one party against the other; the best way to begin an essay is to attack someone; and the best way to show you're really thinking is to criticize. (pp 3-4)

Argument culture limits our inquiries and leaves out everyone who doesn't enjoy or doesn't feel confident communicating in such a combative way. Tannen introduces Asian thinking, suggesting that the Western notion of self versus society is not the same in Asian and other cultures. In general, they value harmony while the West values opposition. "One problem with polarized dualisms is that areas of overlap or similarity are obscured as we look only for points of contrast" (Tannen, 1998, p. 219). "The tendency to value formal, objective knowledge over relational, intuitive knowledge grows out of our notion of education as training for debate" (p. 270). She connects that to doctoral programs and the public "defense". In school, 'original' ideas supposedly come from attacking someone else's view, and so we tend to overlook nuance and distort or

misrepresent others' views. Arguing is easy. "Academics, too, know that it is easy to ask challenging questions without listening, reading, or thinking very carefully" (p. 271).

Agonistic, binary thinking is not just anti-intellectual and simplistic, but it is also dangerous. It is this hyper competitive tone that our current media seem to think is entertaining, and news seems mainly about entertainment. The argument culture is what gives power and voice to hateful people such as Bryan Fischer, a spokesman for the gay-bashing American Family Association, whose church turned into a "professorial, debate-society culture" and who "relies on polarizing messages that catch the attention of reporters" (as cited in May-Chang, 2011, p. 26). The extreme end of not listening respectfully yields fanaticism, which Amos Oz warns is contagious, leading to the "anti-fanatic fanatic, anti-fundamentalist zealots, anti-jihad crusaders" (2011, p. 50). Oz speaks of people not as islands but peninsulas, indicating that when we recognize our relational existence, we can save ourselves. We are always connected to family, culture, and language as we face an ocean. Oz explains:

> In every house, in every family, in every human condition, in every human connection we actually have a relationship between a number of peninsulas…These two peninsulas should be related and at the same time they should be left on their own… A sense of humor, the ability to imagine the other, and the capacity to recognize the peninsular quality of every one of us may be at least a partial defense against the fanatic gene that we all contain (p. 51).

Clearly many of our elected officials don't practice civil discourse or respectful communication across differences that we have every right to expect, and the media in various forms do not reward or celebrate such communication. Historically individualistic and isolationist, the United States can no longer operate with self-determination. "Now we live in an integrated world" (Bai, 2010). For our political and

social lives, for the health of our planet, we need to think across differences and disciplines. The kind of integration and community that is crucial for a humane world and caring generations can be found, I feel, in Learning Communities (LCs) at community colleges. With open admissions and dedication to student success and diversity, community colleges represent perhaps quintessential democratic education. The LCs that I observe bring people together in circles of learning that can challenge agonistic and binary thinking and behaviors. This is no easy task, and I am as interested in the challenges and obstacles as in the successes.

I will have a lot to say about circles later on, but will mention here that as I attempt to push against binaries and linearity, both in my theoretical framework and my research practices, I work in a circular or iterative manner. The text may appear more linear than my process, for reasons of clarity and perhaps also due to my current limitations as an experimental thinker and writer. Picture a spirograph -- that toy of yesterday when a pen inserted into a plastic template was spun around and around, each turn adding complexity to the spiraling picture. Similarly I have cycled through my theories, my data, my grounded theories, my representations of data, and my analyses, questioning, adding, editing, reworking my thinking at each step. I pull in my previous studies, life experiences -- including over twenty years in classrooms --and specific details from this particular study. All inform the product that I present on these pages. Time, I have found, is not always linear. I hope to represent the spiraling in order to acknowledge this process, without leaving the reader or myself dizzy.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

"When the ideal of community is adhered to with consistency and determination it is a source of serious and irresolvable tensions" (Tinder, 1980, p. 1).

Introduction

In the following theoretical background, I discuss concepts that I have encountered throughout my investigation of community. Since my research and professional focus is on classrooms, and I have found that community and learning go hand in hand, I begin with an exploration of what knowing and learning mean. I have come to see some of my key terms -- community, democratic discourse, and metaphor -- as verbs instead of nouns, as actions and processes that are ongoing and never complete. For clarity in my mind and for my readers, I have separated the terms and explored each, one at a time in a linear fashion. Yet the act of defining terms seems to place them into static, set forms, the very nominalization that I resist. Reification, or nominalization, and resistance to it, are processes within a larger dynamic that I explain soon. I would like to emphasize here that all of my key terms are interrelated in complicated ways, in spite of the artificial separation of them in my discussion.

In this theoretical background, I first discuss my belief that learning is social and situated. I then talk about community, and how democratic discourse fits in to that and what that means for classrooms. I use the word 'conversation' in metaphorical ways, partly to build upon Bakhtin's (Bakhtin, 1981; Holquist, 1990) dialogism as it applies to my thinking and research practices. I explain this, and then, since I feel that learning and community go together, I briefly explain how that is so. My views do not rise from

spontaneous generation, but exist within choices of paradigms and lenses, some of those choices perhaps being initially unconscious or intuitive, therefore, I feel compelled to write about how we know what we know, what I mean by truth, and my overarching concept of dualities. Next, I discuss interdisciplinarity, focusing on fully-integrated Learning Communities (LCs) and ways in which they offer metaphorical and transformational thinking and experiences.

Learning is Social and Situated

I take learning to be social and situated (Cole, Engestorm, & Vasquez, 1997; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wells, 1999). Learning is a process. It is the journey, not the destination. It is part of its context, part of social practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). How we think about teaching, learning, and knowing determines what and how we teach, learn and know.

Because learning can't be separated from its context, generalized meanings aren't better or more valid than local ones. "Learning is an integral and inseparable aspect of social practice" (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 31). Dewey's pragmatism suggests the same, that any inquiry must come from and return to experience, or else it is useless to us (Stuhr, 1990). "The generality of any form of knowledge always lies in the power to renegotiate the meaning of the past and future in constructing the meaning of present circumstances" (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 34). In this sense, 'situated' does not only mean one local context, but larger memberships, including culture and history (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Basic human social competence has to do with knowing what and when one context is, opposed to another, which includes recognizing boundaries (Erickson & Schultz, 1997). These researchers point out that contexts are defined by the interactions

of people, not just the setting. Context includes language we use and the physical positions we assume.

Lave and Wenger (1991) say that learning involves the whole person acting in the world. By focusing on practice, or praxis, we are looking at interdependency of agent and world. For Dewey, the separations of self from environment, knowledge from experience, are artificial and misleading (Stuhr, 1990). "One way to think of learning is as the historical production, transformation, and change of persons" (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 51). Learning isn't one-way or merely internalized. Understanding and experience interact constantly and are in flux. "The notion of participation thus dissolves dichotomies between cerebral and embodied activity, between contemplation and involvement" (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 52). We don't lose sight of the person; there is still a focus on the person, but as "person-in-the-world" (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Wells (1999) asserts that learning is collaborative, and as such, discourse in all forms (not just writing) should be central. He says that inquiry is about applicable outcomes, connecting school to the real world. Collaboration also has an affective side: excitement from sharing, learning, and maintaining and developing identity (Wells, 1999). Building on Dewey and Vygotsky, Wells says,

> To summarize this view of education, as it applies to schooling, therefore, we might characterize it as the creation of a collaborative community of practice, in which, through assisted participation in appropriate activities, students undertake a 'semiotic apprenticeship', as they individually reconstruct the resources of the culture as tools for creative and responsible social living in this and the wider community (p. 137).

Community

An overview: I see community as any gathering of people (geographically or virtually) who, through conversations, enact, create, or represent learning. We are always in community, and often carry community within us, but not every collection of people is communal. A failing community is one where oppression or hierarchies overpower the possibility of inquiry. Tinder (1980) says that society, with its action-oriented goals, is counter to community, so we constantly live with a tug between our communal needs and other needs. Since relationships evolve and change, any gathering of people has the potential for community. Included in the term is a community ideal, which, being an ideal, is never fully reached. The path towards that ideal is revealed through intentionality and awareness, and this requires democratic discourse. If we strive for the ideal, we are on our way. Awareness means looking at the communities that we are part of, our roles within them, and the communication that takes place. The ideal is a gathering of people where multiple voices and perspectives are heard and acknowledged, where identity, goals, and purposes are negotiated and there is room for silence, conflict, and discomfort; these are addressed, not smoothed over or hidden. An ideal community may not be harmonious at all times, but it recognizes the value of community. There are goals, visions, and purposes shared by the whole group, but these don't cancel autonomy or individual dreams. Any community has the hope and the potential for its own ideal.

I take the notion of a community ideal from Tinder (1980). Community and culture are not identical, but both are unfinished and imperfect. Culture is not fixed, according to Bruner (1996), but always changing. Each culture deals with change differently. "What they all have in common is the dilemma of imperfection: keeping faith

in the ability to change for the better while knowing that a final and settled end can never be attained" (Bruner, 1996, p. 97).

Community is something we do, not something we find or take. Tinder suggests an active, verb-quality of community when he says that "It must be more impermanent, personal, and elusive. It must be a reality partaking of movement and freedom" (Tinder, 1980, p. 17). Tinder says human beings by nature question society, see flaws in it, and search for their own being and the being of others, so community is inquiry. Can we say there is a natural way to be human? I accept Tinder's reflections on what it means to be human, because of the ongoing, negotiated, complex qualities that he describes; I need to say something about humanity as I make sense of learning and community -- human endeavors -- but I do hope to remain open, and take a reflective, questioning stance, not a didactic or closed argument. This, I believe, stays true to the very inquiry that Tinder describes. He says that inquiry is communal. Its purpose is to ease alienation, to merge or harmonize consciousness. To merge consciousness is also to merge solitary and dialogic efforts, which means reflection and communication are part of the same activity in Tinder's view. Because "being" is our goal, it is never totally comprehensible. Truth is in all of inquiry, not just in its results, says Tinder. If we separate truth from the questions leading to it, we objectify being and lose truth. In his warning against focusing on product over process, he again shows the active nature of community, the need to treat it as a verb. He goes on to say that community is not an object. "Community is inherently unfinished" (p. 81). He tells us that community is not a product of an activity, but the activity itself (Tinder, 1980).

To say something is a 'sign of community' implies that some collections of people are 'more' community than others, or that there are false communities. Certainly the word 'community' has become a facile cliché, where by naming the word, one assumes one has invoked the ideal. My mother had a good laugh over the glossy brochure for a 'retirement community' that she said smelled like old food just like they all do. My study looks at 'community colleges' and 'learning communities', both terms that can either complacently accept an unexamined view of community, or work at investigating and renewing its meaning. What draws me to these sites is the word and the activity of community, and I will show later how much, in LCs, efforts move beyond complacency to very exciting places. I've noticed suspicion of the word 'community', as if it assumes homogeneity or assimilation. I will talk about that shortly, but will say that while I think those suspicions are well founded, I would like to reclaim the word. I see the hope, the potential of the community ideal in all gatherings of people, while recognizing the specific components and efforts necessary to move closer to the ideal. The community ideal includes plurality and tolerance, according to Tinder (1980), qualities which I associate with democracy. Tinder's tolerance, as I discuss later, is about space, silence, listening, and accepting differences; it is not simply about putting up with, while not engaging with, the other. Communication is the medium for community and learning.

My Conversation Metaphor

I use the word 'conversation' as a metaphor and trope running throughout all of my thinking and research. With overlapping and sometimes conflicting definitions of terms such as dialogue, discussion, and inquiry, and to capture the notion that all human exchanges and experiences can be seen as dialogic, I adopt the metaphor 'conversation'

for learning and exchanges about and within community. Because my research represents learning and communication, it too is a conversation. The most democratic conversation I call dialogue, and conversation that is infected with positivism and binary thinking I call argument. This meaning of 'conversation' of course includes literal conversations as well, which are the most concrete and obvious examples of human exchanges and which played a prominent role in my study. Holquist (1990) writes of Bahktin's dialogism, which shows knowing and being as contextual, eternal and multi-voiced. Actions always involve more than one actor. Deborah Tannen (1998) contrasts argument with conversation, quoting Dewey: "Democracy begins in conversation" (as cited in Tannen, p. 25). Conversation happens within community, she says, and within personal connections.

Finding or making meaning is the purpose of language and selfhood. Both are in progress, never fully finished. Conversation gets at the communal and contextual quality of communication. Meanings aren't in language (Fish, 1980b). They're in contexts, with structure and norms. "That structure, however, is not abstract and independent but social; and therefore it is not a single structure with a privileged relationship to the process of communication as it occurs in any situation but a structure that changes when one situation, with its assumed background of practices, purposes, and goals, has given way to another." (Fish, 1980c, p. 318). For Bakhtin, Holquist (1990) explains, there isn't one meaning we're aiming for. Being is an event. We are never alone. Being is simultaneous and shared. "Bakhtin uses the literary genre of the novel as an allegory for representing existence as the condition of authoring" (p. 30). Because we have many moments, not just one, with an "other", we gain different understandings of the self. This means that if

we don't feel understood, there is a future "other" who might understand us. Language for Bakhtin, as for the other theorists described above, is about relationships. It is always based on differences, but also these differences lead to simultaneity. All differences are connected through relations within dialogue. Not only is learning contextual, social, and communal, but it also represents an ongoing, unfinished dynamic or conversation.

Oakeshott (1962) also uses conversation metaphorically when he writes of conversation as poetry. He challenges the view that all utterances are debate and inquiry.

> But this understanding of human activity and intercourse as an inquiry, while appearing to accommodate a variety of voices, in fact recognizes only one, namely, the voice of argumentative discourse, the voice of 'science' and all others are acknowledged merely in respect of their aptitude to imitate this voice (p. 197).

His juxtaposition of science and inquiry against poetry and conversation makes a point, but does not align exactly with my thinking. I would take his term 'science' (which he puts in quotation marks) as scientism or positivism. A common meeting place is not argument, but conversation, he says. A conversation doesn't have a winner and loser. There is no hierarchy. "It is an unrehearsed intellectual adventure" (p. 198). Oakeshott's conversation as poetry coincides with the ideal of the term as I use it. He says this conversation allows different voices. There is no requirement that they assimilate to one another. A conversation holds a tension between seriousness and playfulness. Relevance in conversations comes from within the conversation, not external standards. Conversation and poetry represent open inquiry and egalitarian dialogue. Poetry, says Oakshott, including dance, painting, etc., is about contemplation (Oakeshott, 1962). This description fits the ideal, democratic end of the conversation continuum as I see it, with the possibility of less successful attempts towards such openness on the other end.

To say we are in conversation is also to focus on process and moments in time. When we study communication, we should look at procedures and contexts, not only external structures (Dervin & Clark, 1993) . We should investigate individual moments of *communicating*, not the product, *communication*. Even if diverse voices are allowed to speak, without tending to process and context, we might end up with cacophony instead of heterogeneity (Dervin & Clark, 1993). In classrooms, in what Rawlins (2000) calls 'educational friendship', we carry out teaching and learning as dialogue, and "in telling these stories to each other, we don't separate facts from values or living from learning together. We challenge static assumptions about the knowledge we are creating and celebrate the possibilities of *becoming* in our shared moments" and "In reaching its understandings, the truths of such friendship are not static accomplishments; they are provisional living truths, ecstatic and unfolding, and continually shaped by other stories, change, and temporality" (Rawlins, 2000, pp. 18 and 19, italics his).

In my reading, I have picked up on any use of the word 'conversation'. For example, Bruffee (1999) uses the term to connote what collaborative learning becomes. Philosophy can be called a conversation. The word can be used casually. 'Continuing the conversation' I suppose is pretty much a cliché. But I think of Bruner's (1996) reminder that cultural narratives reflect and shape how we know. I am taking those references to conversation then not as coincidental or serendipitous, but as manifestations of a cultural sense of conversation as shared meaning-making over time and space that can also be very local and intimate, more or less friendly, although when it becomes more antagonistic, it requires a different term, such as argument or debate. This is not to say that conversation is free of disagreement or discomfort. I explain that in detail further

along. Discussion is a neutral term like conversation, and dialogue implies sharing that is more in the ideal, democratic direction of the continuum. Argument and persuasion are towards the opposite end of the continuum from dialogue. I write of argument not in the sense of vibrant back and forth and disagreement that builds towards understanding, but competitive exchanges with a winner and a loser. Tinder (1980) says that persuasion is not communal. He uses political speech as an example. I would include debates and argumentative papers in college coursework. He says that in these types of texts, the speaker or writer uses selected or partial truths, and the purpose is not to seek the truth. If we care for being true, says Tinder, we need to listen to all voices and accept our own fallibility. The democratic ideal includes a respect for communication itself and a joy in process, as opposed to an argumentative or persuasive stance that looks only to the end goal, a product. Tinder reminds us that we must look at obstacles to communication, including social, economic and educational ones (Tinder, 1980).

> The idea, if it was an idea and not a habit of mind, was that adversaries, fearing contradiction, would be more rigorous in argument, like scientists proposing innovation to their colleagues. What tended to happen, to Colin and Mary at least, was that subjects were not explored so much as defensively reiterated, or forced into elaborate irrelevancies, and suffused with irritability. Now, freed by mutual encouragement, they roamed, like children at seaside rock pools, from one matter to another (McEwan, 1981).

Community requires dialogue and dialogue can create community. Senge (2006) suggests that one needs first to create a space for deep conversations. “When this is done, learning communities arise as a by-product” (p. 309). Palmer (1983) sees not just community, but truth, in dialogue: “This dialogue saves personal truth from subjectivism, for genuine dialogue is possible only as I acknowledge an integrity in the other that cannot be reduced to my perceptions and needs” (p. 56). We treat people as complex

selves with their own perspective (objectivism reduces them to things with no connection to us). We relate to each other in conversation, so we meet people who may resist our limited private conception of reality. Dialogue is internal too, and Palmer, connecting dialogue with community, says that therefore community is also internal (Palmer, 1983). Bakhtin too looks at dialogue as both internal and communal. Even an internal utterance is a response to or representation of utterances said by others in the past or present (Bakhtin, 1981; Holquist, 1990). So conversation is a medium of community. I picture community a body of water, huge and amorphous, like an ocean, and conversation the currents of water coursing through and around in all sorts of patterns, eddies, and flow. Taking conversation as primary means focusing on collective thought and experience, and this has important implications:

> This particular liability of thought understood as internalized conversation is illuminating from an educational point of view. If ethnocentrism, inexperience, personal anxiety, economic interest, and paradigmatic inflexibility (tunnel vision) constrain our conversation, they will constrain our thinking. If the talk within the knowledge communities we are members of is narrow, superficial, biased, or limited to clichés, our thinking is almost certain to be so, too. Many of the social forms and conventions of conversation, most of the grammatical, syntactical, and rhetorical structures of conversation, and the range, flexibility, impetus, and goals of conversation are the sources of the forms, conventions, structures, impetus, range, flexibility, issues, and goals of thought. Good talk begets good thought (Bruffee, 1999, p. 134).

Within conversation, there is an ideal and a real in terms of how free and open an exchange of views can be. A conversation is open and casual, but can turn competitive and adversarial. The conversation trope that I use for my work is not meant to be entirely verbal or text-based, but to appreciate experiential, intuitive, unvoiced understandings and communication. A range of fluctuating interactions between the real and ideal are

encompassed by the term. Democracy or democratic discourse, as I see it, is a quality of conversation.

Democratic Discourse

"Truth is an eternal conversation about things that matter, conducted with passion and discipline" (Palmer, 1998, p. 104).

"What *is* the point is the procedure of inquiry, of mind using, which is central to the maintenance of an interpretive community and a democratic culture" (Bruner, 1996, p. 98, italics his).

"Discussion and democracy are inseparable because both have the same root purpose – to nurture and promote human growth" (Brookfield & Preskill, 1999, p. 3).

"Conversation is the central location of pedagogy for the democratic educator" (hooks, 2003, p. 44).

Democratic discourse is ideal communication within communities. Its features coincide with those of community, as it feeds community. It represents dialogue of multiple voices and views that leads sometimes to conflict and discomfort; these can be used productively for further growth of individuals and the community. Community requires tolerance, and democratic discourse offers listening, silence, and distance that facilitate tolerance. I think of democracy as a way of being together, not only a particular political system. As Dewey says, "A democracy is more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience" (Dewey, 1916, 1944, p. 87).

Plurality, not harmony.

Tinder asserts that we must maintain plurality so we won't confuse social unity with community. "A solitary voice, speaking with utmost seriousness, is a far more decisive sign of community than is a nation unified merely by force and propaganda, or by commercial convenience and advertising" (Tinder, 1980, p. 31). Tinder's conception

of community, as I understand it and take on, does not imply harmony. Nor does it imply conformity. In fact, it thrives on, depends upon, plurality (Tinder, 1980). He also makes it clear that force and true community are not compatible. He talks about creating the conditions for community, not making community. Senge (2006), describes an old-school business mindset (which sadly still thrives), that sees diversity as a problem to be solved. Instead, he argues that it is an asset, and necessary for the growth of an organization. Elbow (1986) shows that "the believing game" helps quiet or marginalized voices enter a conversation. This strategy helps to counter group-think and solipsism, because people get more practice experiencing a wider range of views, and minority opinions are given attention. Diversity is not just about race, class, and socioeconomics, says Palmer (2011). It is also about the different ways that we see the world, think, and believe. "The benefits of diversity can be ours only if we hold our differences with respect, patience, openness, and hope, which means we must attend to the invisible dynamics of the heart that are part of democracy's infrastructure" (p. 13). The intellectual community pictured here is not one where everyone gets along and shares the same views. Biesta (2001) also speaks of the imperative of plurality in her distinction between what she calls virtue and virtu theorists (referring to Honig); the former sees plurality as something that politics should fix, while the latter argues that plurality is not something to overcome (Biesta, 2001).

Diversity leads to opportunities and challenges. Tensions can help us grow. A certain amount of tension or stress is good. Palmer (2011) points out that psychologists use the term 'distress' for too much, 'eustress' for that which leads to growth. Positive stress "can help our hearts become more spacious and generous" (Palmer, 2011, p. 13).

For Bakhtin 'ideology' is not an inflexible doctrine, but simply an idea system. He and his school use the term 'ideological becoming', meaning how we develop our ideological self, our view of the world. Bakhtin's focus is not individual growth, but individuals within a social context, in reciprocal relationships (Freedman & Ball, 2004). Bakhtin/Medvedev (the authorship is disputed) talks about ideological becoming happening within an 'ideological environment". This mediates between human consciousness and external existence. With diversity comes challenges and exciting opportunities for these ideological environments, suggest Freedman and Ball. They say that tensions and conflict lead to learning according to Bakhtin, and that he suggests that we need to look past instances of miscommunication to a long-term dialogic process (Freedman & Ball, 2004).

Plurality of views, personalities, and visions inevitably leads to conflict. I will insert here an idea of 'just enough': a social/emotional Zone of Proximal Development (taken from Vygoskty's ZPD (1986)). In addition to Vygotsky's concept of paths for academic or content learning, each person can be viewed as having her or his own trajectory for social and emotional learning. This includes a threshold for discomfort, and if a situation goes beyond that mark, the person might shut down completely and leave the conversation literally or mentally. In the right setting of trusting, communal inquiry, those thresholds may shift. Palmer (2011) asserts that even suffering can be productive. "When the human heart is open and allowed to work its alchemy, suffering can generate vitality instead of violence" (p. 19). Making use of conflict through democratic discourse is not the same as ignoring or fixing it, but nor does this mean wallowing in or becoming incapacitated by conflict.

Discomfort is Necessary

Democratic discourse within community implies multiple voices and discomfort. Palmer (1983) talks of 'hospitality', which he says is ethical and epistemological. Because truth is central, we must welcome people and ideas that are strange to us, even if this is unsettling. We do this not to make everyone happy or to eliminate pain, but to make painful experiences possible. While it can't and shouldn't be avoided, conflict can be surpassed. In college classrooms, "The writer writes at a site of conflict rather than 'comfortably inside or powerlessly outside the academy' (citing self, Lu, 1992, p. 888). Conflict can be used productively, even dramatized (Graff, 1990; Harris, 1989) allowing students to reposition themselves in relationship to "several continuous and conflicting discourses" (Harris, 1989, p. 5). We can undermine the chance for learning in complex or conflictual situations without "Reciprocal inquiry. By this we mean that everyone makes his or her thinking explicit and subject to public examination" (Senge, 2006, p, 184). If we don't examine our own assumptions and recognize generalizations and gaps between what we say and do, we often also don't see the need for inquiry (Senge, 2006). Generalizations, including stereotypes, start to seem like facts, and can lead to further generalizations, reminds Senge (2006). Graff (1989) suggests that disciplinary conflicts too can be used productively (which speaks to the interdisciplinarity of LCs). When the university mistakenly tries to resolve such conflicts, a 'common culture' with a site of uniform truths and values is imposed from above, while "Instead of trying to superimpose coherence from above, we should try to locate the principle of coherence in the cultural conversation itself in all its contentiousness " (Graff, 1990, p. 54).

Conflict and discomfort then should not be ignored or eased in simplistic ways, and ironically, if this does happens, our democratic communities weaken and suffer the loss of important members. Commenting on "basic writers', Lu (1992) says, "If students […] learn to view experiences of conflict – exclusion, confusion, uncertainty, psychic pain or strain – as 'temporary', they are also likely to view the recurrence of those experiences as a reason to discontinue their education" (p. 897, ellipses mine).

Community and democratic discourse involve entering a space as a whole (but not fully finished) person, but Dorney (1991) notes that when one is fearful, one keeps oneself out of work and relationships (some of the women in her study reported this). "For what has been gained if the rooms of work and relationship are entered into while leaving deep feeling, thoughts and one's personal power at the door?" (p. 109). Democratic discourse is indeed risky for participants. Brookfield & Preskill (1999) remind us that students may not trust, like, or know how to participate in democratic discussion. They may have previously experienced falsely democratic surfaces that mask the same hierarchies and inequalities of race, class, and gender as in larger society (Brookfield & Preskill, 1999). Even a well-meaning teacher must be constantly vigilant as she supports and facilitates democratic dialogue or discussion.

For students to even feel that the classroom is a place where their personal power is valid and valued takes a lot of work on the part of the teacher, because in most classrooms this is not the case. In community college classrooms, I often encounter students who have a distrust of school, teachers, and institutions in general, and in my view, for very good reasons. Dorney (1991) presents this paradox of trust: The ground is

set when people take risks and have honest conversations, but how to do this without trust?

Fear

Diversity leads to a fear of conflict, says Palmer (1998). We fear having to change our life, which is transformation. Revisiting not only what one knows, but what knowing is, can be scary. Our own epistemology is part of our sense of self, and would potentially shift in an open, democratic community. Senge (2006) suggests that we tend to protect our deepest assumptions, to protect against pain, but this also blocks learning. We pick this up early in life. School reinforces it. We don't want to give the 'wrong' answer. "The discipline of dialogue also involves learning how to recognize the patterns of interaction in terms that undermine learning" (Senge, 2006). While not easy to overcome, fear is easily manipulated by those who don't want change.

> Dominator culture has tried to keep us all afraid, to make us choose safety instead of risk, sameness instead of diversity. Moving through that fear, finding out what connects us, reveling in our differences; this is the process that brings us closer that gives us a world of shared values, of meaningful community (hooks, 2003, p. 197).

When community does not hold closely to the ideal of democratic discourse, another fear surfaces: that of a uniform dystopia, as depicted in the novel *The Giver*, where everyone is 'equal' and the same and everything is literally seen in black and white (Lowry, 2001). There is a fear of the individual self being subsumed by the mass, happy (or complacent) group-think or of minority views and cultures being forced to assimilate into a dominant culture (Harris, 1989; Lu, 1992; Lu & Horner, 1998; Pratt, 1991; Slyck, 1997). But this would occur when community does not include plurality and autonomy. Lu (1992) juxtaposes community with conflict and struggle in her critique of pioneer

theorists in basic writing. In their attempts to cancel out pain and conflict experienced by their students, they perpetuated a notion of academic culture and discourse communities as monolithic, static entities. This implies that any 'minority' or 'home' culture and discourse must be subsumed by or given up for the powerful and even superior academic culture and discourse. I recognize and heed the dangers represented by this thinking.

> What is the place of unsolicited oppositional discourse, parody, resistance, critique in the imagined classroom community? Are teachers supposed to feel that their teaching has been most successful when they have eliminated such things and unified the social world, probably in their own image? " (Pratt, p. 38).

I feel though, that there is a mistaken association of the word 'community' with harmony and homogeneity.

While the thinkers Lu critiques may have been misguided, I understand their impulse to want to ease their students' pain. Conflict and discomfort should not be denied or erased, but by discarding community altogether, we are eliminating a supportive, sharing context within which multiple viewpoints can be examined with compassion and depth. The social/emotional ZPD may shut down learning as we block ourselves from pain. Who would choose to plunge headlong into discomfort if there wasn't some sense of potential help, care, and healing? I would also suggest that in a community of learning, teachers too are forced to reexamine their perspectives, and thus experience their own conflicts and growth, although I recognize that this is easier said than done.

Palmer (2011) distinguishes conflict from competition. There is an exploration through conflict, but not competition. Competition is zero sum, with private gains. It destroys relationships.

> Competitive education rarely works for students who have been socialized to value working for the good of the community. It rends them, tearing them apart.

> They experience levels of disconnection and fragmentation that destroy all pleasure in learning. These are the students who most need the guiding influence of democratic educators (hooks, 2003, p. 49).

I feel that for people who are more comfortable in a competitive system, perhaps closer to the dominant value system, democratic education also offers very important opportunities; they can experience other sides of themselves, and perhaps examine critically a way of being that they may take for granted.

Autonomy, personal dignity, and individuality do not preclude or even conflict with community. Senge (2006) explains that an open discussion "does not imply that we must sacrifice our vision 'for the larger cause'. Rather, "we must allow multiple visions to coexist, listening for the right course of action that transcends and unifies all our individual visions" (p. 202). "Universal communality entails autonomy. Comprehensive attentiveness and availability preclude total absorption in any particular relationship" (Tinder, 1980, p. 190). I don't think that Palmer's spiritualism or Abram's (1996) call for us to re-learn how to converse with the natural world preclude autonomy. Community seen this way is not about giving up the self, but re-conceptualizing the self, seeing it as formed in relationships with others. "Entering into community is not linking a completed self with others: rather, it is forming the self in association with others" (Tinder, 1980, p. 34). When we are in conversation, the product is the process.

Identity and self evolve within the dynamic of individual and community. I've written of community and democracy as verbs. Davies and colleagues (2004) claim the self as a verb as well. While Tinder writes of a person's essence, he does not essentialize identity. He contrasts destiny with fate, saying the latter we humans create, usually through pride and our ignorance of our own failings, but destiny is sacred. (Tinder

expresses a Christian view with words like ‘pride’ and ‘sacred’, but also insists that he speaks from beyond that belief system, and while feeling a little alienated by the Christian imagery and cosmology, I look beyond at powerful statements about human community and individual integrity.) “Every individual is of infinite value” (Tinder, 1981, p. 6). Destiny preserves the feeling of mystery “and this perhaps has importance in an age when the sanctuaries of personal being are repeatedly violated by objectifying statisticians, bureaucrats, and technicians” (p. 6). Like Bruner and others, he recognizes the situated, tentative quality of identity (Bruner, 1986; Davies et al., 2004; Jackson, 2004). “Through inquiring communication we enter into being in its depth and mystery and we gain a sense of ourselves in our restless, reflective, and companionable essence” (Tinder, 1980, p. 36). The fear of losing oneself to a group-as-one dissipates when we see the self as something ongoing and emerging from within community. Destiny as selfhood means “that selfhood is not merely an abstract and changeless identity transcending the struggle to embody that identity in a concrete life. It is also the struggle itself” (Tinder, 1981, p. 29).

Do we lose individualism when we welcome postmodernism in? Gergen (1991, 2000) discusses individualism as a component of romanticism and modernism, and that the traditional Western emphasis on individualism is anti-communal and anti-collaboration. He suggests that postmodernism can lead to relational knowing as a counter to individualism, which professes a belief that we have inner traits that determine our behavior and that a healthy, ideal person is “self-directing and self reliant” (Gergen, 1991, 2000, p. 98). I don’t believe that individualism or autonomy preclude community and relationships, as long as we take identity as fluid and multifaceted. I think about how

we speak from our bodies, how grounded we are in bodily experiences. Even the metaphors that drive most of our thinking originate in embodied experiences (Grady, 1997). I think about our unique genetic codes and fingerprints, but what this means in terms of how we locate and identify ourselves in community is not straightforward. Even if there are contradictions and multiple meanings, I feel the need to say, this is who I am, at least for now in this place, and this is how this experience adds to my understanding of who I am. To be an individual in history is to be located in a very specific time and place, with a very specific layering of past experiences, but also borrowed utterances and roles determined by cultural and societal forces beyond one unique being. We have choices and agency within the limitations of old scripts and structures that we might follow, tweak, or challenge.

We can feel and assert autonomy and identity, even if these are tentative states or conditions. Brookfield and Preskill (1999) include autonomy in their list of necessary features for democratic discussion. They suggest that individuals need to be willing to take a stand. Even if doing so is only temporary, they need a chance for a strong sense of self. (Brookfield & Preskill, 1999). Similarly, Elbow's (1986) "believing game" suggests discussion as a chance to try on uncomfortable or unusual views, which coincides with Tinder's description of tolerance. Tinder (1980) says that if we tolerate others, we create interpersonal space; we let them stay at a distance, but not too distant. "Rightly understood, tolerance is an ideal calculated to check thoughtless communal enthusiasm. What it does is to require, before communal dreams are enacted, a prior step: the granting of distance" (Tinder, 1980, p. 85).

Communication that allows for difference is democratic discourse. This, I believe, is how we move closer to an ideal community; it includes questioning inquiry. At the other end of a continuum we would find debate and argument – the types of conversations that build up sides and a win/lose structure, declare answers, and shut out questions (Bruffee, 1999; Elbow, 1986; Seitz, 1999).

Practicing Democracy

> "The only way to prepare for social life is to engage in social life" (Dewey, 1902, 1998, p. 248).
>
> Today, however, high-stakes testing has deflected many of our public schools from their historical function of forming good citizens, and higher education is more focused on training employees than on instilling democratic habits of the heart" (Palmer, 2011, p. 120).

Bruner (1996) suggests that education is an enactment of how culture operates, not just a preparation for culture. Dewey too says that "Education is a process of living and not a preparation for future living" (Dewey, 1897, p. 230). He also says that preparation is a 'treacherous idea' (Dewey, 1938, p. 47), that every experience leads to or prepares a person for a later one, but also must be an experience in itself. You can't just amass a body of skills for use later in conditions that are totally different. Like Dewey, Biesta, Lawy and Kelly (2009) critique what they call 'citizenship-as-achievement', whereby children are blank slates that need to be made more adult-like. Instead, they recommend 'citizenship-as-practice', in which all participants are already citizens. "By positioning democracy at the endpoint of democratic education, as something that comes a*fter* education, it is suggested that the learning that matters in these processes is itself not affected by the characteristics (and troubles) of democratic politics (Biesta, 2010a, p. 557, italics hers). Citizenship is ongoing and reflexive, says Biesta. It examines social and

structural effects on the process, and so it is relational as well. It requires public dialogue. This shows democratic discourse within community.

Palmer (2011) says, like Dewey (1916, 1944; Stuhr, 1990), that democracy is an ongoing project, never finished. The heart's "alchemy" can "turn suffering into community, conflict into the energy of creativity, and tension into an opening toward the common good" (Palmer, 2011, p. 9). Kohn shows what's at stake when he comments on the fact that students get fewer and fewer choices as they get older. "Thus, the average American high school is excellent preparation for adult life…assuming that one lives in a totalitarian society" (Kohn, 2010, p. 18, ellipses his). Here he gets at the crux of the matter when we talk about democracy. Not only should we give our students practice as engaged, active citizens of a democracy, but if we don't do so, they will not be in a position to push against very powerful forces in our current culture that do not want individual voices to be heard. Brookfield and Preskill (1999) would agree, saying that "To participate in conversations that model these practices and principles is a first step toward the reconstruction of a more humane and just society" (p. 36). The 'seminar', a student-led discussion that is a staple pedagogy in the LC program that I visited, shows such democracy enacted or at least attempted.

> Too many students spend long hours in classrooms where they are mere audience to a teacher's performance. They become passive recipients of expert knowledge rather than active participants in a process of inquiry, discovery, and co-creation….Democracy is not a spectator sport. (Palmer, 2011, p. 133, ellipses mine).

Democracy and education are both ongoing and defined by growth. Dewey (1916, 1944) says that maturity is the power to grow. Growing is not something that should stop or be seen in terms of a template or end product to impose on children. "Life is

development and that developing, growing, is life" (p. 49). And Biesta (2010b) points out that if we assume that schools are to offer training for democracy, that implies that adults have already arrived and learned all they need to know. Democracy and democratic discourse mean growth also for Brookfield and Preskill (1999), growth for all participants. They refer to Richard Rorty, who sees philosophy itself as a continuing conversation through which our sense of 'we' develops and starts to include those we once thought of as 'they'; it is a moral practice. Democratic discourse is thus transformational. As with community, since democratic discourse is active and ongoing, it requires assessment and renewal. "There is always more to be done to make discussion open, fair, diverse, and mutually illuminating" (p. 19), especially since hierarchies and inequities are part of the world outside the classroom; we must acknowledge this (Brookfield & Preskill, 1999).

In what I call our current iCulture, people can remain plugged in to individual devices that stream just the music, news, and connections that they choose. We could easily get through entire days without encountering an idea that is alien, or a person who challenges our sense of right or reality. hooks (2003) describes her realization of the painful and often insurmountable problems in higher education, tracing her decision to leave it, yet she also notes that even though there is a lot of racism in schools, higher education included, classrooms are also sometimes the only place where people can gather to talk about and learn from those who are different from them. Classrooms are one of the few sites left where random collections of people come together to listen to one another. "Education is much more than the learning of a culture and its knowledge (though it is certainly that as well): it is the gradual learning of agency itself (Hinchliffe,

2010, p. 461). Stone (1992)writes hopefully of a postmodern citizenship, where an understanding of multiple subjectivities frees us to appreciate difference and not fear the homogenizing harmony that some associate with the word 'community'.

> The postmodern era, at the last, necessitates a new conception of citizenship, in which diversity and difference are valued and the modernist power hierarchy continues to devolve. In this new citizenship *we* must also recognize and work with temporary associations in which individuals revel in the positive elements of meeting and being with new people who are only partially and temporarily like themselves (p. 51).

To support democracy, we need to make space for silence, questions, and emotions, says Palmer (1998). Palmer (2011) talks about democracy and the notion of "free spaces" as introduced by Sara Evan and Harry Boyte. Quoting them: "Free spaces are settings between private lives and large-scale institutions where ordinary citizens can act with dignity, independence, and vision" (as cited in Palmer, 2011, p. 97). Similar to the distance offered by Tinder's tolerance, Biesta (2010b) talks of public space, as described by Arendt, as a place for action and freedom. In these spaces, within collective action, we bridge gaps across differences, by "imagining how I would respond as a character in a story very different from my own (citing Disch, pp 569-570). Building upon Hannah Arendt's and John Dewey's ideas, Bernstein says, freedom occurs only in public spaces, and it is a real, shared, physical experience. Freedom comes from individuals working together. It is fragile, and it only works where individuals interact, converse, and treat each other as equals (Bernstein, 2008).

hooks (2003) also connects democracy with freedom in the physical space of classrooms and embodied in dialogue. She seems to align herself with Bernstein when she writes of freedom as a place from which action can flow that challenges inequities.

> Education as the practice of freedom affirms healthy self-esteem in students as it promotes their capacity to be aware and live consciously. It teaches them to reflect and act in ways that further self-actualization, rather than conformity to the status quo (hooks, 2003, p. 72).

I believe community college classrooms can be such spaces. The emphasis on teaching and learning in the community college, as well as the open admissions and amazing students drawn to these, combine to offer diversity and a desire to learn from it; this keeps me hopeful of these as sites for democratic classrooms.

Room for Silence

> A death, Camus noted, is not absurd or meaningless because it results from a chance or a mishap, but instead because we refuse to accept the very possibility of senselessness. We insist upon meaning, even when we invent or impose it. It is our confrontation with the universe, not something inherent to the universe itself, that leads to absurdity. 'The absurd', he insisted, 'depends as much on [a person] as on the world'. It occurs when one combines the world's silence with our need for understanding (Zaretsky, 2011, p. 4).

Democratic conversations value silence and listening as much as noise and talking. In my exploration of silence, I have found it to hold multiple meanings. Silence can represent resistance, active listening and tolerance, and also a space prior to or transcendent of verbally articulated understandings (Brookfield & Preskill, 1999; Elbow, 1986; Litowitz, 1997; VanManen, 1990). Prochnik (2010) notes the etymology of 'silence'. From Gothic comes the verb 'anasilan', meaning wind dying down, and from Latin 'desinere', meaning stop. Together this gives the feeling of interrupted action. To find silence is to stop action. "The interval of inaction means rage is suppressed, and the craving for command is replaced by hope" (Tinder, 1980, p. 45). Silence is an "abandonment of efforts to impose our will and vision on the world" (Prochnik, 2010, p. 12).

For Brookfield and Preskill (1999), silence resides in necessary pauses. The writers remind us that a discussion is not a competition of eloquence. If a person needs time to think something over before responding to another comment, they should feel free to ask for that, just as Elbow suggests a person with an unusual or unpopular stance can ask for others to try believing it just a little bit longer. The space to let something sink in before jumping in for an attack is a kind of silence. Silence is listening, sitting silently and taking in another's view, or Tinder's tolerance. Silence is then also spacial, spacious. Even spoken language has silence within it, in between phonemes and words, and studies show that our minds when listening to music are most active during the silences (Prochnik, 2010).

Silence is negative space in visual art. It is in between, and it is free. Bakhtin says that utterances are border phenomena, operating between speakers and between what is said and not said. "In other words, consciousness is the medium and utterance the specific means by which two otherwise disparate elements – the quickness of experience and the materiality of language – are harnessed into a volatile unity" (Holquist, 1990, p. 63).

Bakhtin (1986) asserts that the problem with previous linguistic theories, including that of Saussure, is the assumption that speech is all about the speaker, with the listener a passive recipient. He says the listener is always active and responsive. An utterance asks for a response so the listener becomes a speaker. The listener can respond with action or even silence, but this is just a delayed response. It is the same for 'written speech'. A speaker gears herself towards a response and a speaker is also a responder building upon past utterances (Bakhtin, 1986). Notice the metaphorical use of 'speech',

as a model for human communication and human existence. This I carry with me in everything represented on these pages.

Prochnik (2010), in his book investigating silence, interviews a man who had temporarily lost his hearing and liked the silence. He shared that it opened up the world for him. He could see new connections between images and felt that "sound imposes a narrative on you and it's always someone else's narrative. My experience of silence was like being awake inside a dream I could direct" (p. 15). A meditation instructor also saw silence as freeing us from set narratives, and that it helps you "unplug from the mental story" so that you are fully attentive to the present moment (Prochnik, 2010, p. 43).

> Here she could lie for half a day undistracted, holding pleasant and incomplete conceptions in her mind --- almost in her hands. They were scarcely clear enough to be called ideas. They had something to do with fragrance and colour and sound, but almost nothing to do with words. She was singing very little now, but a song would go through her head all morning, as a spring keeps welling up, and it was like a pleasant sensation indefinitely prolonged. It was much more like a sensation than like an idea, or an act of remembering (Cather, 1915, 1937, p. 269).

Ambiguity

Silence can be a time or space where ambiguities live. Brookfield and Preskill (1999) suggest that in democratic discussion, we're forced to consider the fragility of our own identities and beliefs and learn to hear others. Critical thinking improves as well as appreciation for ambiguity and complexity. Referring to Elbow, they comment that we make sense of chaos while staying "true to the natural incoherence of experience" (As cited in Brookfield & Preskill, 1999, p. 20). When Palmer (1998) discusses openness, he means that we erase barriers to learning (within us and beyond), including the fear of not knowing. Don't clutter the classroom to block the adventure of uncertainty, he admonishes. Learning is ongoing, not finite. Silence in the classroom is helpful, but often

awkward and hard (Palmer, 1998). Silence then seems connected to trust and not knowing. I would say that silence becomes the place for accepting the tentative, ongoing nature of learning and community.

I am thinking about silence from a phenomenological perspective, as the space beyond language. Van Manen (1990, 1991), Abram (1996) and Palmer (1983, 1998) all appreciate experiences and connections that are before or beyond human language. Words can be fixed and finite, says Palmer, but this is not fair to the living truth in community. Abram (1996) argues that it is our language, especially abstract, phonetic languages, that block us from full communication with and understanding of nature. If we, imperfect humans, can never fully reach community, perhaps language is both one of the tools we use to get as close as we can, and also a hindrance

Human language is flawed, and it is in the gaps of silence perhaps, where our unreachable and unspeakable whole selves comprehend perfect community. Silence can be where we experience a sense of ideal democratic discourse and community, where we temporarily are freed of the limitations of human language.

Learning and Community Overlap

> Knowing is how we make community with the unavailable other, with realities that would elude us without the connective tissue of knowledge. Knowing is a human way to seek relationship and, in the process, to have encounters and exchanges that will inevitably alter us. At is deepest reaches, knowing is always communal (Palmer, 1998 p. 54).

Learning and community go hand-in-hand. Tinder (1980) shows that what counts is process, not product, if there even is clear-cut product. This means that being in community, with the ideal ever present, ever elusive, is active, ongoing; it is questioning

and inquiry. “Community is inherently unfinished” (Tinder, 1980, p. 81). Community and communication go together (Tinder, 1980).

> Inquiry is nothing but serious communication, and it may be that understanding community depends above all on rejoining two concepts that have become strangely disassociated in our thinking – community and communication (p. 18).

Community is about our investigations into being; we cannot do this alone, according to Tinder (1980). Community depends on communication, which includes speaking and listening, closeness and distance. We learn in groups. “We misperceive the thoughts as our own, because we fail to see the stream of collective thinking from which they arise” (Bohm, as cited in Senge, 2006, p. 225). Collective learning is essential for the best potential of human intelligence. We get sensitive to a wider range of thoughts than what is ordinary and familiar to us (Senge, 2006).

Knowing is always relational, says Palmer (1998) and Dewey (1916, 1944). “On the intellectual side, the separation of ‘mind’ from direct occupation with things throws emphasis on *things* at the expense of *relations* or connections” (Dewey, 1916, 1944, p. 143, italics his). Knowing involves encounters. If we don’t recognize that, and build a wall, all we see is the wall, Palmer warns.

Love

For Palmer (1983), there is a lot at stake in asserting the relational approach to learning in school. Learning can inspire and build from love instead of fear. Palmer says that conventional education cancels passion, but if feelings and passion are ignored, prejudice can increase in private, while the public self hides behind supposed objectivity. Instead, education should allow passions to inform facts, and visa versa. Because reality is a complex web of interrelated communities of being, Palmer says that it can’t be

understood only through empiricism and rationality. Relationships are central to reality (Palmer, 1983).

If knowing is relational, love is the most intense, giving, transcendent form or medium for knowing and learning. When we see knowing as relational, we find love, not fear, says Palmer (1983). Tinder (1981) suggests that love actually overcomes fear. We are co-creating instead of controlling. Tinder talks of love as a power that does not control or use force. Fate is our human-made paradigms and sufferings, while destiny is some wider, freer mystery of being, in Tinder's view. Love means seeing destiny, seeing the unique significance of another person, and that who they are is beyond observable facts. Love "dissolves fate" (p. 58.) Love can't be a deliberate act. Love means suspending judgment, allowing receptivity. Tinder brings together communication and love here: "If love is the power of understanding the world as a theatre for the fulfillment of destinies, communication is the cultivation and application of that power" (p. 61). Palmer asserts that paradoxes are not resolved, but transcended through love in a community of truth. "Serious communication and genuine love do not bring a loss of personal being but rather enhancement" (Tinder, 1981, p. 36). bell hooks also writes of learning and love, and how love can challenge the objectivism of the status quo:

> Dominator culture promotes a calculated objectivism that is dehumanizing. Alternatively, a mutual partnership model invites an engagement of the self that humanizes, that makes love possible…In *All About Love: New Visions*, I defined love as a combination of care, commitment, knowledge, responsibility, respect and trust. All these factors work interdependently. They are a core foundation of love irrespective of the relational context. Even though there is a difference between romantic love and the love between teacher and pupil, these core aspects must be present for love to be love (hooks, 2003, p. 131).

Our Belief Systems Tell us What and How to Know

Bruner (1996) explains how folk beliefs and narratives operate in human understanding. Our reality is constructed, says Bruner. Culture's toolkit and traditions lead to our ways of thinking. Culture determines what we see, but we also act on culture. Bruner (1989) and Lakoff & Johnson (1987, 1998) write of conflicting or contradictory beliefs that coexist. Bruner's 'antinomies' are opposites that are both true. He suggests that logic cannot resolve the differences, only practice can. Lakoff & Johnson (1999) demonstrate how much of our human reasoning is based on complex, often contradictory metaphor systems. Bruner (1996) reminds us of various models of teaching and learning that operate in our beliefs and practices, often without being acknowledged, for example the idea that children learn best through didactic presentation and therefore have no access to rules or facts except through teachers and texts. We can recognize paradigms, and metacognition is how we do so, but I am not sure we are ever free or separate from our belief systems, and many of these come from old, cultural and historical conventions. "Indeed, the literal is simply metaphor grown complacent" (Gergen, 1991, 2000, p. 223). Talking about an exchange with someone who critiqued post-structuralism, Fish (1980) writes:

> If what follows is communication or understanding, it will not be because he and I share a language, in the sense of knowing the meanings of individual words and the rules for combining them, but because a way of thinking, a form of life, shares us, and implicates us in a world of already-in-place objects, purposes, goals, procedures, values, and so on; and it is to the features of that world that any words we utter will be heard as necessarily referring" (Fish, 1980b, pp. 303-304).

We see things and ideas as already in place whether they are or not; we see our own paradigms as inevitable or immutable. I don't think it's an accident that the myths of

stability of self and world, or objectivity of knowledge, exist. The alternatives are often terrifying.

In fact, constructivism (similar to postmodernism) as a way of thinking, with its tolerance for ambiguity and its belief that knowing is ongoing, tentative, and situated, can feel scary and unstable. Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1986) write about women moving through different ways of thinking and only after gaining confidence, experience, and support, being able to recognized themselves as intelligent contributors to developing knowledge. Based on interviews with women from a wide range of cultural, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds, these researchers find that male dominance and male paradigms leave women out. Participants used voice metaphors, talking about being silenced, not being heard, etc. Even the metaphor for knowing as seeing, they suggest, connotes an elevated, dispassionate distance from what is known, as opposed to listening, something women tend to value and nurture, which requires physical closeness, dialogue, and interaction. I have been describing what I think community and learning are, and I have often used the pronoun 'we', but at the same time, to include the situated, contextual quality to learning in community means I must keep in mind always that each individual has her or his own history and ideas about what these experiences are. Belenky and colleagues remind me that someone, and not only women, who has felt powerless and disenfranchised, who has not been treated with respect and given a voice, may not feel part of a community at all, or part of important conversations.

Belenky, with her research partners, (1986) seem to imply a clear progression in ways of thinking and knowing, with connected, constructivist the pinnacle, more in terms

of empowerment and agency than as an inherently superior way of thinking, although I think this is implied. I am not sure how I feel about that, but the trajectory the women in their study went through probably matches my own. One participant, as she shifted out of 'received knowing' left an abusive husband, acquired a motorcycle, and learned how to maintain it. Belenky and associates suggest 'connected learning' as most advantageous for women, and I will explain that more fully in chapter three.

The writers associate the earlier ways of thinking with binaries. Either you are a listener or a speaker within what they label 'received', 'subjective', or 'procedural' knowing, but you can balance both as a constructivist. There is either right or wrong for earlier thinking, with authority figures in the right, the women feeling that they are in the wrong, but ideas are complex and contextual for a constructivist. Interestingly, they compare their study to another that looked at men at elite colleges, and the men, thinking within similar binaries, tended to align themselves with the voices of authority. To a degree, authoritative discourse is what we make of it. Each person has her own history of relationships to authority and this affects how she views learning and community. Particularly harsh or abusive relationships make for difficult future dealings with authority, but all past experiences affect current ones. For example, one student in this study was taking a course in art history. She was just beginning to trust her own knowing, and in so doing, felt both oppressed by and skeptical of voices of authority. "But the authorities seemed to be saying, 'listen not to yourself but to us, the experts who know about painting. Forget your so-called knowledge and memorize ours'" (p. 89). How we know and what we even think knowing is has a lot to do with cultural, historical, and individual experiences and the paradigms or lenses that these shape.

Truth

I am interested in being true, not claiming a truth. I find that truth is determined by particular communities interacting with their environment (Palmer, 1983; Stuhr, 1990), and so, like learning and knowing, it is social and situated. Seeking truth isn't about 'The truth', but looking at the ways that we limit ourselves or block ourselves; it means that we challenge our own theories, broaden our awareness, and look for underlying structures, according to Senge (2006). As a researcher, I have decided my goal is to be true, not seek The Truth. That connects to relationships with participants, data, and ideas. "In truthful knowing the knower becomes co-participant in a community of faithful relationships with other persons and creatures and things, with whatever our knowledge makes known" (Palmer, 1983). Palmer (1998) says that our traditional theories of knowing are based on fear: objectivism leads to a 'truth' reached by disconnecting ourselves physically and emotionally from what we study. Objectivism is the killing of the self. It was originally understood as protecting us from unchecked subjectivity (like back in the Middle Ages, the belief that the Black Death was caused by God, not fleas), but it has ended up hurting us; people don't trust their own knowledge (Palmer, 1998). "The truth of an idea is not a stagnant quality that is in it. Truth happens to an idea. It becomes true, is made true, by events." (Stuhr, 1990, quoting William James).

Learning is between people in specific situations, and therefore truth and learning are processes, not separate objects. Wells (1999) suggests that to address what knowing is, we need to look at the act of knowing, not the artifact it produces. "Ultimately, then, we do not possess knowledge in any literal sense; rather, we strategically reconstruct a

version of it by using what we remember to ‘re-know’ in a manner appropriate to the current situation” (pp 78-79).

Lakoff and Johnson (1999), like Bruner, write of ‘folk beliefs’. These writers comment on how the stories we tell become our reality. Lakoff and Johnson (1999) address the difficult word, ‘truth’, and offer a useful approach. They say something is true when it fits and helps our understanding. A metaphor isn’t less true than an embodied reality. I think of the expression ‘it rings true’, when they suggest an alternative term: apt. A metaphor, or any other abstract conceptualization, can be more or less apt. The only understandings we have are human ones, so our truths too are limited by our humanness, if you see such understandings as limited. They could also be seen as part of the complex, imaginative, wonderful qualities that make us human and are infinitely fascinating for study. Bakhtin warns against thinking of the truth as an abstract, universal idea, law, or theory, separate from a unique, whole experience. “The emotional-volitional tone of a once-occurrent actual consciousness is conveyed more aptly by the word *faithfulness* [being-true-to]” (Bakhtin, 1993, p. 38, italics in text, brackets translator's).

Dewey (Stuhr, 1990) suggests avoiding the word ‘truth’ altogether, because of misunderstandings, and Lakoff and Johnson (1999) steer us away from it. I do not reject the term completely, because of my desire to test my theoretical understandings and research practices against something larger than myself, something that tells me about quality, ethics, and usefulness. To see truth as situated and constructed implies that it is never separate from power. “Truth isn’t outside power, or lacking in power… truth isn’t the reward of free spirit, the child of protracted solitude, nor the privilege of those who

have succeeded in liberating themselves" (Foucault, 1972,1980, p. 131, ellipses mine). When I see truth in this way, I can hold on to the word without doing harm to the integrity of research participants and the power of stories that are not mine.

Knowing in History

Our beliefs are never only our own. We belong to culture and history. Each moment of human interaction is specific to a particular context, yet also embedded within and connected to human history. One moment in time with particular individuals is as unique as a snowflake, yet also connected to history and culture, just as a snowflake is made from snow and returns to snow.

Bakhtin's dialogism (Bakhtin, 1981; Holquist, 1990) helps me see a particular utterance as always a response -- to another person, a past or future self, a voice of power and authority, or some combination of these. From Bakhtin, I have found that there is an echoing or recycling of utterances that connects us to our humanness. We have shared thoughts. "It is our sense of belonging to this canonical past that allows us to frame our self-accounts as, somehow, impelled by deviation from what was expected of us, while still maintaining complicity with the canon" (Bruner, 1996, p. 147). In this sense, we can say something about being human without denying a plural, communal, socio-historical framework. "From one point of view the person is within history, from another point of view history is within the person. What one searches for in history is not the distant and exotic but one's own full selfhood" (Tinder, 1980, p. 125).

My study has brought me to see time and space differently. Time is not always linear, and so nor is history. Utterances cycle through us and through history. Writing of Foucault's conception of power/knowledge, Gordon (1980) explains:

> More precisely, it suggests a mode of examination of the general signification of the history of particular forms of rationality and scientificity. This would consist in the exact opposite of the rationalist historicism where the truth of history is interpreted as the effect of a meta-historical process of rationalisation; it would mean a study of the specific effects of practices whose rationale is the installation of a regime of truth (p. 242).

We only know who we are by learning with and from others, those in our immediate contexts and humanity in history. The historical view helps me aim for a balance between making detailed, up-close observations of complex moments, and seeing the larger context that they are part of, which I discuss again in my research practices (chapter four). Morson (2004) mentions a parent's voice as an example of authoritative discourse, (which I discuss more fully shortly) suggesting long-term or generational developments. At first, a child dismisses it as authoritative, but eventually, the young person takes in the idea, makes it her own, and it can then become internally persuasive. I would add that a parent's message is not always good. Racism, sexism and other harmful views are learned. Morson reminds us that teachers too can be experienced by their students as oppressive, even when they picture themselves the liberators. The trick is to recognize the dynamic within moments and how navigating the two discourses is never a smooth or straightforward trajectory. Because our ideological becoming is determined by context (Freedman & Ball, 2004), we need to think of this duality within communities and history, not just within an individual mind. One challenge is to create a school environment that addresses the difference between internally persuasive and authoritative discourses and merges them in productive ways (Landay, 2004). This statement demonstrates a way to acknowledge conflicted moments and aim for some kind of balance, while recognizing the reality of an ongoing and irresolvable duality.

Dualities and Yin Yang

"Hope springs eternal in the human breast.
Man never Is, but always To be blest"
-- An Essay on Man, Epistle I, Alexander Pope

Picture a Malthusian curve, which approaches a line but never reaches it. Like an inverted whale's back, in a graceful arc it sweeps down towards the x axis and goes off with it to infinity, never quite touching. Anticipation is everything. The very best moments in life are great because we look forward to them, and that split second right before we bite into the lush chocolate mousse cake, or plunge down the freaky slope of a roller coaster -- for those who find joy in that -- that's where bliss resides. As soon as the actual experience is under way, its death is also imminent, and it is never as good as we expect it to be. We hope because we aim to be 'blessed', to be perfect, to achieve; we keep aiming for this, always in a state of about to. We live in imperfection, looking beyond towards perfection. Opposites, such as real and ideal, need not be seen as atomistic entities, however, but instead as part of some larger, meaningful whole (Bruner, 1996; Elbow, 1986; Senge, 2006). In my theoretical background and in my data, I find pairs that are dualities as defined by Wenger, not dichotomies. A dichotomy is an either/or arrangement implying a zero sum and a conflicted relationship. Are such dichotomies or binaries inevitably imbalanced? Operating within cultural norms and hegemony, perhaps so.

> Central to this logocentric form of thinking is a system of binary operations and distinctions. Those terms that are pre-eminent and invested with truth, achieve that status by excluding and marginalising what they are not. A good example of this binarism is the construction of sexual difference that pervades our language. Active/passive, culture/nature, rational/emotional, hard/soft, masculine/feminine, these dichotomies are inscribed with gendered meaning: they are the products of

> historical and ideological forces that underpin and legitimize women's subordination and oppression (Rutherford, 1990, p. 21).

The yin yang duality connotes a coexistence of apparent opposites within a larger whole. Chinese culture does consider dualisms, reports Tannen but, quoting Derk Bodde, they are "complementary and necessary partners, interacting to form a higher synthesis, rather than as irreconcilable and eternally warring opposites" (as cited in Tannen, 1998, p. 219). Tannen says that yin yang according to Linda Young, revolves and has a white patch in the dark, a dark patch in the white, representing the "non-duality" of Chinese philosophy (here I take 'duality' as equivalent to binaries or dichotomies, as opposed to 'duality' in the way Wenger uses it).

We live with the real, but also, while it's always out of reach, with the ideal. Seeing these dualities as such is crucial to understanding the complexity of the concepts I examine and their interrelationships. The notion of aiming for perfection but never reaching it connects to the real and ideal dualities in community and democratic discourse.

Running through all dualities that I describe here and find in my data is Bakhtin's dynamic tension between authoritative and internally persuasive discourses (1981; Holquist, 1990). The first speaks in a monologic voice that requires obedience and offers no dialogue. The second is individual, showing a person in all of her wholeness making sense of and responding to her world. This feeds her ideological becoming, who she is in this world (Bakhtin,1981). From reading and experiencing my past and current studies I have found the duality of internally persuasive and authoritative discourses to be a complex dynamic represented by conflicted moments that are never resolved (Holquist, 1990; Morson, 2004; Sperling, 2004). Neither discourse is good or bad. They respond to

and rely on one another. Voices of authority represent power that some have easier access to or more experience with than others, but all gathered in a community, experts and apprentices, teachers and students, try out this authoritative voice, can be bullied or dominated by it, and can also reshape it as it becomes an internally persuasive message through which the authority is theirs.

Another duality is reification and participation. Wenger presents the yin yang symbol as a representation of his participation/reification duality, which is where I get my inspiration (Wenger, 1998, p. 83). He suggests that we need both reification and participation in Communities of Practice (CoPs), and that one informs and influences the other. Bakhtin thought in dualities as well. He did not believe in complete relativism or freedom. He recognized biological and linguistic limitations. "There is no pure spontaneity, for breaking frames depends on the existence of frames" (Bakhtin, 1986, p. xix, introduction by Holquist). I see reification as an idealized form of a concept, a document or artifact that as an object, fixes a thought in place, and thus blocks it from further development, while practice is "a process by which we can experience the world and our engagement with it as meaningful" (Wenger, 1998, p. 51). Reification can solidify binaries. "By assembling the heterogeneous possibilities of meaning within language into fixed dichotomies, binarism reduces the potential of difference into polar opposites. This stasis of meaning regulates and disciplines the emergence of new identities" (Rutherford, pp. 21-22). In Dewey's terms, knowledge is reification and thinking is practice. Knowledge, he says, is set, taken for granted, and finished, while thinking starts from doubt and uncertainty.

> While all thinking results in knowledge, ultimately the value of knowledge is subordinate to its use in thinking. For we live not in a settled and finished world,

> but in one which is going on, and where our main task is prospective, and where retrospect – and all knowledge as distinct from thought is retrospect – is of value in the solidity, security, and fertility it affords our dealings with the future (Dewey, 1916, 1944, p. 151).

A theory is a reification, and so I remain cautious of theories, their tendency to stagnate and take on such authority that we don't examine them, interact with them, or let them enter practice. "An ounce of experience is better than a ton of theory" (Dewey, 1916, 1944, p. 144). Tinder addresses this struggle when he specifically calls his book "a set of distinct inquiries" and reflections, which "expresses my conviction that systematic political theory, although often useful, always falsifies, since reality itself is not systematic" (Tinder, p. xiii). Bakhtin (1993) expresses a similar sentiment when he says that theory generalizes and leaves behind the unique event-being. "Content-ethics" in philosophy is faulty, he says, it theorizes the "ought". "And yet the ought is precisely a category of the individual act; even more than that – it is a category of the individuality, of the uniqueness of a performed act, of its once-occurent completeness, of its historicity, of the impossibility to replace it with anything else or to provide a substitute for it" (p. 25). Feminist scholars as well deal cautiously with theory. "Feminist poststructuralist and queer scholarship have been invaluable in establishing the necessity of taking theory out of those abstract realms where specificity and difference (from the white male middle-class norm) were made invisible and irrelevant" (Davies et al, 2002, p.293).

Bahktin's authoritative discourse is reified, abstract thinking. "When discourse is torn from reality, it is fatal for the word itself as well: words grow sickly, lose semantic depth and flexibility, the capacity to expand and renew their meanings in new living contexts – they essentially die as discourse" (Bakhtin, 1981, pp 353-354). This connects to my wariness in regards to how nominalization freezes terms such as community and

democratic discourse, and thus implies that each one is a solid, finished thing. Wenger (1998) wisely reminds us that we need reification to have something to share across communities and respond to, as long as we recognize the equal importance of participation, which gives the living, ongoing, negotiated qualities to our meaning-making. Knowledge that is produced by and within communities can be both reified and immersed in practice. Since learning is contextual and interactional, it is also emergent and flexible. But there is some need for continuity too, as Wells (1999) points out. He says that cultural reproduction and individual development go hand-in-hand. As one becomes a fully participating member of a community, one develops self and appropriate cultural resources. Individuals are transformed and they transform the culture.

Seeking the right balance in a duality is key, but adding more of one element does not take away from the other. Elbow (1986) presents a convincing case for believing, including the point that people who doubt often, even compulsively, are actually trapped in their own beliefs without even being aware of it. This is similar to Senge's (2006) call for us to look at bigger and bigger systems. Both Elbow and Senge argue that an apparent contradiction could be a smaller part of a larger system or framework that we haven't yet recognized, and that when we do so, sometimes oppositions or binaries vanish. Both support openness to conflict and contradiction. These conflicts and contradictions could occur within one person, between people, or between ideas.

Through research that I do and write about runs the tension between theory and practice. Bruner (1996) writes of antinomies, similar to the yin yang image, which are two opposites that are both true. One example he offers concerns how to judge or assess ways of knowing or constructing meaning, what Bruner calls "particularism versus

universalism" (p. 69). One side holds that human experience, local, situated, is all that matters. It cannot be generalized, and if attempts to do so are made, they represent hegemony, dominant culture asserting itself. The other side seeks a universal, authoritative voice, and can be off-putting because that voice can be pompous or self-righteous, but it also aspires to large historical goals and values of a culture, like grace, justice, and order. This side acknowledges some universals in human history, and says that to deny them is to deny a larger culture. If we say our own little group's definition of itself is all that counts, that can lead to divisiveness. In my work, I want to offer something that can be carried away, remembered, made useful, yet I try to avoid generalizations that lack life. I hope that the local and historical can both speak.

Because authoritative discourse represents power, while other voices can speak back, its role in community tells a story of power dynamics. Davies and colleagues (2002) draw from Foucault in their assessment of humanist and post-humanist conceptions of power. The humanist tradition, while not a monolithic, static entity, tends to see power as unidirectional, hierarchical, and negative. It is also separate from knowledge. If you have power, you stop knowing. This assumes too that there are oases clear of power, where untainted truth is possible. Davies and her research partners connect this thinking to a positivist, Cartesian model that accepts an objective truth. Foucault challenges this, showing how power and knowledge are inextricably connected, and in fact create one another. For Foucault, power is always in motion. Power relations are inextricably interwoven with all social relations: production, family, sexuality, for example (Foucault, 1972,1980). Resistance is complex and takes many forms, as does non-resistance. Writing about Foucault's thinking, Gordon (1980) explains that:

> The existence of those who seem not to rebel is a warren of minute, individual, autonomous tactics and strategies which counter and inflect the visible facts of overall domination, and whose purpose and calculations, desire and choices resist any simple division into the political and the apolitical (p. 257).

There are "lines of sedimentation" and also fissures and fractures within power relations (Davies et al, 2002, p. 297). This connects to the importance of moments, as I discuss later. Power within communication and community, as an ongoing, shifting dynamic, can only be understood within specific moments in particular contexts.

Authoritative discourse, speaking with and from power, fits with Foucault, via Davies and associates (2002), and the idea of power as a force acting upon acting subjects. "The 'dominated' are not in a binary relation to those who exercise power, but are themselves integral to and operating through the relevant lines of force" (p. 297). The most extreme form, violence, uses force, but other forms include the possibility of refusal, or in Bakhtin's terms, I would say dialogue and internally persuasive discourse. Is this all happening within language? Post-structuralist feminist theories, as represented by Stone (1996), suggest that the subject is not a thing, but is within the signifying process. I take signification and discourse in a very general and metaphorical sense, along the lines of my conversation metaphor, because I believe there are experiences and knowing that are prior to or beyond human language. Agency comes through multiple subjects and resistance. "Individual subjects resist, mutate, and revise these discourses from within them" (Stone citing Heckman, p. 49). Like the fissures mentioned above, gaps and ambiguities are what allow for change and resistance. Davies and colleagues (2002) contend that Foucault fails to take into account "the extent to which the repeated, minute accretions of everyday practices can generate sedimentations of lines of force that may also be understood as a state of domination" (p. 312).

The lines of sedimentation should not be underestimated. Power as a fluid, contextual force might allow 'agency', but this is not a free-for-all that anyone can access anew in each new situation. In our desire to make sense of the world and create coherent systems, we can become trapped in such systems, and those who control the discourse and resources behind the system have a different kind of access than those who do not. "Our world does not follow a programme, but we live in a world of programmes, that is to say in a world traversed by the effects of discourses whose object (in both senses of the word) is the rendering rationalisable, transparent and programmable of the real" (Gordon, 1980, p. 245). If someone has historically felt powerless and lacked confidence in her own agency, she may not recognize the possibility of redefining relationships. One participant, for example, in the study I describe above on women's way of knowing, says:

> You know, I used to only hear his words, and his words kept coming out of my mouth. He had me thinking that I didn't know anything. But now, you know, I realize I'm not so dumb…And my own words are coming out of my mouth now (Belenky et al, 1986, p. 30).

This same study identified different ways of knowing based on interviews. One is 'received knowers' who trust only knowledge given by others, especially authority figures. An example the writers offer is of a college student who did not like one professor who insisted that she come up with her own answers. Since he knew, why was he withholding that information from her? She did not trust herself as an agent in meaning making. Another example is a woman who was asked what she would do if two of her child's teachers presented conflicting ideas. She was flustered at first, and then replied that she would seek the advice of the head teacher, thus associating status with truth. Who we are in particular contexts may not be static or predetermined, but powerful historical and societal forces do not allow equal access even to the idea of agency.

Wenger (1998) defines power as a quality of social communities, not only about conflict or domination, but mainly "as the ability to act in line with the enterprises we pursue and only secondarily in terms of competing interests" (p. 189) and that " a social concept of identity entails a social concept of power and, conversely that a discussion of power must include considerations of community, negotiation of meaning, and identity" (p. 190). Power is then situated and contextual. Wenger's notion of "alignment" I find helpful. There is an interplay, he says, between engagement, imagination and alignment. A community of practice needs to fit in, align itself with external demands (authoritative discourse) in order to survive, and these demands may conflict with local needs and purposes (internally persuasive discourse, expressed through practice). I would add though, that a CoP does not function as one being, and there might not be consensus within a group as to what the practice even is. The external demands I would say often appear as reified rules, laws, documents, and cultural messages. Imagination, says Wenger, helps with understanding contexts beyond or different from the local one and in finding unwalked paths. "Through imagination, we can locate ourselves in the world and in history, and include in our identities other meanings, other possibilities, other perspectives" (Wenger, p. 178). Imagination is free, untethered to grounded living experience. It can soar and sail, but it can also appropriate damaging stereotypes and unhelpful generalizations. As with reification, it must come back to practice in order to have ongoing, meaningful usefulness. Reification is how we transport ideas beyond a particular community. "Reification thus feeds imagination through the ability of its forms to travel across time and space" but imagination is needed to challenge set forms: "It explores them as forms. It rearranges them, lets them propose their own combinations,

builds on incongruity and serendipity" (p. 186). If power is fluid force, in this context, it is expressed within each negotiation between reification and practice, between engagement, imagination, and alignment.

A community of practice needs engagement, imagination, and alignment, but striking the right balance that is most healthy and efficacious is a difficult, delicate maneuver. Wenger suggests, in fact, that finding that balance is what distinguishes a "learning community" from other communities of practice. Power, for Wenger, is not in itself good or bad, although he acknowledges its extreme abuses. It is part of social, human life. An individual, an idea, a text, or a discourse can claim power, but this is always within community negotiations.

> We form communities not because we fall short of an ideal of individualism or freedom, but because identification is at the very core of the social nature of our identities…On the other hand, our communities give rise to economies of meaning not because we are evil, self-interested, or short-sighted, but because negotiability – and thus contestability – is at the very core of the social nature of our meanings and so we construct even our shared values in that context (pp 212-213, ellipses mine).

How power flows and is accessed depends on local dynamics, as well as cultural and historical sediments of identity and knowledge. Dualities such as reification and practice, and authoritative and internally persuasive discourse, are in flux, but not necessarily fully open and up for grabs. We each respond to power in context in our own ways, informed by these other forces, while our responses are also always within negotiations and local processes.

The yin yang dualities and the Malthusian curve unite all of my key thoughts, both in my theory and practice as a researcher. These images allow me to consider the

ongoing, dynamic quality represented by complex moments, as well as a larger whole that such moments comprise.

Living with an Ideal

I would like to address directly my use of 'ideal', as it is core to my ideas about community and democratic discourse. Having ideals, being 'idealistic', does not preclude being practical, being grounded in life. Dewey (1990), whose philosophy was called 'pragmatism', holds close to ideals as well. He expresses hope for ideals such as freedom and democracy, while his instrumentalism is highly pragmatic and grounded. The strength or value of a theory is tested in its usefulness to experience. Usefulness has to do with the 'organism harmonizing with its environment'. Dewey believed that our main human, philosophical mission is for growth, which requires democracy, and that we do that through education, that we "educate when we meaningfully renew social life through communication" (Stuhr, 1990). For our society to be free and democratic, it must be educated. Democracy does not just happen. We need to "demonstrate the truth of democratic ideals" (Dewey quoted in Stuhr, 1990). Dewey's combination of faith and hard work demonstrate a comfortable combination of real and ideal.

> All peoples at all times have been narrowly realistic in practice and have then employed idealization to cover up in sentiment and theory their brutalities, but never, perhaps, has the tendency been so dangerous, and so tempting as with ourselves. Faith in the power of intelligence to imagine a future which is the projection of the desirable in the present and to invent the instrumentalities of its realization is our salvation, and it is a faith which must be nurtured and made articulate (Dewey, quoted in Stuhr, 1990).

Perfect and Finished

Dewey (1990) says that aesthetic experiences are experiences brought to completion; each one is a consummation. It brings a sense of unity. When something has this unity, it

is qualitatively different, and then it gets a name, a label, for example, 'that conversation', 'that concert' (Stuhr, 1990). I think this gets at the heart of my sense that real and ideal cohabitate. Words are reifications. Nouns, or nominalization, represent a freeze frame, a static, finished, closed state or thing. While I picture my key terms, community and democracy, as verbs, I am also attempting to define them and thereby fix them, pin them down. It seems to me these efforts do not cancel each other out. The unified, self-contained, finished 'community' or 'democracy' is always a goal, an image, something to look for and wonder about, yet the actions of making, doing, fixing, inquiring into democracy and community are also always there.

Burke's (1966) concept of perfection also points to real and ideal coexisting. He talks of an entelechial perfection in an Aristotilean sense, where the thing is fully itself and embodies its essence. There may be a notion of the perfect idea of 'bread', for example, and then "We may feel disillusioned about 'reality' because the *thing* bread falls so tragically short of the ideal that flits about our *word* for 'perfect' bread." But then there is another reaction: we see evidence of ways in which even terrible bread "embodies, however finitely, the *principle* of an infinitely and absolutely 'perfect*'* bread" (p. 74, italics his). Burke's description of the five dogs shows how multiple meanings coexist. First there is the 'primal' dog, in a psychoanalytic sense. It is the first dog you knew – you loved it, or lost it, or were scared by it. Even if we forget that initial incident, the associations with it last. Second comes the 'jingle' dog. The word itself is accidental, not connected to meaning, but it has sounds, rhymes with things, adds to a rhythm, and sounds like other words in that or other languages. Third we find the 'lexical' dog. This comes from a dictionary definition. It is public, normal, rational, and the emptiest of all

dogs; there is no poetry to it. Fourth, is the 'entelechial' dog. Here is a dog that's perfect in its dogness, or the idea that dogs can aspire to. When we compare what we encounter to this ideal, we could feel disappointed and disillusioned, or we could see the possibility of this ideal in all dogs, even the least ideal. Fifth is the 'tautological' dog. Terms associated with this dog in turn lead to its spirit or how we see it. All five overlap (Burke, 1966). How can we recognize an ideal in something far from it? How can we prevent disillusionment and disappointment from overwhelming us?

The Interplay between Real and Ideal Requires Hope

Brookfield and Preskill (1999) refer to Dewey's "democratic faith" in their discussion of hope, meaning that we have to believe our efforts are worthwhile, even with imperfect results. Richard Bernstein (2008), in his "Democratic hope", presents a strong case for the usefulness of utopian vision. He suggests that utopian thinking is not about the future; it's about fixing the way things are now, and regardless of how far plans can or will go, without this type of vision one can fall into a complacent acceptance of society's injustices.

Ideals Require Renewal

John Dewey, as Bernstein describes him, defended his views against criticisms that they were too 'utopian'. He wrote about free inquiry, free communication, where ideas are aired and debated, and where intelligence offers possibilities and decisions. He argued that democracy is not a self-perpetuating system, but needs constant renewal, and is about individual participation. It is personal, is about character and desires, and impacts all aspects of one's life (Bernstein, 2008).

Both Dewey and Arendt, Bernstein suggests, remind us that "Democracy as a way of life requires constant effort, commitment, and creative imagination" (p. 44). Any effort towards democracy will necessarily be incomplete. Failures though, are not complete. They leave sparks behind that may catch in time. "The moment of disappointment and disillusionment ought to be the spur for new forms of utopian thinking that seek to overcome recalcitrant obstacles" (Bernstein, 2008, p. 48). Senge (2006) writes of "creative tension", energy from the difference between vision and reality. Instead of leading to discouragement, it should compel us further (p. 140). It is not the same as emotional tension or feelings of stress and anxiety, which can lead us to compromise our vision and goals. Instead, we work on changing reality to meet our vision, but this takes time (Senge, 2006).

Idealism may not be about the future, but hope must extend over time and not seek a definitive product. Tinder (1981) says hope is not assurance, which is when we feel life is under our control or can be. Hope is trusting that it will turn out okay, but not always because of human intervention or control, and not even in ways that are "empirically manifest" (p. 26). Palmer's (2011) notion of a tragic ideal echoes Tinder's, when he says,

> Nevertheless we continue to live our lives in the tragic gap – tragic not simply because it is heartbreaking but because, in the classical sense of *tragic*, it is an eternal and inescapable feature of the human condition. This is the place called human history where we must stand and act with hope even though neither we nor any of our descendants will see the gap permanently closed (p. 191).

hooks (2003) proposes that the shock of disappointment can actually enliven and deepen a movement. She talks of how disillusionment puts us in a different place, distant from our original position, and that distance helps us see new perspectives (hooks, 2003).

I wrote earlier of discomfort and conflict as necessary component of democratic discourse in community, Tinder (1981) connects that with hope when he says that hope addresses suffering within an inquiring and communal stance. We look for meaning in suffering, and it is hope that allows patience and a longer view. Bernstein speaks of utopian thinking as an ongoing process, which is more important than a fixed image of an unreachable ideal. Similar to Tinder's discussion of community as an ideal, this too implies a way of being and acting in the world. Bernstein's utopia is not a static picture to reproduce or appropriate (Bernstein, 2008).

We Need Ideals

Bernstein manages so beautifully to express enthusiasm and hope while remaining pragmatic. He too, like Kohn, hooks, Broofield and Preskill, indicates how very much is at stake. He reminds us that in dark times, we can't give in to skepticism. We need to keep alive memories of us at our best, not in order to be nostalgic, but to see possibilities (Bernstein, 2008). bell hooks (2003) asks that we also remain hopeful that people can change, and in that effort, we need to look for the good in others. If we see the other as unchangeable, we are giving in to the culture of dominance, she argues, just as Bernstein (2008) suggests that without a utopian vision, we may simply accept our current situation and ourselves at our worst. We cannot give in to fatalism or shallow optimism, and need to know that public freedom is possible. "We should reaffirm that creative democracy is always a *task before us* and requires hope, dedicated commitment, and toughness" (Bernstein, 2008, p. 49, italics his). Hope is not blind faith, Bernstein tells us. It acknowledges past and possible future disappointments, but pushes past these.

hooks (2003) represents a connection between Bernstein and Palmer when she talks of spirituality. She suggests that spirituality in education is important for democratic educators, because their work is exhausting and they often come close to losing hope. We need chances for renewal. We need to notice our joys, not just our suffering (hooks, 2003). I see hope as the reconciliation between real and ideal community.

Metaphor and Metacognition

The Motive for Metaphor

You like it under the tree in autumn,
Because everything is half dead.
The wind moves like a cripple among the leaves
And repeats words without meaning.

In the same way, you were happy in spring,
With the half colors of quarter-things,
The slightly brighter sky, the melting clouds,
The single bird, the obscure moon --

The obscure moon lighting an obscure world
Of things that would never be quite expressed.
Where you yourself were never quite yourself
And did not want to nor have to be.

Desiring the exhilarations of changes:
The motive for metaphor, shrinking from
The weight of primary noon,
The A B C of being,

The rudder temper, the hammer,
Of red and blue, the hard sound –
Steel against intimation – the sharp flash,
The vital arrogant, fatal, dominant X.

Wallace Stevens (Cited in Seitz)

Seitz (1999) shows how awareness of metaphor enhances learning and conversations within learning. Lakoff talks about metaphor from a cognitive perspective, as inherent to human reason (Lakoff, 1987; Lakoff & Johnson, 1999). While Seitz

describes metaphor as a subversive device that can serve as a tool for thinking and writing, Lakoff describes metaphor as basic to human cognition. He shows how much of our thinking is metaphorical without our even realizing it. These views I find complementary, not conflicting when I consider metacognition.

Learning includes metacognition, which is thinking about thinking and learning about learning. This entails awareness of the processes within the community in which learning takes place (Bruner, 1996). Nurturing, contributing to, being attentive to community is part of what we learn and also facilitates learning (Bruffee, 1999; Palmer, 1983, 1998). Understanding how we think and communicate, bringing to the surface phenomena that often operate below, can help us do what we do better. Metaphor represents connections and ambiguities, often unconscious ones. Metaphorical thinking is one way in to metacognition. Awareness of metaphor can release powers for our use that we might not otherwise acknowledge; it can also highlight assumptions, prejudices, and flawed thinking, "what can be accomplished by getting teachers (and students) to think *explicitly* about their folk psychological assumptions, in order to bring them out of the shadow of tacit knowledge" (Bruner, 1996, p. 47, italics his). The spaces that metaphor creates between unlike, sometimes conflicting terms, is like silence in a conversation: a space for new thinking. Wenger, like Seitz, shows metaphor to be a powerful tool, a gap or space for conversation and negotiation.

> The spontaneous creation of metaphors is a perfect example of the kind of resource provided by a renegotiable history of usage. When combined with history, ambiguity is not an absence or lack of meaning. Rather, it is a condition of negotiability and thus a condition for the very possibility of meaning (Wenger, 1998, p. 83).

Bruner (1996) too talks about metacognition powering negotiation in community. He says that we create artifacts and other cultural objects collectively, so that there is group solidarity. I equate this with Wenger's reification and practice. Within a community, division of labor appears, says Bruner. Everyone has a role. When we look at products and process together, and at the success of the group, not individuals, this is metacognition. It leads to shared and negotiable ways of thinking, or, I would say, a dynamic of reification and practice. The artifacts serve as a record or representation of our thinking, making it easier to think about thinking than only in the abstract. In this way, the product and process of thought come together (Bruner, 1996).

Metacognition, with metaphor being one form, exposes our assumptions, paradigms, and world views. "Metacognition converts ontological arguments about the nature of reality into epistemological ones about how we know" (Bruner, 1996, p. 148). This allows us to negotiate ways of making meaning, even without consensus (Bruner, 1996)."If we want to honor and develop the skills required to create a space for learning, we must name them and make them explicit" (Palmer, 1998, p. 133).

Employing metacognition in classrooms results in what I call *emergent pedagogy*, which I explain further in my study, as I came to see this as a feature of LCs. Teachers and students together investigate their thinking, including the thinking behind classroom practices, pedagogies, and curricular decisions. I have seen glimpses of this in all three LCs that I observed. I have seen teachers offer such transparency and students respond positively to that. I have attempted it in my own classroom, but not with much success as yet. This is very difficult to achieve, and I haven't yet figured out how far I feel it can or should go. I do believe that empowering students and modeling thinking about thinking

go along with democracy and community building, and so must at least be considered. I feel too that the flexible, collaborative, and metaphorical nature of fully-integrated LCs suggest ripe opportunities for emergent pedagogy.

Learning Communities: Sites for Metaphor and Transformation

I have found Learning Communities (LCs), fully-integrated interdisciplinary courses, to make use of and lead to metaphorical thinking in very interesting ways. Much of the literature on interdisciplinarity refers to metaphors both in the background beliefs and in the results of interdisciplinary work, including the thinking of teachers and students (B. J. Brown, 2003; Fogarty, 2007; Klein, 1990; Lattuca, 2001). LCs are inherently metaphorical in how they connect two unlike things, two disciplines, and make space for a third entity. "A curriculum composed of disconnected courses masks the implicit conversation the courses are always in, and apart from which their subject matter is virtually unintelligible" (Graff, 1989, p. 56).

Creating new metaphors and investigating existing metaphors is potentially transformational and subversive. Learning itself is transformational, as defined by the theorists I work with. Not all classrooms offer learning as transformation, however, and I would like to insist that they all should try. Community colleges in particular have complex missions and goals, offering vocational training, preparation for transfer to baccalaureate granting institutions, and continuing education for the curious. Thinking of their services in merely practical, economic or job-training terms, I feel is wrong minded.

> But for most of that history it has not been a major aim that all students should develop the ability and disposition to engage in theoretical knowing, with the likelihood of what that entails of their challenging and transforming currently accepted beliefs, practices, and values" (Wells, p. 83).

The liberal arts or simply 'liberal' education as envisioned by Meiklejohn (1932) is not only for the elite. His thinking, often deemed the beginning of LCs, called for integrated studies where students' social and intellectual learning was tended to within inquiring communities. This was connected directly to the democratization of education and schools as sites for cultural critique.

In their description of 'received knowers', Belenky and colleagues (1986) describe women who do not trust themselves as sources of knowledge. The women in their study who fit this description tended to be the ones most economically disadvantaged. Many community college students as well come from underserved, underrepresented populations where public institutions and representatives from them have denied them opportunities for developing a confident voice and sense of agency. The received knowers that Belenky and colleagues describe tend to be intolerant of ambiguity. They tend to value quantitative over qualitative expressions. "Facts are true; opinions don't count" (p. 42). Thinking critically is then crucial for empowerment and agency, including appreciation of metaphor and ambiguity. "In pluralistic and intellectually challenging environments, this way of thinking quickly disappears" (p. 43), but in their study, they found this effect in participants attending 'highly selective colleges' (p. 43).

Conversations across disciplines as genres offer new understandings, as opposed to what Graff (1989) calls the 'cafeteria-counter model' where new thinking is sequestered in an isolated new course that does not interact with the rest of the academy in any way. Genre is not a form of language but a form of utterance, according to Bakhtin (speech genres). A genre is more flexible than norms within language, and so it

can be reshaped and when this happens it becomes something new. He suggests too that a familiar genre sees the addressee as without rank, outside of any hierarchy, and so can be relaxed, honest, and expect or hope that the speaker and addressee may merge. This is a way to challenge and break down old, tired conventions (Bakhtin, 1986).

Metaphor, democratic discourse, and community can come together in interdisciplinary courses. "By putting courses into dialogue, they create an academic public sphere" (Graff, 1989, p. 62). Lu talks about Gloria Anzaldua and her idea of cultural and linguistic 'border residents'. "The border resident develops a tolerance for contradiction and ambivalence, learning to sustain contradiction and turn ambivalence into a new consciousness, a 'third element which is greater than the sum of its severed parts' (as cited in Lu, 1992, p. 899). Lu also says border residents do not see borders or boundaries as rigid and impermeable. "Rather, they use these 'borders' to identify the unitary aspect of 'official' paradigms which 'set' and 'separate' cultures and which they can then work to break down" (Lu, 1992, p. 900) – in other words, authoritative discourse pulled into dialogue and thus converted into internally persuasive discourse. Writing not about the fully-integrated LCs that I study, but linked courses, Van Slyck (1997) shows how dialogue across multiple texts and views can flourish:

> Thematically organized cluster courses create a new kind of contact zone, one in which student scan examine texts which foreground and critique different cultural groups' attitudes toward a common issue—the roles of women, for example. These texts may never have been juxtaposed before, but they effectively mirror the experiences of students whose cultures arbitrarily confront each other in today's college classes (p. 155).

Graff (1989) says our thinking about education has already changed, but our departments and curricula haven't yet caught up. We've moved past positivism, and see

knowledge not as a pyramid of building blocks, but as social practices and as a conversation. “What would then happen is not fully predictable or controllable. But it would not have to be if the end is not to indoctrinate students but to interest them in joining the academic conversation” (pp 63-64).

LCs inspire metaphorical thinking and make it transparent. This does not mean that they always do this successfully, just that the potential is there. One study suggests that the dialogic, metaphorical thinking found in interdisciplinary cognition could be what all cognition looks like, only more so (Nikitina, 2005). This suggests that LCs could be exciting living laboratories of thinking and learning.

Interdisciplinarity, as I’ve said, offers an exciting glimpse into metaphor and integration at work. “I hope what interdisciplinarity does for colleagues and for students is that same thing it does for me, that is, opening minds and making the questions more important than the mode of answering them” (Lattuca, 2001, p. 81). Its long, multiple histories as told by Klein show efforts to combat fragmentation in higher education, to contribute to social movements, and to connect the classroom to real-world issues and problems (Klein, 1990, 2005).

> In all of these fields, there was a broad post-World War II critique of the way disciplinary and cultural knowledge has been circumscribed by authoritative categories and specious dichotomies. The interdisciplinary critique was, therefore, a disciplinary, and epistemological, *and* a cultural critique (Klein, 1990, p. 98, italics hers).

Harris (1989) says that teachers are cultural critics. He writes about criticism in his classroom (and film criticism conducted by his students), but I think he speaks too of the potential of interdisciplinary courses:

> Rather criticism rests on serendipity and desire: on the chance meetings of discourse, persons and texts – as well as on a writer's inclination to pursue the differences that such meetings can reveal. We are, at times, placed so that we can see certain texts or events in a different or unusual light – and it is at those points that we can begin to resist the power of discourse, to transform their rules, to become critics. As teachers we need to work to arrange such meetings in our classes and to celebrate the acts of criticism and resistance they allow (Harris, p. 10)

LCs offer the best of interdisciplinarity, in my opinion. In an important speech, Hill (1985) explains that LC's are not an intervention or response to one issue, but a way to address a whole collection of ills currently facing higher education. One such problem is a disconnect between what undergraduates want and expect, and what faculty are rewarded for offering. Another 'ill' is not enough intellectual interactions between students and faculty and amongst students; this, he says research indicates, most directly affects students' success. Third, Hill says LCs are meant to address a lack of coherence across courses, especially in a world with complex issues that an individual discipline can not encompass. "We have not taken into account that the most intense and productive life of culture takes place on the boundaries of its individual areas and not in places where the area have become enclosed in their own specificity" (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 2). LCs also take care of a lack of professional development opportunities for faculty. Improving retention rates is another goal of LCs. Overall, Hill expresses enthusiasm for the fact that LCs can tackle, "The atomism – the social atomism, the structural atomism – which isolates people and enterprises from each other" ((Hill, 1985, p. 5). Just as a metaphor bridges but does not erase gaps, difference, and ambiguity, so LCs unite disciplines, students, faculty, and ideas, without negating plurality. LCs offer the most intense, compact versions of

interdisciplinarity available, and so provide powerful learning opportunities for teachers, students, and researchers.

Conclusions on the Theoretical Background

The coexistence of real and ideal implies that hope and despair coexist within community and democratic discourse. We experience forward movement, or progress, and then reassess the horizon or feel ourselves slipping back from it. Still, we remain ever hopeful. Love, imagination, and striving within community are what keep us hopeful and keep our sights on an ideal. Imagination and the believing game overlap. We imagine not just larger contexts and alternative paths, but we also imagine the position of others. As Oz (2011) puts it, imagination is one defense against fanaticism . Awareness, or metacognition, helps us see processes for what they are. Democratic discourse is what brings us close to our goal of perfect community, but it is also an ideal, and so is never fully accomplished. Frustration and disillusionment come with community efforts. I see hope as the reconciliation between real and ideal community. Bernstein (2008) points out that hope is our memory of us at our best, and a necessary antidote to complacent acceptance of us at our worst. Yin yang dualities afford an understanding of antinomies in balance (authoritative and internally persuasive discourses, participation and reification, ideal and real). Balance, while forever a goal, is not a state that once reached, maintains perfect harmony. There is a constant tugging back and forth, moment to moment, manifested in our literal and metaphorical conversations, our dialogic, communal existence. LC's are embodiments of conversation, and they give us a glimpse into community negotiations and metaphorical thinking at work. They are no less frustrating, contentious, or far from perfection than any other community, but they offer a

certain transparency and emergent learning structure that suggests intriguing opportunities for investigating learning in community.

CHAPTER 3

THE RESEARCH CONTEXT

Wider Contexts for Community

In order to understand learning in a classroom community, I first investigated whole campus contexts and overall conceptions of community. Having a sense of community is important for learning and wellbeing (Anderson, 1995; Boyer, 1990a, 1990b; Cadieux, 2002; Cohen, 1985; McDonald, 2002; Putnam, 2000; Tinder, 1980). Sarason (1974) explores the meaning of a "sense of community" (SOC), stating that in order to support SOC, our values need to shift, maintaining that community must be a specific, conscious priority. This priority means understanding the unique history and values of a particular community, and how a larger community impacts a local setting. Building strong communities does not mean fixing or ignoring disagreements and tensions. Nor does it mean emphasizing results or products, (which Sarason suggested schools tend to do), but looking closely at the internal workings and dynamics. This coincides with my understanding of community as ongoing and never finished. "The internal psychological sense of community became a victim of a production ethic" (p. 271). Sarason talks about 'isms', such as 'professionalism' getting in the way, because people's titles or roles are reified and stuck. This leads to a narrow focus on the community or organization itself as a fixed entity and not its connection to larger communities (Sarason, 1974). If I take context as a central and determining factor of community, Sarason reminds us that identifying various, sometimes overlapping contexts is an important step in understanding community.

College classrooms are communities inside of campus communities, which comprise and connect to other groupings. Here, social and academic integration , as put forth by Tinto (1997), is crucial. Retention is much discussed at community colleges, and because there are financial ramifications, it seems to be a major topic used for validating programs, or even personnel. At one horrible place where I used to teach, the full timers kept a running record of each adjunct's 'retention numbers', which a faculty member started passing around at a meeting by mistake. I do see that for those who care about the students and the impact college might have on them, retention is important too. This is how I see the connection to 'community': retention is about getting students there and keeping them there, so that community can happen, and the way to get them there is to facilitate community through engagement and integration, which leads to retention (also called persistence). If you're going to faciliate a community of learning, you need first to invite everyone to show up and entice them to stay.

Tinto's (1997) concept, much cited and utilized, is that students tend to stay longer when they feel a connection to their campus. This connection is both social and academic. Some objections or cautions have surfaced about applicability to the community college (Borglum & Kubala, 2001; Karp, Hughes, & O'Gara, 2008). Dorms at baccalaureate granting institutions, with all sorts of related social activities, make such integration so much easier. Community college students tend to come to campus just for classes, and then rush off to parenting, paid jobs, and many other obligations. Borglum and Kubala (2001) evaluated surveys of community college students designed to focus on Tinto's key components of retention. Results showed that students who felt academically integrated also felt socially integrated, even though most students spent very little time on

campus outside of class meetings and most had no opinion on many of the campus services, implying perhaps that they did not even know what was available.

Karp and associates (2008) found that social and academic integration were important to community college students as well, but that most such connections occur within one class, and that social and academic connections go together. The socializing in their study came from study groups and other purposeful gatherings. In this study, learning about campus resources through informal networking was key to a sense of belonging (Karp et al., 2008). The terms engagement and validation connect to social and academic integration. Besides knowing that we want to get and keep students at a community college, I would like to know how that happens, how they are affected, how community is part of this.

Rendon's (1994, 2002) concept of validation comes from her findings that more traditional and privileged college students did not tend to doubt their abilities or success, while nontraditional students tended to have doubts and insecurities, and to do better with specific support and interventions. Rendon (1994) adds to the picture by explaining that involvement, integration, engagement, these important signs of connection to a campus, are secondary to validation, a student feeling that he or she is capable and has something to say and contribute in the first place. I would guess these develop together in different ways, not necessarily in a clear-cut causal relationship, but in my research and teaching experiences, I have often encountered students who are intimidated by college classrooms, facilities, faculty and other students. My returning students often feel that they are out of practice at being a student, and feel that they stand out socially because of their age.

The participants in Rendon's (1994) study found validation not in terms of their own initiative, but active efforts on the part of college faculty and staff to reach out, reassure, inform them, and help them feel capable. She suggests that a 'validating' classroom is not competitive, but supportive, does not lower standards or patronize students, but helps them see themselves as powerful learners and allows multiple perspectives (1994). Other studies show that academic and social integration interrelate with critical thinking skills, showing that these components of community do not just connect to keeping students there, but in how they learn (Crosling, 2000; Kuh, 1995; Li & Simpson, 1999). When I think about community as inquiry, as Tinder does, I see that explicit community-building efforts in community college classrooms become integral to the kind of deep, transformational learning that I feel all classrooms should offer.

Retention and Validation in LC's

LC research, now quite vibrant and vast, connects to the large campus issues that I've mentioned: retention, engagement, and validation. The kind of instruction offered in LC's is much like what Rendon suggested, and many studies indicate that LC's help with student retention and engagement (Ancar, Freeman, & Field, 2006; Bailey & Alfonso, 2005; Cambell, Collings, & Hinckley, 2002; Ebert, 1999). Ebert suggests that self-concept is more important to 'success' than this thing called 'IQ', and that students need roles, not just goals. The collaborative and interdisciplinary learning offered in LCs, he says, offers just the setting for this. Tinto agrees in a later report that LC's are places where support for persistence can occur, given that for most students at community colleges, community exists mainly or only in classrooms (1998). In this article, he says, "Our research on persistence must enable us not only to document the impact of practice

on student behavior, but also to understand how and why that impact arises" (p. 177). Overall, retention, engagement, and validation seem to me ways to start to facilitate and study community. In order for community to happen, students first need to want to be there and keep showing up.

CoPs: Real and Ideal Communities

Studies on communities of practice (CoPs) give me some ideas on how to look at specific communities. Some seem to compare an observed reality with the theoretical model and ask, in what ways is this a CoP (Duncan, Gordon, & Hu, 2001; Granville & Dison, 2005; Taylor, Abasi, Pinset-Johnson, & Evans, 2007)? Others seem to look at how to create a CoP, what are the difficulties and challenges in intentional CoPs in schools, or where are the disconnects with workplace CoPs (Bradley, 2004; Yandell & Turvey, 2007). I think the real/ideal duality exists within research histories and practices as well. CoP itself becomes reified, especially when represented by unmoving two-dimensional texts and graphics. Wenger (1998) would be the first to point out that the model needs to enter practice to become meaningful, and that it is a descriptive, not prescriptive model.

From other studies, I see directly or indirectly, how real and ideal play out in actual classrooms. McArdle and Ackland (2007), for example, talk about the work place setting from which Wenger developed his CoP theory, and how transferring that to educational contexts can cause tensions, but they also suggest these can be useful tensions. The researchers point out that a community with the explicit intention of learning about practice is different from one formed around a common purpose or the goal of a particular product. They define their 'learning community' as "an experimental community of practice where ideas can be developed and taken back to extend the

knowledge of the community of practice work situation" (p. 116). McArdle and Ackland talk about facilitating a CoP while recognizing that participants are part of other CoPs and have different understandings of them. They see the task partly as making what's implicit explicit. Thinking about applicability, they suggest, means looking at what students/ participants will bring back to their own CoPs and find useful there. This includes critical reflection, which means looking at power dynamics (McArdle & Ackland, 2007). I found concentric circles of membership in the community that I studied, thus confirming the view here that when looking directly at community we need to address a range of different community affiliations. Morck (2010) also demonstrates how a complex web of multiple communities and learning trajectories can change practice itself and the meaning of marginalization, in what she calls "expansive learning".

Studies focusing on 'authentic learning' within CoP's also address the real/ideal dynamic. 'Authentic' learning is associated with workplace and 'real world' situations, as opposed to classroom ones (S. J. Stein, Issacs, & Andrews, 2004). I am still not convinced of this simple binary, but I do keep it in mind as I try to look at meaningful community and learning. One component of their report that I find important is the recommendation that teachers investigate their assumptions about learning and learners, as the teacher in their study did (S. J. Stein et al., 2004). Some words on the term 'authentic': While it can connote some sort of purist, normative quality, I am more interested and compelled by the way it is used within situated cognition, as a contextual entity, defined by the practice at hand. The reason classroom work feels like a mere simulation is that it tends to be "implicitly framed by one culture, but explicitly attributed to another. Classroom activity very much take space within the culture of schools,

although it is attributed to the culture so readers, writers, mathematicians, historians, economists, geographers, and so forth" (J. S. Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989, p. 34).

Another example of research addressing a real/ideal duality asks directly whether or not a CoP can be intentional (Akkerman, 2008). The writer says: yes. But that the goals of the group must be kept primary, and any system or practice should be secondary and come from that. This study looked at CoPs in the tourist industry through case studies. Akkerman cites Wenger's distinction between 'cultivating' and 'creating' CoPs, and points out that when setting one up deliberately, conflicts between the deliberate and organic nature of CoPs come forth. Because the term CoP implies meaningful activity, the challenge is building "group ownership of the direction of community activity" (p. 396). In these cases, Akkerman felt that the group itself needed to determine purpose and direction before an external facilitator would come in. Someone deliberately setting up a CoP may have preconceived ideas of how people should communicate and act, and then set up "CoP-like" activities, but participants then are less involved. Although meaningful and shared activity must come from the group, a facilitator can serve as catalyst, can notice potential for that, and can help the group see how and why collaboration is useful to them (Akkerman, 2008). I love the subtitle of this article, "facilitating emergence" . The facilitator or teacher's role, as described in this study, is to support community as it emerges. The kinds of collaboration required to find common terms and purpose, Morck (2010) demonstrates, involve tension and conflict; in her study, these involved race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic class identities. Workplace peers, however, comprise quite a different community than students and teachers in a classroom, where certain roles and

assumptions about authority might be much more entrenched, might represent the 'sedimentation' in power dynamics (Davies, Flemmen, Gannon, Laws, & Watson, 2002).

When considering real and ideal community, we can't ignore the fact that even the most careful, sensitive plan or structure cannot function independently of the complex human beings experiencing it. In her look at identity construction within a CoP, Morita (2004) observed different meanings of silence in L2 graduate students in a Canadian university. She found that not only did silence mean something different in different contexts, but that it meant different things to the same student in different times and places: acceptance, resistance, patience, for example, and these different silences affected identity, but also participants actively constructed identity; they did not passively accept an assigned identity. Another study which also finds identity to be evolving and layered looked at second language students in a high school class (Duff, 2002). Both found that seemingly homogenous groups are not so, and that intricacies of positionality and identity must be understood within specific contexts. Another study shows identity as negotiated, not a given (Knight, Dixon, Norton, & Bentley, 2004). A 'learning community' designed and intended as such is no guarantee of shared meanings or agency. Traditional thinking and pedagogies, like 'banking model' can sneak in (2004). Here we find further evidence of authoritative and internally persuasive discourses, and how they play out in classrooms.

CoP theory is based on work place investigations (Wenger, 1998). "Practice" is described in these terms, like a medical practice or insurance sales practice. Apprenticeship is the model for learning. A classroom is different. I'd like to think about "practice" in two ways: a contextualized set of skills and knowledge, as in the above, and

working at something until we get better at it, as when we practice a sport, or musical instrument. We also practice democracy (Bernstein, 2008; Brookfield & Preskill, 1999; Dewey, 1916, 1944; Stuhr, 1990), which captures both meanings. Within situated cognition, practice can be taken in more general terms, as what people do within learning cultures, connected to participation. A learning site is "a practice constituted by the actions, dispositions and interpretations of the participants" (Hodkinson, Biesta, & James, 2007, p. 419). The practices of/in a classroom are not completely grounded in one particular work-place profession, and can be more abstract. The practice may not even necessarily be literary criticism or economics, for example, if the teachers are not in those fields themselves, maybe never were, but instead is about teaching how to think and talk about those topics. To look at and think about in what ways community learning in a classroom is a CoP can be useful, as long as one notices in what ways the three main 'ingredients' as articulated by Wenger: domain, community, and practice, might be different in each context, and different in a classroom than a work place. Hodkinson and colleagues remind us of the fluid boundaries of learning. "While learning sites can have relatively clearly defined boundaries, the factors that constitute the learning culture of any particular site do not. They spread well beyond the site itself" (p. 412). What I glean from this research is that components of community such as identity and practice cannot be taken for granted. "There are no ready-made identities that we can unproblematically slip into" (Rutherford, 1990, p. 25). Wenger's CoP is, I find, a rich and robust concept that allows for the real/ideal duality. In their unpacking of the term 'development', Matusov and associates (2007) make use of CoP to uncover how one second grade African American boy is labeled ADHD because of available frames and the particular

social context within which he was situated. “It is important to note here that this negotiation is not just an interactive process involving immediate participants but always involves broader historical, cultural, and social frames of reference more or less available to the participants” (Matusov et al., 2007, p. 418) Social categories are determined by context, which includes the specific individuals gathered together, yet there are also pressures, codes, and structures coming from outside, often representing power and authority that also affect those same components.

Classroom Communities

Now I zoom in closer to look at research on classroom communities, my particular focus.

Real and Ideal Communities in Classrooms

Situated cognition grapples with disconnects between the ‘real world’ and the world of the classroom. From these studies, I see that not only identity and practice are contextual and situated, but so is communication. While a classroom may focus its work on theories removed from practice, classroom activities also are practice, as I’ve pointed out earlier. In one study, the researcher applied situated learning and activity theory to an engineering capstone course in a case study (Paretti, 2008). Paretti found that teacher and student interactions around communications have an important effect on students gaining communication skills that can be transferred to other contexts. False communication acts, she suggests, seem inevitable, when students realize their real audience is the teacher, for a grade, even if it’s set up ‘like’ a work place or real-world task. I think this expectation makes no sense. The classroom has to be its own world, even as it pulls in larger worlds. Students need to be writing for one another, for the joy of expressing themselves and the

process itself, and feel a responsibility towards and attachment to the other people in that room. In Paretti's study, students showed frustration from a disconnect between goals of an assignment and its constituent parts. The main problem as Paretti sees it is in bridging school and work activity systems, but I still wonder if this focus is useful, although I must say, I encountered the same tension in the LC community that I observed: students wanted the learning immediately applied to the 'real world', and they were impatient to act in the real world instead of just talking about our environmental crisis. I wonder, though, to what degree such a bridge is really possible. I wonder about making conflicts transparent, instead of fixing them, even the conflict between real and ideal, or 'real' and classroom worlds. Paretti perhaps gets to this when she recommends making the goals of assignments and assessments explicit:

> These strategies enable instructors to leverage situated learning in the design classroom, not by making the classroom look like the workplace, or even trying to minimize the differences between the two, but by being explicit and open about the needs, constraints, and goals of each context (p. 500).

Another study focusing on communication found that even in well-meaning attempts at creating communicative classrooms, without ground rules and shared understandings of communication, the classrooms were not as interactive as the teachers had hoped (Little & Sanders, 1989). Using an ethnographic approach, the two researchers visited each other's classes and took field notes. Their initial interest was in learners' strategies and teachers' classroom management, but they found a surprising difference in classroom interactions, and decided to investigate that. The researchers, like Tinder (1980), connect 'community' with 'communication', both etymologically, and experientially. One must feel a sense of connection and togetherness, and belief in a shared purpose, even temporary, in order for genuine communication to happen. The

study's suggestions have to do with supporting identities and building a classroom history and culture. Little and Saunders also recommend reducing competition. Community requires all participants, they say. "Communicative" activities do not ensure community. When there is community, these activities can build upon it, but even activities that don't seem 'communicative', like drills, and practice, can become part of a shared experience. They suggest that students could be part of a classroom community and not be aware of it or their role in creating it, but still benefit from it, and then "transcend the artificiality of the classroom situation and engage in real communication between members of a community, which just happens to be a language class" (p. 280). This challenges my notion of transparency, explicitness and learning about community as part of what learning is. Community is not a given, but it can be unconscious. In other words, someone might not think about community explicitly or they might disagree with a group's definition of it, yet that person would still be affected by community and would impact community as well.

Contexts Shape Meaning

Core terms such as identity, practice, communication, and community must be understood within the context of specific groups. "Community psychology" offers a different thread from situated cognition and socio-cultural learning theories, for which community is implied. This field focuses on cognitive growth, or learning, not the group in which learning is constituted. Instead, community psychology looks explicitly at community and the focus is on connections between community structures and community behaviors, actions, and beliefs, not on learning. From what I can see by looking at its periodical, *American Journal of Community Psychology*, researchers

publishing in this field address how to define and study empowerment, collective action, collaborative research, what 'sense of community' means, and how it can be studied (Harrell & Bond, 2006; Solomon, Watson, Battistich, Schaps, & Delucchi, 1996; Townley, Kloos, Green, & Franco, 2011; Vieno, Perkins, Smith, & Santinello, 2005), "The refocus on community means taking seriously attachments to localities, relationship structures, and determinants of collective action as important topics of scholarly inquiry" (Heller, 1989, p. 4).

Townley and associates (2011) show in their study how the story of community as homogeneity can block our recognizing and understandings diversity. I see that my goal of reclaiming community – describing it as complex, conflicted, dynamic, and not harmonious or uniform – pushes against deeply entrenched thinking. Townley and his colleagues say sense of community (SOC) can assume homogeneity, which conflicts with ideas of diversity and cultural relativity, and that this dialectic should be addressed in research. SOC often refers to similarities and group values within a community as juxtaposed against others who are outside. The writers cite research that demonstrates that similarities in economic, racial, or historical identities correlate to a higher sense of community than in more heterogeneous groups (among university students, neighborhoods, etc.). They also mention self-categorizing and self-identification theories and social identity theory, all of which explain how people tend to look for similarity, a common fate, a sense of cohesion, and social integration in communities. In order to feel part of one group, people tend to emphasize similarities to those in it, and differences from people outside of it. People feel safer in a group that they perceive as homogenous. In situations when a group feels oppressed and discriminated against, they seek smaller

community of similar people, and regain pride, autonomy, comfort there (Townley et al., 2011), which speaks of Pratt's (1991). "safe houses" within contact zones, which are oases of communality in a landscape of complex and conflictual diversity.

Townley and associates (2011) say we shouldn't assume people in a given group have the same values around community or diversity. The writers urge us to work against the myth of 'we', and look at subcommunities and differences instead of romanticizing SOC. Different measures of SOC may be culturally specific, they say. That makes me wonder about an externally designed tool for measuring something such as sense of community at all. The writers do suggest qualitative research to look at contextually determined meanings of community, to aim for long-term involvement in a setting, and to encourage participants to be co-creators of knowledge. You can't force the value of diversity on a group, they say, but settings can be created that support diversity. A norm can be established that encourages interdependence and bridging boundaries so as to bring in diverse experiences (Townley et al., 2011). I don't see a community-diversity binary, as they suggest. My conception of community includes plurality and diversity. I would suggest too that 'homogeneity' and 'heterogeneity' can be subjective terms. Who is inside and who is outside can be determined by a particular group, and I see that in the LC's that I observe. What is important to keep in mind, though, is that different people have different conceptions of community, and thinking of Bruner's (1996) notion of narratives that shape our thinking and become our realities, the homogeneous story of community is out there, and affects how people may view themselves in their communities.

Another study on sense of community associates that with democratic values (Solomon et al., 1996). These researchers created interventions aiming at increasing a sense of community, and found, based on student reporting, that the efforts were successful. Working with three elementary schools, and three others for comparison, they implemented a program including cooperative learning and explicit teaching of social and ethical components. Students helped design and implement classroom rules. Solomon and assoiciates describe classroom community as when members care about and support one another and can participate actively in making decisions, plans, and goals. The researchers also found a correlation between sense of community and democratic values. They noted better conflict resolution and academic motivation in the program classrooms, with a wider difference between students in the comparison (control) classrooms. In 6th grade classrooms (they worked with the 4th, 5th and 6th grades), there was less reported loneliness, social anxiety, and higher reading comprehension scores in the program classrooms. The higher sense of community in program classrooms correlated with autonomy and supportiveness, while in comparison classrooms, this correlated with teacher control and supportiveness (Solomon et al., 1996). What's interesting here is that a sense of community was experienced differently within the different classroom cultures.

What I take away from this literature review is that community is at least partly defined by local contexts, but also that new norms can be introduced, as long as they are given a chance to develop organically in ways that make sense for participants. Another study also shows a correlation between sense of community and democratic values (Vieno et al., 2005), implying that having a voice and feeling a sense of efficacy within a

group can go along with feeling part of a community. This supports my concept, emergent pedagogy.

Harrell and Bond (2006), talk about conceptualizing diversity and multiculturalism. The writers assert that each community has layers of culture and diversity dynamics. One needs a 'textured' understanding of the community. The writers consulted narratives of multicultural community research to discover common threads and themes. Harrell and Bond find that diversities overlap in a particular context. "It is this convergence of multiple diversities in an ecological niche that contributes to the formation of a multidimensional social identity and creates places where a sense of community can emerge" (Harrell & Bond, 2006, p. 366). There are rhythms and relations in a community. One should describe those with informed compassion. Don't assume an outsider knows what's best for a community. Unanticipated diversities can emerge through the work, and must be addressed directly. Differences are named and dialogue encouraged. Harrel and Bond emphasize that when they talk of 'bridging differences', that does not mean minimizing or denying differences or similarities. "Bridging differences cannot happen when there is a resistance to moving out of our comfort zones or when messages encourage differences to remain hidden and unexpressed in order to smooth the crossing" (p. 374). This brings to mind Wenger's (1998) imagination, Elbow's believing game (1986), and Tinder's tolerance (1980). This is a process, not an outcome. You have to see the differences in the first place, including your relationship to them. It is "ongoing and dynamic" (Harrell & Bond, 2006, p. 374). This work helps me think further about community and my researcher's sensibility, as community psychology

represents a field of research that makes an explicit commitment to core values central to the work.

Democratic Classrooms

Jennings and Mills (2009) connect inquiry, democracy and interdisciplinarity. This ethnography looked at teachers' intentional efforts in creating a 'discourse of inquiry' in an elementary school. The researchers found inquiry to be dynamic, dialogic, and thoughtful; participants experienced agency, exhibited responsibility and compassion, and valued multiple and interdisciplinary perspectives. Social and intellectual learning come together as well, in inquiry. The project was seen as connected to the explicitly democratic mission of the school. The researchers suggest that the tolerance for ambiguity experienced in inquiry as also necessary for a democracy. They found that teachers and students inquired together, and reflective insights became reflexive, turning back to the community itself. Social or personal and academic inquiry interacted and enriched one another (Jennings & Mills, 2009).

While we can study whole programs, classroom culture, or interventions, and make claims about community, inquiry, and democracy, as shown above, individual moments show close up, important views of the complex dynamics of learning in community. Classroom talk is not easy to interpret or classify. Even teacher behavior such as the I-R-E (Initiate, Respond, Evaluate) pattern that tends to be described as a teacher-centered obstacle to open inquiry, can be understood in more nuanced ways depending on context and intentions (Jennings & Mills, 2009; Townsend & Pace, 2005). A seemingly authoritative, or controlling approach must be understood through how it is expressed and experienced (Aguiar, Mortimer, & Scott, 2010; Jennings & Mills, 2009;

Townsend & Pace, 2005). Aguiar and associates point out too how what they identify as authoritative and dialogic approaches to teaching can interrelate in a productive tension. They write about students making use of the authoritative voice of science in order to try out concepts and connect those to their own experiences. "By asking questions, student exhibit dialogic attitudes in response to the foreign words of science, meeting then with their own words, experiences, and previous knowledge' (p. 191). I have taken both the focus on moments as rich sources of understanding, and the ongoing dynamic between authoritative and internally persuasive discourses into my own research.

Uncertainty, wondering, and metacognition need to be valued and modeled (Jennings & Mills, 2009; Townsend & Pace, 2005). If this is true, teacher and student learning must complement each other. Teachers show themselves to be learners, and show interest in learning how their students learn, while students support one another and the classroom community in the role of teacher and learner. In understanding classroom conversations, nonlinguistic clues such as position or location, body language, tone of voice, and gestures are also important (Townsend & Pace, 2005). This helps me in my researcher's sensibility as I understand each classroom moment to be complex and contextual and conversation to include silence.

Similarly, Belenky and colleagues (1986) recommend what they call connected teaching for connected learners. Their study looked only at women, but the patterns and learning trajectories that they noticed might apply to anyone, particularly someone struggling with voice, self-worth, and authority. Still, I do not mean to downplay the importance of appreciating how women perceive learning and knowing and the implications for schooling. The researchers observed in their participants' interviews, that

as they moved towards greater autonomy and confidence, they became constructivist thinkers, seeing the knower as part of knowing, seeing this as a situated process, and appreciating that they have something valid and valuable to contribute to that process. They came to "learn to live with conflict rather than talking or acting it away" as one participant said (p. 137). For these women, constructed knowledge is integrative. They reclaim the self by connecting intuitive, personal knowledge with that of others, rational with emotional knowing. They strive for wholeness, keeping their various selves present.

> We observed a passion for knowing the self in the subjectivists and an excitement over the power of reason among procedural knowers, but we found that the opening of the mind *and* heart to embrace the *world* was characteristic only of the women at the position of constructed knowledge (p. 141).

Constructivist women in the study value "real talk", genuine sharing, which does not include domination, but instead, reciprocity and cooperation. In certain work or academic settings, if the feel is adversarial, they may want to show that they can do battle with argument and data, "However, they usually resent the implicit pressure in male-dominated circles to toughen up and fight to get their ideas across" (p. 146). Recommendations for classrooms and institutions include giving women freedom with support, as traditionally they have been expected to fit in to existing structures. "Both the authoritarian banking model [from Freire] and the adversarial doubting model of education are, we believe, wrong for women " (p. 228). Positive schooling entails including women in decisions about their academic path instead of submitting them to external objective valuation criteria and uniform dates and schedules for completion. Similar to how I describe emergent pedagogy, Belenky and associates suggest that teachers share their thinking processes with students, make these transparent, so that students can see thinking as human, fallible, and achievable. Connected teaching helps

students develop their own voices and teachers "use their own knowledge to put students into conversation with other voices – past and present – in the culture "(p. 219). This overlaps with my thinking of democratic discourse within community. These writers suggest that "in a community, unlike a hierarchy, people get to know each other. They do not act as representative of positions or as occupants of roles, but as individuals with particular styles of thinking" (p. 221).

In democratic classroom communities, what happens with authority? This is not easily answered either in theory or practice. I have talked about shared authority and dynamic power relations in my theoretical background. Making the difficulties of community building transparent seems to be one important component. In an experiment with de-centered authority, one finding was that the issues of authority should have been made more explicit (Chapman, 1975). "Finally, the faculty learned that the process of education as community-making and self-knowing is more important than and prior to the content of education. We also learned that politics and education are the same" (p. 2).

In the second year of Chapman's study, authority became the main issue. Students took over governance of the program. There was infighting and smaller group subdivisions. An effort to make the group more self-critically political seemed to diminish the sense of community and took away the joy for learning. But, Chapman acknowledges that there was more to it than that. Students did not distinguish 'legitimate' from 'illegitimate' authority, which led to a general anti-authoritarianism that objected to anything like faculty 'teaching' situations. Often abstract ideas were dismissed as 'bullshit' One faculty member felt that there was a false dichotomy set up between individual and community (Chapman, 1975). To an extent, Bakhtin's authoritative

discourse exists where we see it, and assumes power that we give it. In the study described above, women who started to move being beyond 'received knowing' started for the first time to believe in their own ideas as sources of knowledge, and felt all external messages were authoritative and bullying. It seems something similar occurred for Chapman.

Along the lines of interdisciplinary curricula, Chapman and the other program designers had wanted students and faculty alike to be learners, and to aim for integration and synthesis, not separation and analysis (Chapman, 1975). Through their holistic approach, Chapman and his team eliminated boundaries around subject matter, and looked at the course's thematic questions instead of disciplinary definitions. It was hoped that the course structure too would counteract the traditional fractured lives of students and teachers. Chapman finds that the democratic nature, with no authority or pressure allowed for non-judgmental, multi-faceted community and that students became much more aware of their own political values. Self-government is hard to learn, Chapman suggests, but worth the effort. "If we are not learning this in our educational institutions, then what *are* we learning?" (Chapman, 1975, p. 26, italics his). Democratic classrooms, this research indicates, require reflection, a tolerance for ambiguity and discomfort, and as Dewey (1916, 1944) suggests about democracy, the work is never finished.

Classrooms as Conversations

Bakhtin's dialogism operates metaphorically. Our communications and experiences function like dialogue. When applied to classrooms, the interplay between voices of teachers, texts, students, and others carried into the classroom by those voices are all manifested in intertextual conversations. Knoeller (2004) uses Bakhtin's theories

of appropriation and dual-voicing to look at classroom language in connection to interpreting texts. Interpretation, Knoeller says, is social. In class discussions, "voicing" occurs often. "Such voicing effectively extends dialogue by incorporating the words and perspective of others into one's own thought, speech, and writing" (p. 150).

We can "Voice" textually, with words, ideas, the author, etc, or interactionally with people present (Knoeller, 2004). "Voicing" includes capturing one's own words and what one previously thought through inner dialogue. In interviews for this study, students shared how previous opinions were in their minds during class discussions and modified in that moment of hearing other's views or even hearing themselves talk about the books. Knoeller notes a continuum between written and spoken discourse when he says that writing in classrooms can be placed dialogically, as a response to classroom discussions.

In a dialogic classroom, difference is valued. In the classroom that Knoeller studied, first there was a response paper, then class discussion, then a written assignment to respond to the class discussion and to prepare for the next discussion (Knoeller, 2004). A final writing assignment was a letter arguing for or against teaching the text (*The Autobiography of Malcolm X*). One focus student argued yes, because of its difficulties and ambiguities, which led to good class discussions, even though she too had difficulties with the text, showing that she came to value dialogue, difference, and the chance for everyone to rethink their views. In other final papers, many students accommodated views of other students, important signs of respect and tolerance for difference (Knoeller, 2004). Knoeller's study offers an example of a teacher's developing pedagogy that heightens the dialogic nature of learning and the connections between discussion and writing. This also shows writing to be part of classroom conversations.

The project that Knoeller describes focused on teachers learning about student learning. Knoeller quotes Farmer: "In our class discussion, in our assignments, in our response to student work, as well as in every other aspect of our pedagogies we pitch camp on *borderlines*, for there and only there are we able to meet our twin obligations to mutual inquiry, to dialogue" (p. 169, citing Farmer, italics his). The borders of two disciplines united within an LC could also facilitate such dialogue and inquiry. Knoeller says the data show that "professional development that offers an invitation to teachers to engage in such self-refashioning reaches, in powerful and promising ways, into the lives and literacies of their students" (p. 173).

> In fact, the lines between 'teacher' and 'learner' became blurred as students were invited into the collaborative textual and discursive problem-solving process that constitutes the heart of academic learning and literacy (Knoeller, 2004, p. 193).

Knoeller (2004) points out that for Bakhtin, language is always layered, dynamic, and in flux, yet there's an impulse to close off possibilities, make it into a monologue, which is associated with didactic and authoritative discourse, and then it loses its internal persuasiveness. Knoeller asserts that traditional professional development is monologic. Disciplines too can be monologic. Different disciplines see reading and literacy practices differently, and teachers judge students according to these unstated rules and epistemologies, but don't teach them to students. Bruner and Walvoord also point out how powerful unstated, even unrecognized assumptions can be (Bruner, 1990, 1996; Walvoord & McCarthy, 1990). Including students in learning about learning seems key here, and helps me think about how student and teacher learning interact in a classroom community and the important place for transparency and metacognition.

If community is ongoing and emergent, how does one study it? I know that I want to recognize the specificity and complexity of each community that I observe and interact with, yet conflicting stories of communities and learning impact what I and others experience and see. One study addresses conflicts in moments, which reminds me of Bruner's antimonies (Sperling, 2004). Contradictions and inconsistencies are part of being human, and so are not necessarily problematic, Sperling suggests. Teachers' contradictory theories as played out in classrooms are part of their dialogic experience. She summarizes the point of her article as saying:

> That teachers' shifting theories reveal the multiple and sometimes conflicting realities of their dialogic existence in the world of school, or put another way, their shifting identities as they relate to one another, to students inside the classroom, and to outside others, such as policy makers, who influence classroom life. Ultimately, such multiple relationships shape what teachers perceive and do (p. 232).

Sperling uses Bakhtin's notion of the social context for discourse and thought; these come from multiple and even opposing forces, and exist within living moments. To understand teachers and students, Sperling feels we need to focus on these moments. The point is not to capture teachers' "point of view" as one, static thing, but to enter a specific, complex moment, and look at "*the person in front of us now*" (p. 134, italics hers). In her study of middle school and high school English teachers, Sperling captures contradictory moments and analyzes them. She notices multiple voices within teachers' discourse, including authoritative messages from textbooks and outside voices of power. Slippery pronouns indicate association with these, and also with trying on students' perspectives. She notes too that some of the teachers' comments during an interview looked as if they are anticipating the interviewer's questions or judgments. The research

interview too is a collection of words offered in a historical moment, with a particular person within the associated dynamics.

The contradictions that Sperling uncovered seem to speak to the different narratives of the mind and learning that Bruner explicates, for example, the 'blank slate' model, or teaching as an intersubjective exchange (Bruner, 1996). Sperling finds contradicting views on literacy ability and assessment. She says contradictions aren't in themselves problematic; we can't expect teachers to erase contradictions. That would mean erasing their real contexts of home and work. Her main point is that we need to develop conceptual frameworks that address or acknowledge these contradictions.

Sperling quotes Gopnkik, an essayist:

> …it's apparent….that the theories (people) employ change, flexibly and of necessity, from moment to moment in conversation, (and) that the notion of limiting conversation to a rigid rule of theoretical constancy is an absurd denial of what conversation is (Sperling, 2004, p. 232).

This study offers me a strong example of how to look at moments and the complexity of them. I appreciate Sperling's sympathy towards teachers and their realities, which inspires my developing researcher's sensibility, but her methods don't seem to match. She analyzes chunks of texts from teachers, and finds inconsistencies, and while she says these aren't problems, that doesn't seem sincere. For example, the fact that lower achieving students were judged with different standards than high achieving ones is obviously a problem, but she doesn't take up what meaning the teachers made of that. If I think about my conversation metaphor, and the conversation I enter as a researcher, holding back my own voice, pretending my judgment and assessments aren't there would be disingenuous and does not give participants a chance to talk back to that. At the same

time, I need to hold back enough so that participants' voices come through freely and strongly. A research interview, Sperling reminds me, is also a conversation of complex, often conflicted moments. The kind of collaboration and reciprocity required for such exchanges is very difficult to achieve, and I discuss that later in regards to my study.

Interdisciplinary Classrooms

Research on interdisciplinary curricula shows this to be an exciting, but challenging avenue for facilitating learning in community. One study looking at several middle and high school interdisciplinary courses found a wide range of levels of interdisciplinarity, teaching styles, and experienced learning (Applebee & Flihan, 2007). Some teachers remained more traditional, some more progressive. There was a trend that courses more in the interdisciplinary direction also tended to be show more flexibility in teaching, with teacher meetings as places for learning about pedagogy and curriculum. Interestingly, in all configurations, the researchers found movement back and fourth during the course of the semester in levels of interdisciplinarity. Conversations between disciplines are not smooth or straightforward. In this study, Applebee and associate didn't find the disciplines neglected, but simply used as powerful tools or lenses for the interdisciplinary study (Applebee & Flihan, 2007).

Because interdisciplinary work is so complex, Applebee and his research partner warn that it can't be imposed from the top down. It must come from willing, committed faculty who are able to work together and work hard. Teachers need to be allowed flexibility to move in and out of interdisciplinarity as they're comfortable and see the need. This also allows them to maintain their disciplinary identities.

Power dynamics are complex in any community of learning. The collaborative work of interdisciplinary curricula can be difficult for the teachers themselves, let alone student-teacher relationships. One study shows how seemingly equal, democratic cooperation within interdisciplinary teams still replicates hierarchies of the larger institution (Gunn & King, 2003). The researchers found that centralized control silenced participants, but then when that was opened up, an avoidance of key issues set in, where daily, nitty-gritty concerns took over and there was no large consensus on core issues around teaching and learning. When a later stage brought more substantive discussions, it also brought more conflict. The researcher-participants found that interpersonal issues could not be separated out from academic or professional ones (Gunn & King, 2003). The context for this study, a secondary school, with a long-term collaborative project, differs from the LCs that I look at, which offer a teaching team a huge amount of autonomy. They may get less support in a sense, but also less pressure and watchful judgment from administration. Still, the LC that I studied clearly existed with a larger, and to some degree, hostile environment.

Another look at teacher community shows this to be complex and fraught with tensions (Grossman, Wineburg, & Woolworth, 2000). A professional development project of willing teachers who were paid a stipend for their participation experienced conflict around goals and individual roles. The researchers who were also facilitators found their roles confusing as well, not wanting to push agendas, yet wondering at times if stepping back too much hurt the proceedings. Grossman and colleagues discuss the concept of pseudo-community, where white middle class values are taken for granted, silence is not investigated, the pushier or noisier voices are heard, and any interpersonal

conflicts are seen as the isolated problem of the individuals concerned, not the group. The researchers point out that when conflict leads to engagement, when differences are discussed instead of ignored, the group is moving beyond a pseudo-community. (Grossman et al., 2000). In highlighting this point, they are reminding me of the hard work of community, and that it seems to require ongoing assessment that involves all members.

LC's are never easy. When the two disciplines are seen as competing, and the two teachers who represent them have very different teaching styles, interdisciplinary courses can present all sorts of challenges (Fogarty, 2007; R. Nowacek, 2011; R. S. Nowacek, 2009). I have seen this in my three studies on LCs, including this current one. Some of the trouble with translating across activity systems, as described by Fogarty and Nowacek, arises from the fact that the configurations they describe have each teacher with her or his own teaching times, own syllabus and assignments, with each drawing from thematic links. The LCs that I observe, however, are fully integrated, with both teachers in the room at all times, although I have found that the teachers still are situated within and associate themselves with their own disciplines, and the students see them this way too. I do see some of the tension and confusion that is described in the research, but am interested in how conversations across disciplines can also offer cohesion, intriguing connections, and perhaps raise questions through productive conflict.

Nowacek (2011) suggests both how problematic interdisciplinarity can be, but also how productive the troubles can become. She talks of 'agents of transfer', showing that both teachers and students can take active, conscious roles in the complex moves required of transferring knowledge and ways of knowing across disciplines and contexts.

Nowacek talks about making explicit the differences between disciplines, their genres and activity system (2009, 2011). Fogarty (2009) writes of applicability and usefulness. When students in the LC that she studied could see concepts from history used directly in writing for English, they felt more involved and in control of their learning. They also seemed to want to see clear connections to their major and their anticipated career choices (2009). Still, I think about students getting involved in a particular conversation, project, activity, immersed and engaged in it, regardless of what the longer-term pay off might be. Applicability and transfer can perhaps be seen in less literal ways. I also think of the satisfaction students and teachers seem to get simply from being in community.

Walvoord and McCarthy (1990) also found confusing, conflicting messages across college disciplines around genre and teacher expectations. This study offers me guidance in terms of my researcher's stance and sensibility, which I will explain further along. What pertains at this point is the fact that students were found to follow models and leads from classroom conversations and teacher documents to a degree that surprised teachers and researchers; students worked very hard to meet what they perceived to be teachers' expectations. For example, assignments that listed how a final paper should be presented were taken as recipes for which part to tackle in what order. Chalkboard notes found their way into paper outlines or reflections on the writing process. Transparency comes up again: Walwoord and McCarthy found that all of the teachers studied held expectations for students' writing roles that they were not necessarily making explicit even for themselves, let alone the students, and this led to confusion and products that didn't please the teachers. The researchers also found that when students felt unclear about expectations, they relied on models of familiar genres, some from previous

experiences, such as a high school English class It seems that some of the challenges special to interdisciplinary work can also be sources of strength: negotiating differences across contexts and disciplines.

Teacher and Student Learning in LCs

Research elucidates both student learning and teacher learning within LCs, but not how the two interact. A report from the Washington Center gives an overview of LC success (2010). For example, 85% of the 1063 students surveyed reported improved critical and analytical thinking skills. Eighty-four percent shared that they felt their LC participation helped them take more responsibility for their learning, and 82% said that their teacher made them feel comfortable participating in class activities. LC assessment looks for integration and interdisciplinarity as desirable features (Lardner & Malnarich, 2008a, 2008b; Mlynarczyk, 2002). LC research often reports reflexive thinking in teachers and students as positive components of the LC work and part of the assessment processes (Boix-Mansilla, 2008; Gabelnick, 1990; Mino, 2007; Reilly & Mcbreary, 2007). LCs are important sources for teacher learning, or professional development (F. Armstrong, 1980; Thomson, 2007).

Brown (2003) focuses on faculty development, and finds that LCs offer teacher community and teacher growth in profound ways. She doesn't look so much at the how, but she does also show that student learning and teacher learning both occur differently than in stand-alone classes. Teachers reported that students were not only better at discussion in LC's than stand-alones, but they were better at dealing with controversial material, especially topics such as race, gender, and cultural norms. (B. J. Brown, 2003).

Brown (2003) found that LC teachers appreciated their colleagues more, and spent more time together. They also felt freer to experiment and develop small group and interactive activities. They then transferred these practices to their stand-alone classes. The researcher found that faculty addressed directly issues such as boundaries and control, different teaching styles, and content coverage. Conversation with colleagues in LC's were more positive, more about strategies for improving students' learning, while with stand-alones, colleagues tended to complain about students more. Brown also notes that LC conversations in class and out included more storytelling, humor, and metaphor. Teachers reported that the storytelling led to authenticity and more connectedness. Brown does note one way in which student and teacher learning overlap. "Students' willingness to be productive members of an academic community energized teachers a great deal" (p. 261). From this, teachers were more willing to spend more time and energy on the LC. Since I see community and learning overlapping, and this learning including metacognition, I am interested in how all community members experience their learning together. I am not looking at clear-cut or quantifiable correlations or causalities; I do not feel this is possible. I attempt to describe the experience of learning in community for both teachers and students with my own researcher's sensibility.

I started out believing that LCs were wonderful and magical, and convinced already about their connection to engagement and retention. I wanted to see *how* that occurs, with the hope that I could contribute towards scholarship on ways to help LCs do what they do even better. I have found different ways of assessing and looking at learning and community, and find the most salient message is that identity, practice, and community membership come together within dynamic, often conflicted, moments. I

hope to achieve depth over breadth, with a very narrow focus on one community. I do not believe that sense of community can be measured, not do I find it fruitful to determine how dialogic a classroom is. These types of assessments do not tell me what I want to know. I have come see that human experience and communication *are* dialogic; that is what Bakhtin tells us. How different voices course through exchanges, how power is held and seen, this is what interests me, and this can not be grasped in generalizations or overall assessments. I have come to see that learning *is* communal. I do not wish to evaluate how communal the learning at a particular site is. I am interested in looking at learning in community and looking at how that presents itself. My focus is literal and metaphorical conversation.

I am committed to and still learning the subtleties of operating as a qualitative, narrative, relational, researcher, balancing openness with focus. One study that remains a model for me on several levels, recalls Clifford Geertz's basic research question: "What's going on and what do the people think they're up to?" (Walvoord & McCarthy, 1990) I strive to balance refining focus through my theoretical framework with maintaining an openness to whatever reality participants experience and construct, and what the site reveals.

Mainly I am looking at learning in community. To continue from Geertz and Walvoord and MacCarthy, I would simply ask "What's going on with learning in community here and what do people think of it?" I would not take for granted the terms 'learning' and 'community' or any relationship between the two. I realize that if I want to know how my participants experience these elements, I need to find out how they conceptualize them.

Noticing the complexity and nuance within moments of teaching and learning is I feel an important contribution I have made and will continue to make. I had hoped to capture a narrative trajectory and to develop an approach that notices developments and transformations in the course of the one-semester class, which my previous studies had not attended to, but I found instead a pattern that does not follow a clear linear storyline. My ideas about knowing in history helped me attend to a big picture. I aimed to develop a sense of complex moments within the culture and history of the community that I visited. I would never be able to know or represent each individual's lifelong history or the entire history of the institution or even the particular course that I observed, but I attempted to train my gaze on parts and a whole and the interconnections between the two.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH PRACTICES AND QUESTIONS

My Theoretical Framework as Researcher's Stance

I write of research practices, not methodology, because I believe that what I do and why go together, that ethics, procedures, and theory are best not separated. I work not to fall into "methodolatry":

> The tyranny of methodolatry hinders new discoveries. It prevents us from raising questions never asked before and from being illumined by ides that do not fit into preestablished boxes and forms. The worshipers of Method have an effective way of handling data that does not fit into the Respectable Categories of Questions and Answers. They simply classify it as nondata thereby rendering it invisible (Belenky et al, citing Mary Daly, pp 95-96).

My approach to research is part of who I am as an educator and who I am when I make sense of theory. One piece contains the whole. For example, transparency as manifested in metacognition and what I call *emergent pedagogy* in the classroom is also my goal as I conduct and report research. For Van Manen (1991) research is pedagogy. What we do in our practice as parents and educators includes studying how to do that better. Practice and theory unite. This is similar to Dewey, for whom the whole point of philosophy is to make our practice intelligent (Stuhr, 1990). Van Manen (1990) asserts that the goal of research is not a general theory that helps us explain or control the world, but understandings that bring us closer to the world. This connects to my choice of inquiry or the conversation trope over argument. Our speech and writing acts are always in conversation or dialogue, and I see the communities that I observe as well as the research I do as conversational. I conduct research so as to become a better educator, and how I conceptualize learning and community shape my research design. Thus, my theory

determines my practice and how I position myself as a researcher; how I experience myself as a teacher, learner and researcher informs my theory.

I strive for wholeness, and it turns out, the participants in my study seemed to do the same. This might be a general human need, but in isolated college classrooms, I wonder how often it is manifested as clearly as it was in the class that I observed. Senge (2006) tells that we see beauty in the whole person, poem, etc, and that "whole" and "health" come from the same root: Old English 'hal' as in "hale" and "hearty". In one sense, perhaps my urge for wholeness calls back to a humanistic belief in a stable, monolithic identity and the notion that to be mentally healthy is to be whole. I read about people from younger generations who seem perfectly comfortable being one person in one setting and a totally different person in another (Gee, 2004; Gergen, 1991, 2000), and this disturbs me. Maybe I shouldn't be so disturbed. But at the same time, I believe that wholeness can be multiple. Integrity means wholeness, Palmer reminds us. We choose life-giving ways of connecting the different forces inside of the self. Western thinking favors analysis and either/or thinking, which leads to a fragmented sense of reality that ruins the wholeness and wonder of life. The truth is sometimes paradoxical (Palmer, 1998). Arts-based research gets at wholeness and embodied, nonverbal truths in ways that help me stay whole. Within an individual and within a community, wholeness can be multifaceted, complex, and dynamic. An a/r/tographer keeps her teacher, researcher, and artist selves present as she critiques and investigates identity construction.

> How we live, interact with others and our various environments, engage in art, teach, and research is intertwined and inseparable from our identity. These active engagements serve a larger ontological and epistemological inquiry and form a holistic way of being – a living inquiry (Guyas, 2008, p. 25).

"Entering into community is not linking a completed self with others; rather it is forming the self in association with others" (Tinder, 1989, p. 34). In research, wholeness means allowing my mother self, my teacher self, my writer self, and my student self to enter and work together. This implies the multifaceted, multi-voiced, and situated truths that qualitative research and in particular arts-based research calls for (Glesne, 1997; Leavy, 2009; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Richardson, 2000).

> Multifaceted scholarship turns and twists, stands to all sides….It never stops trying, even though it may elect to speak from one stance at any given moment, even though I knows that to speak is always to be located in history, to always be positioned and partisan (Leavy, 2009, p. 12, ellipses mine).

Bakhtin, in his suspicion of theory and ideology, says that we can assume an objective, 'scientific', third position, but only if we're looking at one specialized part of a person, not their whole individuality (when we play a role, e.g. 'an engineer' or 'a physicist'). He suggests that 'exact sciences' are monologic, because we look at and think about a thing that is voiceless. This object can be a human. A subject on the other hand, will have a voice and so our understanding is dialogic. Similarly, Palmer (1983, 1998) talks of objectivism and subjectivism, the former denying relationships and the latter recognizing knowledge as relational.

> Ah, not to be cut off,
> Not through the slightest partition
> Shut from the law of the stars.
> The inner – what is it?
> If not intensified sky,
> hurled through with birds and deep
> with the winds of homecoming
> --Rilke (cited in Palmer, 1998, p. 191)

I've realized that through much of my process, I am battling against positivism in myself and the world around me; I found such struggles too in the community that I

studied. I see this tension even in my writing. I probably cannot blame all awkward, weak prose on positivism, but those convoluted, passive sentences that I fall into I think partly come from pressure to appear objective and unemotional; such a style seems to carry authority and validity. My use of the first person, informal language, and contractions is not meant to be cutesy or gratuitously provocative, but represents another manifestation of this struggle for authenticity, immediacy, truthfulness. We are working against what Pelias (2004) describes: "Too often I've watched claims of truth try to triumph over compassion, try to crush alternative possibilities, and try to silence minority voices" (p. 1). This I connect to Bahktin's authoritative and internally persuasive discourses. Traditional research and voices of power from within academia impact how one defines and positions oneself as a researcher.

> Quite frequently, methods of explanation and interpretation are reduced to this kind of disclosure of the repeatable, to a recognition of the already familiar, and, if the new is grasped at all, it is only in an extremely impoverished and abstract form. Moreover, the individual personality of the creator (speaker), or course, disappears completely (Bakhtin, 1986, pp. 140-141).

Pelias writes of those who follow the heart in their research. He talks of Ruth Behar, who he quotes as saying that scholarship that "doesn't break your heart just isn't worth doing anymore" (as cited in Pelias, 2004, p. 9) and those who oppose such research, whom he calls "gatekeepers guarding the boundaries of their disciplines" (p. 9). "The pioneers in this area [arts based research] seek to sculpt engaged, holistic, passionate research practices that bridge and not divide both the artist-self and researcher-self with the researcher and audience and researcher and teacher" (Leavy, p. 2). Both Pelias and Palmer (2011) associate wholeness with the heart. For both, the heart is where many selves and many truths are united, and where we unite with others.

> ‘I don’t want to go places where the heart is not welcome. Such places frighten me’
> ‘Are you frightened by the truth?’ would come the rejoinder.
> ‘No. I’m frightened by what poses as the truth’ (Pelias, 2004, p. 8).

I am calling myself a qualitative, narrative, relational researcher. Bruner (1990, 1996) speaks to my English teacher self and that I value the importance of stories. “The heart learns that stories are the truths that won’t keep still” (Pelias, p. 171). Lincoln & Guba (1985) tell me about perspectivism and together with Van Manen (1990, 1991) show the qualitative researcher herself as the key research instrument. I use the word ‘relational’ to dismiss once and for all any aspirations towards or claims of objectivity. Each step of the research process involves relationships, and these must be accounted for, nourished; they become intrinsic to the process and product. Writing of a/r/tography, Irwin and Springgay (2008) add that within a community of practice, inquiry into self and practice involves relationships not just between different people, but between different part of identities, such as artist, researcher, and teacher. One works within relational inquiry, relational aesthetics, and relational learning (Iwrwin & Springgay, 2008). While I thought I was make up the term “relational researcher” to suit my developing sensibilities, I want to acknowledge my indebtedness to feminist and post-structuralist theorists, some of whom I’ve only read lightly or read references to, but they have affected cultural understandings of knowledge and community so deeply that many of their ideas simply resonate for me and the work that I do. Preparing for and conducting research requires that I fine-tune my sensibilities, that I continue to read models, theoretical background, while noting who I am in my discoveries and experiences of learning in community. The writing of this document occurs in the midst of this cycle of learning and freezes it on the page for now, while the conversations continue. The

reading and thinking that I do provide for me not recipes, criteria, or even paradigms to carry into the field, but awareness and focus.

What Do I Mean by Positivism?

Positivism has emerged as an important theme in my work, both for myself as I make sense of my researcher's stance and sensibilities, and for my participants, as they seemed to struggle with defining science and positioning their learning within that. I would like to write explicitly here about what I mean by positivism, at least at this point in my knowing. Leavy (2009) talks of positivist epistemology as the basis of a quantitative paradigm. Qualitative research offers an alternative paradigm, with arts-based research (ABR) as a new genre within that. She summarizes Thomas Kuhn's (1962) definition of paradigm: "A world-view through which knowledge is filtered" (p. 5).

I have run into some confusion over the word 'empiricism' which I cannot at this point completely resolve. Leavy says "positivist" sciences are synonymous with empiricism. My participants too seemed to equate 'science' in general terms with positivism. The word 'empiricism', the felt but unuttered word 'positivism' and the word 'science' were conflated. I do not believe that all science is positivist (Gergen, 1991, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 1985), nor that empiricism is always positivist, yet it seems its history places it in close affiliation. I would consider my research empirical. How we define 'observable' would certainly affect our view on empiricism. As Leavy tells it, empiricism, based on the scientific method, infiltrated the social sciences, mainly due to the influence of Emile Durkheim. Researchers wanted to legitimize sociology, basing it on physics. But I would add that physicists were some of the first to object to positivism

(Gergen, 1991, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 1985), showing, among other points, how the subject and object are interconnected. "That subatomic particles dance in and out of existence, seeming perpetually to vibrate together, suggests that at the quantum level, reality is relationships, not matter" (Johnson, 2002, p. 28). Gergen associates positivism with modernism in its emphasis on rationality: rules for objective knowledge, logical empiricist philosophy, and science as rational procedures. Science within this paradigm is about "truth through method" (p. 36). Within this, social sciences too had to be logical and mathematical. Anything that wasn't tied to the observable world didn't count. "Any discipline laying claim to scientific methods could also claim to search for its essence: the essence of the political process, the economy, mental illness, social institutions, foreign cultures, education, communication, and so on" (p. 33). Here we see the essentializing effect of positivism and its truth claims. Science within the modernist paradigm connects to the Dominant Social Paradigm (DSP) discussed in the LC that I observed as well, with its focus on progress:

> The enchantment of modernism derives importantly from its promise of progress – the belief that, with proper application of reason and observation, the essences of the natural world may be made increasingly known, and that with such increments in knowledge the society may move steadily toward a utopian state (Gergen, 1991, 2000, pp 231-232).

Positivism relies on deductive methods (Leavy, 2009). This assumes researcher and research tools are objective, even in the social world. Lincoln and Guba point out that in positivism, there is a problematic division between theory and fact. The assumption is that 'fact' is free from theory, whereby through deduction, one and only one conclusion comes from the 'facts'. Lincoln and Guba suggest that with induction, on the other hand, there are many conclusions possible. Inductive data analysis is best for looking at

multiple realities, to describe a setting most fully, and to make decisions about transferability. Values are explicit. In qualitative research, Leavy (2009) says, meaning-making is iterative, not linear and arts-based research makes these processes transparent.

Positivism, with its focus on facts, denies relationships, as I have said earlier. Tinder (1981) says that sharing factual knowledge is not community. If we challenge the 'facts', we're ignored, refuted or forced to agree. We can see this in the alienation people suffer who do care about "serious inquiry" but don't respect the rules set by society, the academy, or commercial powers. Going against the grain, insisting on community and genuine inquiry (as opposed to an insistence on 'objective facts') is a form of resistance. Postmodernism as Gergen describes it, and the qualitative paradigm that Leavy elucidates, challenge the objectivity of positivism. Leavy describes the cause and effect in the quantitative, positivist paradigm: it can be tested and proven. Reality is predictable and controllable. "Only objects are fully comprehensible and controllable, and pride therefore objectifies. It strives to understand the spiritual as physical, the individual as general, the spontaneous as necessary" (Tinder, 1981, p. 16). Lincoln and Guba argue that research with humans that ignores their humanness creates problems with ethics and validity. An alternative paradigm, qualitative, includes a range of epistemologies and theoretical bases. Lincoln and Guba's approach holds that there are multiple constructed realities. The only way to study them is holistically. The outcome is not about prediction and control, but instead understanding. The inquirer is not separate from the known. The aim is a 'working hypothesis' to describe an individual case, not something that holds anywhere at any time. "All entities are in a state of mutual simultaneous shaping so that it is impossible to distinguish causes from effects" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.38). Gergen

asserts that within postmodernism, we lose a solid, objective truth or self. “And as science becomes not a reflection of the world but a reflection of social process, attention is removed from the ‘world as it is’ and centers instead on our representations of the world” (Gergen, 1991, 2000, p. 16). I do not believe that this requires that we deny the existence of a material reality, but just that we do not take for granted how knowledge and understandings of our world are communicated and constructed.

According to Stone (1992), positivism is not viable any more in science (writing back then, in the ‘90s) but the myth of positivism persists in education, and it is played like a game. What she means by game is that “there is a posturing, and lack of self-criticism, and that leads to rigid reification” (p. 17). Bakhtin (1986) says that **c**omplete reification results in a loss of deep meaning. We see this in what he calls ‘neutral sciences’ and ’causal explanations’. One part of the myth that Stone describes supports prediction (identify certain classroom practices, and you can predict certain outcomes). “It is this escape from certainty and prediction that is at the heart of postmodernism – and I take at the heart of postpositivism” (p. 17). The myth is expressed in scientism, which misunderstands science, and puts forth a belief in practical prediction and a myth of theoretical positivism. Leavy says too that qualitative research is still judged by quantitative standards. “The resistance, by some, to the newer breed of arts-based practices is therefore linked to these larger struggles about scientific standards and knowledge-building”(Leavy, p. 6). Stone says postmodernism has not been defined, and that’s appropriate, because to do so would be reductive reification. Still, there are key ideas: 1) multiplicity (no single economy, politics, art, or theory) and 2) dispersion. Meanings are not fixed, and 3) tentativeness, which includes ambiguity, and 4)

contingency or non-certainty: no personal anchors, societal foundations or theoretical frameworks. What this means for teaching is that we don't blame individual teachers or students. This leads to a different kind of accountability, which is not about 'measuring up' but about present action and dedicating ourselves to making teaching matter "in a way that recognizes the non-certainty of the present yet understands that all we have is our work with each other – in schools and classroom – to create a better world in which to live for more people" (p. 20).

Postmodernism or a qualitative paradigm moves past a dichotomy of objective/subjective and other binaries, and asserts perspectivism instead. Lincoln and Guba, quoting from Schwartz and Ogilvy's *The emergent paradigm: changing patterns of thought and belief (1979)*:

> We suggest that perspective is a more useful concept. Perspective connotes a view at a distance from a particular focus. Where we look from affects what we see. This means that any one focus of observation gives only a partial result; no single discipline ever gives us a complete picture. A whole picture is an image created morphogenetically from multiple perspectives (as cited in Lincoln & Guba, p. 55).

"In these and other ways, feminists called for a dismantling of the dualisms on which positivism hinges: subject-object, rational-emotional, and concrete-abstract" (Leavy, 2009, p. 8). Lincoln & Guba (1985) suggest that rationalism versus irrationalism is a dangerous binary. It implies that if you don't see things my way, you're irrational. Instead, we should look for multiple rationales and conflicting value systems.

Any paradigm is a way of seeing built on metaphor. But positivism denies that it makes use of metaphor. It proclaims itself simply 'real'. Writing about Schwartz and Ogilvy, Lincoln & Guba describe a shift from a 'machine' metaphor to a 'holographic one'. In the first, the world works like a machine, with all of the parts adding up to the

whole, and for some, this was all constructed by a higher being like god. Gergen too, in his discussion of modernism, refers to the machine metaphor, and how postmodernism offers relational knowing. Instead of a machine, with the hologram, each part holds the whole. Everything is interconnected.

Creative Nonfiction and Arts-Based Research

"Work which remains permeated with the play attitude is art – in quality if not in conventional designation" (Dewey, 1916,1944, p. 206).

Creative nonfiction works well as an analogous genre for my narrative approach. I combine that with arts based research for my research practices. Leavy (2009) defines arts based research as: "…practices are a set of methodological tools used by qualitative researchers across the disciplines during all phases of social research, including data collection, analysis, interpretations, and representation" and that they tend to address research questions in "*holistic* and *engaged* ways in which *theory and practice are intertwined*" (p. ix, emphasis in original).

She says that these represent not just methodologies, but epistemologies. What I know and what I think knowing is clearly impact how I do my research and identify myself as a researcher, and as I've said, I am pushing against something, the authoritative voice of positivism and traditional research practices. Leavy contends that "ABR also *disrupts* traditional research paradigms" (ix, emphasis in original). ABR moves across disciplines, and so feels right to me as a means of studying interdisciplinarity. Leavy says too that ABR carves out "in between space", which suggests the metaphorical thinking within metacognition that I see play out in LCs. I aspire to what Pelias calls 'The heart's genres". When I experience art, visual, performance, film, whatever, I feel enlarged. I go back into my daily living, like a mole exposed to bright sunlight; my senses awaken, the

world pulses vividly, and new angles and perspectives present themselves. Arts-based research should achieve this as well. Pelias does, at least for me. Describing the essays in his book, he says that "some are performative, playful, longing toward poem. They believe in words. They want to language a stone. They have the jitters. Their heart beats in a phrase" and that "Some are creative nonfiction, certain that they can only name by way of the poem. They dance with the facts" (p. 11).

Creative nonfiction allows me the literary effects that invite in new, powerful meanings, while maintaining my compact with the reader for veracity and with the participants for respectful, fair representation. Earlier I explain what I mean by being true. In addition to Lakoff and Johnson (1999) and Bruner (1996), the creative nonfiction genre helps me conceptualize truth as part of the process, part of the crafting and interacting with material. Truth in creative nonfiction comes from living experiences and therefore is not a matter of merely reporting supposedly objective realities (Bartkevicius, 2010; Blew, 2010; Robert L. Root & Steinberg, 2010). Writers who cross genres also "have made the language of their academic discourse more expansive, more intimate, more literary… in essence, they move the written work beyond presentation into conversation" (Robert L. Root & Steinberg, 2010, p. xxx). As a conversation, this form also merges writing and reading practices.

> The prevailing binary of truth and fiction (or fantasy) is thereby replaced with a complex conception of the act of reading as one in which a delicious dialectic tensions between actuality and imagination may be experienced. Indeed, a boundary between fact and fiction has never been, itself, an objective, strictly 'factual' entity. Rather it is a human (social) construction, an artifact of convention, one born out of a general need for an unambiguous classification of otherwise indeterminate entities (Barone, 2008, p. 109).

The border position of creative nonfiction, like narrative and arts based research, allows a borrowing from different genres and a self-conscious conversation across genres and with readers. Readers engage in the nonfiction, literal world of the text, and figurative, imaginative leaps to their own realities beyond the text, and thus "to engage in a kind of textual play that is premised on the understanding that there are no final meanings inscribed within the text. The meanings are, rather, ambiguous ones that are brought into being within negotiations between the text and the reader" (Barone, 2008, p. 113). Writers of standard nonfiction, Root and Steinberg suggest, offer their work as a means to an end and a container for transporting information. Poets and fiction writers put themselves into their work, and see it as an end in itself. They explore, reflect, imagine through the text. Writers of creative nonfiction do both, in a variety of configurations.

> Creative nonfiction, which is simultaneously literary and transactional, integrates these discourse aims; it brings artistry to information and actuality to imagination, and it draws upon the expressive aim that lies below the surface in all writing (Robert L. Root & Steinberg, 2010, p. xxxiii).

At the same time, I believe that creative nonfiction and arts based research challenge assumptions of objectivity asserted by traditional research practices. As Fish (1980) points out "ordinary language" is supposedly objective, neutral, and literal. This is a myth. It rests on assumptions that there is a clear division between literary and non-literary texts, that the self is autonomous, that fact is separate from value, and meaning separate from interpretation. Creative nonfiction communicates poetically through prose. Arts based research utilizes art for academic writing, thus while offering new methods and perspectives, these practices also challenge the very boundaries that allow their existence. Fish says that the question "What makes an utterance a work of art?" is

actually a hidden answer, because it implies that an utterance is either 'ordinary' or 'a work of art' and there are clear demarcations for each. These practices challenge a belief that form can ever be separated from content, that there can ever be some sort of neutral, interpretatively free container for language that then offers objectivity (Fish, 1980a).

Research as Conversation

I see my research practice, including research writing, as part of a bigger conversation. A conversation is not an argument. It is collaborative, friendly, and unfinished.

> As in poetry, it is inappropriate to ask for a conclusion or a summary of a phenomenological study. To summarize a poem in order to present the result would destroy the result because the poem itself is the result. The poem is the thing. So phenomenology, not unlike poetry, is a poetizing project; it tries an incantative, evocative speaking, a primal telling, wherein we aim to involve the voice in an original singing of the world (VanManen, 1990, p. 13).

Narrative, poetic, artistic research practices include readers in texts and in spaces between texts. "And art forms, such as poetry, provide tacit experiences for readers. Interpretation requires engagement in ways that go beyond cognition" (Glesne, 1997, p. 217). If I keep in mind my core research interest: learning in community, it makes sense to position myself not as an authority studying this phenomenon, but as a participant, a member of communities of learning, including communities of teachers and of researchers. This means that I involve my participants in the meaning making to the greatest extent possible, and that my writing invites the reader in too. "The capability of the arts to capture process mirrors the unfolding nature of social life, and thus there is a congruence between subject matter and method" (Leavy, 2009, p. 12). The work is cyclical. Leavy says arts-based research is iterative, not linear. She also describes it the way I see

democratic discourse within community, as questioning, challenging the status quo, causing necessary discomfort that then forces us to reexamine our practices and beliefs. Within dialogue, ABR evokes emotions and inspires empathy, which we need for "building collaboration/community across differences" (p. 14).

Peter Elbow (2012) talks about speech as enactment and writing as a record of thinking, and he says that writing and speech can each borrow the virtues of the other. The conversation metaphor offers important speech-like qualities to research writing, including writing as active inquiry in progress.

> Although we usually think about writing as a mode of 'telling' about the social world, writing is not just a mopping-up activity at the end of a research project. Writing is also a way of 'knowing' – a method of discovery and analysis. By writing in different ways, we discover new aspects of our topic and our relationship to it. Form and content are inseparable (Richardson, 2000, p. 923).

Writing as process helps me unite theory or reification with practice. Richardson (1997) talks of this when she says,

> I believe that writing is a theoretical and practical process through which we can (a) reveal epistemological assumptions, (b) discover grounds for questioning received scripts and hegemonic ideals – both those within the academy those incorporated within ourselves, (c) find ways to change those scripts, (d) connect to others and form community, and (e) nurture our emergent selves (p. 295).

I would associate 'received' and 'hegemonic' with authoritative discourses, and agree that sometimes we internalize them. Writing to know is partly a conversation with the self. We talk to ourselves, or a myriad collection of others, through our texts. Research as conversation shows research writing as not merely the container for transporting information that Root and Steinberg (2010) say of standard nonfiction. It is a process, not just a product. "The image of a path walked, however rocky was worth walking for its own sake" (Cosson, 2008, p. 283).

Art allows for communication that can
continually change and fragment anew.
Text can also do this,
but so often it is hijacked to serve the
hegemonic hierarchies
of the status quo.
I call for us to walk care(fully)
stealth(fully)
forward
walking carefully,
a/r/tfully
with freedom.
I set a walk to lead
a journey of discover

A PLACE OF GROWTH
FOR ALL
(de Cosson, 2008, p. 283)

The conversational quality connotes an ongoing, iterative, open stance that reaches across genres and includes participants and readers in making meaning. "The text is not a thing, and therefore the second consciousness, the consciousness of the perceiver, can in no way be eliminated or neutralized" (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 107). Research as conversation positions the researcher as part of communication that extends beyond her own text.

Ethics

Research methodology and ethics are interconnected. Keeping biases and limitations up front is not just right or ethical, but also the only way to carry out research in a clear, rigorous manner. Because human beings are flawed, there must be ways to ensure ethical behavior in research activities. One way is to make the process transparent and shared.

> When the data conflict with the evolving story, or when there are contradictions, the researchers changes the configuration of the story. Recursive movements are

> made between the evolving story and the database until the plot begins to take form (Coulter & Smith, 2009, p. 587).

Narrative research techniques allow for rigor in storytelling. Coulter and Smith recognize that any set of data could yield many stories, but not any story will stand up to triangulation and other methods of verification. Just as a metaphor may be more or less apt, so a larger research story must hold up even while it's being constructed.

Making and reading stories helps us find meaning, but because much of this is usually done unconsciously, to use narrative in research requires awareness and transparency. While fiction can be seamless, with the hand of the writer well-disguised, creative nonfiction keeps an authorial presence more prominent. The storytelling of narrative research involves all sorts of editing and shaping decisions, so as much as possible, the seams should show, and decisions should be made explicit to readers. Making stories is such a habit, Bruner (1996) says, that we do it all the time; it's hard for us to see it. How we build awareness is through contrast, confrontation, and metacognition.

Creative nonfiction, by bridging genres, invites contrast and ambiguity. Metacognition, as I determined in my theoretic background, helps us do community, but also helps us study community. Confrontation could occur when your narrative reality doesn't fit with what happens or with the reality story of others, says Bruner (1996). It is risky and can lead to anger or resentment instead of raised consciousness. This implies a need for care, compassion, and courage. "Metacognition converts ontological arguments about the nature of reality into epistemological ones about how we know" (p. 148). Metacognition and transparency require reflection and self-awareness. Iterative work builds upon reflection, circling back. "Reflexive scholarship comes back around, points

to itself in order to say this is where it stands, at least at this moment….It hopes to…shake the seemingly unshakable, and to feel the answer squirm. It lives for maybe" (Pelias, 2004, p. 12, ellipses mine). I see a circular interrelationship between doing community, learning about community and learning about learning. My learning is not separate from the learning that I observe. As I make stories I also learn about and reveal how stories are made. The creative part of creative nonfiction offers literary elements for use in analysis and expression. It values the power of stories. The nonfiction side nags about veracity and transparency; it says, you may tell stories, but you must share how you constructed those stories.

From my researcher's journal on 11/21:

> Just had a thought, how these pseudonyms start to become real to me. I start to call people by the wrong names, and somehow that connects to my "poetic license", that I didn't apply for or earn, this fiction, that no matter how close to life it is, is a story that I get to tell.

My vision was for collaborative and reciprocal research (North, 2007, 2009; Weems, 2006). Reality offered something quite different, and I will explain that more fully later. I did not take informed consent for granted; it is embedded within relationships and I feel needs to be revisited throughout a project. As a relational researcher, my self-assessment becomes complicated and crucial. Who am I in this space? I had to ask myself that question frequently. Murray (2003) asks the provocative question, am I a spy, a shill, a go-between, or a sociologist? Her answer: all of the above. She explorers her presence as a participant observer in two settings, one of which involved high risks for the other participants. She describes what I found to be true as well, boundaries between friend, researcher, worker, observer become fluid and confusing, with participants sharing information as friends and temporarily forgetting

about the researcher role. Is it fair to collect data from someone who seeks your support as a friend? Murray seems to say yes, that when she enters a site as a sociologist, she is above everything else that identity, although she proceeded with delicacy and decency. I think any relational researcher must ask these questions and answer them for herself. I did so in an ongoing manner throughout my research.

Deciding what to record, what to report, these issues are endless. At one point, a participant wanted to talk to me about some major doubts about the class. Something told me to offer the option of speaking off the record. As the participant unloaded some powerful and troubling feelings, I had two opposite thoughts: 1) Darn, this is really good data. I wish I could include it, and 2) This is bigger than me and my dissertation. This is about a human being who needs support, and I want to recognize and offer that. Here I think it is not just the pressure of positivism, in its denial of relationships, that confused me, but also what Sarason (1974) calls 'professionalism' and how it intrudes on our sense of community – there is a deeply rooted need for outcomes, producing work and defining oneself by the work that one does and can show. "The internal psychological sense of community became a victim of a production ethic" (p. 271).

In the back of my mind throughout my project was Hostetler's (2005) definition of 'good research', that above all else, it should do good and be good for all concerned. He worries about how focusing on methodology as separate from ethics can lead us to neglecting its effects on people. Lincoln and Guba (1985) quote J.M. Johnson critiquing conventional research, for which "It is presumed that trust is, in effect, a kind of commodity for which one can barter" (as cited in Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 256). I include much of the participants' own voices as part of my effort to present multiple

truths, but I did not get a feedback loop and collaborative data analysis that I had hoped for. I can only hope to do better next time, to conduct research that, as Pelias suggests, recognizes

> …that experience is prologue to explanation. It is to allow oneself the luxury of privileging the living moment, the situated individual who is constantly in the ongoing process of constructing meaning. It is to recognize that the life of a community exceeds, in its richness and complexity, the sense-making activity of any one of its participants. It is to claim that an imaginative evocation of voices from that community life, spoken from within the heart of the paying field, yields as compelling an explanation of culture as any distanced description offered from the sidelines. It is to insist that all members of a community are contributing members of a cultural team (Pelias & Pineau, p. 122).

Love

Van Manen (1991) says we research as parents and teachers, and that our motivation is care and love. Love is connected to understanding (Palmer, 1983, 1998; Tinder, 1980; VanManen, 1991). This makes me think again about "inquiry" and "community" going together. The hard work of loving is essential, I feel, in trustworthy and ethical research. "Then research is a caring act…We desire to truly know our loved one's very nature. And if our love is strong enough, we not only will learn much about life, we also will come face to face with its mystery" (VanManen, 1990, pp. 5-6, ellipses mine).

Research Questions

My research question is: What do learning and community look like and how are they experienced within a specific Learning Community (LC)? I have moved towards this very general question, as I find that fits with my researcher's stance: qualitative, narrative, and relational. While my central question is general so as to maintain openness to the experiences of my participants, my background theoretical understandings have

become more full and refined over time. The background theoretical understanding informs what I see and carries with it some background questions. I call them 'background questions' because I decided to keep them in the back of my mind, to revisit them as the study evolved, but not to force data or my or my participant's experiences into explicit answers for these questions. I thought I might find answers to some or discover different questions as the study progressed. These background questions are:

- How does the dynamic interplay between authoritative and internally persuasive discourses operate within this community and within specific moments, and what does that tell us (myself, the participants, my readers) about learning in community?
- What metaphors of learning and community are in operation in this community? Which of those are expressed directly by participants, and do those explicit metaphors shift or develop over the course of the semester-long class?
- What do these metaphors tell us about learning in community?
- Are there embodied, implied metaphors, perhaps present but not verbalized directly?
- How can I identify those and what do they tell us about learning in community?
- What do the literal and metaphorical conversations tell us about learning in community? (Metaphorical conversations include interdisciplinary, nonverbal, and indirect exchanges between people, texts, and ideas.)
- In what ways do the structures and pedagogies of the LC appear to further or hinder literal and metaphorical conversations and learning in community?

My researcher's stance and research design are not such that I would test a hypothesis that learning in LC's is better than in other, 'stand-alone' courses. I was not set up for a cause and effect or before and after study. Instead, I set out to capture the story of learning in community, so as to show one LC in action and understand better how it makes the magic that it does, what obstacles may get in the way, and what that tells us about learning in community.

I observed a one semester-long LC, taking field notes, interviewing four participants twice each, conducting two focus groups, and collecting artifacts. Two other interviews came about, one, with Gus who had a family emergency and could not attend a focus group, but was eager to talk with me, and another, with Raneff. This one started as a quick break-time conversation and continued on the phone; he called me because a theme we had been discussing in class he felt connected to ideas he had about learning and community. I point this out to demonstrate the kind of personal and intellectual connections that LCs facilitate. I entered the site right at the beginning of the semester and stayed to the end. I attended sixteen three-hour class sessions and recorded five of them with audio and video footage. I had planned on collaborating with the two instructors, and agreeing together on tools for reflecting upon community that they also found helpful for their professional goals, but this did not happen. I thought I would focus on metaphor and that this would help to capture participants' conceptualizations of learning and community and changes in these over time. I did ask the participants in the first interviews to share their learning and community metaphors with me and then revisit those metaphors in the second interview, but this ended up not being the richest source of data. Metaphorical and symbolic thinking infused much of what I saw and how

participants communicated, but in the background. Explicit use of metaphor as a research tool, I discovered, would have required more set-up and support; it would have required that I was either studying my own class and/or that this was connected to the content of the course and class time allotted for it. I've noticed that some things need to be named and some things are ruined or diminished with naming. I haven't yet figured out which is which or how consistently this proves true, but while we live in metaphor daily, people seem to clam up when asked to talk about it directly. I take this up later when I discuss emergent pedagogy, but I acknowledge that this throws a wrench in my advocacy of transparency and metacognition. We may ruin some things by talking about them (music, sex, metaphor). Does that mean attempting transparency and metacognition is fruitless? I say, no. As usual, we need balance.

I had hoped that all of the strategies described above would open up the possibility of capturing a sense of developing experiences with and perceptions of learning and community without imposing expectations on the participants or the data. I found that to be the case, but the narrative arc that I thought I would discover was not the shape or form of my findings. My background questions offered me various ways of exploring the dynamics of a particular LC, with an overall focus on the relationship between parts – dynamic moments – and the whole – learning in community. The yin yang image represents dualities in moments. The Malthusian curve reminds me of larger, overall movement. I have mentioned our basic human need to be 'blessed', to achieve perfection, but I don't mean to imply that movement is always forward or that perfection is always a shared vision.

I used what I might call a modified grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) to code field notes, transcripts of interviews, and other artifacts. I appreciate St Pierre's (2011) critique of traditional coding. She suggests that much of qualitative research is still modeled on and assessed through a positivist stance. She argues that coding gains respectability because it is teachable, systematic and seems 'scientific', yet it distances us from our data. "Those data entangled me and the world, they could never be separate for me – out there somewhere waiting for me to find them, collect them, and reduce them to words in the service of a quasi-statistical manipulation like coding" (p. 2). I used coding partly because that's what I was taught. As a novice researcher, I'm still at the point where I'm trying out what I've been exposed to, and only pushing against certain rules and boundaries that don't seem right, but not necessarily moving completely beyond them. For example, assigning one and only one code for one piece of data never made sense to me. Is there ever really a tidy one-to-one correspondence between a moment in life and a category or description for it? While I am still not sure I like how coding fragments the data and removes them from context, as I worked, I found the only alternative would have been to present the raw data as is for readers to interact with. (I should perhaps say 'semi-cooked' instead of 'raw', because of course my sound recordings and hand-written field notes arrive already filtered through tools that I wield and operate). I take on the role of translator and interpreter when I write research. To re-present data in any way is to interpret it. I found, though, that my coding work helped me get close to, not distant from, the data. I went back in to field notes and interview transcripts over and over in order to select segments and decide where to put them. This forced me not to jump too quickly to generalizations and global messages. Theory, as I

have mentioned earlier, can itself be suspect, a reification removed from practice, but a/r/tographers redefine theory in a way that works for me, as "reflective, responsive, and relational, which is continuously in a state of reconstruction and becoming something else altogether" (Irwin & Springgay, 2008, p. xx) . This reflection includes looking back upon one's own learning and observations, so my research journal and ongoing responses to findings also constituted data.

While the bulk of my data are class conversations, my work could not be described as discourse analysis. I did not parse out intricate overlapping, pauses, or other moments in verbal exchanges. If I think of my research reporting as enactment, then a play, a movie, some sort of sound recording, would work better for such considerations, to capture the lived experience of literal conversation. What I did was look at how ideas, beliefs, disciplines and texts interacted through classroom conversations. In thinking of the classroom as a novel, and all texts as part of conversation, and relying on the two-dimensional page for sharing my findings, I instead looked at field notes, interview transcripts, and other material as texts. I sat in cafes and read the book of data, looking for patterns, themes, messages, tensions, conflicts, and images with the question "what does this tell me about learning in community?" in the back of my mind.

My circular or iterative processes also helped me resist positivism and pre-formed formulae. St. Pierre questions the research format whereby a literature review comes first and then is set aside and forgotten. "Could I quote Foucault and a participant in the same sentence? I actually don't see that done very often in the findings' section of a qualitative research report" (p. 5). I wasn't able to set things aside and forget about them. I cycled through theory, emerging themes, data, and my representations of the data in several

trips, so that each piece was informing the other. That was my way of making sense of my work.

Glesne (1997) explains how she codes and sorts data and the fact that more material came forth from questions she asked directly, less from what her participants got to tangentially, and that therefore less in volume is not less in importance. Instead of the traditional additional sorting of grounded theory, she looked at the material in each interview, taking in the essence of the message. Emotions are part of the message, the knowledge that she builds and participates in. She tried to account for and even evoke the emotional content of the text. I pursued a similar approach. After I identified themes, I checked them against the data and with a critical friend. I also brought some of my nascent findings to interviews and casual conversations with participants to glean their feedback. I was in collage mode early on, cutting and pasting material into thematic bundles, and looking at how an intertextual message came through. I explain this in more detail in the next chapter. Perhaps younger generations feel differently, but in order to work in a literary frame of mind, I had to see printed text on paper. I found sitting in a café with a book-like document helped me appreciate nuance, metaphor, irony and other literary effects that carry layers of meaning. I could not do that on a computer screen, and therefore eschewed coding software. My modified version of axial coding, micro coding, and reworking categories and themes helped me refine my categories and my understanding of the community (Corbin & Strauss, 2007; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). I discussed arts-based research above, but here will say again that Leavy (2009) explains that ABR is part of every stage of research, not just reporting. I found this to be true for

me, as I observed, took notes, and analyzed the data coming in. I hoped to appreciate, but not be ‘seduced’ by aesthetics; I hoped to let beauty in and let it speak.

The form that the written presentation took revealed itself. I aimed to unite form and content, so that the emerging story of learning in community was told in such a way that the message was not just reported but enacted.

CHAPTER 5

THE STUDY

A Basic Story

Pine Hill Community College (PHCC) is a community college up on a hill in New England that has been around since the mid-forties. A spirit of innovation and perseverance set in early, when a disaster destroying most buildings was met with community support and avid rebuilding, physical and institutional, at least the way the school tells it. The campus currently comprises over one hundred acres. PHCC educates about 12,500 students a year, with 62% female and 38% male, according to their website. The age breakdown has 29% under 20, 35% between 20 and 24, 13% between 25 and 29, 16% between 30 and 44, and 7% above 45. The average is 25 years old. In terms of race and ethnicity, 69% of the students are White, 20% Hispanic or Latino, 7% Black or African American, 2 % Asian, 2% two or more races, 1% American Indian and less than 1% Pacific Islander or Cape Verdean.

In the class that I observed, twelve students returned a demographic survey: 8 were female, 4 male (Laurence, a man in his 40's or 50's, did not turn one in and ended up dropping the course). Three students were under 20 (about 23%), 6 were between 20 and 24 (46%), 2 were between 25 and 29 (15%), and one (not counting Laurence) was between 30 and 44 (8%), not so different from PHCC's reported numbers. Ethnicity is harder to report in numbers. Six students identified themselves as white and/or Caucasian (46%). One of them also noted that s/he was Irish and French Canadian. Others did not write a race, but instead included heritage, for example one has an Italian and French Canadian background, another added to white a background of English, Irish, German,

and French Canadian. Another participant identified as French, Irish and Polish. One wrote "Scottish heritage". One identified themselves as Puerto Rican, one as Latin American, and one wrote that they were born in Bogota, Columbia and raised in the U.S. The LC page on PHCC's website reports that demographics in LCs mainly match those of the campus.

The campus sits within some natural landscape, but is mainly concrete, save a small organic garden tucked away in a corner – Stephanie's (a student whom I interviewed) favorite spot. One of the fancier buildings is the one for business programs. I pass through that on my way to the upper level buildings where the LC meets. One building houses the library and most English classes, and the other houses labs and most science classes, so while the two-room set up is mainly a disruptive inconvenience, it does represent the two disciplines joined for this course. One classroom has yellowish, seemingly freshly painted walls (there were "Wet Paint" signs up in the hallways early on), chalkboards on two walls, and a row of sliding windows framed in black along another, where we can see a row of trees doing what they do in the different seasons and weather. A big green chalkboard runs along the wall where the door is. A classroom clock is above that. A TV hangs from the corner between that wall and the red chalkboard wall. The floor is oatmeal colored linoleum squares with brown streaks.

Chairs attached to little desks are moved around for circles or clusters for group work. The other classroom is similar, except for an odd pasted-on mural of a luxuriant jungle scene, which seems part concession to and part mockery of the lack of windows and the fact that this environmentally themed course meets in a square room with desks in rows. These chair n' desks move too, and each class time they are set up in a circle.

Paul is the first to start them moving, but early into the semester, students get the desks set up when they arrive in the room.

There is a fifteen to twenty minute break during the room switch. Students often go for food. There is almost always a smoker's group who hangs out in between the two buildings. Sometimes students go straight to the second room and relax or catch up on homework. The start time for each session seemed to get more and more flexible as the semester progresses.

I have known PHCC and Julian and Paul for almost four years now. I didn't know the teachers well, but had had several conversations about LCs, education, literature, and various other topics with them, and Paul had invited me to participate in the annual LC retreat each of the past three years, which I did. I had been developing a relationship with another teaching pair whom I had hoped to work with for my dissertation, but mid-summer, I was told that they decided against it. It seemed that they understood the project to involve a certain amount of work on their part that they were too overwhelmed with other obligations to feel comfortable with. I had talked with Julian the previous year about working with him and another teaching partner, and he seemed eager but she said no. Somewhere along the way, I'm not remembering for sure when, Julian said something like, 'you could always observe my LC with Paul'. I then decided to call in that favor, and I asked Julian over the summer if he and Paul would be willing to have me in their class for my dissertation study. Julian said he would ask Paul, and then reported to me that it was fine. By now, summer was coming to an end, and we moved quite quickly from there. We dove right in to the first interviews, before having a casual introductory meeting that I was hoping for.

I know conditions are never ideal, but I feel that the sudden, panicked way in which I jumpstarted this project got in the way of some important groundwork. Even if you know participants pretty well, a research relationship is a new relationship that takes work. I realize now too that while this might not have been possible for me at the time, the kind of researcher that I aspire to be requires either that the participating teachers ask for a study partner, or I am researching my own class. I doubt that the kind of reciprocal, collaborative work that I respect can be achieved by an outside researcher gaining permission to visit a class, and then doing research *on* the class. Unless research goals and design are shared, with shared reflection and analysis running throughout the project, the preposition is 'on', no matter how hard one tries to make it 'with'. Of course, any relationship shifts and evolves. Time and conversation seem key components in allowing a relationship to grow, but I did not have meetings outside of class time with Paul or Julian. I would linger after class sometimes for a brief conversation, or a few times, show up early and visit Paul in his office, but I could not make any other kinds of meetings happen.

The class I visited was a combination of environmental literature and ecopsychology called "When Gaia meets Psyche". This was the second year that Paul and Julian had taught the course. They have taught other LCs together, and have been close friends for over twenty years. They travel and hike together; they know each other's families. The class started with fifteen students. One dropped after two weeks, and two more dropped later on, due to personal struggles. The course had two required ecopsychology texts, a handful of literary texts, and about twenty additional articles. Some of the course texts are as follows: *Ecopsychology: Restoring the Earth, Healing the*

Mind, edited by Mary Gomes, Allen Kanner, and Theodore Roszak; *The Psychology of Environmental Problems: Psychology for Sustainability, 3rd* edition, by Susan Koger and Deborah DuNann Winter; *Not Wanted on the Voyage* by Timothy Findley; *Ishmael*, by Daniel Quinn; *The Tempest,* by William Shakespeare, *Siddhartha*, by Herman Hesse; *Solar Storms*, by Linda Hogan; and *Tao Te Ching,* by Lau Tzu. Group work and class discussions comprised most Tuesdays and half of each Thursday, with the second half devoted to the seminar. A one-page seminar paper was due each Thursday. The two teachers seemed to divide up those papers and write feedback on them, which they handed out not always the following week but not long after. Deadlines for readings and papers shifted a lot as the course went on.

Two big events loomed large for this class. One was a shocking early storm that cut electricity for some people for a full week. There was a lot of rain after the snowstorm as well. The other big event was the Occupy Wall Street movement, which had just started up at this time. Students and teachers talked quite a bit about OWS and its connection to some of the course's themes. Felicia, one of the students, became deeply involved in OWS and founded an Occupy PHCC branch.

Paul and Julian took the class outside for three experiential adventures. One was on the second day of class; this was a silent walk in the woods on campus. The second was a trip to the top of a local mountain (hiking optional. About half of the class chose this option), and then poetry reading at the top. The third trip was to a reservoir, with a walk around and then down to the waterfront, where the class wrote haikus and read them aloud.

The storm seemed to throw the course off. Deadlines started to shift, and at the same time, heading in to midterms, students started to feel overwhelmed by the amount of work required by the class. Paul describes a 'wall' that came up at this time, with a very clear before and after, and the decline after an irreversible and unpleasant loss of communication and learning. I saw a little more ups and downs, with students expressing dissatisfaction well before the storm, and several feeling positive about shifts that occurred after.

Paul and Julian seemed to feel disappointed by the class, but rejoiced at some powerful moments. Julian seemed to feel much more positively about another LC that he was teaching at the time. Paul did not teach other classes, as he coordinates the LC program. Some students who seemed very engaged and hardworking did not manage to complete final assignments. There was at least one incomplete and a few generous grades offered to accommodate potential. At the time of this writing, I have tried to keep in touch with the teachers and students, but save one café meeting with Felicia and bumping in to Laurence, who had dropped the course, at another café, I have not heard from anyone.

Participant Descriptions

Penelope has auburn hair (does she dye it? Today it was very black) often worn down, below shoulder length, parted on the side. Today it is casually twisted up in a bun, with a teal green plastic stick or comb stuck through (which later she removes). She is 25 years old. She describes her heritage as Italian and French Canadian. On one day she wears torn jeans with black tights below (which she wore on day two as well, except the jeans were shorts). She has black lace-up shoes. A plaid button down shirt opens over a

scoop-necked black top. She has light hazel eyes which flicker and flame with emotion. She has a very loud voice that sounds almost mechanical, like a wind-up toy, yet merry as well. She lives with her boyfriend. The two of them take care of their cats. She says that she is ”working class and proud of it.” She works as a hairdresser part time. She also says she is a seamstress. In class she mentions a few times that she works three jobs. She receives financial aid. This is her only class at the time. Her major is creative writing. This is her fourth semester at PHCC. Responding to Carol’s comment that the ecofeminism article seemed to focus too much on Christianity and only mentioned other beliefs briefly, she says: "Kali Mah is the producer of Chakti, she produces Chatki through consorting with her consort, Sheba, so that she ends up, in the story, she ends up killing him and like spreading part of his body all over the world which makes the world grow into what it is now. So I think this text is missing out on the divinity of Chakti and channeling that kind of energy, channeling those kinds of thoughts, and, so I definitely agree with you on that perspective”. I am not sure how to read Penelope. She has strong opinions about people, but then changes them. One day, she spends a lot of the class time leafing through an illustrated book that I see has ‘witchcraft’ in the title. She passes it to Marguerite, who also looks through it a little during class.

Elliot seems to like caps. On one day, he wears a brown baseball cap, a plaid blue and green shirt, tight jeans flared a little at the end. He is 19 and describes his heritage as Scottish. He wears boots with a little heel. He has short dark hair with sideburns and pronounced dimples. His eyebrows are thick and dark, and he has and very thick, long eyelashes. While he has beautiful green-blue eyes, I picture him in shades, like on the field trip. He is kind of a hip guy, kind of like one of the Beatles when they were new,

young, and very cool. He wears a woven thread bracelet, like a friendship bracelet. He lives in an apartment attached to his grandparents' house during the school week, and sometimes goes to another town, a bit further away, on weekends, staying with friends or his parents. He describes himself as middle class. He worked full time over the summer, and now is a full time student and doesn't work. He receives aid through FAFSA. He does some volunteer work for the sustainability club. He also helps out his grandparents and cares for his dog. This is his second year at PHCC. He takes 18 credits, 5 classes, 2 labs. He is a sustainability major, and hopes to transfer to a 4-year college and into a Natural Resources major. On field trips or causal chat times, he talks about his plans of going to Cornell. He seems to have communicated with them already, and/or have clear ideas on their transfer policy (because he talks about taking classes that will facilitate that, and not wasting time on ones that won't). When he talks about his eco-identity collage, he says he is a licensed diver, and loves being under water. He says he prefers diving without cages, likes to be there, even one time with 40 sharks, 9, 10, 11 feet away; they bumped into him. "It's an experience like no other to have this big mouth open and go right past you". He says he doesn't feel any fear. He doesn't worry about anything, and it's the only time he can deal without music. "I always have to have it playing in my head. But when I'm down there, I just listen to the bubbles. You know, hear the oxygen".

Marguerite seems to have partnered up in some way with Elliot. They sat alone together on a rock on the field trip, and shared a common interest in mind-altering drugs. Later I'm told that they never dated, within a conversation about his having a crush on her. She says in a consoling way, 'he's a cutie pie'. There was some joking and embarrassment about Julian riding in her car to the reservoir field trip, because apparently

she had drugs in there. I think they smoked a joint together before he hopped in to give them driving directions. Marguerite's attire one day: low black boots, black slim jeans, short sleeved, scoop-necked shirt, two necklaces, a shell one, short, and a longer one with a pendent which looks like a Celtic symbol in silver. She has long red hair, worn down loose, swept back and over one shoulder. She tends to push the hair back repeatedly during class discussions in a dramatic flourish. She describes herself as Caucasian, Irish and French Canadian. She is 19 years old, lives with her father and younger sister. She has an accent, maybe Boston or Eastern Massachusetts. With long vowel sounds and a little bit of a whiney twang at the end of words, which I find charming. This is her second year at PHCC. She is currently enrolled in 12 credits. She doesn't yet have a major and so is in the 'liberal arts' for now. She considers herself working to middle class. She works 30 hours a week at a large grocery store chain. She receives financial aid in the form of Pell grants. When she presented her eco-identity collage, she says, "I have the sun and the moon here, because as a child, that's the first thing I picked up on, that it's like, the changing from day to night, and waking up to the moon at night and the sun in day, and just getting good energy from it, so I included that. I kind of always thought of my parents as the sun and the moon, just like their personalities were always reflective of that… And this picture was of a bird, crashing in a window of my house, last year, and I thought it was dead, but it was so beautiful that I took a picture and then as soon as I snapped this picture, it woke up and flew away".

Felicia identifies herself as Caucasian. She wears high, thick, brown, laced boots. Eye shadow. Black leggings over a mini jeans skirt on some days, a jade pendant. Layered, scoop-neck tee shirts. She wears her hair pulled back. She has lovely, clear

green eyes. Her earrings are thick, black, like musical notes. She is 29 years old and lives with her sister. She is working class “always have hovered around the poverty line!” She does part-time work on and off during school. She volunteers for the mayoral campaign of her city. She receives financial aid. This is her second year at PHCC. She takes 13 credits (4 classes plus a lab). She is a liberal arts major, still trying to figure out what she wants to study. She has a mellifluous voice and speaks confidently and eloquently.

Jaspar wears a green wool cap on most days. Dark rimmed glasses. Jeans. Black sneakers. He has a cute, boyish way, sort of a squeaky voice. (When he was in my way to the board one day, he said, oh sorry, I’m a meanie). He is 20 years old and lives with both of his parents. He is not sure how to describe his economic class background. He earns $17,000 a year working at an inn for about 15-20 hours a week. He does not receive financial aid. He describes his racial and ethnic heritage as white, English, Irish, German, French-Canadian and “a mix of other things”. This is his third semester. He takes 4 courses for a total of 17 credits. His major is environmental sustainability.

Laurence has brown hair with lots of grey streaks, no part, worn down to the back of his neck. One day he wears a grey, long sleeved polo like shirt. He has wire rimmed glasses. Laced up dark brown work boots. He has two daughters. (I never got the demographics survey back from him). When he presents his eco-identity, he says “I was introduced to nature and the outdoors and travel I guess by my dad, who I lost when I was ten years old. And I think I've always had that connection.” He points to a picture of his mentor who taught Laurence when he was 65. “He has been an inspiration. He has a pace-maker. He gets out there and he does it. You learn so much from other people when you're out doing these things.” He includes pictures of his two daughters. "When they

came into the picture, being a dad, and not being able to go outside, I recreated the outdoors inside by building a climbing wall… Once they came into my life, I tried to pass down to them some of my experiences that I've been through".

Gus is 24 years old. He describes his heritage as French, Irish and "supposedly 1/8 Native American" from his father's side, but is closer to his mother's side, which is Polish. He speaks some Polish phrases and terms, and says he is a beginner in French and knows 'very little' Spanish. He is tall, average build. He has an eager, sort of goofy look. Penelope says he is really cool, seems quiet, but must have sisters or something, because he 'gets it', even though he looks like, what did she say, the typical male? He lives with his mother. Of his economic class, he says "Working class, getting by fairly well, not struggling for food or anything, but not fine dining and vacationing. No complaints (Besides about the state of the country's economic system as a whole)". He has financial aid. He does not currently work for pay, but does a lot of babysitting for his sister, who is a nurse, and has done so for years (he missed class one day because one of her children needed his help.) He also does yard work for his family, and for fun, helps set up computer/entertainment systems. He is taking 4 courses for 13 credits. He has been here for 2 ½ years. He is currently a liberal arts major, but taking coursework towards a psychology major. He is interested in capitalism's impact on the environment.

Raneff is 21 years old. He has long black hair which falls loose with a middle part, sometimes gathered in a pony tail. He wears silver metal framed squarish glasses and large, round black post earrings. He has a soft voice and very round, gentle brown eyes. Of his racial and ethnic heritage, he says he was born in Columbia and raised in the US, in New England. He lives with his mother and stepfather. He describes himself as

upper middle class. He does not have a job, but sometimes does weekend work for his father, renovating houses. He does not receive any financial aid. He is in his second year at PHCC (says a year and a half here). He is taking 2 courses, for 9 credits. He is not sure of his major, but is thinking of doubling in English and biology, and transferring to a nearby public university. Raneff talks a lot about his mother, with great pride and love. She is very spiritual and tries to spread female energy. He talks of dreams, like when he presented his eco-identity collage, he shared that he got his idea for it from a dream, remembering a trip to St. Lucia with his father. He talked about how his father was a gardener his whole life, as a hobby, and "he taught me how important it is to pay attention to nature".

Carol has big round glasses which look like sunglasses, and they are often worn up on her head. She is 17 years old. She has a loud, confident voice, with a slight lisp. Round face, big light green eyes. She has light brown hair with some blonder streaks kept short, just below the chin. She has quite pale skin. She wears a chunk of bracelets about 4 inches wide, multiple shiny rocks. (Later, when I participate in group work with her, she and Hillary talk about gem stones and their various positive properties. Carol says she wore those bracelets non-stop for a few months, and they broke. Now she keeps gemstones in her pockets.) She wears high black boots over black tight jeans or leggings. Purple swirly shirt, not quiet paisley with mid-length sleeves and a necklace on a black cord. It's a silver horse. Carol lives with her mother. Her parents are divorced. She describes herself as middle class. She does not receive financial aid. She does unpaid work, living on a farm and training horses. She also volunteers for equine rescues and for her church. She has taken two semesters so far and is currently enrolled in 3 courses for

10 credits. Her major, which she underlined, is Sustainability Studies. She says that she tends to talk a lot in class, but for her eco-identity, she said that she enjoyed silence and being alone, or at least without any humans around. She said that surprised her. She wakes up before 5:00 am, and actually jumps out of her bedroom window, landing on a lawn chair, so as not to wake the household. Kitty follows after. She also does not like technology, and for the photographs that she took for this project, she did not use a flash, but only natural light. She says: "When a person wakes up or comes outside or calls, it's like being shocked out of your cocoon. That's really my identity, is being at peace with myself, don't worry about things, because I keep doing my thing."

Hillary has wavy brown hair, a very deep voice, and blue eyes. She identifies herself as Caucasian. She is 20 years old. There's a solidity to her build and presence. She seems confident and caring. She lives with both parents, two brothers, and her pets. She says she is "In-between working class and middle class". She knows intermediate Spanish and is currently studying American Sign Language. She works in a vet's office for an hourly wage, about 12 hours a week. She also volunteers at a nearby humane society. She receives financial aid. She is enrolled in 13 credits. She is not yet sure of a major, but is interested in animal behavior, psychology, and art therapy. This is her second year at PHCC.

Terrie is 40 years old and identifies herself as Caucasian. She has short reddish-blond hair (the color of autumn leaves), kind of a boyish cut, and freckles. She's short, not slim, kind of average build. Her voice can be strong, cheery, or wavering and emotional. She lives with one parent. She describes herself as "very poor working class". She works about 20-25 hours a week for an hourly wage. (In a conversation, she told me

how much she hates her work, how hard it is, causes her back pain, and how she's been there so long but earns so little. She is a pet groomer. Towards the end of the semester, she mentions being fired, and is very upset, worried about money). She receives financial aid. She has been at PHCC since the summer of '09 (2 ½ years). She is taking 4 courses for 13 credits. For a major, she is thinking about psychology, English, and nutrition. She is very forthcoming about her personal life, mentioning in one brief conversation during break that she had substance abuse problems in high school (started drinking at age 8, I believe), was bullied by siblings and then became a bully. She is interested in going into social work, either helping kids with issues of bullying or helping abused women. She tells the story, as if she has done so many times before, of being suicidal in high school. She had planned out her death, but decided she needed to seek forgiveness from the girl she had been bullying before she died. She did so, and the fact that the girl was able to forgive her changed (and saved!) her life. I think it was in this same conversation that she mentioned coming out as gay, and how much harder that was in the past.

Michelle is 22 years old. She is a single mom with a two-year old. She says she has so much going on sometimes she just wants to pull her hair out. She also lives with her younger brother. Her heritage is Puerto Rican. Spanish is her first language. She says her other siblings did not learn Spanish. The bilingual programs were cancelled by the time they went through school, but she can read, write, and speak Spanish fluently. She has long black hair, worn down loose over one shoulder, or in a braid, or pulled back partially. She is a little heavy around the middle. She has a cute, round face, cheery energy, and talks freely and enthusiastically. There is a childlike innocence to her. She speaks with a Puerto Rican urban accent, if I can say that. She describes herself as

working class. She currently works for an hourly wage. She receives financial aid. She is enrolled in 2 LCs plus a lab, for 16 credits! She wants to be a psychiatrist. Her major is psychology. She says "Good morning!" loudly and cheerily at the start of each class, as she enters the room, even one day when she was feeling quite sick, and she immediately sort of deflated after her greeting. She also says, during a conversation about the town PHCC is located in, that she was born and grew up there, but never felt a sense of community there, and feels much more of one when she goes back to Puerto Rico. I always wondered what community meant to her and whether or not she felt it in this room, but I couldn't get an interview with her, nor was she free for any of the focus groups. She has a heavy class load and is the mom of a young, very active, boy. She wore flat pumps on the trip to the reservoir, and big earrings, lots of jewelry, which did not look comfortable for walking, but did not complain once.

Stephanie is small in height and build. She is 23. Her heritage is Latin American, her first language being Spanish. She is a beginner in Russian and French. She is fluent in English. Dark curly short hair frames her face. It's full and poofy, like a cloud. She sometimes gathers it on top of her head like a pom-pom. She wears small hoop earrings, brown leather lace-up shoes, jeans, faded at the knee. Sometimes she looks chilly, wearing her jacket buttoned up in class. She has dark eyes. She speaks with an accent that at one point Paul says he really likes. She is enthusiastic and up front. She is often the first to express confusion or ask questions about an article or an assignment. She likes to wear bulky scarves, often of hand-woven looking fabrics (she had a bag made of entirely recycled materials the day of the trip to the mountain). She lives with her uncle, aunt and nephew. She is working class. She works 16 hours a week, and also babysits,

not for wages. She has FAFSA student aid. She has been at PHCC for 1 ½ years. She is enrolled in 4 classes. She is interested in secondary education, specifically art and language arts. She told me of her dream to start a school in her home country. On the field trip (the day before she broke down in class), she excitedly told me she was thinking of shifting the focus of her school from language to environmental sustainability.

Steph: For at least three years, I lived in this ceiling of a house, that was made of bamboo and hay, and in there, I lived with a community of tarantulas. That's why I'm never afraid of spiders. I was probably like, seven and I lived in trees most of the time. Most of my days I was just, stuck up there, you wouldn't even be able to see me cause I was up so high. So, I feel better when I'm in nature than I am with, you know, cars, and buildings and smokes, you know, things like that (from our first interview). Her favorite place on campus is the organic garden. "It's the only place I feel like nobody's observing me. And I can separate the noises of people and just focus on just nature."

Julian is tall, (6 ft?), of slim build with a little bit of a paunch. He is in his early 50's, balding with a fringe of grey. He has blue eyes, long hands, kind of an elegance to his face and shape. He has a very soothing, gentle, and quiet voice – it doesn't always carry to my recording device well. He has a twinkle in his eye and a playful smirk when he's delivering his ironic jokes. He often wears belted trousers and button-down dress shirts, even to the trip to the mountain (for which Paul hiked, and looked like a mountain man, in loose-fitting shorts and a bandana around his head). Julian is the 'task master' and the one who keeps track of time, when an activity is going on too long, or scolds the group when conversations are not orderly.

Paul: Students develop trust in the process, trust in us as a faculty team, trust in their classmates that they can have a discussion where they make themselves vulnerable, but yet at the same time, they feel safe. Again, that's something that evolves. And we take some steps to develop--

Julian -- Well, it's the Stockholm syndrome.

Paul laughs: Yeah, brainwashed.

Julian: They're together for six hours a week, not three, and there are intense requirements, and so they suffer, and they grow to love each other as a result.

Paul: Cause misery loves company. [chuckles]

Julian: Yeah. Right. They turn to each other for solace [he chuckles too]. (An interview).

Julian is the jokester, the 'devil's advocate' and at times he mediates, supporting students when Paul is saying they're wrong about something

From a class visit: Julian: So can I go to the hospital and get my Id removed?

[some laughter]

Paul: These are constructs, ideas, not something physical.

Julian: You mean they're ideas that could be wrong!? Wow! [exaggerated, playing the role of the ingénue] and a little later, Julian, the jokester again: Talk to me, tell me about it. I can't, I'm unconscious. (Laughter)

Later in the same class, talking about science, phenomenology, etc, somewhere in the discussion about subjectivity, Julian says "Is it just me, or is it cold in here?" Terrie takes him literally, answering "Well, I'm having hot flashes, so I can't say".

Paul is of average height (5'7"?). Also in his early 50's. A thicker build – square body, square face (not heavy, though, just solid). He has grey hair and beard, looks like a

mountain man. He looks quite huggable, and is charismatic, but distant too, not effusive nor does he make physical contact easily. Eye color? I'm picturing blue. He has kind eyes and a solid, rumbling voice that really carries. It doesn't feel piercing or insistent, but I can hear him all the way down a hallway. He dresses more casually than Julian. He says 'you know' and 'right' a lot. He drops his 'h's sometimes, like on the word 'huge'. Paul says proudly "I don't own a cell phone". Julian says, "And he doesn't have a watch either. That's why he's always asking me, hey Julian, what time is it?" (An interview). Paul: And then we try to punctuate that with climbing trips to the Northwest. We try to use school, well here's another advantage, and example of life and school going together, is we use the college travel funds in professional development to climb. So we'll only go to conferences where we can climb things, different mountain ranges (Interview 8.11).

Paul and Julian are a unit, one of the closest pairs of heterosexual men I've ever encountered. They finish each other's sentences. Every time I send an email to both, one or the other answers, but never both. I don't know if they talked and agreed, or were somehow so psychically linked that one replied and the other knew not to.

Julian: The happiness needs to come --

Paul: It comes on reflection.

Julian: And over time.

Paul: And distance, yeah, absolutely.

Julian: Yeah. And it was a class, it wasn't therapy, right? (Interview 8.11, about the positive psych LC)

Circles and Lines

"Reality is made up of circles but we see straight lines" (Senge, 2006 p. 73).

The data showed me a picture of circles and lines. Lines are reifications, as defined by Wenger (1998), in which I include binaries. (See graphic representations following. On a line, you are always only at one point and not another. With binaries, you are only this or that; there is no in between or nuance.) In connection with post-structuralism, I see binaries as ways of fixing or essentializing categories, part of "Identity categories that function as regulatory and normalizing" (Jackson, 2004, p. 676); they insist that you are this (male, for example) because you are not that (female).

> It is within their polarities of white/black, masculine/feminine, hetero/homosexual, where one term is always dominant and the other subordinate, that our identities are formed. Difference in this context is always perceived as the effect of the other. But a cultural politics that can address difference offers a way of breaking these hierarchies and dismantling this language of polarity and its material structures of inequality and discrimination (Rutherford, 1990, p. 10).

A line is the shortest distance between two points, and thus connotes efficiency. Writing can be linear and follow the laws of genre that assert an authority and order of cleanliness or purity. "The idea around which we circulate is that linear texts are related to organized life in a particular way – the text performs the sanitizing… and the repression. The text produces order…and unhappiness" (Pullen & Rhodes, 2008, p. 244, ellipses theirs). Collages and the intertextuality they enact serve also as circles or resistance to lines. Operating this way, "We place ontological and epistemological boundaries around the dualisms that structure our thinking and writing – self/other; man/woman; unemotional/emotional; script/improvisation; object/subject; rational/irrational; centre/margin; inside/outside; clean/dirty" (Pullen & Rhodes, 2008, p. 249). A line is about atomistic identities. There is only one point at a time, no interaction between them.

Binaries represent our cultural (Western, American, maybe human) tendencies to think in a limited, linear, hierarchical way. Positivism epitomizes this thinking and in some ways directs it. I also associate reification and positivism with Bakhtin's (1981) authoritative discourse, and circles with his internally persuasive discourse. In this LC community, the word 'paradigm' became prominent, and ironically, that too became a reification, in that it was often repeated and not examined. Words, particularly nominalizations, are reifications.

Positivism to me means unexamined, dominating reification that has been kept away from practice. Reification is not something to fight or overcome; it is not dangerous in itself. Positivism, I believe is, because it insists that all we have are lines. Palmer calls it objectivism, and says that it claims we can only know objects and ideas as removed from us. Words stand in for ideas, says Dewey (1916, 1944), but when we take them at face value, we accept half-dead ideas. We then assume that we can understand relationships from outside of experience. Positivism denies relationships.

Wenger (1998) explains that we need both reification and practice. Theories, texts, and tools, are all reifications.We need reification to share knowledge, to pass it on from one community to another, one era to another. A theory can be robust, rich, elegant, and thus gain the status of reification. The theory of evolution is one I'm attached to, and it comes up in this study. Shakespeare has authority; his name and titles are reifications. When we don't bring reified knowledge back into practice, though, and play with it, examine it, challenge it, that is when it becomes authoritative, stagnant, and possibly dangerous. "Modern man has a weakness for theories because theories promise a strong and reliable grasp of reality…If in the past the chief obstacle to receptivity has been

religious dogmatism, today it may well be the obsession with finding the true master theory" (Tinder, 1981, p. 52, ellipses mine). Linear thinking allows one voice to dominate.

Circles are community and 'practice' (also from Wenger); lines and circles struggle against each other. Circles are the living experiences that allow us to interrupt, question, and carry out dialogue with confining categories or points on a line. Circular behavior allows multiple viewpoints and voices, collaboration instead of hierarchy. Circles offer empty space, welcoming mysteries, silences and possibilities. "It [intertexuality] can be at once a melancholic moment of crisis, a loss of voice and meaning, a void and displaced origin, and a rebellious conquest of a new polymorphous expression against any unproductive identity or totalitarian linearity" (Kristeva, 2003). Circles represent the thinking of non-Western, non-dominant culture, also our yearning for community, for moving beyond binaries and hierarchies. This includes wholeness and nuance, dialogue, other ways of being than in argument and debate. "Holding tensions creatively does *not* mean indecision or inaction…decisions must be made. But they must not be made in the haste that comes from being impatient with tensions or in the ignorance that results from fearing the clash of diverse opinions" (Palmer, 2011, p. 22).

Circles and lines interrelate in a vibrant duality. Neither can or should stand alone, nor do either ever achieve a pure, happy, ideal form. When he says that society is anti-communal, Tinder (1980) is not saying community is everything and we should reject society. I would associate his concept of society with lines and community with circles. We live with both. "Some of our acts (cognitive and moral) strive toward the limit of reification, but never reach it; other acts strive toward the limit of personification, and

never reach it completely" (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 168). As I stated earlier, Sperling (2004) shows in her study how contradictions are part of a teacher's daily reality and are not problems in need of fixing. She says we need to develop conceptual frameworks that acknowledge these tensions, which is what I am attempting here. Morson (2004) shows how Bakhtin's authoritative message offers an 'alibi', which says you don't need to think, just obey. It tries to block itself from dialogue, but at the margins, dialogue hovers and demands a response, and once the authoritative voice responds, it is not fully authoritative anymore. This shows reification or authoritative discourse put into practice. Picture a streak of light passing through a pool of water, and how the straight line starts to curve and ripple in the rhythms and patterns of the water.

A point or a dot is the starting point. The smallest element in graphic design is the dot, which is the first contact of a pencil to paper or cursor on computer screen. It can grow or stretch into lines, circles or other shapes (Oei & De Kegel, 2002). The center of a circle is a point, one-dimensional, or without dimension, a mysterious abyss representing original speech that we yearn for yet can never recover; writing covers over the center, displaces it through play, repetition, and signifiers (Derrida, 1978). The center is "the unnamable bottomless well whose sign the center was, has always been *surnamed;* the center as the sign of a hole that the book attempted to fill" (Derrida, 1978, p. 297). A circle comprises all points that are the same distance from the center, these points can range free and aimless; we circle around the point, perhaps discourse always does (we don't get to the point). I think of common metaphors, such as "I'm going in circles" or "that's a circular argument", meaning getting lost in repetitious, dizzying movement or thought. Norton Juster's line was in love with a dot. "You're the beginning and the end,

the hub, the core and the quintessence," he said to her (Juster, 1963). A circle is the sun, limitless. "The circle is the most all-embracing form of the universal design elements, because it may be regarded as a magnified dot, as a circular line – made of tiny dots strung together – or as a round plane" (Oei & De Kegel, 2002, p. 169). Circles can suggest organic shapes, calling to the earth and all its curved lines, and fluidity (Livermore, 1997; B. Schupack, 2012). A circle has no beginning or end, no divisions, and represents completeness, eternity, perfection (some sort of god or ideal) (Emick, 2009; Fischler, 1994). "The circle has great educational value in that it shows how everything exists in the context of everything else" (Hansen-Smith, 2007, p. 118). Less than perfect is the square or other straight-edged forms. A square is a 'truncated circle, and lacking a circumference is limited to four sides" (Hansen-Smith, 2007, p. 118).

> Has an obsession with straight lines and right angles becomes a 'straight' jacket that restricts our ability to see the world in other terms, to observe through the eyes of those who see the world in circles, arcs, and globes? What happens when we find ourselves in a culture where round is the rule; where, for example, it is not the cross that symbolizes religious understanding but the nested, curved commas that are yin yang? (Welsch, 1995, p. 1).

A circle here offers a contrast to the straight lines of Western thinking, which Welsch associates with the square. Concentric circles in Native American communities, uniting humans with nature and the cosmos, offer an alternative to the boxes of Western cities and TVs and other machines and the sharp edged corners of "white man's time" (Welsch, 1995).

The circle and line metaphors appeal to me because of the very basic, clean, archetypal nature of the images; they predate writing and appear in many if not all, cultures (Emick, 2009; Grady, 1997; Lakoff, 1987; Lakoff & Johnson, 1999). They are also problematic, I recognize, for the same reasons. The complexities and layers of

meaning different people and cultures can assign to circles and lines suggest a possible limiting or reductive effect of my use of these metaphors. I call back to my idea of real and ideal cohabitating in order to start to work through this dilemma. The ideal community that I bring forth from Tinder is an expanding circle with permeable boundaries, not a 'pure', cartoon version or the self-enclosed circle. But, to talk of community and circles requires that I acknowledge the valid fears that I mentioned in my theoretical background, of conformity, homogeneity, and hegemony. A common metaphor associates the center with what is most important (Grady, 1997). People who challenge the expectation that community means harmony and homogeneity talk of de-centering (Harris, 1989; Lu, 1992; Rutherford, 1990; Slyck, 1997), and listening to those who have been marginalized. Being in the 'right' location is a common metaphor for correctness and appropriateness ('there's something off about his ideas', or, 'you've hit the nail on the head') (Grady, 1997). This implies that in the open space of a circle, there are some places to stand/be/think that are better than others. Any community circle runs the risk of centering and privileging certain stances or voices. A circle in itself is not an unproblematic construct, but it includes an ideal.

A circle can also be bounded and enclosed (Emick, 2009; Fischler, 1994), or exclusive to the point of self-referential solipsism, as in the "circle of sin" in 17th century cosmology (Fischler, 1994). The most atomistic might be a person as an 'island' -- her or his own circle. No one wants to be accused of being self-centered. Communities often define themselves and create a sense of belonging by comparison to an other, by what they're not (Townley et al., 2011). Wenger (1998) warns that communities of practice that do not accommodate or interact with other communities can become narcissistic and

stagnant. We talk about a tight circle or inner circle, thus capturing the closed and exclusionary feel of circles. In art, a perfect circle can feel as limiting and inorganic, inauthentic, as a straight line, maybe more so (K. Schupack, 2012).

Lines as well can be the mathematical or cartoon straight edge, or living varieties of it. Straight equals the norm in a common metaphor, with expressions like off-kilter, twisted, and warped showing supposedly suspicious or dangerous deviations from the straight line (Grady, 1997) (I think, with distaste, about the expression 'straight' for heterosexual, implying that others are what? Crooked? Of course, straight, as in straight-laced, is also boring and uptight). A line connotes the one, proper way to be – toe the line, get your ducks in a line, they keep us in line. Juster's dot at first was not impressed by line: "You are stiff as a stick. Dull. Conventional and repressed" she scorned, and he tried again with "Why take chances? I'm dependable. I know where I'm going. I've got dignity" (Juster, 1963). From the perspective of a line, a sphere looks like a line. Einstein tell us that, and also similarly, that we can not recognize four dimensionality because we see from a perspective of three dimensionality (Abbott, 1999; L. Schupack, 2012). To an artist, the line is a basic unit of expression with limitless possibilities, as long is it isn't a perfectly straight line drawn with a ruler (Livermore, 1997; K. Schupack, 2012). Juster's line learned many tricks to impress dot. She was finally swayed, and dismissed her beau, the squiggly line, saying "Your are meaningless as a melon, undisciplined, unkempt and unaccountable…out of shape, out of order, out of place and out of luck", and turning to her new friend, the line, "Do the one with all the funny curves again, honey" (Juster, 1963). Lines connect circles. Concentric circles do not necessarily speak to each other. A line is a path. "Throw me a life line". In the 17th century Christian view again, lines

connect the human circle to god's (Fischler, 1994), one of many possible ways of describing such connections. Wenger's (1998) line of reification is needed to communicate ideas across time and place and between the circles of communities of practice.

LC's bring circles and lines together in relationship. They offer one powerful way to examine reification and dismantle or challenge binaries, hierarchies, and positivism, but the circle and line duality never ends. Our world and we humans too, are flawed. Maybe particularly people who have been brought up in and succeeded within the dominant positivist culture -- which would include to varying degrees teachers and students gathered in an LC -- can't achieve ideal community. Positivism sneaks into our thinking and communications.

Resistance occurs when circles and lines confront one another. We could dig our heels in and resist circles or resist the lines. If we consider ourselves in community, in circles, we might resist what feels linear (e.g. "empiricism" for this group). When this occurs, a circle cannot keep its 'pure', enclosed, impermeable shape, nor can a line remain the ruler-drawn straight edge. A circle can admit lines, but a line does not have room for a circle. We can bisect a circle in infinite ways. Does that ruin its shape? Perhaps, or the lines offer temporary revision of the circle, much the way theories and reification connect one community to another or can inform practice within one community. I saw both forms of resistance occur in the community I studied. At points of resistance, imagination, dreams, hope, and love mediate circles and lines.

> The quality of this encounter with 'otherness' depends on the kind of imagination I bring to it, which shapes how I approach it, how I engage it, and what I take from it… My point is simply this: if our experience in the company of strangers is to deepen our sense of civic community and help us cultivate democratic habits of

> the heart, the lens of compassionate imagination is crucial" (Palmer, 2011, pp. 115-116, ellipses mine).

Julian and Paul seem to represent circles, with the LC way, and support them and consider themselves within circles, building and facilitating circles. A class text and the two teachers spoke often of the "Dominant Social Paradigm" (DSP), representing linear, hierarchical thinking, and the "New Environmental Paradigm" (NEP), which offers a collaborative, cyclical challenge to the DSP. Yet the teachers also hold on to the lines of positivism and power structures in the classroom. Paul said more than once that scientific and literary or 'other ways of knowing' (including spiritual) need not be in conflict. They can connect and work together, yet in the binary of science versus literature, Paul in a way defends 'science'. That's his discipline. He did seem to draw lines, mainly in regards to science and non-science (taken up in "Interdisciplinarity"). That seemed to lead to confusion and resistance by the students. We define things by what they're not (this is binary thinking. It's either this or that).

Below I include a table showing some binaries that I observed in this community, gleaned from the way people communicated their ideas and interacted with one another and with class texts. I saw some bundling or cross-associations amongst ideas on the left and amongst ideas on the right. There is an ongoing tension between the two. I would say that thinking on the right side, taken too far, represents positivism, a dominant or domineering way of thinking that the participants in my study seemed to try to resist and struggle with in many ways, as do I. Circles and lines are not a binary. As I've explained, they interact in a duality, a yin yang kind of fluctuating dynamic. Ideal community is circular, however, so that is the favored shape. Community is not linear, although we live with and in fact need lines (just as Tinder (1981) points out that society is anti-communal,

but he does not say we could or should do without society). Any of the elements in the table below could coexist in a larger whole, but they often were experienced in this LC as binaries instead. The message is that when we see things as tidy two-sided issues, we miss ways to collaborate and compromise, to find nuance and wholeness, to seek questions instead of answers and to continue to be in community (which as Tinder (1981) points out, is inquiry). This LC community (and I would suggest my own thinking and American culture in general) tends to think in either/or terms, which ends up limiting us (Tannen, 1998). We see more and interrelate more deeply when there are many sides, (so many sides that it becomes a circle!)

Table 1. Binaries

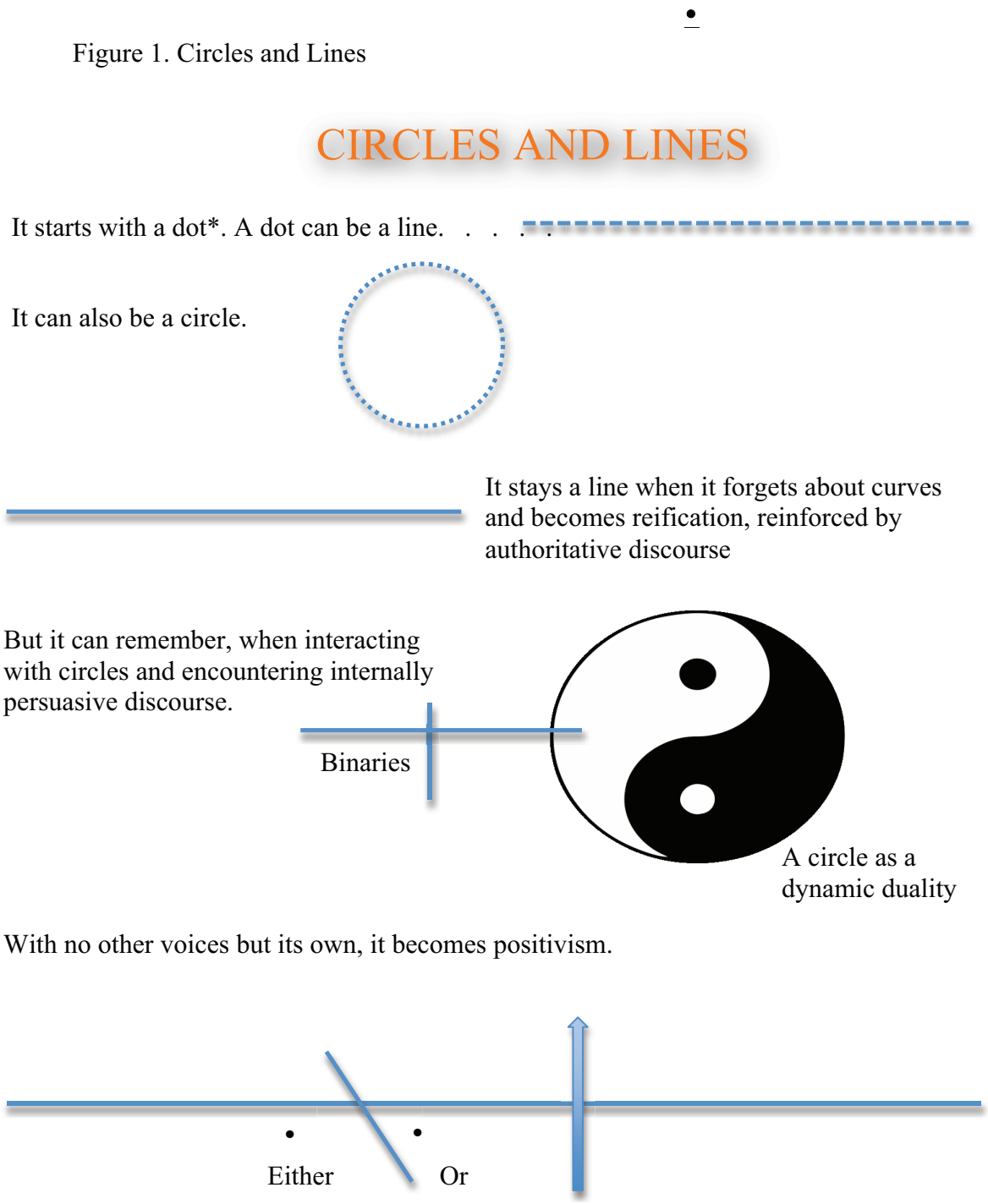
Internally persuasive discourse	Authoritative Discourse
Questions, inquiry, open-ended speaking and writing opportunities, dialogue	Answers. Thesis-driven essay. Argument. Debate.
Process	Product
Action, activism, "practice" (Wenger), connections to outside (the classroom). Learning as fluid, concentric and overlapping circles.	Theory, reification, staying inside (the classroom). Classroom learning.
Nature	Humans
Literary, aesthetic, and spiritual ways of knowing. (While these three can be very different, they seemed to all be pitted	Scientific, esp. psychological ways of knowing (note: I found a confusing message about what science is. The word

against ‘science’ and ‘empiricism’ in this community). Connected too is the binary dreams vs reality. The imagination (offered in literature and art) as opposed to ‘sticking to the facts’ that science seemed to represent.	‘empiricism’ was used in ways that suggested it became reified and unexamined, and stood in for a fact-based, unyielding and I would suggest positivist form of science that does not necessarily speak accurately of science in general or psychology).
Women and a ‘woman’s way of knowing’. Tension here came from confusion between general cultural gender differences and individuals, between patriarchy as bad and individual men as representatives of it in some ways, but separate from it or not meant to be blamed for it in other ways.	Men, and a ‘man’s way of knowing’, patriarchy. Participants associated Julian and Paul with the patriarchy and another reified term, “The Dominant Social Paradigm” or the DSP.
Social and personal learning and community. For the most part, participants recognized that these two halves are interrelated and not a binary, but there were times when it seemed they were seen as in competition, one gains while the other loses.	Academic, intellectual learning. Tension around how much personal anecdote is useful in a seminar or other class discussion.
Resistance to standards, attempt to develop and communicate alternative expectations	Grades, standards, institutional expectations and accountability.

and ways of appreciating one another's work.	

Overall, the community challenged binaries, seeking circles, but did not always succeed. Who ever could? I hope to represent both the wonderful efforts and the points of resistance. When I talk about "The LC Way", I show how fully-integrated learning communities aim to create community circles, which is admirable and important work. Because of their unique community-building, with teachers and the disciplines they represent in collaboration, and the long hours the students and teachers spend together, there is a fluidity of social to academic, text to conversation, that allows for trust, relationships, risk-taking, imagining, and sharing, all of which create the space and opportunities for joining together to dismantle binaries or at least question them.

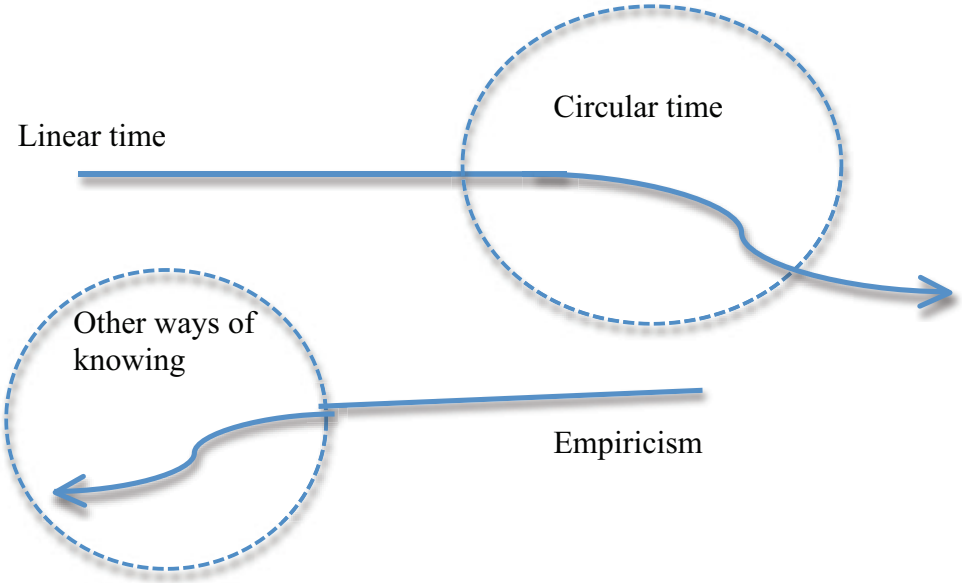
Figure 1. Circles and Lines



* But a dot, even at the subatomic level, is not a dot. The smallest matter that physicists discuss is the string, which is actually an oscillating, vibrating loop (Green, 2003).

Figure 2 . LCs are Circles

Circles interact with lines, offering challenges to linear and binary thinking



LCs offer overlapping and concentric circles, radiating out from the classroom.

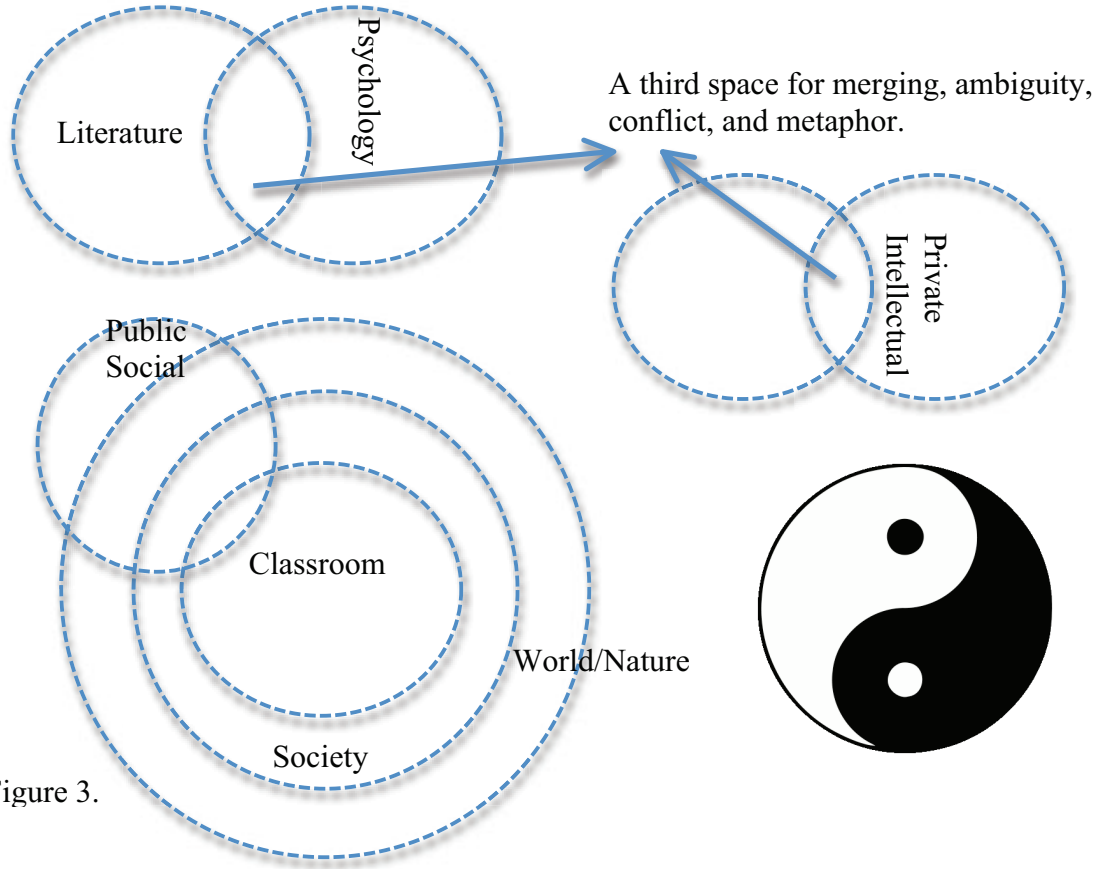


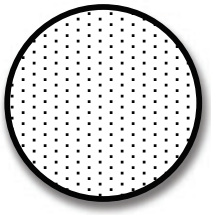
Figure 3.

Figure 3. Circles as Communities

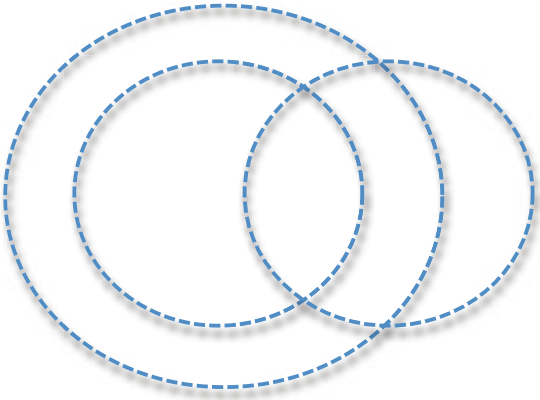
CIRCLES AS COMMUNITIES

Wenger's Communities of Practice: Reification meets Practice in a duality

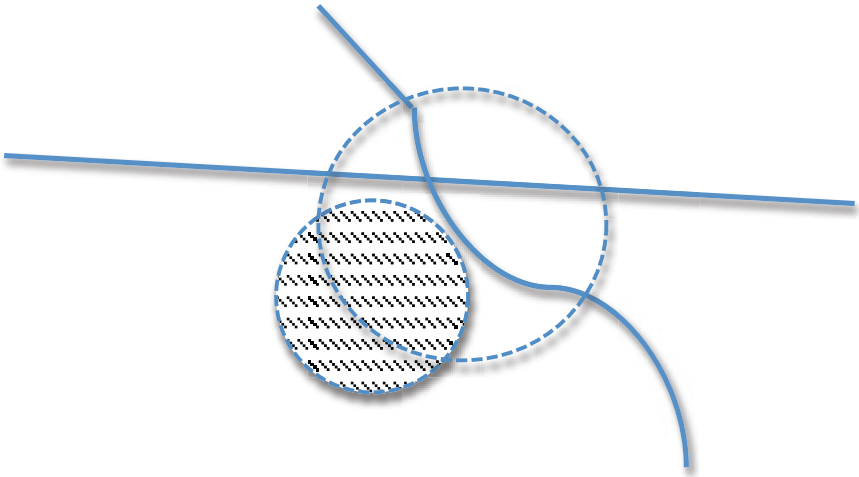
Some fear, for valid reasons, community as a closed, homogenous, solipsistic



I picture ideal community as permeable circles, inviting diversity and overlapping or concentric circles of other communities.



As such, circles/communities are not always harmonious. Conflict and discomfort can result from plurality. Lines of reification, positivism, and hierarchy interact with circles in complicated ways. Authoritative discourse may shape and be shaped by internally persuasive discourse of living experience within communities.



The LC Way: Towards An Ideal Community

I have found what I'm calling 'The LC Way' as the core category of my data. The thinking below represents ideas I have been building up over the past few years as I read about interdiscipinarity, fully-integrated Learning Communities (LCs), and conduct my own studies, this current one being the third. I did not come to the idea of LCs leading towards ideal communities until coding and analyzing my current data, when past experience and thinking clicked with what I had in front of me.

The "LC Way" as an ideal is the central form of resistance in the community that I studied. LCs *are* circles. From my current data:

> Felicia: In an LC setting, in a setting where it's that circle of people together, if there's, I feel like if people connect up with each other, it just sort of spreads through the room.
> Sara: So the teachers are in the circle?
> Felicia: The teachers are in the circle. Yeah. And they do it intentionally. I mean, it's not just like this natural, not every teacher would naturally be drawn in by the students. I think the LC professors are mindful of wanting to keep themselves on that level of reciprocal education.

I have come to see the LC Way as collaborative learning that pushes against the traditional hierarchical structure of higher education. "It is this hegemony of the official story, this enemy of pluralism, multiplicity and complexity, that genuine dialogues about and across differences must be enjoined to combat" (Brookfield and Preskill, 1999, p. 150). LCs support the 'connected teaching" that Belenky and her research team (1986) advocate for women. Because interdisciplinarity runs counter to our current academic culture in higher education, there is a pioneer, maverick quality to the work and the instructors who choose to do it. Their identities are at stake and in flux, and their practices are often rejuvenated by the experience. LC faculty tend to challenge

linear/hierarchical classroom structures, as indicated in this quotation from a study on interdisciplinarity.

> I've done certain things that the students haven't done yet, but I'm not going to set myself up as this expert or try to assert my authority as a way of covering up what I don't know. I'd much rather play master of ceremonies and have this back-and-forth thing. Try to summarize every once in a while, but not assert my personality and knowledge base because I can learn so much from my seminars. When you create a situation where it's really active learning, people get so much more involved and it's much better for everybody. It's precisely people bringing in their individual perspectives and knowledge bases that makes it exciting, makes it possible for everyone to contribute (Lattuca, 2001, p. 134).

I have seen this in my interactions with LC instructors. A participant in one of my earlier studies, Phoebe, told me that she identified herself as an "LC instructor" and felt alienated from her science department. In this study, Julian and Paul seem to describe themselves as rebels and pioneers. When they started their LC program over twenty years ago, they were up against all sorts of administrative and disciplinary obstacles. They took failures and frustrations in their stride. They forged ahead, helping to build a strong program and developing a powerful friendship.

Teachers and students join in literal and metaphorical circles, opposed to the lines of desks in rows, and the lines of straightforward lecture or memorized facts representing pre-formed knowledge, lines of knowledge delivered by one expert in the room to the passive recipients. Palmer (2011) praises the humanities in language that applies well to LCs, saying that they "help form habits of the heart that are crucial to democracy's future -- including humility, chutzpah, and the capacity to hold tension creatively --- all of which help counter the cult of expertise" (p. 134). This demonstrates transformational learning, which I've discussed earlier as connected to metacognition and metaphor and facilitated by interdisciplinarity.

In their study of women's way of knowing, Belenky and associates (1986) describe "received knowers", women in their study who previously or at the time of the interviews, did not trust themselves as knowledgeable, and instead relied on authority figures. They may seek and enjoy community with peers, but difference is too uncomfortable, because there is either right or wrong; all disagreement is confrontation (and many of them had experienced harsh confrontations with men, some violent, which they always lost) and right is usually dictated from above. "They relish having so much in common and aren't aware of their tendency to shape their perceptions and thoughts to match those of others" (p. 38). Such pseudo-community can come from fear and lack of confidence. I have encountered 'received knowers' in my classrooms, and can understand how people who have not felt agentive might know in this way, and might be found in college classrooms as they were in that study. In the LC that I observed, however, there was very little evidence of such behavior. Stephanie perhaps valued and turned to the knowledge of the teachers most of any of the students, but she also believed in her own questions and participation and the ideas of her classmates. Whether the students entering the LC already were full of confidence and able to engage in equal, inquiring discussion or not, I can't know, but I do feel the LC setting encourages and supports learners to move beyond this 'received' way of knowing. (Several of the participants had taken LCs before as well).

Learning communities as I describe them (fully integrated team-taught college courses) overlap with Wenger's "Learning community", one type of Community of Practice (CoP) (1998). A CoP is a specific context where knowledge is acquired and new knowledge is generated, but what sets a learning community apart, according to Wenger,

is that the practice becomes learning itself. The community keeps experience and competence in tension. Different levels of participation are incorporated into the learning. "Turning marginalities into peripheral wisdom requires identities that can play with participation and non-participation" (p. 216). A learning community in Wenger's sense also must take into account other communities that it is part of or connects to. I noticed concentric circles of community that I describe later on in "Circles" which allow for multiple ways to enter the circle and multiple circles to enter. Wenger says members feel safe taking the risks necessary for exploration. Similar to what I call emergent pedagogy, in a Wengerian learning community, the practice is a reflective one, whereby the community works to "understand the rhythms of its own learning" (Wenger, 1998, p. 218). The LC Way as an ideal offers the kind of dynamic, reflective learning that Wenger describes. He mentions negotiation – of membership, of tensions between identity and engagement, for example – demonstrating that such communities function as ongoing conversations about what they do and the knowledge they investigate and build. Throughout the various components of the LC Way, I find this dynamic, dialogic, reflective work sustained through hope, imagination, and belief in community.

The LC Way challenges lines, such as reification, and binaries, for example male/female, and social/intellectual, which I explore in detail later. In an exchange from my current data, Elliot, a student, says, "The brain breaks things down into dualisms, like binaries. Like you have to break things apart in order to understand them. So you can't just put together science and religion in your mind and understand it better –". An involved discussion ensued, within which Paul, one of the teachers, replied," I think that kind of conception can be traced back to the dominant social paradigm. In terms of how

we categorize experience, right? It's simple to put things into binaries, right, stranger, family…" LCs shake up or at least make transparent the reification/participation dualism and others. "Imagination requires the ability to dislocate participation and reification in order to reinvent ourselves, our enterprises, our practices and, our communities. New and perhaps incongruous mixes of participation and reification are one way of creating novel situations of learning" (Wenger, 1998, p. 185). LCs encourage and trigger the imagination.

The LC way is a conversation. The open, tentative, ongoing qualities of conversation thrive in LCs. What counts as knowing and authority, among other basic assumptions, are questioned instead of taken for granted. In the theoretical background, I noted that the path towards ideal community is revealed through intentionality and awareness. LCs offer such metacognition. LCs appreciate knowledge as relational, not a competition or argument. Paul talks often of Peter Elbow's(1986) "believing game" and asks students to start out in belief. Tannen (1998) connects this same believing game with integrative learning, a cornerstone of LC programs. "Critiquing relieves you of the responsibility of doing integrative thinking" (Tannen, 1998, p. 273). When we critique, says Tannen, we can seem smart, but there is much less opportunity for actually learning from the work we're attacking. In the LC that I observed, 'paradigm shift' was a phrase uttered often. Tannen mentions it too when she talks about a conversational, non-agonistic way of learning that I associate with the LC Way:

> If you limit your view of a problem to choosing between two sides, you inevitably reject much that is true, and you narrow your field of vision to the limits of those two sides, making it unlikely you'll pull back, widen your field of vision, and discover the paradigm shift that will permit truly new understanding (p. 290).

This LC ideal also challenges the binaries or closed borders of the different disciplines. LCs expose a hidden curriculum. For Palmer (1998), how we teach is more important than what we teach. How we mediate the knower and the known leads to students' sense of self and the world. Palmer also touches on the limitations of disciplines, which suggests interdisciplinarity as a possible solution. Palmer says that teachers need to open their minds so that students and the subject can speak freely. We can get this by exploring new topics and disciplines, not getting stuck on one and deluded into thinking ourselves masters of it (Palmer, 1998). The LC Way represents resistance to traditional disciplines and traditional ways of teaching and learning.

> Interdisciplinarity is a means of solving problems and answering questions that cannot be satisfactorily addressed using single methods or approaches. Whether the context is short-range instrumentality or a long-range reconceptualization of epistemology, the concept represents an important attempt to define and establish common ground (Klein, 1990, introduction).

> We should remember that it is in the educational venture that the exploration of worlds that are, that were, and that might be, takes place. Unfortunately, for the most part, these worlds are cut, divided, repackaged and merchandised like so many cold cuts that we are invited to select from (Belth, 1993, p. 29).

The interdisciplinarity aimed for in LC's offers dialogue, community, and metaphorical thinking. Theorists and practitioners talk about interdisciplinarity as circular, not linear knowledge development. (Klein, 1990).

LCs can look at distortions and omissions in disciplines and at different ways of knowing. In some cases, interdisciplinarity tries to eliminate the dualism of action and thought, and instead reunites them (Klein, 1990). In my study, I saw that tension made explicit. Lattuca (2001) questions the notion of integration, suggesting that if we value difference, maybe integration isn't a goal. We want to look at conflicts and

contradictions, the plural nature of reality; this coincides with my notion of plurality, conflict, and discomfort in democratic discourse within community.

Plurality and tolerance are keys to community and democracy (Brookfield & Preskill, 1999; Palmer, 2011; Tinder, 1980). Democracy is an ideal, of course, and like the LC Way, requires vigilance, assessment, self-awareness, and care. (Palmer, 2011) Laufgraben (2004) lists general characteristics of LCs. One is that they acknowledge that students and teachers share responsibility for learning. Another is that students can see the importance of learning from each other. The LC also encourages thinking about the form and context of assignments, and the focus is on the process of learning, not just outcomes (Laufgraben, 2004).

> Of particular interest to learning communities, discussion can help students learn the process of democratic discourse, emphasize students' roles as co-creators of knowledge, promote collaborative learning, and enhance the skills of synthesis and integration (Laufgraben, 2004, p. 63).

The LC Way is an ideal, and as such, is never fully accomplished. Resistance is hard. The authoritative voice of the institution, the disciplines, time, texts and other sources speak through the teachers and students at times to interfere with the admirable effort of resistance. Texts, curricula, and other reifications are not bad, either, as I have mentioned elsewhere. Two-way resistance is part of the dynamic that is learning in community, but without resistance from both directions, positivism can rule and our democracy is at risk. Overall the LC Way represents democracy in classrooms, whereby each member of the classroom community plays an important part in creating knowledge and making decisions. Quoting Koolsbergen, a professor of humanities at La Guardia

Community College, Malnarich and asscoiates point out what diversity can mean within an LC.

> Diversity is more than ensuring that our classes reflect a diversity of texts or reflect the diversity of our students. In learning communities especially, 'doing' diversity means engaging in dialogue, confronting, and grappling with our diverse personas. Students are asked to engage in a variety of roles each day. Our students are workers, parents, children, non-native speakers, and retirees. They also come from culturally diverse backgrounds. Often they play multiple roles at one time when their work, family language, and learning intersect. The class discussion is about how we construct these personas or have them assigned to us; the sensitivity to diversity follows as we deconstruct these social roles and look at what positive and negative attributes we attach to them. Because learning communities are designed by faculty from different disciplines who come together to find a way to approach teaching and learning through the different perspective of the disciplines, they are the ideal structure for dealing with diversity (Malnarich, Dusenberry, Sloan, Swinton, & van Slyck, 2003p. 41, citing Koolsbergen).

People recognize LCs as special. The LC Way is sensed by all who come in contact with them. Participants in my study often compared an LC experience to stand-alone class even when I did not ask. I found this so in my previous studies as well. A participant of my current study, Felicia, explains:

> One of the things that's great about learning communities, and I think using the word community is important, is that, especially for someone like me who's coming to school after ten years, coming to a school that I don't live with the students, I don't know pretty much anyone there. A learning community puts you into a circle, faces you to each other, has you know each other, and you start to feel like there are people who are in it with you, people who are going through your education process with you.

Felicia said that the LC program sometimes felt like a separate college. There is great pride and loyalty to LCs, with teachers saying they could never go back and would never want to give up their LC teaching and students saying LCs should be required or they wish they could take exclusively LC courses.

> Paul: Those fifteen faculty who joined us in that adventure continued teaching learning communities throughout their professional career. Till they retired. And then we still have retirees who are coming back and are teaching as adjuncts in learning communities, so it's like, once you've been bit by this LC bug, you're infected, and you don't just do stand-alone coursework again

Several of the participants had taken LCs previously and planned on signing up for more, and one was following in her sister's footsteps. I have felt that connection as well; I fell in love the first time I observed an LC in action. I have struggled with this report because partly I want to advocate for LCs and simply show how great they are. I worry that the close-up view, warts and all, will present a misleading message, whereby any LC detractor could focus on the warts and not the magic. I hope that in my ongoing discussion of the dynamic tension between real and ideal, I am showing that any lived experiences has struggles and ugliness, but the potential for LCs and the courageous, honest, loving work that LC teachers and students conduct daily, outweighs the difficulties, or perhaps shows that what makes LC work so hard is also what makes it so great.

I'm speaking of ideals as juxtaposed against traditions, and so am not asserting that LCs fully succeed in their resistance or that all other classrooms are completely linear and hierarchical. In fact, the binary thinking that I struggle to overcome in my own work and that the community I observed struggled against, would insist that a classroom must either be in the LC way or not, while lived experience would suggest that not to be the case. Still, there is something special going on in these LCs that indicates the potential for all classrooms. I have found that the apparent weaknesses of LCs that I've observed also represent their greatest strengths. The fact that struggles and negotiations around identity, community, and learning are given so much space and time speaks to a

yearning towards a community ideal, with multiple views, democratic discourse, and inevitable tensions or conflicts. “Disagreements are not settled by the facts, but are the means by which the facts are settled” (Fish, 1980d, p. 338).

The qualities that I associate with the LC Way, as manifested by the particular community that I observed for this study, are listed below. I will demonstrate each point with text-collages from that data and analyses of them in the following section. Below I describe the features of an ideal, but within each of these categories is the real/ideal dynamic.

- Concentric circles of membership radiate out from the classroom, including local society, larger society, and the world (in this case, community with nature).
- Interdisciplinarity: two disciplines come together to generate questions about, and investigations into disciplines, epistemologies, and to demonstrate how disciplines can work together to create new or deeper knowledge. Along with or because of the interdisciplinarity, metaphorical and creative thinking result, and participants see connections to ideas and texts beyond the parameters of the classroom and the two disciplines it houses.
- Collaborative learning is modeled and supported, with a melding of personal with public, social with intellectual learning.
- Focus on process over product. Teachers show themselves to be learners, and that they learn from students. A questioning stance is favored over definitive answer-seeking.

- Transformation begins for teachers and students (seeds are planted for internal, pedagogical, and structural transformations).
- Emergent Pedagogy: Teachers include students in curricular and pedagogical decisions and/or make such decisions transparent.

Why Text Collages?

I have called myself a narrative researcher, coming from an appreciation of how we live in and by stories, yet the circles I observed in this LC community also included fluid time and space, challenges to the linearity of narrative. This corresponds with Bakhtin's recycling of utterance, which Gertrude Stein not only speaks of, but enacts in her writing: "The composition is the thing seen by every one living in the living they are doing, they are the composing of the composition that at the time they are living is the composition of the time in which they are living" (G. Stein, 1926, p. 172). I disrupt linear time not just for the sake of being disruptive, but because this is another way to make meaning and reveal truths. Past, present and future converge around certain themes, tensions, and consolidating moments.

I continue the narrative research tradition that Leavy (2009) describes as part of the qualitative paradigm. Such research, she says, looks at the relationship of research and researched. It shifts from numbers as data to words as data and moves from the general to the particular. It aims for reflection and dialogue as a way to resist the "codified language" associated with academia (p. 26). I associate this with Bakhtin's authoritative discourse and Wenger's reification (See the section titled Circle and Lines), which speaks to both my research process and the LC community's experience. At part of

the qualitative research paradigm, narrative research can challenge the public-private dichotomy. "It is the contention of most qualitative practitioners that the personal is always, to some extent, embedded within research practice and resulting knowledge" (Leavy, 2009, p. 37).

Leavy talks about how Kip Jones builds upon Bakhtin's notion of the border between verbal and nonverbal messages, asserting that qualitative research is visual. We visualize a story. Quoting Jones: "The bricolage of images and nonverbal clues accumulated to produce additional keys that unlocked the narratives, enriched the life stories and enhanced the analysis" (p. 32). In a research interview, negative space around dialogue is just like in a painting. This helps with the goal of all qualitative research, which is: "getting at *real*, textured, complex, sensory, contextual meanings" (Leavy, 2009, p. 32, italics hers).

1 was also drawn to poetry in research (Brady, 2000; Faulkner, 2009; Kendall & Murray, 2005). Paraphrasing a statement by Billy Collins, Leavy says that "Poems, surrounded by space and weighted by silence, break through the noise to present an essence" (p. 63). Poetry attends to silence, layered meanings, and participants' voices.

> The heart learns that poems are the hypotheses that let our hearts pump, love, and forgive. We may struggle, unable to get the words of our poems right. We may fall short, incapable of finding our heart's rhythm. We may grind against ourselves, unskilled in locating healing comparisons. Poems, though, give our hearts permission and hope. They are open promises, waiting (Pelias, 2004, p. 172).

Participants in this LC study mentioned space and silence directly, and in their journey along "the LC Way" they opened up space and sought silence.

> In western cultures, time is typically perceived as uniformly flowing without regard for individuals, events or contexts. Space is typically perceived as a

> container or even a vast emptiness (outer space). Yet artists, poets, performance artists, novelists, and musicians perceive time and space differently…Artists see time and space as conditions for living; conditions for engaging with the world through inquiry (Irwin & Springgay, 2008, p. xxvii)

Space and silence appear as components of democratic discourse in community in my literature review. Ronald Pelias and Elyse Pineau say that "the 'mysteries' of organizational life are essentially poetic; they often elude categorization, defy definition, and evaporate under the cold scrutinizing gaze of traditional scholarly discourse" (Pelias & Pineau, 2004, p. 123). Line breaks, human speech, flow and juxtaposition, as well as a trancelike or incantatory quality, these poetic features worked for me (Faulkner, 2009). The close attentiveness to language as a force also appealed to me, but what I did not take up was word by word manipulations resulting in assonance, alliteration and other poetic effects, because I wanted to quote participants directly, keeping significant chunks of their original syntax and expression in tact. Certainly there may be poetry in their words, and I leave that to present itself.

Combining the modes of narrative with poetry, I build upon Glesne's (1997) "poetic transcription" and de Cosson's (2008) "textu(r)al sculptures" and come upon what I call text-collages (although in linear time, I started with my text collages and then found Glesne and deCosson's work). Glesne works with grounded theory, coding data and identifying themes. This researcher built poems from a participant's words. She was working from interviews with one participant. I had to figure out how to present data that included interviews with four participants, field notes and transcripts from class visits, and email communications, but Glesne's general approach and methodological philosophy fit my researcher's stance and my data very well. She, like my participants and I, aims to challenge binaries. "It's a way of reframing an 'either/or' perspective into

one of 'both/and', of moving from dichotomous thinking to more divergent thought" (Glesne, 1997, p. 205). Linearity is part of positivism, which Glesne also resists and I do too: "Conclusions suggest an ending, a linear progression that can be resolved in some neat way. I see no conclusions here, but rather *openings*. Experimental form is an opening, a clearing in the woods of research regularities" (p. 218, italics hers). "It contains multiple negative spaces allowing its *form* to be both open and closed, a multiplying binary that transcends itself, defying the binary it suggests" (de Cosson, 2008 p. 279). Defining 'participant' to include all who are involved, Glesne suggests that "the writer of experimental form seeks the transformative powers of language and reflection to open, in some way, all participants: researcher, researched, and readers" (p. 218).

Poetry, poetic transcriptions, and collage all live with ambiguity (Faulkner, 2009; Glesne, 1997). Since I am looking at complex moments and ongoing dynamics, I needed a way to understand and represent my data that allowed for ambiguity. This implies too that meaning comes about within texts, between texts, and between researcher, participants, and readers. Glesne suggests that a third voice can emerge, one "that comes from the conversation between the respondent and the researcher and develops during interpretation" (Leavy, 2009, p.75). de Cosson (2008) describes an implied, imagined three-dimensionality to writing-sculptures, with the space between text and reader. He uses different fonts, as do I (and I discovered his work after my decision, which actually was inspired by the movie *Helvetica*[1].) In Glesne's poems, ideas from theory and a literature review appear together.

Just as we listen for a sound

[1] Hustwit, G. (Director and Producer). (2007). *Helvetica* [DVD]. London: Swiss Dots.

to emanate from a wind-chime

(all its potential awaiting but a breath of air),

so too a methodology based in sculpture

awaits the fluidity of forms forming,

its being becoming.

It is fluid,

always forming,

(re)forming

once formed

always awaiting new trans(form)ations

(de Cosson, p. 280. I tried to use the same font and formatting as in the original).

Wholeness is a theme in my theoretical framework, my past research, and the community that I observed. In an effort to challenge the limitations of linear and binary thinking, community circles offer wholeness. According to Glesne, arts based research including her poetic transcription has the same goal.

> Experimental writing makes writers and readers more aware of the researcher's relationship with the text and research participants, but that is not why we, the writers, experiment. Rather, experimental form seems to be demanding our attention as a way to help fill holes in our fragmented society (Glesne, 2009, p. 214).

Glesne quotes Lincoln in Denzin, saying: "Many, including scientists, are searching to find some spiritual core in themselves, a way of reconnecting to meaning, purpose, and the sense of wholeness and holiness " (as cited in Glesne, 1997, p. 214).

Wholeness does not mean tidiness or smoothness. As I mentioned in my research practices, what I appreciate about narrative and arts based research is the transparency, showing the seams. A 'messy' or 'dirty' text is "one that does not seek to clean up the mess in its own analytic authority, but rather to attest (as best as writing can do) to that mess – the text as an analogue to life. This text defies the utopian pursuit of conceptual clarity, linear argument, and knock-down conclusions. It adds rough texture to its own bits and pieces such that the conclusions are not so neat, so that knowledge is not so total" (Pullen & Rhodes, 2008, pp 243-244).

Leavy talks about collage as a medium for juxtaposition and metaphor. Here she is describing visual collages. Butler-Kisber also writes about collages of visual, non-textual images. "In the world of art, collage refers to a genre in which 'found' materials that are either natural or made are cut up and pasted on some sort of flat surface" (Butler-Kisber, 2008, p. 266). Describing collage precursors, she says

> The intention of the Cubists in using the medium of collage was to challenge the long-held conventions of painting, oppose the 19th century notion of a single reality or truth by portraying multiple realities, and merge art with the more banal, everyday aspect of life as a critique of the elitist nature of 'high art' (p. 267).

In arts based research, collage can be used for analysis and representation, and I use it in both ways. Butler-Kisber talks about found poetry, in which a researcher gets words and ideas from transcripts and arranges them poetically so as to better express the ideas, while collage works the other way around, starting with intuition and feelings and moving to thoughts and ideas. Each rearrangement and draft offers a metaphorical product that

elicits responses, "providing alternative ways for interpreting both conscious and unconscious ideas" (Butler-Kisber, 2008, p. 269). While my material comes from transcripts, field notes, and class texts, I operate much more the way Butler-Kisber describes collage. I have some ideas, which come from themes in coding, but the placement and shaping of the materials was done more intuitively, with a circling back to themes and theory and then back again into the collages.

I chose to stay with text for various reasons, including the restraints of dissertation expectations, but also because of the rich intertextuality that I feel the data offered (Bazerman, 2004)(Bazerman combines Bahktin's literary and novel-based notion of intertextuality with Vygotsky's and Volosinov's. cultural, extra-textual versions, to show how actions in social contexts are part of textual dialogue). Kristeva (2003) writes of intertextuality as a frontier or threshold, the empty space in a text that makes the reader look outside of the text in her or his yearning for meaning. Meaning is

> not a unity that comes before or after the text, but an irruption, an always unstable revelation on a more or less undermined ground embedded in a plural unity. It paradoxically imposes itself through the recurrence of non-sense, distortion, ambiguity, and contradiction (Kristeva, 2003, p. 11).

I see classroom exchanges, the novel-ness of the classroom, as text, as well as the collages that live on my pages and my interpretations of them. Data are components of texts. "Data are, so to speak, the *constructions* offered by or in the sources: data analysis leads to a *reconstruction* of those constructions" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 332).

The idea of collage suited my data and findings and offers a feeling of layering and serendipity that I find apt. "Messy texts follow the sensibility of the assemblage" (Pullen & Rhodes, p. 244). Words from social conversations or class texts showed up in the classroom and the other way around in a Bakhtinian fashion where past and future

seemed to come together in present moments. Some words stay stiff with reification and others bend and meld. Each time they appear, because they are in a specific context, they are changed as are the people uttering and hearing them. This I feel a collage captures. The LC community seemed to be in collage mode, not least of all because of two assignments, an eco-identity collage and a final poster project, which resulted in visual representations of learning and ideas.

In my text collages, I challenge a narrative by juxtaposing participants' words and actions in ways that heighten the circle and line dynamics, while breaking up the literal chronology of the lived experience. I would like to borrow Pelias' title: "fragments circling an argument" (2004, p. 7). Any researcher edits and rearranges, while an arts based researcher tends to be even more explicit about that. To balance the poetic license that I claimed, I offer a lot of the original data. I do this too because I feel that participants' own words and ideas speak most powerfully of the themes I've identified. The first attempt was my 'heard poem' (included in Circles: Am I in the circle?) This text does not attribute any of the quotations, and thus manifests the collective, collaborative learning that Paul loves to talk about and that I witnessed. I did not feel comfortable removing identities from the other collages, because individual personalities and the tug between individual and community is also part of the story. I wanted each voice to be recognized. I consider arts-based research as not just evocative, a word I often see its practitioners use, but also an enactment. I don't think that a research report is ever a mirror to lived experiences. It is always filtered through lenses, fitted into different forms. With arts-based research and what I attempt in the collages, I am not only representing an experience; I am enacting one. "These words of others carry with them their own

expression, their own evaluative tone, which we assimilate, rework, and re-accentuate" (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 89). Bahktin also says that the part of a text that is reproducible and transferable is a language system, but text as utterance is unique (1986). I think of the texts or utterances of classroom conversations, the texts of readings and written exchanges between participants, the texts of interviews, and I bring them together while creating new texts, new experiences, in the collages. While trying my best to stay true to the spirit and thoughts of the community that I observed, I am creating something new that offers another experience of that spirit and those thoughts. I am not copying or sharing a conversation; I am adding to it.

I am sensitive to narcissism. I write quite a bit about my own emotions and thoughts, because I feel these are valid data, necessary reporting from a relational researcher, yet most important is how the other participants speak of or show their own experiences with learning in community. Pelias (2004) introduces his book, *A methodology of the heart: Evoking academic and daily life,* as

> …located in the researcher's body – a body deployed not as a narcissistic display but on behalf of others, a body that invites identification and empathic connection, a body that takes as its charge to be fully human (p. 1).

How I made the collages: I used a modified grounded theory coding, as explained in the research practices section, and then cut and pasted salient data into a document for each theme. I looked at what textures, juxtapositions and meanings emerged from this new arrangement of material, and using some intuition and gut responses, I rearranged text snippets and shaped them. As I did this, I looked over emerging drafts for ways in which particular concepts, such as binaries or circles and lines, were heightened or not. I looked at where sparks flew, what resonated, and what did not, and reshaped again. I call

my constructions text-collages, not poems, because the layering, the negative space, and the rhythms created come from the intersection of texts in a collage-like way, not from within texts. I did not repeat lines, or create my own music with words in other ways (except in the 'heard poem', which is a poem). Instead, I let the participants' words interact in the layered intersections on the page. Clearly I did shape the texts in much the way a collage artist cuts out pieces of text or imagery. A collage artist may choose to tear rough edges or cut precise ones with scissors. Similarly, I chose ragged, organic, curved or straight edges according to the feel of the text snippet and its exchange with the neighboring snippet. I invented this form for myself, and learned as I went about how far I could push the limitations of the page and the software. I don't think Bill Gates imagined anything like text collages with his Word programs, for I would save a document in all its fonts, and then found that they had disappeared into monochromatic Times New Roman the next time I opened the document. Page and section breaks seemed to go berserk and assert themselves at random moments. I tried to create an overall look, with positive and negative space, to suit the sense I got of meanings emerging from the gathered texts. Then, I turned back to my analyses of each theme, letting the collage inform the analysis and the other way around, making adjustments of each, while reviewing my theoretical framework for other layers of meaning. This was a circular movement through the different sources of ideas: data, reshaped data, found theory, and grounded theory.

After a brief introduction, I present collages, and then analyses of the theme they connect with. All dialogue in the collages comes straight from participants. I replaced pronouns with the referent that appeared earlier in an interview or exchange for the sake

of clarity. I maintained the original meaning to the best of my ability. I include a few quotations from email communications as well. Other texts quoted in the collages are texts assigned for the course (with the exception of one dictionary entry) but not necessarily quoted directly in class discussions. I place these bits, as with all others, thematically. Citations are in footnotes, so as to not disrupt the collage. In each collage, the default font for narration and analysis is Times New Roman, to fit the authoritative discourse of graduate school and dissertation requirements. Each participant gets her or his own font in direct quotations.

For any dialogue that was not quoted directly from audio-recorded transcripts, I narrate in the third person with indirect quotations to avoid putting words into participants' mouths. Here I may sacrifice aesthetics for veracity and ethics. I chose arts based research for the reasons I've explicated in Chapter Four: Research Practices, but as I keep methodology and ethics prominent in my thinking throughout the research process, I must revisit the ethical/aesthetic balance frequently. When does a powerful irony, or lovely turn of phrase reveal more about a participant than might be appropriate or comfortable for them? This comes up as well from simply including so much of participants' words. How could anyone be her or his best self at all times for such a prolonged interaction? Including myself, of course. Or, do the reconfigurations distort the experience that participants seem to be expressing? In this case, the volume of data helps. We might not even mean something that we say once, but the layering effect of several collages and several manifestations of a given theme or tension helps present unique moments within the complex web of a larger story. I feel that both 'count': the unique moments, and the bigger picture that they contribute to.

I have written about love as one way to mediate tensions between real and ideal, lines and circles. I aimed to love the participants, as I always do with my students. This is hard work. You can't force love, but you can open yourself to it and wait for it to happen. My feelings were mixed at times throughout the process of observing, collecting data, analyzing data and representing findings. I didn't always love myself either. "In aesthetic seeing you love a human being not because he is good, but, rather, a human being is good because you love him" (Bakhtin, 1993, p. 62). In some cases, I found new love as I assembled the collages, maybe partly as I thought of the collages as an additional gift for the participants, like my 'heard poem', while always questioning the value of such gifts. I can only hope that readers will find that love as well, appreciating the complexities of the relationships that we all lived and I describe.

Circles: Introduction

Circles represent resistance to lines and binaries and they demonstrate learning and community coinciding. They offer infinite relational configurations, while lines present individual, separate points with one and only one relationship to one another. "As a network of relations in constant tension and activity, power relations are inevitably unstable and therefore produce multiple sites and modes of resistance (Jackson, 2004, p. 687, referring to Foucault). Open space invites silence and fluid movement, unlike a line where you have a fixed location -- you are one place or another, not ever both, and one point is one-dimensional. Yin yang is a circle, with opposites united in a larger whole.

Soul Food

Everybody on earth knowing
That beauty is beautiful

makes ugliness.

Everybody knowing
that goodness is good
makes wickedness.

For being and nonbeing
arise together;
hard and easy
complete each other;
long and short
shape each other;
high and low
depend on each other;
note and voice
make the music together
before and after
follow each other.

That's why the wise soul
does without doing,
teaches without talking.

The things of this world
exist, they are;
you can't refuse them.

To bear and not to own;
To act and not lay claim;
To do the work and let it go:
for just letting it go
Is what makes it stay.

The Tao, #2, pp 4-5.

In circles, collaboration flourishes. Instead of hierarchies, equal peers face one another in literal and metaphorical circles of dialogue. When asked about community, Stephanie, a student participant, talked about interdependence. Circles are communities. Gomes and Kanner (1995), in the ecopsychology textbook for the course, talk about male-centered psychology that defines healthy development as moving toward autonomy

and independence. The Stone Center at Wellesley seeks a different 'self-in-relation' view, which focuses on interconnectedness. The writers quote Janet Surrey, a founding thinker in 'relational theory' talking about healthy relationships: "Each participant's voice is acknowledged so that he or she…feels affirmed and empowered….Thus the sense of connection and participation in something larger than oneself does not diminish but rather heightens the sense of personal power and understanding" (Gomes & Kanner, 1995, p. 117). Besides fitting in to what I see as the LC Way, this also speaks to myself as a relational researcher. When the LC members were talking about their final project, a poster, and looking at models, this little dialogue ensued:

> Sara: I like the circle. I mean, you know, everyone does rectangles.
> Marguerite: Makes me think of back in like English, when they tell you to brainstorm and you start with a circle and branch off.
> Paul: So, she's got a circular aesthetic that's usually more visually pleasing. [and a bit later on the same day] Paul: Yeah, you guys are liking the circle in this class, I'm getting that feeling.
> Felicia: [in a playful tone] We're not into that linear, you know --
> Sara: Exactly [Iaughs]
> Paul: [laughs] Hierarchical –
>
> [And about another poster] Paul: And you've got that circular idea right there, the circle of connection, that seems to be the common aesthetic that this class brings up, is that circle of connection.

Circles represent wholeness, opposed to fragmentation. Palmer (2011) writes of the heart as integrative. He says that the word 'heart' comes from Latin 'cor', which connotes emotions and also the core of the self, "That center place where all of our ways of knowing converge – intellectual, emotional, sensory, intuitive, imaginative, experiential, relational, and bodily, among others" (p. 6). Palmer (1998) also talks about classrooms that circle around a subject, not an object. We can know the subject within relationships. This is not a hierarchical arrangement, but circular, interactive, and

dynamic. I observed such circles in the community of my study, with the seminar – a student-run discussion with little or no involvement on the part of the teachers – as the centerpiece. Commenting on how LCs are different, Felicia says

> Immediately I could tell the difference. Immediately, just sitting in a circle and looking at each other. I mean it's kind of awkward at first, cause you're used to just having to file in and find a seat and listen to the professor. It's a little awkward at first, but it's so much better, you know. You immediately start connecting with students in class and there are people in some of my other classes that I wouldn't even recognize that we were in class together, even though we've spent an entire semester together. But in an LC, you always know who you're in class with, because you're always looking at each other and talking to each other, and so, yeah, right away, that experience…

When she visited the class to talk about the novel *Solar Storms*, Mary brought up the theme of becoming whole again and that this is true for the environment and for humans. It is about bringing back things that have been split violently. As Elliot, another student, says, "There's definitely a diversity there that we can all embrace in a sense cause it's not supposed to be about pulling ourselves apart, it's supposed to be embracing the separate identities within us."

Coming in to this project, I believed that learning and community go together, as I've discussed in my theoretical background, and I found that to be so for the participants. When Julian and Paul talk about community, they connect that to how they teach and how students learn. Julian suggests the metaphor of "On belay" for community[2] and the two teachers continue:

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[2] Definition from Wikipedia: What a climber calls when they are ready to be belayed. Belay: To protect a roped climber from falling by passing the rope through, or around, any type of friction enhancing belay device. Before belay devices were invented, the rope was simply passed around the belayer's hips to create friction.

Paul: Well, yeah, that's actually really good. The notion of on belay, that you're tied in to your climbing partner, and your climbing partner has you on rope, which is your safety line, as you venture in to unknown territory.
Julian: Or is telling you that you're safe. You can go now.
Paul: Right. We kind of do that with students.
Julian: Absolutely.
Paul: We model it, we do it on a smaller scale as they move into the larger demands of the curriculum we put them on belay, and eventually, they're free climbing by the end of the semester.
Julian: This is really tied to the academic work.

For Stephanie, a metaphor for learning has to do with interdisciplinarity, or the circle of learning that cuts across and invites in different disciplines. The metacognition supported by interdisciplinarity and the LC setting leads to this kind of metaphorical thinking.

> When you eat, you take all these things, all these flavors, just, you can taste them, and then you digest them. Learning is the same thing. A teacher gives you the material, the content, and it's your brain taking in all this information and processing it, and then the effect is, your knowledge…, so if they give you a plate of food, and they just give you like, carrots. You're just tasting that flavor, and you can't, you don't get the chance to explore other flavors and how the combination of those flavors can taste better. That's how I feel in a classroom that is teacher-oriented only, versus a classroom where all the students are participating. It's like, when they give you, or me for example, my taste is, if they give me a plate of rice, beans, meat, all of this other stuff, I have a sense of all of the flavors together. That's how I feel in my class.

When the course is over, she feels full:

> I mean I said it at the beginning and I could still restate it, because so far in we've managed to get a flavor of everyone, including Paul and Julian. Like the discussions, just like everything, the text, the discussions, the after class discussions that I have with classmates, or friends, cause I could call some of them friends. I just feel like I've participated myself with all these knowledge and all these perspectives… when I first began, it was just taking the food. Taking and digesting. Now it's more like taking, and tasting it, just kind of like taking the time to enjoy what's going through your mouth… I'm stuffed, actually. At this point, I've had so much, and I have so much in here that I'm still digesting, I'm done. I'm kinda like in the sleep or laziness effect that you get after eating, when the food is just taking all this energy to process itself, that's how I feel right now.

Sara: That's a good place to be, so go get rest, and digest, it'll take you the rest of your life to digest some of this, right?
Steph: Yes, I think.

Felicia talks about learning as a reciprocal phenomenon:

I'm trying to think. It's more of a reciprocity, is the word I'm looking for, cause it's more of, like what I was reading in *The Pedagogy* (of the Oppressed: Freire) and what I totally agree with is that having been in the educator role…and what happens is even though you have the information that they need in order to pass these tests, they're teaching you things that you've never even thought about every day, so when I would come in to work, I knew that it wasn't just me being there to make this demand but it was this sort of shared learning experience, and I had stuff for them and they had stuff for me.

As I explained in my description of "The LC Way", real and ideal communities coexist. The circles of learning struggle against lines of hierarchy, authoritative discourse, reification, and positivism, but circles don't win a battle and nor do lines. There is no end; it is an ongoing dynamic. Landay (2004) says that a classroom is like a novel in a Bakhtinian sense; many different languages intersect and recognize each other in various ways. The point is not to deny differences or declare one entity the valued one. The challenge, she says, is to create a school environment that addresses the difference between internally persuasive and authoritative discourses, and merges them in productive ways. What I saw in the LC conversations was respect for the authority of disciplinary tools and teachers' expertise, while at the same time, an appreciation for democratic discourse and shared learning.

Circles aren't always easy to enter or recognize. I explore the tensions between circles and lines in the following three sections: "Entering the Circle/s", "Am I in the Circle?" and "Concentric Community Circles". Below is a text-collage showing the negotiations around entering the circle. Each speaker is given a different font. My own

thoughts and observations enter the picture, shown in the handwriting font. Narration is in Times New Roman, as are quotations from class texts.

Text Collage: Entering the Circle/s

"We see a line drawn between one and many, one and not one. But if we truly realize the interdependent nature of the dust, the flower, and the human being, we see **that unity cannot exist without diversity.** Unity and diversity interpenetrate each other freely." [3]

Julian: This is a strong class.
Paul: bordering on our favorite class.

Steph: It's not too much work, because of the fact that I'm learning.
The fact that the teachers are always encouraging me to do better, and the fact that I know that they have better expectations of me,
because they know that I can do much better than I am doing now,
that's what is motivating me.

Jaspar: I like the idea of sitting in the circle when we have seminar, because you get to see everybody's faces and when they're talking, you can look at them, when you're talking to them, you can make eye contact with them, which enhances the communication for me. **Once in a circle, I feel like it's much more open,** it's like people hanging out, having a conversation. Of course it's a directed conversation, and it's not exactly hanging out.

Already by the second day of class, my first day observing, students are sitting in a circle, brainstorming freely on the meaning of a poem. Afterwards, Josh says he appreciated the poem more after talking about it.

Paul: We were collectively guiding. **None of us knew what it meant at the beginning.** That's the purpose of seminar, to get multiple perspectives that lead to a deeper understanding.

[3] Thich Nhat Hanh (Hanh, 1993)

[A rock has appeared in the middle of the room]

For example, look at that rock. What do you see when you look at that rock? Paul tells us to get up, walk around it. Some students go right up to it. Others linger in the back. I stay towards the back, because it's pretty crowded and I don't feel I should crowd out a student. Paul notes that Penelope is the first to touch it. At the end, as people start to head back to their seats, I rub my hand up the sloping, lined side, which looks like the bark of a tree, and feels good, like a massage. Michelle: It's hard.

Raneff: It's part of something larger, time.

Terrie: The striations are like rings on a tree.

Stephanie: It's like a frog or the head of a shark .

Terrie, talking about her eco-identity collage, says: I hide a lot. I, I,

I, don't like to express a lot of things.
And I gotta say that this was the hardest thing.

I had to revisit a childhood that wasn't the best thing [her voice gets very shaky, as if she's about to cry] and going to an adulthood that has also had a lot of challenges, so I don't have a lot to say about it. If you have questions, I will answer them as well as I can.

Paul then tries to draw her out asking questions about her design choices.

Sara: Do you think that nature structures things for you?

Terrie: That's a tough question, because right now, I have very conflicted feelings about nature, from when I was a kid to today. You know, I used to live outside, for a couple years, coming home, it was kind of hard to live within walls. And now I'm basically afraid of the outside in a lot of respects, so, it's very conflicted for me.

Paul: **Thank-you, Terrie, for introducing the idea of conflict,** of conflicting views and experiences with nature.

Felicia: Paul sort of pushed me to talk more, and then Julian has come along and repeatedly complimented me on things I've said in class, which is encouraging, and then he brought me to the LC conference.
I am a sucker for positive reinforcement,
like if I don't get it, I have a really hard time,
and it doesn't have to be anything major,
but those little, you know, **the nods from Paul and once in a while Julian saying 'oh, that was a really on point today!'**, oh okay,
so I am making sense to someone other than just myself.

Julian: We had some outliers in that class who are that way by nature. Laurence...Terrie...Carol... Penelope, she seems to work a lot. She's got a boyfriend of some sort, she's definitely got a mother. I've heard all about her. She's not a typical person. And I think we could all feel that.

So, their outside lives impact their social lives here.

Julian: I brought Terrie into the office early in the semester because she seemed to be suffering in some way, and just had a little ten-minute chat, and ***that seemed to create a kind of bond*** *that I thought was really nice. And I don't know how helpful it was.*

Michelle: I don't have a green thumb. I can't. I've tried, you know in elementary school, they give you a little seed and some dirt....
Felicia: What if your life depended on it?
Michelle: I guess I'd have to.
Sophia jokes: **Natural selection.**
Laughter

I know it's a quick moment and light humor, but I'm thinking about belonging or not to this community, the assumption that they're all 'tree-huggers', and when Michelle admits that she doesn't plant plants, she is sort of is outside of that assumed community, there's a joke about her not surviving, in an evolutionary way, as if you have to be a tree hugger to survive in this community.

Michelle: I grew up in this town, but I've never felt a sense of community here.

I feel more community back in Puerto Rico.

Gus: It's wicked lighthearted. I like that. Like you don't have to be embarrassed about anything, you can say whatever you want, you know, stuff like that, which oftentimes isn't, can be taken for granted.

I like how we break up into the groups.

Carol: When I talk too much I'm really annoying.

Terrie: It does seem a little bit manic.

The class goes so fast, that **it is hard to jump in and even know what you're saying half the time.**

Julian enters the second classroom, after break. It is time for class to start. He stands at the front and starts to talk. His quiet voice does not carry over the chatter. Penelope chats loudly with Gus, and continues to talk. While her voice is one of the louder ones, others chat on for a while until it feels that class has actually started.

Julian says to me later: *It's actually very difficult to talk to that group. I've taught so many classes, but* ***that was not an easy group to have a conversation with.***

Because they interrupted each other and they interrupted us, a lot.

It was difficult to make a conversation go in a direction for a while. Talk about sustainability.

I think there was a difficulty in that class in sustaining focus.

Terrie: In the small groups, sometimes we get things totally different from each other, from the same words, and hearing what somebody else got from it opens my eyes to a new way of thinking. I love that by the way. And it's, bouncing off ideas, and building off of personal experiences to get to new ideas, and even solutions, cause maybe somebody in our class will have a brilliant idea that can help.

Carol: When we talk, random nonsense that comes out, it's easier to find what you're trying to say.

Gus: Yeah, it's, that's another thing, where I think a teacher intervention...it's a little too, I mean there's no such thing as raising your hand, you know what I mean? I don't like that. For a shyer student.
It's harder to, and then when you have no teacher interaction,
you just have people
that just dominate it,
but nothing wrong with them, I mean,
they're doing what they're supposed to be doing.

Carol: I think my favorite seminars have been ones that were really like, they just let us loose,
and they were like, okay, we're gonna see what they do for 45 minutes,
and unless they start throwing chairs,
we're just gonna stay out. Because **I feel that it's the most authentic way of discussion.**

The day of the reservoir trip, chatting in the parking lot as we wait for the rest of the class Michelle says she doesn't like speaking. Paul says he was happy to see how good her writing is, how she can go deeply into an idea. She says she's the kind of person who doesn't think before she speaks. Carol says something like, it's fun and entertaining that way. Some people in the class do seem charmed and amused by Michelle's comments, including me. Paul says some people are deep listeners. They learn that way. They take it all in. Carol says, like Jaspar. We all agree. Paul says yeah, he sits and takes it all, and then asks really provocative, deep questions.

Felicia: I loved that Terrie was just talking almost the entire time, like she was so into it, and she sort of blossomed out in this one discussion time, just you know, all semester she's just been throwing in her two cents and she does say some really important things and I like to hear from her, but all of a sudden it was like, her moment to shine, and she just, she gave perspectives that I hadn't really thought of, you know, and so I definitely was able to look at the Tao from her perspective, and she explained it, so it definitely **enriches your experience.** I think that discussion part specifically.

Terrie: I froze

and said, I have nothing to say,
because information overload at that time. It was going, for me, it was going too fast for me to be able to process
what everybody else saying.

Felicia: I come into this class, and it's just, it's sort of the, I think it's just that I want to argue with them, like a lot [laughs], you know, in the beginning, not now, in the beginning they'd like say stuff and I was just, I have to say something about this, and that got me rolling as we got into, which, I think annoyed me at first, but now I can see the benefit of it, but you know, it sort of got me talking more, and once I did, I started feeling really comfortable being able to talk to them, and I think, you know, with how we, how much we complain about Paul running his mouth sometimes, and he knows it, **he does really put you at ease**, cause he will do that sort of joking around, prodding you a little, and just you know, talking so much that you're just, okay, I've got to get a word in

Julian: Stephanie, I think has just tons of potential and what she needs is what a lot of the students need, and it's what we all need, that is practice, practice, practice. And also some discipline.

edgewise now.

Paul: **It was like we hit this wall** that people could not climb, and as mountain guides we couldn't get them to climb it, and so we had to scale back our expectations, we had to scale back, the plan, and make major changes in the plan. Because if I stuck with due dates, the majority of the students would have failed.

Paul: Elliot's another one that's got really good potential, but he doesn't do the preparation, you know? He comes in half the time without doing the reading, without doing the writing, he talks a good game, but you know, he's a con-man, he's a bullshitter, If he would just stop being lazy and do the god damn work, he'd be an honors student, an A student, consistently. You know, he's got a good mind.

Julian: Elliot's very smart, very smart, I think, and possibly lazy and maybe just cavalier, but something needs to happen with him,

because he is clever enough to be able to enjoy learning in the way that clever students do, and that's not happening.

Julian: Felicia, I think is very bright, and very capable, and again, loads and loads of potential, and she's easily distracted with things like Occupy Wall Street, which I think is admirable, and good for her, it's going to be a good growing thing for her, but, at some point you need to do your homework and pay attention to it.

Stephanie told me that she often read articles two or three times, because she found them difficult, and she wrote down words that Julian used that she didn't know, and looked them up in the dictionary.
Felicia ended up getting an A.
She talked about spending 14 hours just on the writing of her literary analysis paper

Paul: Oh, Penelope's so funny. You know, I've never had a student as self-referential as her. Never! It's just incredible, but you know, that's how she learns, it's obvious, that's her learning style. **She's got to make it personally relevant.** I have to say, to be honest, and there were a couple of times when she was like, almost acting out. It was really bizarre. Were you there for that seminar, when she was fiddling the entire time? Got up, like six times in a half hour? I felt that she was being really disrespectful to her classmates, that's how I perceived it. Anyone else who was a hardass would have stopped her right there, humiliated the shit out of her, and said if you can't stay still and focused, you're out.

Sara: I do think she might have some attention issues too.

Paul: I think so too. Yeah, that seems obvious to me now. But at the time, I took it as really disruptive, you know.

I didn't notice this behavior at all. Why not? I still wonder. After the course, Felicia tells me that in Penelope's recovery from her very serious brain trauma, she maybe doesn't even realize some of her behavior would be considered odd. We talk about how maybe this is something she should tell her teachers at the beginning of a course.

Paul: But I got to say [chuckles] Penelope had a huge impact on the class. I'd say more positive than negative. Definitely more positive than negative. **She was really good about connecting with people, and sense of community and sense of joy she brought to learning,** and there were some real positive things I think she brought to the classroom.

Julian: I wouldn't say it was one of the more exciting LCs for me.
I don't think Paul would say that either,
I'm guessing.
We had very nice students. I liked them personally,
and I think Paul did too.
But they were not terribly invested
in what was happening academically in the class.

Paul: I would say that this is probably one of the more challenging LCs that I've taught for a while. Because of the things that transpired in it.
I got really mixed feelings about this class.
There were some real highlights that were really extraordinary,
and some really beautiful integrative moments in the classroom,
and then there's these, you know, unfulfilled potentials.

Julian: Our gen ed assessment
committee determined two years ago -- they
took 80 random essays written by sophomores
here, and graded them, based on research and
plagiarism and focus and composition and stuff like that, and
PHCC fails. And I think if people want to come here and do well,
the opportunity is provided, but for the majority of just average
students, who don't select courses carefully or don't put a lot of
effort into their own work, they can slide through.

Paul: I can see that
some students
thought it was good
cop
bad cop, and
Julian is the bad cop,
because Julian often
would communicate
his dissatisfaction or
his disappointment,
and almost sound like
the punitive parent,
Which I don't do that,
cause I don't think it
has a positive effect
on students.
And I got a feeling like
students were thinking
of me in the same
way,
but I'm much more
open as an instructor.

Julian: Wait wait,

just a moment,

and consider how
difficult it is for
all of us do this
work on time,
and if we could
write perfect
papers every time,
we'd be really
happy.

Paul: I mean, I'll push,
and I'll challenge, you
know. I have high
expectations for
students, and most
the time they meet
them. And I'll give
students ANY support
they need to be
successful, especially
since I teach only one
LC. So I can give
myself to that LC.
And it was
disappointing that that
wasn't seen.

Gus: In my past learning community, I had what I thought was a very strict teacher, and it's one of those things where he was so strict that everyone tried really hard, you know what I mean? **And everyone was like you know, right in a row,**
start at the beginning of a chapter,
work our way to the end,
and none of this hopping
around
kind of stuff, this person likes this phrase
over here, and we talk about the first sentence,
and then we hop over here, and, maybe that doesn't
need a teacher, but that's just what I'm thinking now... when we got off of
the subject at all, or about a personal topics or anything like that,
that he would say, get back on the text.

Raneff expresses disappointment. He seems to feel this LC is not enough
of a circle. He says this LC is more based around the materials than based on us.
Wisdom. He says we don't get enough from Paul and Julian,
Enough of their experiences with the texts.

Terrie: You have something to say,
and you can't say it, the teachers go on
and on for fifteen, twenty minutes
and the rhythm
of the class
is now over.
And now it's awkward

silence.

Elliot: You can kind of ask
whatever question you want,
that you feel is stemmed
from what you've just heard,
and they'll answer it, they'll try
to bring it
somewhere,

they'll, you know,
listen
to your concept.

Carol: I think everyone in the class is pretty good about like, we all have different opinions, but I think people are pretty good at saying, okay,
we can look at people's opinions.
The teachers have like a set, I think they both have, like a theory, they have an idea,

I think they're pretty set in their opinions,
so for them, I think it's pretty cool how they listen to
other people, and **you can look at their faces and
kind of see that they're like,
'I hadn't thought of it that way'.**

Felicia challenges the article for the day, talking about her twelve years in schools.
She sees that kids aren't domineering and selfish as the article says.
She cites Piaget.

Kids just don't know cause and effect, they don't mean to hurt nature; they're just experiencing nature.
She had rehearsed this in her interview with me, and how
her experience should count.
She knows a thing or two about education and child development. And it works the other way around for Stephanie, who
practices in a classroom comment something
that comes up later in my interview with her.

Penelope goes over to Julian, says she has something for him.
She sits next to him. It's something about different translations
of the King James Bible, or quotations from the bible. She says,
"I saw these things, didn't realize where they came from" Julian
says, "You know, the joke about Shakespeare? He wrote in so
many clichés, but they weren't clichés then." I think about the other class,
when she brings in the book on witchcraft, and for the
ecofeminism seminar she also brings in a book on women's
spirituality. It seems her way of being engaged and engaging
others is an innocent sort of show and tell.

Paul: It's the last day. No one's going to argue against you.
Julian: Finally!

[On The Tao]
Julian: don't ask me!
Paul laughs uproariously.
Stephanie says something like, you're supposed to have the answers.
More laughter.
Julian: I'm not a sage.
Paul [laughs]: Whatever he said to you wouldn't be true anyway. So.
[more laughter]
Penelope: That's right.
Julian: They've known that all along.

Paul: You can't master this pedagogy.

Sara: Well, yeah, and I would say, it's not to be mastered, because it's all about relationships, and every single relationship--

Paul: -- It's all about relationships.

Sara: -- is different and complex.

Paul: --and these emerging moments in the classroom

Sara: -- which you can't predict.

Paul: Yeah, you can orchestrate, you can organize, you can have this activity and that activity, and these materials and those materials, and you can schedule this and schedule that, but like the weather, sometimes you can't do it.

Sara: I think if you can say you have mastered it, then you're in trouble.

Paul: Yeah, it's time to go. It's time to retire.

Paul, talking about what he learned from this experience: That they're not just this person coming to your class, in this very narrow domain, of doing academic work, that they're a lot more than that.

Much more complex than that.

And they need respect for that

and I think you know, this class has been really pushing me to act on that belief, more so than I have in the past.

Sara: And do you think they've seen that?

Paul: You know. I don't know. It's hard to say. Like I said, I think the misperceived me.

Carol: I'd like to take all LCs next semester. It's really nice because they encourage you to be outspoken, and eat tacos in seminars. It's important.

Marguerite: Honestly, of all the LCs that I've had, this has been like my favorite one. Everyone has something wonderful to contribute.

At the end on the last day, after people start to leave,
Penelope goes up to Paul and Julian, shakes their hands,
and thanks them
for the class.
"It was a really cool class".

Analysis: Entering the Circle/s

In one sense, anyone who enters the classroom is in the circle of learning. In another sense, every time an activity or discussion occurs, community members negotiate their membership. They are central or peripheral participants, as Wenger (1998) might put it. Have they even agreed as to what the practice is that they are a community of? The

content implied by the course title, or teaching and learning, these are practices that there may be general agreement on, but a given text or topic, a given approach to it, and what the teaching and learning should look like and feel like, these are ongoing negotiations on the level of moments in time. In some cases, binary thinking may interfere with and limit these membership negotiations. If you are either in the circle or not, either quiet or loud, either a good student or bad, finding an authentic way to be in a circle of learning is difficult. The circle at some these moments may be defined as everyone who considers themselves environmentalists. Another circle is also everyone who has read and prepared the assigned texts for the day, or everyone who can keep up with and contribute to the conversation. We inscribe circles around others and ourselves in these moments. Binary thinking shuts us down, narrows our view to either in or out of the circle, instead of a range of circles and a range of ways to participate. Lave and Wenger's (1991) peripheral participation shows valid, valued community membership in someone who considers herself a novice or in some other ways chooses not to be in the center of the learning. I do not believe this acknowledgement is always obvious or comfortable. I saw in myself and signs in others that an inside/outside mentality might have interfered with a person's acceptance of their own or someone else's valid peripheral participation.

Julian, a quiet person who doesn't seem to like noise and chaos, seemed uncomfortable at times. Paul -- whose voice, while not obnoxious or loud, has a powerful quality that makes it carry far -- talks a lot. He seemed to dominate in the classroom. The difference between them is perhaps heightened by binary thinking: Julian is not-Paul, and Paul is not-Julian. Julian enters as a text-based, thesis statement guy. He respects the written word, literature, and narratives. He is more than this too, of course, and his

relationship with Paul expands both of them. Paul's focus is conversation. He seems to have an ongoing conversation with himself, with current ideas buzzing around, colliding and developing. He talks in class and outside of class and in his head, as if all of it is part of the same conversation. They both enter the circle as teachers and learners. This clearly opened the circle of learning, and the students showed appreciation for it. I was struck by how often students talked about the literal circular seating arrangement and how that facilitated the kinds of conversations that I call democratic discourse in community and that I associate with metaphorical circles. At the same time, the teachers are bound by their disciplines and their own syllabus. I wouldn't say that a teacher who is passionate about his subject and feels the desire to share as much of it as possible with students, is trapped by lines, reification, or positivism. I do feel that when we enter circles of learning as whole people, but others see a fraction of that person, learning in community suffers. In other words, if you are only a pushy teacher who makes me read too much, or you are only a lazy student who doesn't come prepared, you might not be seen as or even feel able to behave as more than that. If we draw closed circles that leave others out, or perceive such circles as leaving us out, we can not enter a community of learning fully.

LCs, as I've said, honor the circles of relationships, but relationships are hard work. Ironically when we expect to be present and seen as a whole person, there are more chances for disappointment, although I would also say that each complicated effort, even if not successful, provides deeper learning than if those efforts were not even initiated. As we learn about content, we also learn about learning and community and who we are in that. We learn through and sometimes from discomfort. I found high expectations and accompanying disappointment with Paul and Julian's descriptions of unmet expectations

in their students' academic attitudes and performances, while the students presented themselves as hardworking and serious about school and the subject matter. I saw this in the tensions with Penelope and Paul's feeling of being misunderstood, that his efforts to reach out to students in academic and personal ways were not fully recognized or appreciated. I talk of discomfort as a necessary ingredient in learning in community, but it does not feel good, it does not necessarily lead to learning in an immediate or obvious way, and too much discomfort can be counterproductive, as I explain with the social/emotional ZPD. I do think that overall, participants trusted one another and the community such that discomfort was tolerated and in some ways used productively.

Paul and Julian both seemed to have trouble with Penelope. What I saw was a passionate, outspoken, eager student who had strong initial reactions to texts and people, and then modified those reactions. I did feel she was someone I wouldn't want mad at me. But I experienced her as well-meaning, hard working, and kind. One of her classroom identities was as an outspoken feminist, and I revisit that point in "Transformation", but will propose here that that might have made her more sympathetic to me than to Paul and Julian. To a degree, the students and teachers treated each day as new, in terms of potential for relationships and learning. I love how Paul can finally say Penelope's presence was more positive than negative, but I still feel an ache of sadness when I think about her relationships with the two teachers. They certainly let her speak and accepted her written work with relatively open minds, as far as I can tell, but there was a tension that set in early and did not go away, an assumption that she was working against and detracting from the plan, the learning, the teachers, when that was likely not her intention or even the result. Penelope came to almost every class session, completed

all of her work on time, unlike many of her classmates, chose to be part of things, and was supported in that by the community. In spite of the tensions, her voice was not diminished.

A syllabus can be a reification, even when the teacher has a lot of autonomy. I notice myself getting too attached to a lesson plan that is completely up to me. It may be inevitable that teachers feel loyal to or trapped by an idea of how a course or one class session should go. In this LC, the teachers showed a lot of flexibility in terms of lesson plans and often followed students' leads for the pace and content of class time work. With many hours spent together, complex relationships and differing views of community membership, who is inside or outside of the circle becomes tangled in those very same complex relationships. The teachers have a lot of power to set the tone and draw a circle's boundaries, yet in an LC, this is mediated by a less hierarchical environment. Students were included in the process of describing the circle of learning.

The two teachers evaluated their students, as I think teachers always do. This I gathered from hearing their comments in their second interviews and some additional informal conversations, although Julian was very cautious about this, saying he didn't feel he knew the students well enough to make overall assessments. Paul and Julian looked at who was engaged or not, who was doing the work, who was in the circle. They made efforts throughout the semester to bring people into a circle who seemed, due to personal or academic obstacles, to be outside or on the periphery. Again, when I talk about inside and outside a circle, I refer to one of many circles at any given moment. But this does beg the question, which circle are we talking about, and do we see the same one?

An authoritative discourse of standardization and accountability hovered behind the assessments; this I feel is present in every classroom. What does belonging in academia, at college, in an upper level literature and psychology class entail? Possessing a checklist of skills and quantifiable abilities? Teachers are given the power of describing students with one letter grade. This seems to affect daily interactions in ways we might not want to acknowledge. I saw the teachers attributing unmet potential and less than desirable learning to lack of ability or effort on the part of the students. Julian made comments implying that it is up to students to acclimate and succeed in college. To a degree, this makes sense, and I can't claim that the students worked as hard as they could have and always had scholarly, eager attitudes towards the course material. But the notion of acculturation and homogeneity of academic culture that Lu (1992) warns against insists that the institution, classroom culture, and teachers in a room do not need to meet the students half way and learn from who they are, but that students must discard home cultures to fully take on 'academic culture'. In spite of the accountability rhetoric, Paul and Julian both defied such hierarchical thinking daily, in their kind and supportive interactions with students. The most extreme version of accountability inscribing closed circles would be a teacher who gives up on a student, or who declares that the student "isn't college material". Students who were late with homework or missed classes or struggled in some way in this LC community were offered multiple ways in to community circles, both by the teachers and by their classmates.

I saw reification set in in ways that shut down inquiries into class concepts and how well the learning in community was going. I think partly because Paul's job is to advocate for the LC program, there are certain phrases, like 'co-construction of

knowledge' that he has probably said a thousand times. Does saying it mean it has occurred? No, although clearly the students felt a collegial exchange of ideas and support that they don't find elsewhere. In this course, 'other ways of knowing' and 'the dominant social paradigm' were also terms repeated so often without comment that they seemed to lose some of their newness and vigor. Even ideas that seem to represent circles and resist lines and positivism, if not revisited and renewed often, can lose their effectiveness. In "The LC Way", I wrote about a certain LC loyalty that I see in almost all LC participants -- students and teachers –whom I've interacted with over the past four years. I think we all tend to look for the good news about LC learning and sometimes miss out on what can be learned by bad or ambiguous news (that being said, the two teachers seemed quite disappointed by this LC by the end, which I discuss further in "Process over Product".)

Am I in the circle?

For an additional part of the story of entering circles, I explore in the collage below what my role was in the circle of learning. As a relational researcher, I feel the need to assess who I am in relationships throughout the research process. It would be irresponsible for me to leave this part out, because my own resistances, insecurity, efforts, caring, worries, and biases shape all of what I say in this document, and affected the learning in the community that I observed and participated in.

I will present first a 'heard poem' that I made in October and distributed via email to the group. It is made entirely of words spoken by the participants. Before I knew it, it turned out to be my very first attempt at a text-collage, and was constructed in the spirit of giving to the community, which has carried over into this current document. People seemed appreciative. Paul posted it on the class website. Julian said it was lovely. Some

students thanked me. It felt like something, but not enough. Following the poem is another text collage. Once again, each participant has her or his own font for direct quotations. Indirect quotes or narration is in the 'standard' Times New Roman, and my thoughts from my researcher journal are in the handwriting font.

Heard Poem

Once you walk through the door, everything should change for you.

That's the way I experienced nature first: I just ran out into it.
A plant growing against gravity.
I have a tree on my shoulder.
We humans are creatures of habit.

The words are indicators of a world view; there are consequences.
Finding something in nature
that you aren't getting from human relations.
Technology distorts our natural instincts.
Social networking isn't social. It's isolation.
Do we exploit the earth more easily because we think of it
as female, 'mother earth'?
In *The Giving Tree*, nature is supposed to supply us with what we need,
and we take.
The message: we can't keep taking without giving.
Like in relationships, with two people.
You can't keep taking from the other
without giving anything.

Nature Deficit Disorder.
The medical paradigm has shown itself to be useful.
Couldn't the paradigm be in place because of the power system
that puts profit over people?
Will they make a pill for NDD?
Can I go to the hospital and get my Id removed?
We humans are creatures of habit.

Is it stewardship or domination?

The words are indicators of a world view; there are consequences.
Everything makes sense when you put it into context.
And human beings,
when you put them into context.

The ocean and the rocks were trying to tell me something:
"You are safe here, I am holding you. I have always known you."
The horses whinny and they snort and they run and they buck and they rear.
Noah abuses Motl's kittens.
Do you have kitty cats? I love kitty cats.
She's kind of spicy, so I named her Cayenne.
I like chickens.
I love wolves; they're so mystical.
They're survivors.
We have a poet on the same stage with scientists.
What the hell is that?

What's hiding in the dark woods?
There are scary things in there.
Thank you, for introducing the idea
of conflicting views and experiences with nature.
It's an experience like no other
to have this big mouth open and go right past you.
I like to have fun in the woods as well.
It's the only place I feel like nobody's observing me.
And I can separate the noises of people
and just focus on nature.
Silence can be productive.
We also need to pull back sometimes,
let things settle,
so we can process it.
We humans are creatures of habit.

You kind of get lost.

The words are indicators of a world view; there are consequences.
Being in the company of others in nature
is also an uplifting or restorative
kind of experience.
You learn so much from other people
when you're out doing these things.

If you teach kids to control themselves,
and take only what they need,
then that's one less thing that you have to worry about.
When they came into the picture,
I recreated the outdoors inside
by building a climbing wall.
We humans are creatures of habit.

The words are indicators of a world view; there are consequences.

Talk about paradigm shift!
You have already broken the mold and moved beyond the rectangle.
"Talk to me. Tell me about it"
"I can't, I'm unconscious".
If I'm dreaming about an elephant, is there an elephant dreaming about me?
There's a lot here. You got layers and layers.
We might need to come up with new language for this.

I think we found we have a lot more in common
than we thought we did when we first walked in this room.

Text Collage: Am I in the Circle?

I'm not a student or a teacher.
When talking about parking for the field trip, *I think that is in*
Julian says to me, "tell them *my mind as I do my*
that **your professor** asked *research. The things I'm*
you to park *not: makes me feel awkward and not*
there temporarily" and I feel stung, *fitting in,*
that he sees me as 'just' *even though I've been a*
another student. *student (and am currently one) and I've been a*
teacher (all of my adult life). But I also feel
hurt and annoyed,
feeling that Julian and Paul see me the same way:
what I'm not,
instead of who I am and what I might add to the class and their
experience. I might be an asset.

Felicia: I think it's been so great to have you in class this semester, and I'm not the only one. Definitely reinforce that. They've been, 'oh, Sara, it's wonderful to have her, and she's always so encouraging, and she always offers a little insight', and as far as your research goes, it's been good for me to do the interviews, cause I think it's helped me sort of **take a step back** and look at the class in a different way, and helps me be more empathetic
[chuckles] when maybe I don't want to be empathetic
with the professors, and just think about the other students in class, I don't know how other people feel,

but on a weekly basis, on a day-to-day basis, of having you in class, having you
sitting there and documenting us
and everything, just it's almost like someone's
just sitting there taking notes in class.
It's not **intrusive** or **disruptive** at all,
and you know it's just like you're
a **natural part** of the classroom
and it's been, I've loved having you in class, yeah.

I couldn't get an informal meeting with the two teachers before the semester began. I wanted to explain my research to them, and see how I might work with their own goals. In an email, when I mentioned 'professional goals', Julian responded with
"We don't have any". He talks about learning
from colleagues, continuing to learn. Like most LC instructors,
he and Paul both talk about not
getting bored because
each time it's
different. So I take
the email as a joke,
but also a way of **resisting me** as
a researcher.

I don't like feeling like an outsider.
It seems to go along with feeling
like an intruder, but not always.
The socially awkward, nerdy, teased
young girl resurfaces
when I try to chat
with students before class and they seem to turn back to each other,
annoyed or indifferent. With Paul and Julian too,
they're the cool guys and
I'm the boring pest.
but also there's me (and my camera),
*not a student, **not a full participant**,*
wandering around the room eavesdropping
on group work, and roaming my camera around the circle as they share
reflections on the lawn,
or as they sit at trees
or by the creek on our silent walk.

I enter as a student. I work with Jaspar, Raneff, and Marguerite. I have fun, feel we each have something to offer, although Jaspar is the most reticent. He often puts forth disclaimers, like "this is stupid but" or "I'm not sure this
is valid, but". At one point, I made a connection to OWS, and Marguerite said,
I love that you did that.

Marguerite starts with the reporting out to the class. She is excited to share stuff on the construction of whiteness, because she learned all about that in her previous LC on slavery. **I feel I want to perform well**, say smart things that the teachers want, and for us as a group to perform, so when Paul asks, "and what is Anthony's critique of ecopsychology?" I feel embarrassed that none of use had really prepared an answer to that. I quickly offer one quotation but it isn't totally on topic. I feet a little annoyed when Carol jumps in with a quotation. I think she offers two and someone else another. I also feel embarrassed, not 'cool, we're figuring this out together', but 'oh no, that was our job and we failed'.

Even though I am annoyed by Carol's stepping in to fix our mistakes, I have no qualms about putting in my 2 cents to her group's presentation, I think partly because they say they don't really like it and had trouble with it, and I LOVED it. I thought they misunderstood and misjudged part of it.

Still, it is hard for me to speak up.
The pace is really fast.
I feel awkward
about my participation
and my need to perform,
especially when Felicia
and I interact, like she
adds an idea and looks at me,
and it feels odd,
sort of **fake?**
After we had those more relaxed,
honest,
friendly
conversations
outside of class.

Dream: Was it connected
to my research?
I was ugly
and it was a secret.
Maybe I was the only one
who didn't know?
Maybe people feared it was contagious
or icky in some way.
Finally, Charlotte
(Peggy's older daughter) broke the news
to me. She was kind, not cruel or
gossipy, because it was Charlotte,
after all. I wonder if I feel ugly
as a researcher somehow,
not fitting in, not liked....
I wonder if Peggy's family appears because of
Phoebe's coming out as gay.
In her family, and her setting, this is a big deal
but not an ugly secret in any way, thank goodness.
I make a dream connection to

the news article I read about gay soldiers coming out on YouTube. I thought, how awkward it would be when they faced the people directly who they came out to from afar
(Phoebe did it in an email to her dad late at night).
There's something here about

public and private,

about secrets and honesty,
about being fully seen and accepted,
about video images and genuine
in-person encounters?

I'm **not** a trusted friend
with whom to build
a professional collaboration,
nor am I a trusted professional
with whom to build a friendly collaboration.

Penelope seems to be looking over at my notes.
I feel self-conscious, and as if my cover is
blown, as if I'm somehow supposed to be **invisible.**
Another time, Julian looks over, and
makes a joke about my calling them
'field notes'. This isn't a field, is it?
He asks. I felt awkward,
kind of trivial
and stupidly self-important.

Stephanie: I think
yeah, I'd put
it in a positive way,
because, I feel like
you were in a way
the **mediator**,
like we went
on riot kind of state, but we
were just ready to explode, and
you were just there to like okay,
calm down, you know, just help here. You were
very **neutral**, but you helped. And yeah, it definitely
affected the class. Because they [the teachers] learned. They
showed on the last five classes that we had, or six, they changed the way they did,
or the way they conducted the class that's it...
Sara: They did that, probably without me though. Like if I was **out of the picture,**
probably, I'm guessing that that still would have occurred.

Paul is talking about the
literary analysis paper. He says, Sara's willing to look at drafts too, right?

I guess I made myself a permanent **writing coach**\

In the same class session, Carol is one of the discussion leaders.
She asks everyone to go around the circle and say what they want to talk about,

but I don't get a turn.

Paul asks me to facilitate the peer review.
I'm startled,
because I had volunteered to do that last week when Julian was away.
I hadn't thought it was a standing offer, and wonder about how Julian will take this.

Terrie later tells me. "You should have seen the look on his face", and implies it was not a happy look.//

As I listen to the recording, I get annoyed by how loud **my voice** is.

Because I set the sound device down
near me, my voice sometimes
drowns
out
the others, giving me an
inaccurate

prominence

that I feel represents my
centrality
to my own
project.

Paul: I didn't know what to expect.
But, you know, I felt like you were doing some really good support stuff in the classroom, with students, you were doing
a lot of affirmation with students.
I think it could have had an impact on them
bonding not as closely with Julian and I as teachers, because they saw you as this kind of **intermediary.**
You know, and the students would go to you, with issues and problems,
rather than come to us.
Sara: Even though I told them to go to you.
[I laugh]

Paul: I know. I don't see what you did as in any way encouraging that.

That's how they interpreted that experience, and that's how they saw your role then, as almost a student advocate. So it's like, you know
go tell Daddy and Mommy, we don't like this.
Or - whatever it was, rather than speaking to us directly. Cause they didn't know
what to make of your role in the classroom.
That was weird for them. **They've never seen that before.**

We never did that before either, you know.
This is really helpful
to me, to kind of close out this class. It's like an
end-of-semester reflective interview.

Julian: I think the relationship between the students in that class, and Paul and me, was less than usual. It was less tight, and I don't know why. It's possibly because there was
a kind of ***third parent*** *there;*
it might have been because of other things. I think there were some really beneficial things.
And part of what is really good about a learning community, is having another person in the room
who understands what's going on, participates,
understands the material, and has intelligent things to say about it, and so, you fulfilled all those roles too,
and that's a good role model for the students, and nice for Paul and me, and, just good. So, you made a lot of really nice contributions.
Sara: I also, I, held back often, because I --
Julian: Yeah, I could tell –

Sara: I didn't want to steal their space; like I wanted it to be their discovery and I didn't want to
step on that in a way.
Julian: Right. Right, and that's something that
we all have to work with. …
Sara: Well, especially when your role is completely nebulous. I mean,
I 'm **not a student or a teacher,**
so what am I doing there?
Julian: but you are. I mean, really those distinctions break down anyway when ***we're all academics,***
and we're all inquirers.

Am I in the Circle? Analysis

I struggled with my role/s within this community. I call myself a relational researcher, but I felt unsure about what the relationships were that I had entered and how to best nurture them. I think of Belenky and associates (1986) and their description of 'connected knowers', which seems to overlap a lot with a qualitative research paradigm. Connected knowing uses empathy and learning about specific experiences of other people, not disembodied facts. On the other hand, separate knowing uses the lens of a discipline. The goal of the connected knower is not to judge, but to understand. This is what I aimed for, yet obstacles made it difficult; some of those obstacles were within me.

The paradoxical dual nature of the title 'participant-observer', if not interrogated, implies an easy balance between objectivity and subjectivity (Brueggemann, 1996). She suggests that we need to "work the hyphen" and "traverse the terrain of what is 'happening between' participant and observer, learn to negotiate the 'zippered borders' of our various roles and representations" (citing Fine, pp 19-20). I attempt this in my collage and this analysis. Bueggemann tells of her own 'crisis of representation' (as suggested by Yvonna Lincoln and Norman Denzin) which extended from research process to years after the completion of her study. In her study, she had ideas about her role as participant-observer that then were immediately challenged or refashioned by her participants. She found a hearing versus deaf binary (her study looked at writing practices of deaf students) imposed on her, when she considered herself both (being hearing impaired) and had hoped that would gain her empathy and participant status. I think I may have been trapped by a teacher/student binary, but in many cases, I trapped myself in it. I see myself so much in Bruegemann's description: "I was trying instead to present myself as a

noninterfering and nonjudgmental, somewhat objective and distanced observer, but also as an eager, interested, and intelligent potential participant" (p. 24). Any role can become a reification, and thus block us from interacting with others in complex and meaningful ways. When Tinder (1980) talks about our search for being within community, he points out that the roles we play are ways for us to protect ourselves from the risks of genuine communication. The struggle that individuals experience with forming or understanding their own identities occurs within the dynamics of their social contexts, and therefore is not a solitary or finite struggle. My struggle occurred within community.

I notice the tug of positivism when I cringe at the pronoun 'I', when I feel flattered by Stephanie's comment that my role was neutral or Felicia's that I wasn't intrusive, that I was a 'natural' part of the class. I felt right when I was a supposedly objective observer, while also doubting the value and possibility of objectivity. Mainly I let go of the illusion of objectivity, but then did not know what my relationship was to the class. I have always had a lot of trouble being in the present. I overthink things. I can't help wondering how much my own ambivalence and confusion blocked deeper engagement in the community.

At the same time, I couldn't help feeling like an intruder. In this way, I failed to see how permeable the boundaries of circles can be. I kept getting stuck in the inside/outside binary, worrying about being outside, or about being inside but not invited. I seemed more possessive of ideas than most of the others gathered in that space. In other words, I often held off on sharing an idea in class in case someone else had a similar idea and I thought it should be theirs, as if I'd take away from them in some way. I noticed that possessive, competitiveness in me when I entered the site as a student, and had

prepared the reading and wanted my ideas heard as mine. I marvel at the fact that the students and teachers seemed more interested in building ideas collaboratively. There may have been some posing of cleverness, but very little. There is some way in which I failed at the LC Way and the other participants succeeded, and I admire them for that.

My original vision of a collaborative project fell short, and is a lesson to me about how collaboration is two-way. Of course, you can't force it on someone; you can't force reciprocity, as much as you value it. There may be binary thinking here too, in terms of either objective or collaborative. Thinking of a purely reciprocal research role as a sign of success "would only occur if we were to talk of collaboration as an unadulterated 'good', rather than a contested, unstable set of relations open to all possible power relations and dynamics" (Gallagher & Wessels, 2011, p. 254). I've read about and been inspired by collaborative, honest, compassionate, reciprocal, democratic research (Ansley & Gaventa, 1997; Hermes, 1997; North, 2007, 2009; Paugh, 2004) All along, I kept trying multiple ways to give back to the community, because I wasn't sure that Paul and Julian saw my research as useful to them. I felt a relational tug, opposite of my other desire to be an 'objective' fly on the wall, wanting to be friends or to be meaningful to others. Brueggemann (1996) made some friendships as she conducted her research, but "they grew not from some research agenda, but – even in spite of those agendas – from natural affinities" (p. 25). I sometimes overlooked the authority I carried as a researcher, even being a novice and graduate student. Simply as an outsider and someone representing a research institution, my presence could imply judgment and assessment. Even with truly collaborative projects, conflicts around power and control complicate ongoing relationships between researcher and other participants (Gallagher & Wessels, 2011).

Still, I think I can say that some projects are more collaborative than others, and I wish mine was more.

As I mentioned earlier, the LC program at the time of my study was to some degree threatened, and Paul's job to advocate and inspire on a programmatic level might have made my visit tense and ambiguous. I wanted to overcome that tension, which maybe is impossible. I also simply wanted to belong. I wanted to help, to make an impact, and to do good. I was forced to come to terms with the fact that my research was really most important to me, and often of no importance at all to the people gathered together to learn about environmental literature and ecopsychology. In terms of time, I was dedicating myself almost entirely to this work, and it is work leading to a very specific goal: a dissertation. All of the other participants not only did not have anything concrete or specific to gain from my research, but they also had many other absorbing, time-consuming academic commitments (of course all of us had personal commitments). "While I would agree…that we ought to try to collaborate with our subjects, I do not think it entirely ethical that we unequivocally assume that they *want* to be involved, to collaborate, to respond, to co-construct representations with us" (Brueggemann, p. 33, italics hers). Fisher (2011) suggests that there are other ways to work productively and respectfully that aren't necessarily collaborative, and that we may at times be hindered by the collaborative ideal.

> In cases such as these the research relationship can be productively pursued with different strategies, which involve putting this ideal to one side and facing the researcher guilt this entails. Finally, I suggest that the pressure of such a diffuse ideal rests particularly heavily on early career researchers who often do no have the research experience to balance the rhetoric of the literature with the reality of the field site (Fisher, 2011, p. 461).

Whatever role/s I set out to play or ended up playing, my research was my presence in that community, not some tool or behaviors applied separately. The research was part of the relationships, part of the learning,

When the students described me as a helper, a mediator, a supporter, I cringed a little inside, and then heard from Paul and Julian both that they felt my presence might have compromised their relationships with students. It wasn't only negative, of course. Both Stephanie and Felicia talked about my conversations with them helping them to 'calm down' and 'empathize better' with the teachers. My discomfort may have been the positivist in me, hoping to be invisible and have no effect whatsoever on the community, but it is also the pressure I felt to be a 'good researcher' according to Hostetler (2005) – meaning causing no harm, doing good.

Roles we play or assign one another set up perceptions of allegiances that then impact further perceptions. For Gallagher and Wessles (2011), for example, one manifestation of this was a student who saw the classroom teacher and researcher becoming close, and she felt threatened by that. For me, this manifested in my needing a clear label for myself. Was I a teacher? A student? A friend? A silent observer? It also surfaces in my reading Paul and Julian as unreachable and aloof, when they may have simply been very busy. Still, I needed to know my participants, and so doubled my efforts to talk with and get to know the students. In my attempts at reciprocity, I offered to help students with their writing, which I did a few times. I offered to help facilitate a peer review session one time when Julian was away (and ironically, it was postponed, and Paul called on me to do that another time when Julian was in class, which might have bothered him. It was hard to tell for sure). These data tell me about learning in

community. They confirm my theoretical findings, that identity is formed within community, and in turn affects community, and these data challenge my practices. In my great effort to 'be collaborative', I may have disrupted relationships more than if I had somehow just let relationships evolve, although I'm not sure what that would have looked like. Relationships don't always work. They require effort on the part of both/all parties, and if one person defines a relationship differently from the other, confusion and conflict result, but these definitions do not always live at the conscious level.

I notice how much weight a piece of the collage carries, the snippet that is in my hands to select and place where it goes. I see this in the pieces towards the end of the text collage above, where Julian and Paul both talk of their misgivings about my presence. I feel I am doing to myself above what I'm doing to all of the other participants throughout the other collages. When a piece of text sits frozen on a page, it gains a certain power and meaning because of its placement. This problem is inherent to all research practices, the fact that the researcher makes decisions about representation, including what to include, how much to include, and where to put it. With a more collaborative process, I would have participants responding to each collage and each following analysis.

To be in troubled relationships is to be in relationships. Perhaps my feeling wrong about my unclear roles is also a taint of positivism – when are roles ever clear-cut? It's partly a denial of relationships at all then, a resistance to "feminist accountability" and "feminist science" that "requires a knowledge tuned to resonance, not to dichotomy" and that is "about the science of the multiple subject with (at least) double vision" (Brueggemann, 1996, citing Haraway, p. 31).

Concentric Community Circles

LCs offer concentric circles radiating out from the classroom to society. Picture too a Venn diagram, with overlapping circles. Different community members may speak from membership in any given circle at a particular time, and there can be confusion and conflict from different voices and needs in terms of community membership and representation. I think there is a tension two between 'space' (of a circle, infinite, expansive, open) and 'place' (local affinities, home, groundedness, a point on a line, not budging). The classroom community represented both. Location "is an itinerary rather than a bounded site – a series of encounters and translations" (Pelias, 2004, citing James Clifford, p. 21). John Brown Childs (2003) recognizes the valid need for home, for place with his "transcommunality" a theory of activism whereby local autonomy mixes with wider agendas through mutually respectful negotiations. Through this work, space, freedom, and place come together within resistance. He says that homogenization and fragmentation lead to subordination, while heterogeneity and cooperation lead to resistance and freedom. A self-enclosed, solipsistic circle or community of practice can close off learning, while the circle within a circle of permeable boundaries and connections to other practices keeps the learning alive and fresh. Within a classroom community, local and wider circles enter through texts, conversations, and imagination. Fixed points and expanding space may exist within individual minds.

Below I present a text collage on concentric circles of community, with linear and circular enactments of time and space.

Text Collage: Concentric Circles

"The only alternative to coexistence is co-nonexistence"[4]

Felicia: There are certain places that I've been in nature that just feel like really healing, and so I feel like it's part of my community.

Felicia: Well, there are all different types of learning. When I graduated high school, I had absolutely no interest in going to college and thought I never would, but that didn't mean that I stopped learning. And I think we sort of almost unconsciously learn every day, anyway, there are just new experiences for us every day, but then there are lots of ways to learn in a nontraditional sense, self-educating and just sort of learning from people,.. there's that type of learning, outside of the classroom, in that day-to-day interaction, you know, if you keep a curious mind. Children learn so quickly, because they're curious, and things are new to them, so if you kind of keep yourself open to experiences and keep yourself open to curiosity, I think you just continue to learn a lot throughout your lifetime.

I walk over to the other building with Paul. Students line the hallway, some sitting on the floor, waiting for the previous class to clear out. Paul chats comfortably, amiably with the students.

It feels as if the boundary between class time and break time is fluid, barely noticeable

Stephanie: Hillary, she's in the Sustainability group. She, inspired me. She changed the way I actually thought about me in nature.

I thought I couldn't help it, and she has taught me that yes, I can help in many ways.

And with her and her projects in the group she's involved with, they've all shown me that yes, I can contribute.

You know, to make it a better place, so that's an example of change. I just joined her club.

Winona LaDuke "Everybody is indigenous to some place"[5].

---

[4] Thich Nhat Hanh (1993). On simplicity, in *Love in action*. Berkeley: Parallax Press.

[5] From a YouTube video of a lecture shown in class and posted on the class website (Television & Kurtz, 2007).

Like their ancestors before them, they {Apache people] display by word and deed that beyond the visible reality of place lies a moral realty which they themselves have come to embody. And whether or not they finally succeed in becoming fully wise, it is this interior landscape – this landscape of the moral imagination – that most deeply influences their vital sense of place, and also, I believe, their unshakable sense of self[6]

Marguerite, reading from The Tao[7]:
Be like the forces of nature.
When it blows there is only wind. When it rains,
there is only rain. When the clouds pass,
the sun shines through. To open yourself to the Tao, you are at one
with the Tao, and you can embody it completely.
If you open yourself to insight, you are at one with insight,
and you can use it completely. If you open yourself to loss, you are at one with
loss, and you can accept it completely. Open yourself to the Tao, and trust your
natural responses, and everything will fall into place.

Steph: I loved that reading so much.
And I knew it wasn't assigned. It was
just a hand-out that Julian gives
us. And when, that actually impacted
me, because when we went to the trail,
the natural trail on the college site, I was
always thinking about that reading. You know,
it made me look at the walk in a different
way than I would have looked at it
before reading it.

It's pouring rain as the class talks about
Not Wanted on the Voyage,
a Noah's Ark story,
and there are jokes about
this being the ark.

We're on the voyage.

Paul: You're raising a really big dichotomy
that's often presented when people talk about nature
and relations to nature, and it's often this, either bias
that humans are better or superior, which you're saying, no, your
experience is that animals are superior, but think about that

---

[6] Basso. (1996, p. 86)

[7] Marguerite had brought a version of the Tao that she had found online. Unless otherwise stated, I quote from the version I found (written from translation by Ursula LeGuin), which is not the same as the one on the course syllabus. Several different versions showed up on the days that the Tao was discussed.

kind of binary set up, that one species of life is better than another species of life. Think about that relative to the whole web of life. And that gets back to the exceptionality doctrine, that humans are somehow exceptional from the animal kingdom, that we put ourselves above and beyond. We're special.

On the trip to the reservoir -- as I get to the reservoir wall, the narrow rock-lined path, with deep green valley on one side, deep blue water on the other -- maybe I finally get sort of into a groove.
The water is noisy and I like the noise. The wind here gives me an earache though. The walk to the beach is a relief. To step on pine needles instead of pavement, so soft, now I feel a sense of the "happy peaceful steps" from the video on the course website.
The camera and writing both distance me from an experience. I know we're going to write haikus when we get there, and I start to think about one as I walk, but then sort of feel that that's cheating, and blocking an immediate and deep way to nature.

My haiku:
Tried to be a tree,
rooted, breeze-kissed, and swaying.
Human steps blocked me.

My winter jacket makes a loud scratchy noise as my arm
rubs against my torso, which I find annoying and
distracting in the quieter spots,
when it's just breeze and wind.

"Whether we can wake up or not depends on whether we can walk mindfully on our Mother Earth. The future of all life, including our own, depends on our mindful steps" [8]

Very quickly, we gather into a circle at the water's edge, and everyone reads a haiku. Felicia – whom I didn't see composing, and had complained pretty close to this time --suddenly has one and it's a very nice one at that:

Walking through the trees
to the wild wind on water,
like sea without salt.

Stephanie's haiku:
Bald trees in the earth
High winds blowing cold water
My mind blown away

Revert to nature
Mankind has been here before
Here I shall remain --Haiku by Elliot

[8] Thich Nhat Hanh (1993).

Silent walking re-
minds us of the world's bounty.
The world is enough.
-- Haiku by Julian

From Raneff:
Nothing to say
While we hold our breath
Quiet like wind

In class, Raneff shyly says he has another haiku, and
did I want to hear it? I say yes:
Once a sound
below the surface
echoes out
(always a story)

Talking about the Haiku, Raneff mentions the massive tree, and how it made a big sound when it broke, and that somehow the sound is still there in it. Felicia: I just think of trees as being the keepers of the story, in the forest you know, you can read trees, trees as storytellers.

When we get back to campus, I feel
a buzzing in me,
I think it's gone now, but it lasted for a while.
It feels like
the wind and waves entered my body's rhythms,
unless it was just the cold.

"The active reality [in Okanagan language, a spoken, not written language] could be thought of as a sphere sliced into many circles.

A circle could be thought of as a physical plane
surrounding the speaker; this could be called
'the present'. Moving above and below the speaker,
the surrounding sphere may be thought of as the 'past' or the 'future', with

everything always connected to the present reality of the speaker. The Okanagan language creates links by connecting active pieces of reality rather than isolating them" [9]

Paul: Silence is not a bad thing.

[9] Armstrong (1995, pp. 318-319).

Don't be afraid of it. Faculty can be really bad about that. Use silence productively. It can be productive.

Julian: Unless you're unconscious, you know, sleeping.

> "Experiencing full sensory contact and engagement requires quieting the intellect, the part of the mind that provides continual commentary, analysis, judgment, or chatter about one's experiences. To become mindful is to reduce this internal chatter and raise awareness of present experience" [10]

Gus: It's wicked lighthearted. I like that. Like you don't have to be embarrassed about anything, you can say whatever you want, you know, stuff like that, which oftentimes isn't, can be taken for granted.

I like how we break up into the groups.

Paul: I think that's a good example of new knowledge, that's developed as a result of bringing together these disciplines, and moving in to this open space that's not occupied by my voice, Julian's voice, or the author's of what their reading. And I think that's what's critical in a lot of the -- not only in the LCs, but I think any kind of classroom -- if there's no space,

unoccupied space for the students to move into, then students do not have the opportunity to construct new knowledge. Because geographically, there's nowhere for them to go.

Jaspar: Everything makes sense when you
put it into context. And human beings,
when you put them into context,
where they evolved, it makes sense. human beings evolved
in the world, and I guess it goes along with the whole
biophilia hypothesis, that we have a tendency
to focus on life
and life forms.

[10] Koger & Winter, (2010, p. 297).

"Even as socially intense as we are, much of the unconscious life of the individual is rooted
in interaction with otherness that goes beyond our own kind,
interacting with it very early in personal growth,
not as an alternative to human socialization,
but as an adjunct to it"

"Interbeing is a step forward. We are already inside,
so we don't have to enter" [11]

Greed

People are starving.
The rich gobble taxes,
that's why people are starving.

People rebel.
The rich oppress them,
that's why people rebel.

People hold life cheap.
The rich make it too costly,
that's why people hold it cheap.

But those who don't live for the sake of living
are worth more than the wealth-seekers[12]

Carol: We're always taking,
and there's this overwhelming
concept in *Ishmael*, of whether or not
humans are the epitome of evolution, if
humans are the completeness, you know,
the end.
And I don't think they are, because evolution
and biology, they're always continuing,
so the earth was not created for humans,
and it's amazing that people actually think that.

---

[11] Thich Nhat Hanh (1993).
[12] Lau Tzu (2009, pp. 108-109, # 75).

Felicia: I think they improved a lot
over the semester. I think they were
really trying to allow other voices to
be heard. And I also feel like, they
have tried to pull in other ways of
knowing recently, like I've,
I've sent them, video and just
brought 'em different things to class,

and the whole Occupy movement,

Julian's been really
embracing bringing that to class,
and to me that's
another way of knowing,
outside of what we're doing in class,
and I think
it's relevant
to what we're talking about.
I feel like I've been able to bring stuff
to class that's sort of
something

new,

different.

Julian asks Felicia for an update on Occupy PHCC.

Paul says this is a commuter school; there are no options for living here. He says he'll put the link to Felicia's Occupy PHCC Facebook page on the course website.

Julian says, when PHCC students come together, they have a lot of power.

The problem is, they don't come together enough.

Terrie asks if the OWS movement is worth it.
She is cautious and careful about her questions,
but wonders about small businesses that are blocked by protestors, wonders what it's really about.

Felicia and others respond respectfully.
There's room in this classroom space for such an open inquiry
without judgment.

Julian asks the students to connect this back to the class,
to issues of social justice and a link between how the earth and
how women are treated,
how certain animal populations
and indigenous people are treated

"In short, a land ethic changes the role of *Homo sapiens*
from conqueror of the land-community to plain member and citizen of it. It implies respect for his fellow-members and also respect for the community as such". [13]

Steph: On the connection with human and nature, I knew I liked it, but I never really thought I was connected with it, or I never really saw it, and being in this class showed me that
everyone is connected with nature and earth,
even if it's unconscious, we are still connected in that,
and I didn't think that before. I thought that we were
against nature,
and we punished it, and all this stuff, and we give to it as well, so that really,
that's what this community in this class has changed in me.

Felicia: I'm feeling more like in this learning we're getting more of, read it, flip it around, and turn it into a paper, like let's [snaps twice] let's get through the material, whereas my previous class, it was like, let's really understand this, you know, let's really get into it, and so that, cause the whole point of getting an education is to somehow bring that knowledge into the real world with you. It's not just to know it and write papers about it. You want to apply it.

"For it is likely that the 'inner world' of or Western psychological experience like the supernatural heaven of Christian belief, originated in the loss of our ancestral reciprocity with the living landscape….It is not by sending his awareness out *beyond* the natural world that the shaman makes contact with the purveyors of life and health, nor by journeying into his personal psyche; rather it is by propelling his awareness *laterally*, outward into the depths of a landscape *at once sensuous and psychological*, this living dream that we share with the soaring hawk, the spider, and the stone silently sprouting lichens on its coarse surface"[14]

Jaspar: I would say
that this experience helps me to learn about myself,
opposed to different classes. I do compare the two often,
because I benefit much more from the learning community.
There are many more instances when I do find myself gaining insight about the bigger picture and about myself in a learning community setting.

If you listen at the walls of one human being, even if that one
is yourself, you will hear the drumming. Older creatures are
remembered in the blood. Inside ourselves we are not yet

[13] Leopold (1966).
[14] Abram (1995, p. 306, quotation marks and italics his, ellipses mine).

upright walkers.
We are tree.
We are frog in amber.
Maybe earth itself is just now starting to form.

One day, when the light was yellow, I turned to Bush and I said, 'Something wonderful lives inside me.' She looked at me. 'Yes,' she said. 'The early people knew this, that's why they painted animals on the inside of caves.'

Something beautiful lives inside us.
You will see. Just believe it. You will see [15]

"To successfully address environmental problems requires recognition of one's ecological self, the part of one's identity that is continuous with the natural world" [16]

Julian: I think there needed to be more silence in the room,

and a little bit more space

for the students to step into,
and again, I think that's important for sometimes the weaker students, so, something to think about
for the next time around.

Felicia: One thing that LCs provide is that here we are in a 2-year school and a lot of people are transferring out to these different colleges and stuff, and you get to know these people, you get close with them. It provides this community not just within PHCC, but you have all these connections to people who are in other colleges and can help guide you in their own way into your transition on to another school. There's talk at PHCC about cutting the honors and the LC program, and one of the girls whose amazing,
she's just a go-getter.

[15] Hogan (1995, p. 351).
[16] Koger and Winter, (2010, p. 299).

She texted at the beginning of the school year and said, they're trying to do this, the professors are upset, you know, and want to fight it, and let's get everybody in on this, so between my sister and me, we were able to contact over 30 people, just from who we had met and stayed in touch with, after LCs, after they've gone on to other schools or gone on to whatever they're doing, These people are saying, oh my gosh,
I don't want PHCC to lose that, for, that was such an incredible experience for me, I'll write a letter, I'll support this fight, and you know, it just goes to show that instead of walking out of PHCC with maybe a handful of people that you sort of keep in touch with,
you have a whole community of people spread throughout different parts of the country that have been a part of your education community,
your learning community
so I think that that's something really precious and LCs provide that for people.

"We can be ethical only in relation to something we can see, feel, understand, love, or otherwise have faith in"[17]

Felicia: We were talking in the Gaia Psyche class about always having the consciousness of being part of nature,
being part of this bigger biosphere,
whatever the whole Gaia hypothesis,
so I feel like whatever direction I head, to have that consciousness, to have that continued learning about that experience, and about how to better respect my environment, and I feel that would go alongside whatever direction I head in school.

"So many beings in the universe love us unconditionally"[18]

[17] Leopold (1966).
[18] Thich Nhat Hanh (1993).

Concentric Circles Analysis

In the community I observed, resistance between circles and lines, space and place shifted and flickered, bringing tensions to the foreground. Not only do real and ideal community coincide and interact, I found, but so do different notions of community membership and learning. The flexibility in an LC that allows these tensions and explorations also allows for the incredible expansion of learning and community that I saw, reaching beyond the classroom walls, even to nonhuman circles and places beyond human language.

Circles and spaciousness allow silence. One point on a line has no negative space. "Silence is a strategy, an ongoing conversation between two listeners" (Pelias, 2004, p. 61). Bakhtin (1986) writes of silence and sound, pauses between words, as part of one whole, open-ended, and unfinished structure. Silence and listening go together. Several participants said that there wasn't enough silence. It seems that while many participants came to value mindfulness, space, and silence, for complicated reasons, those did not get the time and space that they needed. Teachers, when silent, listen. Dressman talks about a Bahktinian notion of the teacher not as master reader but master conversationalist who models listening, not just speaking (as cited in Brettschneider, 2004, personal communication). "Calvin was trying to decide whether it was a comfortable or uncomfortable silence. He wondered if it would be a different thing for each person or if perceptions about silence were mutual, like an odor in the room no one could ignore" (Pneuman, 2011, p. 124). The seminar, a student-led discussion, emulates listening in conversation, and I think this LC achieved that to a great extent, although both teachers and some students expressed disappointment in how the seminars went.

The community toyed with alternative conceptions of time and space. Tinder's (1980) historical community implies seeing the large flow of time beyond our immediate experiences. Senge (2006) points out that we tend to assume cause and effect are close together in time, which they aren't in complex systems. Bruner (1996) also talks of a 'folk' belief that time is steady, coherent, and produces clear, causal relationships**.** While the community bravely resisted linear and limited time as represented by the institution and its class hours, classroom assignments, and the semester structure, time did not feel infinite or easy to manage. How much 'outside experience' was valued and heard was a point of contention. There was tension around what class time should be spent on, in regards to wider circles.

When I think about the alternative views on time and space offered by this LC, I think of a cubist painting. Multiple planes of a face are presented as one, as if the many moods of the individual and the many views as she pivots in space are captured in one moment. Bahktin was interested in Goethe's ability to see time in space, to visualize time, for example, his recognition that mountains live and aren't static. "Local folklore interprets and saturates space with time, and draws in into history" (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 52). There were moments that seemed timeless, where the enthusiasm for the given topic, in both teachers and students, whether that topic was strictly course content or not, seemed to defy boundaries of schedules or classroom walls. There were other times when the clock on the wall, the next class waiting to enter the room, or an upcoming due date, forced a conversation shut, and at some moments, students seemed to draw boundaries of the circle of learning differently than the teachers did.

In this LC community, time was often fluid, with content-heavy conversations continuing during break, after class, and after the semester was over. The website represents ongoing learning open to wider circles of experience, with postings from last year's course, and Paul's announcement that it will continue after the class officially ends, it is "for you". During the semester, Paul posted student announcements and links, such as information on Felicia's Occupy PHCC group. The concentric circles and ongoing time were embodied in six different people who were invited into the classroom space: Two, Riley and Lee, were students from the same LC of the previous year. Susan Deer Cloud is a poet whose work overlaps with the themes of the course. Two faculty experts came too, Mary, who spoke on the novel *Solar Storms*, and Trevor, who spoke on and read from Walt Whitman from atop a nearby mountain (all names are pseudonyms, except for Deer Cloud). And of course, Paul and Julian generously allowed me to attend the entire course.

Humor mediates tension between ways of being, ways of knowing, circles and lines. Morson (2004) suggests, borrowing from Bakthin, that laughter allows in the perspective of the other. "Laughter is implicitly pluralistic" (p. 323). Bakhtin says irony is a form of silence, and that irony and laughter can liberate us. "Only dogmatic and authoritarian cultures are one-sidedly serious" (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 134). "Humor is relativism, humor is the ability to see yourself as others may see you" (Oz, 2011, p. 50). The teachers set a jocular, playful tone that the students seemed to enjoy and contribute to. I noticed a fluid transition from funny to serious conversations, showing that it was all part of the learning in community.

In this LC, community with nature became an important and powerful circle. Three outdoor experiences offered opportunities to, as Paul says, 'bring the outside in', a silent walk through the woods on PHCC's campus, a trip to the top of a nearby mountain, when students read aloud from Emily Dickinson or Walt Whitman, and a meditative silent walk around a nearby reservoir followed by a haiku writing exercise at the water's edge. The outside was brought in to the classroom through course texts and conversations about relationships with nature. Several of the class texts, some quoted above, connected space, silence, and mindfulness to nonhuman communication and community with nature. While there could have been more literal silence, I felt a spaciousness between these texts, between community members, allowing a sense of wonder and appreciation for relationships with nonhuman beings that we might not be able to or even want to put into words.

A circle of learning implies collaboration as opposed to hierarchies. This was particularly evident when the confines of the classroom -- its literal and metaphorical space and its academic/institutional focus -- were expanded. A community is always a collection of individuals, and even if their identities are ongoing and contextualized by the community, differing views on what community means, what the learning should look like, and especially in a course on the environment, how and how much to bring the outside in, make for ongoing, constant negotiations and possible tensions and disagreements. These tensions can and did in turn fuel further thinking and learning about what we mean by human and natural, what we mean by community and how we do it.

Interdisciplinarity

As mentioned in "The LC Way", LCs offer interdisciplinarity, which challenges the lines drawn around separate disciplines. At their best, LCs merge two disciplines and open up space for metaphorical, interconnected thought. The way two teachers collaborate in one classroom and step out of the confines of their disciplines represents a resistance to traditional, fragmented, and hierarchical higher education. But the authoritative voice of their institutions and disciplines calls to them and speaks through them. Students too hear the call of tradition and institutional or societal expectations. Binary thinking pits one discipline against another, in this case, literature versus psychology, creating a conflict with one winner.

Following are two text collages, one on the dynamics of interdisciplinarity, and one on science and other ways of knowing.

Text Collage: Interdisciplinarity

Raneff: Teachers come together because they have a cause to represent.

Paul: I do like the idea of looking at it from the perspective of subject matter and suggesting that it's a new approach to creating curriculum,
and we're doing it in an integrative way, because it's
more responsive to how the world works and the way
knowledge is actually created and constructed.
And using the disciplines you know, to do that work.

Paul: When all of these learning communities, first of all, are thematically focused and that's really important. It's not just intro psych and intro English that happen to be in the same room. It's centered around a theme. And when you take different disciplines that aren't used to being together, and focus those disciplines on a theme, or when you approach that theme from the vantage of different disciplines, **new ideas start to be created.** The territory that we're mapping is the intersections in our disciplines, or it's **across the boundaries** of our disciplines into this unknown area that we get to map as a class together.

Felicia: Writing this last paper that I did about *Solar Storms*, with the ecofeminism aspect was a really good way of putting the two together, and I think it's probably good that they started with
that, they started building
the psych foundation
first, because as
you get into the
novels, you sort of
have those concepts
in mind as you,
and you start
to look at
them with that
perspective, so it

Steph: Well, every book they assigned us has psychology incorporated. Or if not, the teacher [Paul] will make sure we look for – he will give us clues as to what to look for in the psychological part of the text, for example, in *Not Wanted on the Voyage,* Paul's always telling us to look for paradigms. And if I was to read the book just without that hint, **it would be just a fun book**, but the fact that he tells me to look for paradigms actually has been pretty helpful, constantly, or he give me other hints to look for in the book, that makes it more interesting, and more, it makes me analyze the content in a better way

Sara: In a psychological way?
Steph: Yeah. In a very psychological sense.

Julian asks about La Duke, what did she say about conquest and empire?
Paul and Sara both answer: It's not sustainable.
Julian: There's lots of conquest and empire in The Tempest.
Stephanie asks a question about water – something scientific, about its cycling. Julian sits down and answers her question

Felicia: I feel like when we talked about *Ishmael*, people had those concepts, those ecopsych concepts in mind

then they were reading through *Ishmael*,
and thinking about the interaction between you know,
Ishmael, the character, just, definitely enriched the lit
experience a lot,
and I'm finding that **I see it in other places** too,
you know, as I'm reading other things in life.

Carol: I think like, these ecopsych concepts that are happening, that there's a little issue with balancing the literature and the English part with psychology. We could like have more teaching on how they want us to write and how they want us to read critically.

Jaspar: When I think of English,
I think of, well, writing, and it's not just writing,
but learning how to communicate, and in seminar,
we talk about ecopsych concepts and having seminar helps me
to synthesize an idea better.
So, in the seminar I think they [the disciplines] blend very well.

Julian: It's a stunning assertion, made me stop and think.
Nature is mind-like. Is it?
Terrie: **It's all about the listener.**
It's up to us to listen to what it has to say.
Paul mentions that DNA is information, there is chemical code which is cycled through.
Junk DNA from all living things, is in us.
Julian and Paul talk about Shakespeare,
and a king passing through the intestines of a peasant:
he dies, is eaten by worms, enters food, is eaten by the peasant.

While it's Terrie's turn to present her eco-identity poster, there is a long digression where Paul continues the idea of 'exceptionalism' (the human/nature binary) from earlier that class, and Julian talks about early American literature, and the symbolism of the dark, dangerous woods morally scary too. *Julian: And the world offers a moral predicament. And the temptations that lead to the moral predicament also, and so again, we read about all of this stuff in chapter 2, which is really loaded. Has some great stuff in here. When we look at that Cartesian -- that's the word we get from Descartes' last name -- when we look at that split between body and mind, what part of us is going to get us into heaven?*

Steph: To be honest, I feel that the psychology is more **dominant** than the literature. I know that, they're equally passionate about their teachings, but I see that

Paul is more dominant when it comes to class discussions.

And it was actually a problem for quite a while with the students, because we thought that they assigned us these novels, but we really didn't talk about it, and I guess we rebelled against that [chuckles], in kind of like a mini strike type of thing.

Actually, they made changes, started talking about the books and how were they related to what we were studying, and I think that really made a difference. And yes, there is a dominant side.

But the thing is that he explains, he takes over Julian's, by explaining the connections of the lit and the psychology, instead of Julian explaining the connections of the lit and then Paul, psychology. Sometimes I've seen that,

but lately they've been working together more.

Terrie: I don't see much of a blend. I see mostly psychology about nature. I find it hard to find - I don't even know **which one is the literature teacher in our class.**

One day, only about ten minutes are spent on *Ishmael,* in the second half of class, squeezed in before the seminar. In general, lit feels squeezed in, to me.

Felicia: I feel like there's a lot of science.

Terrie: There really really is.

Felicia: Which is, I don't think it should be excluded.

It should be part of it, it's just sort of hard to fit all of that information in.

Felicia's final poster that she shows in class has a symbolic title that everyone loves:
Water over Stones.
She says her sister helped her with it;
it just came to them after the poster was done.
It shows the power of something that seems 'weak' :
water, over time, is stronger than rocks, like female power from the Tao,
like the main women in the novel *Solar Storms*, and the ecofeminist movement.

Paul: There's an aesthetic behind a poster, and that is the language you're supposed to be using here in transmitting your message.
It's a visual aesthetic, okay?

Michelle: I'm making a spider's web. I'll be using thread, not a drawing. I got the idea as I was writing my paper. The first sentence is about a web of relationships.

Paul [about sample posters]: **The combination of doing it literally and evoking the emotions** also associated with this theme. Beautiful representation of that. That image down there, I think speaks more

than all the text that you see here, you get it immediately when you look at that image. So look for evocative images, because there's a whole emotional tone to what we're talking about in this class as well, right? I mean, you're **feeling** it deeply, in terms of feeling it in the **heart**, or feeling it from the soul, right? You can represent that in imagery, and then you're really capturing something there that's deep about that experience.

Marguerite: Whoever did it was definitely, mindful when they did it. They were putting their poster **into practice**.

Paul: [laughs] okay, so you got the feeling of the central idea of this poster was actually part of the execution. You're getting that just from the aesthetics of it?

Marguerite: Yes.

Paul: Wow!

Paul asks the students to look at the title of the course. Carol talks about finding the blending of soul (Psyche) and earth (Gaia).

Paul: Yes, finding! Making connections. It's not just an academic issue. We want you to articulate that connection. There's no prescription. You may find connections that we've never thought about. I was just saying to Julian, "Isn't it great that **we get paid to learn**!"

Julian: One of the real benefits of learning communities that we try to promote but most people don't care to hear it, is writing across the curriculum, and so, there's Paul in the psych department, grading papers, grading seminar papers, and he's been trained by all of the English faculty he's taught with. And he did not do this and he did not know how to do it when he started teaching in learning communities, and now he is really good at it. And so for decades and decades people have been talking about writing across the curriculum, and it's never happened. Except in these learning communities, and they get it done.

Sara: Do you have a sense of what the discipline of literature or the discipline of psychology, or not really? It's more like about how they come together?

Steph: I think it's more about how they come together.
However, I have seen the discipline in lit,
and I see the discipline in psychology.
And the reason why I learned it was because they assigned research papers.

Julian: In the past actually, we've
all read everything. And we did that for probably more than
ten years. We just read everything. And I think finally people are
just getting a bit fried, so we've started dividing things up.

Paul: I got to say, that last day before the poster conference, when
everybody was all crazy, and all that activity, and
Julian starts scolding everybody, they were pissed at him,
man. They were really not liking that. He was asking for some **order**,
you know. It was very **chaotic**. And I don't mind that chaos,
I really don't, cause to me that speaks of enthusiasm
and engagement and the voices will come up, important stuff
will come up. I come from a big Italian family, so it's no problem.
And we have these dinners with people throwing bread
down the long table,
and these two are arguing about that and
this one's screaming at the kids to do that,
and I take it as, people are engaged,
this is the **stuff of life**.

Paul: Julian is very malleable
as a teaching partner, and is very
very generous, and will allocate as much
time as you want to take, to deal with your
subject matter, you know, I don't want to say,
here's mine, even though we did combine, but I'm
saying like the ecopsych stuff, you know. At the
beginning of the semester, that was dominating.
Later in the semester, since we lost half of the
syllabus, we did more with the literature, but we need
more with the literature right from the beginning
you know. **He needs to take the time to do literature**
work with the students, in terms of **vision**, in
terms of **imagination**, in terms of a
laboratory, that allows you
see how things work and
also as an epistemology
As a way of knowing.

Julian: It's fine with me.
I think the psych does need
to be emphasized
a little bit more, and
typically in most
learning communities,
I don't think it's appropriate to just
to go into a ***lecture about lit****. And so I*
talked a little bit about iambic pentameter or
something at one point, and I think we could
have spent a little bit more time looking at the
text, with something like Solar Storms, but I'm not sure the
students could have done it.

Julian: I've learned about the ways in which our minds react to the problems around us, the strategies we use to cope.

Paul: You're giving a shout out to psychology!

Julian: Yeah.

Paul: I was ***losing my way*** *in psychology until the literature came in. With psychology, you're supposed to not have feelings, be objective, scientific. Literature turns that on its head. It presents universal truths on the human condition that social sciences can't touch.*

Paul: Julian was spending a lot more time with the material, setting them up with *The Tempest* [little chuckle]. Reading -- it was great reading the lines. That was really fun. And you got to see a part of him where **Julian was deeply engaged,** as a teacher. I love when he does it. That's what got me, well that's what got me to appreciate literature as something to teach, the importance of it, that's why I didn't want students going away thinking the literature was just a kind of ornamentation to the ecopsychology. That it's just as central. And I think they got that, with *Solar Storms*, the ones who did read it. I think it's a magnificent novel. It just puts it all together.

Julian goes over Wallace Stevens' "Sunday Morning". He offers some background on the poet, then he reads the whole poem aloud, and then puts out a series of questions, some that students can't answer and so he answers for them. Paul takes notes during the talk, and doesn't say anything, except to answer one of Julian's questions as if he's a student.

[Talking about posters] Paul: It's a soothing color too. And get the balance between blank space and used space. Right? So she took advantage of the **negative space** in the poster.to create a balance, between text, imagery, and open space.

Julian: The hand print is arresting.

Paul: Yeah, it also goes, emblematically for service learning as hands-on learning.

Julian: ahh haa [in an appreciative, laughing voice]

Julian: Lend a hand.

Paul: Lend a hand, another one, yeah.
See all the metaphors? So think about using these metaphors as well.

Julian: fingers in the pie.

Paul laughs heartily: Okay.

Sara in a stage whisper: Just let him keep going.

Paul: Knowledge can come from writing. The only
thing about that is that it's limited to the individual.
And there's something about the collective
construction of knowledge that so surpasses that.
Cause even the smartest honors student
will be honest, and say, you know what,
I didn't even think of it that way before
we had this conversation. Now,
I'm enlarged by this,
and their thinking has changed,
as a result of their classmates,
and that's what you can't get
in individual writing.

Paul: That's Julian's thing.
That's that thesis-driven, one thesis,
three paragraphs, you're done.

Julian: I think we still need to have a final integrative paper. And the poster substituted for that. I would like to redesign around that somehow. And I'm mostly sold on the poster idea, but not entirely, and the psych paper changed a couple of times, and it turned out, I thought that it was going to be a psych paper and it turned out not to really be a psych paper.

It was a little bit less than that. It doesn't advance a thesis.

Paul: As long as you provide space
there's no **space** for them
will not occur, so that's
talking about,

for students to do the integrated work. If
to do the integrated work, integration
the intentionality that you were
that's really important.

Paul: If we just acquire knowledge in a vacuum,
that doesn't have a context, what good is it really,
other than temporary retention? And then within in a year,
it's gone...But if the students are using that in very specific ways,
to produce products of use, they can retain that, and they'll be able
to **transfer** that to new situations. So, Learning Communities
are one means of doing that. It's not *the* means,
and it's not a panacea

Text Collage on Empiricism and Other Ways of Knowing/ What is Science?

During break, Hillary is talking about experiments, something to do with a glass of water and the pictures that formed, with negative stimulus and half-formed crystals. There's something about exposing water to beautiful music and other positive things, and those crystals were perfectly formed.

Hillary: It just makes you really believe in the power of energy.

Terrie says how cool that is. She says something about plants hearing us, understanding us.

It's about what we're putting out.

Paul comes in and says: It's carbon dioxide.

Terrie: Ha ha ha [sarcastic] We're going deeper than that.

Paul jokes as he starts a video -- a panel discussion on the Gaia theory: We have a **poet on the same stage with scientists.** What the hell is that!?

Paul points out that this approach is psychological. There are other disciplines, other approaches, which will be looked at later. The definition of a problem and resolution is psychological.

Julian reminds the students to try to identify the themes when they do readings, especially of academic texts. Later in that class, Paul asks Julian if he wants to say anything about the different mode of literature for getting at the topic. Julian says literature puts ideas into narrative form, at least in this case and then says "That's all for now".

Julian: What's the basic form of scientific knowledge? Empiricism.

On the board, Paul writes: hypothesis to theory
to paradigms, with arrows between each, and below
that he writes, in brackets [scientific method]

Paul: What distinguishes phenomenology from science?

Paul leads the class to the conclusion that phenomenology is subjective and science objective. The scientific method is repeated experiment. It's about disproving things and systematic procedures to test ideas. Paul says this is the key idea, the principle of falsifiability. If you can't disconfirm something you're not doing science. That's empiricism. **It can be measured.**

Paul: So, to make a claim that natural phenomena are teleological is that science? Can I test that out scientifically?

A pause.

Jaspar: No

Paul: No, I cannot.

em·pir·i·cism[19] <a
src="http://sp.dictionary.com/dictstatic/g/d/speaker.gif"> [em-**pir**-*uh*-siz-*uh*m] Show IPA

noun

1.empirical method or practice.
2.*Philosophy* . the doctrine that all knowledge is derived from sense experience. Compare rationalism (def. 2) .
3.undue reliance upon experience, as in medicine; quackery.
4.an empirical conclusion.

em·pir·i·cal [em-**pir**-i-k*uh*l] Show IPA

adjective

1.derived from or guided by experience or experiment.
2.depending upon experience or observation alone, without using scientific method or theory, especially as in medicine.
3.provable or verifiable by experience or experiment.

Felicia: There are other ways of knowing. Religion offers that. In fact,
empiricism is a symptom ...

Julian: -- of the dominant social paradigm?

Felicia: Yes. Paul: The same critiques can be leveled at science. Science and technology can't solve our current environmental crisis.

Paul talks about Lynn Margulis who warns against non-scientists misrepresenting scientific theories, or talking metaphorically. He says Lovelock struggled with that too. He used metaphors.
Paul: It isn't necessarily bad, but **it 'aint science**

Terrie: I don't always want to deal with the empirical side of things.

I love the philosophical,
and I don't feel we're getting *any* of that.

Felicia: they're so [gesture with one hand slapping into the other]
got to stick to the empirical,
got to, you know,
'scientific' [said with a mock mysterious or awestruck tone]

[19] From dictionary.com

Terrie: plus the instructors, **they speak the language so fluently** and fast, and they just add all these other words that we may not even know, and then get upset because we're not as fluent in this language as they are.

Felicia: Well, I think it's interesting because you know they start out the class really talking about how we need to destroy the dominant social paradigm and then for like the first half of the class, they function so distinctly within the dominant social paradigm.
And then, we haven't really talked about the DSP in a while, but it's like they almost just found their way out of it in the second half of class, you know, they've opened up to these other ways of doing things in class, discussing. And I don't know how much of it is conscious.

Talking about Lovelock's Gaia hypothesis, Jasper says science is so compartmentalized, so they can't do what they try to do. Paul responds, saying this piece seems to be asking for interdisciplinarity. Paul: How ironic is it that biologists couldn't define life?

Gus: See, I think, just blatantly honest, I feel like people want to do that, [talk about] spirituality and 'other ways of knowing' just because it's **easier.** That's like, you can write anything you want about spirituality. You can't write anything on hard facts.

And ten people that say that, I would say five of them are just saying that because they want for you to acknowledge that they're a free thinker, and that they're, in their paper, give them leeway. I feel it's like, well, I don't need to do that, because I feel this way, like I don't need to -- as bluntly as can be, **I don't need to learn science, I believe in god.**

In the discussion on *Not Wanted*, science is set against Christianity, with the former the hero, while in many other discussions, 'empiricism' seems to be pitted against spirituality.
Elliot talks about the rape scene.

Julian: That's really fascinating, that violence trumps all forms of epistemology.

Might makes right.

Elliot: The victor of the battle gets to write the history.

Paul: It's not a logical analysis. Noah looks for things to confirm his beliefs, and anything that disconfirms it, he doesn't attend to.

Paul talks about denial, a coping mechanism, referring to Freud and their textbook. He talks about competition between ways of knowing.

The winner of the competition is the one with the most power.

Gus: I have a question. Religion and science are like opposing forces, and I kinda wonder why they're both aspects of the DSP. Well, I think science -- Noah was using it, he used it for bad, obviously, but ultimately, it's the ultimate weapon versus religion.

Terrie: But religion is hugely into controlling [and conforming] within its structure, depending on which religion you believe in, as does science.

Michelle: Yes, Well, I honestly think that religion was there to give answers to questions people did not understand, so that's why they follow it.

Now science, is basically the opposite. It's giving you the facts, so you can understand. So people who are not informed don't want to get educated, would rather follow religion.

Felicia: We use science to analyze nature, rather than understand it and understand our place in it, and it's just to take, and… Gus: Yeah, but it's fifty-fifty, we'll use the same science to prove that we're connected to nature.

Lee: (Felicia's sister) The same thing could be said of religion.
You guys are looking at religion as institutionalized, as in Western traditions, not looking at it from the perspective of other, indigenous religions.
There's a completely different interaction with nature, so **we can make the same of science and religion.**

Julian: And in a similar way, there are different kinds of science.

Paul: Right.

*Julian: There's a **reductionist kind of science and a holistic kind of science.***

Paul: As we can see, there's not one kind of science and there's not one kind of religion, and you can see how each can be utilized within two different paradigms. So this actually is really great, because it blows apart the simple binary, the polarity, right? It's either this or that.

Felicia: They wanted to focus mostly on empiricism and, you know just more of that hard line understanding of stuff, whereas, you know, I relate more to, the intuitive, spiritual, stuff and also I think on the list of other ways of knowing is the wisdom of others who have lived before you, something to that effect, and so, I think that stuff was sort of seen as more experiential, it's not really fact, so we don't really want to hear about that stuff in our seminars, and in your papers, but as we've gone on, I mean, [quick laugh] look at the Tao! And some of the other stuff too, I think, Thich Nhat Hanh, you can't really prove what he's saying. It would take a lot more research, and what he's saying people understand and can relate to because it's true. And so I that's sort of been allowed in class more, and I think it's been a good experience for me because I've been sort of forced to focus a little bit more on the ways of knowing that I don't really do, as much, I mean, I respect them.

Marguerite: I still don't know what the ecological unconscious is. I still can't sum it up myself. I've been doing this all semester. That's what I've been studying. It's completely, there is no way to actually **prove** it, other than other ways of knowing.

Paul: A hypothesis is like the smallest unit, of scientific inquiry, right? We have a guess about something.

He continues, talking about building a theory.

Julian: A hypothesis might turn out to be true or not true.

Paul: Well, I wouldn't say true or not true,
I'd say, supported or not supported.
I don't think we should get into the idea of truth yet,
until you're beyond theory, to when you're really into scientific law.

Julian: There's so much evidence supporting the theory of evolution, but it's still just a theory. It won't be a law.

Paul: Right.

Felicia: Why do we even need empiricism to prove stuff that we observe and know with common sense?

Julian: What a great question!

Paul asks me to explain qualitative research. I say something like:
I'm an educational researcher, so I'm doing science (in air quotes),
but I do narrative qualitative research.
I tell stories.
The goal is not to come up with generalizations and theories.
The thinking is that to remove the experience from its context, important truths are lost,
and the goal is also to try to understand the experience from the perspective of the people in it.

Julian asks me something like does the school of ed. give you a hard time? I answer, no it's totally qualitative.

Paul: And a lot of the literature, even though it was fictional, it provides metaphor, it provides ways of understanding that the straight psychology stuff didn't.

Felicia: *Solar Storms* broadens the narrative of ecofeminism to include the dynamic between the dominant culture of Euro-American culture, over the indigenous culture, so it sort of includes the native American struggle against patriarchy as well as the feminist struggle against patriarchy, so in that way I feel like *Solar Storms* sort of went back and informed ecofeminism more.

Paul: That's the most powerful thing science can do for us, show the cause and effect between two phenomena, through the experimental method. Gaia is now a paradigm, a dominant paradigm, and a new view in science.

Is one way of knowing better than another?
(no clear answers)
Paul: Which one is privileged in the West? Calls on Felicia, who says, Empiricism.
Paul: We're saying there are other ways of knowing.
Certain ways of knowing are better under certain conditions, for example, Julian represents environmental literature.

What do you privilege?

Julian answers something like: Only ***truth and beauty****.*

Gus: Well, I'm trying to learn psychology from the empirical side of it, you know, trying to learn it, and I feel like we get off on these spiritual, and... granted, I understand that they're important and that they have a place, but I feel like it's just 90/10, spiritual,

you know, stories, compared to things, **hard facts**,
and if that's the nature of the science, which I know it has
some of that in it, very much so,
then maybe that's not what I want,
but I don't know if that's truthfully how non-empirical it is.
I think that there are more facts there, more stuff there...
I feel like we're learning psychology by reading literature,
you know what I mean? And that's just, it's weird.

Paul: Eco-psychology is premised on this experiential knowledge that you get by being *in* the environment, of the environment,
and not separate from.
And the literature gave us the form.

Felicia: I passed in [my paper] to Paul, he really loved it and I thought I was sort of [giggles] cracking down on his empiricism a little, and he responded well to it, but it's like, how much is psychology actually a science?
It's really
not a science,
it's a social science.
That's very different. So I think psychology is informed by
other ways of knowing.

Sara: Whether it likes it or not.
Felicia: Whether it likes it or not
[we laugh]
and eco-psych probably even more so.

Michelle says [explaining a slide in her eco-identity power point presentation]
We have to love our earth. There's only one.
Paul says she used that four letter word
[L-O-V-E],
which is hard,
and not often used in these contexts, in science.

Paul talks of 'soft empiricism' and correlations as not as strong as cause and effect.
Julian asks, *what does Ishmael ask us to do?*
Felicia: Think, reflect.
Paul: So, we're back to consciousness.
Julian: I'm afraid so. [In his quiet, ironic, way]
Paul says you can study the process of giving back, empirically. He says the different ways of knowing don't need to be in opposition. They can work in **conjunction**.

Paul: And again, I would say, you know, reject none, and use them situationally and instrumentally, you know, for what you want to accomplish, for whatever the purposes are. That's why I kept pressing students about the literature. Because I think a lot of students, particularly more of the male students who are more scientifically oriented, like Elliot and people, didn't see much value in the literature. And so, nobody really was able to articulate the power of literature, in terms of just **envisioning** something new, the power of the imagination, you know, to envision a solution or solutions or you know envisioning an alternative identity, as the literature did, the literature actually demonstrated that. It made real things that Koger and Winter were talking about we should be doing. They did it. In the literature. It was made real in the literature, and that's something to examine as a kind of like a laboratory, you know?

Talking about Hogan [the writer of *Solar Storms*], Mary points out that the author shows us there are always two ways of seeing things, scientific and spiritual (the terms she uses are: "mythological" and "realistic".) and later, in regards to how Husk uses science, she says, to **confirm what he already knows.**

Mary talks about how she still finds things in this work (and other Native texts) and then she later reads about the scientific 'discovery' that confirms that truth.

Julian smiles at her fondly and knowingly.

Interdisciplinarity Analysis

One powerful effect of interdisciplinarity is that it makes disciplinary boundaries, tools, and definitions explicit to students and teachers, thus allowing creative and challenging questions about these boundaries and lines. It exposes and offers metaphors, thus supporting the metacognition necessary for transformative learning. Can we leap to interdisciplinarity without firmly establishing what the disciplines are? I have heard several LC instructors grappling with this question. I did see quite a bit of confusion about what the parameters of each discipline were in this particular LC. Questions about what exactly literature is, what exactly psychology is, are fruitful and I would guess not typical of stand-alone classes. The confusion might not always feel productive, though.

Students wondered if the 'literature/English' part of the class included writing and reading skills, which were not addressed directly. We talk about literature to mean scholarly articles, like literature on educational research or ecopsychology literature. And then there's English class literature: novels, plays, poems. Two students, Carol and Terrie, spoke directly of this tangle. At one point, they wondered if they could write about the ecopsychology texts in their literary analysis paper.

Interdisciplinarity can expand our understanding of each discipline, but not when the binary thinking defines one by the fact that it's not the other. Binary thinking I found heightened power dynamics. Teachers --their personalities and styles of communication – often stand in for the discipline that they represent, and the way in which Paul seemed to dominate sent a message to the students about psychology dominating, one that many of them resisted. This I feel blocked them from seeing how psychology and literature can inform one another and coexist happily. In the first interview, Stephanie talked about how Julian hands out these little readings that aren't even assigned, but she finds them interesting. On several occasions, he quietly distributed readings, not saying anything about what to look for or when they were due. One class time, though, he started up a discussion on one. I was surprised, and I'm guessing other students were too. I hadn't realized it was assigned. Stephanie says she thinks of Julian as a "psychological figure" as well, as if psychology colored all class work and both teachers. This could show a blending of the disciplines, but also psychology taking space from literature. In my many class visits, more often than not, Paul stands in front of the room, talking to the group, and Julian sits in the back. In terms of what the disciplines are and who these two individuals are within their disciplines, I get the sense that Julian feels literature should

and can speak for itself. He says, “With literature and philosophy, sometimes it takes months or years for these ideas to sink in” and “That’s the great thing about literature, you can read it and just take it in”. As an English teacher, I understand this point, and appreciate how Julian seemed to cherish the mystery and magic of literature, but I couldn’t help feeling that literature had been cheated, and that interdisciplinarity suffered because of that, even though Paul and Julian modeled cross-disciplinary collaboration and offered assignments that specifically spoke to that. They mentioned several times directly that the two disciplines inform one another, and that they each learn from each other and each other’s discipline. Julian spoke from within psychology and Paul did so from within literature.

Another uneasy relationship was between science or ‘empiricism’ (the word used often in this LC community) and ‘other ways of knowing’ which, as used within this community, refers to literary, experiential, spiritual, and women’s ways of knowing. In their discussion of women’s way of knowing, Belenky and her research team (1986) note that women’s ‘constructed’ and ‘connected’ learning is “a far cry from the perception of science as absolute truth or as a procedure for obtaining objective facts” (p. 138). It seems that participants, not necessarily only or all women, felt their way of knowing coming up against some authoritative, inflexible thing called science. Once again, when the binary thinking operated – the idea that you can only do one or the other, that one or the other is in charge or is valued --this led to limited learning, and to further lines being drawn, instead of circles opening up the learning.

> What could be more banal than to stand in the midst of this astonishing universe, sifting its wonders through reductionist screens, debunking amazement with data and logic, downsizing mystery to the scale of our own minds? (Palmer, 1998).

Not all science is reductive. Julian says so directly, but a similar binary that Parker Palmer (1983) implies above warns against the extreme of empiricism: positivism, or what he calls "objectivism", which, he says, is about individual learning, not community. On a line, there are only separate points. Within a circle, there are infinite combinations. Because objectivism fears subjectivity, Palmer comments, it is opposed to community. Reality is a complex web of interrelated communities of being, and so it can't be understood only through empiricism and rationality, he says.

The LC community followed a tangled, convoluted path questioning what science is. I too felt confused. To be fair, science seems not so clear about itself these days. Alan Lightman (2011) writes about physics coming around to resemble philosophy and religion. He tells of a new theory of multiple universes, building upon string theory, that throws out completely the long held belief that our universe is a unique and inevitable result of particular forces, principles, and laws of nature. Instead, it might be an accident. Therefore, "we are living in a universe uncalculable by science" (Lightman, p. 36). This level of uncertainty or epistemological confusion is not what I would expect of the field of science, although the class texts offered a wide range of articles written by scientists, some philosophical, some lyrical or metaphorical, that may have added to the confusion about what science is. This seems a potentially good, productive confusion. Science is not necessarily linear, but I often think of it that way and I feel many of the other community members did as well. I am told that the 'scientific method' as sketched in contemporary textbooks almost always appears as a circle these days (Tallman, 2012). Empiricism itself has both inductive and deductive approaches, and relativism is a whole branch of science that takes into account social factors in the conduct of science (Lee, 2000). Lee also says

that science is about observation of real phenomena and that findings must be measurable in one way or another. He says other fields of knowledge are not inferior to science; they just investigate other phenomena (with the implication that science takes care of reality, and other areas such as art, literature, and spirituality live in the unreal).

I associate the word 'empiricism' with experience. I thought the qualitative research I've been conducting would be considered empirical research. Leavy says empiricism is synonymous with positivism, and it seems this LC community treated it the same way. Students spoke a lot about 'too much empiricism' or an emphasis on 'facts' crowding out 'other ways of knowing'. "The heart learns that facts are the possibilities we pretend we trust" (Pelias, p. 171).

As I have mentioned earlier, to a certain degree, we give power and authority to a particular discourse. A community builds and reinforces its own power dynamics. Positivism seemed the silent partner behind the authority of science. I wonder about when naming something diminishes it and when not naming it perhaps gives it too much power. Positivism was never mentioned by name; it might have helped to do so. It seems that with unclear terminology and some concepts left unexamined, 'empiricism' and 'science' stood in for 'positivism'. "Science is the act of looking at a tree and seeing lumber. Poetry is the act of looking at a tree and seeing a tree. The alchemy that separates the head from the heart finds no gold" (Pelias, 2004, p. 9). But science need not always dismiss the heart. Some of the first people to object to positivism were scientists, after all (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Science and poetry can work together. Paul and Julian tried to make that happen. Students in this LC resisted the lines of hierarchy, binaries, objectification, and denial of personal experience and interconnectedness, which I

associate with positivism, but because positivism wasn't explicitly named and challenged, empiricism and science stood in for it. At the same time, some of Paul's messages implied a rigidity and linearity that seemed aligned with positivism. A component of positivism, scientism was also at play, unnamed. "I posit a general meaning of 'scientism' or 'scientistic' to mean a reduction and reification of science and of its epistemological dominance to the exclusion of all other forms of knowing" (Stone, 1992, p. 21). This connects to Paul's apparent dominance in the classroom, as students associated him with empiricism and science and felt he shut them down verbally while other ways of knowing were closed off from the conversations.

Organized religion was pitted against science, with science favored, while spirituality was also pitted against science in this LC community, and for many, science lost. These battles were not named or addressed, and so again, learning in community lost out. The binary thinking seemed to prevent participants at times from seeing where there is overlap, nuance, and collaboration across ways of knowing. Two different paradigms from the course content -- the Dominant Social Paradigm (DSP) and the New Environmental Paradigm (NEP) -- played prominent parts in classroom conversations, and complicated and challenged binaries in some ways. The class text that defines the DSP says, quoting Pirages and Ehrich, that the DSP values "abundance and progress, growth and prosperity, faith in science and technology, and commitment to a laissez-faire economy, limited governmental planning and private property rights" (as cited by Koger & Winter, 2010, p. 32). The NEP focuses on ecological issues and recognizes them as urgent. Koger & Winter cite studies that connect the NEP with collectivist societies. They also say that psychology and industrialization are both built upon a belief in

individualism, and so psychology has been very slow to change in a direction amendable to the NEP. I think it's significant that I never heard the definition of the DSP read aloud in class or directly referred to. The terms DSP and NEP, along with the expression 'other ways of knowing' became so often repeated and unexamined that I feel they were reified and then allowed to be set against one another in binaries.

Thomas Kuhn was mentioned in class, with the idea of paradigms attributed to him. I wonder if students' resistance to 'empiricism' came partly from a sense of scientism in our institutions and society, which is not, but can be mistaken for, science. "In following Kuhn, we should not be misled into a scientistic faith in empirical evidence as compelling. Instead, the special province of our new paradigm may be indicated in his analysis of the ways in which any paradigm is constituted by language" (Bizzell, 1979, p. 764). Here we see wider circles and lines too entering into the classroom community, with appropriate and genuine concerns about positivism and scientism influencing where authority was located (in Paul, in 'science' and 'empiricism') and then resisted.

Forces and trends outside of the classroom played out in the science/other ways binary. Besides the crisis in physics mentioned above, there is also a status problem for psychology. A few different participants made comments about psychology having to legitimize itself, having a chip on its shoulder, and even during class, Felicia said that it wasn't a 'real science'. Perhaps this pushed on one side, asserting science over other ways with psychology defensively claiming its place (and Paul as its advocate and representative), while people's resistance to scientism and positivism pushed from the other side, setting psychology up as the authoritative bully. As Paul pointed out in class one time, it's about power and politics. One paradigm is not better than another, but if

one is privileged, it gets money and power. This does not mean different paradigms can not converse and share, but with either/or thinking, there is a winner and a loser. Interdisciplinarity offers conversations across disciplines that are hard to find elsewhere, while ironically at the same time, making possible binary thinking that turns these conversations into agonistic arguments.

A *New York Times* article "Leaders of the Field" talks about self-proclaimed experts and evangelicals, in a way that connects to the spiritual versus scientific conflict in this LC. Reading the article shook up my binary thinking. It suggests that evangelicals push youth to think deeply about their beliefs in ways that maybe secular communities don't. According to these evangelicals, human reasoning is always flawed and requires god's help. Facts and values cannot be separated (which seems to oppose the view of positivism, that facts are outside of us, objective, immutable). The writer quotes Michael Horton in *Christianity Today*, saying that in America, "reason rests upon public facts, faith on private values" and "the Gospel tears down the wall between reason and faith, public and private, objective and subjective truth, by its very content" (p. 20). Isn't this what a qualitative paradigm also suggests? In other words, do liberal people such as myself use logic and 'science' to critique those right wing, loopy fundamentalists, while not recognizing the grip of positivism on our thinking and our modes of critique? I think about my firm support for the theory of evolution, but have I read Darwin recently? Do I simply have faith in the theory of evolution? Have I explored the robustness, the power of that theory, or is my support political, mainly because I dislike those who challenge it (and can easily find fault in the arguments in favor of creationism)? In this LC, I noticed a general resistance to 'facts' in favor of 'other ways of knowing', with some important

exceptions, but also the opposite pull: words like 'facts' and 'proof' carried weight and snuck in to conversations about emotional, spiritual, and artistic understandings, with facts and proof enjoying status as the final words on validity and credibility. In other words, participants, myself included, judged ideas with positivist lenses at the same time as challenging positivism.

The binary thinking did not always prevail. There were powerful and exciting conversations where different epistemologies were considered and put into dialogue with one another, and the magic of an LC is that such struggles could even come to the surface at all and enter conversations. Members took apart or turned over the meanings of religion, science, spirituality, and truth. Both lines and circles spoke in a fluctuating dynamic. Beyond the limited time frame of one semester, I expect most participants are still turning these concepts over, thus the lasting effect of so many questions and conflicts is likely very fruitful.

Personal Meets Public; Social and Intellectual Learning

> It may be that in most cases teaching achieves only intermittent moments of real friendship, like the fleeting accomplishment of authentic dialogue in other structurally encumbered relationships, such as parenting and therapy. Even if these moments are transitory, I still believe the stance and political climate of educational friendship are worth attempting in fostering a learning community (Rawlins, p. 21)[20].

The special configuration of fully integrated LCs suggests great potential for community learning. The ideal circle offers collaborative learning whereby the personal and public come together, as do social and intellectual learning. Dewey (1909, 1998) has

[20] Note that Rawlins uses the terms 'learning community' in general terms here, not in references to the interdisciplinary team-taught LCs that I focus on.

said that if we put off psychological effects from the subject matter, they sneak in anyway, and then we are stuck trying to simulate interest and motivation in artificial ways, not through the subject matter itself. Palmer (1998) says when we gather in community around the subject, the subject speaks to us.

Below is a text collage showing how social and intellectual, private and public learning merged and breathed together within a circle of expanding space and time, and how binary thinking set one against the other, in competition within limited time and space.

Personal Meets Public Text Collage

Paul: Who we are in the classroom is who we are outside of the classroom. I think. For the most part. I think we bring, in a lot of our background experience, in terms of hiking, and climbing, and the environment. That's why we created this class. This course is really just an excuse for us, you know, to delve into those things that we value, and those things that we think are important to living. And so, what we do, particularly with learning communities, is that it provides you that range and flexibility, reflects who we are as people, outside the classroom. The way we conduct ourselves in the classroom reflects who we are as people, in terms of valuing community, collaboration, so all those elements of what and how we do school, I think, reflects who we are as people.

Paul: In fact, that's how him and I met, that's how we first started teaching, was in one of those pilots. The pilot was a three-course integration with biology.

Julian: that's how we started hiking and skiing together too.

Paul: That was our bonding process.

Julian: We would go out to talk about the class, course design--

Paul: Right, so we were designing courses at 1 o'clock in the morning, at a 30 below --

Julian:-- Yeah, it was cold, I remember--

Paul: -- night, in Washington. We were on Mt. Toby, or Mt. Monadnock. We do our best curriculum development on the trail.

Julian: They were very exciting days, those were. And we made lots of mistakes too.

Paul: It has to be sympatico between the teaching partners. There's got to be trust within that relationship. You've got to be able to walk into this intimate space of the classroom and feel like your partner's got your back, right?

Raneff says that the teachers know what the students are thinking. There's a feeling that 'we are accomplishing this together" and that's why there are two teachers together, instead of two teachers, separate, with their two areas of expertise.

Paul: You develop these personal relationships, that you think or you want to be more than just the classroom, with students, that

you're treating them like real human beings, you're seeing them as whole people, not just a student in your class, and hopefully they're seeing that about you as well.

During the break, Terrie talks about the power outage during the storm, how no one was nice to her. She bumped in to Felicia, the only person to talk with her, and she felt it was so nice, Felicia inviting her back to shower. Then, when she got back home, the power was on.

Felicia: Even just those little breaks between class, usually people that don't smoke all go to where the smokers are, and sort of just talk for a few minutes about different things that are going on.

It's so different than lecture classes… you know even with how much we've talked in class, I see people from that [other] class and they don't even really acknowledge. I'll smile or whatever, they'll smile back, but it's not like seeing somebody from an LC.

You usually stop and check in with each other,

It's very different.

Elliot: The more I make eye contact

with the people you see and are trying to communicate with,

you definitely make, like a faster connection with them, you can talk to anybody, as opposed to maybe someone saying something in class and you answering a follow-up question, **and they're two rows behind you, and there's no connection whatsoever.**

Julian: If you can do this well, it'll help you so much. Figure out what the author is saying. Paul: Emotions play into it. You love it or hate it. If you love it, you are uncritical. If you hate it, your reject it, and don't go into the ideas. Try to resist this. Try to balance believing and doubting. Paul: Carol, magnificent seminar student, wow! She was so great. Because she was so grounded in the text. And she then made interpretations that was original thinking on her part, and connected it to other texts, and other ideas that students generated in the class. She was a great listener and a great reader, you know, and so she really brought that seminar up. Jaspar, even though he was resistant to talk and he sat back on almost all the seminars, asked terrifically integrative questions that really made people stop and rethink what they said and then make another attempt to interpret the text, so in a way, someone like that who asks those kinds of questions, are probably the best seminar person you can have in a group.

Terrie: I think that's the problem with not being able to bounce your own emotions off of each other. It's harder to learn when you feel alone in that material.

Felicia: I wonder if it would help on seminar days, to have the first half of class be just groups of two or three, maybe three, you know, pre-seminar discussing what we read.

Terrie: I LOVE that idea. Felicia: What stood out to me the most was in the seminars, they kept saying, you know, we need to stick to the text, and if people tried to connect the text at all to any sort of personal experience. I remember people would try to say, this reminds me of, and they would just, well not in so many words, they would be like, that's not relevant, it's not fact-based so it shouldn't be part of the seminar, you're getting off topic.

And I was thinking, well, we're not really getting off topic if we're making the material relevant to our own lives. You can stay focused on the material, but also connect it up with how you understand it, and to me, that shows that you're learning.

Stephanie: The relationship
between teachers and students.
It's -- I've never been in a classroom
where students are so comfortable talking
with the teachers as they are in this classroom.
I mean, we don't even talk to them as professors.
We're just, Hey Paul, what's up?
How's everything?
Like, it's just like he's –
well he *is* part of this community.
It's very personal.
I've never been in a class
when I've felt so connected.

Paul (talking about the on belay metaphor):
I do that with all the kind of prompting
and support outside of the classroom,
in terms of email, electronically, and
personal conversations,
in between class, after class,
I really make a point to try to get to
a personal connection with each student
in the classroom, so again, to raise the comfort level
so they can disclose problems they're having, so I can
work with them around the stuff, rather than
not showing or not turning anything in.

Felicia: If the students connect up
with each other, they're more
comfortable in class,
which makes it more comfortable
talking to the teachers,
more relaxed. I think in the beginning
of the class, people were sort of
nervous
about how were the teachers going
to react to what they were saying,
but since we've all gotten to know
each other, everyone's a little more
relaxed,
we can joke around,
I mean, the girl talk that happened
the other day was hilarious, [When
they made both professors blush]…
I think it builds
this sense of community
and puts people at ease, so, it just
sets the mood for that
reciprocal learning,

that people are comfortable
talking to the teacher
rather than him or her
being on the
pedestal

at the front of the room.

Paul: And the students clearly, you saw that. Yeah, they were doing that, on belay work.

I think more so personally than they were doing so academically.
I think there were some academic relationships in there, of support and affirmation, but there was a lot of personal stuff going on there, and people supporting each other
on a very intimate level,
that I wasn't privy to,
but I could see it, I could see it happening.
Terrie, for example. Terrie has a very difficult background.

There were a number of times when she could have dropped from that class
and disappeared
and been invisible,
and we would never have seen her again. But she didn't. And I think she stayed because
people like Carol,
and other students she felt a real connection to, Raneff,
even Gus she talked about.

I see students bonding with one another,
great Penelope's laugh is.
she calls it like it is, and
fond, lingering glance I saw
course. Penelope
me Hillary often misses
somewhere she needs to go;
comment. At the same time,
set in that could find the
and Carol, who
during break about how

Carol, Hillary and I talk about how
Penelope and I admire Michelle, how
then Penelope looks over at her with that
her give Julian at the beginning of the
saying she misses Raneff. Carol telling
the second half, she thinks there's
it's a sympathetic, not judgmental
a general grumpiness and despondency has
teachers as the targets, the culprits. Penelope
seemed so different and not close earlier, chat
male perspectives dominated on the poetry field trip.

Paul: We facilitated that as well, for the students, that was part
of the community aspect. And it really functions --
and this gets to the idea of community --
It really functions like an extended family,
there's this social obligation that's not coerced.
It's something that develops from the first day onward.
Students develop trust in the process,
trust in us as a faculty team, trust in their classmates
that they can have a discussion
where they make themselves vulnerable,
but yet at the same time, they feel safe. Again, that's something that evolves,
and we take some steps to develop.

Julian gives me a cute smile,
and I see him exchange the same smile with Penelope.

It's kind of a boyish, we're all in this together kind of smile. Felicia: I'm you know,
culturally very Irish Catholic, even though I'm
not Catholic [quick giggle] so I have this sort of , you
know, suck it up, do it on your own, don't ask anyone for help,
but the LC just sort of, that atmosphere, the environment
just sort of facilitates that kind of interaction,
where you automatically offer or ask for help from people.

I am surprised to discover that as late as October 13, several students still don't seem to know each other's names.

Julian: I don't think the students bonded that well with each other. Some of them clearly did see each other outside of school. And that's good.

After the silent walk through the woods in the back of campus, the class sits in a circle on the lawn near a plain, ugly side of a classroom building.

Julian sits outside of the circle, stretching his long legs in front of him.
Sophia sits outside too. Penelope comments that Julian was like
our steward of the forest,
how he was so confident, guiding us along,
and then how he stood by the fallen tree and helped everyone over.

There is great tenderness in her voice.

Paul says, Julian, did you hear what she said?
He replies, yes, and then makes a comment that I think is critical,
about how people pick up things on walks, like rocks and leaves.
Penelope wears a leaf in her hair.
Hillary picks up an inchworm and passes it to the person next to her.
With very few words, we end up passing the worm all around the circle.
Elliot says, he's our mascot.

Paul: The students who really do well
with that are the ones who are able to take
those individual ideas
and then bring them to
the community, and then
those ideas get enlarged,
and it's spectacular.

Julian: Their outside lives impact their social lives here. In my positive psych class, the students bonded very tightly. And Sally [the co-teacher] is very good, at putting the brakes on confessionals and any attempt to turn the class into some kind of therapy, or anything like that. She won't allow it.

Paul: You know, we always have a number of students who have life difficulties that they can't control and there were a number of those that happened, and two people dropped the class as a result of that, and we still kept people who would have dropped, if not for the encouragement to stay in, and they stayed in, but you know, they didn't complete a lot of the things they needed to complete. So, I got really mixed feelings about how the whole thing went. I always make changes. I'm not wedded to the syllabus. And I'm really easy about making accommodations for students. I roll with it. **I don't take it personal,** and I don't see that I'm there to punish students when they don't complete, and that kind of thing. What I'm disappointed in is that we lost a lot of good material that in the past when we taught the course made a difference in student understanding.

Julian on negative reactions to the novel *Not Wanted on the Voyage*: *And then in terms of discomfort, that's actually one of the central tenets of ecopsych, and it's what Koger and Winter talk about over and over again, that we have all of these very clever psychological strategies to make us not feel uncomfortable with the poison that is surrounding us! So, [sighs] that's something that a number of the students should have been able to recognize, that the issue of comfort itself needs to be looked at, and needs to be looked at not in a personal way, but in an ecopsych way. And this is how people are reacting to a book, how do we understand how governments and populations are reacting*

to dirty power plants and legislation that's not happening and enforcement that's not happening, and everything that Ishmael wanted us to think about?

Paul: I think it's stress stuff unrelated, this is the humbling part of teaching in classrooms, is that the students are more affected by what happens outside the classroom than inside the classroom,
so life intervenes, with all the stressors and all the
things that happen in these students' lives, and they're very complex, difficult, challenging lives that they lead, you know,
two jobs, unemployed, no car, no gas, someone dying—

Paul says that the thing we privilege is students' writing. He believes the best learning is in conversation, and that's not used as samples of students' learning: Julian and I value that.
It happens in group work too, not just in seminar.

The collective is more powerful,
but that's not to say that the
individual isn't important.

Terrie: For me the seminar papers are a chore. I do them cause I have to.
The speaking, I learn.
I feel connected and validated
as a person I guess,
cause I have an idea that I can share,
and I can learn from others.

Michelle: I thought it was funny. You know how she's [Motl the cat, in *Not Wanted on the Voyage*] always talking about being in heat. For real? Like that's all you can think about?
Paul: It's an animal.
Michelle: I know
Paul: They eat and have sex, right?
Sophia: But I have a dog, and--
Paul: --Just like humans,
Sophia: She doesn't --
Paul: That's what Freud said, sex and aggression.
That's what drives the animal.
Penelope: All my cats are spayed and neutered, so they don't have that problem.

Terrie feels Siddhartha was rude not to go back to his dad, who missed him so.
Stephanie says, but if you apply the Tao, the more you have, the less you have.
Julian akss then what did Siddhartha's son do to him? The answer: left him and didn't return.
Julian offers that it bothered him too,

the separation from feelings, from bodily sensations, from family.
I think he says, as a father, that was hard for him.
Is this the first time he shares his feelings,
his personal response to the literature?
I find it moving and wish there was so much more of it.

Felicia: Probably what stood out to me was the collage posters and talking about your eco-identity. You know, we'd been in class for a little while, but I think when folks did those, they brought in a lot of their personal experiences and a lot of information about who they were, and so I feel like that really strengthened the sense of community because you know, you start looking around the room and you're starting to identify people with the information they've shared with you and it goes to show -- I think what we all came out with was **we have a lot more in common** than we thought we did.

Paul: They did their best work in the classroom. When it came to doing work outside the classroom, for individual or independent work, that's where they fell. So in this sense, the community aspect of the class I think was very successful, because it did leverage individual learning in the classroom, you know?

Terrie and Felicia talk about the first paper, the psychology literature review.

Terrie: I didn't really, like I was afraid to put too much of me in it. I thought they really wanted me to just read something and write what these people were saying, not what my take on it was. Felicia: I get a little hesitant about putting myself too much into it, I get worried.

Julian: I think the learning is changing, particularly in learning communities. The academics are not as prominent as they used to be, and ***there is more emotional***

support being offered *to students, and more scaffolding -*

Paul talks about how low
the mood was on Thursday,
and how much better it feels today.
He felt things were falling apart.
Why?

everybody knows that term -
and more accommodation.

After being on the mountain, hearing poetry, relaxing, he thought things should feel good.

Felicia: The professors will surprise me with things
like bringing up guilt and love in class (brief laugh)
and I think there's potential for it with more literature coming about,
but I do feel like when people start to talk about their own experiences, initially, it seemed like that was allowed,
and maybe it was because we were all new and getting to know each other,
but as we've gotten into a lot more heavy work load it's,
let's not get off topic, you know,
well, this isn't really off topic .

Paul: Academically Terrie's strong. **She could be a lot stronger**, but you know, she's got personal stuff going on.

I think once she starts to sort through that better,
she'll be *much* better academically
but I think she made a
significant transition this semester.
You know, to seeing that she could do the work,
and that her relationship
to other students
is really important.

Felicia: I hope that we're headed
towards a shift now, where we can
start to bring in our emotional reactions,
and maybe we should bring it up,
because I think maybe
we should talk about it.
How that feels, and how can we connect this to our lives,
and give ourselves some excitement

and hope Paul: We never did a large class discussion
about on a text individually,
where in the ecopsych part anyway. You know,
we're going. Julian did,
with some of the literature, … so providing them that experience
to work together to make some meaning,
go over it, and then we report out, you know, that I think was a really key process for them, to do that kind of
collective *Julian, [talking about his other LC]:*
construction. *We're very clear this is not therapy.*
It's academic,
but the students did catch on that a lot of what we were reading about in positive psychology is meant to be applied
to their lives. And the students got that too, and they understood
that they didn't have to be leaping for joy

to consider themselves doing okay

as human beings. Paul: If Penelope wasn't working two jobs
and wasn't broke
and wasn't moving
and all these other things,
I think she could have been much more successful.

She could have produced much better work,
because the last seminar paper she wrote was the best seminar paper I read all semester from her,

and she revised her feminist eco-psych paper.
She's capable of doing
better work.

She turned her work in on time,
both papers, which was really good,

most students didn't do that, so she was definitely there.
She was definitely engaged

Felicia: I think I'm missing that spirituality in this class.

Finding our place in nature,
part of that is your spiritual connection

Paul: After you left the poster conference, I was really touched by the community they did establish. They were all waiting on their classmates to come, the ones that didn't show yet. They stayed together because they wanted to be together, and Terrie tried to leave like three different times and came back, every time. And Carol was, you could see, Carol was so puffed up, you know, she felt connected to these people, she really got a sense of how the classroom can be a community that can be really exciting, really affirming, the seventeen year-old home-schooled kid, you know, that had never had a school experience, so I have to say, there was some really beautiful moments there, that you know, that doesn't do away with the wall,
but it makes it, that, easier to take

Paul: Hillary was texting. Texting in the classroom! And Julian called her on it. She was sitting right next to him. I mean, Jesus Christ, come on! You know, and we haven't tolerated any of that the whole semester. And then she did it again, in the second half, when we were in seminar. And then she was humiliated, because he did it publically, and she stormed off. I haven't heard from her since. I sent her an email, and I said,
I understand you might have gotten your feelings hurt,
because of the scolding you got from Julian about texting,
but **you're a better student than that, and don't give it all away.** Don't blow it now.

This was the class time when the group was noisy and Julian seemed annoyed by that and agitated. I noticed him moving around through the classroom space more than usual. When he scolded Hillary the second time, I thought we were still on break. Class starting time seemed to get more and more flexible as the semester wore on.

Felicia and Penelope expressed anger at Julian on Hillary's behalf, saying she was singled out. Penelope said she had a cell phone out too and he left her alone. This was the second-to-last day of class. Hillary did not attend the next class session, nor the poster conference. She didn't turn in the poster or the literary analysis paper.
Paul told me they agreed to give her a 'mercy C' for a final grade

Paul: I'm always disappointed when I'm putting myself out there, **cause it's an emotional thing**, you know, to work with students like this,
and become part of their lives
and they become part of yours,
and it doesn't follow through.

Public Meets Private Analysis

The LC community allowed social, intellectual, public and private learning to merge, yet binary thinking presented challenges to this. "The notion of participation thus dissolves dichotomies between cerebral and embodied activity, between contemplation and involvement" (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 52). When we learn socially, we don't lose sight of the person; we look to a "person-in-the-world" (Lave & Wenger, 1991). If I am saying that learning is social, then how can there be something called "social learning" and another called "intellectual learning", or "private" separate from "public"? There can't be, unless within an either/or polarity. An either/or construction severs one part of a person's identity from another, so the self that is put forth and developed within the community is an incomplete one, thus responses to that identity reinforce its limitations. In a yin yang fluid dynamic, hazy boundaries blur and one contains elements of the other. There are more choices for identity development and negotiation. Yet the rigid divisions, pictured as binaries, persist in our cultural understandings of schooling and education (Bruner, 1996). Positivism insists on such binaries.

Acknowledging learning as social requires that we support collaboration. Traditionally, collaboration and interdependence have not been valued in academia, says Bruffee (1999). "As a result, most college and university students get no experience in applying the craft of interdependence to thinking about substantive issues and making reliable decisions" (xiii). A student complaining about such an experience says, "It was awful. The people didn't know how to talk about anything. They didn't know how to share ideas. It was always an argument; it wasn't an idea to be developed, to be explored" (Belenky et al, 1986, p. 119). I saw quite the opposite in this community. Paul talks a lot

about shared meaning making within classroom conversations as deeper than individual learning. The LC Way offers connected learning as described by Belenky and associates. Authority, they say, comes from common experiences within specific contexts.

> Connected knowers see personality as adding to the perception, and so the personality of each member of the group enriches the group's understanding. Each individual must stretch her own vision in order to share another's vision. Through mutual stretching and sharing the group achieves a vision richer than any individual could achieve alone (p. 119).

Social constructivism implies a new look at authority and knowledge, according to Bruffee. It goes hand-in-hand with collaborative learning, so we need to look at how we define knowledge and where the authority is in the classroom (Bruffee, 1999). "Connected teaching", which Belenky et al. recommend for women, constructs truth from consensus, meaning here not necessarily agreement, but feeling and sensing together, and thereby "bridging private and shared experience" (p. 223). The collaborative nature of democracy in the classroom changes teachers and students' roles. "To allow the traditional dividing line between teacher and student to become blurred in this way requires teachers and students to view their enterprise as truly collaborative" (Brookfield & Preskill, 1999, p. 13).

The two teachers in an LC model and represent collaboration -- friendly, personal, and scholarly -- as they demonstrate and facilitate conversations across their two disciplines. The teachers, disciplines, and students all collaborate in various configurations such that community members experience learning as ongoing, negotiated, social, and academic. The teacher/student binary dissolves. I saw this happen in the Gaia Meets Psyche LC. The two teachers' long, close friendship served as a powerful model of personal and professional collaboration. Students supported one another in and outside of

the classroom. Some mentioned circles directly, including the circle of a seminar discussion, as an important way for a class to know one another and learn together.

The seminar seems the epitome of collaborative learning and an enactment of the conversation metaphor that I write about in my theoretical background, where inquiry is shared, multi-voiced, and dialogic. The teachers stepped back and let the students share ideas, and then during feedback sessions after, offered positive reinforcement for those who supported the conversation and one another. In interviews and informal exchanges, both Paul and Julian showed appreciation for students who built community, listened well, and drew others out. Success was measured by group achievements, not individual ones, in a way that I find incredibly rare and special in higher education. I am embarrassed to admit that I had difficulty with this. A segment from my field notes: "I'm finding it hard to really listen. I read the Taylor article, so I am prepared to participate as a student. I had this thing I really wanted to say, and found myself tuning out from others, or not taking in the whole message, just how I might fit in my bit to that. It makes me appreciate even more what they do." Students also expressed appreciation for the growth and contributions of others. They shared time and space in classroom discussions with generosity and grace. Participants seemed to respond to one another as whole people with feelings and lives outside of the classroom. Terrie talked about her chickens, and once brought in an egg carton full of lovely, multiply colored eggs. Penelope shared stories about her cats. All participants brought in personal anecdotes and made personal connections aloud to course topics, although the two teachers did so rarely. It was not just a matter of show and tell or confessionals. Students seemed to respond to each other's needs and gifts as learners.

Social, collaborative learning has to do with who we are as we grapple with course material, and how our various selves enter the space of the subject-centered classrooms. Felicia, for example, spoke of holding back during discussions, or worrying about being too forceful with one comment, considering how her voice affected feelings of others, not just how disembodied ideas affected intellectual learning. Paul seemed to sense the mood in the room and respond to that. The class conversations, particularly within seminars, demonstrated layered, personal and public learning. They showed that knowledge resides not only in monologic texts such as lectures, a syllabus, or a textbook. These conversations demonstrated the possibilities and process of making discourse internally persuasive.

There is a balance of course between social and academic, private and public. Can we get carried away with our emotions? Can private stories intrude on a public space for learning? Linear time pressed in. Temporary circles probably do need to be drawn such that material is inside or out, and some of what is left out is personal stories, so there's time to address the reading or topic of the day. Yet there may have been opportunities for the personal, emotional, and experiential to inform and enrich the intellectual that were not fully exploited because of binary thinking that assumed only one or the other could speak.

One specific moment comes to my mind, which I offer as an example of what participants may have felt about other moments. This is my take on that particular event. It was a tense, awkward spot in the seminar on ecofeminism when Carol blurted out something like, we can't just toss out patriarchy, because it got us where we are. Capitalism and the DSP were also tied in to patriarchy in this discussion. I saw in her

comment discomfort with the idea of dramatic social change and revolution, not necessarily a defense of patriarchy. A bristling silence set in, followed by three gentle rebuttals to her comment, but I felt anger and frustration in the room (and one person after did confirm this). Paul said something about how men can be feminists too and the system hurts all of us, but that felt too easy to me. I said something about the validity and importance of feelings and then the conversation moved on. I felt dissatisfied. I found that any exploration of our own roles in the patriarchy was cut short. People's discomfort with feminism, with change, with social criticism, even awkward defensiveness, could have offered productive starting points for important work in applying theories to reflection and practice. I saw emotions as important components of the intellectual work of the classroom, and when they were shut out, the work was less rich or deep.

Students can't just memorize beliefs behind a body of knowledge and then know. They need to engage actively in collaborative knowledge building and apply it to their own world views and practical situations (Wells, 1999). A reified syllabus or departmental course outline, a job contract, handed down learning outcomes, these lines conflict with the circles of real relationships and contextualized learning, but they are not necessarily harmful, as long as negotiation occurs across lines. Artifacts are mediating tools and outcomes, but are not the same as knowledge, only metaphorically (Wells, 1999). But even within collaboration, who decides what the topic is and which circle/s are entered? Certainly a student pays her hard-earned money for a course that describes itself as environmental literature and ecopsychology, and it wouldn't be fair if she found instead music theory. A teacher has obligations to his department and institution. Reification and practice work together. I do believe that positivism causes harm, and that

occurs when relationships are denied, when reified items are taken as the only truths, and only what is quantifiable is valued. There may have been just enough looseness to each class session in this LC that students felt they had a say in what was covered, and then felt frustration when topics they wanted to address were cut short or skipped.

There seemed to be a tension, as expressed by students, between 'facts' and 'emotions' with emotions losing out. "In the gendered nature of the theoretical discourse we've inherited, emotion has always been subordinate to rationality" (Rutherford, 1990, p. 23). I found Paul and Julian at times incredibly receptive to, and at other times resistant to or suspicious of emotions and personal or social learning. The teachers were cautious about emotions, guiding students to set them aside when preparing seminar papers so as not to cloud their analysis. They also talked about not taking teaching too personally. At the same time, they recognized their students' moods, offered lots of support in and outside of class hours, and Paul mentioned feeling his own emotional strain by the end of the course from trying so hard to reach out to students and not always getting good results.

Tannen (1998) suggests that starting with Aristotle, emotions and the intellect have been kept apart in Western thinking. Aristotle favored logic and mistrusted emotions. In contract, in Eastern thinking, intuitive insights are considered the best ways to get to truths. The focus is also not on finding abstract generalizations, but on observation and experience.

> With its emphasis on harmony, says anthropologist Linda Young, Chinese philosophy sees a diverse universe in precarious balance that is maintained by talk. This translates into a method of investigation that focuses more on integrating ideas and exploring relations among them than on opposing ideas and fighting over them (p. 258)

Note here that emotions, sharing, and inquiry are put together, as opposed to cold intellect that creates fights and conflicts. Julian mentioned a few different times that teaching isn't therapy. "What harm could come from using the self to display what might be therapeutic? Who benefits from such hidings? Why must we work under an epistemology of 'not that'?" (Pelias, 2004, p. 8). Felicia in particular seemed to object to an 'epistemology of not that' and noted that student bonding facilitated community with teachers that in turn helped class discussions, so for her and I feel many others, social learning helped, and did not hinder, academic learning.

Did social and emotional connections stand in for intellectual connections? I remember talking with other LC instructors who noticed in one class a great sense of community in the classroom, with strong friendships and support connecting to deep engagement with the material, but the majority of the students did almost no homework. In the Gaia Meets Psyche class, I was surprised to discover after its end that some of the students who seemed most involved and attentive did not turn in one or even two of the major written assignments. There is something going on with community not transferring to individual work, primarily written work. The conversation metaphor perhaps becomes too literal, and is the learning that is most valued and focused on.

Why is it that students don't do their school work? Of course there are countless answers to this question, but if teachers care about their subjects, as I think all do, how can we not take it personally when students don't 'perform' in a way that shows deep engagement with the material?

> I have drifted into an unflattering portrait of the urge to protect one's subject, a defensive urge that stems from hurt. Surely much bad teaching and academic foolishness derive from this immature reaction to students or colleagues who will not

> accept a gift we tried generously to give (generously, but sometimes ineffectually or condescendingly or autocratically) (Elbow, 1986, p. 147).

Yet, Elbow suggests, it isn't immature to protect the integrity of our subject in a positive way. Good teaching is about both students and subject being transformed to fit one another, he says. This fit, I believe, must include social and intellectual, private and public learning, for learning is communal and community involves whole people. As I mentioned in "Interdisciplinarity", the presence of two teachers who represent two disciplines and have very different personal and communication styles mitigates to a large degree a tyranny of expertise. They are learners too and thus the class tone is a collaborative one. While Julian and Paul both seemed sad and disappointed at the end that most students did not meet their full potentials, I never saw them take this out on students. I saw only their continuing enthusiasm about their subjects (and not only their separate disciplines either).

When we spend time together and get to know each other, we also develop a sense of responsibility to one another, or as Paul says "There's this social obligation that's not coerced." Paul says Terrie might have dropped away and become 'invisible' because of personal issues, if it weren't for the support of the community, and that makes sense to me. Jaspar told me about a major assignment that he was thinking of not doing, but Paul didn't let him become invisible, and even after the official due date kept asking Jaspar when he'd see that paper. Jaspar was a quiet, self-deprecating figure, but the community showed ongoing acceptance and appreciation for him that I found lovely. Both Paul and Carol are talkative people, yet they each made a point of commenting on how good a listener Jaspar was, and therefore what a positive presence he was in seminars.

Elbow (1986) points out that when we teachers are in the roles of ally and gatekeeper, mentor and critic, negotiating those paradoxes can create conflict and difficulties. My sense is that the two teachers balanced this paradox with grace. Paul expressed strong distaste for grades and the process of grading students, which I discuss in "Process over Product". Elbow calls for each teacher balancing conflicting components in their personality in their own way, but being explicit with students about assessment criteria. While I wasn't always sure of the expectations for specific class assignments, students seemed to struggle more with due dates than expectations. Paul and Julian offered class discussions about all major assignments, with some shared brainstorming and drafts. The focus seemed to be on learning, not performance or results, although some students more than others seemed results oriented. One class time, Paul asked students to share briefly their ideas in a paper that they were turning in that day. The way he responded to each, making suggestions and asking others to respond, seemed to imply that these were works in progress, that the learning wouldn't stop just because the final draft was due that day. I did not see students alarmed by the fact that these friendly fellows were grading them. I notice that sometimes in other classrooms -- the sense that, hey, I thought we were friends, so why did you give me a C? I do know that one student complained about the final grade with one of the teachers, but that's all I know about any kind of unease around the dual roles of the teachers. Students seemed to appreciate the way the friendliness and informality of the teachers facilitated their learning. Stephanie in particular said that she had never experienced such a relaxed, social classroom environment before, and that this helped her learning.

Personal problems sometimes overwhelm the public work of learning in college. A perennial sadness for community college teachers including myself is seeing smart, capable students suffer, not complete assignments, even drop out of college, because of life getting in the way. In some cases, issues outside of class are so daunting that without classroom support, many students cannot get their work done. Is there more the institution and we teachers can do to accommodate such difficulties and reshape the institution to fit life, or are those part of larger, societal problems beyond our purview? Paul and Julian showed frustration over missed opportunities and unmet potential, some that they attributed to problems outside of the classroom. I did not get a full picture of what particular needs, emotional, financial, or otherwise, that students had and how those needs were or were not met by other campus resources. I know that six of the twelve students worked for pay, most of those twenty to thirty hours a week. A few others had unpaid work (working on the family farm, helping relatives, and childcare, for example). One student stated a disability, and another I was told did struggle with one, but she did not identify herself that way. Six identified themselves as working class (one "very poor working class"). Two students said they were in between working and middle class. One was not sure how to identify her/himself by economic class. Two said they were middle class. One said s/he was upper middle class. Nine students were receiving financial aid. I know that I've sometimes felt that my students' problems were too much for me, yet I wasn't always able to connect them to the right resources for support, leaving me feeling ashamed and ineffectual.

When personal and public, social and intellectual learning come together, we are whole. As I stated earlier, I do not believe that a desire to feel whole necessarily

represents a humanist insistence on an essential, stable self. We can enjoy multiple and shifting identities yet still need those identities to show up and play freely within inquiry. As Felicia points out, making personal connections to the material is not getting off topic. Learning is an "evolving form of membership" (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 53).

> We must understand that good communities really work on passion. They work on people's identity and their identification with the domain. There is a sense of excitement and a sense of 'wow'! The community is where I can discuss things that are really meaningful to me and are deeply a part of my identity" (Cagna, 2001, p. 10).

"Learning is an integral and inseparable aspect of social practice" (Lave & Wenger, 1991). We learn with our mind and heart, with love, hope, and intellect. "Teaching and learning, done well, are done not by disembodied intellects: they are done by whole persons whose intellects cannot be disentangled from the complex faculties held together by the heart" (Palmer, 2011, pp 127-128). To separate emotions from intellectual learning is inaccurate and unproductive.

> Thought is not begotten by thought; it is engendered by motivation, i.e., by your desires and needs, our interests and emotions. Behind every thought there is an affective-volitional tendency, which holds the answer to the last 'why' in the analysis of thinking. A true and full understanding of another's thought is possible only when we understand its affective-volitional basis (Vygotsky, 1986, p. 252).

In spite of or because of tensions, for perhaps those are inevitable, members of the Gaia meets Psyche LC seemed to appreciate personal attachments and intellectual discoveries. Because of the long hours spent together in an LC and the general pedagogies of collaborative learning and the seminar, it would be almost impossible not to have some melding of social with intellectual, private with public. When this melding is supported and tensions used productively, circles of learning prevail. A very fine line seems to exist between binaries that block learning and tensions that heighten it, or at

least heighten learning about learning and community. Curricular and time constraints are real and pervasive. We don't have all the time in the world to sit around and debrief how we feel about the exchange that we just had. Pressures from time and curriculum can set social against intellectual, rend private from public. The either/or binaries might push us to overlook or feel threatened by an apparent encroachment of social on intellectual, private on public, instead of at least acknowledging that the two are valid and then aiming for some kind of balance. While some students seemed to yearn for more acknowledgment of this balance and how emotions and private experiences fit in, overall, all of the participants seemed to genuinely care about one another and the subject matter.

Process over Product

LCs focus on the learning process, appreciate the journey, and downplay traditional results, regulations, and accountability. Questions are valued as highly, if not more so, than answers, and teachers model and enjoy inquiry. "Every means is a temporary end until we have attained it. Every end becomes a means of carrying activity further as soon as it is achieved" (Dewey, 1916, 1944, p. 106). Paul used words like 'lively' for learning that is open and questioning, and 'dead' for knowledge or teaching that operates in hierarchical or traditional ways. Yet linear time and product-oriented thinking - as expressed through institutional and societal voices of authority -- put pressure on the openness to questions that the LC way yearns towards. Below is a text-collage showing this tension.

Process over Product Text Collage

Paul says at
the end of the
semester:

I was
feeling like, **now
we're ready**

to begin this class.
That's what I was feeling. I
was feeling like now we're
at this point where the
people feel they know
each other enough to
be vulnerable.

Paul: When you take that position learning -- this is also metaphoric—
learning as exploration, what it does is it provides the opportunity
for students to be authors of new knowledge,
and they don't often get that experience.
And it enlivens the classroom and it enlivens the disciplines,
because now, talking about something that is coming to be,
that's not just static knowledge,
that's in some cases dead.

Felicia: And I've learned also to say
'I don't know if this really makes sense' or 'I haven't really thought this through
completely yet' but, just sort of getting an idea out
and letting people play around with it,
and see what we come up with.

Paul : The seminar process should raise more questions than it answers. A really
good seminar should leave you with big,
important questions,
and if it doesn't, it hasn't done its job.

*Julian [talking about a student from last year]: It was wonderful to
watch him grow in that way, because he became
very sensitive to what was going on in the
classroom, and what, when a student's
voice or a couple of students' voices*

were dominating the conversation too much, he would try to steer it back to the other students, or, if there were a lag, he would jump in and get things going again, so, he was very tuned in to the process of learning communities in the class –

Paul: The group in seminar they had a hard time in the beginning, seminaring. They had to really learn the process, and I think they did learn the process, so I was really happy about that.

Paul: You can read sections aloud. You should focus on questions rather than answers.

Julian: Yeah, but I want to hear answers too.

Julian goes to the board and says that thesis statements are statements, not questions. They should be able to be stated in one sentence. He jokes about getting on the bus, and the bus driver asks you "What's your thesis?"

Felicia: Can't it be implied?

Julian: You can do whatever you want. You can break any of these rules.

Paul. If reading a difficult text, do you want an explicit, clear statement?

Penelope: I'd enjoy building up to it.

Josh concurs.

Julian: Fiction is different. We enjoy the mystery. Without a thesis, the paper falls apart.

Paul: Steph asked some great provocative questions, and she wasn't trying to be provocative and she wasn't trying to be like a leader in the seminar, but she actually became that because she asked really good questions that made people stop and think about how to answer her questions. So that was terrific.

Julian: There were several people -- Stephanie, Marguerite, and Carol primarily, and then Felicia, secondarily, and who am I forgetting, Terrie a little bit -- who would reread and sense what was happening in the seminar, and jump in with something to get it going. And so Marguerite was I think one of the people who most deliberately and consistently made an effort to make the seminar worthwhile.

Felicia: And the frustrating thing too is that they specifically said, no questions in your seminar paper, like I think I put one in, and they crossed it, like you can't put a question, and I'm like, but that's what a seminar is: we're asking questions, we're exploring.

Paul, talking about seminaring, says: You should come out of the seminar with more questions than answers. If you come out feeling like you answered all the questions, chances are, it's pretty superficial answering, not going deep enough.
Julian reminds them to identify the thesis and the support that the author uses.

Penelope and Gus lead the seminar. It's a difficult one, on the essay on ecofeminism. Carol struggles with it, even saying at one point something to the effect that the patriarchy made our world what it is, so we can't just throw it out. Penelope is passionately feminist, but she keeps calm and respectful. Everyone does. At one point she asks to hear from more of the guys. When she asks Terrie for a comment, and Terrie says she found this a tough one and doesn't have anything to add, Penelope kindly offers, "Well feel free to interject once you, you know, once you come up with anything." I'm struck by the mutual respect and feeling of puzzling through a difficult text together.

Talking about "Love in action", Julian says: *You've said it rambles, so what is the thesis. How is it structured?* Paul: You need to let the text flow over you. Understand not in a traditional, compartmentalized way, which is a demonstration of how we need multiple voices. We haven't heard this perspective yet. It's a meditation. It should be read as a meditation, should be read like the Tao Te Ching. Talking about The Tao, Julian seems to be in 'thesis statement' mode. He asks of one of the chapters, what the central idea is.

A little later, Paul: This is a very different kind of epistemology than the kind of epistemology that we have here in the West. Particularly the scientific, or using the philosophical reasoning, 'cause you can't use logical reasoning in this book, you know, in terms of having a premise and conclusion.

Terrie: Well, I think too, one day you're going to read it and have one interpretation, and a couple of days later…

Julian: You're brainstorming. Now keep going and you'll get to a thesis.

Paul: Now you ruined it.

Terrie: It's hard to speak the language when you're being thrown into it so fast. There's just no absorbing time.

Felicia: I thought, why can't we just get this one article!? Have enough time to really read it, and then spend the whole class just discussing biophilia, maybe even two classes… rather than having us jumping from one article into the next.

Paul: You know, when you go in there with these pre-conceived questions, you already know the answers to, you're basically taking them to that, there's no life to it. But when you allow students that space, that openness, to move into the text as they see, and to come up with ideas, you give 'em some prompts and stuff, but they're making the discoveries, look at the liveliness of that!

Paul: Well, for me, what the students are doing in the classroom mirrors what I do as a teacher. I mean, part of, part of our role as we put together these LCs is we have to map this new curriculum. Now I really don't know how students are going to respond to that and what we're going to make of those things, until we actually do it, and so for me that's the adventure, is doing it with the students, so their learning is my learning; my learning is partly their learning.

Steph: I've taken classes like there's no tomorrow, and usually I just hear the teacher talk, and we get to hear them, but we don't really express if we've learned or not. **They just give us tests and that's how they know we learn.** In this class, it's very different... Sara: So how do you feel in this class that you demonstrate your learning? Steph: If I learn something, I need to ask questions to make sure that I'm on the right path. By just contributing to other people's ideas and questions, for example, in seminars, when anybody asks questions, and I am able to answer, the confidence that I show by answering that question demonstrates to me that I've learned and I understood the material assigned.

Felicia: Well there's, there have definitely been sections of time when it was very banking education [quick laugh] and there's a lot of, especially Paul would get into these monologues in class and even during seminar sometimes, and I do like hearing from him, and Julian both, I do. I wish they, maybe I should tell them, like structure once a week, half of the class be just like a lecture time from one of them, because they do have a lot to offer, but it happens so interspersed with these random

times and I feel like it sort of takes away from what people have to say.

Paul talks about 'the wall', when he feels everything suddenly changed for the worse: Going around it means you're making a new trail, and you're making a new map of that territory by the end of the semester.

We just kept pushing off the same thing, so for me that creates a gap, you know, that doesn't get filled. There's no alternative for that.
It's a loss.
I'm not sure how they perceive it, but I didn't see, okay, now we had three weeks to do this seminar, **I didn't see the depth** that we could have, if they spent three weeks with that particular reading

Jaspar, discussing his eco-identity collage says he'll start with a storm cloud and lightening, which he included because he likes storms, they attract him: I'm not a violent guy, but I guess I like the violence of it. I know they're destructive, but -- Paul: -- Maybe it's the power, not the violence.
Jaspar: Yeah, yeah, the power.

Paul: -- cause I'm similar. I love the storms coming
off the ocean, because they move, they're so dramatic,
what they do with light. It's just an incredible experience.
You get so exhilarated by it. So I wouldn't say it's the violence so
much as the power of it. You're in awe of it, right?
Jaspar: Yeah, you get it.

Felicia: In LC's I feel people learn how to respectfully disagree with someone else, you know, and to come in and say I absolutely do not subscribe to that way of thinking, however, if that's how you feel, I can listen to your argument, and take it into consideration, and we can debate it, and learn from each other, and then, you know, move on from there.
Paul: So I'd say, I saw some good
progress there, from the beginning of the semester,
and the students seemed to value their conversation
with each other,
which is really good.
Felicia: I think I've really come to appreciate Julian, and how much he tries to train us and ready us for [laughs] furthering our education, but it is frustrating when -- it's the whole nature of the class, being so, shove aside the DSP -- and yet we function so distinctly within that, and I think it's the same thing,

that 'prove your point, get to your point' [slaps one hand into the other?] 'wrap it up'.

Gus: I think that the discussion is what pushes it, to make it go deeper, but you just have to knock it back in line, you know, and straighten back up, instead of five minutes of, you know, fluff, it would be five extra minutes of focusing

When Terrie talks about the Abram article,
and how he builds up to his point,
Julian says that's a very '**dangerous**' way to write, because it's easy to fail.
It is inductive,
while most academic writing is deductive.
The thesis statement is right up front.

Paul: You want people coming away from these conferences knowing more than they did when they went in, and in some cases, you actually want to persuade them of the validity of your view. So in some cases you'll find posters that are set up as argument, okay?

Julian: The seminaring that they did was pretty good. There were some moments of real magic in the seminars.
And pretty much all of the students learned what they were supposed to do in a seminar.
Even if they didn't always do it,
so they got the sense that they needed to prepare the material, and refer to the material during the seminar, and to work that text,
so occasionally it worked beautifully,
so that was good.

Paul: And you're using grades **punitively,** and so, I don't want to do that. And Julian knows that now, and I think he tends to be more, you know, what's the word? A harder grader, if you want to say, than I am. I used to be that way. I'm not that way anymore. Especially, and this is the thing, I think, especially in terms of when students show me what they can do,
like these students showed me, you know,
in our classroom again,
that level of engagement,
and those opportunities in which they really **demonstrated some deep learning with the text,**
how can you fail students like that? You know.
If they're doing that for, repeatedly, it's not just a one-shot deal.
These students were actively engaged like that.

Felicia, talking about Occupy Wall Street:
I got interviewed so many times that day, like NPR interviewed me,
some communist magazine,
the official Occupy documentary
interviewed me and wanted to do follow
ups with me…
I would attribute it to learning communities,
the fact that I've learned how to articulate what I think,
and not always the best, but confidently, you know.
I think if somebody had interviewed me a year ago,
I would have had complete stage fright and not known what to say.

Paul: Yeah. I always tweak it in favor of the student. So even if the percentages,
say this assignment is worth more, if they did well on
these other assignments, I'll upgrade that proportion of the grade,
and downgrade the other proportion of the grade, so it's a
win. But what makes it even more difficult, though, is doing
that with your partner. Cause your partner isn't always on
the same page with you. **That's the hard part of community**.
You develop these personal relationships, that you think or you want
to be more than just the classroom, you know, with students,
that you're treating them like real human beings, you're
seeing them as whole people, not just a student in your class,
and hopefully they're seeing that about you as well, then you get into
this very rigid model, for assigning grades.

Julian: I think we've now seen that students get back in touch with us a lot, that you have to wait, and the semester ends, and over the next semester or two, all that material starts to filter down.

Paul…they're actually creating something new. And that's a really exciting experience.

Julian: Absolutely

Paul: And that's what keeps us coming back to learning communities.

Julian: What's the premise or the thesis for this class?

Process over Product Analysis

The authoritative discourse of higher education calls loudly, and seems particularly set against LCs. In their first interview, Julian and Paul talked about the history of the LC program and all of the early obstacles, including the difficulties of getting one room assigned for the whole three-hour class session. For this LC, they were first assigned a room in the satellite campus that is down town, has terrible parking, and thus enrollment was very low. When they finally got the class moved to the main campus, just like twenty years ago, they were in two different classrooms, one in the humanities building and one in the science building. This felt like such an indignity to me, and clearly annoyed the teachers, because they referred to the inconvenience many times. The fluidity of time and disciplinary boundaries that all participants strived for was disrupted greatly by the fact that at exactly the halfway mark, the next class was outside clamoring to enter, and everyone had to pack up and move to another building.

Maybe taking a wide, philosophical view, we don't need time, but it is an integral part of societies that we've created. Within that, a class can't go on forever; teachers and students have other classes to get to. Linear time is something we deal with, and in some ways push against. It is when institutional, authoritative demands ignore all others that positivism reigns and learning in community is harmed. Pelias (2004) personifies that voice:

> Let's insist that when the bell rings, we will send our students on their way regardless of what might be happening in the classroom Let's demand that all our classes follow the same time schedule, regardless of content. Let's never let education interfere with efficiency (p. 136).

The authoritative voice of the institution asserts itself through grades and accountability. At PHCC, grades must be reported separately, one for each discipline, to accommodate both the college's system and those of transfer institutions. I learned from Paul after the class was over that usually in a fully-integrated LC, the grade for each subject is identical, but this time, in a few cases, he and Julian assigned different grades. I could say that their collaboration and the spirit of integration were disrupted by grades. It also worked the other way around, whereby the two main writing assignments ended up more separate and bound to a discipline than is always the case with fully-integrated LCs (as explained by Paul and Julian), and Paul told me he and Julian found it easier to assign separate grades, so I could also say that in some cases, their collaboration broke down in ways that let standard, discipline-segmented grades dominate.

Paul in particular clearly put up a resistance to grades, and was saddened by the difficult effort. He talked about students' potential, and also learning as extending beyond the classroom in time and space, but the limits of learning framed within one semester with grades reported at the end clearly stunted the growth he aimed for and wanted to recognize. Both teachers showed appreciation for the process of the seminar including learning how to seminar. A seminar, a student-led class discussion, is itself a process without an obvious product. Paul in particular represented questions, reminding students directly that seminars should raise more questions than offer answers. While Julian too appreciated the seminar as a process, and spoke of his own ongoing learning about teaching seminar skills and behaviors, he also represented the seminar papers, one-page thesis-driven assignments. Paul supported these papers and said directly that he saw their

value. Both teachers read and offered students feedback on the papers. But many participants, including Paul, spoke of them as Julian's thing.

In terms of how Paul and Julian assessed the LC and the students, they seemed very sad, disappointed, and negative in their second interviews. I ended up overall feeling impressed by this LC community, but they both said they'd seen much better. There were some creative maneuverings with grades to reward progress and potential, but the teachers expressed frustration about unmet potential and disappointment in and disillusionment with particular students. I didn't get input from many students at the very end, but the mood on the last couple of days seemed grateful, sentimental, and light. Stephanie and Felicia in their second interviews both expressed great appreciation for the teachers and the experience.

A general culture of standards and accountability affects how we learn together in college classrooms; the lines of academia and beyond enter classroom circles. In schools, say Lave & Wenger (1991), increasing participation isn't the main motivation for learning, because a didactic leader, the teacher, takes on the role of motivating newcomers. Instead of everyone co-participating, the newcomer is acted upon. Her or his identity becomes an 'object for change'. A 'commoditization of learning' occurs, with exchange values, and a focus on showing learning for evaluation instead of learning to know. "Test taking then becomes a new parasitic practice, the goal of which is to increase the exchange value of learning independently of its use value" (Lave & Wenger, p. 112). I see this in many classrooms, but not in the Gaia Meets Psyche LC. The focus on process and collaboration, on co-production of knowledge, did not objectify students' identities.

Tensions between lines and circles, reification and practice, ran throughout the community, but not in a clear, hierarchical path from teachers to students.

We are always sizing each other up. Students evaluate teachers too, but this feedback wields much less power than do grades. I felt there were misunderstandings and miscommunications around people's motivations and efforts in this community. Students and teachers alike felt misunderstood. The teachers I think saw resistance to them or the material that I saw differently. Was there too much reading for this class? I can't answer that. Students spoke of wanting each reading to count, to be discussed in some way in class, and some even said if they were held more accountable, the reading would have felt more important, thus showing a product-driven mentality. I believe, and the teachers said as much, that there is a lot of reading in college. That's the way it goes. And students need to develop more independence in terms of keeping up and making their own meanings. But I saw too that the students were willing to work hard. They craved depth. Some felt the pace in the class was frantic and scattered. Felicia talked about wanting to rewrite her seminar papers (as she was asked to do in a previous LC), because the writing and learning always improve, and so she was operating in a process-driven manner. There may have been other possible ways for students to feel that material 'counted' and for the teachers to support that. My sense is that institutional time, grades, and an accountability culture hindered some important negotiations that could have emphasized learning and community over resistance and inadequacies. Marguerite made a comment about the haikus at the beach being graded, and Gus was impatient with the seeming lack of focus (lack of product) of the seminars. Yet students challenged deadlines, conversed on class topics outside of class, and spoke of continuing on their environmental journey

after the course was over. Students and teachers showed accountability to the disciplines, academia, the earth, and one another.

Both teachers have allegiance to and a sense of responsibility for their disciplines. This isn't good or bad, but is part of the dynamic of learning in community. Paul perhaps was experienced as the hardliner in terms of 'empiricism' and 'science' as seen in "Interdisciplinarity", and Julian was more of the hardliner in terms of grades, the linearity of the thesis-driven paper, and an emphasis on answers. Simply having two teachers in a room invites binary thinking, a good cop/bad cop dynamic whereby one is defined by how he isn't the other. Paul alluded to this in an interview.

The thesis-driven paper builds an argument and suggests writing as deductive; this represents part of what Tannen calls our "Argument culture" (1998).

> Our schools and universities, our ways of doing science and approaching knowledge, are deeply agonistic. We all pass through our country's educational system, and it is there that the seeds of our adversarial culture are planted (p. 257).

Debate has been highly valued in education in the West from ancient times, asserts Tannen. This is not so in Asia. She refers to Robert T. Oliver, who says classical periods in China and India preferred exposition to argument. The goal was to "enlighten an inquirer" and not "overwhelm an opponent". The tone reflected the "eagerness of investigation" not the "fervor of conviction" (as cited in Tannen, 1998, p. 258). I have a knee-jerk reaction to the argument culture, and a deep, ongoing struggle against formulaic writing, particularly the thesis-driven essay. My antennae were up for these elements, perhaps more so than might be the case for another English teacher/researcher. Inductive and deductive thinking and writing need not be in conflict, but I do feel a deductive and linear approach tends to dominate in higher education. I struggle with this

balance, and the neighboring balance of creative with analytical writing, one example being my text collages and how they are positioned within more straightforward prose.

> We learn (or fail to learn) to think associatively or intuitively in the same manner as we learn (or fail to learn) to think formally logically and explicitly. Working with the intellectual tradition of Western civilization, we yearn to set these contrasting patterns up as a dichotomy and privilege one over the other…What really happens, I believe, is that at any particular instant in a given series of thoughts, we are situated at some point on a continuum between these extremes (Heilker, pp 26-27).

Excerpts from an email exchange with Julian demonstrate the linear/circular, deductive/inductive tension. (I wrote to both teachers, but as usual only one of them replied; this time, it was Julian.) What set off the exchange was a conversation about deductive and inductive writing, with Penelope saying she felt she got an A- , not an A, in a previous class because she wasn't writing in the expected deductive manner.

> Sara: The idea that a woman, or anyone who has freed themselves from the privileged status quo for writing, would have to work extra hard to legitimize their work, I can see as being quite distressing.
>
> Paul Heilker, in his book "The Essay: Theory and Pedagogy for an Active Form", argues for a place in college writing classrooms for the Montaigne-style essay. Such an essay is a voyage. It captures the intellectual journey of the writer. It often does start with a question (but not one of those clever, rhetorical questions that the writer has an answer to. I find those so irritating). The question is a genuine one that the writer pursues in the essay.
>
> He refers to Keith Fort, and says: The thesis/support form not only masks the nature of authority in this manner but also conditions our attitudes toward that mystified authority. Fort maintains that our insistence on the standard thesis/support form conditions students to think in terms of authority and hierarchy (p. 7).
>
> Another: "The essayist writes 'not so much with the hope of gaining adherence as of stimulating and disturbing thought' " -- Walter Beale (p. 90).
>
> Julian: Grade some papers for a few semesters and then see what you think. You'll remember that I mentioned "inductively" written papers which are one alternative (although still thesis driven) but they remain a dangerous enterprise even for practiced writers. I don't know what Beale means by

"adherence," but I'd rather not find my students' essays disturbing. The larger question that goes begging is if college as a whole offers a Western male construct and, if so, why we all participate in it. Yet a remark like hers suggests that she hasn't thought about how grades are used to measure nor how the grades themselves are measured. If she is distressed by an A- then she might consider handing papers in on time.

What form will your own dissertation take?

Sara: There is always a difficult balance between supporting and fitting in to current systems of structure and assessment, and carving out new spaces, finding new ground. It is tough and for me -- as a student and teacher-- has always been a difficult struggle, but not a struggle that I will give up on.

Julian: I do share your struggle. I've been uncomfortable, for a long time, about the rigidity (appropriate symbolism, I guess) of thesis-driven papers and even more of rationality. We hold up logic and rationality as if they make . . . sense. Yet they are deeply flawed. At the same time, I feel a duty to train my students to succeed in college and beyond and I do believe that thesis-driven papers, inductive reasoning, and all the rest of it have a lot of usefulness to offer. Like most everything else, though, there are imperfections and limits.

Most of the students pushed against deduction, limiting answers, and restrictive writing, although some, Gus in particular, seemed to crave structure and linearity and felt uncomfortable with a loose, wandering feel to class discussions, including the seminars. Do students need to learn structures like the thesis-driven essay, master these linear ways of knowing and communicating first, in order to succeed in college, and then somehow later, earn the right to find and express meaning in alternative ways? I think the predominant view in higher education is such, but it is not my view. Above are ways in which an authoritative discourse comes through mainly in the teachers' voices. How one views such discourse and answers it or not, of course, shapes present and future conversations. Linear writing projects and deductive reasoning, one could argue, have done much good, achieved great feats, and help students and teachers alike. Just because they represent the status quo does not make them inherently useless or harmful. When

they are adopted unquestioningly, when there is no dialogue, that is when harm occurs. As I have mentioned, my bias is strongly against linear, deductive writing and thinking. In some says, I believe, dialogue and questioning were cut short in the LC that I observed, particularly in writing, but certainly not shut down completely, as occurs in many classrooms.

In our competitive, individualistic culture, grades represent one of the most positivist components of education. One number or letter stands in for a student's learning or even the student herself ('she's a C student'). The fact that Paul and Julian both downplayed grades, using them with flexibility and compassion, extending deadlines and supporting students for success, speaks of powerful resistance to positivism. The classroom emphasis on process over product also invited circles of community, while linearity in the form of results, grades, and deductive thinking and writing also asserted itself. Was the balance just right between circles of conversation and questions with lines of thesis-driven writing and answers? I would guess that each community member would answer that question differently. If I were to apply a quantitative measurement, I would say a vast majority of classroom minutes (let's say 72%) were devoted to questions and inquiry.

Transformation

LCs plant the seeds for transformation: personal, institutional, social. As metaphors, hybrids, and borderlands, LC's can challenge definitions of social categories. Participants open up and question labels and norms instead of taking them for granted, and this, I believe, is a necessary first step towards personal or structural transformation. "Otherness, taken seriously, always invites transformation (Palmer, 1998, p. 38). The

American College Personnel Association and the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators define transformative education in terms of internal changes.

> Transformative education places the student's reflective process at the core of the learning experience and asks the student to evaluate both new information and the frames of reference through which the information acquires meaning (As cited in Abes & Jones, 2004, p. 628)

I would add that transformation resides not just in individuals but also within relationships, and involves teachers and institutions as well as students. In the one-semester course that I visited, it would be unlikely that I would witness obvious institutional transformations or even personal and social ones in blatant, outward ways, although several participants did speak of this. What I saw was the groundwork, this questioning stance towards paradigms and structures within the classroom, the disciplines explored there, and society in general.

> The space of the in-between is the locus for social, cultural and natural transformation: it is not simply a convenient space for movements and realignments but in fact is the only place – the place around identities, between identities – where becoming, openness to futurity, outstrips the conversational impetus to retain cohesion and unity (Irwin & Springgay, 2008, p. xx, citing Grosz)

Transformation takes time, includes pain and confusion, and does not represent a clear or linear path, so I would not expect and indeed did not find a clear narrative arc of change. Powerful moments of reflection, questioning, envisioning a different world and different roles in that world all demonstrate those seeds starting to take. Below is a text collage that explores transformation and resistance to it. Much of this revolves around the environmental theme of the course and also says a lot about community.

Text Collage: Transformation

Consider Beginnings

Do without doing.
Act without action.
Savor the flavorless.
Treat the small as large,
The few as many.

Meet injury
with the power of goodness.

Study the hard while it's easy.
Do big things while they're small.
The hardest jobs in the world start out easy,
The great affairs of the world start small.

So the wise soul,
By never dealing with great things,
Gets great things done.

Now, since taking things too lightly makes them worthless,
And taking things too easy makes them hard,
The wise soul,
by treating the easy as hard,
doesn't find anything hard.

The Tao, # 63, pp 92-93.

Paul: We want to also focus this course not on the problem per se,
but on what people can do today, right now,
as we sit in this class, as we go home, as you relate to your families in your neighborhoods and your community,
that you can **take steps now** to change things. *Julian: It's really about* ***personal agency.***

Terrie, on the Tao:

I want action, I want desire,
I want to strive. I want the emotions.
It is so emotionless. There are some phrases in here
that actually got me angry. It's like, how can we evolve as a person
if you don't act, if you don't involve yourself with the things around you,

instead of just sitting there,
in non-action?

Paul and Julian seem to identify themselves as rebels and trailblazers, and take the challenges in stride (like Julian joking about how the college VP told him seminaring is not a verb, but the LC community uses it as one).

Raneff says that LCs bring wisdom that all of us have from reading these things together. There are sometimes philosophical tangents that no one has elsewhere. He likes how they sit and look at each other, talk to each other. You'd never get that outside of LCs. He says **you need that, that circle, in order to achieve the new paradigm shift.** Other institutions don't see

wisdom coming from others as important.

Paul goes over an assignment about assessing our ecological footmark based on behavior and another assessment based on beliefs. He predicts that there will be a **gap** for everyone in the class.
He says, think about what you can do to make your behavior more consistent with your beliefs.

*Julian jokes: You don't want them to **change their beliefs** so that they're more consistent with their behavior?*

Paul: Well that's easy to do.

Julian: Oh (in comical, exaggerated light-bulb-going-off tone).

Paul: That's called rationalization.
Yeah, Freud talked about it in that 3rd chapter.

Julian: Oh, got it.

Paul: We **rationalize** things after we do them, right, so that we can feel better about them and not generate any anxiety. So that's a really nice mechanism.

Terrie: For the first part of this semester, I found I was getting more and more **depressed** about the human race, I mean, that's all we did was put ourselves down, and how bad we are, and I was really starting to feel the **weight** of it, and then I realized, woa, I can't own all of it.

Elliot says something like: Only a few people actually act. Others just feel guilty.
It's like kinetic energy is the action, and **stored energy is the guilt.**
Felicia talks about how Ecopsychology is a step, but not a solution. It is re-educating us, re-teaching us. It is not a solution.

We want **more action.**

Carol says, that's what changing what the world thinks is.

Carol: I think a part of this class is really frustrating,
because most of the discussion isn't about how we
can fix our problems. I would be impressed
to see if we actually enact some solutions,
rather than just discussing them. Because
part of the problem with **discussion** is you
don't get to **do** very much, you just talk about it.

Felicia: Community gardens, bring humans together, and into the nature community. Michelle: that's what I got from the little garden here, at PHCC.

Carol: that's how we affect change.
We **start small**, it's easier to connect with people.

Felicia: so it's eases tension, and it's something for a community **to protect**.

Josh: There are stronger feelings of dependency that way. Globally, we don't feel as direct. It's so micro you feel your input.

Sara: Is there anything else that community
gives to you or does for one?
Steph: Change.

It changes me.

Because as an individual, I have my own perspective of things,
but once a community – members of a community contribute,
then I change my mind, I change,
I can change my perspective on something, because
I'm looking at that perspective or that view or that something
in different ways,
with the eyes of other people,
so it helps me change my mind. Carol: A lot of my
opinions have changed in the class.
I'm very open to hearing **other people's opinions**
and incorporating them,
Jaspar: I would say that I've so that's been very nice.
been changed from the input
that all my classmates have had,

so they've had a lasting impression on me,
so I have been changed.

Steph (talking about the Tao): Well, the whole thing about difficulties, that he confronts them but never experiences them, that doesn't make sense to me.Terrie: He doesn't own them. They don't become a part of his character. He doesn't own that problem.

Paul: Well, what she's saying has brought us back to the course. Okay, so we're talking about this huge environmental catastrophe. Right. As a planet, and as a human race, and for all species. That is really big. And is really [short giggle] **overwhelming**, that leaves you completely powerless when you think about it, in such a big way, right? And as a result, of the size and difficulty of this problem, what do most people do? They **withdraw.** Right? And they don't deal with it, or again, they feel guilty or they feel bad about it, resentful and they **assuage** that with consumption and other things, and we looked at the psychology of all that. Or they can do little things, and they do little things deeply… So we're dealing with this difficulty, this great difficulty, but by engaging in it fully, that actually, **love** has a lot to do with this. And with love, it's not difficult, right?

Steph: Well, at the beginning of this class, it, this will seem a little bit like stupid and childish, but
I had a phobia of worms.
I could not see them, they were disgusting,
pink, brownish, whatever, things. I did not want
to do anything with them. And about two weeks ago,
I saw this little worm, jumping, and it was cold
out there. Cold! And there were a lot, and
they were all like jumping and I felt
so bad because come on, it's cold, and
they're used to being **inside of the earth**,
warm, I guess, I don't know, but, it broke my
heart, so I took a couple of them and put
them in the grass...but yeah, this class
has definitely generated a change
in me, in my own little paradigm .
So it's really cool to see that.

Hillary, first reading from the seminar article: "Ecofeminism is practice, integration of theory and action", so it's like, I think it's adding to what the current environmental movements are doing, cause they're looking at the problems and they're saying, like, some of them on a very scientific level, of you know, there's biodiversity's being lost and species are being lost, how do we solve this, and

they're looking at it from like a very scientific
viewpoint, and ecofeminism is adding this whole other
layer of social change on, Paul: Well, let me make it's kind of **integrating**
those two things together, and an interesting connection moving forward like
that, so I think that that is why for you. Cause I've heard it's more useful,
because, it's not just one side or the a lot of people say this, other. It's kind of
an integration of the two things. about the Occupy Wall Street movement,
is that that's
all they're doing.
They're not doing anything else.
They're just there. What's their point?
What action are they going to finally take?
That's gonna make the difference.
Steph: I think it's a balance.
Felicia: I agree with you, Steph, I think it's a balance.
I think that it's important to be contemplative and, and think and dwell on things
before you act on them, but I don't think you shouldn't ever argue or act or any
of that, I think there's a balance, like you said,
Paul: The point I'm trying there is passion in action.
to make about the movement,
look at the impact the movement has had on people's
consciousness and awareness,
regardless of what your political position is, This is a
popular, people's uprising, if you're not aware of that. It's not
just the Arab Spring as a separate thing. It's not just Wall
Street as a separate thing. If you remember last year in Great
Britain there were numerous, they called it the riots, in Great Britain,
this is all the same thing, okay? So if we look at it, from the Tao's perspective,
what they're doing is very much an illustration of this principal

of action through non-action.

Felicia: It's okay to talk about a paradigm shift
and that might be difficult or you know, emotional,
but it doesn't have to be so dark

and depressing. It can be uplifting and exciting.

That's why I was so excited that day when we talked about

Occupy Wall Street, and how I said, this is a paradigm shift
happening in our country right now,
you know, go see it in action.
It's exciting, and it's not depressing.

"It is the individual who begins to effect change. But in order to effect change, he or she must have personally recovered, must be **whole**"[21]

One of several dreams that I had featuring Jolie, our parakeet:
There are two birds. One is not in a cage.
The other is buried in seeds. There is
some sort of choice and rescue required,
but I can't figure out what it is.

My son watches.
I know previously, I had looked at her and felt sad
about having a bird in a cage.
This class brought that old thought back.
I've also felt painful guilt, not so much about my own unhelpful ecological behaviors,
as my bad ecological parenting.
I can't seem to get Teddy out of the house.
I let him do too much screen time,
because then I can get my work done.

"Just as Freud believed that neuroses were the consequences of dismissing our deep-rooted sexual and aggressive instincts, ecopsychologists believe that grief, despair and anxiety are the consequences of dismissing equally deep-rooted **ecological instincts**"[22]

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[21] Thich Nhat Hanh

Steph: I became a vegetarian. I 'm more conscious of the vegetables I eat and where they come from.

Carol talks about the writing on her poster disappearing because of the silver pen she used.

Julian: It's ephemeral.

Paul: that's very Taoist. The words don't say it.

Carol: Mindfulness and action. One thing I've learned from this class.

Mindfulness
IS your way of changing.

Steph: Maybe I learned from this class not to think about myself as an individual, rather think of myself as part of a community. And when I say community, I mean humans and animals, everything around them, and that's, I can't say it happened overnight, cause it hasn't. "Changing the world It happened over time, and it took a lot of changing and fighting with myself and I think too to be able to feel that in becomes such a short period of time is pretty amazing, is pretty cool, and **to be aware** of it, it's even better, because you can constantly keep going back towards the goal that I have, which is completely changing the paradigm that I have, completely changing my egocentric paradigm and just you know being part of this larger social paradigm. an unconscious,
desperate
substitute
for changing the self…
The trouble with the eagerness to make a world is that,
because the world is already made,
what is there must first be destroyed." [23]

Carol: What you said,
JUST a paradigm shift,
to me screams really big,
difficult, messy, cause

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[22] Smith, Daniel B. (2010). Is there an ecological unconscious? *The New York Times*, pp 2-3.
[23] Shepard, Paul. In *Ecopsychology*. p. 32.

to change our way of thinking,
you would need a social transformation,
I just --

Felicia: You don't think we need that?

Carol: No, we need it,
I think it's going to be
incredibly difficult, to me--

Penelope: Change is inevitable.
Change is like the spirit of
reality. Cause change is the
spirit of our lives and our survival, and
you know, say like, if ideas about women
from the 18th century didn't change,
we wouldn't be able to be in this classroom,
you know, and so **change I think can be a**
joyful and enlightening thing
that can cause a lot of new ideas and new
ways of thinking for everyone.

Paul: They sort of turned the tables on us and said, what did you learn? In terms of subject matter, again, I think that the subject matter is really significant material, and so, makes me re-learn, and this is important, because you forget, you get **back into your old ways** in doing things, but re-learn the power of change on a daily basis, you know, that you can change things, and that by changing things in your life, you're literally changing the world, and it doesn't have to be a big thing, you know. It doesn't have to be, you know, you're changing the economic system or you're going to live in a commune or something like that. It's simple things, you know, taking the time to be mindful, of where you are and who you're with, in relationship.

Elliot: I know there were one or two times in the class when someone said something, and one of them might have been Laurence,
and one of them might have been a teacher,
but I remember that later in the day, I was just like going about my normal day, and I picked up something different,
I did something different,
and I remember thinking how
it's just **all the small things**
are like adding up

to be who you are,
like a change of paradigms

is really ultimately to change anything here you have to change something in
here [indicates his head].

Stephanie: I am fearful of change.

And I think it sucks, because it's hard to adjust to a way of doing things.
I at first, when I went to that class, I just wanted to find out, anything about nature, just to see how it was.

I didn't really think I would change
anything, so, in my mind, it wasn't to change anything at all in me; it was just learning. [In community] they show you that it's tough,
but they're there for you. If you're not gonna understand something, they're going to explain it to you to the best of their abilities.
So that way, yes, **you fear taking the step,** but you're taking it anyway because you know
there's someone you can rely on. Terrie: I'm doing something on this paper that I'm hoping to actually make a career out of, in years to come, you know,
helping abused women,
and there's only one study done on it, so now that
I can get my take on it,
and see what needs to be done,
maybe some day I'll be able to do a project on how nature actually enhances the recovery of [women] abused mentally and emotionally,

Steph: I'm planning to, as soon as I get my so, it is exciting.
bachelor's degree in teaching,
I'm planning to open a school,
a school of arts, and eventually incorporate nature into arts,
because I feel like, and this is not gonna be a government based school. I'm gonna pay for everything, because, and it's going to be in a really poor section of my country, or wherever I'm at that point,
because I feel that some children that are poor
don't get the same opportunities of exploring art
because they're worrying about working and going to school and completing their academic stuff, that they just don't have time to focus on what they like,
and I feel art is very important, because there's no other way of to express, besides writing, your feelings...
I want to emphasize the artistic ways, whether it's dancing, painting, sculpting, and even if it's speaking other languages.
I'm doing research on, the, finding a way to create paint, in a natural way, instead of buying it, just creating it...
I still think language is such an important way of communication, and you can do so much with it.
I've learned that if we can, we tried to create a new, more environmental paradigm, and going global about this paradigm,
so I think, what better way to do it than saying it,
and if you can say it in different languages.

Felicia: I don't know, ten, fifteen years or so, I'd love to live on community land with other people. I think we've really gotten away from this sense of community you know, I think that's part of our disconnection with nature, but people used to live much **slower lives**, and used to be way more, you know, tied in with each other, so I like the idea of living on some sort of big plot of land where, you're not living in a community house but there's families and individuals sharing the same land, where you're as self-sustaining as possible, that there's you know, like renewable energy, there's you grow a lot of your own food, there's a lot of animals, there's a lot of children, you know, and there's also space for the arts to take place too, maybe there's a writer's retreat cabin there or a place for people to come and do music, or paint, or whatever it is that they want to do, or also I like the idea, cause I've always like been a big volunteer person, I like to, I don't know, maybe it's the way I was raised, I don't know, I just feel this sense of you know, I need to always be giving back to another type of community, not just my close community, but the **bigger community**, you know, and so I've always been interested in social justice work, and you know political stuff, and so, sort of making the space for that activism, and also maybe they have these programs where they take these inner city kids and they take them to the country. I've always wanted to do foster care, so you take in kids who are coming out of a more urban setting, and bringing them **into nature**, even if it's just a couple weeks or a couple months, having that experience of learning about nature and learning about animals, learning more old-fashioned skills, learning how to slow cook things from scratch, and how to, you know, just do different things like that, learning how to make your own things instead of just buying them, and, so, that's my big goal, and that's sort of, that's part of what **drives me** back to school.

Our revels now are ended. These our actors,
As I foretold you, were all spirits and
Are melted into air, into thin air;
And like the baseless fabric of this vision,
The cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
Yeah, all which it inherit, shall dissolve,
And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff
As dreams are made on, and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep.[24]

Transformation Analysis

The LC Way is transformative. Change is hard. It hurts, it is scary, and we tend to resist it if we can even see it. "Some institutions or forms of life are so widely lived in that for a great many people the meanings they enable seem "naturally' available and it takes a special effort to see that they are the products of circumstances" (Fish, 1980, p. 309).

A social/emotional ZPD (discussed in the theoretical background) represents individual thresholds of social and emotional pain and discomfort. In community, these thresholds can adjust. In my previous studies and this current one too, participants have talked about how much time they spend together and that this is perhaps the biggest factor in community building. They get to know one another, and thus build the trust and support necessary for emotionally difficult journeys. The collage above shows disagreement, discomfort, miscommunication, and negative feelings as well as playfulness, questioning, and trying out new ideas. Because transformation is not

[24] Shakespeare, William. (1994). *The tempest, Act 4, scene 1, lines 165-175.*New York: Washington Square Press.

comfortable, and I conceptualize democratic discourse within community as including necessary discomfort, I end up applauding the ways in which these tensions were given the space to breathe and evolve, and community members were given the chance to talk and think about them explicitly.

The interdisciplinarity of LCs serves as cultural criticism, as I've mentioned earlier, which is a component of transformation. To open things up, to question, is to enter circles. To settle on immovable answers, to shut down or avoid questions, is to not budge from lines. "Criticism consists in uncovering that thought and trying to change it; showing that things are not as obvious as people believe, making it so that what is taken for granted is no longer taken for granted. To do criticism is to make harder those acts which are now too easy" (citing Foucault, Davies et al, p. 312). I saw terms such as man, woman, science, paradigm, epistemology, other ways of knowing, nature, and community, among others, opened up for investigation and critique in this LC, while I also saw some terms become stagnant and reified, with plenty of ambivalence and resistance towards these investigations.

Change can be manifested in internal or external realms, although the two cannot be neatly separated. In a classroom, students and teachers can challenge the status quo of cultural or societal norms and pressures. They can also challenge classroom decisions and pedagogies, which, in various ways, may represent those same cultural trends (I take this up in "Emergent Pedagogy"). The authoritative discourse of higher education interacts with internally persuasive discourses of individuals in a room. Bakhtin (1981) says that when an ideological discourse becomes internally persuasive, it affects our individual consciousness, but it's not clear at first which is an 'alien' discourse and which is not.

Later in development, we start to make distinctions between these. He is talking about human development, but I think the same process occurs within a community that learns to be together and learns together. In this community, terms such as 'patriarchy', and 'dominant social paradigm' were repeated, tried out on various tongues, sometimes slipping off unexamined, sometimes gaining depth or traction, each time taking on a different flavor for speaker and listeners alike. How we see things affects what we see at very deep levels. "But what anyone sees is not independent of his verbal and mental categories but is in fact a product of them" (Fish, 1980, 271). If someone believes in god, for example, "He is everywhere not as the result of an interpretive act self-consciously performed on data otherwise available, but as the result of an interpretive act performed at so deep a level that it is indistinguishable from consciousness itself" (p. 272). Similarly patriarchy and nature, for example, were at times unconscious lenses but often were forced to the surface for examination by the communal class inquiries.

In one sense, the culture of the Gaia Meets Psyche LC put pressure in the direction of transformation. In other words, within this particular community, an authoritative discourse spoke of transformation. The premise of ecopsychology is that we must understand and change our own consciousness in order to make the necessary changes in our world. If we want to fix our current environmental crisis, we first need to fix ourselves, including our views on human and nature in community (Koger & Winter, 2010). This carried authority in the room, while at the same time, such a move goes against the authority of the status quo and hierarchical schooling. Such personal and deep transformation goes against the notion that learning consists of teachers transmitting knowledge to students. The word 'paradigm' was used constantly, which seemed to invite

opposite tendencies. In one sense, paradigm, like metaphor, connotes ways of thinking, and so mentioning that those frameworks or lenses exist opens up learning to address and unpack that thinking. It makes it transparent. Agency within a poststructuralist notion of multiple subjectivities (Davies et al., 2002, Stone, 1996), means that in particular moments and contexts, a new subject situates itself and at the same time, through gaps and ambiguities, can challenge previous subjectivities. I saw this happening in the experimentation with transformation in ecological discussions and key terms that populated them. As community members made connections between course readings, personal experiences, and the comments of others, they tried out various meanings and applications of the key terms.

But in another sense, if we repeat 'paradigm' over and over, does that stand in for investigations that are cut short? This is what I mean earlier when I suggest that the term "Dominant Social Paradigm" to a degree became reified within this community. How exactly do the DSP and patriarchy, capitalism, and competition connect, for example? How do empiricism and science fit in or not? These questions were implied, but not directly addressed (and as I explain in Interdisciplinarity, I think science was maligned and some interdisciplinary potential hindered by the ways key terms were not fully investigated, and thus left to fall back into traditional binaries).

Stephanie, who talked about learning as interdependency and in her metaphor, likens it to eating many flavors, also says that she first thought she was going to 'just learn' in this class, and not change, thus recalling a conflicting transmission model of learning. The LC community puzzled through what exactly internal change, changing consciousness, would consist of, and some members openly admitted struggling with it. It

was not taken for granted that such change can occur, that it is easy, or that there is a prescription for it.

Is internal transformation enough? Community members asked this question, impatient about enacting ideas, perhaps suggesting that the practice everyone was engaged in should include environmental activism, not just intellectual conversations. I found a tension between activism and talk, theory and practice. This seems in part to represent circles of lived experience, being in the world, with lines of hierarchical higher education. An inner/outer binary of course can be a trap. Lines are within us; they do not enter and interrupt circles on their own. Many of the students seemed to experience a division between classroom practices and the world outside of the classroom.

What does it mean to know and who gets to decide? Students may be transformed by their school experiences, but can teachers be transformed? And what about the schools themselves- the physical spaces, the boundaries erected, the topics and voices that are included or not? If an authoritative discourse prevails, it does not change. The four walls of a classroom can only be metaphorically permeable, unless the class moves outside of them. Desks in rows, unless they are nailed down, can be moved, but they are still desks. A class about our natural world carries an inherent irony and tension, which I saw manifested in the tacky jungle mural on the windowless wall of the second classroom. Paul and Julian treasure their time outdoors, and hoped to schedule several such experiences for their students. One field trip was put off at least three times because of the rain, an additional irony. If we focus on internal transformation, how do we know what to look for and how to support that? The students seemed to want concrete

experiences. Students and teachers alike seemed both to appreciate and resist internal transformation.

> Thoughtful reflection is itself an experience. Thoughtful reflection is an experience that gives significance to or perceives it in the experience upon which it reflects. So the significance that we attribute through thoughtful reflection to past experience leaves a living memory that is not less embodied knowledge than are the physical skills and habits we learn and acquire in a less reflective manner. However, this thought-engaged body knowledge of acting tactfully attaches a mindful, thinking quality to our ordinary awareness of our everyday actions and experiences (Van Manen, 1991, p. 209).

The binary of ideas and actions, *being* in school and *doing* outside of school perhaps is more prominent for 'non-traditional' students who have work and life experiences placing them more ambiguously in both sectors. Felicia, devoted to social and political activism, seemed to struggle with college in general, with the feeling of wasting her time and energy sitting in a classroom, discussing readings, instead of getting out there and directly effecting change. Can thinking or talking count as action? I would say yes, but participants often saw one as not the other in a binary, which cast doubt on the value of class readings and discussions. Most of the students had paying jobs during the course and also had been working and out of school for some years. Even the younger ones who came straight from high school expressed frustration that they weren't out there doing things to help the earth, instead of sitting around talking about it, or at least having class outside, so that they could interact with nature. I was impressed by the students' knowledge of and involvement in local politics, including environmental actions and clubs on campus and in their towns. "That's what grounds me – those nonverbal experiences and daily activities where, frankly, the eggplant or the tepary bean or the soil microbe doesn't care about my ideology" (Goetzman, 2011, quoting Gary Paul Nabhan,

p. 41). School is always going to involve reading, writing, and talking. Can this be transformative? As an educator, I have to believe that. But applying knowledge, living new understandings, putting theory into practice, these are not only yearnings of the students in this study, but beliefs held by Dewey and most of the theorists whom I follow.

One way that binaries are resisted or the tension between circles and lines is eased is through the imagination and dreams. The future and the past meet up in the present through dreams. Ideal and real connect comfortably in dreams. We try on new ideas, with Elbow's "believing game" and Brookfield and Preskill's democratic discourse, but this depends so much on the relationships we're in. In a supportive, respectful community, there is room to play around with an idea, experiment with change, and express discomfort, and for the most part, I saw this community make the time and space for imagination, empathy, and trying out ideas. Imagination helps us appreciate a different perspective or envision change (Biesta, 2002; Wenger, 1998). Dreams of the future and dreams of the present are manifestations of the imagination trying out change. Dreams came up in classroom conversations, interviews, and the literature, and showed another way to take up the possibility of transformation.

> When we openly acknowledge this gap between aspiration and reality and are willing to live in it honestly, a myth can encourage us to bring what we *are* a bit closer to what we *seek to be*. When we confuse the aspiration with the reality of our lives, we can get ourselves into very deep trouble as individuals and as a nation (Palmer, 2011, p. 177)

In her support of conversation over argument, Tannen (1998) also calls on the imagination, saying that you need imagination and ingenuity to offer additional ways that can lead you to truths beyond argument. Wenger (1998) shows imagination to be collective, not only individual, and a way of "expanding our self by transcending our time

and space and creating new images of the world and ourselves" (p. 176). Paul appreciates literature for how it invites the imagination into dialogue, as shown in "Interdisciplinarity". I show how the group re-conceptualizes time and space in "Concentric Circles". Stephanie, Felicia, and Terrie dream of future lives that challenge linear and limited time and space, and show transformational learning and community that extend beyond the confines of the classroom. I recall Bernstein's (2008) hope, Palmer's (2011) notion that overlaps with Tinder's (1980), of a 'tragic gap' between real and possible, and that democracy requires that we see that gap. Love, hope, and imagination are how we bridge real and ideal, including the real in classrooms, with obstacles to full, free, ongoing learning, and the ideal of a transformative circle of inquiry.

Transformation: Gender

I offer the subcategory, gender, which asserted itself prominently in the data. The following collage explores challenges to a gender binary and associated resistance. Interrogating gender is one particular way to question social categories on the path to personal and possibly structural transformation. The majority of students were female and I, the visiting researcher am too, with the two teachers male; this dynamic involves power, communication, and identity within community. Gender is one of the most powerful, entrenched binaries that drives much of our thinking and actions, but this binary is not inevitable or unimpeachable.

Text Collage: Gender

Before she begins as one of two seminar leaders on the eco-feminism text, Penelope says:

We're not addressing specific men in this seminar,
we're addressing a dominant social paradigm.

Paul: Yeah, but see the way of thinking, don't deny the **gendered nature** of ways of thinking, because there are ways of thinking that are gendered in how they've evolved and in how they are represented and acted on in society.

Terrie: It's kind of hard, I guess,
with two men as teachers when you're
dealing with a topic that is **dominated by man.**
It's hard, because a lot times I don't think that we can talk
about what we actually feel on a lot of things.

Felicia: I only have one real
learning community to judge this off
of, cause my first one wasn't really done in a
learning community style, but it was two women and they pulled
back a lot more in class,
and I don't know if that's gender related or not,
it's sort of hard to tell, but I'm feeling more like in this learning we're getting
more of, read it,
flip it around,
and turn it into a paper,
like let's [snaps twice] let's get through the material.

Susan Deer Cloud: I bake poems. I'm not very domestic.

Felicia: I definitely think that there's a difference,
not across the board, but there's a general
difference between how men think
and function and understand
things and women do, and
you know I, obviously our
society does everything
in favor of men,

Sara: your style is, you sort of
put these things out in a kind of a

as we were just talking about,
men's health,
men's way of knowing,
men, you know, so, yeah,
so I think we tend to be
a more empirical type
of society rather than
functioning on intuition
and love [chuckles],
and the wisdom of the ancients.

forceful way, and I picked up,
my sense of it is that you're saying,
challenge me.

Paul: Yeah.

Sara: But I think some people
take that literally, and feel--

Paul: -- Well, I definitely got that
from a lot of the women in the class.
I think there was a gender dynamic
going on here that hasn't happened
to me in other classes.

Today at the poetry on the mount,
I felt very uncomfortable with all of the talk about
male sexuality, referring to the Walt Whitman poems.
I feel that we didn't discuss Emily Dickinson
nearly as much as Walt Whitman,
and that most of the poetic discussion
was based on male sexual expression. From my perspective,
male sexual expression is the foundation
of the Dominant Social Paradigm. From what
I've learned in class, the DSP views nature as something
to be manipulated and controlled, much in the
same way as **women have been manipulated**
and controlled by cultural standards
throughout history (note the word
is <u>his</u>tory, not <u>her</u>story).
I feel that we have only been given
an empirical view on human cultural evolution
in reference to the development of human relationships
with nature, that other ways of knowing have been dismissed
in our classroom. The visceral/emotional/intuitive way of knowing,
which I will call the woman's way of knowing,
has not been addressed in depth. Do any of you feel
these feelings like I do?
Am I crazy?
What can we do to address these issues?
In solidarity and sisterhood, Penelope.

Susan Deer Cloud asks Paul and Julian if it's okay if she reads a poem that is a little risqué. She doesn't want to get them into trouble. They say sure.

Part of her poem:

"You Really Have ----------
balls," for years the boys and then all the men
in my life tossed me their highest compliment.
For years, beginning with those first, fierce seasons
when I was a tomboy with Genghis Khan eyes, bloodied knees,
hair that refused to grow, I accepted their praise
like the glass beads my Mohawk and Blackfoot ancestors
accepted from long ago white men…

But these days whenever some blue-eyed songster hotly breathes to me,
"You really have balls," I think, "No, I really have cunt.
So did my mother, her mother before her, and all the women
blood-rivering back to the original wise woman whose glowing ovum
resulted in me. They were loving, laughing, dignified, healing,
singing dreamers who slipped through the endless Burning Times,
bequeathing a legacy of dreamer-women to Mother Earth." [25]

Penelope: Occupy the bedroom.

Hillary: I think that a huge misconception with ecofeminism is that people see
these eco-feminists on one side and the rest of the world on the
other side, and that, it's like, they say men bad female good,
but she says that it's not safe to idealize ecofeminism, because
by only seeing the connection between women and nature, it
further supports the male separateness, domination paradigm.
[Reading from the article] Instead we should seek " to reweave
new stories that acknowledge and value the biological and cultural
diversity that sustain all life, so hierarchical relationships must
be replaced with reciprocity and mutuality"[26].

Raneff: Competition hinders our understanding of a new paradigm.
Hillary: and that's capitalism.
Michelle: **survival of the fittest.**
Lee [Felicia's sister]: We can blame social structures,
but…we need to change who we are,
how we think.
People were that way before capitalism.

Hillary: We avoid introspection.

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[25] Deer Cloud, S. (2010). From You really have … in *The last ceremony*. Kanona: Foothills Publishing.

[26] Diamond and Orenstein, as cited in Howell, Nancy R. (1997) Ecofeminism: What one needs to know. *Zygon* 32(2). The Joint Publication Board of Zygon. p. 233. Full text provided in [appendix?]

We create these constructs to **look outside of ourselves,**
and so we **don't ask ourselves** why we're so shitty.

Penelope: Sara, you are an articulate, resourceful, powerful woman and I feel better knowing you are looking out for us.

Marguerite (referring to the article "The Rape of the Well-Maidens":
Domination
is a way to deny dependence.

Elliot talks about conquering (in connection to his childhood forays into the woods, getting lost, not worrying about where they were going).
Paul teases him:
Now you're getting all masculine, you use words like **conquer**,
and now it's back to patriarchy and dominant social paradigm.
[lots of laughter]
Someone jokes about that he needs a paradigm shift,
yeah.
Let's shift him.
Elliot says he's talking about conquering himself.
Paul: Oh, then that's different.

Penelope says her boyfriend is a feminist. Paul teases her, says, well, he'd have to be. Good-natured laughter.

Paul (Talking about *Not Wanted)*: **Wash away the contamination of the patriarchy**, you know, pray for rain. It's like, oh my god, that's it! It's apocalyptic, bioregionalism, right there. And the whole ecofeminist resistance, you know, being at the bottom of the boat, on the level of animals, the whole hierarchy. It's brilliant. I think it's a brilliant novel.

Stephanie on the Tao: And woman stays still,
and does nothing, no movement.
Guys do all the moving.
That pissed me off. Women do everything!
Paul: Women are responsible for three quarters of the labor of the world.

It's been **established** by the United Nations, **as a fact**,
that's been established.

Terrie [reading]: The female overcomes the male with stillness,
lying below in stillness.
Paul: Okay, but that's not, that's not saying that women should be still.
That says that the woman
overcomes the man with stillness.
Carol: And that's like before, when it talks about water,
and it talks about stillness.
Paul: How powerful water is!
Carol: Right.
Julian: So then there's the analogy.

Talking about *Not Wanted*, the Noah's Ark story, Carol says: The masculine,
the dominant idea, is the image of god,
that god tells us to do this,
we should do that,
and we're not really listening to nature.
In the book he doesn't really talk about if there's
anything wrong with nature,
if there's any reason why, but if god tells us, we should
just let nature be destroyed.
That's what god said,
he's the man,
we should listen to the man without resisting.

Raneff (on ecofeminism): Well, basically, yeah, "male domination of woman is repeated in scientific and technological concepts of absolute mastery of matter" and there's a very kind of condescending pattern you see going from men to nature, as to where, if there would be a storm, the first instinct would be either to run or to conquer it, and to conquer it would be more manly.
I'm going to wrangle this alligator,
meaning I'm going to conquer it.
It's gonna have my name on it.
We can put our names on stars now, you know,
we can own anything.

Paul: I think the guys actually were pretty weak, you know, in this class, on a lot of levels. I think they could have been much more intellectual, but I think they were intimidated, you know.

Sara: By the women?
Paul: Yeah, I think so. I think so. They weren't
able to find their voices.
The women definitely were able to find their voices.

There was no question about that. *Julian: A number of the students were not prepared for the seminars. The boys were curiously quiet during almost every seminar.*

I'm not really sure how to account for that.

Paul: If Elliot would just stop being lazy and do the god damn work, he'd be an honors student, an A student, consistently. You know, he's got a good mind. And the women **put him to shame**. They really did. You know, in terms of where they were with the subject matter.

Penelope: Nothing infuriates me more than men sitting around congratulating each other for being male. I don't want to hike up a mountain just to hear a poem about Walt Whitman getting a blow job.

Talking about the draft of Penelope's final poster, Julian suggests the woman symbol for the main, central shape.
Penelope: I don't know. I like it the way it is. She talks about 'giving birth' to her poster, how much work it is.
Paul: Think of us as your midwives.
Penelope: Euw. I think I'll do it myself.
Marguerite: I love how this totally reflects your learning in this class. You've been totally consistent.

Julian: I do think the whole gender thing in this class was just blown way out of proportion in ways that I don't even understand. We were talking about it when we never should have been talking about it. It was brought up in conversation when it just wasn't relevant. You know. All right. We get it, you know, there are other things that we need to learn.

Julian: So, if you think about this in terms of yin and yang, for example, it doesn't matter

which of those little loopy things is male or female.
It rotates.
Paul: And if you really look closely at that image,
you'll notice that there's, it looks like an eye, right, the circular image.
And that's the other.
So each possesses the essence of the other.

Gender Analysis: Challenging the Male/Female Binary

Gender rang out loud and clear as a central, loaded theme. I cannot enter this discussion without addressing my own femaleness. If transformation requires transparency and unpacking of cultural myths and metaphors, the notion of a stable identity, including a gender identity, is one of them. "The concept of an autonomous gendered self with agency is a fiction" (Davies et al., 2004, citing Denzin). Lakoff (1987) reminds us of common metaphorical expressions such as "finding myself", "be true to myself" or "besides myself" as reflecting and building such deeply ingrained concepts. My thinking often comes from within a humanist stance, with identity as unmoving and power as a thing that someone has and another doesn't. I try, and don't always succeed, to heed the warning against "lodging power *in* boys/men and vulnerability *in* girls/women" (Davies et al., 2002, p. 296, italics theirs). The humanist notion of power also reinforces a male/female binary.

Thinking about circles and lines, I can associate a circle with the vagina, a line with the penis, but I do so cautiously, worrying about biological determinism. We are embodied beings, but we needn't be always only either male or female. These categories are not our bodies, yet the categories often speak louder than our bodies or embodied knowing. Writing about messy or 'dirty' texts, Pullen & Rhodes (2008) associate linearity and organization in writing with a phallogocentric, male fear of female messiness and a need to control that. When we keep things tidy, we produce "writing as a

feminine hygiene product" (p. 256). Gender and genre connect. The etymology from the Latin 'genus' denotes race, type, gender and so includes, according to Derrida "sexual difference between the feminine and masculine genre/gender" (as cited in Pullen & Rhodes, 2008, p. 249). Gender and genre offer a promise of feminizing and transgression, because binaries are always spilling beyond their own categorization, but "it's just whether you obey the law, whether you operate within the law, whether you're prepared to contaminate" (Pullen & Rhodes, 2008, p. 249). I would add that contaminating 'the law' (authoritative discourse) is no simple matter.

Many people associate circular thinking with women (or the socially constructed category 'woman') and linear thinking with men (Davies, 2000; Heilker, 1996; Pullen & Rhodes, 2008) and I do too, in a very general sense. As told by Debbie, one of Tom Robbins' (2003) cowgirls:

> You will notice that everything an Indian does is in a circle, and that is because the Power of the World always works in circles, and everything tries to be round…..Nature creates in circles and moves in circles. Atoms and galaxies are circular, and most organic things in between. The Earth is round. The wind whirls. The womb is no shoebox. Where are the corners of the egg and the sky?...The square is the product of logic and rationality. It was invented by civilized man. It's the work of masculine consciousness….Woman is a round animal. The male, in his rebellion against what is natural and feminine in the universe, has used logic as weapon and as a shield. The whole object of logic is to square the circle. ….It's the duty of advanced women to teach men to love the circle again. (p. 305, ellipses mine).

How much did the LC community members obey the laws or transgress them? I think all of us, including myself, at times fell back on a male/female binary. The dynamics of two male teachers, a majority of female students, and a female researcher played into tensions and questions around gender, yet male feminists and unanimous distaste for the

‘dominant social paradigm’ and ‘patriarchy’ allowed for some breaking of the laws, or at least making them explicit and questioning them.

Challenges to social categories happen in moments. These can build towards a coherent, effective movement, they can remain isolated moments that sink back into entrenched thinking, or they can reappear in other communities. Seeds can take root but then die; they can scatter in strong wind and fail, or they can grow into strong, healthy plants that then spread their new seeds to the next generation. I see momentary efforts that move forward and retreat in the words and behaviors of other participants as well as within my thinking and writing as a researcher and participant in the LC. Pullen and Rhodes connect genre/gender of texts to performativity and subjectivity of gender (Davies et al, 2002; Pullen & Rhodes, 2008; Jackson 2004). Pullen and Rhodes suggest, referring to Derrida, that a text is always in a genre; it can’t be genre-less, but it can participate without belonging. For any socially constructed category then, including genre and gender, repetition means the category is unstable and there is room for subversion and transgression (Jackson, 2004). But those lines of sedimentation that Davies and colleagues mention can hold firm. Perhaps participants, including myself, labeled power dynamics along rigid lines determined by a gender binary and then behaved within those lines. I think I felt protective of some of the women and defensive about Paul and Julian’s explicit and implicit responses to gender. Perhaps I, and others too, were responding to long-term experiences and understandings of ways in which male norms of communication silence women’s texts and voices, in which case once again, larger societal circles and lines entered the circle of classroom community.

Did gender become an issue because some of us made it one, or was it an issue regardless? I say both. Wenger (1998) says that while imagination helps us take ideas into larger spheres across time and space, untethered from practice, it also can lead to harmful stereotypes and generalizations. Julian and Paul noticed gender, and the 'gender issues' that arose in this class. Julian said too much time and energy was spent on it and Paul noted that he had never encountered anything quite like it before (perhaps responding to a feeling that indeed the community gave gender a power that participants then reinforced and resisted). Paul directly mentioned in class the difference between biological gender and culturally-determined gender (although Deborah Tannen (1998) points out that biological gender ambiguity is surgically 'fixed' in this country). Students were cautious about making gender generalizations, for example, in regards to equating patriarchy with individual men. But both of the teachers talked about the male students not holding up and the women outperforming them. I had to wonder, why is it men against women? (I did not see any indication that the students were making such comparisons.) Both teachers also commented that the men might have been intimidated by the women, but I wonder, how was that balanced by the two male teachers, which two students mentioned directly in interviews. I did not ask male students directly if they were intimidated by the female students, and this could have operated at a subconscious level too, but I saw no evidence of this in their classroom and break-time interactions, the fluid and friendly gatherings in class group work and chats in the hallways and on field trips. I wonder if Paul and Julian might have themselves been intimidated by a strong female presence. I wonder to what degree gender would have been noticed if it was the other way around, with more men than women.

Gender was critiqued as a concept in this community, with the male/female binary put under scrutiny, yet a men versus women ethos insinuated itself into some of the class dynamics. The "Dominant Social Paradigm" (DSP) was a key concept in the course, presented as something to critique and push against. Ironically, through inquiries into the DSP, a male/female binary may have conflated and oversimplified terms in ways that limited community learning and depth of these very inquiries. Participants associated science and empiricism with maleness, along the lines of Hopfl's notion of social science as masculine, as a "science of erection" (as cited by Pullen & Rhodes, 2008, p. 249). In a class discussion, Felicia made a direct connection between empiricism and the DSP, which Penelope also did in one of her papers. Paul and Julian seemed to encourage these thoughts, but then in my second interview with Paul, he expressed disapproving surprise that someone in their seminar portfolio actually associated empiricism with the DSP. I see how science in general can be perceived as being dominated and directed by male voices, yet at the same time, to conflate empiricism, science (which I contend stood in for the unnamed positivism) and maleness, is to draw rigid lines where nuance might offer deeper insight and understanding across differences. Binary thinking may have elicited personal responses that cut short the deep reflection necessary for transformation. How much were people really willing or able to investigate and change their understanding of and relationship to patriarchy or the DSP? This question was in the air, never fully answered. This connects back to "personal meets public", with emotional responses such as discomfort, defensiveness, and anger valid first steps in investigating reflexively how theory meets practice, how learning in community evolves and interrelates with identity.

Paul's chattiness was associated with his being male, and students connected certain topics and practices (empiricism, sticking to the text, no outlet for emotional responses) to maleness. Some students equated teaching styles and classroom conversations with patriarchy and the DSP. I used the term 'dominated' to describe Paul in the "Interdisciplinarity" section, and several students did experience his behavior as dominating. Some talked about his cutting them off, shutting them down, talking too much, and other similar comments. Tannen (1993) talks about how interrupting can be a sign of engagement, especially when the topic stays the same, and there is overlapping talk. "Some speakers consider talking along with another as a show of enthusiastic participation " (1994, p. 178). The problem is that someone who does not favor this style might stop talking as soon as the other begins. Tannen says that overlapping talk tends to work better amongst peers. Paul clearly was enthusiastic and engaged, and cares about his students' learning. He and Julian both mentioned that this was the only LC he was teaching, so he could give it his all. But his power and authority as one of the teachers in the room can't be denied; he couldn't really be a peer of his students, even though there was much talk about everybody learning together. His good intentions do offer a partial explanation for why he seemed to feel so misunderstood by the end of the course.

Tannen (1993) warns against associating linguistic behaviors such as interruptions, talkativeness, and silence with dominance or powerlessness, because motivations and results depend on cultural background and context. Power and solidarity can prove ambiguous, and both can exist within a particular exchange, she points out, which makes me think again of authoritative and internally persuasive discourses and power as a force within community, not an object for possession. All interactions take at

least two, Tannen reminds us. How a person responds to a particular linguistic move determines the outcome. How did participants negotiate silence, interruption, taking or giving 'the floor' and how much did gender play a role? I know that Jaspar is a shy, quiet *person*, and that a louder seemingly more confident *person*, Carol, respected him for being a good listener. Raneff had a hard time gathering his thoughts in time to keep up with the fast pace of discussions, and others sympathized and tried to help him out, while Elliot seemed comfortable making up answers about texts he hadn't yet read. Gus did not speak often, but did so in a clear and confident voice. He offered friendly support and conversation to Terrie, Penelope, and Felicia during breaks and field trips. In other words, gender was often not a defining or determining category in the community learning. I felt impressed by how often students 'talked back', not in a rude or confrontational manner, but sticking up for themselves, continuing with their idea, or supporting a classmate. Felicia even stated that Paul's style of talking compelled her to speak out more. She wanted to argue with him or make her point stronger. An authoritative discourse has power partly because we give it power. Certain people in the Gaia meets Psyche community may have held power in part because others let them. Did gender itself claim power because we allowed that? And by the same token, can we take away or challenge the power that we've allowed? These questions were explored as circles of genuine community, while they also came against binaries and the hierarchical line of patriarchy.

I wonder how much community members dismissed or focused less on another's words because of their gender, and to what degree personality clashes were attributed to gender. I saw students socializing, working together, and referring to one another in ways

that seemed to have nothing to do with gender or age or any other obvious outward category. A few times someone might comment, 'where are the guys?' or something like that, but very rarely were direct comments made on the fact that the majority of the students were female or that a given topic was associated with feminism. I am not sure I can accurately express the way in which ideas became prominent in this community and how classroom interactions seemed to transcend personal agendas or tensions in the name of the larger cause of collaborative learning. This is not to say tensions vanished.

Both teachers talked about Penelope as dominating and directing the course of conversations, and Julian said the class was not a safe space to challenge ecofeminism. While I think she has a big personality, I did not experience Penelope that way. I know gender dynamics and feminism were important to at least several other students besides her. At times, Penelope did express great anger and frustration, particularly with Julian. At other times, she showed conciliatory, warm, and caring behavior. Perhaps I gave her more leeway and appreciated her more because I connected with her and respected her feminism. I do feel that there was something amiss with the fact that Penelope whole-heartedly took on a key concept of the course material, the DSP, which several community members including Paul and Julian connected to patriarchy in class conversations, and yet she was seen as difficult. When talking about a class time in which both Paul and Julian felt she was being very disruptive, Paul read her behavior as intentionally challenging the two of them, yet Paul also did concede that her presence in class was more positive than negative.

Certainly conversation style within cultural and personal frames affects communication in ways not defined only by gender. Perhaps Penelope's passionate voice

and antsy engagement put off Paul and Julian. I did notice that she seemed to have a hard time sitting still. Her manner might have put off others as well; that I don't know. There are personal preferences of communication styles that are not necessarily about gender. Tannen (1993) says that no one conversational style in itself is problematic, but when different styles come together, that's when conflict and discomfort can result. New ideas might be more or less appealing depending on who presents them or how they enter a conversation. I noticed that Carol, in her resistance to social change, seemed to rub Penelope the wrong way, but they came together over their objection to the mountain top poetry reading and what they felt was a prominence of male perspectives. Either different personal styles were overcome because of the bigger cause of gender equity, or Carol and Penelope found something compelling and appealing in one another, or some combination of the two.

I saw in both Julian and Paul, a teasing, sardonic style that I read as male. Tannen (1993, 1994) says that verbal and even physical fighting can facilitate friendship in boys and not for girls; verbal conflict can be a game for men. She points out too that for girls, showing emotions can increase their power (for example, a girl crying at s party ends up getting all the attention) while boys who show feelings are often teased for it (Tannen, 1998). In "Public meets private" I talked about emotions and community learning. Paul and Julian both showed a certain acceptance of, but also caution about, a place for emotions in classroom conversations. One way that participants mentioned feeling 'shut down' was emotionally, and those who said so were female, although Raneff commented about wanting to see more of how the teachers experienced the material. Both Paul and Julian make provocative statements that perhaps are meant to draw people out, get a

reaction, and stimulate conversation. Again, how one reacts to another's way of communicating is part of the communication. I saw resistance to Paul and Julian on the part of many community members that in some cases was connected or attributed to gender, and these exchanges, when the male/female binary prevailed, might have blocked participants from fuller understandings of one another and the ideas being expressed.

Several times, Felicia and other participants too, mentioned wanting to talk to the teachers about various objections, but then not doing so, or not feeling comfortable broaching such subjects with the teachers outside of class hours. I am not sure what to make of this self-censorship in general or in terms of power and gender. One person did say something like 'they probably wouldn't listen to me,' yet the classroom seemed a space for quite frank, open discussions on difficult and contentious topics. It may be that simply being college professors, and being white males in their 50's, Paul and Julian wear a certain authority that is reinforced by students' perceptions and doubts.

"The female-male polarity, though real, is more like ends of a continuum than a discrete dualism" (Tannen, 1998, p. 167). When we have limiting categories, not only do we put people into them with swift and facile dispatch, but we also carry encounters with previous members of a category into new encounters with another. Writing about factions amongst Native American activists in regards to a main character, Hogan writes, "The young men who were quickest to accuse her were the ones from the city, the ones of uncertain identity who had names and categories for themselves" (p. 316). In terms of feminism, I noticed nuance and gradations, with Raneff, a male, proud of his spiritual, feminist mother and speaking of her often, and Carol calling herself a feminist, yet defending patriarchy at one point. Elliot made one comment about being glad

ecofeminism was done, enough already, something to that effect (which in turn made at least one participant really angry). Paul and Julian both directly challenged patriarchy and the DSP, while also expressing discomfort and impatience with gender issues. In general, though, I got a feeling of people figuring out together what ecofeminism is and what their place in it might be, without being bound by a gender identification or imposing that on another. Transformation of cultural norms or even our understanding of them takes time, much more than one semester, I would think. As Stephanie points out, it's pretty amazing how much occurred in this relatively short time. I don't think all that transpired was happy or productive, but certainly the questions raised are valuable and not asked nearly enough in college classrooms. Once again, I find that the apparent weaknesses of the LC are its strengths. The fact that the course content – ecopsychology including ecofeminism –directly addressed transformation, while the LC structure allowed personal, social, academic, and public spheres and modes to merge, this very messiness is what complicated gender and invited in a useful tension between circles and lines, authoritative and internally persuasive discourses.

LCs offer Emergent Pedagogy

Emergent pedagogy is my term for transparent, democratic teaching whereby students are included not only in meaning-making but in pedagogical and curricular decisions when appropriate and possible (I am still exploring exactly what appropriate and possible mean in this context.) In this LC, as with others that I've observed and read about, there is an openness and tentativeness that invites students in to class processes more than I've ever encountered before. The two teachers in a room model collaboration, and, as the nature of the collaboration seems to necessitate decisions on the spot about the

course of a class session or a semester, these decisions are in plain view of students and often include them. One participant in a previous study who had taken many LCs told me that her favorite was the LC that was the first time for the teachers, because the roughness also meant they shared their decisions with students and sought opinions. The ongoing nature of the learning for teachers and students together in an LC invites emergent pedagogy, while lines of reified syllabi, accountability pressures, and other manifestations of authoritative discourse block it.

Below I offer a text collage showing efforts towards and resistance to emergent pedagogy.

Emergent Pedagogy Text Collage

Dear Gaia Gang,

The world is a sacred vessel, which must not be
tampered with or grabbed after.
To tamper with it is to spoil it,
and to grasp it is to
lose it. [Tao Te Ching, 29]

Below please find a list of the seminar readings/papers that will make up your portfolio.
And please don't forget to get outside
and breathe deeply this weekend…P & J

Paul starts almost every single class with the website up on a screen, pointing out where things are, or playing a video off of it. He is a big documenter, getting video and other data from other LCs and his own, posting data on the LC program website, keeping a sense of an ongoing narrative, an ongoing LC journey.

Felicia [about an early emphasis
on psychology]: So I think
it's good, I think maybe
they, to improve for next year,

maybe they could explain that
a little more? "I know it
seems like we're really focused
on this, but you really need to
understand these concepts so that
it will help you to better understand the
novels and the lit that you're gonna read".
Cause I think we didn't really understand
that in the beginning of class,
but it naturally sort of happened.
For me, I've sort of seen the purpose of that,
and I hope other people have as well.

Paul: So we mapped the curriculum.
Now I really don't know how students
are going to respond to that
and what we're going to make
of those things,
until we actually do it,
and so for me
that's the adventure,
is doing it with the students,
so their learning is my learning; my learning is partly
their learning. We work off each other just as our partners do.

Carol: They're obviously learning from how they constructed it, making some changes.

Felicia: Julian said, so when do you want to have the paper due?

Which totally blew me away, you know, he asked the whole class, he was there by himself and Paul was away.

This is the paper that he's doing, you know, Paul's done his, so, I was pretty surprised, and I thought,
I attributed that to more to the intervention from the students.

Julian: the seminar model has become more important in just the last few years.
And that's partly because I was finally able to be more comfortable with it, and figure it out better, because of my teaching partners.

They taught me how to do it.

Carol: You get a lot more out of the teachers, because you're not just getting what they planned to talk about. Like it's easy when a teacher has a lecture planned, you know, and they have you know, notes. When they randomly ask some questions, they're not expecting it, so lots of times I feel we'll ask them things they weren't prepared for, so you can like see their minds working, like this is interesting, we hadn't planned on this. It's nice to know that we're having new, original ideas that they've never encountered before.

Felicia (talking about balance between 'sticking to the text' and allowing in personal experiences): it's probably really tricky to do, to keep that balance, you know, and maybe they're still learning how to do that with the subject, but yeah, attaining that balance would be ideal for seminars.

Elliot: In lectures, we don't have to stick to the syllabus or the curriculum for that day. And it might be easier to go about it that way, but you're kind of asking questions that are a lot more directly related to what you see on the board, or what you see in the power point. Or what they said, and you can really take it in a different direction here, with the exception of seminars, where sometimes they really like you to stick to the article, I mean, there's definitely a good reason for that. You can kind of ask whatever question you want, that you feel stemmed from what you've just heard, and they'll answer it, they'll try to bring it somewhere, they'll, you know, listen to your concept.

Hey Gaia Gang,

Occupy PHCC is organizing an event this week called "Wear Your Student Debt". We are asking folks to wear their student debt on an armband, or duct taped to their clothes. We are hoping to generate conversations on campus about the student debt crisis and rising cost of tuition. If you have any questions, let me know, I can forward you some more links about what we've been talking about! See you all on Tuesday! Felicia

Paul: you know, disciplinary-wise,
it gives us new intellectual ideas to pursue in other courses,
and it also gives us more experience in the pedagogy,

because each class is different,

each partnership is different,

each time we teach together, it's a little different,

and new things emerge, and you carry that with you for the transfer. But I'd have to say that the students' learning is a mirror to hold up
to look at our own learning.
That's how it is for me, anyway.
If it wasn't like that, I don't think I'd be teaching.
Because if it was just one way, you know, where we disseminate, and they receive, and that's it, it's like,

why bother?

I already know this stuff, why do I have to keep teaching the same thing
over and over again?
Felicia: I think they improved a lot over the semester.

Julian: So, I learned from my colleagues in that way too. Slowly, but I learn a lot, not just about your subject matter, but their teaching, from my colleagues. Paul: Yeah, the professional
development experience --
Julian: -- is pretty extraordinary
Paul: -- is transformative. And there's nothing
comparable. You know, and that's one thing, after surveying
faculty for years, who taught in LCs, that's what they always come
back to, that their teaching partnership has been the most
transformational

professional development experience they've ever had, beyond grad school, beyond their PhD, Felicia: It doesn't really surprise beyond anything else.
me when the teachers are wowed by
something the student says, or they learn something new.
It doesn't surprise me, but it's, you know, it's satisfying,
because it feels that that's the way education should be,
us informing one another, rather than this
hierarchical

role of
teacher
and
student.

Paul…they're actually creating something new.
And that's a really exciting experience.

Julian: Absolutely.

Paul: And that's what keeps us coming back
to learning communities.

Carol: It's also nice to see
what can be passed on to the next class.
Things from the previous class. This is only
the second year they've been teaching this class.
That class's insight has been passed down to us,
and our insight will be passed down,
so, it's pretty awesome.

Dear Gaia Gang,

"There are ways in, journeys to the center of life,
through time; through air, matter, dream and thought.
The ways are not always mapped or charted,
but sometimes being lost,
if there is such a thing, is the sweetest place to be.
And always, in this search, a person might find that she is already
there, at the center of the world.
It may be a broken world, but it is glorious nonetheless." [27]

It's been an honor and a privilege
working with you all this semester.
To borrow Terrie's favorite quotation by Mahatma Gandhi, continue
to "be the change you want to see in the world."
And remember, when Gaia meets Psyche
everything is possible.
LC On...Paul & Julian.

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[27] Hogan, Linda. (2001).*The Woman Who Watches Over the World: A Native Memoir*. New York: W.W. Norton.

Emergent Pedagogy Analysis

In the LC for this study, the teachers showed an incredible amount of flexibility, in terms of how class time was spent and what readings and writings were assigned. To a certain degree, flexibility is the mark of any good teacher, but the emergent pedagogy of LCs seems to make even more apparent certain features of teaching and learning that we need to pay attention to. I find it impressive how many of the students talk comfortably about the teachers learning: learning from their students and learning about teaching. That the students noticed, that they saw this possibility at all, that Paul and Julian in some ways allowed such perceptions, all speak to a uniquely accepting and democratic learning environment.

Brookfield and Preskill (1999) use the term "engaged pluralism" to connote an openness similar to Elbow's "believing game". It represents an effort to seek common ground, even if it is never found, to accept multiplicity of views and analyses, and to be responsive to the claims of others. Brookfield and Preskill also say, similar to Dorney (1991), that there need to be outlets for grief and anger. In this context, pluralism is not simply about allowing in a variety of views and feelings, but truly listening to them. I think of both Bakhtin's "answerability" and Van Manen, who uses the term "response-ability" (1991). For Bakhtin (1981), every utterance asks for and offers a response to other utterances. Van Manen (1990) says that we teachers, researchers, and parents reflect in action; each choice that we make is a moral one and requires recognition of and responses to who our students and children are. The openness required of plurality is both intellectual and deeply personal. Gallagher and Wessles (2011) write of "emergent pedagogy" in much the way I use the term. They, like Van Manen, talk about research

practices as well as teaching practices, and it strikes me now that I was not fully able to conduct my research in the responsive manner that I celebrate in "The LC Way", although I did remain open to what was to be known, in the way that Gallagher and Wessles suggest. I might not have been as flexible about emerging practices or concerns as befitting reflective research and teaching that I describe here. These researchers refer to Ellsworth who talks of pedagogy as "practice grounded in the unknowable" (as cited in Gallaher and Wessles, p. 241). Paul and Julian mentioned often that they didn't know it all, that they enjoyed LC work particularly because it was different every time, and that they loved learning from each unique experience within an LC community.

How democratic can a classroom be, with teachers in charge, doling out grades at the end of a prescribed time frame? Dewey (1938) suggests that control can be internal or external. The rules of a game, for example, are intrinsic to the game. To play the game means to follow the rules, or else it's a different game. In what he calls traditional school, because there wasn't internal control from the communal social activities, the teacher imposed rules or they came from above or outside. In progressive schools, "The primary source of social control resides in the very nature of the work done in a social enterprise in which all individuals have an opportunity to contribute and to which all feel a responsibility" (1938, p. 56). Progressive education, he says, is not opposed to planning altogether, as long as it is flexible and allows some free play and individuality in experience. Free is not unstructured, which is what Brookfield and Preskill (1999) say about democratic discussions. They say that an open-ended discussion is not unstructured. It is not 'free', like the market.

> But the free market patently is not free if by free we mean that everyone has the same chance to participate and succeed. The market frees those with the greatest

> resources, power, and privilege to maintain their position of dominance over others. So it goes with discussion (p. 176).

Some structure then, especially if constructed from within practice, need not preclude emergent pedagogy, but allowing enough freedom from authoritative forces for this openness to thrive represents a difficult and ongoing challenge.

Julian and Paul showed flexibility and adaptability with time, deadlines, class conversations, and ideas. I was so impressed for example, when I made a comment about symbolic use of color on a sample poster, and Paul immediately thought of another poster that demonstrated the point and brought it out to show. He and Julian both responded to what came up quickly and nimbly, sometimes even photocopying some pertinent document that was just brought up during the break and handing it out in the second half of class.

The authority of the syllabus caused tension however. I wouldn't say the 'covering model' insinuated itself into this dynamic, because I didn't see an external, monolithic curriculum dictated from above or outside. Instead it was the syllabus that Paul and Julian constructed, as well as history, how the course went last year, that held authority. Paul spoke with great disappointment of how much was lost, including readings that he felt students in the previous year had benefited from. Julian felt the final paper that they let go of would have added a lot to the integration of the two disciplines. Their attachment to a previous plan, to their own syllabus, seemed more about learning than a blind adherence to a reified structure. I saw a tension between quality and quantity, with many students weighing the two quite differently than the teachers, yet both students and teachers seemed to crave and respect quality.

A particular strategy common to the LC program at PHCC is the "SGIF" (Small Group Instructional Feedback), which is a powerful enactment of emergent pedagogy. This is one of several ways that Paul and Julian included students in conversations about pedagogy and curriculum. In a SGIF, students first write individually, then in small groups and a then the whole group. Next, they talk through concerns about the class until there is a list of points for which there is whole-group consensus. Paul and Julian decided to do a SGIF, and Paul asked if I would facilitate it. Neither of us thought through how that would effect the class dynamics, but it seems to have complicated things in ways that might have hurt the classroom community. I was simply eager to be useful to the teachers. After, Paul explained that he had thought it would make sense since I was already there, and also since the students knew me, it might be easier to get useful, genuine feedback from them. The SGIF happened around the time of the big early storm and the 'wall' that Paul describes in "Public meets private" and "Process over Product". After I was asked to do the SGIF, the storm hit, and then class continued, and I asked again when it was going to happen. I was sensing a lot of frustration and resentment in the students, and was concerned that without a productive outlet for those feelings, things could really go awry. I think about Townley and colleagues (2011) and the idea that we tend to seek homogeneity, and feel a sense of community when we define ourselves by what we're not. When the LC was its own group set against non-LCs or against people not investigating ecopsychology, that created a strong sense of belonging, but when students became one group, different from, and set against teachers, and visa versa, classroom community broke down.

The SGIF itself ended up rushed. As with most days, other topics took longer and we ran out of time. There were also a few significant absences that day. Some students immediately said they wanted more time for it. Unfortunately too, Paul and Julian also did not respond right away after the SGIF, (teachers' follow-up is part of the process) leading one student at least to assume that they decided to ignore it, that they didn't care. Three different students associated me with the SGIF, calling it an intervention, calling me a mediator, thanking me for stepping in, even when I had told them more than once that it was Paul and Julian's idea. What should have been a tool for teachers and students to investigate the course dynamics and trajectory together and negotiate positive changes seemed in some ways to derail honest, trusting, open communications, with me in an uncomfortable middle place.

I was meant to report the findings to the teachers. I'm not sure why, but this meeting ended up just between Julian and me. The conversation felt like an argument, with him answering each point. I wondered, since these were not my views but those of the students, why he did this, and if things were getting even more tangled. As an outsider, a voyeur, a university researcher, did I carry certain authority that he felt as judgment? If so, this added an additional obstacle to the student-teacher negotiations of emergent pedagogy. It is always complicated to get feedback from students in truly meaningful and productive ways. I have often asked students to write letters to me at the beginning and again at the end of my course. I ask that they focus on their own goals and learning, but I often get glowing course evaluations that make me happy and then concerned. Unless the letters are anonymous, or for the students to take home with them

and not turn in to me at all, I can never know how much students are writing to my authority and for a grade.

I'm not sure when Paul and Julian would have offered their response to the SGIF, but the students had been talking amongst themselves about their concerns, and Marguerite decided to speak for the class right before a seminar was to begin, and thus the discussion occurred. It felt like a fair, respectful, calm conversation, with Paul and Julian explaining some of their decisions and course texts, particularly the hated *Not Wanted on the Voyage*, in terms that seemed reasonable. It was in this exchange that Hillary suggested seminars on the literature (not just the ecopsychology readings), something I had been wondering about for a long time. Paul and Julian agreed that that was a good idea. It became clear too that frustration was not only about 'too much reading' but confusion over all of the changes and what was due when. Julian offered to produce a new, updated syllabus, which students seemed appreciative of. Still, in his second interview. Paul spoke of the 'wall' the class had hit, and how everything seemed to go downhill after that, including the students' efforts and work. We look for stories that make sense and in some cases fit with the stories we already have in our heads. I think Paul and Julian had a story of what the course should and could be, partly based on the short history of it from last year. This perhaps, with the syllabus they had worked hard to prepare and texts they believed in, made up an authoritative discourse of sorts. Many students seemed to gravitate towards a different story, one in which they worked very hard, cared deeply about the subject, but were not able to keep up with the work and participate in ways that were fulfilling to them. They dropped hints, made little grumbles, but mostly complained amongst themselves. For some reason, they resisted sharing their

feelings with the teachers in any coherent, forceful way. Finally, within their narrative, they asserted themselves, the teachers listened respectfully, and things got better.

As with all features of the LC Way, the strengths are also the weaknesses. Remaining flexible to students' interests and needs also makes things a little chaotic. Class discussions were thrown off not just because students couldn't keep up with the reading, but also because certain fruitful discussions were allowed to go on longer than planned. Students wanted readings dropped and deadlines extended, but at the same time, felt uncomfortable not knowing exactly what was due when. As discussed in "Concentric circles", the community allowed for a fluid, spacious sense of time. But this also resulted in many students not knowing for sure what to prepare for a particular day. I felt this myself, being a person who is probably too dependent on schedules and plans. I didn't get one email, and showed up prepared for a class discussion, only to find that the trip to the mountain was happening instead. I didn't have my water bottle or other supplies, and felt caught off guard. Some students did not have internet access at home, and Paul communicated almost entirely via email. He sent out emails at least once a week, sometimes more, giving students updates on what was due when, offering additional material of interest, current news stories, videos, etc. During the class session that Paul describes as dark, where students were angry and grumpy, I also saw some useful conversations about real obstacles. This is when Penelope complained that she didn't have internet and so missed all of the announcements, and Carol kindly offered to text her and anyone else who needed it, when an urgent update came along. I didn't see this system pursued further as the course went on, but it represents an example of using transparency and conflict productively.

Transparency may also take away some of the mystery. I think this is a little different from control, but may be not unrelated. If a teacher holds on to the punch line, leading students to some sort of powerful finale, it's hard to give that up. Julian was annoyed when Paul announced that the class would write haikus at the end of the meditative walk. He wanted that to be a surprise. There is some theater to classroom work, and when the teacher gives up her or his role as director, perhaps some of that is lost. Can improvisation be a different kind of theater, equally compelling? I think so, and I think that Paul and Julian were mainly quite open to it, and genuinely enjoyed being surprised themselves, not just the ones presenting surprises. Circles are relational, while lines deny relationships. Emergent pedagogy requires communication, negotiation, attention to relationships, but then of course it is complicated by these relationships. The lines and reifications of a syllabus, linear time, the authority of teachers and the institution, also resist and sometimes derail the conversations needed for emergent pedagogy

CHAPTER 6

WHAT I KNOW NOW

I set out with the main question: What do learning and community look like and how are they experienced within a specific Learning Community (LC)? I have come to recognize that how we see affects what we see, so we often find what we're looking for. I expected to find an interaction between internally persuasive and authoritative discourses and indeed, that is what I found. I am not so interested in confirming that this dynamic exists, as much as investigating how it operates in particular settings. Similarly, I subscribe to social learning theories, and found learning to be social, but again, I wanted to experience close up what that looks like, what it means in the context of an LC. My qualitative, narrative, relational approach to research does not expect generalized theories or instruments for controlling situations. Instead, I observed and participated in a particular community and experienced how features of community and learning operated there. Still, I make some guesses and claims here about patterns of behaviors that I think can be found in any community of learning. I make claims, in the LC Way, of features common to all fully-integrated LCs. I expect contradiction or nuance to manifest in my own future research and that of others as details from other specific contexts come to light. I am proposing not a definition of what learning in community is, but tools and lenses that are helpful ways in which it enter and describe the active, contingent, contextual work of learning in community.

What I found is a dynamic of circles and lines, with circles representing collaboration, participation, internally persuasive discourse, and lived experiences within community. Lines represent reification, authoritative discourse, and the danger of

positivism. This ends up answering some of my background questions as well, namely "How does the dynamic interplay between authoritative and internally persuasive discourses operate within this community and within specific moments, and what does that tell us (myself, the participants, my readers) about learning in community?" The circles and lines that I describe include myself and my research. The whole community lived within and resisted binaries, strove for circles and community, and negotiated the duality between these. I noticed teachers and students questioning the authority of teachers, texts, and disciplines. I saw them struggling with who could and should speak when, what kinds of knowledge are privileged or not, and what kind of learning is valued and achieved. I expect that all communities gathered to learn operate within the duality of circles and lines. Authoritative voices from institutions, curricula, cultural norms, and many other sources enter classrooms and all public spaces; these messages of power and status quo speak through all of us, while individuals within those spaces work to know and be known, to understand themselves in relationship with others and with their setting. An LC, as stated earlier, offers an especially rich opportunity for participating in and observing these dualities, because of the long hours, intense relationships, and opportunities for metaphorical and metacognitive thinking.

While I did find metaphorical and transformational thinking that seems a common feature of learning communities, I did not find coherent metaphors throughout the data -- from within participant's thoughts and words -- that conveyed a clear message to me about learning in community. Metaphorical thinking comprises most of our mind work, but we can be fickle, inconsistent, and contradictory. Metaphors behind our belief systems and behaviors are not as clear or streamlined as in a well-crafted poem.

My other background questions were:

- What do the literal and metaphorical conversations tell us about learning in community? (Metaphorical conversations include interdisciplinary, nonverbal, and indirect exchanges between people, texts, and ideas.)
- In what ways do the structures and pedagogies of the LC appear to further or hinder literal and metaphorical conversations and learning in community?

These I ended up answering with the central theme in my data, The LC Way, and the text collages that I built to represent its components. There is a messiness, to learning in community and in my collages, and some of this I feel works and means something. The LC Way addresses a duality that undergirds all of the others: real and ideal. Two-way resistance between circles and lines occurs within a yearning for perfect community, a yearning that of course can never be satisfied. This is a messy business. To tidy it up would be to deny its essence. Within communication is miscommunication. Within relationships are love, hurt, mystery, anger, just to name some of the complex, irresolvable elements. I want to acknowledge too that when given a chance, most people will find something to complain about, but might feel too busy, lazy, unmotivated, or powerless, to act. My presence and my project may have brought to the surface tensions that otherwise might have simmered silently. This isn't good or bad. It might just be what research does. I have no way of knowing, though, what the community would have looked like without my presence. Overall the LC structure, as outlined in the components of the LC Way, supports learning in community. As two disciplines and the two teachers representing them come together, investigations into the epistemology of each discipline, what it means to learn, how texts and conversations support or complicate learning, all

become explicit topics for consideration. LCs facilitate deep and therefore complex and conflicted learning. Apparent opposites such as real and ideal, literature and science, circles and lines, and authoritative and internally persuasive discourse can be experienced as binaries, which then fuels power differences, alienation, and linear thinking. These entities can also be experienced as dualisms, in which case, there is a sense of a larger whole, of nuance, collaboration, or creative tensions.

I noticed the features that I list as components of the LC way, such as collaboration, process over product, and beginnings of transformation, and I also noticed the participants noticing these things. Again, within each feature is a messy reality and a lovely ideal. It is rare for teachers to think aloud and include students in curricular and pedagogical decisions. It is unusual for students to observe their teachers learning from one another and from them. These components of emergent pedagogy are not so uncommon within fully integrated LCs, and deepen learning about content, learning about learning, and learning about community. These features enable democratic discourse. For a seventeen year-old, home-schooled young woman to freely question texts, classmates, and teachers, is astounding. A class website with links going up immediately to another student's local campus Occupy movement, or a video of music for nature that another student recommends, demonstrates a remarkable openness. Sitting in a circle, facing one another, community members are offered a literal and metaphorical framework for respectful sharing, attentive listening, egalitarian negotiations, and the time and space to air conflicts and discomfort.

There are limits to how democratic a classroom can be, and how free one can or even wants to be from authoritative discourses, but classrooms that push against these limits,

question or address them in some way, are the kinds of classrooms we need. “Of course all freedoms have their limits; those limits, however, must be freely acknowledged, not imposed” (Camus, 1939, 2012, p. 16, unsigned text attributed to Camus). As complicated and sometimes contentious as the participants’ work together was in this particular community, the fact that they acknowledged dualities as opposed to binaries, and let them breathe, suggests a strength of LCs, and something all of us who work in classrooms can aspire to.

What I Did; My Researcher’s Role/s.

I am still working through post-structuralism, post-humanism and what they resist. I do not believe that there’s a battle to be won. The entrenched thinking in myself and surrounding cultures may never go away. Lakoff (1987, 1999) and Bruner (1986, 1990, 1996) show how narratives and metaphors both reflect and shape our thinking. One such story is the idea of a stable identity. Don’t we need to hold on to that? To feel safe, to feel that our lives have meaning, that they are narratives moving forward, towards self-improvement or wisdom? I write this piece in the belief that I have grown and learned over the course of my dissertation work. I did not present the data in a narrative, linear fashion, because I felt the data, including participants’ words and behaviors, defied linear time and straightforward narratives. Still, there was some storytelling, which I think is inevitable. I tell one story of attempting and failing to nurture relationships that would support collaborative research. The two teachers, particularly Paul, tells a story of a smooth, successful beginning and then a wall that the community hit, with a slow deterioration towards a disappointing finish. Several students tell a story of a positive but troubling beginning, building up toward an explosion, a protest or intervention that the

teachers learned from, and then some improvements leading towards a happier ending. These stories offer a beginning, middle, and end, and seem to reach for some moral, conclusion, or lesson. These stories too imply a stable self. In all cases, a situation, an experience is happening to 'me' (the narrator), and it remains outside of and separate from that me that doesn't change in essence. At the same time, the 'me' learns and progresses. Learning then is two different things. It is something that happens to 'me'; it is offered by my setting and is somehow separate from my own beliefs and interactions with that setting. Such learning can feed, be exploited by, binaries (inner/outer, personal/public). Learning is also transformation, but then I have to investigate myself and perhaps change in ways that challenge the stable self. Stephanie represented this conflict when she talked about wanting to 'just learn, not change' and then also talking about how much she changed over the course of the class, but that this was gradual and difficult and she both resisted and relished it.

The myths of progress and a core self, as Gergen (1991, 2000) tells it, are indicative of modernist thinking. One danger of the stable self may lay behind harmful essentializing of 'woman' 'man' 'student' 'teacher' and other such categories that limit and oppress us. I hope that I have not objectified my participants, nominalized learning and community, or caved in to positivism to a degree that compromises this work. I think not. My struggle, like the other struggles described here, should be hopeful and helpful. The efforts I make are part of the kind of inquiry I write about, inquiry within community. I will borrow Guyas' (2008) words here: "I am not only looking to further my understanding of relationality of self and knowledge through a process of holistic

inquiry, but also to learn to accept the importance of cherishing the strangeness within, that which cannot be fully understood (p. 32).

I have treated human experience and communication as conversation. I have also treated classrooms as novels. Spoken words coming together in a particular moment or setting are texts. Fish (1980) says things he once saw as competing to control or constrain interpretation (text, reader, author), later he came to see as products of interpretation. This tells me something about power and how stuck I am sometimes in a humanist, pre-Foucault notion of power, when I miss the constructedness of interpretations and access to them. I realize now that within the text of the classroom community that I participated in, certain components, such as a particular text or mind set, were seen as constraining the learning, and this was part of the interpretation of the classroom learning. For example, many participants saw empiricism as a dogmatic, bullheaded force crowding out other ways of knowing. That constraint was created by the interpretation. Authoritative discourse as a constraint enters circle of learning within interpretation.

While I tried to understand and represent participants' experiences and offered many of their own words so that they could speak for themselves, the main author is me; there is no denying that. I create most constraints in my own interpretations, often being trapped by the binary thinking and positivist stance that I try so hard to escape. If I 'read' the 'text' of the learning community, I keep in mind what Fish says, that reading is an event, not an extraction of meaning from a text. It is an experience. Reading and interpretation enter writing, and I have written an event, an enactment. Is my research empirical? Empiricism became a confusing, problematic term in the community that I observed/participated in. Thinking about empirical as experiential, grounded in lived

experiences, then yes. What I love most about qualitative, empirical research is also what I love about literature: the details – specific and contextual. Reading about one character's observation or thoughts in a novel, or reading a participant's own words, this experience grips me and puts me there. I tried to offer that, to let the details speak for themselves to the degree possible within a constructed, crafted text, as all texts are.

Bakhtin (1981, 1986) focuses on language as a metaphor for human experience. I saw what Knoeller (2004) called Bakhinian voicing in classrooms, where words and voices of others cycle through class texts and conversations. I was struck by how often participants put on another voice in interviews, imitating the person they were talking about, or a generic person representing 'a guy', or 'science', for example. In participants' words, I noticed too the slippery pronouns that Sperling (2004) talks about, signs of other voices entering an utterance within a complex moment. A person refers to a vague 'he', for example, as if there is only one 'he', or a scary 'they', who could be any authority pressing in on the community. This confirms for me the ongoing nature of our utterances within human interactions, and also that community is in us as we are in community; learning is layered, spiraling in ways that defy linear time and rigid structures.

We don't always mean what we say. Thinking about multiple and situated identity and subjectivities, maybe that isn't a problem. In some way, we said what we meant for that moment, or were parodying or quoting someone else in the general soup of shared utterances, and anyway, it was said and then responded to. We express a "currently active identity" (Oyserman & Destin, 2010, p. 1002). Some people enjoy being provocative, either playfully so, to draw others out, as I feel Paul is, or as a way of testing their own identity and ideas in a community, which I feel Carol and Penelope performed at times.

Knoeller points out that we voice ourselves too, speaking our earlier thoughts and new responses to people in our current context. Perhaps any research that represents people's words on a page removes that ongoing, voicing quality and fixes meanings that might be ephemeral and in progress. As I take language metaphorically, I also assert that there are ways to know and be that are beyond or before human language. Silence is one space for this. I hoped in the collages to capture a flickering dynamic of multiple possibilities, overlapping and cycling of voices, and unvoiced understandings in the in-between spaces.

Was I a "participant observer" and if so, what are the implications of that? This issue I raised in one of the Circles collages. Belenky and her research partners (1986) talk about how 'connected teaching', what they advocate for women students, is similar to the participant-observer role of researchers, but another researcher whom they mention, Reinharz, expresses discomfort with that label, and suggests "temporary affiliation" instead. This includes listening deeply to participants and offering feedback, meeting on common ground, and engaging in full conversations. Similarly, they cite Noddings who talks about student-teacher relationships:

> I do no need to establish a lasting, time-consuming personal relationship with every student. What I must do is to be totally and nonselectively present to the student – to each student – as he addresses me. The time interval may be brief but the encounter is total (as cited by Belenky et al, 1986, p. 225).

I am a 'connected learner' and wanted to conduct connected research. Maybe the time period does not need to be long, as Noddings suggests, but relationships do take time, and everyone moves forward at their own pace. Trust, respect, openness, honesty, these are not commodities to grab, purchase, or extricate, nor is achieving them a straightforward,

uniform process. All relationships are fraught, complex, and unresolved, including the relationships between me and other community members. I may have been not a teacher and not a student, but I was and am many other things. The students are also parents, siblings, workers, and teachers. The teachers are activists and hikers and friends and learners. These multiple identities allowed multiple and sometimes confusing relationships. To be a connected or relational learner means to notice and remain responsible to the complex relationships and to honor their complexity.

Some Misgivings and Limitations

I want to do good research, research that, as Hostetler (2005) suggests, does good. Just as with teaching, however, research may have subtle and long-term effects, both good and bad, that do not make themselves known in a clear or timely fashion. I asked the four participants whom I interviewed most extensively about what effects the research seemed to have, and received mixed answers. I do not feel that my work did obvious good for the people whom I worked with, and that unsettles me; this connects to my thinking about constraints on collaborative research.

As mentioned above, a certain amount of messiness is required as we investigate and participate in learning in community. How much of my research messiness was inevitable and part and parcel of my topic and practice, and how much would I fix next time around, I am not yet sure. Reflecting back on limitations and challenges represents an important part of this story. I remember losing my trust in Sperling (2004) when she described contradictions in teachers' ideas of literacy and how they applied those to assessments of students. I wondered if she gave the teachers opportunities to make sense of those contradictions, because it was not mentioned in the paper. I vowed to do better with my

own project, and then did not succeed. I cannot simply apply collaborative, responsive research as a template or formula to the work that I do. It evolves from within relationships, and I was not able to build such relationships with my participants. I was left with tons of data that only I made sense of, with feedback from advisors and a critical friend, but none from the participants. This felt like a huge burden to me, a strain on my sense of research ethics.

My practice was not the emergent pedagogy that I extol in LCs. "Choosing both methodological and pedagogical practices that are responsive, dialogical and shaped by the collaborative impulses and productive resistances of student [and teacher] participants would considerably raise the pedagogical and methodological stakes and potentially offer less coercive forms of involvement" (Gallagher and Wessles, p. 255). While I noted collaborative impulses and productive resistance, I was not able to facilitate a research relationship that made use of those within the research practices. In order to be the kind of researcher I would like to be, I feel that I would need to work with participants who asked me in, who created the research plan and protocol with me, and who co-authored the resulting report. The reality of a lone graduate student completing her doctoral work carried me far from that ideal.

The collages too suffer some limitations. They are removed from context, and frozen in time, defying a dynamic, ongoing quality of time and human experiences (although the same would be true for any research report that is text on a page). "Hold still, we're going to do your portrait, so that you can begin looking like it right away" (Brueggemann quoting Helene Cixous, p. 17). I write about multiple views and voices in my notion of community and of my research practice. In a circle, there are infinite interactions between

different points. Yet I am the sole author of this text, and even direct quotations of participants are edited by me and shaped into collages that I alone created. I think of Bakhtin's dialogism and also Gergen's idea of the populated self, with voices of others becoming part of us, as 'social imagery' (Erick Klinger's) and 'social ghosts' (Mary Gergen's) (as described by Gergen, p. 71). "In an important sense, as social saturation proceeds we become pastiche, imitative assemblages of each other" (Gergen, p. 71). At various points, we test those voices, stretch them, challenge them, reshape them in our interactions with others, but until then, they are processed inside of our heads. My work is clearly populated by the dreams, theories, hopes and fears of many, but filtered through my mind. I cannot claim to represent those others. I represent my understandings of those others. Even if this text is a conversation, within that dialogue, I seem to get the last word. Davies, (2000) writes of agency as *author*ity, authoring, but I'm the author. In what ways do my participants author themselves? Well, they do so daily in classroom interactions, and to a degree, I honor that when I put their exact words in my work, but all the selecting and shaping means I'm authoring them. They also don't get credit. They don't literally author this text. I thought of this particularly when Raneff handed me some extra poems he had written. I had already copied down everyone's haikus from the trip to the reservoir, and had misgivings about that. I was touched that he wanted to share his poetry with me, but realized if I included his poems in this text, they would only be published under his false name and lost in this very long document with a limited audience.

Through pseudonyms, participants become different people to me, characters. As I become comfortable with the fake names, do I give myself additional poetic license that

frees me from responsibility to the living people whom I write about? In a sense, if I take a postmodernist view of identity as ongoing and situated, there is only one of many selves represented by the pronoun 'I', and one of many selves, or some sort of surrogate selves, represented by the doubling of falsely named identities peopling this text. We community members are all new, contingent, situated selves within this text. However, this does not free me of responsibility for the participants of my study, nor does it cancel my concern that the project did not enjoy as much collaboration and shared meaning-making as I had hoped for. "Instead of thinking of our actions, encounters, and thoughts – our living inquiry – as substance that can be arranged in discrete moments, counted, and subjected to normative evaluations, we need to understand living inquiry as responsibility" (Irwin & Springgay, 2008, p. xxxii).

Further Steps

Before fully-integrated LCs become obsolete (because they are considered expensive), more studies on their incredible power and potential will hopefully establish their importance and keep them going. How we are bullied by but also challenge binaries within communities of learning requires further investigation. Each specific site will yield its own stories, but collectively, we might gain insight on how authoritative and internally persuasive discourses interact when people gather together in general, and more specifically, in schools. I invite artistic interpretations of circles and lines, particularly in regards to learning and practice, reification, positivism, and expanding circles of community. Time, while experienced and measured differently by different people, impacts relationships dramatically; I would enjoy spending more time with participants as they move through more than one LC and navigate learning across disciplines within

different communities. A long term study looking at circles and lines, binaries and positivism within communities of learning could yield very interesting stories, while allowing the researcher better opportunities to nourish and notice her relational work.

In classrooms, I would like to see how far emergent pedagogy can go. How explicit and transparent can a teacher be about her pedagogical and curricular decisions? Matusov and his research partners (2007) demonstrate that conversations about teaching practices necessarily include conversations about educational values. This could be liberating and transformational. "In essence, a dialogue about educational values can serve as a part of participants' efforts to transcend their individual circumstances, backgrounds, attitudes, and values for 'a new good' [or 'an old good'] that emerges in the dialogue and practice at large" (Matusov et al., 2007, p. 419, quotation marks and brackets theirs). This is likely not easy to carry out, however, particularly with powerful voices inside and outside of an educator's head, shouting for standardization and accountability, nagging for staying on task, covering material, and getting the work done.

I welcome further conversations, scholarly, educational, casual, artistic, and hybrids of these, about knowing, truth, positivism, and binaries. Such inquiries would explore what it means to be human, if such claims are even useful, and how we could transcend a human/nature binary, with the health of our planet at stake. Such work would represent resistance to a pervasive argument culture, which oversimplifies ideas, negates dialogue, and turns potential community into hostile battlegrounds. My hope is that work such as this document and any thoughts it responds to and provokes can help to unpack postmodernism, what it offers us, how we resist it, and what that tells us about ourselves, our societies, and our schools.

> It's not a matter of emancipating truth from every system of power (which would be a chimera, for truth is already power) but of detaching the power of truth from the forms of hegemony, social, economic and cultural, within which it operates at the present time (Foucault, 1972, 1980, p. 133).

Successes

The participants in this study succeeded in challenging categories and working in a postmodern, relational manner that Gergen describes. This is in part due to the magic of LCs.

> Language viewed as social practice enables a fruitful and imaginative exploration of the ways in which subjects create meaning and transform the world through action, destabilizing tired and often oppressive signs (e.g. *woman*) that have a long history of fixing and essentializing meaning" (Jackson, 2004, p. 674).

LCs offer the creative opportunities for such imagination work. LCs achieve what Landay (2004) calls for: addressing the difference between internally persuasive and authoritative discourses, and merging them in productive ways. They offer the transparency and metacognition for revealing and inspiring metaphorical thinking. Metaphor itself is hybridity and plurality: two different entities come together, and instead of one dominating in a reified binary, a third space is created for a new item. We see this in Pratt's (1991), "contact zones". Simply by honoring two very different disciplines, their overlap and contradictions, LCs do this. "Metaphor produces hybrid realities by yoking together unlikely traditions of thought" (Rutherford & Bhabha, p. 212). Fully-integrated LCs represent and enact such metaphors. I hope to have shared the excitement, the complexities, and the great potential of LCs for furthering democratic education and conversations about learning in community.

At their very best, LCs come close to ideal community circles with plurality, tolerance, tension, silence, and inquiry. The data of this study show that learning is a

journey and community is inquiry is learning, but also that learning is richer when transparent. When democratic conversation, silence, and internally persuasive discourse are heard and acknowledged, when the learning environment supports and makes apparent these factors of ideal community, we see more clearly how we fall short of the ideal. At the same time, we recognize ourselves and communication with others in the context of our striving. We recognize, improve and are empowered by our efforts towards ideal community. With transparency, love, hope and dreams, we hold on to our vision of ideal community. If we lose sight of that vision, we may fall into a complacent acceptance of an agonistic, linear, non-communal status quo. If we don't have opportunities for experiencing democratic discourse and shared inquiry, we might not even see the potential and promise of learning in community.

Have I told truths or been true? Have I shared instructive, useful material? Fish (1980) offers that to claim literature is what is fictive, or literature is what is not normative, is to "depend on the positivist assumption of an objective 'brute fact' world and a language answerable to it on the one hand, and of an entity (literature) with diminished responsibility to that world on the other" (p. 110). There isn't an objective truth out there, but nor is my arts based work not responsible at all to real people who shared a lot of themselves in the context of a real community. I am presenting an essence of what I saw and learned about learning in community. I do so with love and care. I attempt an enactment, which makes this text an alternative, parallel experience. I invite readers in to the experience within a web of overlapping and concentric circles of community. It is not an end, but a middle, and a beginning, and a circling back again. The way may not be straightforward or clear, but it is a worthy adventure,

> …a “bewilderness” in which the mind wanders without certainties, desolate, silent, awkward. But in that milky, dim strangeness lies the way. It can’t be found in the superficial order imposed by positive and negative opinions, the good/bad, yes/no moralizing that denies fear and ignores mystery (Tzu, 2009, pp. 30-31, notes by Le Guin)

APPENDICES

FACULTY INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR INTERVIEW 1.
NOTE: THESE ARE POSSIBLE QUESTIONS. THIS WILL BE A SEMI-FORMAL INTERIVEW.

1. Please tell me the story of how you came to teaching, and how you came to teaching LCs.

2. What metaphor would you use for learning? (Note: I will give my participants warning about this question, so that they can think about it ahead of time. Same for # 4.)

3. Can you please offer examples from your experiences as a student or teacher that fit with your learning metaphor?

4. What metaphor would you use for community?

5. Can you please offer examples from your experiences as a student or teacher that fit with your community metaphor?

6. What do you love most about teaching in LCs?

7. What would you say are some of the biggest challenges of teaching in LCs?

8. What are your main hopes for this particular LC?

9. What are your main concerns about this particular LC?

10. What advise would you give to someone who is starting an LC program?

11. Tell me a little bit about who you are outside of the classroom.

12. Is there anything else you would like me to know about you?

FACULTY INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR INTERVIEW 2
NOTE: THESE ARE POSSIBLE QUESTIONS. THIS WILL BE A SEMI-FORMAL INTERIVEW.

Starting questions (participants will we given notice of these so they can gather their thoughts ahead of time):

1. Revisiting your learning metaphor, can you comment on how you feel about it now? Either offer specific examples of experiences from this class that confirm the metaphor, or if you feel your metaphor need changing, how and why?

2. Revisiting your community metaphor, can you comment on how you feel about it now? Either offer specific examples of experiences from this class that confirm the metaphor, or if you feel your metaphor needs changing, how and why?

Possible follow-up questions, depending on the participant's responses:

1. What are you most enjoying about teaching in this particular LC?
   Least? Challenges?

2. What surprises have you encountered, in terms of how the course is being delivered or how it is received?

3. What surprises have you encountered in terms of your own behavior or that of your colleague or students?

4. Have you, your colleague or any of the students taken actions that you feel directly affected the learning in community? If so, can you describe the action/s and its/their effects?

5. Please describe the quality of the conversations in this LC so far, as you experience them.

6. Do you feel that you are learning in this LC? If so, what, when, how, from whom?

7. Do you think there's one area where students are showing the most growth, e.g. writing, discussions, collaboration, or is it different for each student?

   Would you say students' learning affects that of others in this LC?
   Does your learning affect that of the students or your colleague?

Possible additional or final questions:

1. What effects, if any, do you think this research project ("Learning in Community") has had on you personally or professionally or on the LC?

In terms of assignments, delivery of instruction, collaboration with partner, etc.

2. What advice would you give to a teacher who is going to teach in an LC for the first time?

3. Is there any take away message you've found for yourself from teaching this LC?

   Or, what would you like to keep in mind for next time you teach this LC or any LC?

4. Is there anything else you would like me to know?

STUDENT INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR INTERVIEW 1.
NOTE: THESE ARE POSSIBLE QUESTIONS. THIS WILL BE A SEMI-FORMAL INTERIVEW.

1. Please tell me the story of how you came to be a student here at HCC, and how you came to be in this LC.

2. What metaphor would you use for learning? (Note: I will give my participants warning about this question, so that they can think about it ahead of time. Same for # 4.)

3. Can you please offer examples from your experience that fit with your learning metaphor?

4. What metaphor would you use for community?

5. Can you please offer examples from your experience that fit with your community metaphor?

6. What are you expecting from this LC?

7. So far, has anything surprised you about this LC?

8. Can you describe what kind of a learner you are, how you learn best?

9. Can you describe some of your short-term or long-term goals?

10. Tell me a little bit about who you are outside of the classroom.

11. Is there anything else you would like me to know about you?

STUDENT INTERVIEW PROTOCOL 2
NOTE: THESE ARE POSSIBLE QUESTIONS. THIS WILL BE A SEMI-FORMAL INTERVIEW

Starting questions (participants will we given notice of these so they can gather their thoughts ahead of time):

1. Revisiting your learning metaphor, can you comment on how you feel about it now? Either offer specific examples of experiences from this class that confirm the metaphor, or if you feel your metaphor need changing, how and why?

2. Revisiting your community metaphor, can you comment on how you feel about it now? Either offer specific examples of experiences from this class that confirm the metaphor, or if you feel your metaphor needs changing, how and why?

Possible follow-up questions, depending on the participant's responses:

3. What are you most enjoying about this particular LC?
   Least? Challenges?

4. What surprises have you encountered, in terms of how the course is being delivered or how it is received?

5. What surprises have you encountered in terms of your own behavior or that of your teachers or classmates?

6. Have you, your classmates or either of the teachers taken actions that you feel directly affected the learning in community? If so, can you describe the action/s and its/their effects?

7. Please describe the quality of the conversations in this LC so far, as you experience them.

8. Do you feel that you are learning in this LC? If so, what, when, how, from whom?

9. Do you think there's one area where you are experiencing the most growth, e.g. writing, discussions, collaboration?

   Would you say students' learning affects that of others in this LC?
   Do you see the teachers learning? If so, how, when, from whom?

Possible additional or final questions:

3. What effects, if any, do you think this research project ("Learning in Community") has had on you personally or on the LC?

In terms of assignments, delivery of instruction, collaboration with partner, etc.

4. What advice would you give to a student who is going to enroll in an LC for the first time?

5. Is there any take away message you've found for yourself from taking this LC?

   Or, what would you like to keep in mind for next time you take an LC? Do you plan on taking another LC? Why/why not?

6. Is there anything else you would like me to know?

"Learning in Community". Focus Group Possible Questions.
Researcher: Sara Schupack

1) Tell me about your learning experience in this LC so far.

2) Do you feel that this class is a community? Why/why not/in what ways?

3) What would you say a community is?

4) Would you say knowledge is shared in this LC, and if so, can you describe specific examples?

5) Is there anything that you wish had been different in terms of learning or community? Can you give specific examples?

6) Do you feel you're learning about the separate disciplines of English and economics? If so, explain how that occurs and how you feel about that.

7) Do you feel the two disciplines combine or overlap? If so, how and where does this occur (for example, in written assignments, class discussions, projects, informal conversations, online assignments, etc.)

8) Are there differences between your learning experience in this LC and in stand-alone classes? If so, please describe.

9) Would you recommend an LC to all or some other students? Why/why not? If not all, why not?

"Learning in Community" Demographics Survey
Researcher: Sara Schupack

Please respond to the questions below. I would appreciate answers to all questions, as that helps me get an overall picture of the make up of this community. You have no obligation to answer them all, however, and can skip whichever ones you would rather not write responses to.

Your name: _____

Your age: _____

Your living situation (do you live with one or both parents, a romantic partner, a spouse, friends, alone, etc?):

Please describe your economic situation. You could write what you consider your economic class background to be, like working class, middle class, upper class. You could also share you current household's estimated annual income.

Do you currently work for a salary? If so, please write what job/s you currently hold and how many hours a week on average that you work.

Do you do any non-paid work? (Parenting is mentioned below.) Please describe:

Do you have financial aid at HCC?

Do you take care of any dependents (children, sick or elderly relatives, etc.) and if so, please briefly describe your responsibilities. If those responsibilities are shared, describe how that occurs:

What is your first language? Do you speak a language other than English? If so, what language/s and are you fluent, intermediate or a beginner?

Please describe your racial and ethnic heritage:

How long have you been at HCC?

Do you have any disabilities? If so, please describe.

How many courses and credits are you currently enrolled in?

Do you have an idea of what your major might be? If so, what is it? You could mention what areas interest you or that you are considering as majors.

**********THANK-YOU**********

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