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RELATIONAL KNOWING AND RESPONSIVE INSTRUCTION

BY

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DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

Teachers make innumerable decisions in their classrooms, taking into account students' readiness for a particular topic, their cultural background, and their learning profile. However, the teacher's role—taking care of high numbers of individual students along with the classroom as a whole—can be stressful and discouraging. The current educational conversation leads teachers toward seeing students as test scores as opposed to individual human beings. I would argue that excellent teachers know their students—knowing that goes beyond grades from the previous year. I also argue for high quality, responsive teaching—teaching that acknowledges the needs of individuals and requires teachers to respond in some effective way. This project was a qualitative case study (Dyson & Genishi, 2005) of one fifth-grade classroom teacher as she strove to be responsive to her students. It documented how the relationships she built with her students affected and were affected by her responsive teaching.

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Introduction

What does it mean to truly *know* a student, and why should we address this as a goal, when so much of the current educational conversation revolves around business-oriented vocabulary such as results, targets, and effectiveness? Increasingly, the standardization of curricula, materials, and tests students take each year give the impression that there are not only straightforward ways to improve student learning, there are the *right* ways. The idea is that if teachers do enough of X, the result will be Y—for each and every student. The technical view of teaching would insist that there are clear rules recommending particular actions in certain circumstances, while a moral view of teaching would suggest that this is much more context-based and individualized. The belief underlying this research is that teaching is a fundamentally unique and human task. Human beings do not come in standardized packages or respond in standardized ways. Teaching is not simply an information transfer endeavor. It is a human interaction.

From this perspective, it is difficult to imagine even the best teacher able to respond to the varied needs of her¹ classroom without knowing her students well. Yet students are more than their instructional needs; a teacher must also pay close attention to students' good days and bad days and must know when to push and when to back off. Students are more than learners; they are small idiosyncratic people who want to be cared for, understood, liked by their peers, and engaged by instructional opportunities. Without extensive knowledge of a student and deep situational awareness, how would a teacher know when to move a challenging activity a little further? When to pull a student aside or praise him or her in public? How to decide when to call home with a concern or with a positive comment? “A professionally acknowledged moral

¹ While clearly both males and females are teachers, I have chosen to use the feminine pronoun for a teacher throughout for ease of reading since my focal participant will be a female teacher.

language would allow teachers to think about their daily practices as essentially pedagogical interactions” (van Manen, 2000, p. 315). Those pedagogical interactions require a caring relationship between the teacher and student. While I argue that the relationship with and knowing of a child should not be merely the means to educational ends, truly effective teaching cannot happen without this knowledge of students.

Effective teaching requires that we respond to children in our care appropriately. I deliberately use the vague term *appropriately*. We plan for and respond to students in ways that are beyond the instructional and that involve the social, emotional, ethical, and political. Unfortunately, the one-way delivery of content, criticized for decades (e.g., as banking education by Freire, 2012), still takes place in U.S. classrooms. While students must of course leave schools knowing more than when they entered, content knowledge alone will never be enough to meet even the minimum “College and Career Ready” expectations (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2010). Educators cannot crack open young skulls, pour knowledge in, and close them up for the next year’s teacher. Instead, they must learn about children, respond by recommending books the children might be interested in, hook them with an exciting science project, listen to stories about their siblings, show them ways to become involved in their communities, and simply enjoy them.

As educational stakeholders discuss the responsivity with which teachers address their students, it is worth noting the lexical and semantic associations between the words *respond*, *responsive*, and *responsibility*. At the moment a teacher is looked upon by a student—by van Manen’s (2000) “the other” (p. 319) in this case—that student is already in distress and appealing to the teacher for something—or for many things simultaneously—all without any of this need being expressed verbally or even articulated consciously. The student is looking for a

response and, van Manen (2000) notes, as the teacher, “I cannot help but feel responsible even before I want to feel responsible” (p. 320). When students enter their classrooms, they look to adults to provide...something. They may be concerned whether their teachers will dislike them or think they cannot read well enough. They might be worried that teachers will call home when they are in trouble or inappropriately praise them in front of their peers. Educators are responsible, not only for students’ instructional growth, but for a large portion of their development as a human being.

When educators look back at children, they are not objective responders. They do not find a file in their brain for each child’s need, pull out an appropriate strategy, and implement it without care or concern. Quite often, in fact, teachers do feel guilt and worry over the children in their care. However, responses to children are not solely emotional; as Noddings (1984) indicated, they are emotions mixed with consciousness. Van Manen (2000) suggested that this emotion is analogous to being held hostage. But if we do not feel these things in our line of duty, we move too quickly to the abstract solving of problems. When this happens, our students become *problems* as opposed to being *children*. “It seems that we constantly betray the call of caring responsibility in our efforts to be caring in the general sense of duty, as in our professional practice” (van Manen, 2000, p. 324).

A review of the preceding paragraphs may lead one to assume that in order to teach, one must get to know her students. While this statement is not untrue, it is a vast oversimplification of classroom actions and interactions. I argue in this dissertation that to know students through the concept of relational ethics is not only a valid and honorable goal of education, but is required in order to provide students with appropriate instruction. However, it is not a unidirectional force leading one from a relationship with students to better instruction. The

relational knowing of students, knowing students within the teacher-student relationship, is in constant interaction with a classroom teacher's instruction *in order for both to take place*.

I argue here for teachers to *know their students*—knowing that goes beyond a benchmark score and grades from the previous year. I also argue for *high quality, responsive teaching*—teaching that acknowledges the needs of individuals and requires teachers to respond in some effective way to those needs. This project highlights the intersection between the two: Teachers cannot provide responsive instruction without the recognition of their students' personhoods, and knowledge of and relationships with students cannot occur without providing appropriate learning opportunities.

In order to know a student well, teachers form and strengthen relationships with their students that enhance learning. Scholars such as Noddings (2005, 2013) and van Manen (1986, 1991) have discussed the ways that teachers form relationships with children in their care, though their emphases are somewhat different. Buber (1970) and Benjamin (1988) also discussed, again in different ways, the importance of the interaction between individuals, and how one becomes changed through the interaction with another. Palmer (1983) is yet another scholar who described knowing as a relational process. He recommended a look beyond objectivism and the need to control toward a goal of communication with others.

While the authors highlighted in this paper appear to agree that the teacher's task is almost insurmountable—trying to care for, relate to, recognize, and worry about multiple children in her care—none of them let teachers off the hook. Consequently, the research I conducted involved questioning this task: the relational knowing of each child in the elementary classroom and the teacher's experience when encountering this demand on a minute-to-minute basis. This study is not primarily about effective practice—though of course it is related. Rather,

it is about how teachers remain attuned to their students as whole, complex people who are “being and becoming” (van Manen, 1991, p. 17) as not only learners, but also caring and thoughtful people. I conducted a case study of one White, female, fifth grade teacher over a four-month period, including one follow-up interview at the end of the school year, collecting data via classroom observations, teacher and student interviews, video of selected classroom interactions, and a collaborative researcher-participant journal.

Frequently-Used Terms

Below are terms that I use frequently in this dissertation. Others are defined in context throughout the chapters, but these five are important in order to get an idea of the project’s focus and goals.

Differentiated Instruction (DI). As we shall see in later sections, the definition of differentiated instruction is widely debated. Tomlinson (2001, 2003), a prolific author on the subject, defines it as an approach to teaching that requires planning for and then responding to the needs of all students. She cautioned that differentiated instruction is not a strategy; it is more of a mindset. It is a philosophy of teaching that requires thinking of the students before the curriculum. Traditional views of DI include a focus on adapting the *content* of what one teaches, the *process* by which one approaches a topic, and/or the *product* students create.

Pedagogical Tact. Work with other human beings often involves tact; one must know what to say when, and when to avoid uncomfortable topics in professional settings. Van Manen (1986) expanded on this idea in his description of pedagogic tact. While adults who work with children are often tactful in the ways described above, the attention and sensitivity that is required to be this type of teacher is too complex to be described by a list of rules. It involves

how adults experience and respond to certain situations with children; how they “enter into the world of a child” (p. 10).

Responsive Instruction. While Tomlinson’s (2001, 2003) focus has always been on effective differentiated instruction, in some texts, she has used the term responsive instruction as a synonym to early definitions (1999). This emphasis on responding to students focuses on the teacher’s behavior rather than specific classroom strategies. In this project and Jones (2014), I use the terms responsive teaching and/or responsive instruction for two reasons: One, it allows my research participants to rid themselves of the associations with traditional DI (content, process, product, etc².) and two, the focus on teacher behavior is more aligned to what I want to study. Later in the paper I discuss that the term *responsive* has its roots in the word *respond* and is analogous to *responsibility*, both of which are important to the theoretical framing of this project.

Relational Knowing. This term can be found in the seminal work of Hollingsworth, Dybdahl, and Minarik (1993) that focused on the importance of relational knowing in teaching. The authors describe relational knowing as knowing students through relationships, including a belief in themselves and their students, an awareness of how to look at their students and themselves, and how to reflect on the student-teacher relationship. The authors also cite the importance of Vygotsky’s (1978) work on social constructivism as a key element of relational knowing. Education is a social process and the classroom can and should be considered a community. This knowing through relationships is of the utmost importance in teaching, since

² The differentiation of content, process, and/or product is one of the elements of traditional differentiated instruction as described by Tomlinson (2001). Differentiating content includes adapting the material to be learned, either by providing choice during a lesson or chunking the content through jigsaw groups, for example. Differentiating the process is changing how students make meaning of the content. For example, providing a variety of ways students can reflect on the material introduced, or giving additional time to digest the new content. Teachers differentiate the products of a learning activity when they allow students to demonstrate their learning in a variety of formats.

teachers consider students' actions and reactions in ways that are relative to the teacher. A question one teacher or classroom observer might consider rude, such as, "Why do we have to learn this?" is an opportunity for explication to another someone with knowledge of that student.

Relational Ethics. At times I use the terms relational ethics and care ethics synonymously. This is not done carelessly, as I believe they serve the same purpose in this project. Relational ethics (Austin, 2008) is an approach to ethics within the relationship. This is about how we should live together, in the case of teaching, how the student-teacher relationship is created and maintained. It is about being interdependent and finding context-dependent responses for actions. There is no one answer to "What should I do?" It is about what maintains the relationship.

This is quite similar to the way Noddings (2005, 2013) described an ethic of care. Caring is complex and also context-dependent. It is negotiated; one cannot say that one is a caring person without a reciprocal response from the one who is supposedly being cared for. "By and large, we do not say with any conviction that a person cares if that person acts routinely according to some fixed rule" (2013, p. 13).

Recognition: Benjamin (1988) described recognition as "that response from the other which makes meaningful the feelings, intentions, and actions of the self" (p. 12). Taking a step further than Noddings (2005, 2013), Benjamin insisted that recognition can only come from another that we recognize as a whole person. Noddings referred to *motivational displacement*, where one empties herself in order to receive the experience of the other. In contrast, Benjamin suggested that the "recognizer" does not empty him or herself in order to receive the "recognized;" both are subjects in their own right in order for the relationship to work. Benjamin described this idea as affirming, validating, knowing, accepting, understanding, empathizing,

appreciating, seeing, etc. My research stance tends toward *recognition* as opposed to *motivational displacement*, since I do not believe it is productive or even possible for teachers to truly displace their own needs to receive the experiences of their students.

When a student asks for recognition, they are saying, “Here I am,” and awaiting a response. Benjamin (1988) suggested that the response is not just confirming, “Yes, you are,” but is also how we (teachers) find ourselves in that response. Each subject acknowledges the other as a separate and distinct subject. Benjamin described this as “intersubjective relatedness” (2007, p. 1). Separate from the two subjects, there is a third space where each recognizes the other as different but also connects to the other’s mind. For the student to experience his/her subjectivity in the teacher’s presence, he or she has to recognize the teacher as a subject in her own right. Conversely, and an important piece in this area of relational ethics, the teacher must recognize the student as a subject with his or her own experiences, needs, desires, development, etc. in order to fully accept her (the teacher’s) own subjectivity.

Overview

In this study, I addressed the ways that teaching is a uniquely moral, individual, and caring task, as teachers find themselves at the intersection between the personal and the systemic (Endres, 2007). My research questions were as follows:

- How does a teacher engage in the process of getting to know, recognize, and care for her students?
- What is the teacher’s instructional process, as she is continuously knowing and teaching her students?
- What is the teacher’s experience during this process of teaching, seeing, responding, and caring?

Chapter 1 will address the theoretical literature base related to ideas of care and the relational knowing of children. In this chapter I focus closely on the work of Noddings (2005, 2013) and van Manen (1986, 1991). The work of a number of other scholars who have added to the theoretical discussion of what it means to truly respond in engaged and caring ways in educational settings will also be addressed. The theories of Noddings and van Manen are both rooted in Buber's (1970) work, so I will address his theories in conjunction with theirs. Benjamin (1988), Palmer (1983), and Levinas (1969) will be discussed as well since their work fits within the aforementioned authors. Congruence between the theorists' ideas will be laid out across four topics: the idea of *recognition*, how students address their teachers and how teachers are obligated to respond, objectivity and subjectivity in schooling and relationships, and lastly the need for reflection and introspection.

In Chapter 2, my empirical literature review, I will begin by briefly addressing the field of differentiated instruction, a field that has been primarily responsible for an increased focus on responding to individual and small group needs. Within this section, I will address what the traditional discussion on differentiation is generally missing: a focus on students as whole people for whom talk of learning styles, continuous assessment, and individual learning plans are woefully inadequate.

Since my participant Amy is a White teacher in a school serving predominantly Black students and their families, this empirical literature review will address also White teacher perceptions and culturally relevant pedagogy. It would be difficult to write about her knowing of and relationship with students without considering research on the issues of White teachers instructing Black students.

In Chapter 3, the methods chapter, I describe this study I conducted with one teacher that was designed to explore her relational knowing of students and how that both supported and grew out of her enactment of responsive instruction. I will address teacher selection, data collection, and the ways data collection reflected on relational knowing in the classroom.

In Chapter 4, I follow Amy's classroom practice and her responsive teaching interactions with her students. I also analyze my field notes (including classroom audio, video, and notes taken during classroom observations), interviews with Amy and her students, and student artifacts to show how Amy's work with her students went beyond traditional differentiated instruction. While an effectively differentiated classroom is a difficult and laudable goal of the classroom teacher, I describe how it is only the beginning to a truly responsive classroom that respects and values students as individual human beings.

Chapter 5 is a second findings chapter, and I split the analysis into two sections for specific reasons. Chapter 4 addresses the patterns of Amy's interactions with students in four categories. Chapter 5 describes Amy herself, as she is simultaneously struggling with teaching as described in Chapter 4 and strongly believing in the importance of her relational work. I write about Amy's emotional existence in the classroom; how she feels deeply about her students and what she does and does not have control over in her professional work. I then move on to Amy's development as a White teacher who struggles to be *culturally* responsive, and how because of a university course for her Master's degree, she began to question her upbringing and beliefs about people of color and power differentials in American society.

In Chapter 6, I discuss the data collected in this project by asking two questions, "Does this actually demonstrate *responsiveness* and *pedagogical tact*?" and "Is this *effective* instruction?" Introducing effectiveness to this project is important to the full discussion of Amy's

instructional and relational interactions with students because she is responsible not only for their existence now, their being, as described by van Manen (1986, 1991), but also their becoming, their potential as members of society. I discuss how Amy's work with her students is certainly effective, though it might be necessary to reframe the term as it is commonly understood.

Chapter 1

Theoretical Framework

This chapter begins with a discussion of an ethic of care and relationships in the classroom. In addition to the traditional work on care in the classroom (Noddings, 2005, 2013), I address Benjamin's (1988) work on recognition and van Manen's work (1986, 1991) on pedagogical tact, as both have direct implications on the kind of knowing I recommend is necessary for truly responsive classroom work.

Care and Relational Knowing

The scholars I focus on in this paper address relationship building with students as not only a key component of academic success, but also as an end in itself. I have organized this section of the paper into categories representing the overlaps between theorists. These topics include the idea of *recognition*, or being seen and acknowledged; the ways adults are addressed by students and how they are obligated to respond; the conflict between objectivity and subjectivity in schooling and our relationships; and lastly, the need for reflection and introspection.

Recognition: Being Seen by the Other

Buber's *Between Man and Man* (1955) had a great deal to say about the power of the young child. "This phenomenon of uniqueness" (p. 83), the child, had enormous potential. According to Buber, what the child wanted was to have a say in its becoming, much as we will see that van Manen (1986, 1991) described in the child's being and becoming. In order to develop this potential, Buber (1955) believed that two things were required: Children needed to share in some undertaking and they needed to enter into "mutuality" (p. 87), or a dialogic exchange. Buber went on to describe that children needed this relationship in order to have the

world presented to them as whole and complete persons. A teacher who enters this type of relation sees the child's potential not only as he is now but also as he can become.

The teacher who wants to help the pupil to realize his best potentialities must intend him as this particular person, both in his potentiality and in his actuality. More precisely, he must not know him as a mere sum of qualities, aspirations, and inhibitions; he must apprehend him, and affirm him, as a whole. But this he can only do if he encounters him as a partner in a bipolar situation. And to give his influence unity and meaning, he must live through this situation in all its aspects not only from his own point of view but also from that of his partner. He must practice the kind of realization that I call embracing. It is essential that he should awaken the I-You relationship in the pupil, too, who should intend and affirm his educator as this particular person; and yet the educational relationship could not endure if the pupil also practiced the art of embracing by living through the shared situation from the educator's point of view. (Buber, 1970, p. 178)

I quote this albeit long passage from Buber's *I and Thou* in order to highlight the ways van Manen (1986, 1991) and Noddings (2005, 2013) have drawn upon Buber's work to make several of their most important points. First, that the teacher sees the student in his or her "potentiality and actuality," or, as van Manen (1991) put it, his or her being and becoming. It is not enough to imagine what a student might become, we have to acknowledge and care for his/her being in this moment as well. Second, Buber (1970) described a way of meeting the other that this edition of *I and Thou* calls *embracing*. In a sense, the teacher has the capacity to experience herself and the other simultaneously. In entering into this type of relationship with another, teachers have the potential to become more whole themselves. As we will see, this is very much what Noddings (2013) described when she talked about receptivity, or accepting as nearly as possible the reality

of the cared-for. Buber (1970) also referred to the inability of the relationship to be completely mutual; the teacher-student relationship has a different intention and structure than a friendship.

While both Noddings (2005, 2013) and van Manen (1986, 1991) compared the relation of teacher and student to that of parent and child, van Manen distinguished the kind of relationship that teachers and students have as one of a particular kind of attention. Teachers are, or should be, able to look at a child, see who they are now, and imagine who they will become with education in mind. Keeping the total development in view, the teacher has a special interest in particular aspects of a child's growth. "The teacher has a pedagogic interest in the life of the child. He stands in pedagogical relationship to her, and he cannot help but see the child as a whole human being involved in self-formative growth" (van Manen, 1986, p. 17). A parent can watch a child with parental eyes, and the teacher watches with teacher eyes. Van Manen's pedagogical intent is an intention toward what is good for the child's "being and becoming" (1991, p. 17). We have encountered this child as another person in the world, and he/she has transformed us in the encounter.

Benjamin (1988) described recognition as "that response from the other which makes meaningful the feelings, intentions, and actions of the self" (p. 12). Benjamin insisted that recognition could only come from someone we recognize as a whole person. The person-who-recognizes does not empty him or herself in order to receive the "recognized," as Noddings (2013) suggested. Rather, both parties are subjects in their own right. Benjamin described this idea of intersubjective recognition as affirming, validating, appreciating, seeing, and knowing.

When a subject (the student) asks for recognition, they are saying, "Here I am," and waiting for a response. This harkens back to Levinas (1969) where the Other commands a response. Benjamin (1988) suggested that the teacher's response not only confirms the student,

but the acknowledgement of the student's personhood is how teachers find themselves in the response. She described this as "intersubjective relatedness" (2007, p. 1). Apart from the two people interacting, there is a third space where each recognizes the other as different, as each is also connected to the other. This is similar to Noddings' (2013) duality, when one receives the other and is in a sense conscious of and feeling both the self and the other. The teacher must recognize the student as a subject with his or her own experiences, needs, desires, development, etc. in order to fully accept her (the teacher's) own subjectivity.

But very early on we find that recognition between persons—understanding and being understood, being in attunement—is becoming an end to itself. Recognition between persons is essentially mutual. By our very enjoyment of the other's confirming response, we recognize her in return. (Benjamin 1995, p. 3)

Higgins (2002) suggested that recognition is an important human need. He experimented with the implications of recognition in the field of education. How is recognition required and enacted in the classroom? Higgins suggested that Buber's (1955) work required the teacher to experience the life of the student. Citing Buber, Higgins writes, "According to Buber, the teacher's whole practice should be informed by her ongoing attempt to complement her efforts to educate a student with efforts to 'experience the pupil being educated' (ED, 100)" (p. 298).

This pedagogical relation is inherently unequal. For van Manen, the adult in the teacher-child relationship has the experience of looking forward and looking back, whereas the child can only look forward. As a teacher, I know what it was like to be a child, but the child does not know what it is like to be an adult. Consequently, one cannot expect the relationship to be equal in the sense that the child can care for the teacher in the same way that the teacher cares for the child. Yet, the child can offer the teacher one thing: Hope. "Children are not there primarily for

us. We are there primarily for them. Yet they come to us bearing a gift: the gift of experiencing the possible” (1986, p. 13).

Continuing with van Manen (1986, 1991), it is important to introduce the word *pedagogy* as he used it. As opposed to an approach to delivering curriculum or managing classroom behaviors, van Manen’s pedagogy is a term used to describe a way of living with children. He used pedagogy to describe how to be thoughtful and open with children as opposed to being governed by rules and values imposed from the outside. Van Manen’s education should be a rich, loving, human activity. He described pedagogy as:

A sense of vocation, love and caring for children, a deep sense of responsibility, moral intuitiveness, self-critical openness, thoughtful maturity, tactful sensitivity toward the child’s subjectivity, and interpretive intelligence, a pedagogical understanding of the child’s needs, improvisational resoluteness in dealing with young people, a passion for knowing and learning the mysteries of the world, the moral fibre to stand up for something, a certain understanding of the world, active hope in the face of prevailing crises, and not the least, humor and vitality. (1991, p. 8)

A unique aspect of van Manen’s work (1986, 2002) is the emphasis on being seen, which is in line with Benjamin’s (1988) theory of recognition. “Being seen is more than being acknowledged. For a child it means experiencing being seen by the teacher. It means being confirmed as existing, as being a person and a learner. Not all seeing has this quality, of course” (p. 21). We may all have the experience of talking with someone who looks at us, nods in all the right places, but yet we do not feel that they are with us in the conversation. Noddings described this as being “thrown back” on oneself (2013, p. 19). You are aware that you do not really exist for that other person. They are not with you in the conversation or the moment. For a child to be

seen and recognized, van Manen (1986) clarified, “I see the child with my body” (p. 21).

Teachers who do see and recognize students start with a feeling for how the day will begin—by noticing the movement of the class as students are lining up for the day, how students enter the room, how they hang up their coats and backpacks. Yet being able to see each child individually is incredibly difficult given the number of students in many classrooms and the unavoidable fact that some teachers in large schools are managing, as opposed to being in relation with, students. I find myself longing to recall that as an elementary teacher, I could say each day about all of my children, “Our eyes meet, and for an instant we are there only for each other” (van Manen, 1986, p. 22). While this may not have been my reality all the time, it remains the goal.

Once Confronted, the One-Caring Must Respond

What does it mean to care? For Noddings (2005, 2013), caring was not about a set of rules or advice for the “one-caring” (Noddings, 2013, p. 9). On the contrary, care ethics came out of feminist work that focused on the roots of caring in the feminine experience, though critics reacted negatively to the word “feminine” in the first edition of *Caring* (1984). To highlight the difference between other theories of ethics and the ethic of care, Noddings (1986) described fidelity as a “response to individuals with whom one is in relation” (p. 497). This is not about principle or duty, but toward an effort to institute and maintain a caring relationship. Drawing on Gilligan’s (1982) work, Noddings approached care ethics as the language of the mother, as distinguished from the language of the father, which she saw as couched in logic, fairness, and rules. This does not mean, to Noddings, that men cannot care, or that women cannot be logical and fair. However, “an ethic of caring arises, I believe, out of our experience as women” (2013, p. 8).

To illustrate Noddings' (2013) definition of care, she shared a story of a fictional young man responsible for the care of his mother. In this hypothetical situation, he might transfer her from his home to a nursing facility. He does not visit or call. Does he then not care? Can he be said to care if he pays the bills for the nursing home? What if he frequently worries about her care? What if she experiences his act as care? Noddings stated that as the one-caring, what we do does not depend on rules but on a wider set of conditions that is not only decided by the one-caring but also by the cared-for. More succinctly, "although I can never accomplish it entirely, I try to apprehend the reality of the other" (p. 14). In trying to apprehend the other's reality, we notice a person's pain or need. We are called upon to do something. This process of caring is a negotiation. It is not a set of rules for one to follow.

When we see the other's reality as a possibility for us, we must act to eliminate the intolerable, to reduce the pain, to fill the need, to actualize the dream. When I am in this sort of relationship with another, when the other's reality becomes a real possibility for me, I care. (p. 14)

Though I was unable to verify Levinas (1969) as a main source for Noddings' work described above, his theories were very similar. Levinas argued that the Other (in our case the student) calls out to be recognized and addressed. "The presentation of the face, expression, does not disclose an inward world previously closed...on the contrary, it calls to me above and beyond the given that speech already puts in common among us" (p. 212). There is an urgency with which the Other commands a response. Biesta (2003) and Todd (2001) highlighted what we could learn from Levinas in the educational realm, which is that the teacher-student relationship is ultimately an ethical relationship of responsibility for the being of the other. It is in being

susceptible, in opening ourselves up to accept the other and respond to their summons, that we become ourselves.

The use of the word “command” is not an overstatement, as anyone who has worked with small children would agree. Van Manen (2000) drew upon the work of Levinas to suggest that in a way, children take us hostage in their reliance on us. We feel guilt, responsibility, and worry. Noddings (2005, 2013) introduced the idea of *engrossment* to this urgency that Levinas described. While there are different levels of intensity in relationships and specific interactions within those relationships, Noddings believed that caring required engrossment, “My first and unending obligation is to meet the other as one-caring” (p. 17). This engrossment is not the same as romantic love. Engrossment attempts to receive the cared-for as he or she feels and to turn one’s energies completely toward the cared-for. When you are with another person in a caring relationship, you are completely with that person, your attention and motivation flows toward that person. You make yourself completely available. This is not the same as empathy, which Noddings suggested is a more masculine way of thinking about feeling. Rather than projecting one’s own feelings onto another, her definition of engrossment involved receptivity, “I receive the other into myself... I become a duality” (2013, p. 30).

There are interesting dualities—empathy vs. engrossment, feminine moral language vs. masculine—that Noddings (2013) posed for us in her work. Some may feel as though Noddings described empathy, though she is countering that term in her arguments for true caring. The Oxford Dictionary defines empathy as, “The ability to understand and share the feelings of another” (Oxford English Dictionary, 2015). I believe that Noddings found her argument with the understanding of another, or the temptation to imagine to oneself, “How would I feel if I were her?” Noddings preferred the term *engrossment* as described above. I do not try to imagine

the feelings of another, “the seeing and feeling are mine, but only partly and temporarily mine, as on loan to me” (2013, p. 30). However, it is worth mentioning that the seeing and feeling of the average classroom teacher are on loan to 25 children at a time. One might wonder how this is possible.

Objective Knowing vs. Subjective Recognition

Buber (1970) introduced us to the subjectivity of the human interaction with his word pairs “I-You” and “I-It.” The relation of I-It is essentially one interacting with an object. The I of the word pair does not speak to another human being. He/she is speaking to something or someone without any interest or investment. “The basic word I-It can never be spoken with one’s whole being” (p. 54). I-You is the word pair that signifies relation. When I experience You, both of us are forever changed.

The basic word I-You can be spoken only with one’s whole being. The concentration and fusion into a whole being can never be accomplished by me, can never be accomplished without me. I require a You to become; becoming I, I say You. All actual life is encounter. (1996, p. 62)

Buber (1970) would insist that one cannot distance him/herself and treat the other objectively, or as a means to an end, or the relationship becomes one of manipulation and control. I-You is not a means to an end; it is an end in itself. I *become* through my relationship with You. A number of scholars addressed in this paper draw upon Buber’s work to develop their own, including van Manen (1986, 1991), Noddings (2005, 2013) and Palmer (1993). Palmer, whose work is often centered on Christian thought, highlighted the intersections between his work and Buber’s. “A Martin Buber who understands the Thouness of reality embodies personal truth in his Jewishness more deeply than some Christians seem able to do” (p. 50).

As Noddings (2005, 2013) and Palmer (1983) would recommend, van Manen (1986, 1991) suggested that the noticing a teacher does of a child is not objective watching. We do not look upon them as we might a bug under a microscope, as something to study. We are thinking about the growth of the child in all ways, and it comes out of our love and care for the child as opposed to an objective desire for the child to grow up and be successful. When a pedagogue as described by van Manen watches a child, she does not immediately reach into her teaching toolbox and pull out the best strategy possible for a specific intervention. If that happens, then the receptivity described by Noddings (2013) and the true listening described by van Manen (1986, 1991) disappears and the child is not truly seen. Being a child watcher means keeping the whole child in view.

Palmer (1983) began *To Know As We Are Known* with a chapter on knowledge entitled, “Knowing is Loving.” For Palmer, knowledge is not neutral and certainly not objective. It begins with emotion; it begins inside of us. It is in the act of relating to one another that we find knowledge.

A knowledge born of compassion aims not at exploiting and manipulating creation but at reconciling the world to itself...Here, the act of knowing is an act of love, the act of entertaining and embracing the reality of the other, of allowing the other to enter and embrace our own. (p. 8)

Our scientific curiosity of the world creates an objective distance from things, and Palmer believed that this made us see the world as a toy to be manipulated, as opposed to knowledge that springs from love and calls on us to be accountable to one another.

Noddings (2013) cautioned against taking engrossment and motivational displacement and turning it too quickly into rational and objective problem solving. Engrossment does have a

thinking mode as well as an emotional component; the thinking self turns towards the cared-for. However, this potentially turns a feeling-based interaction into an abstract situation far too quickly. One can imagine a student coming to an instructor with a deeply felt personal problem. To be met instantly with suggestions of things to do might meet vulnerability with an unfeeling and logical response. While this is well intentioned and possibly helpful, the cared-for might not see the instructor as a caring individual. The instructor was not *with* them in that moment. “At times we must suspend [rational-objective thinking] in favor of subjective thinking and reflection, allowing time and space for *seeing* and *feeling*” (italics in original, p. 26).

A Need for Reflection and Introspection

Van Manen (1986) began *The Tone of Teaching* with a story. An experienced psychologist works with a small child. He takes the child into a large room, asks questions, and takes notes on the child’s behavior. The child cries so hysterically that the mother enters the room to comfort him. What might have been different if the psychologist had made eye contact with the boy, smiled, and introduced him to some toys to play with during their session together? The psychologist did not hurt the child, say anything disturbing, yet what happened in the first scenario was insensitive to the child, and the second example was more nurturing and loving. The first example may have been technically correct, but that psychologist did not enter the world of the child with thoughtfulness and tact.

Typing the quote on page 15 made me wonder what a group of teachers would think if presented this paragraph as a job description. It is a long list of qualities, behaviors, and attitudes that may appear overwhelming. Fortunately, van Manen (1986) did not believe that one can be all things at all times to all children. He recommended, as did Noddings (2013), that we do the best we can, as being an educator is a role that is ongoing and full of opportunities to reflect. He

suggested that educators “thinkingly act” (2002, p. 8). Van Manen (2008) acknowledged that teachers often do not have time to think carefully in the moment, when being summoned (literally) by multiple children. He described reflection in action as being limited to an “(inter)active thoughtfulness” (p. 1). This way, teachers were acting instantly but hopefully with consideration for the individual student. We think about what we are doing at the same time we are doing it. There is a difference between thinking *on* the teaching act and thinking in the moment. Thinking about, or on, teaching takes place outside the teaching moment.

Noddings (2012) also wrote of the challenges faced by teachers and how action toward a perfect end is not necessarily our goal. Rather, it is the attitude of the one-caring that is of the most importance, and the way the cared-for receives him or her. Noddings also addressed the conflict that arises when the teacher is supposed to teach one subject but recognizes that the student needs something else. While this is happening, all the other students’ needs must also be met. While Noddings does not suggest a solution for this particular problem, she acknowledged that the way schools are structured makes this even more difficult. “Conflict arises when our engrossment is divided, and several cared-fors demand incompatible decisions from us” (2013, p. 18). That sentence seems to describe the frustrating reality of teaching, and the difficulty of being totally with the cared-for when they summon us, as Levinas (1969) suggested.

Synthesis and Segue

My goal in Chapter 1 was to show that the work on care and relationships within the classroom goes beyond an attempt by classroom teachers to patronize children or assume that without a relationship, there can be no effective instruction. It is also not nearly as simplistic as a list of general principles or rules to follow. The work required to interact with students in a truly caring way, to achieve the essence of pedagogical tact as described by van Manen (1986, 1991),

is to be aware of oneself and one's students as individuals, to pay attention with one's whole self, and to respond with the awareness of one's history as a child. This requires awareness and reflection on instruction and interaction.

Chapter 2 will continue with a review of the empirical work of factors involved in responding to the needs of individuals. I begin with a literature review on differentiated instruction, then move on to the work done on classroom equity. As Amy is a White teacher in a predominantly Black classroom, it is impossible to conduct this work without consideration of issues of culture involved in being a responsive teacher.

Chapter 2

Research Review

This literature review examines how teachers address a wide variety of needs and the perceptions teachers have of their students. In terms of addressing disparate needs, differentiated instruction is a common strategy used by teachers in today's diverse classrooms. While it would be rare to find the teacher who disagreed that it was wise to adjust instruction to meet the needs of students who have either already mastered particular skills or content or who are struggling to achieve with the current instruction offered, it is also rare to find a teacher who does this consistently and effectively. This may be due in part to lack of teacher training or the overwhelming time and content pressures teachers face on a daily basis. Differentiation can also be controversial (Pappano, 2011), as the problems with implementation pose questions about who has access to what types of instruction, and how much we should be asking teachers to do.

Yet another possible issue confronting those recommending differentiation is what teachers believe about learners and about who is capable of certain types of work. For example, gifted programs often serve few to no students of color, while special education classes are full of them (Ford, 2003). Originating in the early 20th century, fixed and genetic conceptions of intelligence as biological, as opposed to developmental or related to privilege, remain in our country and as a basis for a number of schooling decisions, and this has a deleterious effect on equity in instructional opportunities across all students in K-12 schooling. As opposed to thinking of giftedness as a social construct (Borland, 2003; Ford, 2003; Sapon-Shevin, 1994), many persist in believing that some kids have it and some kids do not. This results in inequitable programming for numerous children, especially children of color, children who come from families who live in poverty, and other children from underrepresented groups in the U.S.

Also to be addressed in this review are White teacher perceptions of students of color. This is another factor involved in the educational opportunities students have in U.S. schools. As we will see, some teachers have demonstrated that merely looking at a photograph results in lowered expectations for some students who are seen as less capable solely on the basis of their perceived ethnicity and other factors. While some studies described in this literature review discuss teachers' willingness to differentiate, others indicate that teachers may have negative perceptions of the abilities of students to excel if they are students of color, from a low socioeconomic background, or English language learners. These perceptions of learners' abilities directly impact the access students have to high quality instruction.

Classrooms in the U.S. are becoming increasingly diverse (Solomona, Portelli, Daniel, & Campbell, 2005). Students with various backgrounds, experiences with schooling, readiness levels, interests, learning profiles, races, ethnicities, languages, etc. are placed in a classroom where the only homogenous characteristic is their age relative to an arbitrary cut-off date. Somehow, one teacher, who may or may not have adequate training in meeting these wildly different needs, is expected to move each of these students through the grade-level continuum. This is an enormous task, and one that is often done inadequately.

Quite a bit of attention is given to students with special needs and those who have Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), or written statements for children identified with a disability (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). Preservice teachers take at least one class on special education and learn how to create modifications for students who have IEPs. The attention may or may not be in the form of the caring described above or even effective in meeting the children's needs, even their academic ones. Often it means stigmatizing them and pulling them out of the more engaging instructional opportunities for endless skill and drill

practice. At the same time, attention is rarely given to the student who has mastered the prescribed grade-level curriculum by November, and who marks time in the classroom for the remainder of the year. In my teaching experience, I found that these students who were not identified for some type of special service were often left to fend for themselves.

One way that educators have attempted to reach the needs of students is to provide within-class differentiated instruction that meets a variety of needs. Interestingly, some of the nation's loudest critics of differentiated instruction are those who would support self-contained gifted programs for the students identified as the most academically advanced. Reis (2003) wrote about the lack of rigor in differentiated classrooms, resulting in a major problem for the "most able students" (p. 188). VanTassel-Baska and Stambaugh (2006) wrote more recently that differentiation for the identified gifted learner is challenging because there is a greater degree of differentiation required for them, there is at times negative feelings from teachers toward their gifted students, and there are few state mandates to support gifted services.

This literature review is organized into three major sections: differentiated instruction, equity, and relational ethics. The section on equity contains subsections on culturally responsive teaching and teacher perceptions.

Differentiated Instruction

Theoretical roots of differentiated instruction (DI) can be linked to social constructivism, specifically Vygotsky's (1978) theory of the zone of proximal development (ZPD). "The discrepancy between a child's actual mental age and the level he reaches in solving problems with assistance indicates the zone of his proximal development" (p. 198). Chaiklin (2003) interpreted Vygotsky's ZPD as requiring the ability to imitate. "A person's ability to imitate, as conceived by Vygotsky, is the basis for a subjective zone of proximal development" (p. 51).

Chaiklin reassures us that this type of imitation is not mere copying of words or actions.

Vygotsky wanted to see the word imitation in a new light, “in which imitation presupposes some understanding of the structural relations in a problem” (p. 51).

We see here that Vygotsky used the term imitation to refer to situations in which a child is able to engage in interaction with more competent others around specific tasks that the child would otherwise not be able to perform alone, because of the presence of maturing psychological functions. (p. 52)

This kind of work is important to be done with others in the ZPD because there are psychological functions that are still maturing, making them difficult to be completed independently, but the children are far enough along that they can use their collaborative work with others to understand deeper concepts. Vygotsky based his definition of the ZPD on this notion of the ability to imitate, which enables a moving forward of knowledge or behavior. A difficult problem can be solved with help from a *more knowledgeable other*. At times this more knowledgeable other is the teacher, while at other times it is a student with more advanced knowledge or skills.

One way of looking at the zone of proximal development is by thinking of scaffolding. Wass et al. (2011) conducted research in the area of critical thinking with college students, and found that by facilitating social interaction, the students were able to think more critically at the end of the three-year study. Because of the way the teacher structured learning, students reported learning far more from their peers than from their teacher; in this case, the more knowledgeable others were the students. By moving from textbooks, handouts, lab workbooks, and computer simulations to conducting research with others, the learners in this study changed their view of knowledge from something finite and transferable to something that could be constructed (p.

321). One student remarked on his development through the program and his view of knowledge construction:

Just because they are the teacher, they don't know everything. They're not always right which is a really mean thing to say, but just because you are taught it, it doesn't mean that it's right because science is always subject to change. That's why they can't give us textbooks anymore. They just give us these scientific articles and that's a great way to learn. (Mel, third-year student). (p. 321)

A teacher who is responsive to her students will acknowledge what students already know before proceeding with instruction. Using Vygotskian thought, the teacher would design a lesson so that instruction goes just beyond the student's actual independent level (ADL), encouraging the student to move into a more challenging activity. The teacher acts as the mediator between what students already know and what they can know; what they are and what they can become. The obvious challenge is how teachers can manage this type of teaching with so many children in one classroom.

Santamaria (2009) described DI as originating in special education research and practice. Her point in highlighting these origins was that non-English proficient students are often misdiagnosed and overrepresented in LD and speech/language programs, while underrepresented in gifted programs. Interestingly, VanTassel-Baska (2003) had a very different perspective on differentiation. For VanTassel-Baska, a strong supporter of gifted education, differentiated curriculum is that which provides tailored instruction to gifted learners by an educator trained on the needs of gifted youth. It is unclear who differentiated instruction was originally designed to serve. The importance of that fact may fade when considering that DI could be an attempt to serve *both* students who are historically misdiagnosed for special education and students who

have been traditionally identified as gifted—as well as all the often unseen children in the middle.

A more general definition describes differentiated instruction as an approach designed to address the multiple needs of students in a heterogeneous classroom. Teachers modify the curriculum, teaching methods, resources, and learning activities to address diverse student needs (Tomlinson, 2003, Tomlinson et al., 1995; Tomlinson et al., 2003). Identifying and responding to the academic and socio-emotional needs of 20-30 children is quite difficult, and as Olenchak (2001) showed, effective differentiation must take place on an individual level. While some teacher education programs do teach differentiated instruction strategies in their programs, many teachers find this difficult to put into practice (Edwards, Carr, & Siegel, 2006). It would be difficult to find the teacher who would suggest students are not unique, and the above authors acknowledge that, “the more teachers learn about their students, the more able they are to design experiences that foster learning” (p. 583). However, even as teachers admit that their classrooms contain a range of learners, meeting those needs in the classroom is far more difficult.

Nazzari's (2011) study of two first year teachers at the middle school level found that both teachers differentiated instruction to an extent, but both struggled to implement strategies that might have helped them in their diverse classrooms. For example, one differentiated based on readiness (i.e. knowledge and skills assessed in relation to the curriculum), but did not differentiate process (i.e. the way to meet the needs of learners). When interviewed, the new teachers identified seven factors that inhibited differentiation in their classrooms: Lack of time, behavior management problems, collaboration issues with paraprofessionals, a sense of powerlessness, organizational problems, the need to cover the curriculum, and limited classroom space.

Tomlinson et al. (2003) cite authors who describe some apparently conflicting research about teachers' perceptions of the need for differentiation and their willingness to do so in their own classrooms. One group of high school teachers reported believing that addressing academic differences is important or very important. In another survey of middle school teachers, however, half of the respondents said they did not differentiate instruction because they did not see any need to do so.

Pappano (2011), an education journalist, described some of the controversy surrounding differentiated instruction, specifically related to how much we can ask teachers to do. What is actually possible in the regular classroom? What does it mean to differentiate instruction? Does it mean providing each individual student with different assignments, or is it just good teaching—providing students support if they need it and extensions if they are finding success with the regular curriculum. Drawing on conversations with teachers and education research, Pappano recommended an approach that viewed differentiation as teaching *students* as opposed to *content*. A teacher she interviewed described her pairing of two students with similar weaknesses in writing, “In that case the differentiation happened because I knew my students well, and I knew when I had to insert myself and provide some extra help” (p. 5).

George (2005) argued a convincing rationale for differentiating instruction that went beyond the individual student. “Success for all students is more than a slogan or even a laudable goal; it may be a key to the survival of the American public school as society has come to know it” (p. 186). For George, differentiated instruction within a single classroom is always a better option than separating students into classes based on assessed abilities. The heterogeneous classroom is more closely aligned with our nation's goal for democracy. Students in a heterogeneous classroom work with others with different experiences, languages, and

backgrounds, which should parallel their future lives. Working with students from diverse backgrounds and with varied strengths provides “other social competencies essential for all students” (p. 188). These might include cooperation and conflict resolution skills.

Tomlinson et al. (2003) cite Gamoran and Weinstein (1998), who describe that even in what some might consider a homogeneous classroom, such as a special education room, honors class, or language pull-out program, there is still quite a range of student experiences and competencies. These settings, suggested to be a more efficient educational experience for all, are much more diverse than one might think, creating the need for effective differentiation to take place in all settings.

When done well, differentiated instruction is a recommended way to approach a diverse classroom with a wide variety of needs, interests, and backgrounds (Tomlinson, 2001, 2003). One gains information about students from assessments, student observations, and discussions with parents. This helps teachers design appropriate instructional opportunities. It is admirable to try to reach the level of each student while taking into account his or her learning styles, favorite subjects, and background interests. Yet, I believe students are more complex than this. Who knows where they are in their growth as a learner and a person? The emphasis on differentiating for content, process, or product (Tomlinson, 2001) negates the fact that work with constantly-changing young people is always going to be complicated and messy. Students’ development cannot be predicted and tracked on a straight-line graph, though some try to do so.

Renzulli (2005) suggested that all students should have the opportunity to engage in higher order thinking and should have access to rigorous, relevant learning activities. Rather than labeling a particular student “gifted,” we should instead consider the services provided to students to be “gifted” pedagogies. Renzulli’s model suggested that there are many talents and

potentials in a much broader group of students and there should be advanced learning available for all of these children.

Equity

There are numerous achievement gaps in American schools today. Between Black and White students, middle class and low income, special education and regular education students, there are consistent gaps in rates of progress, achievement on standardized tests, and access to high quality instruction (Braun et al., 2010; Higgins et al., 2003; Wildhagen, 2012). Renzulli (2013) described the existence of persistent achievement gaps related to levels of family wealth as a conspiracy against children from low-income backgrounds. He discussed how the American education system has not only failed to level the playing field, but has also created a lackluster education for those students ready for more challenging material.

While a major challenge facing today's schools is the achievement gap that exists between advantaged and low income students, the ways we have addressed this problem have also produced flatline academic growth among our most able students, rampant boredom among students at all levels, and public dissatisfaction with an education system that is immune to anything but the superficial trappings of change. (p. 45)

The tightening of the reins in public education has resulted in low-level thinking skills for both underserved children, who may or may not have the home resources to combat a boring school experience, and high-achieving students, who eventually lose their motivation to learn in school. Renzulli supported his conspiracy theory by stating that while possibly unintentional, the prescriptive teaching and learning often seen today has withheld critical thinking skills from low-income children. These types of skills are needed more today than ever for successful

participation in higher education, the 21st century job market, and the growing economy.

This is not a new development. In a study conducted between 1978 and 1979, Anyon (1981) discovered that there are distinct differences in the curriculum offered to working class, middle class, and upper class students. In addition to variances in curriculum and the ways students conceptualized knowledge, teachers' articulated perceptions of student abilities also differed. In the working class school,

One male teacher characterized his school as a "tough" school and said he had been nervous when they told him he would be teaching there. He said he felt better after the principal had told him, "Just do your best. If they learn to add and subtract, that's a bonus. If not, don't worry about it." A second-grade teacher stated to [Anyon] that she did not mind teaching in this school because it was "easy," compared to many other schools. She said that she would not want to teach in the district's school for the "gifted and talented." "You have to work too hard. I have a friend who teaches there and she goes in early every day. She's always doing something special." (p. 7)

This can be contrasted with what Anyon describes as the "affluent professional school" (p. 17), where the teachers discuss knowledge in terms of creativity.

In response to [Anyon's] question of what knowledge is most appropriate for her students, one of the two fifth-grade teachers said, "My goal is to have the children learn from experience. I want them to think for themselves." She also expressed the wish that they "try to make sense of their experience" (p. 17).

Culturally Responsive Teaching

Ladson-Billings (1995, 1999) wrote extensively on problems that arise when schools try to squeeze a student's home culture into the school as opposed to negotiating the schooling

process to respect the student's culture. She defined *culturally relevant pedagogy* (or culturally relevant teaching, i.e., CRT) as similar to critical pedagogy but committed to the collective empowerment of students. Her definition includes three factors of a successfully relevant classroom: "a) Students must experience academic success; b) students must develop and/or maintain cultural competence; and c) students must develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of the current social order" (1995, p. 160). Especially important in a project focused on relationships and care, Ladson-Billings (1995) emphasized that teachers cannot merely make students feel good about themselves. She described a teacher in her research who appeared to know her students well, recognizing the social power her African American boys had in the same ways I have described *knowing* and *recognition*. She used this knowledge of her students to channel their skills in academically important ways.

Integrating the theories behind differentiated instruction and culturally responsive teaching may identify teaching practices that are beneficial to all types of learners in the heterogeneous classroom. Santamaria (2009) addresses this idea, especially given the fact that students of color are overrepresented in special education programs and underrepresented in so-called gifted programs. The ideals of effective differentiated instruction seem to lend themselves to classroom practices that are responsive to individual student needs, including those needs that arise because of cultural or language differences within the classroom. Differentiated instruction, however, has traditionally only addressed academic diversity. In a small case study done in California, Santamaria found that differentiated instruction and culturally relevant teaching can, in fact, function in a complementary fashion. The key is not for teachers to merely acknowledge student differences, but for teachers to go one step further and change their practice in order to serve multiple needs effectively and with care.

Over the course of five years, Santamaria (2009) collected data from two schools in California, recording conversations with teachers, parents, administrators, and students. The emphasis of her study was to investigate the interaction of DI, which has traditionally focused on academics, and culturally relevant pedagogy, which by definition has a focus on cultural diversity. She created a matrix aligning the elements of DI and CRT; for example, the focus on content in DI aligning with the emphasis on academic achievement recommended by Ladson-Billings. Comparing pre- and post-assessment data along with her aforementioned qualitative results, she found that when teachers made content accessible to students who were culturally and linguistically diverse (students who are non- or limited-English proficient), the students were more successful in the classroom. While important to acknowledge, these results were hardly earthshattering. What is possibly more important were her findings that if teachers merely acknowledged students' cultural diversity without changing their teaching practice, differentiated instruction did not benefit the culturally and linguistically diverse students. This provides evidence for the idea that DI, while important in diverse classrooms, is not enough to meet the needs of historically underserved populations.

There seems to be a mismatch between the original goals of culturally responsive teaching and what those enacting it believe it to be. In a study of administrators and teacher leaders, Young (2006) collected data over three months using interviews, group meetings, classroom observations, participant reflections, documents from the school district, online discussions, and her own journal. As she expected, there was quite a bit of concern over what constituted culturally relevant pedagogy. Participants spent more time focusing on students' home lives and how they as teachers should be flexible in their expectations, rather than an emphasis on a belief that all of the students were capable of academic success. This does not

quite align with the Santamaria (2009) study above regarding teachers' practices towards DI and CRT as being of equal importance, as well as Ladson-Billings' focus on academic success as one of the three main facets of culturally relevant pedagogy.

It is possible that enacting a complex practice, one with deep theoretical roots like CRT, is quite difficult for some teachers. In the above section on differentiated instruction, Edwards, Carr, and Siegel (2006) admit that transforming teacher practice is complicated. "One area of our research considered the connection between practices and beliefs of candidates and teachers and the relationship of practices and beliefs to preparation." Given the teacher perceptions of students of color to be elaborated upon below, it is not hard to imagine that describing the importance of CRT to teachers and seeing the effects of it in classrooms are two different things. Yet there are cases where this is done successfully, and by White teachers. Paley (1979) and Landsman (2009) are two White teachers who have successfully taught students of color and reflected upon their privilege and perceptions through their writing, and Ladson-Billings (2009) describes three more White teachers who successfully interacted with African-American families in sensitive ways. Their work shows the educational world that CRT can be achieved, but it takes a certain type of critical, reflective process.

Teacher Perceptions

If contemporary classrooms are to serve contemporary student populations effectively, there is a need for investigating and addressing pervasive teacher beliefs, as those beliefs impact teacher awareness of student variance and the curriculum and instruction teachers plan and deliver to diverse learners. (Tomlinson et al., 2003, p. 125)

Tomlinson et al. (2003) went on to say that many teachers, in order to appear "fair," teach and assess each child's performance in the same way, using the same standards. Rather than

assuming that fair is synonymous with equal, the authors describe that the goal of high quality instruction should be flexibility in a teacher's mode of presenting lessons and in the student's options for expressing learning.

Maloch et al. (2013) described a project where two teachers and their classroom grouping practices during literacy centers were observed and analyzed. Though varied across classrooms, much leveling of students took place. Higher groups of students received more engaging materials while lower groups received skills instruction. More time was given to students who needed more help in reading, and there was limited productivity during center activities. As well, though these teachers reported flexible grouping, the leveled groups in which students were placed at one point of the year rarely changed.

Researchers have examined the idea that America's racial divide in terms of achievement could be due in part to teacher perceptions of Black, Latino, and other non-white populations in the public schools. McCombs and Gay (1988), in their study of parochial school teachers, reported, "Without ever mentioning the race or class of the child, teachers made assumptions about both and used both in their evaluations. Again, lower-class children were evaluated more negatively than middle-class children, and Hispanic children were rated more negatively than Whites" (p. 650). McCombs and Gay reported that the teachers made assumptions about a student's potential, "his eyes are bright," and their class, "I feel this student is disadvantaged, possibly of an ethnic, socioeconomic group where education is not a priority" (pp. 650-651) based solely on his or her photograph. While this is a study that was conducted approximately 30 years ago, recent work still declares teachers unprepared to teach students of color sensitively and with racial consciousness (Hayes & Juarez, 2012; Kumar & Hamer, 2012).

Tettegah (1996) investigated the “teachability” beliefs white teachers had about students of color in California by administering three different surveys to a sample of 96 student teachers ranging in age from 22 to 50 years old. The surveys were administered to an entire class of 226 students, but those who identified as other than White Americans were eliminated from the study. From the Oklahoma Racial Attitude Survey (ORAS) results, Tettegah divided teachers into categories associated with what she refers to as “unachieved” White racial consciousness. Teachers described as “avoidant” preferred not to consider minority concerns, the “dissonant” teachers were changing how they felt about minorities, and for “dependent” teachers, their opinions on minorities were largely determined by what others told them (p. 155). Another scale summed up the groups of teachers who answer questions associated with what the ORAS considered “achieved” White racial consciousness.

Conflictive: “Minorities have more influence on government programs than they should have.”

Dominative: “I think it is okay to work with minority people, but it wouldn’t be right to share an apartment with one.”

Integrative: “Racial integration would work fine if people would just give it a chance.”

Reactive: “Most minorities who are in prisons could be considered political prisoners.”

“Sometimes I feel guilty about being White when I think about all the bad things Whites have done to minorities.” (p. 155)

Tettegah concluded that white teachers held differing views on non-white students such as African Americans, Asian Americans, and Latino groups. This study also showed that teachers rated Asian Americans higher than white individuals. Tettegah admitted that the ORAS had limitations in that it used White norms as the standards to which other groups must conform, but

at the time, it was the only instrument that measured racial attitudes of Whites toward racial minorities in general.

Even with the study's limitations, Tettegah (1996) suggested that if teacher education schools have a strong desire to prepare teachers for a culturally diverse society, programs should develop more classes that would address racial attitudes of prospective teachers. Teacher selection processes may also need to pay attention to data such as these when admitting preservice students to programs. If a prospective teacher demonstrated a dominative personality type as indicated above, would she really be effective in any classroom with students of color? Tettegah suggested that a teacher selection process that included attention to these attitudes would be helpful, though not sufficient. She also recommended future research toward guidelines for cross-cultural competencies and increased racial awareness in White teachers.

In a large-scale study of 784 preservice teachers, Kumar and Hamer (2012) found that more than 25% of these college students expressed some stereotypical beliefs about poor and minority students. A more positive result indicates that their teacher education program may have diminished their biases by the time they graduated, as they were more likely to express comfort for adaptive instruction in their final years than they were during their early years of the program. While Kumar and Hamer do not explicitly define adaptive instruction, the term is generally used to refer to an approach that is very similar to differentiated instruction; providing alternate strategies for and routes to student learning (Park & Lee, 2004). Kumar and Hamer differentiate between "mastery-focused" and "performance-focused" practices (p. 164). A mastery-focused classroom focuses on relevant, meaningful, and challenging learning experiences, whereas a performance-focused classroom defines success as being able to perform well on a test. "Preservice teachers who hold stereotypes about the ability of poor and minority

students to succeed in school, and who value students depending on their social and cultural backgrounds are more likely to endorse performance-focused practices” (p. 165).

In a three-year longitudinal study focusing on the development of a Kindergarten teacher transitioning from the preschool classroom, Singh (2007) examined the White teacher’s beliefs about literacy instruction as it related to her culturally and linguistically diverse students. Singh looked at “Lucy’s” articulated beliefs about young children as well as the content and methods of literacy instruction for both native and non-native English speaking students. She found that schooling structures (administration, schedules, meetings) were at times at odds with Lucy’s child-centered classroom. This included a transition to a Transitional Bilingual Education program during the three-year study, limited instruction for her English as a Second Language students, and as a result, limited self-efficacy as a teacher of second language learners. The constraints Singh noted in Lucy’s professional arena, which included significant classroom management concerns, resulted in a significant loss of time for instruction. Lucy simply did not feel she had the support she needed to manage multiple challenging behaviors as well as multiple language needs.

Although the structure of Lucy’s school was a detraction from the effective and child-centered teaching she wanted to implement, Singh (2007) also noted that Lucy created a number of opportunities for students to share their work, she used students’ names as a regular part of literacy instruction, and she had a large number of multicultural and multilingual volunteers in the classroom. Lucy also noted the importance of relationships when it came to teaching young children. “I truly recognize how important it is to establish the emotional aspect of a relationship with my kids in order to reach them academically” (p. 262).

Synthesis and Segue

This research is significant because the current educational conversation leads teachers toward seeing students as test scores and grade levels as opposed to individual human beings. While an awareness of test scores is important, it pales in comparison to the value and impact of the teacher-student relationship. This relationship, though not solely a means to an instructional end, is, nevertheless, required for a classroom teacher to know when and how to appropriately challenge individual students. Teachers cannot teach students they do not know, and they cannot get to know their students without engaging in opportunities to know them better. I suggest that we call these opportunities *teaching* and *learning*.

Differentiated instruction (Tomlinson, 2001, 2003) has often been cited as the cure-all for diverse classrooms in our country. What should we do with large classrooms that have a myriad of needs, both instructional and social/emotional? We change our instruction to meet these needs, of course. Yet differentiated instruction is often better (or less messy) in the theoretical classroom than in real life. Does differentiating instruction mean that we provide different books for each student? Different homework? Do we stick with the age-old low, average, and high reading and math groups? Or is DI more of a mindset than a classroom action?

Lastly, how much are we expecting of our teachers? The work of not only the leaders in the field of DI (Tomlinson, 2001, 2003; VanTassel-Baska & Stambaugh, 2006) but also an ethic of care (Noddings, 2005) say very little about the difficulty of acting, thinking, and reflecting upon teaching this way with large groups of children. Conversely, this is presented as the solution to large, diverse classrooms. It is important to consider the experience of the teacher, especially a teacher like Amy, who has previously demonstrated her care for her students and her commitment to quality educational experiences.

It has become fairly obvious as a result of this review of literature that there are a number of things one might consider “non-instructional” that affect and are affected by instruction. Differentiation, with the lofty goal of reaching each student at his or her level, is challenging both in its varied definitions and its classroom implementation. What types of activities a child receives are often dependent on the perceptions teachers have of the student, and then their resulting performance on what might have been inappropriately designed activities is then replicated in future weeks, months, and years. As well, if teachers only look at students through the academic lens, they miss so very much. Culturally relevant pedagogy is an important piece of the puzzle, as students’ funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 2005) are assets that should not be ignored. How teachers learn about their students and then adjust their practice as a result should not only be based upon the assessments recommended in DI literature, but also the language and culture students bring with them from home.

But it is not enough to believe that effective teaching is the simple equation resulting from differentiated instruction being added to culturally relevant teaching. The relationship, care, and recognition that is negotiated and managed between teacher and student on a regular basis has the potential to inform both parties of the direction the school day and year is to take. Therefore, in this study I have examined the ways in which my participant successfully implements characteristics of an effectively differentiated classroom, but how she takes this further to be aware of the humanity of her students. Chapter 3 will describe the ways I prepared and organized my study of the relationship, care, and recognition Amy demonstrated in her classroom interactions.

Chapter 3

Methodology

In this study I constructed an account of the complexity of knowing students enough to provide instruction that meets their needs—both instructional and social/emotional needs. I worked with a fifth-grade teacher for one semester, conducting classroom observations and periodic interviews with her and her students, attending meetings with her, analyzing video of selected whole and small group activities, and reviewing student work and reflective journal samples. I used a variety of techniques, described below, to get an idea of how this particular teacher worked to know her students as individuals, and how this knowledge of her students affected and was affected by her instruction.

I began my classroom observation work near the beginning of the school year. This is a time of year when effective teachers attempt to learn as much as they can about students through a variety of means, and I investigated the ways the ways this teacher learned about the students from other teachers, parents, benchmark exams, etc. I was especially interested in how the teacher learned about the students as *learners* and as *human beings*. While not mutually exclusive, pressures teachers face in the current era of educational standardization place an emphasis on the former.

This study was designed as an ethnographic case study (Dyson & Genishi, 2005) of one classroom teacher as she worked to be responsive to her students' educational needs and explored how the relationships she had with them affected and was affected by this responsive teaching. I chose a case study design because I wanted to understand as much as possible the complexity of a single teacher's perspectives, decisions, actions, and interactions within the classroom. As mentioned earlier in this paper, this study is not about truth or replicability as

discussed in Guba and Lincoln (1994), nor is it about generalizability, as discussed by Merriam (2009). I did not expect that this teacher's experiences would mirror another's. Yet, the data analyzed here may serve to explain some of the complexity of a teacher's experience as she attempted what is often taken for granted—or assumed to be impossible. In this way, it will provide one example of what a teacher encountered, considered, worried about, etc. as she attempted to be responsible for and responsive to a classroom of students.

A case study is often understood to be an example of ethnographic research where the case is a local phenomenon (Schwandt, 2015). In my case, it is a classroom. This case was then situated in the social context of the school as well as the larger social context of standardized American schooling. The benefits of a case study are numerous. For research into a teacher's experience, a case study can provide invaluable insights into the very messy social phenomenon that is the classroom. Through the study of one teacher's relational knowing of and responsiveness to her students, I gained some perspective on the factors that shape instructional and social/emotional interactions. While there has been concern about the limitations of case studies to provide generalizable results, Merriam (2009) noted that this ignores the point of this type of research. Case studies acknowledge that there are no simple answers, especially when investigating human affairs.

Described in more detail below, I collected several types of data in this project. This included field notes during classroom observations, journals that several students kept, weekly teacher interviews, student interviews twice during the semester, video of targeted classroom lessons and small group activities, and notes taken during and after meetings with the teacher.

My research questions were as follows:

- How does a teacher engage in the process of getting to know, recognize, and care for her students?
- What is the teacher's instructional process, as she is continuously knowing and teaching her students?
- What is the teacher's experience during this process of teaching, seeing, responding, and caring?

The remaining sections of Chapter 3 include information about the setting, including the variety of participants who will be included. I add information regarding the methodological theory serving as a lens for this project, which is an overlap of narrative theory and relational ethics. I give detailed information about the data collection process, including how this is aligned to each research question. I end this chapter with information on how these data were analyzed, challenges I encountered, and the significance of this study.

Setting

The study site was a local K-5 elementary school I called Lincoln Elementary School. Lincoln had an average class size of 21 students per teacher and a total enrollment of approximately 350. Just under 90% of the students at Lincoln were considered low income and received free or reduced meals as a result of this status. The school was identified for School Improvement according to the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) specifications of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act (2001) and was in Year 2 of Academic Early Warning Status, which means it had not made AYP for two years, had developed an improvement plan, and offered school choice. Approximately 58% of Lincoln's students were Black, 21% were White, 10% identified as Hispanic, 9% identified as Multi-racial, 2% identified as American Indian, and less than 1% identified as Asian. Three percent of students in Lincoln Elementary were homeless,

and 22% were identified as students with disabilities. Over 15% of Lincoln students were identified as “chronic truants” (Illinois Interactive Report Card³).

Depending on the grade level, there were between two to four strands of each grade. For example, there were four Kindergarten teachers at Lincoln Elementary, four second grade teachers, and two third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers. Lincoln was a school-wide Title I school, which means that services that were previously reserved for low-income students are now disseminated throughout the school building, including the support services of five reading and math specialists. Lincoln was in a school district with an award-winning fine arts program, so all students were able to have 12 weeks throughout the year of art, music, dance and drama.

Participants

The participants for this dissertation included one fifth grade teacher, her 25-32 students (15 of whom had permission from their parents to be interviewed for this study), and Amy’s colleagues. This study took place in this 5th grade teacher’s classroom. This teacher, whom I call Amy, was entering her ninth year at Lincoln Elementary School⁴ when I began my study in her room. She and I negotiated my participation in classroom activities, such as work with small groups, tutoring of individual students, reading with students, and other general support. The students were also participants, but Amy’s perceptions, decisions, and actions were the main focus of this study.

Other teachers in Amy’s building were peripheral participants in this project, as they participated in meetings with Amy. If they chose to consent, I included their comments from meetings and/or audiotaped interviews with them. None of their students were invited to participate, nor was their students’ work collected.

³ A date was not provided for this citation in order to maintain anonymity for this school site.

⁴ A pseudonym

Additional participants in this project were Amy's fifth grade students. In my work in the classroom collecting field notes and doing whatever tasks Amy wanted me to do (including, but not limited to, small group instruction and individual tutoring), I worked with all the students in the classroom. However, I only collected data on the students who had parental permission to participate. The main focus was on the teacher, so any students who participated were a helpful addition to the research rather than a necessary part of the project.

Focal Participant: Amy

Amy is a white female with whom I worked for several years. She had both attended and led professional meetings during my time in the school district as a teacher educator, which led me to the belief that she had a commitment both to her students and to professional learning. I was not alone in this thought; her principal selected her as a district professional development cadre member. These cadre members worked with district personnel during the summers and during school and district inservice days to design and implement school and district-wide professional development on topics such as assessment, differentiated instruction, goal setting, and other building-selected topics. When I needed to renew my National Board certificate in 2009, she was the first teacher I contacted to "borrow" a classroom for my video analysis, and I spent several days observing and getting to know her students that year before conducting my own lesson.

Amy described herself as having very high expectations for her students. She mentioned during a previous project that she had been told (by whom, she did not say) that her expectations were too high. In our conversations, she discussed the time she had taken to align her classroom lessons with both the district-provided textbooks and the Common Core State Standards. Most of her 2014 summer was spent aligning her literacy activities in this way. Amy's participation in

this project was ideal, first of all because of my own expertise in the intermediate grade band, and also because we were previously acquainted. I felt that because Amy was already thinking about how she and other teachers could implement thoughtful instruction, she would be able to articulate her personal and professional theories in this study.

In this paper, I have regularly used the gender pronoun “her” to represent the teacher’s perspective and recommended attitudes toward students. This was not done to imply that male teachers cannot or should not maintain caring relationships with students. However, I was particularly happy to find a female teacher for this project. Care ethics comes out of a feminist perspective for a reason. The traditionally held views on rule-based ethics are predominantly masculine orientations. While I wanted to examine a teacher’s experience in relation and responding to students in an elementary classroom, I felt that this particular project would be too diffuse if I were to add an additional study of gender to the project.

Additionally, I felt that it was important to limit the scope of this study to a teacher who was not currently the cared-for in the sense of being a new teacher. I was primarily interested in looking at caring relationships and relational knowing from the point of view of the one-caring. What was her experience as she cares for, feels responsible for, and worries about the cared-for(s)? Examining the perspectives of a brand new teacher would add another dimension that cannot be adequately addressed within this particular study.

Peripheral Participants: Amy’s Colleagues

Teachers with whom Amy worked were considered peripheral participants in this project. While Amy was the main research participant in this study, I attended meetings in which other teachers were present. It was important that I gained an impression about the team approach necessary for knowing and instructing students. In one particular meeting, I learned how Amy

and her colleagues made the difficult decision of removing between seven and 10 students from each fifth grade classroom to create a new class, because of the contractual class size limits.

When I attended staff meetings, there were up to 66 teachers, paraprofessionals, and student teachers present. Many of these individuals spent very little time in the school building, as they traveled between buildings in the school district or even between buildings in the county. I received consent forms for a very small percentage of this group (8%), as most of them felt that they were far enough removed from Amy's day-to-day work that I would not need to interview them. I was, however, able to learn about the school environment from the principal or assistant principal at these staff meetings, and I attended and audiotaped the meeting during which students were selected for the new 5th grade classroom.

Student Participants

It would be difficult to investigate the relational knowing of students without finding out, in their own words, how they perceive their classroom instruction and relationship with the teacher. I went to great lengths to assure parents/guardians that non-participation by individuals would not cause problems for the study and would not be seen in a negative light. A successful implementation of my study did not require all students to agree to participate. I did not need 100% student participation for this project and received permission to involve 15 of Amy's 25-32 students in my study. These 15 students were representative of Amy's full classroom, as the group was predominantly Black (10 of the 15), with only two White students, one Hispanic student, and two students who identified as biracial.

Researcher as Participant

The inspiration for this project stems from personal and professional stories of myself as a student, teacher, teacher educator, and parent. While I have excellent memories of K-16

schooling, my school experience was vastly different than my younger sister's. She was as self-conscious as she was creative, and neither of those qualities were rewarded in our classrooms. As a teacher, and later a teacher educator, I was forced to ask myself, Why was my school experience so different from hers? Why was I chosen for pull-out math programs? Advanced reading groups? Was it because of my enthusiasm, in contrast to her reticence? My eye contact with the teacher, and her avoidance? My standardized test scores?

Teaching was a field to which I felt called, rather than one I consciously chose. I found teaching invigorating and more challenging than anything I had ever done. However, I never felt as though I was challenging all my students at their varied instructional levels. Someone was always getting left behind. My professional goals became meeting these varied needs while educating the whole child, avoiding singling children out for special services, and establishing a community that truly appreciated and celebrated risk taking.

I became a teacher educator at roughly the same time as I became a parent. Inservice teachers, filled with stress from the behaviors they managed each day, often wanted a list of teaching strategies that could be easily implemented in their classrooms. There was no sanctioned time for thought; even their grade level meetings were pre-planned and involved benchmark and local assessment data—red, green, and yellow triangles were of the utmost importance. However, as a parent, I wanted to ask vastly different questions. Are your students happy in your classrooms? Are they excited to come to school? Do you like teaching them? Do you like *them*?

Clandinin (2013) suggested that along with “narrative beginnings” (p. 43), researchers must also ask the practical questions about how their research may impact the field. The examples from my personal narrative relate to the broader field of education in raising the

questions about why students have varying experiences in schools, and what types of instructional opportunities are available for certain children. As well, the perspective I bring to this project relates directly to my anticipated challenges. I led a number of workshops on differentiated instruction—would this be helpful or a roadblock as I attempted to be somewhat objective? I was well acquainted with Amy after spending time in the school district, and I did not want our familiarity with one another to create conflict as we entered difficult territory.

Challenges

In my project proposal, I considered a number of potential challenges that may have arisen in this research. First of all, I entered a school in which I previously taught. Amy's classroom happened to be my old classroom, and many of the colleagues in that building were people with whom I had worked very closely. I anticipated this being a tremendously positive aspect for this study, especially given the importance I am giving the relationship in this project, but it has occurred to me that people may know me a bit too well. One might wonder if this is even possible. I was not only a teacher in that building but also a professional developer and most recently a student teaching supervisor, and I considered the possibility that some teachers would feel as though they had to hide comments from me. After all, it is difficult to hide your thoughts and feelings from someone who is familiar with you, and vice versa.

However, I found that this potential concern was not a problem at all. The work with peripheral participants I proposed became a miniscule portion of the project, only becoming necessary when I attended the meeting about the classroom split and addition of the new fifth grade classroom mentioned above and discussed more later in this dissertation. Amy and I were well acquainted enough that we did not need to work through the trust building necessary when

researcher and participant are initially strangers. Our first conversations were just as frank and thorough as the last interviews.

I also wondered if my work with differentiated instruction, both as a teacher and as a teacher educator, would get in the way of my classroom observations. On the contrary, I noticed what Amy did to follow the recommended strategies for a differentiated classroom, including grouping students flexibly and encouraging a growth mindset. Yet, I observed other things Amy did and said to develop her students' confidence and motivation, without which her differentiated instruction techniques would not have been as successful.

Data Collection

Students met daily for their regular instruction, and I negotiated with Amy when to conduct my fieldwork. Fieldwork took place on an average of three days per week for 11 weeks during the fall semester, and I conducted a final interview with Amy after the spring semester. I collected a combination of field notes, interviews, artifacts, and photo/video in the classroom, as described below. The artifacts included copies of planning and instructional materials, field notes and photos taken during instruction, copies of student work products (including photographs taken with classroom digital cameras as part of projects and videos taken as part of the regular classroom work), audio- and video-recordings of activities in the classroom, and copies/print-outs of written correspondence between Amy, her students, and myself.

When asked to by the teacher, I participated as an assistant teacher in the classroom. This meant that I engaged in activities with children such as small reading/math groups, individual tutoring, and read alouds. I had no role evaluating or grading student work, nor did I collaborate with the teacher to assign grades.

Because the data I collected must match what I am trying to explore in this study, I have included a section below that describes which data collection methods I used to address particular research questions.

Research Questions

My first research question was: *How does a teacher engage in the process of getting to know, recognize, and care for her students?* To attempt to answer this question, I felt that it was important to begin my data collection as early in the school year as possible. Unless teachers teach the same students as in previous years, they are faced with a mass of small strangers on the first day of school. Depending on the grade level and the culture of the school, they may have talked to previous teachers about their new students or seen them in the hallways. Yet they do not know them or care for them in the ways described in this study. The methods involved in answering this particular question consisted of a variety of meetings to be described in the sections below, including faculty meetings and grade level meetings with colleagues. The regular interviews conducted with the teacher also directly addressed this question. Each interview addressed at least one interaction between the teacher and a student during the previous week, and I asked the teacher to talk about what decisions she made before, within, and after that interaction.

My second research question was: *What is the teacher's instructional process, as she is continuously knowing and teaching her students?* This question was addressed both in my classroom observations and field notes. I also conducted two interviews with each student for whom I had parent consent and student assent. Noddings (2005) suggested that in a caring cycle, relationships must be felt by both parties in order to be true caring relationships. As well, students must feel as though they are seen in order to be party to the recognition that Benjamin

(1988) required. I wanted to find out via an August and a December interview how students thought and felt about school, what they wanted their teacher to know about them, and how they felt they were challenged in school.

Lastly, I cannot ignore the difficulty of what the notable scholars cited above are asking of teachers. Meeting the varied needs of one child is difficult for a parent; why should we expect this to be any easier for a teacher who is faced with 25 children for six hours a day? My third research question was: *What is the teacher's experience during this process of teaching, seeing, responding, and caring?* I tackled this issue by using the regular interviews with the classroom teacher.

Methods of Data Collection

There were several types of data that I wanted to collect for this project in order to get as full a picture of Amy's decision-making, school context, and student interactions as possible. As I mentioned above, I wanted to attend meetings with Amy in order to learn about her school environment—how other teachers talked about Amy's students, what role Amy played in the school culture, etc. Much of my work was done in the classroom, in the form of classroom observations, upon which I took copious field notes and at times audiotaped or videotaped an interaction. I also conducted student interviews and asked a subset of students to keep a journal about their classroom experiences in order to find out how they were reacting to Amy's attempts to be a responsive teacher.

Meetings. I planned on attending the numerous meetings teachers are required to attend throughout the school year, with an emphasis on the meetings at the beginning of the school year and meetings that were required to get to know students better. However, after attending several staff meetings, I found that these meetings were more about school events and less about

teachers and students. Consequently, I discontinued my weekly attendance at these meetings and focused only on the meetings that involved student information or on which Amy had a strong influence. I attended these meetings as an observer only in order to take notes on conversations related to care and responsive teaching.

Field notes. I was in this classroom a minimum of three days a week. During this time, if I was not co-teaching with Amy, I maintained a detailed field notes journal. This journal focused on any pedagogically tactful interactions between teacher and student and between the teacher and her colleagues. The classroom observations were rich opportunities for me to see how Amy's instruction and relationship with students were affected by each other. While this seems to be limiting the scope of my field notes to only two items, I interpreted these interactions as broadly as did van Manen (1991) in his description of child watching, where he suggested that being a child watcher meant keeping the whole child in view. Thus, any conversations between teacher and student about home lives, conflicts with other students, topics students find boring, field trips they are looking forward to, etc. were legitimate sources of data for this project. Sometimes these interactions between teacher and student were verbal, and sometimes non-verbal: a pat on the back, a smile, or a stern look in someone's direction.

To supplement my written field notes, at times I recorded audio or video of classroom interactions between Amy and her students. This became especially helpful during fast-paced lessons when Amy and one of her students were going back and forth about a topic, and the specific language the pair used was intriguing. I was less confident in my ability to write every single word they said, so I used a digital device to record what was taking place for two to six minutes at a time.

Teacher Interviews. Every week, I scheduled a regular interview with the classroom teacher about interactions I noticed in the classroom (see Appendix A). I created an interview protocol that I anticipated using each week, but when there were specific incidents that took precedence, our exchanges focused on those instead. If I saw Amy taking a student aside for a conversation, I asked her how she knew that student needed to be taken aside for the conversation as opposed to being redirected or praised in front of the class. Or, if there were some students who seemed disengaged in a particular learning activity, I asked her what she thought about their personal and learning needs, and how she would like to meet them within the classroom setting. These interviews were audiotaped for later transcription.

My goal with these interviews was to gain insight into how Amy believed relational knowing interacted with instruction. Thoughtful teachers often have good reasons for why they say certain things to one student while choosing a different approach with other students. I share later what I learned from Amy about her thought process.

Student Interviews. Another portion of this project included pre- and post-project interviews with Amy's students. Noddings (2015, 2013) work described caring as a cycle; caring is not completed unless the relationship is acknowledged by both the one-caring and the cared-for. If students do not feel as though they have a relationship with the teacher, Noddings would suggest that there is in fact no relationship. A classroom study on recognition, relationships, and caring would be inadequate without the perspective of the students. In these interviews, I asked students about their feelings and thoughts about school (see Appendix B). What did they want their teacher to know about them? What experiences did they like having in school? Not surprisingly, especially given the topic of this paper, I felt as though I gained their trust and had more thorough and honest interviews with them in December. I was then able to ask similar

questions about the first semester of their fifth-grade year. Who did they feel knew them best? What were their favorite school experiences so far?

Student Journals. For similar reasons, I asked five of Amy's students to keep researcher journals during the Fall semester. To get a better idea of how Amy's students responded to her and how they felt she cared about them as human beings, I wanted students to be able to record their own field notes of a sort. After consulting with Amy, I selected five students who were often done with their work early, and who we thought would appreciate the additional research opportunity. As it turned out, these students wrote very little, so these journal entries became a secondary data source.

Data Analysis

In this study, I used a content analysis (Merriam, 2009) to represent the common elements of the observations and interviews with teachers and students. My first step in the analysis of this data was the transcription. I transcribed every interview (student and teacher), video clip, and audio clip word for word. The only recorded data source that I did not record verbatim was the meeting I attended with Amy and her 5th grade colleagues, when they were deciding which students would or would not stay with their original classroom teacher. For this meeting, I was able to take notes as I listened, which gave me a clear picture of the process of splitting up the two classes into three.

I found the transcription process enabled me to take notes on possible themes, topics to consider for further examination, or simply a reflection on the research project as a whole. For example, there were themes that I observed arising often in my conversations with Amy, such as the exhausting nature of teaching in a high-need classroom. I was then able to code the interview

transcriptions and use my observations at meetings to discuss the emotions teachers felt when attempting to reach a multitude of student needs.

I took field notes during my classroom observations and at teacher meetings, and I noticed similarities in teacher and student behavior that I grouped by using certain terms in this content analysis. I began analyzing these data by doing an open coding; I took notes in the margins of each printed page for the field notes and interviews and gradually combined these notes into common elements in Amy's classroom experience. I found that the field notes, including the video and audio clips of classroom observations, were an especially rich source of data, and my content analysis using these data and the interviews led me to the main categories to be presented in Chapters 4 and 5.

Open Coding

To begin with, I began the organization of my data by printing all pages of typed field notes, student work samples, and video and audio transcriptions of classroom events and interviews. I had 11 weeks of data, which included between eight and 12 hours of classroom observation each week, weekly interviews with Amy, two interviews with each of the 15 students I had permission to study, field notes from four staff or grade level meetings, and samples of student work (including the student research journals). I also conducted an interview with Amy at the end of the school year to follow up on some remaining questions I had regarding her work with students and her beliefs about social justice issues in education.

I then began to read through each page, noting characteristics of the interaction. For example, when I read through a paragraph that included a joke Amy made in front of her students, I wrote "sense of humor" in the margin next to that paragraph. As I read through my binders of data several times, adding notes each time, I began to notice patterns in my notes.

“Sense of humor” was something I had written many times, a theme for which I had numerous examples, so I created a new document in Microsoft Word with “Sense of Humor” as the title. I did this for each interaction I saw written several times.

Themes

After reviewing my notes often, creating separate Word documents for the most common characteristics of Amy’s behavior and students’ comments about her, I saw that I had many categories. I then began to combine these into similar themes. For example, Amy expressed a great deal of humor in her classroom interactions, she told her students about her interests and her family, and she also allowed her students to share elements of their home lives. I decided that these three characteristics could be considered “Expression of Personhood,” as they were examples of ways Amy shared her life and allowed her students to share their own humanity via classroom activities and impromptu interactions. Using this pattern, I created four main themes: *respect for students, awareness and decision making, expression of personhood, and motivation*. These four major themes organized my first Findings chapter, Chapter 4. Each theme contained between two and four subthemes; for the example above, “Expression of Personhood,” these subthemes were the aforementioned *sharing of Amy’s own personhood, expressing a sense of humor, and allowing students to share their own personhood*.

I have analyzed my four themes across three features of modern schooling: the academic, the organizational, and the socio-emotional. *Academic aspects of schooling* in this project include curriculum, instruction, and assessment. I have included physical education classes in the academic sections of this paper, because Amy was responsible for teaching and assessing P.E. (physical education) performance. The *organization of schools* includes how classes are structured and arranged, how behavior is proactively managed, and what logistics enhance or

interfere with classroom activities. The *socio-emotional aspects* of schools include how teachers encourage students to learn about and get along with each other, how teachers respond to misbehavior in ways that respect or disrespect students, and how a teacher greets and interacts with students. These areas are not mutually exclusive, they do overlap, but the examples have been placed in sections of Chapter 4 where there is a preponderance of evidence.

As I created these themes, I noticed that there were two areas of Amy's behavior that were vitally important to her existence in the classroom and the teaching profession in general, but that were not directly related to the classroom interactions described above. These were her emotional life and her disconnect from her Black students' culture. I had quite a bit of data that suggested Amy's emotions were related to her experience as a teacher who believed in responsiveness, and it would be irresponsible for me to write about Amy's relationship as a White teacher in a predominantly Black classroom without discussing her awareness of privilege and structural racism. Chapter 5 is a discussion of these findings.

Synthesis and Segue

I was fortunate to find and recruit a participant with whom I was familiar, as this particular study, both the topic and methodological format, could not have been completed without a trusting relationship in place between researcher and participant. Amy needed to know that I could be trusted with information about her frustrations with administration, her concerns about students' home lives, and the unknown information students would share with me during our interviews. Though students knew I had permission to share what they said with their teacher, students never expressed concern that I might "tell their teacher" something, and only once did Amy ask me if I was learning anything interesting during the interviews. While my research positionality was initially a concern during my proposal of this project, it was *because*

Amy and I were familiar with one another that our interviews became productive and informative almost immediately. This resulted in more authentic data, and a more representative portrait of this teacher's interactions and relationships with students.

Chapter 4

Findings: Teacher and Student Interactions

This chapter follows Amy's classroom practice in the context of her responsive teaching interactions with her students and her reflections on those interactions during weekly interviews with me. While reviewing my field notes (including video and audio clips), interviews with Amy and her students, and the collected student artifacts, I constructed four main categories, or themes, that demonstrate how Amy's work with her students went beyond traditional differentiated instructional techniques. Amy was respectful of her students, she maintained a high level of awareness in the classroom in order to make classroom decisions, she expressed her personhood and allowed students to share their own, and she used a variety of techniques to increase students' motivation.

In this chapter, I introduce these themes by first describing what a reductionist view of traditional differentiated instruction, instruction without a specific focus on student's humanity and the relationship between teacher and student, might look like. While differentiation is a valid but challenging goal of K-12 classrooms, I have found that limiting oneself to a focus on strategies and disregarding the human element causes one to disconnect from teaching and students in van Manen's (1986, 1991) pedagogical sense.

After I develop the section on Amy's use of traditional differentiated instruction, and discuss why a focus on strategies alone is insufficient, I move into a description and analysis of the four main themes in this portion of my analysis: respect for students, awareness of students and decision making, expressed personhood, and student motivation. Since it is important to me to show how these categories were important to many aspects of schooling, I analyzed these themes and several subthemes across three schooling components: academic, organizational, and

socio-emotional. These subdivisions are necessary to highlight that a teacher's focus on the relational does not limit her to the socio-emotional aspects of the school day. A teacher like Amy can and should place all four of these in the center of her practice to conduct high-quality instruction, and effective instruction helps teachers learn more about their students as complex human beings.

Traditional Differentiated Instruction

If we imagine high-quality instruction as a house, a foundation must be built before the house can take the shape that welcomes its occupants. Footings are prepared, concrete is poured, and walls are built. If done well, the result is the outline of a home; sturdy walls that are crucial to keeping a house strong. These structural elements are often taken for granted, but are essential to a house that lasts. In a diverse classroom, where we would hope to see the *relational* and *instructional* interacting in ways described in earlier chapters, traditional recommendations for differentiated classrooms can be considered these foundational elements. We start with this, but do not end here. Below I describe how recommendations for a differentiated classroom are the basic academic and organizational aspects of the responsive classroom, but Amy goes much further than a formulaic implementation of differentiated instruction (DI). Because I want to focus more on these relational interactions of Amy's as opposed to the commonly-known characteristics of DI, I am fairly brief in my analysis of Amy's traditional DI practices.

Tomlinson (2003) focuses on eleven overarching characteristics of a differentiated classroom. These include 1) linking assessment and instruction, 2) being clear about goals for learning, 3) grouping students flexibly, 4) using resources (time, space, materials) to help students work in different ways, 5) involving students in shared classroom responsibility and community, 6) expressing to students that growth determines classroom success, 7) making sure

all students have work that is equally engaging, 8) seeing differentiation as a challenge, not an escape from a task, 9) high expectations for the teacher as well as the students, 10) utilization of specialists when necessary, and 11) preparing for the needs of students as opposed to reacting to them.

I observed several of these characteristics during my 11 weeks in Amy’s classroom. Examples are provided in the table below, followed by a brief description of how Amy enacted these practices. During this period, I did not observe characteristics 7, 8, and 9, so they are not included on the table. Tomlinson is clear that there is no one right way to differentiate classroom instruction; these practices will vary from year to year, dependent on a teacher’s expertise, the grade level, etc. The list of DI characteristics is not designed to be an all-encompassing list or a checklist to be covered in its entirety every school year.

Table 1		
<i>DI Categories and Classroom Examples</i>		
Category	Thematic Category	Classroom Example
1	Linking assessment & instruction	Amy watched students work on a simple math assignment early in the school year to see how students solved problems. She then used this to design instruction.
2	Being clear about goals for learning	While solving math problems, Amy told students, “The point is that you’re really thinking about the numbers. I want you to be thinking about the ways these numbers interact with one another.”
3	Grouping students flexibly	Amy provided an open-ended social studies assignment where students chose their own groups, while during reading groups, she designed groups based on current academic need.

Table 1 (cont.)		
4	Using resources to help students in differentiated ways	Students' morning work was differentiated: Some were finishing up work they did not complete the day before, others were coloring a Star Student sheet for a peer, while others checked in with Amy to discuss their homework.
5	Involving students in shared classroom responsibility and community	Three students with differentiated spelling work chose their words for the week from the class list.
6	Expressing to students classroom success is determined by growth	Amy created data folders for students to record their reading chapter test scores to see growth throughout the year.
10	Utilizing specialists when necessary	One student had independent math work in a folder, provided by the Special Education teacher. This student pulled this out for independent work while the class is engaged in whole group instruction in math.
11	Preparing vs. reacting	Prior to completing a writing and social studies assignment, Amy selected two students to be class helpers for the simpler tasks involved, allowing her to spend more of her time proofreading other students' papers.

Linking Assessment and Instruction

The relationship between assessment and instruction is a familiar one to even the beginning teacher. Ideally, assessment should be used not only to summarize learning and provide a grade, but to design instruction based on students' individual and whole-group needs. The responsive teacher should be assessing students on a regular basis to ensure that learning

progresses. One way in which Amy demonstrated this link between assessment and instruction was with a benchmark assessment provided by the district, based on the work of Fountas and Pinnell (2008). This assessment required individual students to read a pre-selected passage to Amy and answer comprehension questions. It was enormously frustrating to Amy that each assessment took approximately 45 minutes, and by design must be given to students one at a time. However, though Amy talked about being able to gain similar information in other, more efficient, ways, she did say she would use the information from this assessment to design whole and small group instruction.

Amy used some of her classroom time on Fridays to give Spelling and Reading tests. She graded things quickly so she could design lessons the following week on the information.

So the pre-test that I gave for Theme 3, it goes over what we're going to do for the whole theme, like sequencing is part of it...And some type of figurative language. Which they knocked out of the park from the whole simile-metaphor project and everything that we did, they did great with that. But the one thing that everyone did horrible on, or bad on, you know, like 3 out of 10, yeah, horrible, was the possessive noun part. So that's why we did stations...and when they met with me, that's what we focused on, as opposed to a reading skill.

On another occasion, Amy was working with students on ordering large numbers. She started students on another problem, then asked them to get out their Assess Yourself cards, which will be described in detail later. These cards allowed students to display a card on their desks that represented their comfort with the material. Amy scanned the classroom, got an idea of which students needed some additional work or confidence with the material, and sent two students to the table at which I was working for some additional assistance.

Goals for Learning

Amy's goals for learning were clearly stated in a number of lessons, which went beyond simply stating the learning target for the day's activity. While some of these examples could be considered Characteristic 6, sharing the importance of growth with students, she introduced portions of classroom activities by telling students what *she* thought was important. For example, during a math lesson, Amy discussed how varied their answers or math strategies might be. "I don't care if you get the right answer. I care if you're thinking through the process."

At the beginning of another math lesson, Amy introduced the activity by suggesting that she wanted to see what they could do, and she was going to walk around and watch how they did it so that she could help them. Interestingly, Amy could have introduced this as an assessment, since this is what an assessment is designed to accomplish. But it appeared to be important for her to simply explain to students the goal of this particular activity, keeping "assessment," or "test," out of her vocabulary. Later in the year, she differentiated these two terms when introducing a similar activity to students, seeming to understand that "test" caused some students to become nervous in ways that the word "assessment" may not. "This is not a quiz, this is not a test, it is just an assessment so that I can give you feedback and say you are on the right track."

Flexible Grouping

There are times that it is effective and efficient for the class to work as a whole, guided by the teacher, while at other times, students can work individually or in small groups. Amy was flexible with morning work, at times giving students the choice to work on whatever was most pressing for them when they walked in the door, and at other times, providing a worksheet on which she wanted everyone to work. One day, she handed out notecards to the students and wrote a five-digit numeral on the whiteboard. She asked everyone to write this number in four

ways: short word form (74 thousand, 123), word form (seventy-four thousand, one hundred twenty three), expanded form ($7 \times 10,000 + 4 \times 1,000 + 1 \times 100 + 2 \times 10 + 3$), and exponential expanded form ($7 \times 10^4 + 4 \times 10^3 + 1 \times 10^2 + 2 \times 10^1 + 3 \times 10^0$). She met with each student when he/she⁵ finished this assessment, checked his/her answers, and encouraged students who made mistakes. She then took students' notecards and divided students up into instructional groups on the spot. As a researcher but also a former classroom teacher, I let Amy know that I was available to meet with students when she felt it was appropriate, and I worked with six students who made similar mistakes. She pulled a group of five students to work in the front of the room with her, while the rest of the students worked on the assignment she posted on the whiteboard.

Using Resources Differentially

Tomlinson (2003) wrote,

A teacher in an effectively differentiated classroom continues to look for ways to arrange the classroom to enable students to work in a variety of ways, to enable students to use time flexibly, to match materials to learner needs, and to meet with students in varied formats. (p. 7)

Amy demonstrated an ability to use resources such as time, materials, and the classroom arrangement to meet students' needs. First of all, more than once I entered the classroom and the classroom was arranged differently than it had been the day before. Amy did this to maximize the space in her classroom of 32 students at the beginning of the year, but also to ensure that students who distracted one another were not sitting together. During the morning work time that became routine for students, Amy checked in with a few students about their homework charts; I observed that these were often students who had trouble completing homework consistently, so

⁵ Since all students in the classroom used the pronouns "he" or "she" to identify themselves, these are the pronouns I will use to refer to them.

Amy reminded them of their responsibilities in this area. She also gave two students their “Hugs” sheets, a Tier II behavioral intervention commonly referred to as Check-In/Check-Out ⁶(Smith et al., 2015).

The morning work routine was a planned time for Amy to have students practice a particular skill or work on unfinished work; Amy also took advantage of quiet work time during other class activities to provide assistance to students who struggled with the day’s work. One day, the class was working on writing and decorating their personal goal statements for a schoolwide initiative that required all students to set a behavioral and academic goal for themselves that year. While students worked on their goal statements and decorated them for a hallway display, Amy called on a few students to work with her at the kidney table at the side of the classroom and provided them targeted assistance. At times, she asked me to work with students to proofread their writing or explain a math concept in more detail.

Another time I witnessed Amy using time flexibly was during a Monday afternoon period when much of her class left to attend instruction with the Band or Strings teachers. There were only eight students remaining in the classroom at this time, and Amy maximized this period in various ways. I saw her meet with four students to finish a task they had not completed while the others read silently in the classroom “Book Nook.” Another day, she met with one student to complete the Fountas and Pinnell (2008) benchmark literacy assessment, and several others used classroom iPads to finish a different test. During the week the class was working on research on spiders, Amy conducted a status report with the remaining students to figure out who was at

⁶ Check-in, Check-out is an intervention for students for whom behavior modifications in the regular classroom have not been effective. It involves a half sheet of paper with increments of time for the school day listed on the sheet, and the classroom teacher is supposed to mark 0, 1, or 2 to indicate how successful the student was at paying attention, working with others, completing work, or whatever that students’ particular goals were. The second portion of this intervention is that the student is paired with a school employee, not his or her teacher, with whom he or she can check in each morning to quickly set goals for the day, and then with whom he or she can check out at the end of the school day to review the sheet and the student’s behavior from the day.

what stage of the writing process. She spent the class time proofreading with one student, and asked another to take his notes and write them in paragraph form, while the others continued working on the rough or final drafts of their work.

Shared Classroom Responsibility

This feature of effectively differentiated classrooms requires the teacher to create a certain type of environment. The classroom is a community; everyone understands the goal is to help each student receive whatever support he or she needs to grow. During one open-ended Social Studies activity, where students were involved in group work, Amy acted in a facilitative role as opposed to a more directive one. Students in groups helped each other find materials, construct microphones and makeshift video cameras for their newscasts, while Amy walked around to each group and asked, “Do you need my help with anything?”

Another strategy Amy used not only to provide appropriate instructional activities but also to learn more about each student were her Assess Yourself cards. These were small sets of color-coded circles, held together by a paperclip, that could fit in the palm of your hand. The red circle stated, “I’m stuck!” and was supposed to be displayed if students had a concern with an activity. Yellow was a more cautious, “I may need help in a minute,” green was, “Good to go,” and blue stated, “I’m an expert.” At different points during instruction, Amy would ask students to get these cards out and turn them to whatever card reflected their level of understanding on a topic. She did not do this for every class, but seemed to save these for lessons where she was unsure how the instruction was being received.

By placing these cards on their desks, Amy could see who needed more support academically and who was “good to go.” There was more to this process, however. When involving students in self-assessment in this way, Amy conveyed a sense of importance in how

they felt their work was coming. Amy was not the only individual in the classroom who could evaluate learning; students themselves had a say in what was confusing and what was too easy. As well, Amy let her students know through these cards that she was open to their successes and difficulties.

Growth Determines Classroom Success

As opposed to a classroom where grades are the ultimate goal and every student has the same bar to reach, in a differentiated classroom, “each student is responsible for working to progress as much as he or she can toward goals that are personally challenging” (Tomlinson, 2003, p. 8). Within the first month of school, when Amy set up the students’ data folders for them to put self-chosen samples of work along with their chapter test results, she explained this to them as a way to show their families how much they had grown during the semester. “Just like our characters in our story grow and change, you’re going to grow and change, too.” Amia, one of Amy’s students, took this to heart and shared with me in our December interview that she had grown on her math chapter test, “Um, I feel like I learned more stuff because we had the test of math yesterday...last time I got a 28 and we’re supposed to get 30, and this time I got a 53.”

Amy also encouraged students to assess their own understanding, and when introducing the way they would do this, she made sure students knew this was an individual task, not one others around them needed to worry about.

Remember, it is not anybody else’s business what you put on your thing...It is very important for me for all of you to feel safe for where you are with your education. If

there's something that you don't quite understand, it's OK. There's not a problem with that. That means you're learning and you're growing.

Students had four color-coded, quarter-sized cards that represented different levels of comfort with a particular activity. Red was "I'm stuck," yellow was, "I may need help in a minute," green was, "Good to go," and blue was, "I'm an expert." After various activities, Amy asked students to put the appropriate color on the corner of their desk, and she could scan the room to see how students felt they were progressing.

Utilizing Specialists

There are a number of specialized staff members in any school building who can provide assistance to the classroom teacher. I observed E/BD teaching assistants, floating substitute teachers, the school inclusion facilitator, the school social worker, and the county vision specialist regularly in and out of Amy's classroom during my time there. During an interview, Amy told me that she met with the special education teacher once per week to talk about students' needs. She was released from her classroom duties for this meeting, and a substitute who "floated" around to different classrooms came at a prearranged time to instruct her students for 30-45 minutes.

Alexander, one of Amy's students, had a degenerative vision disorder, and required quite a bit of supplemental help. Amy copied all of his work on 11x17 paper so it could be enlarged for easier viewing, Alexander sat in the front of the classroom, and he used a tool called a Visioboard in order to view the board or other print materials at his desk. This tool was approximately the size of his desktop, and had a screen that Alexander could position toward the board for magnification. In order to help students understand Alexander's needs, the county vision specialist visited the classroom and talked to the students, Alexander included, about his

condition and the kinds of tools he might be using during class that year. It is difficult to know if this talk was the reason why, but during my time in the classroom, I did not see or hear students complaining about Alexander's space in the classroom or the tools he used to assist him in class.

Preparing vs. Reacting

While effective teachers may adjust instruction on the spot, much of their work to differentiate instruction takes place proactively. In November, when the student teacher was instructing the entire class, Amy made plans to take two students out of the regular math class and do some accelerated work with them at a different location. They were using the same materials, but Amy arranged for them to extend the work after a brief introduction to the topic.

Amy also arranged with the special education teacher for three of her students to have independent work during class times when the work was years beyond their current understanding. During these times, the students would pull out their provided folders and work independently on their math or reading so that they could be doing the same topic as the rest of the class, but at their particular level.

Is this Responsive Teaching?

The consistency with which I observed many features of a differentiated classroom may seem to indicate that Amy's classroom is one that Tomlinson would consider effective. I would agree with this, especially based on my observations and interviews with Amy and her students. However, I question whether or not Tomlinson's features adequately represent responsiveness to students' being and becoming (van Manen, 1991). Tomlinson (2000) does discuss indicators related to students' social and emotional growth; for example, their work ethic. She also states in more than one text (2000, 2001, 2003) that differentiation is about mindset and beliefs, not an oversimplified list of strategies. One of these texts suggests Tomlinson's belief in the humanity

of the learner, “human beings share common feelings and needs, and schools should help us understand and respect those commonalities” (2000, p. 17). She also has an entire chapter in *How to Differentiate in Mixed-Ability Classrooms* (2001) on differentiating by student interest, so we see Tomlinson does focus significantly on the personhood of the learner as opposed to merely their instructional needs.

However, while I would suggest that these features are the vital foundation of a responsive classroom, they are not the entire structure. While most individuals would not want to move into a house with little more than rebar and concrete or even simply with drywall in place, there could be aspects of a differentiated classroom, as indicated above, that are also insufficient. A teacher can follow the letter of the DI classroom law without providing the heart in classroom teaching that students crave and need in order to become successful learners, and more importantly, whole and fulfilled persons. Because it is important to consider how this could possibly happen, imagine the classroom below where a teacher follows Tomlinson’s rules as indicated in Table 1.

Students walk in at 8:15 and on their desks are differentiated worksheets. They are color coded by “ability” level—the students who struggle the most have a short worksheet on red paper, the students who are considered average work on yellow pages, and the students identified as high achieving work on blue paper. The students move quietly to their seats while the teacher, Ms. Smith, sits at her desk, but points to the board where, “Quiet morning work!” is written. The students all sit quietly and work on their differentiated papers, eyeing each other’s desks while they do so. After about 15 minutes, the teacher rings a bell and asks students to put their papers away until later, when they can finish it or do it for homework.

Ms. Smith announces that today's learning target is equivalent fractions. "We are going to learn how to create fractions that have the same denominator so that we can add and subtract them." Ms. Smith conducts a short mini lesson with the whole class, then writes a problem on the board for all students to do. Based on their answers to this problem, Ms. Smith splits students into groups. While she meets with groups, students self-select the groups they'll work in on their independent work. When the math activities are done, students silently put their work and materials away and return to their seats.

This fictional narrative clearly demonstrates how assessment and instruction can be linked, the teacher is clear about her learning goals, students are grouped flexibly at times, and the teacher has prepared for differentiated instruction. However, there is nothing in this narrative that suggests that school is interesting or engaging, that the teacher or students enjoy each other, or that students will take what they are learning in school and become lifelong learners. When students go home, what do they tell their parents they have done that day? What are they excited about? What does the teacher enjoy about the students, and what do students think about the role of the teacher? The teacher and students are not relating to one another in van Manen's (1986, 1991) pedagogical sense. The teacher is not *with* the students, and as a result, they are not with her, though they obediently complete the work.

However, one might say that this teacher's classroom is in fact differentiated. Students are completing different levels of work and choosing their own groups for independent work, and the goals for learning are clearly stated. The basics of the differentiated classroom are there, but it would be difficult to agree with Tomlinson that this classroom is *responsive* in the definition of the word: "quick to respond or react appropriately or sympathetically" (Merriam-Webster, 1988, p. 1005). Ms. Smith does not seem to be answering the call of her students in any

way, and in this brief scenario, students do not have an influence on the teacher. There is obviously no emotion or connection passing back and forth between individuals.

The subsequent themes of respect for students, awareness and decision making, expression of personhood, and motivation provide what might be considered the remaining details on the house. Plumbing, electricity, furnishings—who would move into a house or even consider living there without a plan for these in place? These themes describe how Amy’s classroom builds upon the basics of DI to create a classroom that plans for and responds to students’ spoken and unspoken needs.

Chapter 5 will address the emotional life of the teacher and a cultural disconnect between the teacher and students. While these are themes related to responsiveness, they belong in a separate section due to their unique nature—that of the “being and becoming” (van Manen, 1991, p. 17) of the teacher. This is a White teacher in a classroom of predominantly Black students, and, as she admitted during our final interview, there was so much in the arena of social justice to which she was just now opening her eyes. My data collection took place during the fall semester of 2015, and she was engaged in a social justice class in the spring of 2016 that caused her to reflect on her privilege and classroom instruction. Therefore, Amy has proven herself to be a work-in-progress during the course of the year, growing and changing in her awareness of racial issues.

Responsive and Relational Instruction

These aforementioned themes may seem loosely connected with challenging academics. After all, we send our children to school to learn...something. A relationship with the classroom teacher is not enough to consider schooling effective. Consequently, each section below provides examples of the way Amy demonstrated each theme, as well as how each subtheme contains aspects of the academic, organizational, and socio-emotional.

Respect for Students

Without respect, how can teachers and students relate to one another? How can a teacher enjoy his or her profession, and how do the students develop a love of learning? Amy demonstrated her respect for her students in a variety of ways, many of which I observed during my time in her classroom, but these were also present in my interviews with Amy and my interactions with her students. She demonstrated respect for them as human beings (not merely students), and she regularly shared the rationales for her decisions in class.

The following table gives examples of the sub-themes present in Amy's respect for students. I generated these based primarily on my observations of her classroom, and they can be divided up into two main categories—her demonstrated respect for students as human beings, and how she respected them enough to be transparent in her decisions. I have then further subdivided these subthemes across the three categories mentioned earlier—ways that Amy demonstrated her respect in the academic, organizational, and socio-emotional realms of school.

Table 2			
<i>Schooling Features Present in Amy's Respect for Students</i>			
<i>Sub-themes Related to Amy's Respect for Students</i>	Academic	Organizational	Socio-Emotional
Demonstration of Respect	When helping a student who was having a difficult time with an activity, Amy whispered a suggestion rather than stating it out loud.	When a few students were talking, Amy said, "I'll wait until I have everyone's eyes," rather than calling out the individuals who were talking.	When students wrote her personal letters for her mailbox, Amy assured the students that these would be locked up and kept private.
Transparency in Decision Making	Amy emphasized the process as opposed to the answer during one classroom activity, describing what she thought was important about school.	Amy explained to students why they could not all rush up to her at once when they wanted to share something.	Amy asked students if it was appropriate to giggle when she called on someone.

Demonstration of respect. Throughout our interviews, my classroom observations, and the way students talked about Amy, it was obvious that she respected her students as human beings. I recently discussed this project's topic with another teacher, who said, "You mean there are people who don't?!" Yet there were a large number of interactions in Amy's classroom that I could imagine going a variety of ways in other classes that would *not* demonstrate to students that their privacy, humanity, and uniqueness were important to the classroom teacher. I have categorized these interactions or conversations below by the schooling features described above: academic, organizational, and socio-emotional.

Academic. One of Amy's students, Maya, struggled with her Reading tests. Because a number of students had struggled with the tests that semester, Amy had begun teaching them test-taking strategies during the tests so they knew how to check their reading book to find answers, for example. In addition, Amy had a conversation with Maya about what might help her with her test, and she and Maya decided that working one-on-one with me might be beneficial. This was a conversation Amy could have had in front of other students, which would have been detrimental to Maya's self-esteem, as she was already a very quiet, insecure little girl. Amy chose to talk to me in the back of the classroom while the other students were working, hiding her mouth behind a file folder so other students could not tell about whom we were talking. Obviously, the students saw me working with her when the test started, but it had become so commonplace by early October for me to work with one or two students at a time that no one looked at Maya as though she was receiving special treatment.

With another student⁷ who at times exhibited distracting behaviors, Amy pulled him over to her desk to have a private conversation about his handwriting work. As with Maya, this was a conversation Amy could have had in front of the rest of the class, or even in front of the students sitting near his desk. Yet, knowing this would embarrass him and perhaps shut him down even more, she had this conversation at her desk and then sent him back to his desk to redo some of the work at a higher quality. It is also important to note that she sent him back to his desk to complete the work again. Her awareness of his sensitivity did not sway her from her high expectations for his work.

In these examples, Amy was showing her respect not only for academic privacy, but how she understood how academic standing was very important to students' self-esteem. It is true that she was trying to avoid embarrassing these students, but even more so, she was respecting students' academic privacy and holding them to high academic standards.

One more way Amy combined her respect for students with a concern for their academic progress was her adjustment of their work, even when students did not have Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). When we talked about three students who had adjusted spelling lists, she told me she adjusted them primarily because some students started the year getting four words correct out of 20. Only one student of the three had an IEP that required her to make these accommodations, but she said, "When you're getting F's on everything, I mean, that feels horrible." To her, the feeling of persistently getting poor grades was important enough for her to adjust their list to give them a feeling of success while at the same time continuing to develop their spelling strategies.

⁷ I had parent permission to work with 15 students in Amy's classroom, so I refer to those students by the pseudonyms they chose during the interview process. The remainder of Amy's students I do not refer to by name.

So cutting it down to 10, and then I just double it. So if they get nine out of 10, they get 18 out of 20. That feels a lot better than nine out of 20. So, what's it hurting? It's not. If they can master some of those words, and be successful from that, that's a lot more important.

Some teachers might have consistently handed out the 20-word list to every student and watched throughout the year as the same three students scored poorly. Others might have assigned extra practice to those three students or called parents to suggest they practice a little harder with them at home. Teachers are within their rights to do any of these things. Yet Amy explained the validity of students' feelings in her classroom. It was not only important to her that they scored better on the spelling tests, it was important that they did not have horrible feelings about their school performance.

Organizational. One day early in the year there was a scheduled fire drill. These scheduled events are important for students who do not know what to do in this particular part of the building, but they present a problem for the teacher, since the timing is not exact. Teachers know approximately when the drill will happen, but not exactly. Amy used some of her time waiting for the fire drill to ask students why they thought the school conducted these drills. Students volunteered that it was important to stay calm if there was ever a real fire; you want to be prepared, and if you know what to do you will be calmer in an emergency. Some students seemed to get antsy about emergencies in general, and this class started volunteering information about their neighborhoods—one student mentioned having been near a fire, another wanted to talk about the plainclothes officer at the local high school, and another student said he heard a gunshot in his neighborhood. Damon asked about tornadoes, and wanted to know what to do if there was an F5 storm. I was familiar with the term F5, as my husband is an atmospheric

scientist, but I was not sure if Amy was or not. However, she did think for a minute and then suggested a book that she thought Damon might like.

Still awaiting the real drill, the class practiced lining up quickly and quietly, no small task with 32 students. They did it again and again, and each time, Amy asked the students to reflect on how well they thought it went. “Did that feel safe?” “Should we practice another time? You guys feel good?” After a third try, the students seemed to think they were in good shape and did not need to practice again. The actual drill came along and while it was incredibly hot outside, the students were successful and were complimented by the principal upon returning to the building. However, they were still fidgety and wanted to continue the conversation about disasters. They talked about the speed of the firemen and how many Code Red drills they had last year. This was a conversation that could have gone on for a while. To honor their need to talk about these things but to move on to other things, Amy suggested that the students write her letters and put them in her mailbox so she could communicate with them later.

In a similar way to adults who stare at highway accidents, Amy’s students were both fascinated and anxious about the fire drill and the potential of a real emergency. Amy needed to get on with her classroom day, so it was important for her to curtail the conversation students wanted to continue, but she did not want to disrespect or dishonor their interest and emotion on the subject. This led her to recommend a book for Damon, and suggest that students write to her later (and some did) if they had questions or concerns about emergencies.

Socio-Emotional. The private conversations described above were consistent, ongoing, and useful for a variety of purposes. Amy made it clear during an interview that because of recommendations she had read in *Teach Like a Champion* (Lemov, 2010), she was trying to have private conversations with students more often. This came up in a number of ways. She would

occasionally talk with a misbehaving student in the hallway if she thought she could have a more thorough conversation with him or her there than in the classroom; while students were stretching in PE, she called three students up to talk to her about keeping their hands to themselves; and she had an extended conversation at her desk with one student while the rest of the class was working on their morning work and then offered him a blank card. The student then wrote a letter to someone (I was unsure if this letter was to a peer or a family member) on the card behind Amy's desk, and then returned to his own desk to get to work.

It is worth restating that Amy had set private conversations with students as a professional goal for herself, but there were a few non-examples of this in her classroom as well. During one particularly frustrating interaction with two students who had not completed an assignment as she asked, Amy corrected them in front of their peers, "You did not follow my directions." On another occasion, Amy had a brief and private conversation with one student, and gave him an alternate activity to do behind her desk. Within the same lesson, she questioned another student publicly about his behavior. He had opened his desk during the test and she wondered why. The interaction was short but effective.

It is difficult to imagine a teacher being so relaxed throughout his or her day that he or she does not get frustrated with students on occasion, and simply want certain behaviors to stop. Yet I do not believe that the aforementioned non-examples were times that Amy lost her temper. Some of her students required a private conversation, positive or a redirection, and so Amy conducted her interactions with those children in that way. Other students, certainly the boy in the above example, were not students who were embarrassed by being corrected in front of their peers. This student was actually strategically placed at the front of the classroom so Amy could maintain a close eye on him when conducting whole-class lessons; Amy could often quickly and

quietly handle his behavior. However, on this one occasion, Amy may well have wanted the rest of the class to note that it was inappropriate to open their desks during a test: Just as we will see she complimented students to ensure proper behavior spread around the room, a public redirection was effective this time to keep others from attempting the same thing.

Transparency in decision-making. During my classroom visits with Amy's class, I observed her explaining her decisions to her class on a fairly regular basis. Teachers are not under any obligation to do so; it is understood by most 6-11 year olds that the teacher is the "boss" of the classroom, and they should follow whatever directions are given for behavior or classroom instruction. In this case, however, Amy appeared to want her students to understand why she had certain expectations of their behavior and why she was designing certain activities in a particular way. Within this theme, I have divided the examples and analysis from Amy's class into those that can be considered academic, others that are more organizational, and, finally, those that represented the socio-emotional.

Academic. Early in the school year, Amy conducted an activity with students where she put Band-aids on their "boo boos." This activity was designed to help students see why their classroom would be differentiated. It did no good for her to provide one type of instruction for Student A if something else would be more appropriate. After completing this activity with students, she explained why this was important, and what it might mean for classroom instruction. "If I put a Bandaid where your boo boo isn't at, is that going to help you?" The students' answer was in the negative, of course. They had figured it out about halfway through the activity, when Amy consistently put the Band-aids on their hands, even when they would suggest they had a sore on their shoulder or arm. "It is not as important to me [for you] to get As or A+s, all I care about is that you get smarter, getting smarter from where we are today." Amy

was describing the way her instruction was individualized based on what her students needed. If she provided a book for them that was not appropriate, she was not doing her job. It is also important to note that Amy conducted this Morning Meeting during the first week of the school year. This let students know right away that Amy would be meeting their needs with activities that were right for *them*, not someone else.

Amy's transparency here is shown as she explains the need for differentiated instruction to students through a silly activity that completely held their interest. "How ridiculous," her students might have said to her, "Why on earth would you put a Bandaid on my hand if I cut my shoulder?" This led to a humorous and certainly more profound understanding of Amy's need to provide different instruction (Band-aids) to students who had differing instructional needs ("boo boos").

Amy also had an interesting way of talking about assessments with her students. At one point early in the year, she gave students what would be described in any pedagogy textbook as a formative assessment. She prepared to ask students to complete a math problem on a notecard, but when introducing the activity, she stated, "This is not a quiz, this is not a test, it is just an assessment so that I can give you feedback and say you are on the right track." I found it intriguing that Amy differentiated between a quiz/test and an assessment. Quizzes and tests are types of assessment, they are technically not distinct. However, the connotation that students attribute to quizzes and tests is that they are graded—these are fairly negative and high pressure classroom activities, while an assessment, if students are familiar with the term, does not necessarily have a grade attached to it. She was attempting to increase students' comfort levels and decrease any anxiety that their teacher was preparing to judge them in some negative way.

Amy also stated this was an opportunity for feedback to “say you are on the right track.” In essence, this was an opportunity for success, not failure or judgment.

There were a number of times Amy pushed students to see the importance of the process of a particular activity, not on getting the right answer. It was about their growth, not their performance. When students received their data folders, Amy made a comparison between the students and the characters in books they were reading, “Just like our characters in our story grow and change, you’re going to grow and change, too.” During a review of very simple mathematics, students told her how to complete the problem $12 + 8$. When a student told her she should carry the one, she paraphrased the student’s answer and asked for more, “I carry the one; what is that really doing?” This is important: Amy was emphasizing place value in requiring students to tell her that the *1* to be carried signified *10*. After some independent work, Amy closed the activity with a reminder, “The point is that you’re really thinking about the numbers...I want you to be thinking about the ways these numbers interact with one another.”

During one classroom observation, I accompanied the students to their physical education (PE) class. In this school district, the elementary teachers were tasked with teaching PE; there were no certified physical education teachers in the district. Luckily, Amy was physically active herself; she danced, ran, and did workout videos at home. Her 5th grade students were also able to take on some of the leadership in class activities, so Amy selected students to direct some of the warm-up activities. By this point in the school year, two and a half months in, they knew Amy’s expectations and were also well-versed in the exercises that were considered legitimate warm-ups. One student chose a “suicide drill,” which is aptly named for its difficulty. Students started at one side of the gym, sprinted a quarter of the way across the gym, and then returned to touch the wall where they began. They continued sprinting back and forth to the half-court mark,

the three-quarters mark, and then the full length of the gym before running back to where they started. I was familiar with the drill after having participated in a number of athletic teams myself, and Amy took this opportunity to explain to students how these drills would help with their agility in football, basketball, volleyball, gymnastics, and dance. Knowing the students as I did at this point in the school year, I found this a skillful way to get students to see the drill's importance; two to three of her male students were very involved in football and basketball, Butterscotch was a gymnast, and Amia was a dancer. Without a doubt, Amy chose to mention these sports because of her knowledge of students' interest in them.

Organizational. Amy began her school year with 31 students and a new student registered soon afterwards, giving her a total of 32. This was a very large class, in a high-needs school, in a small room. On the first day of school, students began by working quietly on some morning work Amy had placed on their desks. As they finished, one by one, they started asking questions, and Amy had to explain why it was important to raise hands. She was very frank with the class about how there were a lot of them in the room, and if they all came up to her at once, she would never be able to answer all of their questions. "Thumbs up if we are all in agreement with that?" Several thumbs were raised.

In asking students to give her a thumbs up if they were in agreement, Amy was not allowing students to disagree with her. By asking students for a thumbs up or thumbs down, it demonstrated her respect for them. She was giving them a voice, while also checking to see who had listened to her expectations for raising hands in the classroom.

The same day, when students got ready for their bathroom break, Amy told them why she set behavioral expectations for the hallway. "We're 5th graders, top dogs, we have to show everyone else how to do it." Technically, being "top dogs" was not the real reason for being

quiet in the hallways. In fact, it was important for them to be quiet in the hallway because anything else would disturb the other classes, but this rationale for behavior appeared to work. This gave students a sense of pride, thinking about how they were the oldest students in the school and needed to set an example for others. It worked, and it built their self-esteem a bit. It gave students a sense of duty and responsibility and asked students to think about how they were setting an example for the younger students.

I have already mentioned the instance during the third week of school when the class was getting ready for its first fire drill. With any class, and especially such a large one, it is important to practice the way to quickly get out of the building, to see where to wait for the “all clear” signal, and to practice how to safely get back in the same door as four other classes were attempting to do at the same time. Amy led a discussion of why it was important to practice these drills, and students volunteered several good answers. This activity caused several students to get squirrely: There was much whispering and fidgeting in the classroom. In the same way adults get dramatic and antsy when talking about personal or observed emergencies, some students entered that discussion with the same behavior. Amy asked the class to help her figure out who was talking, since in such a large class, it was difficult to find the chatty individual. Without identifying anyone, the way Amy made this request caused whoever was talking to quiet down for the time being.

By asking the class to help her identify who was talking, Amy accomplished a number of things. First of all, asking students to help her again created a sense of duty among members of the class: The teacher needed help. How can we assist her? Secondly, by stating it in this way, she implicitly reminded the talking student that she was aware of their behavior, and she would

appreciate more quiet. Yet, she did not have to call this student by name, which might have embarrassed him or her.

Later in the semester, Amy used another technique for getting students to be more quiet. Some students were trying to finish their reading test, and others had finished and were beginning to whisper among themselves. Amy reminded the class, “It was quiet for you, please let it be quiet for them [the students who are still working].” This seemed to be a very simple way of redirecting classroom behavior, but it was actually quite inspired. In a way, Amy was suggesting that students “do unto others,” since it was very quiet while the majority of them were working. It was a rationale for immediate behavior that had the potential for long-term classroom success.

Socio-Emotional. The way Amy recommended that students consider others when they were overly chatty in class was one way of inspiring classroom bonding. This happened a number of times; once, when the students were working on rainbows that would later become a booklet for the Star Student of the Week, she had to explain why it was important they see this coloring and simple writing activity as something on which to concentrate. “When you’re Star of the Week, you’re going to want them to do this for you. So you have to do this for them.” As in the above example, Amy focused on explaining to students how they should act in ways they would want others to act with and for them. What Amy was requiring of them was to think ahead and to think about others. She asked students to stop and think about what they wanted and needed, and to project that onto what others might want and need.

Many teachers have a system of reinforcing positive behavior. Amy called this her Caught Being Good jar. When students were caught being good, she added between one and three “puff balls.” “There are a lot of us,” she explained again, and followed this with the

importance of following directions as a group, as “Team 234.” “234” represented their room number, and Amy referred to them regularly as Team 234 throughout the year. When their puff balls reached the first line in her jar, students got their choice of 10 minutes of some classroom activity. When it reached the second line in the jar, they again got their choice of 20 minutes of the activity, and when it reached the top, they got 30 minutes of this time. Amy made it very clear that this jar would only be added to, not taken away from. “I feel strongly that when you’ve earned something, you’ve earned it. I’m not taking these away.”

Amy’s strategy of reinforcing her behavioral expectations emphasized more than just proper classroom behavior. First of all, she introduced this as a need to depend on each other, because “there are a lot of us.” However, the large class size was not mentioned with a negative connotation, she referred to them as “Team 234.” They were a team, with similar objectives and experiences, and they could work together to achieve a classroom incentive. Not only could the team work together to achieve something, but no matter what happened, the incentive could only be gained, not lost.

Classroom Awareness and Decision Making

Teachers make an enormous number of decisions each day. The specific focus of this section of my dissertation is on *how* Amy made decisions about many interactions in the classroom, and how she reflected upon her decisions after she had made them. It involves the way Amy noticed students’ reactions and conversations, and how those led to her making similar or very different decisions in the future. It also describes the types of planned activities she used to deepen her knowledge of students and provide them with appropriate instruction.

There are four subsections of this portion of the paper on Classroom Awareness and Decision Making. First of all, I address the decisions Amy made in terms of her planned

activities, especially those such as Morning Meeting. These activities were part of the school curriculum. Secondly, Amy made numerous spontaneous decisions, especially after seeing a student's reaction or recognizing a teachable moment. The third subsection is devoted to the way Amy noticed students: their reactions and their instructional performance. Finally, some of my discussions with Amy were spent on her self-reflection, where she talked about how she loved how a certain activity went, or how she will never do another activity again, based on its perceived unsuccessfulness.

The following table shows these subsections and identifies specific examples of Amy's behavior in the academic, organizational, and socio-emotional arenas of the school day. For example, when Amy made decisions about portions of the math curriculum that she would need to supplement, this can be considered academic, as it is based in the school curriculum. It is also an example of Amy's planning; she considers what is present and effective in the math text, then finds alternate resources for what she has decided is lacking.

Table 3			
<i>Schooling Features Present in Amy's Classroom Awareness and Decision Making</i>			
<i>Sub-themes Related to Amy's Awareness and Decision Making</i>	Academic	Organizational	Socio-Emotional
Planned/ Sanctioned Activities	Amy made decisions about portions of the math curriculum to use or enhance.	Amy placed morning work on students' desks each day.	Amy's planned Star Student of the Week activity involved students writing and decorating papers for one student at a time, which were then made into a book.
In-the-Moment Decisions	Amy paraphrased a student's answer for clarity.	Amy applied a behavioral consequence when a student was whispering the spelling words to classmates.	After doing an activity that highlights the shortest/tallest students in the class, Amy reminded them that they will all change this year.

Table 3 (cont.)			
Noticing	Amy noticed a student who hadn't begun his work, and asked, "Can I help?"	When the Special Education teacher came to take a student, Amy allowed him one more race in PE before he leaves.	Amy talked with Truth about something he referred to during his Star Student presentation.
Self-Reflection	Amy used the Danielson Framework to make changes in her own teaching.	Amy changed desks often, putting one or two students by themselves, in the back of the classroom.	Amy felt that her students' motivation came from the relationships they had with her and with each other.

Planned Activities. The general public sees classroom planning as a large portion of teaching. Teachers plan lessons, implement them with students, and then plan revisions to these based on how well or poorly they are received. The planned activities of a teacher go further than lesson planning, however, and can include activities that allow for students to demonstrate their personhood. Amy planned a great deal more than math and reading instruction, she planned a number of ways students could show her their goals, their interests, and their understanding of learning tasks.

Academic. Part of the district's Strategic Plan, developed four years before the data collection for this project began, was to facilitate students setting their own personally challenging educational goals. For elementary students, the implementation of this plan involved students completing two goal statements—one behavioral goal they had for themselves and one academic goal. In order to teach students how to effectively set goals, Amy wrote one of her own goals on the board, "Be at school by 7:30 in the morning." School started at 8:10. Amy led the students through her process of moving backward from her ultimate goal to the specific steps

needed for success. If she was to get to school by 7:30, she needed to leave the house by 7:15. This meant she should be up by 5:15, and that required a bedtime of 9:30.

Amy accomplished several things by choosing this particular goal and describing to students how this should be accomplished. One, the goal was an academic one, and in telling students she needed to be at school on time, she was reminding them it was important they, too, come to school on time. As well, there were ways they could try to control their choices at home in order to be at school on time. By modeling goal setting this way, Amy was also telling students she was a human being who needed to set goals for herself. It said she found this planning process of getting to school on time difficult, and it was something she needed to think carefully about.

The students then began their own goal statements, and Amy observed several students needed help not only with the specific steps necessary to accomplish a goal, but writing the goal itself. She met with several students at her table, and I also worked with a student in the back of the room. The boy I worked with that day told me he wanted to get his homework done, but there were a number of factors interfering with that—his mother would tell him in the morning about any errands she would have for him when he got home, and whether or not he might need a friend to help with these errands. He also had to walk his dog every day. He and I talked about this one goal for quite a while before we came up with specific steps to enable him to complete his homework after school. Amy had similar conversations with the students at her table.

Organizational. When I entered the class right after the lunch period, it was almost always dark in the room. This was not accidental; Amy scheduled some “Chill Time” each day, right after lunch, so that students could calm down after recess. As she put it, “a lot of things happen on the playground.” This was a time for them to relax. If she tried to move right into

instruction when the students entered the class, she would have a very difficult time, since students were still hot and at times very anxious about issues that arose during a loosely-supervised recess.

This is not the first time I have observed this quiet time in a classroom. In another study (Jones, 2014), the third-grade teacher with whom I worked conducted an almost identical activity after lunch every day. The lights were dimmed as students entered the room, and there was soft music playing. The teacher allowed students to finish work from the morning, but they could also draw or just put their heads down. She called it “Relaxation,” and described that since students’ energy was so high after lunch, sometimes they entered the room crying and upset, and if she tried to begin her lessons immediately after lunch, “it would really be not good for us.”

Amy’s Chill Time was a successful quiet time for students, so they could relax after a very active lunch recess. It was also a time for her to touch base with students who had fought at recess, or who were angry for some other reason. One day, Amy told me of a dispute between two of her boys, and she had everyone involved just write down what they thought happened. Then she was able to bring the two boys to her desk, go over the reports, and see if they were able to forgive each other and move on. Sometimes this Chill Time was not as successful as she would have liked it to be, but most of the time, it allowed students to refocus and set themselves up for success in the afternoon.

Socio-Emotional. I had considerable opportunities to observe Amy leading her class in planned activities related to the social and emotional goals she had for her students. Some of them were activities in which many teachers engage their classes at the beginning of the year to learn about them: One example was a Fabulous Me poster students worked on for several days. This poster included places to write about what they loved to do, what they wanted to be when

they grew up, and facts about their families. Amy also sent postcards to her students before the school year began to introduce herself; it was something she had done for several years, and she remarked in our interviews that doing this for over 30 students was almost prohibitive. However, an acquaintance of Brooklyn's mother stopped Amy in church one day and told her how much Brooklyn was looking forward to getting her postcard. Amy said to me, "Oh, man, now I have to do it. So she's [Brooklyn] the reason why I actually did them this year."

Many classroom teachers do activities at the beginning of the year that are designed to help them get to know their students, so the Fabulous Me poster, while a good idea, was not terribly unexpected. Sending postcards to students before the school year begins is fairly unique, given the logistical minefield that is the beginning of the school year. Especially in a school like Lincoln, where there is a large mobility rate, Amy had to take a semi-accurate class list, generated quickly after district registration only a week before, and write individual postcards to each student. Obviously, if Brooklyn's mother's friend stopped Amy to mention the postcards, it was an activity that students talked about from year to year and appreciated, probably more than Amy will ever know. It conveyed a sense of importance to the student; the teacher was thinking about them before they ever arrived, and was looking forward to seeing them in a few short days. For those students who were nervous about starting the school year, this was bound to ease some worries.

Another activity that received both positive and negative press several years ago was the, "Something I Wish My Teacher Knew About Me" (Washington Post, 2015) activity. A teacher posted on social media the results of a classroom activity where she asked her students to write in response to, "Something I wish my teacher knew about me." The post became quite popular, as people around the country complimented the teacher's sensitivity and understanding, while

others felt she was betraying her students' confidence. When I mentioned this 2015 news story, Amy indicated that she had not heard about it before, but she had done this activity a few times at the beginning of the year, and once when she came back from her maternity leave one year, as a way to reconnect with her students. It is important to note that it is not the activity itself that created an awareness on Amy's part of her students' personalities and needs, but the way the activity was enacted that resulted in awareness and trust between teacher and students.

When introducing the activity during the first week of school, Amy stated and then reiterated that these letters would be kept private. Once these letters were turned in, she was going to lock the sheets of paper up. She would collect them in a basket so no one could see them. Students could fold them in half or more times if they were worried someone would see what they had written. With that, she also expressed her responsibility as a mandated reporter; the only reason she would ever tell someone the content of a letter was if they wrote something that confessed a safety issue, and she had to tell someone who could make them safer.

Nicholas expressed concern that with his VisioBoard and his position at the front of the room, everyone behind him could see what he was writing, I discovered he was correct; in my position at the back of the room, I could see every character he wrote on paper. Amy considered this, agreed, and moved him to a different spot in the room, and also allowed other students to move around the classroom for this activity.

A few students had a difficult time getting started, and I could imagine myself in their shoes. After all, this was the second day of school, and while this activity was designed to establish trust, some students may not have been ready to trust a new teacher quite yet. Amy interrupted the activity to suggest to students that they might use this opportunity to describe anything she could do to help them with school, "Anything that would help me help you be the

best student you can be? Something you are excited about, something you're nervous about?"

When Amy and I reflected on the activity, she said that some students gave her very helpful information while others did not; one student told her they did not celebrate birthdays or holidays, and at that point in the school year Amy did not know that.

The next day that student stood for the Pledge, and didn't have their hand across their heart...and I knew immediately why. And instead of saying, "Why don't you have your...this is what you need to do," I didn't even have to approach it because I knew, and I said, "Thank you so much for letting me know."

Amy was relieved that this student had informed her about his beliefs. As an individual who had spent time in the military, patriotism and the Pledge of Allegiance were important to Amy. If the student had not let her know why he was not fully participating in the Pledge, Amy felt she might have had to redirect this student in some way, possibly embarrassing him in front of his peers. Yet, because she knew about this ahead of time, there was no disrespectful interaction between teacher and student.

This was not the last time Amy suggested students could communicate personal and private information to her. She kept a small mailbox on her desk, students wrote to her, and she wrote back to them. She described this to me as a way to let them know, "this is a secure environment and that they'll be protected in here and respected and hopefully the communication stuff will help."

The sanctioned class time for letter writing to Amy took place only on one class day, and took less than an hour. Yet it communicated so much about Amy to her students, and in turn brought Amy a deeper awareness of her students. By even making time for this activity, Amy said to her students that their thoughts, feelings, concerns, etc. were important to her. The letters

were important enough for Amy to spend time in class on them, and private enough for her to collect them in a basket and place them in a locked drawer. And if students were not ready to write something personal yet, she made space on her desk for a mailbox so they could communicate their needs to her later—and many did.

In-the-Moment Decisions. Van Manen (2008) described this type of awareness as “reflection in action,” (p. 1), and how it was difficult due to the teacher’s need to interact with a large number of students while also considering the individual student. In contrast to the activities described in the section above, these were clearly spontaneous decisions made during an interaction with a student. As with previous sections of this paper, these types of decisions will be divided into the academic, organizational, and socio-emotional components of school.

Academic. On the third day of school, a Monday, I observed the classroom during a reading lesson after lunch. Amy asked for volunteers to read aloud. The student mispronounced the word “stared,” and Amy asked him to self-correct. He did so, and Amy used this opportunity to talk to all of her students about cross-checking being part of their accuracy in reading. While talking to the students about this, she walked to the back of the classroom and found a small prepared note card entitled “cross-checking” and used a magnet to attach this note under “accuracy” on a board that she had created. These cards had obviously been prepared ahead of time for future use, but the student’s mistake and subsequent checking of himself provided Amy a teachable moment. She then reinforced the need to self-check when asking the students comprehension questions about the passage they had just read, and told the class, “If you are unsure, still, you need to reread. Find it.”

On another occasion, at the beginning of a math lesson on place value, Amy was trying to get students to volunteer information about how to read aloud numbers with decimals. “What do

we say when we get to that decimal point? What is that first place to the left of the decimal?”

Only four students raised their hands to answer that last question, and Amy suggested to some of them that she was sure they knew this, as they had been working on place value since Kindergarten. While this was the case, she saw the need for some scaffolding as opposed to continuing with her current questioning, and moved to get a large piece of construction paper from a cabinet. She hid some of the larger numerals in the problem, and simply asked students the value of the numeral in the tens place. Eventually, a volunteer told her the number in the tens place was a six, and it represented 60. Amy then continued to move along the numbers gradually, comparing the decimals to money, which seemed both to help students understand and get them interested in the lesson.

Amy’s spontaneous response to students provided two examples of what happens all day, every day, in classrooms. As I highlighted in a section above, it is important to plan well, but teachers are working with and responding to young human beings who are quite unpredictable. A classroom day may or may not follow one’s carefully written lesson plans. Amy’s awareness in the classroom, and her ability to pay attention to what students were saying and how it related to her academic goals, provided her teachable moments that she could use to support student understanding.

During a social studies lesson early in the school year, I observed that Amy used wait time quite effectively during her lessons. When I asked her to reflect on an interaction with one student who received her attention until the student understood a concept, allowing the other students with hands up to wait their turn, she replied, “I feel that it’s really important that kids know that I believe in them.” When this student had a tough time volunteering information about Civil War-related problems between the North and South in the United States during the 19th

century, Amy replied that sticking with a child, giving him or her a little support or a lot of support, helped that child feel successful. It also taught other children in the class to be patient, and that just because they are ready to answer a question, it does not mean they are the best one to answer it at that particular time. “Because you know, we do need to be patient...but now she knows that she can do it, so maybe next time she’ll try a little bit harder.”

Organizational. The first and probably most obvious in-the-moment decision teachers make during their day is the behavioral consequence. If a student was talking when he or she was not supposed to, then Amy whispered a redirection, told the student they were at a “1” on the classroom behavior plan, or asked him or her to wait for her out in the hallway. This happened with such frequency that it is not necessary to mention each and every occasion.

Related to the aforementioned belief of Amy’s that once she called on a student, she allowed that student to complete the answer no matter how long it took, Amy had not completely abandoned the students who desperately wanted to be called on. On the second day of school, Amia raised her hand and waved it wildly to answer a question in class. Amy replied to her enthusiasm, “It’s OK, Amia, I see your hand up.” After Amy was done working with another student’s answer, she returned to Amia and said, “Was that what you were going to say?” Amia nodded in confirmation. In this particular interaction, somehow both students were able to have a say and share their knowledge of the topic at hand. The student who needed Amy’s help was able to follow through on her work and get the support she needed, and Amia, who wanted to share her knowledge of the topic at hand, was also acknowledged and appreciated in front of her peers.

One day, when I walked in right after the students’ lunch, I noticed there was a carbon copy of an in-school detention form on one student’s desk. While the other students were in the class, Amy had to complete that form, get that student to the office, and then make sure the top

copy of the form got to the office soon after him. Having engaged in the exact same activity in my own teaching career, I knew this multi-tasking, during what can be a tense behavioral interaction can be very difficult. As Amy headed to the door to send this form to the office with another student, she asked me if I wanted to talk to the students about my research project. She and I had discussed my doing this sometime that day, but it was important that I do it at this moment so Amy could get another task done, and so students had something else on which to focus for a few minutes. I told the students about my project and the consent forms, which they strangely found interesting, and then Amy took over the class and began a math lesson.

This interaction took a very short amount of time, but highlights the need for and the appreciation teachers have for another certified adult in the classroom. While Amy rarely asked me to take over, and never put me in a difficult ethical position, there were times when it was obvious she was relieved to have another teacher in the room who could step in with the whole class or a small group who needed some extra help. A teacher and her 25-32 students are often alone for hours at a time. This does not allow for much flexibility when one or two students need more support than can be provided in the general classroom.

Socio-Emotional. On the first day of school, when Amy knew very little about her students, I observed her making some spontaneous decisions as she talked to Jeffrey about volunteering in front of the class. The class was getting ready to practice handshakes as part of their Morning Meeting, and Amy chose Jeffrey to demonstrate how to do a firm handshake while maintaining eye contact. He seemed a bit shy about it, an initial observation that proved to be true throughout the semester. Amy said to him, “I know, it’s kind of scary coming up in front of your friends,” as a way to acknowledge his emotions. Then she appeared to decide that her comment was not necessarily appropriate; do students, especially boys in our society, like to

acknowledge that something is scary? Immediately after this comment, she followed up with, “I don’t want to put words in your mouth.”

In this interaction, Amy at first acknowledged to Jeffrey and the other students in the class that it was hard to demonstrate activities in front of the class. After getting to know Jeffrey more, I am quite sure that he was in fact shy about shaking Amy’s hand in front of his peers. She had noticed his reticence and correctly attributed it to nervousness. However, in backing off this comment and saying, “I don’t want to put words in your mouth,” she then suggested that maybe she was wrong; he was not actually shy, which could have been a quality Jeffrey would have been teased for later. In two sentences, Amy made a decision to acknowledge Jeffrey’s feelings, and then also to make sure he was not tagged as “shy” in front of his 5th grade peers.

I observed Amy responding in a similar way to an activity that could have produced some teasing among students, or at the very least some bad inner feelings on the part of some of her shorter and taller students. During Morning Meeting, Amy asked them to somehow find out each other’s favorite color and favorite sport without talking to each other, and then to order themselves from shortest to tallest without saying a word. The first two activities were fairly innocent, but when the shortest-tallest line was complete, I noticed that the shortest in line was a boy, and the tallest in line was a girl. I could not help but reflect on my own self-consciousness about my height at this age, and I would imagine that boys of shorter stature feel the same way. Our culture does not support tall girls and short boys because of societal norms related to relative height for girls and boys, women and men, in current U.S. society. At the same moment I was mentally questioning the wisdom of this activity with 11-year olds, Amy took the time to tell students about how much they will all grow this year, and the tallest and shortest in line both received prizes from her prize jar. If those two students did feel the way I would have, Amy’s

comments and prizes might not have taken the sting away entirely, but it could have eased their discomfort.

When the students went to the gym for P.E. (physical education), they often walked or ran around the gym to warm up. On one particular day, the students were also involved in running races. For many students in Amy's class, this activity was a wonderful opportunity to show off how fast they were and to compete with their peers. Nicholas, the student in Amy's class with the degenerative visual impairment, was not as fast as his classroom peers, and I wondered if this was because of his eyesight or because he had been homeschooled for most of his life, where P.E. was not part of the daily curriculum. During one of the races, he fell in the gym, and without missing a beat, Amy yelled, "Safe!" as though Nicholas had just slid into home plate and won the baseball game. Her one word legitimized Nicholas's fall and while I watched, I saw no teasing afterwards that would certainly have occurred in other classrooms.

Noticing. As a researcher, it is my job to notice things. The teacher, however, has to both notice and act at the same time. For this project, I sat in the back of the classroom and watched the students and the teacher and I made notes in my field journal. In order to make a number of her decisions, Amy had to pay close attention to her students. This went beyond paying attention to their performance on a test, though their academic performance was obviously of interest to her. It also involved how students reacted to her comments, how students began (or did not) their work, and how students worked with each other. It is related to van Manen's (1991) pedagogical tact. Teachers should be able to view the child as they are now and as they are changing with both personhood and academics in mind. Some of these were very quick moments in class, such as noticing some obvious mistakes on a worksheet and then deciding to go over it in class, or noticing that only a few students were participating in class and then stating her expectation that

they give her choral answers for a little while. Others were more involved, and these moments of noticing are described below.

Academic. Mental Math was an activity Amy often used to get students thinking about math problems without simply recording an algorithm. During the mental math portion of class, students were given a problem but not allowed to use paper and pencil to solve it, and then the class went over the way that students solved each problem. Students posed a number of different strategies for solving the problems. On one occasion, Amy noticed many students were not contributing significant solutions; they appeared to just want to volunteer and be heard. While listening to students is important, it was not the ultimate goal of this portion of the day, and Amy began to gently challenge a student or two. Jayda was one of these students. In my interview with Jayda, she was quite up front with me about her desire to be the “Teacher’s Pet,” and she frequently volunteered in class even when she was unsure of the answer. At one point in the lesson, Amy asked her, “Is that really how you solved it, or are you just trying to come up with another solution?” Jayda insisted that this was how she solved it, so Amy continued to work with her. A few minutes later, when it again became clear that Jayda’s way of solving this particular problem was not effective, Amy asked, “Does this seem like an efficient method?” Jayda agreed that maybe it was not, and Amy replied, “Would you be OK if I crossed this one out? Do you want to keep going?”

The questions Amy asked in that interaction both respected Jayda’s need to speak and be heard as well as her need to be challenged academically. If Amy had refused to continue with Jayda once she realized what was going on, it might have squelched Jayda’s interest in participating, and if Amy had simply accepted what she was saying, Jayda would not have learned the value of an efficient math strategy.

Amy described another occasion when she attempted to use the district math curriculum. She had stated early in our work together that she felt the current district materials were not rigorous enough and that they did not involve the students in enough problem solving or offer enough scaffolding for the students who needed it. She also admitted that math was not her favorite subject, nor was it one in which she felt particularly confident. The day before Amy and I met for our interview, she had taught a lesson that she thought would be an improvement from the current math curriculum. However, she noticed the students having trouble understanding the lesson the way it was implemented, and she wondered if she was doing it correctly. “And the looks on their faces, I mean, they were doing it, but there was no, there was no meaning behind it or whatever. That’s why I went to what I was doing today.”

One of the most difficult things to convey to preservice teachers is the importance of noticing students’ reactions when teaching a lesson. It is very hard for teachers with little experience with children to pay attention to facial expressions and body language, and use this to guide their instruction. Amy did not just get an amorphous feeling that her students were struggling with the math, she saw something in their faces that indicated confusion. She also differentiated between the math operation, and their “doing it,” which some teachers might consider a successful math lesson, and the “meaning behind it,” which was important to Amy. In noticing that students struggled with the meaning behind the work, she decided to switch to a different approach in subsequent lessons.

Organizational. Amy was clear in her behavioral expectations for students. She stated what she wanted them to do, how she expected they do it, and applied consequences if this did not happen. This included the way students treated guests in the classroom. I was considered a guest, and students were very respectful of my role. Substitute teachers were also guests, even if

they were floating subs who visited to help or release Amy for a short period of time before moving on to another classroom. One day, Amy's student teacher was instructing the class, Amy was sitting at her desk, and I was in the remaining adult-sized chair at the back of the classroom where I usually positioned myself. When the floating substitute came into the classroom, she did not have a chair on which to sit. Right away, George, a student who sat alone in the back of the classroom, got up, found an empty student chair, and moved it so the substitute could sit down. She smiled, silently thanking him for his consideration, and she was not the only one. Amy also noticed this behavior, which could be considered uncharacteristic of George, who was on ADHD medication and could be found on the floor at times, and who had kicked and hit other students. Amy looked at me and we both smiled at George's behavior.

Amy's noticing of George was silent and she did not interact with him in this particular moment. However, the fact that she noticed this behavior and smiled at his kindness showed that she could still enjoy this 11-year-old boy who sometimes lay down on the floor while she was teaching and needed to have his own desk in the back of the classroom because he was so distracting to others. Amy could have publicly acknowledged George's behavior, but this would have been unwise for two reasons. One, she would have interrupted the instruction taking place, which would have detracted from the authority her student teacher was trying to establish. Possibly more importantly, Amy knew that George was not a student who liked to be publicly and effusively complimented. To call attention to this kind behavior may have created a situation where George's friends teased him outside at recess, thereby decreasing the chance that George would continue to act positively.

The holistic way that Amy noticed behaviors of her students became apparent throughout a number of interviews. As I mention above, it is common for teachers to become frustrated at

times. Yet, with Amy's acknowledgement that some behaviors were frustrating, she tempered her frustration and what might be considered a criticism with a more positive comment about the student's nature. This happened almost without fail when she was noting a student's difficult behavior.

For example, there was one day when she was recollecting George's difficult behavior that day. "All morning long it was like, 'George, can you put your markers away, all of these things, like nonstop,'" but then Amy immediately followed this with, "He was not doing it to be malicious or anything like that, he's really not, he does have some mean bones in his body, because I've seen that, but not...he's more sweet than anything. He's really smart." To Amy, this child, who she acknowledged had difficulties and required redirecting all morning long, was also smart, sweet, and not at all malicious. For Alexander, who was incredibly talkative and at times identified as a victim in interactions with his peers, Amy started by saying, "I think that he comes across as really innocent, but I don't think that he necessarily is. I think he's in the middle stirring a lot of stuff, too." Immediately following this critique, Amy stated, "So, but, on the academic side of things and just as a person, who I absolutely adore, it's tough being a short fifth grader, and I think that's part of it."

Amy, in example after example, noticed her students as human beings. Much as we all want to be considered, Amy's students were both difficult and sweet, innocent and "pot stirrers." They were whole and complex people, with developing personalities that were not one thing or another.

Socio-Emotional. Amy often noticed the social interactions between students in class, such as the romantic interest between boys and girls that was already happening early in the school year. There were also a number of times that her interactions with the students caused her

to notice, in a moment, something that was important to remember in the future. One day, when I entered the intermediate hallway of the school, I noticed a student in Amy's class crying out in the hallway, with the social worker nearby. They were talking about self-esteem, and since this was right after lunch, I wondered if there was some teasing that had taken place at lunch that caused problems for this girl. I entered the classroom, where the students had finished Chill Time and were already into a lesson with Amy at the front of the classroom. The social worker entered the classroom a few minutes later and asked if she could speak to one of Amy's students, a girl who was usually pretty quiet. Amy teased her, "Are you in trouble?" and then noticed the expression on the girl's face. In a written communication, Amy reflected, "I just noticed that after I had made that comment her face kind of fell. She looked down and embarrassed. That is why I apologized to her. Followed by making a mental note to never do that to a kid again."

This quick interaction showed that Amy was paying close attention to her students, and that their emotional well-being was important to her. Another teacher might have made the same joke about this student possibly being in trouble and then moved on with classroom instruction. This was a small comment, but one that might have been compounded with other comments in the future, had Amy not noticed that the girl responded with a negative expression.

One Friday, Amy assigned the reading curriculum post-test, followed by the pre-test for the next unit. This was not usually done; it just happened on this occasion that both tests fell on this one day. Amy used the pre-test in order to plan her literacy centers and her small instructional groups, so the pre-test was important to her in designing instruction. However, it was a long period of sitting quietly for the students, and I watched to see if they would rebel in frustration. Few did; they took the tests obediently. The one student who expressed some quiet frustration was Brooklyn. She sighed and looked annoyed when she was handed another test as

soon as she turned the first one in. At one point, Amy called Brooklyn over to her desk, and reminded her that this second test was just a pre-test. Then, when Brooklyn was done with this second test, Amy was quick to say to her, “I know that was a lot.” It does not necessarily matter if Amy’s comments to Brooklyn made her feel better in that moment about taking two tests in one sitting. The tests still had to be taken, and Brooklyn’s annoyance was still present. The value of this interaction lies in the future, when Amy may think carefully about future tests and how they affect students who sit for long periods, and how Brooklyn will know that Amy cares for her and her feelings about school.

As I began my data analysis, I began to pick up on a pattern in Amy’s descriptions of what she noticed with her students. At each interview, I asked her to reflect on a particular student I had permission to interview. I was hoping to make connections between what Amy knew of these students and what they told me in their interviews. What I did see was that there was often a) a visceral reaction when I mentioned the student’s name, b) a word or phrase that described the student’s nature, c) an academic or socio-emotional goal she had for this student, d) a professional goal for herself related to the student, and e) a story involving the student. Not all of these things were present each time I asked her to tell me about the student, but Amy said so many of these things in our conversations about students that it was impossible not to notice the way she spoke about each student.

For example, when I asked her about Alexander, her first reaction was to giggle. She then said, “Oh, yes, the talk show host.” She and I had joked about that as a possible career move for him, as he loved to talk and was always trying to get her or my attention during independent work. She expressed some frustration that he was getting involved in some conflicts with other boys in the classroom. It was her belief that Alexander positioned himself as the innocent one in

the conflicts when he actually may have had something to do with instigating an argument. She then moved on to talk about what she hoped he could do, and how she could help him with this.

So it makes me wonder, [as though she is talking to Alexander], “Is that the same kind of stuff that happened at your old school, and maybe the whole story’s not coming out?” or whatever it may be. I need to find some way to help him with accepting responsibility for his actions, instead of just trying to tattle on other people so he doesn’t get in trouble.

When I asked her about Marie, she immediately responded with, “I love her. I really do. She’s such a cool kid.” She then proceeded to tell me about how hard Marie’s life had been; her mother lost custody of her, so she is currently passed around by her three aunts. Marie had also been in enormous trouble in previous school years, expressing frustration by throwing temper tantrums in class. This year, however, she seemed to have matured past that.

She calmed down, and she found it [a math paper] right after she calmed down. Yeah, she’s really smart. She’s really with-it. I think she has a sarcastic side to her, that is so playful and so fun, and I love it when that comes out, and she is so focused. But sometimes she does get caught up in the silliness of being a 5th grade girl with her friends around her and stuff like that, like when she was in that other group I had to move her, because there was just wayyyy too much chit chat.

It was intriguing to discover this pattern in Amy’s descriptions of students, because it reflected the wholeness with which she viewed them. She had a quick emotional reaction to hearing their names, she viewed them as academic and social beings, and was often able to discuss what she felt they could do in the future.

Self-Reflection. A great deal of what happens in the teacher’s decision-making happens after the students have left the classroom for the day. Reflection on and understanding the actions

of the day is required in a profession that demands immediate behavior from teachers, and my interviews with Amy were often spent reflecting on students' personalities or behaviors that day and Amy's frustrations with school limitations.

Academic. The traditional differentiation referred to in the chapter introduction involves providing certain levels of instruction to part of the class, while other instruction is accelerated or enriched for another part of the class. On one occasion, I watched Amy select two girls from the class and pull them out for some accelerated math instruction while the student teacher provided instruction to the rest of the class. Having observed the students for several months at that point, I was not surprised to see the two girls (Amia being one of them) who were chosen for this instruction, but it was important I ask Amy about her exact reasons for pulling these two. She made this decision in part because of the pretests for Chapter 3 in their math text. The two girls had proven they “know most of the stuff.” Interestingly, if Amy had only looked at test scores, she would not have chosen Amia for this small pull-out group. The other student would have gone with her alone. However, she did not just want to pull one child for accelerated math, so added Amia based on her classroom observations. Amia's pretest scores were not close to the other girl's, but the two of them were a good match. “I wasn't going to pull Amia, because her score wasn't nearly as high as [the other student], but they're just so withit, with what they're thinking.”

With the emphasis on data-driven instruction, it is often suggested to teachers that they use standardized data (classroom assessments, etc.) to design instruction. While test scores are important, they are certainly not all that is involved in providing appropriate instruction. Amy used another type of data to select Amia for this pullout group—her observations about Amia's “withitness” and her knowledge of how well the two girls would work together. Having observed

that small pullout group of Amy's, I noticed that Amia, who did not score as well as the other girl, handled the faster pace much better. She was more creative when Amy asked the two girls to create their own logic models and enjoyed the challenging work. Amy only suggested that Amia go in this group because she was "with-it," a term in classroom instruction that is hard to put one's finger on, but that clearly drew on data from Amy's close noticing of students' actions and abilities and not only on data from tests.

A topic that will be addressed in great detail below is the classroom split that took place after a month of school. Contractually, a teacher cannot have 32 or more students at Amy's grade level without the district hiring a teacher's aide to work in the classroom or splitting the class up and creating another 5th grade classroom. After one month with no decrease in Amy's class size (due to a student moving, for example), Amy's principal was required to make some type of adjustment. She chose to create the other 5th grade classroom as opposed to hiring a teacher's aide, believing there was too little physical space in Amy's classroom for another adult. This classroom split was an event that created enormous angst for Amy and her students, starting the year with one teacher and group of students, getting to know her/them and like her/them, and then being moved to another teacher or losing much of your class and having to participate in deciding who would go and who would stay. Yet, Amy reluctantly agreed that it felt better in the classroom once she had 25 students instead of 32. Amy and the other 5th grade teacher were technically asked to give up 10 of their students to create a new 5th grade of 20 students total. However, Amy chose to only release seven students, hoping to maintain as much of her classroom community as possible. "Because 32 was a lot. We could definitely make it work with 32, but things definitely go a lot smoother, now I feel like we're flying through things." Interestingly enough, the Monday I walked in and noticed an obviously differentiated lesson was

the first Monday on which Amy had fewer students. There was more floor space and more room to move around, and it was not a coincidence that the most differentiated lesson I had seen take place was working well on a day that there were fewer students in the room.

Upon self-reflection, Amy was able to negotiate a difficult situation and discuss its complexity with me and with her students. As we talked about this in this and future interviews, Amy never seemed to feel settled about this administrative decision to take seven of her students and put them in a new room. There were logistical and human resources issues that made her anxious, and she felt were unethical. Yet, she was able to also acknowledge that her classroom felt better with fewer students. That did not mean it was a good decision; it was a multi-layered situation that had positive and negative implications for all involved.

Organizational. An organizational situation, some might say a limitation, in Amy's school year was the splitting up of her class and the other 5th grade to manage their class sizes. As was mentioned above, the 5th grade classrooms cannot contractually contain 32 students or more, so the school has to decide to either hire a teacher's assistant for the larger classrooms or split up the classes to make a third 5th grade classroom. I have been in this situation as a classroom teacher, and it is extremely difficult for everyone, both logistically and emotionally. The students struggle, knowing that they may be moved to another classroom with or without their friends, leaving the teacher they have just gotten to know. The teachers have to make this decision, which puts them in an unenviable position of choosing who stays and who goes, knowing that there will be repercussions in terms of students' feelings and possibly parental complaints. In this case, the principal also had the difficult task of leading this process, deciding that the rooms were just too small to add assistance in the form of a teacher's aide. The principal also had to deal with teacher and parent disapproval.

Both before and after this split took place, Amy and I talked about how this would affect her and her students. She was not upset at having such a large class, “I’m not really that frustrated that I have 32 kids, it’s just more lives that I can hopefully impact. So I don’t mind that by any means...if they decide to split these classes, I’m going to be really sad.”

After the class was split, Amy described how some students just sobbed that they were leaving her room. She described that she had made the decision based on four factors. First, she, her 5th grade colleague, and the principal talked about who needed to be separated. Having observed the meeting where these decisions were made official, I heard quite a bit of context for the students. The teachers and principal discussed who had problems with others in that grade level in years past, who was beginning to flirt with whom, etc. Next, the newest students were placed in the new classroom. These students had not gotten as accustomed to the classroom as others had, so they were placed in the new room. Third, students who had to be moved in 4th grade were not supposed to be moved to the new classroom in 5th grade. The previous school year, the exact same thing had happened; the classrooms were oversized, so a new classroom was created from several students in each room. This year, any students who had to undergo this process last year were not supposed to be moved again. Last, Amy chose students with whom she felt she had the least relationship. This was tricky, and she reflected that she may have made a mistake there.

So then [student’s name], because looking through the boys, I felt like I had the least relationship with him, so I felt like that would have been an easier person to go, but then after I saw him bawling, I was like, maybe I made a wrong choice! Obviously, he didn’t feel that way. Apparently, he felt the connection.

It is not easy to admit that one might have made an error, especially when it comes to crying children. Amy used our interviews as one place in which she could safely consider the implications of her choices and those of the school. Sadly, this was a situation in which Amy had little power, and she could not make any future decisions that would improve this situation.

Socio-Emotional. I asked Amy a number of times in our interviews about why she made certain classroom decisions. Why were these things important to her? I observed on the morning of the first day of school that she was able to call students by name. Yes, the students had nametags on their desks, but it did not appear that she was looking at each nametag before calling the students by name. She initially swore that she did not know all of their names on the first day of school, and she did depend on nametags, but in later interviews she also spoke about how she began establishing relationships with students when they were in younger grades, knowing that she would see many of them in 5th grade, so it is possible that she remembered some students from seeing them in 3rd or 4th grade, and at least two of her students were younger siblings of previous children in her class. She spoke of the importance of calling students by name early.

Actually that's one of my biggest fears every year, that I'm not going to be able to remember their names, but it's so important that they know they're valued and that they have a name and that's what they should be called.

She also made an effort to use their names early in the year as often as possible, by telling Amia, for example, to hang up her bookbag in the hallway, rather than calling students by groups to do these morning tasks.

During another interview, I reflected with Amy on a 10-minute period when she had to take a phone call in the office, and I was in the classroom with the student teacher and a

substitute. Ten minutes only, and two of the three of us had many prior years of experience teaching students this age. The class almost immediately got very antsy, with lots of talking, getting up to go interfere with other students, and nothing the three adults could say would convince them to settle down for more than a few seconds. Yet, when Amy returned, the students were quiet again. I wondered aloud what she thought were the reasons for this. She reflected that she thought it was the relationship she had with students. “Our kids are really big relationship kids...I think that they know that, with me, I mean business, and I’m going to follow through on what I say, but they also know that I’m here for them.” While two of the adults running the classroom for that brief period of time had prior teaching experience, Amy stated that unfortunately, the two of us did not really have the opportunity to interact with them all day long.

Expression of Personhood

It is not in every classroom that students have the opportunity to share complexities of themselves and to view the personhood of the teacher in ways that is reciprocal. The existence of this relationship is impossible to view in a single classroom walkthrough and difficult even in a series of short administrative evaluations. It is the classroom teacher’s decision to share or not her private life, sense of humor, and stories with students on a daily basis. Because of Amy’s behavior, students perked up and were more interested in whatever was going on in the classroom. My field notes, teacher interviews, and student interviews are rich with examples of the ways Amy allowed students to share aspects of their personhood and how she also shared her own.

My data offer evidence of at least three ways by which Amy allowed students to see her as an engaged human being and through which she allowed them to share parts of themselves with her and with the rest of the class. First, she shared her personal life in a number of ways,

including stories about her young daughter and husband. Secondly, Amy allowed students to do the same in class, via sanctioned classroom activities but also in spontaneous ways each day. Lastly, Amy expressed her personality with a sense of humor about classroom activities, her mistakes, and the content the class was addressing at the time. Amy's sense of humor and self-aware expressions did not get in the way of classroom activities or violate any expectations of the adult-child relationship in the class, but rather enhanced students' attention to detail and created opportunities for them to share a respectful back and forth with Amy in the midst of developing content expertise.

These three subcategories: Amy's expression of identity, her allowance of students' identities, and her sense of humor will be cross-referenced with the three components of schooling discussed in previous sections (academic, organizational, and socio-emotional). In the first example, Amy said to students during a math lesson, "Sometimes my brain does not work like other people's brains." During an academic portion of the class, Amy told her students that she felt she was different than others, especially when it came to the mathematics. It also encouraged them to identify different ways to solve problems, and that this variation was a positive aspect of their work together.

Table 4			
<i>Schooling Features Present in Amy's Expression of Her Own and Allowance of Students' Expression of Personhood</i>			
<i>Sub-themes by Components of Schooling</i>	Academic	Organizational	Socio-Emotional
Expression of Amy's Identity	Introducing the way she will encourage varied solutions to a math problem, Amy said to students, "Sometimes my brain does not work like other people's brains."	When choosing a name for a classroom item, Amy suggested that she needed the students, not just the other way around, "That's why I need you guys to help me out."	During a Morning Meeting activity where students learn little-known facts about each other, Amy participated, and shared facts that they did not know about her.

Table 4 (cont.)			
Allowance of Students' Identity	Amy used names and facts about students in the weekly spelling sentences.	She allowed some students to <i>not</i> dance during a portion of Morning Meeting where the class danced.	Amy allotted time each week to her Star of the Week activity, where students shared some of their favorite things from home with the rest of the class.
Sense of Humor	In order to teach students how to give an appropriate handshake during Morning Meeting, Amy illustrated by giving a student an obviously limp handshake.	As Amy wiped off the whiteboard with a sock, she joked with students in the front row, "It doesn't smell like stinky feet or anything."	When a specialist came to the room to pull out two students for instruction, the two teachers jokingly argued about who got to keep the students for the day.

Expression of Amy's Identity. In all my years as a teacher, I have never been told, "Share more about yourself with your students." It is not a part of the Danielson evaluation (2013), not even in the domain that focuses on the classroom's learning environment. However, when observing student teachers, I have found that those who share a personal story with their students have a better connection with the class and can illustrate academic concepts in more authentic ways. Amy's practice was illustrative of this as well and will be described in the ways she did this alongside academic instruction, classroom organization, and socio-emotional activities.

Academic. To the layperson, it would seem that giving a spelling test is one of the easiest tasks of the teacher on a Friday afternoon. All the teacher has to do is say the word, provide context by reading it in a sentence, and then repeat the word. It should be that simple, but unfortunately, that activity can be fraught with, "What was that last word?" "I don't understand, which 'witch' did you mean?" and such comments throughout. As with any other classroom activity, one has to hold the students' interest somehow. Amy did this with her use of personal

information in her sentences. “My father lives in Decatur. My daughter is as cute as a button. I am the mother of a 10 month old girl and a hairy dog. When a person is not here at school, we can feel your absence. Some days I feel ancient.” The personal information Amy shared kept students attentive during the spelling tests. It provided a small window into the teacher’s life; important to students who often believe the teacher lives and sleeps at school. Just as valid, her sharing her personal information opened a space that allowed students to feel like personhood was relevant.

Late in the fall semester, Amy’s student teacher was teaching quite a bit, and somehow Amy still found ways to be involved without disrespecting the student teacher’s role. She was able to differentiate student worksheets by highlighting areas of focus, having private conversations with individual students, and looking over student work. On one occasion, the student teacher was talking to students about an upcoming math test and began to pack up her materials so that Amy could continue the next activity. Amy joined in, “I don’t know about you, but I get nervous about any test I’m going to take.”

The truthfulness of this statement in the moment—whether Amy really had some test anxiety or not—is not relevant. Rather, the importance of this interaction with the class is how this comment communicated to students that any nerves they had about the assessment were completely normal. Knowing (or believing) this about Amy may even have eased some anxiety for students who had a difficult time taking this and future tests.

Amy was the classroom’s PE teacher, as physical education teachers were not available in this school district. Luckily for these students, Amy enjoyed physical activity, working out in the mornings and running after school with her daughter in a stroller. One day, the PE warm-up involved running in place, and Amy did this warm-up with them. “How fast can you go? Faster,

faster, faster!” As she picked up her own pace, she smiled, conveying an enjoyment of the physical activity to her students. Amy often expressed her excitement for different classroom activities, including a read aloud one day that was especially tense in one section. “Oh, so stressful!”

This expression of excitement by a teacher is, again, not something that is required by administrators in any formal evaluative capacity. Yet, when a teacher shows personal interest in and excitement for learning, even when the learning is in physical education class, it demonstrates the potential for enjoyment of this activity. Amy, in sharing her own positive feelings for reading and physical activity, said to students, both implicitly and explicitly through her words and actions, “You, too, can have fun reading and being active.” To want to continue something outside of school requires at least some enjoyment of that enterprise. Amy’s modeling of the pleasure involved in reading and PE increased the chance that these students would want to read and be active in their own lives.

Organizational. When I walked in one morning, I noticed Amy having a conversation with Maya, whose first language is Spanish. For the first two months of the school year, Amy had modified some of her work, but there was little to no school language support available. On this day, she talked to Maya about completing some of her assignments in Spanish if she wanted. “We should do what’s beneficial for you.” The work in Spanish would have to be facilitated by Amy as she was the one inviting Maya to this alternative. There was not a language specialist in the school and Amy would have to keep track of what Maya was completing in English or Spanish. She was completely honest with Maya about her limited knowledge of Spanish, admitting that Maya may have to translate some of it for her, since Amy did not know a lot of Spanish. Later, Amy informed me that Maya had turned in at least one piece of work in both

English and Spanish, which was not her original intent. Maya, a student with some academic difficulties, had gone above and beyond the call of duty in order to do some of her work in Spanish.

Amy revealed some of herself as she invited Maya to complete some of her work in Spanish. Another teacher may have suggested that the student complete work in Spanish, but not acknowledge the limitation of not being fully bilingual. In this interaction with Maya, who struggled with school content, Amy admitted that there was an academic area that she, too, struggled with, with which Maya would have to assist her. She shared this aspect of herself, a weakness, putting Maya on a higher academic plane than she. Neither Amy nor I knew if this open and welcoming conversation was the reason Maya completed extra work on her next writing assignment, but it could certainly have been the reason Maya felt confident enough to do so.

On another occasion, Amy was turning the classroom over to the student teacher, who appeared to be trying to position the document camera toward the PowerPoint presentation on her laptop, because there was no Macintosh adapter available to connect the PowerPoint the more efficient way. The class watched the two teachers try to get the right angle, and then Marie piped up, “You left that thing [the adapter] at home again, didn’t you?” Another teacher might have been defensive that a student highlighted a small failing; forgetfulness is not considered a positive trait. Yet, Amy smiled and acknowledged this, and both teachers grinned ruefully. Amy’s students, at least Marie in this case, knew that she was human and made mistakes. Several things happened in that interaction. One, Amy “failed” in public, in front of her students. I remember an occasion when I received a speeding ticket while the bus carrying my students passed my stopped car. The next day, I felt I needed to ask my students what they thought about

it. I was honest about how I was going too fast on my way to a meeting, and the students gasped. One said, “We thought you never made mistakes!” Amy handled her miniscule failure gracefully as opposed to being embarrassed and defensive in front of her students. *How* she handled this is just as important as *what* happened; the students learned that one can be calm and collected when making mistakes. Marie then took a risk by gently teasing Amy about having forgotten the Macintosh dongle, highlighting the fact that this had happened before. In a sense, Marie was sharing with Amy that she knew the teacher made mistakes, and she was making this one mistake repeatedly. Finally, Amy responded with a smile and sheepish acknowledgement, rather than scolding Marie for what less secure teachers might consider disrespect.

Socio-Emotional. Amy often told students short stories that at the outset seemed to serve no purpose but to be amusing. However, these stories connected students and teacher, leading to a unique classroom environment. On one occasion, Amy was introducing a Morning Meeting game where students asked each other questions, and the only thing the respondent could answer was, “Sausage.” This seemed to me to be a ridiculous game, and Amy admitted the same initial impression to her students. However, she told students that she had played this game with another teacher, and the two finished after a few minutes, laughing hysterically. To Amy’s students, this story 1) legitimized the game, 2) expressed that Amy thought some classroom activities were silly, and 3) highlighted that she and another teacher had a sense of humor. The class played the game, and I believe that all of us were equally surprised by how amusing it was and how the class was further connected by their enjoyment.

One day, Amy decided that part of Morning Meeting would involve the website GoNoodle. Many students had heard of GoNoodle, and I, as a parent with a child in 1st grade at the time, was quite familiar with it as well and excited by its use in a 5th grade classroom. Amy

promised the students that they would get to choose from the website sometimes, but today she was going to select the activity. She chose a dancing activity, and prefaced it by telling students, “We don’t all have Dancing with the Stars moves,” and “I’ll be the first to mess up.” As with another comment described above, this latter statement is something I knew to be false. Amy danced at home all the time, and was undoubtedly competent, if not good, at moving to music. However, her comment was designed to make those with less confidence know they had a place in class and not to worry about their self-perceived awkwardness.

During the activity, Amy expressed excitement, “Who’s excited about this? I’m super excited about this!” She then described how often she danced at home with her daughter. A student at the front of the room said she wanted to come to Amy’s house sometime. Amy responded warmly, “I’d love for you to come to my house. It’s a dance party all day long.” In a four to five minute GoNoodle clip, Amy had expressed to students that she may not be a good dancer, so they need not feel self-conscious *and* that she loves dancing with her daughter, which is a piece of her life of which her students were not previously aware.

Allowance of Students’ Identity. In addition to sharing her own personality and home life with her students, Amy provided opportunities for students to share their lives with her and their peers. Many of these opportunities took place during sanctioned classroom activities such as Morning Meetings, or the Star of the Week activity. Others were more spontaneous moments in class.

Academic. During a reading lesson, some students volunteered to read aloud, and Amy stopped them once in a while to ask comprehension or vocabulary questions. If students were unsure of the answers, she encouraged them to stop and reread to find answers to comprehension questions. “Find it.” Amy followed up by asking another question related to the honesty of the

character and had the students turn to a neighbor to discuss the answer. While students were talking to their neighbor, Amy spent awhile with a student who had not volunteered for classroom activities yet. She began to ask him questions to lead him to the understanding that the character was not particularly trustworthy. “How would *you* feel?” “Happy, sad, mad?” “How would you feel if someone weren’t honest with you?” “How do you feel when someone lies to you?” “Can you trust someone who lies?” “You’re not going to be able to trust them, right?”

In spending time with this particular student, who was inconsistently taking his ADHD medication, Amy ensured that he was attentive for at least this part of the lesson. She let him know that she was paying attention to him and that his participation in class mattered to her. She also scaffolded this learning activity, leading him down a path from how he would feel if someone lied to him to how untrustworthy such a person was. Finally, at the same time, she showed him that his feelings were important to her and to classroom instruction. How *he* would feel around such a person could be similar to how the characters in the story would feel in a similar situation.

Early in the school year, Amy asked students to write on a specific prompt: a person they most admire. They were supposed to write about this person and why they admired them. At times, asking students to answer to a specific prompt can limit creativity. However, in this class, students were writing about something that was of great personal interest to them. Some students wrote about family members,

A person I really admire is my mom because she inspires me. She helps me, and she makes me happy when I am sad. Once I was sad because I was being bullied [sic] at school and she made me happy by giving me a hug and said they didn’t mean it.

Other students wrote about Amy, even though it was early enough in the school year that they could not have known much about her. Jayda wrote,

A person I admire most is [Amy] because she is a really good teacher and she taught me a lot of new things. For instance she taught me how to do 5th grade expanded exponents form. [Amy]'s the BEST 5th grade teacher in the whole wide world. I love her and I bet the whole class loves her too. She shows a really awesome influence on the class to [sic] and we can learn a lot of things from her.

If Amy's only goal was to have students write on an interesting topic, or if she had simply wanted to see where their writing abilities were at the beginning of the year, Amy could have asked students to write on any number of less personal prompts. How do you feel about school uniforms? What did you do over the summer? Yet, Amy chose to have students write about someone they admired, which allowed them to share—and Amy to learn about—what they valued in other human beings.

Organizational. Amy often respected students' personhood during class, while at the same time maintaining an orderly environment. During a PE activity, Amy allowed for some silliness. This is risky for teachers; many try to keep a lid on classroom silliness, because without the proper classroom environment and mutual respect between teachers and students, silliness can get out of hand and interfere with learning. When students were getting ready to do their stretches in PE, Amy talked with three students to remind them that they should keep their hands off one another. Following this redirection, Amy allowed the class to be a bit silly as they practiced stretching for the subsequent activity. Amy jumped around a little bit, and the students were able to explore the space around them as they followed her example. Amy even admitted that before she began working out consistently, she could not even do one pushup. This

statement backfired just a bit, as a student laughed at Amy's admission and had to be redirected to be more respectful. Amy reminded her that she hoped this girl was not making fun of her, since that would have been disrespectful.

It was very interesting that this foray into comical behavior in class was preceded and followed by some public reminders of classroom expectations. It was almost as if Amy said to her students, "We can have fun, but there are limits." The students were able to enjoy a few moments of nonsensical behavior in class, as long as they knew not to take it too far. It was quite a life lesson, though not presented to students in such a way. One can and should enjoy one's environment as long as respect for others is paramount.

It has already been discussed how Amy often interacted privately with students when they were misbehaving in class. When a conversation was all that was required, she would speak to them at their desks or have a short conversation with them out in the hallway. When a longer intervention was required, this often took place behind Amy's desk. Amy had a small collection of materials (stress balls to squeeze, for example) she would pull out when a student needed some time to play but remain in the classroom for instruction. Several of her students simply needed some time to relax, or time to fidget, and this strategy allowed her to provide this type of timeout for students. I walked in after lunch one day to see a student behind her desk, and heard her say quietly to him, "I think that's a great idea." She set a timer for five minutes, and during that time, the student worked with Playdoh. On another day several weeks later, I overheard her ask a different student if he had himself "under control." He told her yes, and she gave him a squishy ball. While the class engaged in a discussion of the reading text, this student pressed the ball and gently threw it up in the air, catching it, while the class continued their reading lesson. While the ball then distracted this student, this type of redirection kept him in class. He may not

have been directly participating in the reading lesson, but he was not a distraction to his table group.

Socio-Emotional. Every Friday morning, Amy led the class in an activity she called Stuck On Me. Each student received a sticky note, and they were asked to reflect on the previous week or anticipate something they would be doing that weekend. Students wrote about something they were proud of accomplishing that week, something they learned, or something they were excited about doing. Numerous students reflected on how much they loved Amy. Amy read these aloud to the rest of the class each Friday after collecting them, and used their notes to remind them of how well they were doing academically and socially.

[Reading aloud a post-it note] “Something that stuck with me is that I feel that I can take on the world and that I am a pro with the EEF [expanded exponential form] and that I have the best teach [sic] ever.” I like that whoever wrote this feels so confident that they feel they can take on the world. That’s big. That’s pretty big. [Reading aloud another note] “I am starting to get good at rounding numbers.” That’s awesome, the more we practice, the better we get. Oh, I like this, I like this a lot. “I’ve learned that being a bully isn’t the right way to go.” Absolutely.

This is not a required activity in 5th grade or in Amy’s school. She conducted this activity because it allowed students to share their successes, proud moments, and upcoming events with her and the rest of the class. Many times, what students wrote was based on their academic work, but Amy treated every post-it note with equal weight, including ones where students wrote about upcoming camping trips that had nothing to do with classroom activities.

Morning Meeting was required at each grade level. Yet Amy put her own spin on these activities, sometimes using ideas from the book provided teachers, other times using ideas she

found on the Internet. Early in the school year, Amy taught all students the importance of eye contact and a strong handshake. As the class moved further into the school year, Amy then asked students to share more of themselves with their peers during the Greeting portion of Morning Meeting. One day, students were supposed to do their handshakes, but the Greeting was set to music, and when the music stopped, just as in musical chairs, students were supposed to find something in common with the person whose hand they were shaking. Another day Amy taught them how to say “hello” in Hindi, Hebrew, Italian, and Japanese. Students were then to say hello to their peers using one of these languages. When the class came together after the Greeting, this activity allowed Amia to share that she was of Japanese and English heritage. She remarked on how it was funny and also frustrating that her American friends wanted her to say things to them in Japanese, and her Japanese friends (she visited Japan every summer) wanted her to say things in English. Nicholas then piped up that he had mastered Hebrew writing, and Alexander shared that he wanted to learn Hebrew.

Morning Meeting was designed to create classroom cohesion and to set students up for success both academically and socially (Kriete, 2014). Amy’s enactment of this now-popular activity created a unique classroom environment where students felt comfortable sharing personal feelings and talents. Amy learned more about their interests and abilities, and so did the rest of the class. Equally important, I never once heard students get teased about feelings and capabilities they shared in a Morning Meeting.

Sense of Humor. Amy’s sense of humor was the third way she allowed personhood to be shared in her classroom. When I was an overly serious preservice teacher, my cooperating teacher gave me a book on humorous classrooms. It was unspoken advice from this teacher who, interestingly, rarely smiled but had a dry sense of humor that appealed to his fourth graders;

something I could not emulate during my 16 weeks in his classroom. I was far too nervous. Amy, however, in her 9th year of teaching, was confident enough to joke often and effectively with her students. When I say “effectively,” I mean that her sense of humor was found to be funny to her students; they responded by watching her more closely, laughing with her, or even joking back in respectful ways.

Academic. Amy often used jokes as a way to connect with her students as she was getting them to pay attention during class. On one occasion, her students were having a difficult time identifying place value of numerals in large numbers, especially large numbers that had decimals. At one point, Amy switched gears during the lesson and started comparing the decimals to money. This was not just an effective instructional tool, it also showed her students that she knew how important money was to them. One student I interviewed, Truth, talked about all of the things he wanted to buy when he got a paper route that year, and it was a fairly long list.

When Amy reached the numeral five in the large number they were analyzing, she said, “You’d better not tell me that five is five dollars. I’m going to scream and shout!” The five in this case represented 500, so students paid closer attention to why Amy might be screaming and shouting about them suggesting it was worth only five dollars. At this point in the lesson, Marie piped up, “You’d share [the \$500] with all of us, right?” Amy replied, “Absolutely...[pause] not.” Much laughter ensued, and the lesson proceeded with students volunteering to give answers for place values to the ten billions place.

During another math lesson, Amy pretended to be incorrect in order to see if students could correct her. This strategy was quite effective in a number of ways. It was a low risk way to see if most of the students were paying attention to Amy; if students failed to correct her when

she made an obvious error, she knew that she needed to hook their attention another way. In general, students like to correct the teacher, which may be another way of acknowledging and enjoying the teacher's sharing of his or her personhood, though it is an obvious mistake that students know the teacher is not actually making out of misunderstanding. Amy's students may also have appreciated her efforts to connect with them via an obvious and false mistake. They knew that she knew the correct answer so it became a kind of inside joke.

The lesson objective was to order numbers from greatest to least and least to greatest. At first, students seemed to be doing very well, so Amy suggested, "I guess I need to make this a little tougher." She put another problem on the board and asked students to "order those bad boys." The way she taught them to order these numbers was to first look at the number in the leftmost place (hundreds place, thousands place, etc.), and then move right. For example, a number with a five in the thousands place would obviously be larger than a number with a four in the thousands place. When she modeled the next problem, she suggested, "Starting from the right, right?" Almost all of her students loudly responded, "No!" She corrected herself, "Starting from the left."

On another occasion, Amy used humor to give students a hint about the vocabulary word she was hoping they would pull from their math notebooks or their knowledge from prior instruction. She was hoping students would remember the word *variable*, since they were working on beginning algebra. She started by asking a very simple question, then added some humor to that, using the joke to hint at the vocabulary word, "If there's something we don't know, what do we use to express that? It starts with a v. V-v-v-v-v...It's v-v-v...very chilly outside today." Many students smiled, and one remembered and volunteered the word *variable*. Amy's humor in this example again encouraged students to pay attention, while reviewing the

content knowledge they needed for the present lesson. Amy continued to use this content vocabulary throughout the lesson, which further encouraged students to use academic language such as *variable* and *equation* as opposed to “something we don’t know” or “answer.” “I’m glad you know what the answer is, and that is the answer, but what variable can we use?” “Does anyone feel brave enough to come up and write the equation?”

Organizational. Another aspect of classroom teaching that appears on the face to be very simple is the selection of students to participate in giving classroom answers. The most traditional way this is done is to ask a question, encourage students to raise their hands, and respond to their answer. This initiation/response/evaluation (Mehan, 1979) pattern was not altered in Amy’s instruction, but was enhanced by Amy’s sense of humor and ways she shared her excitement about the current topic. When conducting a whole group reading lesson, Amy once invited students to participate by asking, “Anyone who can let us delight in hearing their voice?” Another way that Amy selected students to participate was to pull sticks from a jar. Each stick had a student’s name written on it, which eliminated the wild waving of hands to volunteer; each student had an equal chance of being called on. One day, when using this strategy to call on students, Amy acted as if she was a student who was eagerly anticipating being called upon. “Please be me, please be me, please be me, oh, wait, my name isn’t even in there.”

Amy’s acting skills and way of inviting students to participate in class activities did more than get students to answer her questions. While this did happen, students did raise their hands, they also learned that Amy believed their participation would be a “delight.” Their round robin reading in class, a strategy that has come under fire in recent decades (True, 1979) was presented to them as an opportunity to share with the class their excellence, their talent, and their voice. In pulling sticks out of a jar and pretending to be an excited student, Amy conveyed there is delight

in the being selected for class participation. School is the opposite of drudgery; it is pleasant, fun, and to be eagerly anticipated. Students who follow Amy's model of avid interest in the upcoming activity will be more likely to feel that school has the potential to hook their interest.

Amy's selection of students during class activities was not without forethought. For especially risky classroom activities, Amy needed to consider who might be able to handle doing this in front of the class and who might be uncomfortable. For the final step to a social studies activity, Amy wanted to take the students' final papers and age them by soaking them in tea. This would give their final work the look of old paper, and would make a presentable display for the classroom bulletin board. Another teacher might have simply stated to students the process for aging their papers. Amy chose to create anticipation for this activity by teasing one of her more secure students.

Butterscotch had finished the final draft of her paper before many other students. She was a quiet but confident girl. When introducing the final step to this project, Amy picked Butterscotch's paper up from her desk and crumpled it up. I am fairly sure that I gasped in the back of the classroom while watching this, and I was not alone in my shock. Amy had everyone's attention at that point. She looked at Butterscotch and said, "Oh, did you spend a lot of time on this?" The girl blushed, smiled, and nodded, as the rest of the class watched Amy carefully. Then Amy proceeded to explain what they were going to do with these final drafts: crumple them to get wrinkles in the paper, then soak them in tea to make them look old. These would then be part of a classroom display.

This was a fairly short but complex interaction between Amy, Butterscotch, and the class. First of all, Amy chose Butterscotch wisely. She knew that her work was finished, but also that Butterscotch trusted her and would allow Amy to finish this production while the other students

watched. Another student might have reacted negatively to having their work crumpled up, but Butterscotch knew Amy had her best interests at heart, and Amy knew Butterscotch would allow this to happen with a calm demeanor. Another teacher may not have been able to pull this type of process off. The class might have erupted in defense of Butterscotch's work, as she was a well-liked student whose work was seemingly being destroyed. Yet, this class trusted Amy and knew she had both a sense of humor and a belief in the importance of quality work. They waited through Amy's skit, aware that something was about to happen, and was going to involve something other than a destruction of their work.

Socio-Emotional. This paper has already presented the way Amy inserted information about herself into her spelling test sentences. She also included ways to connect with students while making up the sentences. For the word "pasture," Amy stated, "Cows live out in a *pasture*. Not, it's *past your* bedtime." She then went on to joke with the students, "Ha ha, I could be a comedian. [student's name], we could take on the world." Amy's way of using humor during spelling tests was one way to keep students attentive. On this occasion, she also used it as a way to connect to one of her students, who had recently shared that she wanted to be a comedian when she grew up. It also intimated that "we" could take on the world. The two, student and teacher, could do this together.

I am the oldest of two girls in my family, and my mother constantly calls both my sister and me by the wrong names. My mother-in-law did the same with her two sons. Amy alluded to a similar thing happening in her family (she had several siblings) when she called a student by the wrong name by accident. It was early in the year; she was obviously not the only teacher who occasionally misspoke. But in order to make her student feel more comfortable, she joked, "It's like a little family in here." This not only made the student feel more comfortable, but in a sense

Amy invited the student to join the classroom family, and conveyed a sense of community to all of her students.

Motivation

Inserting the phrase, “motivating K-12 students” into an Internet search engine produces 4.4 million results. This is one small but obvious sign that the motivation of students is important to those who live and work with children.

This section will address two ways Amy motivated her students in class: One, she provided students with a number of compliments that boosted their self-esteem and interest in the subject at hand. Two, Amy had high expectations for her students, as evidenced by the ways she required them to explain answers and supported them as they monitored their own learning. This balance of support and encouragement alongside high expectations guided students to feel comfortable and challenged simultaneously.

The following chart provides examples of the ways Amy encouraged her students while also providing challenging learning, in the categories of school academics, organization, and socio-emotional learning.

Table 5			
<i>Schooling Features Present in Amy’s Strategies to Motivate and Support Her Students</i>			
<i>Sub-themes Related to Amy’s Motivation of Students</i>	Academic	Organization	Socio-Emotional
Compliments & Encouragement	Amy stated to children during a lesson, “I love the way your brains are working.”	Amy complimented the class, “I’m so impressed at the way you guys follow directions.”	Amy said, “Nice job, Nicholas,” on the first day of school, demonstrating the importance of calling students by name.

Table 5 (cont.)			
High Expectations	Amy had a private conversation with a student about completing the work he had not finished after telling the entire class that whoever did not have this done will stay in for recess.	If a student was unhappy with his or her grade on a test, they needed to fill out a paper called Request to Retest, stating their rationale for retaking the exam.	Being familiar with her expectation of explaining answers in class, students in a previous class gave her the gift of a t-shirt with the word “Why?” written all over it.

Compliments and encouragement. It is difficult to reduce this section to a title such as “compliments.” What Amy did in class can certainly be described as complimentary to students; she encouraged them in ways that celebrated their accomplishments. Yet, her words went beyond a simple, “Good job!” They could almost be described as effective feedback. Amy often stated specifically what was positive about what the student had done, thereby showing the student and the rest of the class exactly what was positive about their behavior. This led to the students not only feeling good about themselves, but knowing exactly how to receive approbation in the future. These types of complimentary and encouraging feedback will be divided into three categories of schooling: academic, organizational, and socio-emotional.

Academic. The most simple and obvious ways Amy encouraged her students to keep trying in school were to compliment their efforts by describing them as *smart*. One way Amy used praise to push her students forward was by the use of what she called Smart Beads. These plastic bead necklaces were in a jar at the front of her classroom, and she used them regularly to recognize students who were giving an extra effort in class or who gave an especially good answer. Several times during my time in her classroom, I would hear comments such as, “Look how smart you are!” That student would then be invited to go to the front of the classroom and get a rope of Smart Beads to put in their desk or wear that day. On another occasion, when a

student was struggling to pronounce the word *interrogative*, Amy encouraged him, “You’ve got it.” He finally pronounced it correctly, and Amy praised him, “See how smart you are, I knew you could do it.” Tests were also often presented in such a way as to suggest they were an opportunity for showing Amy their intelligence. “Do your best, I can’t wait to see how smart you are.” In math class one day, students were begging for a harder problem, and Amy acquiesced, saying, “By popular demand, a challenging one. When you’re done, put your head down, you mathematical geniuses.”

My interest in Dweck’s (2006) growth vs. fixed mindset research initially made me question Amy’s use of the word *smart* to describe and encourage students. Dweck suggested we praise students for their process and hard work and to avoid implying there is such a static quality as *being* smart. When one tells a child he or she is smart, it becomes part of their identity, and many children then become fearful of losing this identity through failure, consequently avoiding risk and challenge. However, even though Amy’s comments were directly in line with Dweck’s fixed mindset (“Look at how smart you are.”), she was using the word smart to encourage a group of students in a high-need school who may or may not have ever thought of themselves as intelligent. Amy used the term smart in a lighthearted way, not in a way that would force students into an assumption that smart was the only way to be in this world. Throughout a number of other examples already mentioned in this paper, Amy encouraged students to concentrate more on the process than the answer, thereby identifying more with Dweck’s growth mindset. Students certainly received both encouraging messages: They contained the ability inside themselves to achieve, and they could make mistakes and improve upon their performance.

Amy also had a number of ways to help students refer to prior learning, including a resource notebook in math and language arts. When students were reviewing first person perspective, Amy complimented students who were using this resource in order to remind other students that this was a way for them, too, to find answers. “What is first person all about? I love how people are looking back at their notebooks. That’s a resource you can always use.” This last comment not only complimented the students who were using their notebooks, thereby communicating that it was important that they do this again in the future, but it told the students who had forgotten about the notebook they could pull it out and refer to it on a regular basis.

Amy often used her compliments in such ways, to praise students following her expectations, but also to state exactly what the commended individual was doing correctly. This encouraged other students to conduct themselves in the identified way in the future. For example, when the class was working on multiplying numbers with decimals, Amy complimented the student at the board, “I really like how you’re underlining the zero so you know how many places to move the decimal point.” During another math lesson, when Amy was focused on helping students not only write equations but learn exactly what the term *equation* represented, she asked the class, “Does anyone feel brave enough to come write the equation? Who can solve that equation? Oooh, look at all those hands!”

Amy’s few sentences above were powerful and well placed in this particular classroom context. Prior to the question she asked, she was inviting students to participate at the board, and very few students were volunteering. This is a conundrum for a teacher who wants to gauge more than just a few students’ understandings of the topic. Calling on the same children over and over means that one knows only how a fraction of the class is feeling about equations, in this case. Consequently, Amy suggested that one only needed to be “brave” to come and write the

equation. Students knew she would support them at the board; Amy spent as much time with individual students as they needed. She stated the correct term twice in her questions to students, reinforcing the use of the term *equation* in their vocabulary. Finally, when more students raised their hands, she expressed excitement at how many people were “brave” enough to volunteer. “Oooh, look at all those hands!”

Organizational. Amy’s use of compliments and encouragement often allowed her to remind students of behavioral expectations in a positive way rather than lecturing students to stop doing so-and-so. Early in the school year, Amy said, “I really appreciate you guys doing just what I asked.” This can be contrasted with teachers who would call on individual students who were *not* doing what the teacher asked, putting out behavioral fires one by one. Amy’s simple statement of appreciation to the class addressed the few students who were not doing what she asked, yet without any scolding or negativity. The same was true of Amy’s handling of large portions of the class who were off task. One day, when the students were especially fidgety after an exhilarating five minutes of indoor recess, Amy said to Tyra, “Tyra, thank you for following my directions and doing exactly what I asked.” Many other students then followed suit, and the classroom calmed down quickly. Amy also thanked students individually when they were getting ready at Amy’s request, “Thanks, Jeffrey, thanks, Maya, for being ready.”

Amy used positive encouragement and her own excitement to make transitions in class go smoothly. When she was preparing for the Morning Meeting activity that involved students squeezing liquids and gels out of tubes to illustrate the importance of kind words, she pushed students to get ready in a positive way. “We have an exciting morning meeting today, I’m not gonna lie. [Student’s name], get everything off your desk. Trust me, you’re going to want to get everything off. This might get messy.” The student to which Amy referred was a student who

often did not follow directions immediately, and Amy would have been well within her rights to state his name firmly and tell him to get things off his desk *right now*. Yet Amy used excitement to encourage his behavior: Class was about to get really exciting and messy, and he would not want to miss it. This piqued the class's interest, as they had prepared for the transition and began to eagerly anticipate the activity, and it also encouraged the individual student to follow expectations.

Amy had two students who received supplemental support from the school emotional/behavioral disorder (E/BD) consultant. When one of these students was having trouble getting started on a fairly simple activity one day, Amy had a side conversation with him to encourage him to begin work. He half-heartedly looked at the picture the class was analyzing for a social studies lesson on primary sources. Amy asked him to work behind her desk, a space that was often reserved for students who were not disrupting the class but who needed some individual support. Amy then set a timer, walked around the room to supervise others, and came back to him. She had to do this once more before the student started the work behind her desk.

It may seem strange to consider the use of a timer as an encouraging method of behavior management. Yet, Amy balanced her expectation of this student starting work, work she was confident he could accomplish, with regular check-ins to see if he needed assistance. Again, this can be contrasted with another teacher who might publicly push the student to start work, then send him to a timeout with the E/BD consultant when he did not comply. Amy handled this interaction privately, used a timer to set parameters for his beginning of the work, and checked with him once in a while to provide any necessary support.

Socio-Emotional. Amy's encouragement of students often reassured students that they were on the right track. Amia, who was often desperate to be called on, was often reminded by

Amy, “It’s ok, Amia, I see your hand up.” Other times, she would wave back at Amia when Amia’s hand was waving wildly to be called on. Amy thanked students who volunteered answers. She also heavily praised students who were often not praised for other reasons, when they did accomplish something in class. To one student, a student with ADHD who received numerous referrals to the office, “Woo! Smokin’! Cool him off!” after he spelled a word quickly and correctly in their spelling game Sparkle. To another student with ADHD, “Aw, what a great idea, George. [Go and get some] Smart Beads. You’re thinkin’ Lincoln.” To the entire class, when enough students had shared strategies, “Awesome. I love that we just shared all of these different ways in which you all solved this one. This is amazing, amazing.”

Adults and children are no different in that we need a bit of praise and recognition once in a while in order to keep going. Yet it may have been even more important for Amy to remind her students how well they were doing when instructing a class of 5th graders in a high-needs school. Her students’ home culture was very different than the school’s culture, and if Amy wanted students to volunteer answers and interact with each other in ways familiar to traditional schooling, she needed to reinforce certain behaviors. It was interesting how her responses to students were also very individualized. Amia was encouraged to participate, but also encouraged to settle down. The students with ADHD described above were heavily praised when they were caught being good, because they needed more reminders about how to *do school* than other students in the classroom.

Amy’s compliments to students were also designed at times to share with students their specialness and how much she valued them in class. Once, when inviting Brooklyn up to the board, she called on “Brooklyn, with the beautiful smile.” On a Friday when the class was preparing to fill out their post-it notes during the Stuck on Me portion of the morning, Amy

reminded the students, “There are a lot of things we can feel proud about and good about.” Later that morning, they played the spelling review game Sparkle, where students competed to spell the weekly words correctly. Amy told one student, “You are such a good sport, I love playing with you.” To another, “Didn’t you win two times last week?” That day, the words *special* and *absence* were on the spelling list, and Amy used those words to convey the students’ importance when making up sentences, “Every single one of you is special. True story.” “When a person is not here at school, we can feel your absence.”

Amy’s compliments to students suggested to them that she saw them in their best light. Remembering that one of her students had won the spelling game twice last week and noticing another had a nice smile said the students were important to her. She thought about them, cared about them, and remembered their successes. When they were gone, they were missed. Such a message conveyed to students that school is a safe place where they are valued just as they are.

Setting high expectations. Amy expected great things from her students. These high expectations were not merely academic; Amy set up behavioral expectations in class and held students to them. She expected students to be responsible learners and to be considerate of her and of each other. In the following sections, I describe how Amy held students to high academic instruction, specifically how she required students to explain their answers to problems in math class. In order to proactively manage behavior, Amy organized her classroom in such a way that students were required to check and monitor their own actions and materials. Lastly, Amy responded to student misbehavior with respect but also reminders of what was expected in the past and what they should consider in the future.

Academic. At times, only a few of Amy’s students would volunteer an answer in class. This was unacceptable to Amy, and she would either scaffold her instruction to support more

students' participation, or she would remind them of her high expectations. At one point, there were only four students with hands up in class, after considerable wait time, and Amy replied to the class, "Only four people thought of one? [one story problem] Ok, write one down. I'm not going to let the rest of you skate on what four of you are doing." Amy then handed notecards out to all of her students. All students wrote down story problems to match the equation on the board, and they went over all of these in class.

Teachers leading class discussions often find it difficult to know if the few students volunteering answers are the only ones who know the answers or if they are simply the most confident. Amy decided in that moment that she was going to find out which was true, the former or the latter, and discovered that the four students raising their hands were definitely not the only ones who knew how to write story problems from an equation. As I listened to students reading their story problems aloud, I noticed some small errors in their reasoning, but all of the students understood the mathematical concept. Given the information I cited above about Amy's support and encouragement of students, I have no doubt that if even a small portion of her class had misunderstood, she would have found a way to revise her instruction to create a deeper understanding.

During one of our interviews, Amy and I discussed the revisions she was going to try to make to her mathematics instruction this year. She admitted that math was not a subject in which she felt very confident. However, she considered her students and their need for supportive but challenging instruction, and was going to try to use another program rather than the moderately-scripted textbook provided by the district. She felt as though the book did not provide all that her students needed. "Going through the [series] in the past eight years, they [students] don't have the prerequisite skills to do the big thing that it's asking them to do." She described the series as

not having enough rigor. The current curriculum guide was “very surface level,” and “nothing’s really interweaved.” She wanted more word problems and real-life applications in her math class, and she felt the textbook did not have enough of this.

It was interesting to discuss this textbook with Amy, and to hear her describe almost simultaneously how the text was at once not supportive enough of her students’ need for additional prerequisite practice and how it needed to be more rigorous. It was refreshing to hear a teacher describe the need for relevant applications in math class.

It has already been mentioned that one of Amy’s former students gave her a t-shirt with the word “Why?” written all over it. I found out why this was true during a number of observations of Amy’s math class. For example, during the class’s mental math portion of the afternoon, students were supposed to multiply 22×35 without using any paper and pencil. One student volunteered that Amy should split 22 into 11×2 , 35 into 7×5 , and then multiply 11×5 and 7×2 . Since the purpose of the mental math activity was to get students to find ways to simplify the problem in order to multiply these numbers in their heads, this student’s suggestion was not as efficient as Amy hoped. It provided no simpler way of multiplying the numbers mentally: $11 \times 5 = 55$, and $7 \times 2 = 14$. 55×14 is just as hard to answer in one’s head as 22×35 . Amy reminded the student, “Remember, how did you write that, vertically in your head?” She continued to prod students about how they had organized the problems. Another student suggested that 22×35 had a 0 in the one’s place. While this was true, and another teacher might have simply replied, “Good!” and written that 0 on the board, Amy replied, “Why do we leave a 0 in that place?” She asked that student to “defend” their answer. “You had the 770 [as their suggested answer], do you want to defend that for us?”

Damon, one of Amy's most sensitive students, who admitted to me in our interview that he was not very confident in math, volunteered during mental math another day. The problem was 121×40 . Damon began by multiplying 1×4 , then 2×4 , then 1×4 . For those of us who can imagine the problem written on paper like this:

$$121$$
$$\times 40$$

We can see why Damon would have started his problem this way. The traditional algorithm for multiplication requires students to multiply each number in turn, and I believed Damon was trying to do the problem this way. Amy responded to him as though she was not sure what he was doing, though I have no doubt she also recognized Damon was attempting the problem as though he was writing the answers down on paper, rather than figuring it out conceptually in his head. She pushed him to explain his answer clearly with place value in mind, and though he told her to just add a zero at the end of the problem, she told him why this bothered her a bit. "The only thing that scares me a little bit is the place value and the understanding there."

Amy gently but firmly pushed both students not only to answer these questions, but to demonstrate their conceptual understanding of number sense. It is far more important that students know *why* they multiply 1×4 , 2×4 , 1×4 , and "just add zero," than writing down 4,840. As students move through higher levels of mathematics, their understanding of number sense can allow them to reason with numbers, identify incorrect answers, and see connections between operations. A study of 180 seventh graders found that students with math difficulties often had misunderstandings related to their number sense awareness (Neergard, 2013).

Amy may not be the only teacher who asks her students to explain their answers in class, but the way she did so respected each student who volunteered in class. Her statement, "The only

thing that scares me a little bit is the place value and the understanding there,” could have so easily been reworded to something such as, “I don’t think you understand the place value in this problem.” To Damon especially, this latter statement would have been crushing, as he was answering a question in one of his least favorite subjects.

Organizational. The way Amy demonstrated her high expectations can also be highlighted in the ways that she set and reinforced her behavioral expectations. Always respectful of students, she was clear and calm about the way she wanted them to participate, line up to exit the classroom, and work with each other. She often reminded students about the need for them to be responsible for themselves rather than constantly supervised by her. One day early in the year, Amy asked the students to line up quietly. She went to her desk to retrieve something, and sat down in her chair to watch how the students lined up. They were quiet but whispering in line, and rather than correcting them out loud, Amy stayed in her chair. A few students began to look around, wondering why the class was not leaving their room; others continued to whisper. After a few minutes of this, Amy said out loud to the class, “There is a reason that I’m sitting over here.” The students quickly got the point and stopped talking. The silent class then left the room and entered the hallway without disruption.

On a similar occasion, the students were again talking while in line to leave the room. The class was getting ready for PE, which was something many students enjoyed. The Star Student of the Week activity had just wrapped up, and Amy was looking over a magazine that Truth had brought to class for his presentation. She continued to look over the magazine, and said to the students, “That’s fine, keep talking, I can get through a full magazine if you keep talking.”

Before both of these interactions, Amy had talked with her students about her expectations for leaving the classroom. She had discussed the reasons why it was important to be quiet out in the hallway. This was not a surprise to any of her fifth graders. Therefore, when she waited for them to get quiet without getting frustrated or repeatedly reminding them of proper classroom behavior, she was essentially telling them they should self-check. If they wanted to leave the classroom on time, they needed to get quiet. It is important to note that both of these events took place before the class was on their way to PE or recess. Students had a great interest in getting as much time as possible in the gym or on the playground, so Amy clearly had the upper hand in these situations. She knew if they wanted their full PE time or their full recess time, they would want to get quiet more quickly.

Amy made it very clear in our interviews and directly to her students the importance of responsibility. These were students who in a few short months would be in middle school, which excited and scared some of them. Amy reiterated their need to be responsible and keep track of their materials whenever she could. Before a spelling test one day, one of her students asked her for an eraser. She replied to the class, “I don’t have any more erasers. Because the 50 pencils I put in at the beginning of the week are gone. You guys are going to have to be more responsible.” Later that day, Amy wrote the page numbers for their math homework on the whiteboard. Four students began to look for that piece of paper and could not find it. Amy stated to the class, “If you don’t have this, it’s because you took it out [of your binder]. You will need to copy someone else’s [blank worksheet].” The next day, Amy had the students begin some research on spiders using the classroom set of Chromebooks. Each student had his or her own login and password, which Amy had written on a notecard and passed out. She reminded

students that they would have to keep track of these notecards, “This is part of being a responsible student.”

It is interesting to note that when Amy told her students that their loss of the homework page in math meant copying another student’s blank page did not result in any whines or complaints. Students took this announcement in stride because they were well aware of Amy’s expectations of responsibility. They knew that it was important for them to keep track of materials, and that they would have to accept a small consequence for their moment of disorganization. In all of these examples, Amy clearly stated her high expectations for students, so when students purposefully or accidentally contradicted those expectations, Amy was able to remind them how fifth graders should behave.

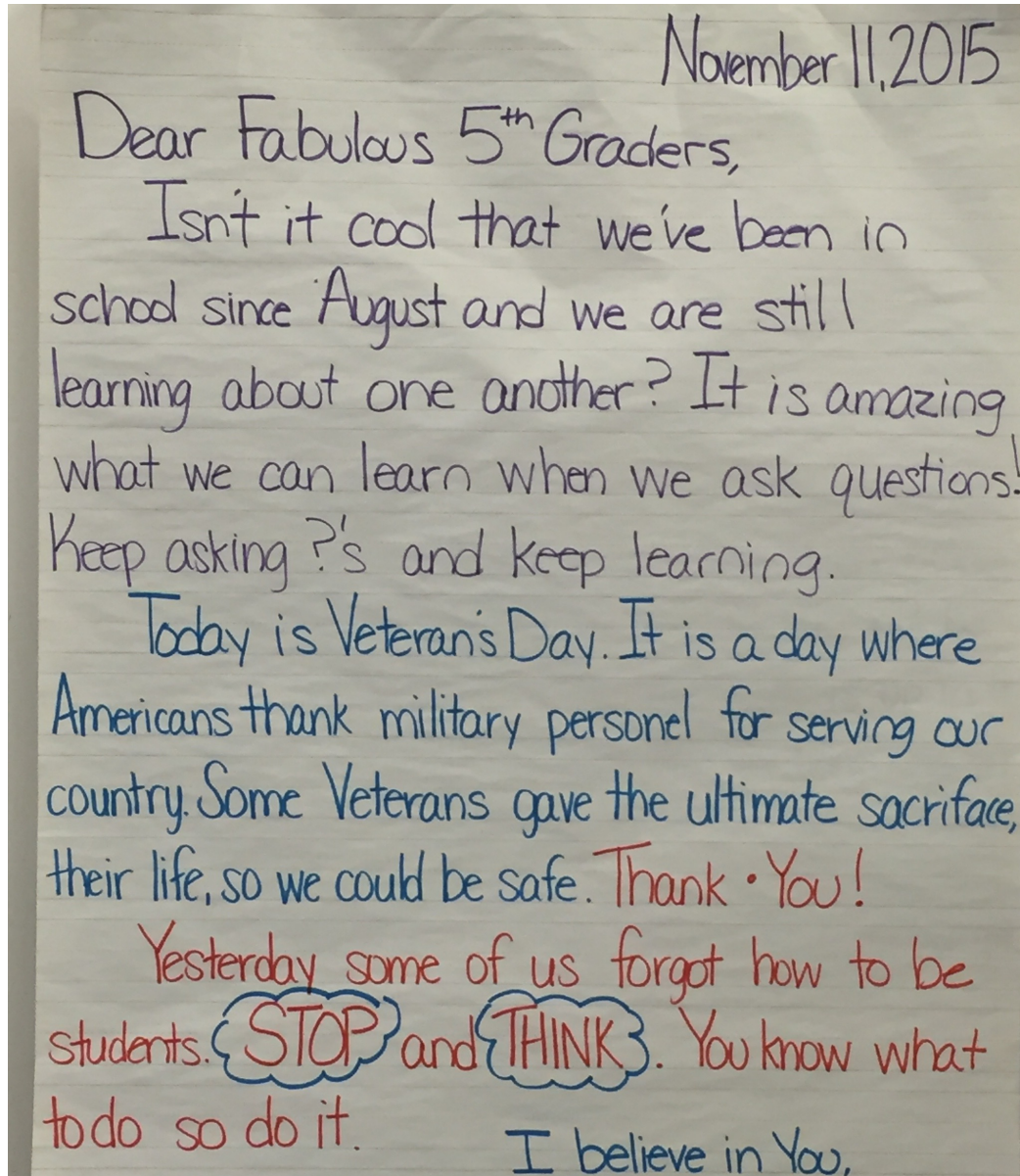
Socio-Emotional. The ways that Amy held her students to high expectations entered the socio-emotional realm in the ways she responded to their misbehavior. As in the above examples, when Amy respectfully and effectively set expectations for her students, there were times when she needed to respond to their mistakes in ways that would restate her expectations but also respect their personhood. One day, the students were getting ready for the mental math portion of their day, and Amy suggested that the class show me exactly how they go through their process of providing answers and explaining varied strategies for solving the problems. The problem she wrote on the board was $25 \times 92 \times 4$. My mouth dropped, as I initially believed this was a difficult problem and I wanted them to know how impressed I was with their math abilities. The class, possibly responding to my expression, got very talkative and excited. Amy reminded them that they had done this activity many times in the past, so they did not need to get overly loud for this one problem.

Amy's interaction with her students encouraged their continued math performance by reminding them that this was a familiar activity to them. They did not need to overreact just because I was watching them closely. They had done this type of problem with success. With that said, she also reminded them they could do it with respect for others who needed the classroom to be a bit more quiet. There were times in Amy's classroom where it was especially loud, but during Mental Math, the class was quieter to allow for focused thought.

Being a well-respected teacher in her school and district, Amy was often called to serve on committees that met during the school day. This required her to prepare plans for substitute teachers. At times she knew the substitute who would be taking over her classroom for the day, but often she did not. Teachers have little to no control over this substitute ("sub") selection process. In order to motivate her students to behave when a "guest teacher," as she called them, was in the classroom, Amy would at times leave notes on certain students' desks and tell students the day before what they would be covering with the sub.

One day in November, Amy returned to her classroom to find a note from the sub that her class had gotten in a considerable amount of trouble. Not all of the students were misbehaving, but enough of them that it was a concern. The day she returned to teach, she wrote a letter to her class on poster paper. This letter was a recommended part of the Morning Meeting, but Amy only used this letter once in a while, believing that it was only authentic when she had something specific to communicate. Her letter wrote,

Figure 1



Amy's letter to her students was thoughtful, positive, and conveyed her high expectations for behavior. She began her communication with them by suggesting that they were still learning about each other, and how wonderful it was that this was true. It is not easy to return to a classroom after being absent and to learn that one's class has been a problem. The temptation is to spend time addressing this behavior by becoming a detective; interviewing individual students about what they did, what their peers did, etc. This can take up a great amount of classroom time

and usually produces few results. Amy instead began the day on a positive note, while at the same time finishing her letter with a reminder not to, “forget how to be students.” Her statement, “You know what to do, so do it,” is reminiscent of the aforementioned scenarios where Amy held firm to already-stated expectations. Lastly, she ended her letter with, “I believe in you,” which reminded students she was on their side and they had the potential to do better.

Synthesis and Segue

The focus of this chapter has been the extent to which Amy’s classroom is *responsive* to her students. Tomlinson (2013) has used the phrase responsive classroom to describe an effectively-differentiated class; while this is an excellent goal of any educator, I would argue that it is not the gold standard of what teacher educators must encourage in higher education or inservice work. Amy’s instruction went above and beyond the traditional differentiated classroom, and could be said to be truly responsive and imbued with pedagogical tact. She created an environment where her students felt welcome, successful, and motivated. She pushed them to explain their answers using academic language and would not lessen her focus on one struggling student so another, who could answer more quickly, could save the day. She clearly had fun with them, and they with her, as they worked together and learned from each other.

At the risk of appearing hagiographic in writing Amy’s classroom story, I must close this chapter with a preview of the next. Amy is not a perfect teacher; perfection cannot exist in one’s work with unpredictable human beings. It is also important to note that Amy would certainly agree with this statement. For example, she denied that she knew all of her students’ names on the first day (though she clearly did) and stated that she was still working hard on having private conversations with students (though these conversations took place far more than the public redirections). In the following chapter, I describe how Amy is still growing in her knowledge of

her students, both as individuals and as members of historically marginalized groups. I also describe Amy's emotional response to teaching the way that she does. Again, such human work produces a number of human emotions, and I expound on these as I describe Amy's growth as an individual.

Chapter 5

Findings: The Teacher's Being and Becoming

In earlier sections, I have addressed the theoretical framing of this project, based on the work of Buber (1955), van Manen (1986, 1991), and Nodding (2005, 2013). All of these theorists described how a teacher values the pedagogical relationship with children in his or her care. This type of relationship requires an awareness of the student's "potentiality" (Buber, p. 83) and "actuality" (Buber, p. 91), or, as van Manen (1991) put it, his or her being and becoming. Teachers, having been children at one time, are able to keep the child's total development in view, simultaneously considering the student's status as a human being while also imagining what they might become when engaged with educational opportunities. It is not enough to imagine what a student might become, teachers must see who the child is now and who and what he or she may be in the future.

Teachers who fail to acknowledge one of these aspects of van Manen's pedagogy risk falling into one of two schooling traps. Teachers who believe that the student's potential is more important than the current person presenting himself or herself might not notice a student's feelings when he or she expresses concern, confusion, or doubt about instructional activities. Students may have difficulty with one or more peers, and this teacher, feeling the educational goals of placing these students together for cooperative learning is more important than the student's emotions, might continue to ask these students to work together. Obviously, there are good reasons to mix students who are occasionally in conflict with one another, but a consistent pattern of ignoring the student's personhood in order to value the student's potential can be insensitive. At times teachers are also pressured to prepare the student for the next year's curriculum, which requires them to ignore the human child standing in front of them today.

Yet another teacher might do the opposite, valuing the child's personhood over the inherent and developing educational potential. Such a teacher may bend over backwards to ensure the student's comfort, concerned that hurt feelings and overly challenging instruction would damage the student's psyche. A teacher in this frame of mind might also be more concerned with school needing to be immediately fun and engaging, rather than an opportunity to learn the importance and reward of long-term effort. If the teacher perceives an insurmountable educational or behavioral barrier, the teacher may not risk giving the student permission to fail, an act which could appropriately challenge that student.

This presents a conundrum for those involved in life and work with children. How do teachers balance the student's potentiality and actuality? Throughout my interviews and classroom observations, I noted two aspects of Amy's process and experience that I will address in this section of the paper: Amy's emotional experience as she attempted to balance students' actuality and potentiality, and the cultural concerns (and growing awareness) in Amy's professional life.

As I present these two topics, it is important to note that Amy herself is also in the midst of being and becoming. At first, it may seem that her emotional responses and experiences with her students represent her current humanity, her personhood, her *being*; and her growing cultural awareness is her *becoming*. Yet that would be overly simplistic. In part this is because it would be very difficult to separate Amy's teacher-self and her person-self, much as it is problematic to assume that students leave their humanity at home and are merely students while in classrooms during the day. Amy's emotional existence is not simply a representation of herself at one point in time. Zembylas (2003) suggested that the teacher self is, "constructed and re-constructed through the social interactions that teachers have" (p. 213) in particular contexts. Amy's

emotional life in teaching represents her changing experiences with varying students, administrator requirements, and the changing school context.

As well, Amy's cultural constraints and later her growing awareness of privilege cannot be simply described as her potentiality. Described in more detail later, I observed a number of interactions between Amy and her students that could be said to be well intentioned but representative of White privilege. After my classroom observations were completed, Amy and I talked about a university graduate course she took after my semester collecting data in her room. Amy mentioned the course had changed how she perceived students from high poverty backgrounds, especially students of color. This growing awareness, indicative of Amy's potential to become a teacher immersed in social justice, cannot be separated from Amy's personhood. Amy contrasted her new beliefs with her prior way of being and thinking, noting how she was raised with certain views, including a notion that hard work was all that was important.

In summary, these two sections: The Emotional Life of the Teacher and Cultural Disconnect vs. Cultural Awareness will address both states of Amy's experience, her actuality and her potentiality.

The Emotional Life of the Teacher

Acknowledging that teaching is a profession blessed or fraught with emotion, depending on the day, is not an earth-shattering development. Any teacher will tell you this is the case. However, I would posit that a teacher who ignores van Manen's pedagogical tact might make their lives easier and less filled with complicated and often conflicting feelings on a day-to-day basis. If we ignore that students are also complete human beings, we can push their often messy, expressed and nonexpressed needs to the side in the interests of instruction. If, on the other hand, teachers focus only on students' being and not on their potential, we fail to do our job as

instructional leaders, ensuring that students will become competent and productive citizens in a changing society. Amy's wide array of feelings, expressed in our interviews over the course of 11 weeks, show that she had not chosen an easy path as she accepted the interactions of potentiality and actuality. This wide array of emotions included fear, frustration, sadness, pity or sympathy, guilt, worry, and finally, happiness and excitement. This is not an all-inclusive list; Amy also expressed resignation, protectiveness, embarrassment, exhaustion, and mistrust. However, because the former list contains the preponderance of evidence from our interviews, I will focus on these seven emotions in my discussion below.

Fear

Amy was fearful of inadvertently acting in a way that would do a disservice to her students—fearful that actions she took as their teacher would negatively affect them in some way. When she was considering how to avoid making such mistakes, she focused on her desire to 1) avoid hurting their feelings, denying their personal value and 2) avoid providing the students a negative educational experience. Her fear was that she would fail in either or both of these goals. Van Manen (1986, 1991) would almost certainly describe Amy as a teacher who believed in the importance of pedagogical tact, and someone who was afraid to teach in ways that were not tactful. I will show this through focused examples below.

On the first day of school Amy called all students by their first names, and pronounced each and every one of them correctly. I was surprised she was able to do this on the first day of school, and wondered how she learned the names so quickly. Was she looking at their nametags? She did not seem to be. When I asked her in class, she responded that she did not actually believe she knew their names on the first day of school. She began the year concerned that she would not remember students' names. She believed in the importance of calling students by name. To Amy,

this was a reflection of valuing students; they had a name, and that is what they should be called. I learned later in the year that she was acquainted with some students because she had taught their siblings, and she learned others' names by chatting with them in the intermediate hallway when they were 4th graders.

Later in the semester, we were talking about her curriculum and how she found teaching ideas. She described Pinterest as one way teachers shared their best ideas, noting specifically how grateful she was when she found ideas for teaching the concept of *main idea* to her students. Apparently, this portion of her Language Arts curriculum was one she had not felt very successful teaching in the past, so she was hoping that her Pinterest ideas would work this year. She said that even though her students were "great, they're amazing," she was scared to teach this concept. Wanting this to be a meaningful learning experience, and still not entirely familiar with the new requirements of the Common Core Standards, Amy searched online for a variety of ideas to teach concepts with which she had limited familiarity.

During another conversation about instructional decisions, I asked Amy about how and why she had chosen two girls for some pullout enrichment mathematics work. She described how, ideally, she would teach a mini-lesson to her whole class and then break the class into groups. This was similar to how she taught reading; she divided the whole class into leveled groups, and met with one at a time while the other students were working on center activities. However, "I'm really scared to do that for math. Because I'm afraid that my lower kids will just be really bored." In previous sections of this paper, I alluded to Amy's limited confidence with mathematics. This appeared to limit her flexibility with instructional strategies in this area. Not wanting to bore a portion of her class, she taught a whole group lesson, and then responded to individual needs as necessary, as opposed to proactively dividing students into instructional

groups as she would for literacy. Because she felt more confident teaching reading, she was able to assess their instructional levels and divide them into guided reading groups. Yet she felt fear when it came to doing this in math, rooted in her discomfort with the subject.

Frustration

Amy's frustration was similar to her fear. Given that pedagogical tact was at the forefront of her mind, and she was equally concerned with students' awareness of their personal value and their instructional success, schooling practices that got in the way of her ability to interact with students in these ways created annoyance. Amy found miscommunication between adults in her school district to be one of the most frustrating things in her professional life.

Especially when you're trying to do the right thing and you want what's best for your students. You know, that little thing of miscommunication, trying to manage so many things is really frustrating. I would say that is my, really my only frustration.

Amy found that as a leader of school professional development, there were often miscommunications between those at the district level and those at the school level. When Amy received one message from a district leader, and then presented this message to the entire staff in a meeting, her principal occasionally chimed in with a different message, one she had received at a principal's meeting. This led to Amy's being embarrassed in front of her colleagues, as people then began to question her message and authority as a professional development leader. It also caused confusion to Amy herself about what she should do with her students. If the message she believed to be true was in doubt, what should her next steps be?

Amy had more than one student with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). This in and of itself was not a frustration of Amy's, sometimes the way a student's situation was handled led to frustration for her. In the case of George, one of her students with ADHD, the

issue was that George's mother was inconsistent about dispensing his ADHD medication.

George's mother had expressed that she believed he could control his ADHD himself if he chose to do so. In our interview, Amy commented somewhat sarcastically, "Of course he can, that's why the doctor prescribed it." Then more seriously, "It's ok. We'll make it work." Amy did make this work. George was seated by himself in the classroom, which seemed to calm him down and encourage him to complete his work, while at the same time decreasing his occasional distracting behaviors (e.g., talking out of turn, lying down on the floor) from throwing off the rest of the class. Amy arranged for him to receive a Tier 2 intervention in class, which allowed him to check in with another staff member at the beginning and end of each day to set goals and then reflect upon the day. Amy did not allow her occasional frustration with George's mother to interfere with George's instructional and personal needs; she "made it work."

Another example of Amy's frustration stemmed from the aforementioned split of the 5th grade classrooms when a third room was added to the grade level after the school year was underway. Because the initial two 5th grade classrooms were so full at the beginning of the school year, the split meant Amy had to choose seven to 10 students who would leave her classroom to become part of a new class (with an equal number of students from the other current 5th grade class). In the end, Amy only selected the minimum number to move (seven), even though sending more would have lessened her teaching load significantly. When Amy and I spoke about her choices, whom she decided to give up and why, she was detailed in her answer but also admitted that one student was removed from her classroom when Amy had intended to keep her that year.

I did not want to give her up, she was not even on my list, that got pulled out from underneath my feet, I was kind of upset about that...I've wanted to teach her since she

was in Kindergarten. I had her in summer school. Every year we've worked on building a relationship, and she had a tough time, especially in the younger grades, and so, I was one of her go-to people. I'm not happy about that.

While Amy did not use the word *frustration* in this quote, it is clear that frustration, annoyance, and powerlessness are the emotions she was referring to in this situation when she said she was "kind of upset" and "not happy." First of all, Amy described that she had a list of students she was planning on giving to the new 5th grade teacher. This list was prepared using a variety of criteria described in previous sections of this paper. It was not created haphazardly; Amy considered a number of factors when choosing students to leave her classroom. Amy also experienced a removal of her power and authority when she decided to keep this student and then the student was taken off her class list. Because her principal had observed this young woman and young man in Amy's classroom were interacting in a flirtatious way the previous year, the principal wanted the two students to be separated in 5th grade. As the school administrator, she made the final decision about the class lists. Amy's frustration came from her belief in a relationship she had created and maintained with this student, beginning when the student was very young. This was a student in whom Amy had invested time and effort in support of the child, and for whom she believed she meant something. Removing this student from her class list felt like a betrayal of this relationship, both to Amy and to the student.

Sadness

Amy's sadness came through in our discussions of her students. While Amy was expressing her own sadness, it centered on the unfair situations in which her students had been placed in school or in their home lives. Amy felt sadness *for* her students, given how difficult she

felt their lives were—economically, emotionally, and physically (due to abuse and food insecurity).

One expression of sadness was related to the classroom split mentioned above. Early in the year, Amy saw this split coming. The students had gone through the same experience in their 4th grade classes, and it seemed likely to happen a second time because the size of the 5th grade class had not decreased, yet there were still only two 5th grade teachers at the beginning of the school year. Amy described how she would feel really sad if the class was split, because the class had quickly created a safe community; one where students worked well together early in the school year, and Amy felt sadness that this was going to go through a rift.

She went on to talk about which boys she chose to leave her classroom. As she named a few of the boys, she stopped on one student's name, describing how he left because he was the most recent addition to her classroom. She said that putting him on her list "broke [her] heart," because he was such a nice child. I doubt that Amy would have felt significantly better if she had chosen a mean child to leave her classroom; she certainly did not express anything like this during our time together, but telling a student who was especially sweet that he would have to get used to another teacher was heartbreaking.

In each of our interviews, I asked Amy to tell me about one of her students. One day, she settled on Maya. While Amy did not come out and tell me that Maya had been abused, I suggested that this was a possibility, given some behaviors I had seen in class, and Amy confirmed my suspicions without betraying a confidence. Because of privacy rules, Amy was not allowed to go into detail about this incident in Maya's recent past. This was not the only student of hers who had an incredibly difficult history, but Amy and I both felt especially sad when talking about Maya. Amy said, "It's just so sad. You just want to protect them. It's crazy."

Amy's sadness came from a concern and love for her students. She felt for her students, for the difficult situations she was forced to put them in during the school year, and for the lives some of them led out of school, much of which was out of her control.

Pity and Sympathy

Closely related to the sadness described above, Amy expressed sympathy for her students on a number of occasions, usually related to schooling limitations that got in the way of their having a productive day or year. There was also an expression of pity, which I consider to be different than sympathy. When Amy expressed pity for one or two of her students, it appeared to be related to the cultural disconnect between her, a White woman, and her students and their families, who were predominantly Black. This notion of pity will be discussed in more detail in the upcoming section on cultural awareness.

Before losing seven of her students to a new 5th grade teacher, Amy expressed sympathy for the students in her class who were, in a way, victims of the large class size. The space in the classroom was quite limited; one or two students often sat at a desk behind Amy's desk to reset their behavior. Others took over her kidney-shaped table, usually reserved for small group instruction, if they needed to spread out materials. The area I tried to use for data collection was often covered with posters or other class projects that were unfinished. She once conveyed sympathy for Nicholas, who had an even greater need to spread out his materials. Because of his degenerative vision, his work was copied on 11x17 inch paper, and he often used the VisioBoard to write answers on self-stick notes or notecards. When Nicholas was stationed at Amy's table one day, due to the large size of his materials, Amy remarked on how hard it was to do projects where many materials were required. "Poor Nicholas was trying to work over here, and thank goodness he's so flexible. I'm taking up half his work space." This all took up quite a bit of

space, and the vision coordinator who visited Amy's classroom on occasion suggested he be allowed access to two desks. In a classroom of 32 students, this was not easy, but Amy made it work.

The chaos of the beginning of the year was also something that Amy noticed, especially when one of her students, new to the school building, was not picked up right away for the special services to which she was entitled. It took Amy giving the class a very simple mathematics assignment to notice this 5th grade girl counting simple addition and subtraction problems using Touch Math, a strategy that 1st and 2nd grade teachers use with their students. "Poor girl, she's probably lost. I don't know how she got missed."

At the risk of being redundant, Amy expressed sympathy for her students who were part of the classroom split. Obviously this was a situation about which Amy had a number of emotions. When there was a suggestion the school would hire a new teacher and the students had to become accustomed to someone else as their teacher, Amy said, "And they're [administrative personnel] going to supposedly get all of their ducks in a row and then come tell [the other 5th grade teacher] and myself. So those poor kids have to go through another person."

While it is not uncommon for a teacher to find him or herself feeling sympathy for the difficulties of his or her students, Amy's sympathy was experienced on another level. The situations her students faced were not ones they had chosen, nor did she have control over these. It was almost as though she felt both sympathy and sadness at the limited power she and her students had to control important aspects of their lives.

Guilt

In a previous paper (Jones, 2014) I found how often teachers described themselves as feeling guilty in their professional lives. They never quite felt they were doing enough for their

students. Amy also described an enormous amount of guilt, mainly due to factors that were out of her control. As one might expect, choosing students to move out of her classroom, and then discussing this with them after they found out was an experience she reflected on as having been “awful.” An event completely out of her control led to her having to make specific, conscious choices about who to send away, as some of the students saw it. Who to send to the new classroom was in Amy’s control to a certain extent, and she was left to handle the emotional fallout with her students.

Another requirement of all the teachers in Amy’s school district was the benchmark assessment system they completed three times per year. It is important to note that the Fountas and Pinnell (2008) system was not the only form of assessment required of the teachers in Amy’s district. They also frequently completed running records in order to check students’ progress throughout the school year. While running records take just a few minutes per student, the Fountas and Pinnell system required 45 minutes per child. Given the size of Amy’s class at the beginning of the year, spending this amount of time assessing individual children was prohibitive. In August, Amy had 32 students. If she spent 45 minutes with each child, that would require 1440 minutes of time (24 hours) with individual students, during which time the rest of her class must be entirely independent. Amy and I did the simple math together and figured that if she spent one and a half hours each day (the time it would take to assess two children), she might complete the assessments in just less than a month of school days. However, the remaining 30 students in her class would not have access to Amy’s assistance during almost a quarter of the day if she were to complete the assessment this way. As well, she would have to go through the same lengthy procedure in December and again in May. Besides the fact that Amy did not believe the assessment gave her better information than the more efficient running records, her

assessment results from the previous year were in her file cabinet. A district requirement, the school district seemed to have no interest in collecting the information once all this time was spent, leaving Amy to question the value of the action.

Many teachers would have decided that if the school district were not interested in seeing the assessment results, they would stop spending the necessary time in their classrooms.

However, Amy told me how badly she would feel if she did not do what was required of her, as pointless as she felt it was. “Because I’m a rule follower, if I didn’t do it, I’d feel really bad.” Fortunately, her reading specialist colleagues helped her complete these assessments, and Amy was not tasked with finishing them by herself.

One day, I entered near the students’ dismissal time. Amy and her student teacher were quietly but breathlessly commenting on their difficult day. Since Amy was usually very calm, and quite successful with classroom management, I asked specifically what made that day worse than others. Apparently one of her students had been so disruptive that Amy had to remove the rest of her students from the classroom, taking them into the hallway while other staff came to escort the offending student from her room. She felt very guilty that her attention was so focused on one student’s negative behavior and that she could not spend her time enjoying and complimenting the students who were doing well. “I’ve never really felt bad about this kind of thing before, but I really and truly felt bad for the rest of the kids, that’s how bad it was. Just unbelievable. Unbelievable.”

Amy is far from the only teacher who has felt bad after a day with difficult students. Yet Amy decided, based on this day with so much of her attention spent managing misbehavior, that she would find some way to positively reinforce the students who were following classroom expectations. This was obviously not the first time Amy had considered or implemented positive

reinforcements; the section in Chapter 4 on her compliments and encouragement describes how positively she works with her students. However, based on this one particular day, she returned to class with renewed energy and began to hand out small pieces of colored paper to students who were doing well. Students put their names on these papers and placed them in a bag for a drawing. Those who won the drawing got to have lunch with Amy.

As I mentioned above, Amy was involved in a number of district initiatives, which often required her to be out of her classroom for all-day meetings. While these meetings were important for Amy's and her colleagues' professional development, Amy expressed guilt at being absent from her classroom so much. On one particular day, Amy felt especially bad because her student teacher was being observed by her clinical supervisor the next day, and Amy was going to be out of the classroom. Since many students take advantage of a substitute teacher, Amy was concerned that they would be especially silly with the student teacher who was being evaluated.

While Amy's guilt was well-placed, as her student teacher may have had a more difficult time without Amy's consistent presence, Amy was not at fault for the timing of these required meetings or for the student teacher's observation schedule. Amy was strongly encouraged to attend professional development, be one of two professional development leaders in her building, accept student teachers in her classroom, but also be at school every day.

Worry

Along with guilt, worry is present in many teachers' minds and hearts. While the classroom split was taking place at Amy's grade level, Amy was asking some critical questions of her principal and assistant principal. She wondered what it meant when her administrator said, "We're doing what's good for kids." She questioned who would be responsible for planning

lessons and grading assignments if the person the school hired was a long-term substitute as opposed to a licensed teacher. It was suggested that the seven students she sent to the new room would remain on her official class list. If that were the case, would their test scores be included in her professional evaluation? Not surprisingly, these questions challenged those in power to come up with acceptable answers, which then required a higher-level administrator to visit with Amy during the school day. Amy welcomed this visit, since she wanted to find out exactly what she was responsible for, but the questions she asked created conflict.

Right now I feel like everybody is so mad at me, I feel like they think I'm stirring this pot, and making a big mess of whatever, and, because you can tell, because people have a different demeanor when they're trying to act like they're not.

In a previous paper (Jones, 2014), one of my focal teachers reflected on the fact that teachers tend to want to get along. Participants also stated that it was difficult to speak up about things and that it was “emotionally hard” (p. 35) for teachers when they did speak up. Besides being emotionally hard, teachers paid for their opinions in unspoken ways, which was exactly what Amy described.

Alluded to in other parts of this paper, Amy also expressed her discomfort with mathematics. She was very comfortable differentiating in language arts, but the idea of differentiating in math made her very nervous. She stated that she wished there were, “an easy button” to do this, but, “my lack of confidence in differentiating for math” made it very difficult. She worried that she would do a disservice to her students in this subject if she tried to provide stations for them. This was “unknown territory” for her.

Happiness and Excitement

Fortunately for Amy and her students, happiness and excitement were two emotions she felt quite a bit. She was excited by how well her students did, she was pleasantly surprised when they came up with unique strategies to solve problems, and she was happy when students and parents took initiative.

One conversation Amy and I had was about a book she was planning on reading to her class called *Flutter* (Moulton, 2011). I had not read it at the time, and Amy was very excited about the book's possibilities. "It sounded really good, so I can't wait to read it. I have a feeling I'm going to cry, but I cry over everything." I observed Amy reading this novel to her class one afternoon, and she was indeed very enthusiastic. Her excitement and love for the text flowed into her voice as she read it aloud, and she stopped frequently to ask students to make connections to the book and to describe her own anticipation at poignant sections of each chapter.

On another occasion, when Amy and I were reflecting on the activities we had done with the two girls who were pulled for accelerated math work, Amy expressed pleasant surprise at Amia's problem-solving ability. It is especially important to remember that Amia had not scored as high as the other girl on the math pretest, so Amy had asked Amia to join solely based on Amy's classroom observations and Amia's previous work. On the day I observed, Amia was actually more successful with the enrichment activity the two students worked on, and had suggested she and the other student create their own logic models. Amy said later, "I didn't think Amia was going to take it there. What a great way to show what you're doing." Teaching is unpredictable on the best of days, and it is good to know that teachers can notice surprising student behavior and assimilate that into the totality of a student's interests, abilities, and habits

of mind. Amia was almost left out of that math group, and yet proved herself not only capable, but a thoughtful leader in this particular math activity.

Amy once reflected on a student who was often a behavior problem in class, and how she had sent unfinished schoolwork home with him. The work came back completed, and Amy remarked on how well done it was. “Wow, yeah. I was so happy that his parent took the initiative to get that done.” Amy had expressed concern in the past that this particular parent was supportive of her son’s education. She commented that when negative behaviors were moved aside, students proved themselves very capable of getting quality work done. It both bothered her that the behaviors got in the way, and impressed her with how well done his work was when the student had parental support and was encouraged to take the time.

Behaviors that get in the way of instruction are a common refrain of both the preservice and inservice teacher. It is one reason that the enduring understanding of our university’s pedagogy course for senior students is, “Curriculum and management are inextricably interrelated.” One cannot have a quality curriculum without effective management, much as I argue in this paper that a sensitive, quality teacher cannot pay attention to a student’s personhood but not their potential. Amy was expressing the concern that a student’s behavior was getting in the way of what he could truly show her academically, and happiness that he could overcome this with the appropriate support.

Cultural Disconnect

Before continuing my explication of Amy’s instructional interactions, I have to introduce the difficulties the cultural disconnect—a White teacher in a school serving predominantly Black students—creates in the mind and practice of the White teacher. When I was an experienced 5th grade teacher, also in a classroom of predominantly Black students, I recollect interacting with

my students in many of the same ways that Amy did during my time in her room. I noticed students' responses to my comments and my sense of humor, I adjusted instruction to meet what I perceived as their emotional and academic needs, and I constantly reflected on ways I could improve my work and relationships with them. Yet, I also wince painfully when recollecting some of the ways I interacted with my Black students and their families. My status and privilege as a middle class White teacher, raised by two academic parents in a college town, showed itself in less than ideal ways.

On one occasion, I had a Black student teacher who was creating a living museum in my social studies classroom. Each student would choose a Black individual in American history—an artist, scientist, teacher, etc.—and students would learn enough about the individual to act as them in a class “living” museum. Other teachers would bring their students to our room, choose a student in my class who was acting as if he were George Washington Carver, for example, and that student would describe the life and work of Dr. Carver. It was an impressive display, as students dressed up for their presentations and were proud of their work.

Early in the process, however, I found myself uncomfortable when students chose their characters in history. Marvin Gaye, for example, had an extremely troubled history—his father had numerous extramarital affairs and often beat Marvin. Marvin struggled with depression and drug addiction, and he was finally killed in a dispute with his father. When one of my students chose Marvin Gaye, I became concerned. These topics seemed far too serious for 11 year olds. Would the student become depressed? Would he think this was a life to emulate? I decided it was necessary to talk to his mother and make sure she was alright with his choice. I clearly remember speaking to her in the hallway outside my classroom and telling her that I just wanted to make sure she was aware of her son's choice. She responded that she was aware of the choice,

and she was fine with this. I thought to myself, “She must not know what I know about Gaye’s personal history,” and I replied to her, “So you are aware of his [pause] past?” She looked at me for a moment, paused, and then said that she did know, and she was still fine with her son’s choice for this social studies activity. In this brief interaction, I assumed I knew more than this parent did. I doubted her ability to decide what was appropriate for her child, and expressed this doubt in my question.

On another occasion, my students and I were talking about famous people in class. This was a different school year, and I had another student teacher observing my classroom. One student brought up the rapper Fifty Cent. I had never heard of him before. “Fifty Cent?!” I replied. “It’s Fifty Cents!” The students laughed and said, “No, Ms. Jones, it’s Fifty *Cent*! That’s his name!” I looked to my student teacher, who was much more immersed in popular culture than I, and she smiled and nodded. I teased the students again, “He’s got it wrong, you guys. It should be Fifty Cents.” My obliviousness to an integral part of my students’ culture was only the beginning of my error in this classroom interaction. I believed that in teasing my students about the rapper’s name being “incorrect,” I was demonstrating that I had a sense of humor, while all I was doing was rejecting an AAVE speaker’s way of saying aloud “\$0.50.”

Having reached a position in life where I am more aware of my Whiteness, my privilege, and AAVE (and the need to be linguistically inclusive of rule-governed languages in my classroom), I have often shaken my head at my previous self and wondered if the second student teacher used me in her own social studies class as an example of what *not* to do when trying to relate to Black children. These two examples highlight a number of things. One, that I was at a stage in my life at that point where I considered myself a bit of a White savior (Camarota, 2011). I was there to help those poor students in poverty; I should shield them from controversial

topics and teach them the way to navigate toward societal power and White cultural competence. Secondly, I made mistakes. Many of them. Especially when I did not confront my background enough to reconsider the hierarchies present in schools and society.

While I could continue to beat myself up over the latter item and write a large book on the former, the purpose of including these stories in this paper is to highlight the ways teachers themselves are also “being and becoming” (van Manen, 1991, p. 17). None of us are perfect; we are constantly developing and changing. It seems the fool’s errand to believe that higher education will ever provide preservice teachers all they need to know before they graduate. Our work with them is just the beginning. Amy and I were both living proof that one cannot know all there is to know within one interaction with a student or a class. It takes constant reflection and professional growth to learn and challenge one’s assumptions about race, class, gender, and privilege.

The following sections describe the conflicts Amy recognized in her work with her class of mostly Black students. These sections should not be viewed as a short list of mistakes that Amy has made with her students, but rather very common concerns of the White teacher in a class of students of color. One issue was written language, and an awareness of AAVE as a legitimate language students used. Another concern was the way students’ home life appeared to their teacher and how Amy sometimes felt powerless in her interactions with her students’ parents. The final section in this chapter tells the story of Amy’s professional growth via a class on social justice at the local university, and how it opened her eyes to many issues.

African American Vernacular English (AAVE)

It is an understatement to suggest that the public has many prejudiced conceptions of AAVE.

Most speakers of Standard English think that AAVE is just a badly spoken version of their language, marred by a lot of ignorant mistakes in grammar and pronunciation, or worse than that, an unimportant and mostly abusive repertoire of street slang used by an ignorant urban underclass (Pullam, 1999, 39-40).

My interactions with Amy never involved her stating any of the above words to describe her students' use of AAVE, "abusive," "ignorant," or "unimportant." Amy consistently described her students as smart, valuable, and wonderful. I would have been very surprised to hear these words associated with her class. However, there is a considerable challenge in schools as teachers examine and correct students' writing. Some of the most traditional concerns of educators: If teachers value students' home language, AAVE in this example, are schools preparing students for a world in which Standard English rules? Are teachers helping them navigate the world of Whiteness and power if we do not teach them how to write a cover letter in a reputable language (Delpit, 2006)? While these are often arguments used to justify the "correcting" of students' AAVE, these questions do not seem to come up in the same ways when teachers consider Spanish as a second language, and I have already described how Amy allowed a Spanish-speaking student to write in her home language, even though Amy herself was not fluent in the language.

There were a number of times when Amy went over a language worksheet and encountered this problem. When the class was discussing interrogative sentences, Amy reminded students, "'Where were you?' would make sense, but not 'Where was you?'" Another time, she asked students, "Are we going to put 'She swimming in the pool'?" The implied answer was *No*, yet in a classroom of Black students, the answer to the latter question would have been a resounding *Yes* if students had not known the answer Amy expected.

On another occasion, Amy joked about how silly it would have been if a student (Amia, who was Japanese-American) would have written, “I is smart.” Amia joked back with her, “I is so smart,” and Amy repeated the student’s joke, “I is so smart.” It is interesting that this joke occurred with not only a student who could be considered in the top 5% of Amy’s class academically, but a student who was White and Asian, not a Black student. The idea of writing or speaking such a sentence was silly. It is reminiscent of my teasing my previous class about the rapper Fifty Cent’s name. To them, *Fifty Cent* was completely appropriate, but I tried to correct a musical icon’s name and turn it into Standard English. Amy’s use of humor, “I is so smart,” as mine was in the Fifty Cent example, was intended to connect her to her students. Yet she was potentially and unintentionally disengaging from any of her students who would legitimately say, “I is smart.”

Familial Interactions

Amy’s descriptions of her work with families ranged from the complimentary to the frustrated. At times, she had a difficult time feeling that some parents and guardians believed in their child’s potential. Given the familial conversations she had overheard, Amy came to the conclusion that many parents felt their child was doing poorly in school.

I just don’t want any child in my classroom to feel like they are failures. Ever. Enough of our kids get that, and I hear the way their parents speak to them, and that is the last thing that I want any of them walking out at the end of the day feeling.

On another occasion, I asked her to reflect on the ways her students were organized and well behaved when she led the classroom, but when there was a substitute, or when I took over for 10 minutes so she could answer a telephone call, the students became anxious and talkative. Amy described her students as *relationship kids*. “And unfortunately, a lot of them go home and

there's no structure, and there's no love, and there's no respect." Amy's frustration with families who inconsistently doled out ADHD medication, did not ensure the completion of homework, did not respond to weekly newsletters, and did not attend parent-teacher conferences led her to assume an unsupportive atmosphere in many homes. It was also not uncommon for guardians to speak sharply to children when they were being picked up, which, to White teachers unfamiliar with Delpit's work (2006) seemed uncaring, even cruel. In Amy's heart and mind, her students came to school looking for some love and respect, and it was her job to find ways to achieve that in her classroom. She worked very hard to build their self-esteem and find ways for them to succeed, no matter what activity they completed.

In a similar sense, Amy found parent-teacher conferences to be less than helpful. Since many parents did not come to conferences, Amy felt at the time that this reflected a lack of interest on the part of the parents. She doubted that the majority of her students had conversations about school when at home with their parents. She reflected, sadly, that she thought the newsletters she sent home were a "waste," in that they reached only a few parents, if any. At the time of this interview, Amy was either not aware or not ready to accept that many of her Black parents felt great stress when attending school events, as traditional schooling is often not welcoming to students and parents of color (Delpit, 2006).

One specific conversation with a student's mother provided a good example of what Amy was talking about in the above example. When this student yelled at Amy in class, Amy called home to discuss his tone of voice.

So I called his mom, [as though quoting the mother] "My son wasn't doing that." And I was like, "He was using a very disrespectful tone in the way he was speaking, and talking

back,” and she was like, “Well, maybe that’s just the tone that he uses.” [Comment directed at me:] Well, maybe it is the tone that he uses, because he hears it at home. These perceptions of interactions with parents are ones I admit to having myself, when teaching a similar population. My university students, predominately white upper middle class students, ask me questions such as, “Why don’t some parents care about their child’s education?” “How hard is it to get to a 15 minute parent-teacher conference?” “It’s just two pages of homework. How hard is that to complete and sign each night?” What these students, and what I, in my early career, misunderstood, is that there are a number of factors facing urban families that likely do not resemble the college students’ upbringing. Some of my young, White, preservice teachers fail to consider that care will look different in many families, many families have difficulties (logistical and emotional) attending school events, and many of these issues connect to larger societal structures.

What happens in the classroom is far from color blind. There is quite a bit of evidence suggesting that Black students are more often perceived to be misbehaving more than White children when taught by White teachers (Wright, 2015). The section on Equity and Teacher Perceptions in Chapter 2 of this project highlights the various empirical reports of White teachers who believed students from poverty and students of color were less bright and had less potential than their White or Asian peers. There are a number of racist attitudes with which White teachers knowingly or unknowingly present to their students and students’ families, including beliefs about what *smart* looks like in a student, and what *care* looks like with families.

Let us imagine for a brief second that teacher educators should condone these racist beliefs, and that we reject the societal structures and negative relationships of power in the classroom. That could lead us, as it leads some White preservice and inservice teachers, to ask

“But don’t Black children act out more than White children? I know my Black parents come to conferences less than White parents.” Yet who could blame them? Who could blame the students, who are reacting to schooling practices that reinforce White privilege and power? Who could blame their parents, who have had many more experiences, often negative ones, with White teachers than their children? Given a number of years in traditional schools, where many teachers enact the results of the above research, how could students of color fail to feel the disconnect and power differential between White middle class teachers and themselves?

Before moving to suggest that White teachers are simply bad at interacting with students of color and reflecting on race and social justice issues in their classrooms, there are a number of cases where White teachers have successfully done this. Ladson-Billings (2009), Landsman (2009), and Paley (1979) provide evidence of White teachers who have gained mainstream attention for their work with students of color and for acknowledging the difficulties of acknowledging one’s privilege. In the next section, I will address how Amy, because of her enrollment in a class on social justice, did just that.

Professional Growth

Amy began our discussion on her class by stating that there were, “so many things that I didn’t realize were going on in the world.” She had a regretful air about her during our conversation, as though she felt her own educational upbringing had done her a disservice.

So many things in the world that I didn’t realize were going on, forever, that have been glossed over, or changed from history books, to make it seem like White people are so great, they’ve done all these great things, but it’s like, no we don’t. We have ruined so many lives and families and put so many people underneath us, for why? Why?

Amy talked about the beliefs she had grown up with, and how some of the things she learned in her class were shocking. She had been led to understand that if people wanted something badly enough, they could work hard to achieve it. Yet, she was learning that for so many people, no matter how hard you worked, there was somebody there to oppress you, individually or systemically. She described how she was now trying to acknowledge her own perspectives and biases, “I know we all like to believe that we don’t have them, you know, but they are there, however small they may be, so just really being critical of that. It is tough.”

How difficult it must have been for Amy to admit this, not only to me as a researcher, but to herself. She expressed sadness, shame, embarrassment, and confusion. She was essentially saying that she was questioning her background and upbringing, which could mean that she wondered why her parents and siblings had not taught her certain things and why she had not reached beyond her upbringing to discover and explore these notions herself. What does this mean for teachers, who are more than teachers, they are also human beings who will still attend family reunions, weddings, and Sunday dinners? Many adults have long since realized that their parents were not perfect people, but to understand their families and themselves as part of a system of White privilege is another matter all together. This is an even more important endeavor today, considering the resurgence and normalization of white supremacist views (e.g., the selection of Steve Bannon as Chief Strategist in the White House, or the fact that white supremacists consider Trump’s victory a victory for their movement.) (Roy, 2016)

The difficulty facing White teachers in the questioning of their privilege is obviously no reason to not do this challenging work. It must happen. As I have already mentioned, Amy was a frequent consumer and leader of professional development over the course of her nine years in the classroom, and yet, this college course she attended offered her the first explicit awareness of

her Whiteness and of the racism infecting her and her teaching, and impacting her students. It was the first time she had felt moved to question her racial and privileged perspectives.

Amy did not let her difficult emotions slow her down. By the time we met, she was already able to discuss how her instruction had changed while she was taking this class and how she anticipated changing curriculum materials for both her own students and others in the school district. She planned to begin with children's literature and also to open up her classroom to more student-led learning. She described teaching *The Watson's Go to Birmingham—1963* (Curtis, 1995) and how her students had “mindblowing” questions to ask.

It just gave them opportunities to really explore and question—and be critical thinkers.

And then, thinking about, too, how can they be the change in the world...on my Star of the Week board, instead of “What do you want to be when you grow up?” it's, “How do you want to affect the world?” So we're thinking about these bigger things.

While most of Amy's students were Black that year, there was a growing Hispanic population in the community, and Amy did not limit her proposed improvements to her future Black students. She had examined the district's basal reader, and, “I don't know if there are any stories about African Americans, maybe a few Mexican American stories, Hispanic stories, but not enough, so, and my classroom is not a White-dominated classroom.”

Synthesis and Segue

This section, though entitled “Cultural Disconnect,” ends with a more hopeful presentation of the possibilities of professional learning for teachers' growth. Amy had obviously learned quite a large number of strategies for and with her students, but nine years after being considered a new teacher, she was still learning about herself and ways she could teach her

students in more impactful ways. The next chapter of this paper will focus on the discussion of the issues presented in chapters 4 and 5.

Chapter 6

Discussion

There are a number of questions one might ask when considering this particular analysis of Amy's classroom interactions. Of particular importance to this paper is the question, "Yes, but does this really demonstrate *responsiveness* and *pedagogical tact* in the ways they are described in Chapters 1 and 2 of this paper? Can Amy be said to have a deep and considerate awareness of her students, given the evidence of the cultural disconnect shared in Chapter 5?" A secondary question, but one at the heart of many stakeholders in the educational arena is, "Even if she is a responsive teacher, is this teacher *effective*?" Many pages have thus far been devoted to an explication of the ways Amy noticed her students' needs and personalities, but is this the main goal of the teacher?

First of all, I would suggest that yes, Amy is demonstrating a number of responsive interactions with her students, and I believe van Manen (1986, 1991) would consider her to also be enacting pedagogical tact as he recommended. There is no such thing as perfection when one enters a profession with such unpredictability as a fallible, developing human being at work with young, changing human beings. I will address some thoughts on the teaching behaviors of Amy, especially those stemming from a lack of awareness of her privilege and beliefs. Students and teachers do not bring only their brains to school, they bring all of themselves, and Amy noticed and responded to students' personhood in many varied ways.

When considering the question of effectiveness, I should begin by acknowledging that this was not originally an aspect of study in my empirical literature review. However, it is hard to ignore in the current era of standards-based instruction. To examine Amy's practice through the lens of what is considered *effective*, I turn at first to Allington, Johnston, and Day (2002) to

highlight exactly what their research determined to be not merely effective, but exemplary. The characteristics they specify as recommended practices consist of types of classroom talk, nontraditional materials, facilitative as opposed to direct instruction, and collaborative student work. As teacher educators, we also do not have to choose between a teacher who responds to her students' personal needs and a teacher who addresses their intellectual needs. Noddings did not believe teachers needed to make a choice between academics and care.

My contention is, first, that we should want more from our educational efforts than adequate academic achievement and, second, that we will not achieve even that meager success unless our children believe that they themselves are cared for and learn to care for others (1995, p. 675).

Amy's Responsiveness and Pedagogical Tact

To begin, it is important to review the origins of my discussion on responsiveness and pedagogical tact, beginning with Buber (1955). I restate a quote from Chapter 1 below to highlight the belief in the importance of the relationship and the belief in the Other as a whole and complete person:

The teacher who wants to help the pupil to realize his best potentialities must intend him as this particular person, both in his *potentiality and in his actuality*. More precisely, he must not know him as a mere sum of qualities, aspirations, and inhibitions; *he must apprehend him, and affirm him, as a whole*. But this he can only do if he encounters him as a partner in a bipolar situation. And to give his influence unity and meaning, *he must live through this situation in all its aspects not only from his own point of view but also from that of his partner*. He must practice the kind of realization that I call embracing. It is essential that *he should awaken the I-You relationship in the pupil, too, who should*

intend and affirm his educator as this particular person; and yet the educational relationship could not endure if the pupil also practiced the art of embracing by living through the shared situation from the educator's point of view. (p. 178, emphasis added)

I added emphases to this quote to identify significant aspects of Amy's practice that are directly in line with Buber's beliefs about mutuality and the teacher-student, or I-You, relationship. In order to identify ways that the analysis sections of this paper have followed Buber and van Manen's theories of responsiveness, pedagogical tact, and the Other as a whole person, I have organized the following four sections of this paper to align with the above italicized descriptors: potentiality and actuality, apprehending and affirming as a whole, the teacher's dual points of view, and awakening the I-You in the student.

Potentiality and Actuality

When considering potentiality and actuality, or Van Manen's (1986, 1991) being and becoming, I (and they) suggest that we look at the student as they are now and as they may become. The difficulty here lies in the unpredictability of this knowledge. A teacher who sees a student for approximately six hours a day can certainly not achieve a full and complete knowledge of a student, I do not believe that either Buber or van Manen would suggest that there is a finish line to be reached in this attempt. Yet we must consider both types of knowledge when considering a student. As I discussed in Chapter 5, to consider a student's potential over their current personhood could lead one to push a student too far beyond their level of comfort, and to consider their actuality, their *now*, over their potential, could mean worrying so much about their feelings it leads a teacher to shy away from challenging learning. It is a delicate duality responsive teachers manage thousands of times a day.

Amy handled this balance well during my time in her classroom. For example, her interaction with Damon, described in Chapter 4, highlights how Amy maintained her high expectations at the same time she used her knowledge of *who* Damon was to respond to his comments in a certain way. Damon had little confidence in his math abilities, and Amy also knew him to be a student who was very sensitive. At times, when he felt unsure of himself, he would put his head down on his desk in tears, so Amy handled his conceptual misunderstandings in a different way than she would have with Amia, for example, who exhibited a great deal of confidence in her academics. When responding to his work, “The only thing that scares me a little bit is the place value and the understanding there,” she did not suggest to him that he was wrong, though she opened the door for additional work on understanding place value. She respected his sensitivity and also his potential need to develop number sense.

In the same section of Chapter 4, I discuss how Amy at times managed whole-class behaviors by sitting calmly at her desk and waiting for students to check their behaviors themselves. A teacher who was not as concerned with students’ actuality and potentiality might sharply call on the students who were talking or simply allow the classroom to walk into the hallway loud and disorganized. Yet Amy was aware of the current need for students to respect other classes and their work, so she maintained her expectation that students be quiet in the hallway. She also knew that in life, students would not be as closely supervised as they were in their 5th grade classroom, so to be able to check and correct their own behavior at times was important.

Apprehend and Affirm as a Whole

When Amy described her students during our interviews, she described them in a very holistic manner. Students were far more than a benchmark score or a problem behavior. They

were described by a visceral emotional response, a phrase that described their nature, a goal she had for the student, and at times a professional goal she was trying to reach to best support them. Amy sighed, giggled, or smiled when I mentioned a student's name in our interviews, hoping to find out what she knew and felt about the student. She often told stories about their classroom interactions or the student's life outside of school, at times wistful and sad that the student did not have a better life.

This pattern of describing students in a number of ways held throughout our interviews, and I was able to see that Amy certainly apprehended her students as whole and complex beings. While she might have been frustrated by behaviors during the day, when I asked her to reflect on a student, she presented both their difficulties and their positives. One student might have needed help accepting responsibility, but was a very interesting boy who loved to talk. Another was a student she loved, who had trouble in recent years dealing with frustration, and had a very difficult past with her mother.

Dual Points of View

In attempting to be both aware of her own needs to help students make progress but also to be aware of the students' points of view, Amy conveyed a great interest in students' feelings throughout her instruction. While teachers are not required by any evaluation to take an interest in students' feelings, Amy felt it was extremely important for students to feel confident in themselves. I write about this in Chapter 4 when I discuss how Amy adjusted the work of students, even if she was not required to by the students' IEPs. Three of her students had adjusted spelling lists, while only one was required to have these accommodations. She told me, "When you're getting F's on everything, I mean, that feels horrible." To Amy, the feeling students may have when consistently failing their spelling test was important enough for her to

adjust their lists. Amy's need as a teacher was to improve students' spelling, but she retained an awareness of how some of her students felt when they were not able to progress as fast as other members of the class.

In the same section of Chapter 4, I wrote about Amy's practice fire drill, and how excited and anxious students behaved when practicing their quick classroom line and exit from the classroom. They had a number of questions, which, in order to get on with her planned instruction, Amy could certainly have shut down in order to move on. Yet, she chose to balance her need to continue instruction with the students' need to address insecurities about emergencies. She let them ask several questions, but then suggested they write additional questions down and submit them to mailbox that was always available on her desk. She needed to conduct classroom lessons, but she knew that the students' worries were also important, so she encouraged them to express themselves at a later time.

Awakening the I-You in the Student

There is an entire section in Chapter 4 about how Amy not only allows her students to express their own personhood, but she expresses her own on a regular basis. Through her Star Student activity, Amy encouraged students to share their hobbies and interests. In one classroom activity, Amy met with a student who was struggling with the lesson and encouraged him to respond to questions that would connect how he might feel to how the character in the story might feel. Amy also allowed her students to write to her, at one point giving them a writing prompt that asked them to consider who they admired and why. It is important to note that these activities were either instructional, which means Amy connected Buber's I-You to classroom instruction, or they were social-emotional, which she felt were important enough that valuable class time was given.

At one point in class, Amy shared that she got nervous when preparing to take a test. She also shared personal stories, through her spelling tests or in Morning Meeting. She expressed her own excitement about classroom activities and her appreciation for students' hard work. Students certainly saw her as a whole, complete person, highlighted by Marie's gentle teasing when Amy forgot the Macintosh dongle yet again.

Amy's Effectiveness

Amy's responsiveness is all well and good, but if students are not learning academics, teachers will have a difficult time justifying their methods to stakeholders. I have demonstrated through many pages of analysis that Amy is certainly a responsive teacher, but is it possible that a responsive teacher could be ineffective? To discuss the implications of the word *effective* when considering work and life with students, I have first selected an article (Allington et al., 2002) that highlights particular practices of exemplary intermediate teachers. I show how Amy's classroom work is closely aligned with these recommendations, in the four categories of classroom talk, classroom materials, instruction, and student work. I then move on to the limitations of the word *effective*, not the least of which is the varied interpretations of the term, and propose an alternate consideration for what an *effective classroom* might look like.

Classroom Talk

Allington et al. (2002) noticed that the students in their study talked to the teacher and to other students more than in other classrooms. This talk was "respectful, supportive, and productive" (p. 463), and the teachers used real conversation to learn about their students. At times, the teacher admitted that he or she was wrong, and talked about his or her interests within classroom instruction. Finally, these exemplary teachers encouraged their students to describe how they solved problems rather than just asking them to identify an answer.

The researchers in this study could have been describing Amy's classroom when they delineated the exemplary characteristics of real talk between the teacher and students. In Chapter 4, where I devote a section to Amy's sense of humor, I note several instances of her admitting her own errors in humorous and relatable ways. She called a student the wrong name, and then suggested that, "It's like a little family in here." On another occasion, in the Expression of Amy's Identity, Amy and her student Marie are comfortable joking about Amy's forgetfulness with her Macintosh dongle.

In the section of this paper focused on Amy's Transparency in Decision Making, I describe how she discussed the importance of being quiet out in the hallway. She told her students, "We're 5th graders, top dogs, we have to show everyone else how to do it." She included herself in that "we," suggesting to her students that they were all, together, in charge of showing the rest of the school how to behave. In the above section on the Expression of Personhood, I describe the variety of ways Amy conversed with her students, either within their spelling tests—"My *father* lives in Decatur. My *daughter* is as cute as a button."—or when she compared their potential feelings about an upcoming test to her own, "I don't know about you, but I get nervous about any test I'm going to take."

Also in the section on Amy's Transparency in Decision Making, I discussed how she focused on the process of the work as opposed to the answer. She was clear when giving an assessment that she wanted to give them feedback as opposed to a grade, she compared their growth in school to the growth of characters in the books they read, and she required students to explain their strategies when doing math problems. "The point is that you're really thinking about the numbers...I want you to be thinking about the ways these numbers interact with one another."

Chosen Classroom Materials

Allington et al. (2002) also described the types of materials used in these teachers' classrooms as going beyond the traditional textbook. For example, the teachers might use historical fiction to highlight a point, or to do research on the Internet or in magazines. These teachers often drew attention to language in the way they "fostered student interest both in words and in the turn of a phrase" (p. 463).

I wrote in Chapter 4 about how Amy set high expectations for her students, and one of these examples was when the class was doing research on their Chromebooks. Amy had set up several websites with accessible research on spiders, and each student had their own spider to look up. Amy also read aloud historical fiction in her classroom and included books such as *The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963* (Curtis, 1995) in her curriculum to highlight issues of racial injustice. The class also developed their own resource materials, keeping notes in a math journal so that they could go back to it to find out how to write numbers in expanded exponential form, for example.

Amy's sense of humor often focused on the use of words and a turn of phrase, as the researchers above suggest is important. When Amy was encouraging her students to remember what the word variable represented, she said, "If there's something we don't know, what do we use to express that? It starts with a v. V-v-v-v...It's v-v-v...very chilly outside today." When putting the spelling words into sentences for the weekly test, Amy often structured those sentences to be entertaining. "Cows live out in a *pasture*. Not, it's *past your* bedtime." Amy also used creative language to compliment and motivate her students. "Woo! Smokin'! Cool him off!" after one student spelled a word quickly and correctly in their spelling game. She said, "You're thinkin' Lincoln," to another student who was doing well in the game that day.

Instruction

The researchers described this instruction as being “more conversational in nature, as opposed to being comprised of the more typical lecture and interrogation” (p. 463). These exemplary teachers did not necessarily individualize instruction, but gave students choice and responded to their students’ needs and interests. In the first portion of Chapter 4, I describe how Amy created an open-ended Social Studies activity where students were involved in group work and Amy acted as more of the facilitator than the director.

Amy also reacted to interesting classroom activities as though she were sharing them with her students, not merely instructing them. In PE, she shared their excitement when pushing them to go faster, and did the activity with them, smiling the whole time. When reading aloud the book *Flutter* (2012), Amy stopped at the end of a cliffhanging chapter, “Oh, so stressful,” as though she and her students were members of the same book club.

In the section of this paper on the Expression of Personhood, I describe how Amy worked with Maya, a LEP student in her classroom, to hand in some of her written work in Spanish. Amy acknowledged to Maya that she did not have much knowledge of Spanish, and that Maya may have to translate some of her work for Amy.

Student Work

Finally, Allington et al. (2002) found that their exemplary teachers “focused on developing students’ personal responsibility through choice and goal setting” (p. 464). Hard work and improvement were valued as much as achievement, and evaluations were personalized. Also near the beginning of Chapter 4, I describe how Amy and her students together shared the value and importance of growth—Amy highlighted their growth when introducing their data folders and when analyzing characters in their reading instruction. “Just like our characters in our

story grow and change, you're going to grow and change, too." One of Amy's high achieving students accepted this growth mindset and told me how she felt that she had learned "more stuff" because she improved her math test score.

Amy also focused on goal setting in her classroom. Students completed goal statements—one behavioral and one academic—and posted these in the hallway. In order to show students the importance of goal setting and also how to do this themselves, Amy modeled this with a goal of her own.

In the section of this paper about Amy's Respect for Students, I write about how Amy adjusted some of her students' work, not because their IEP required it, but because she knew it felt horrible to the students to consistently get failing grades on their spelling tests. Finally, Amy regularly stated to her students how it was more important to her that they grew, not that they got good grades. "It is not as important to me to get As or A+s, all I care about is that you get smarter, getting smarter from where we are today."

Extending Understandings of Effectiveness

Amy is clearly effective in all the ways described above. However, there is more to consider. With all due respect to the notable authors above, there are a wide variety of definitions of effective teaching. At this point, one must ask, can teacher educators select just one definition of effective teaching, and does Amy represent an effective teacher according to those criteria? Allington et al. (2002) would suggest that Amy is certainly effective according to their guidelines, but I would like to take this one step further and suggest that there is another way to consider effective instruction that is discussed less often in the literature. The ultimate question I ask here is, *effective to what end?*

I would like to discuss the possibility that the field of teacher education move away from the traditional ways of considering teacher effectiveness. Ko and Simmons (2013) acknowledged that defining effectiveness was a challenge, but provided a table that shared several components of teacher effectiveness. These included observable behaviors seen during classroom observations, value-added measures of effectiveness, the relationship between certain teacher behaviors and student outcomes, out-of-classroom teacher processes such as competence and teacher training, differentiated teacher effectiveness (including the consistency of teacher effects), and all of those components as a whole. While this chart did not spend any time discussing other factors than the academic, the authors did suggest that there are,

Likely to be other important social, behavioural and affective current and future oriented purposes and goals of education. These might include developing students to become good citizens, promoting their physical, emotional and economic well-being and inculcating skills and attitudes that encourage lifelong learning (p. 6).

The questionable use of the word “inculcating” when referring to lifelong learning aside, the authors have taken one step toward suggesting that there are qualities outside of the curriculum and value-added measures that might identify a teacher’s effectiveness. However, as my introduction to Chapter 4 suggested, imagining a teacher who is very good at teaching social studies and PE, gives students chances to practice their socio-emotional skills, and encourages lifelong learning still may not be responsive in the ways that van Manen, Buber, and Noddings would recommend, and the ways that Amy demonstrated noticing, responding to, and reflecting upon her students and her practice.

It is possible we need to move toward a more progressive, but not at all new, consideration of what the goals of education are, and what we hope our students will become

when they leave our compulsory K-12 system. Will they be lifelong learners by choice, not having been “inculcated,” but because they consider learning a “delight” as Amy suggested in one of my observations? Will they be comfortable and confident to explore their own potential, given the experiences she has taught them for appreciating themselves and others? And is it possible that we can shift our focus off test scores and onto raising and encouraging students to be confident, responsible, thoughtful citizens of a democratic society?

I would now like to examine two non-traditional facets of effective instruction that Amy demonstrated: One, the ways Amy encourages her students in ways that would predict their interest in learning after they leave her classroom, and two, how they are able to be confident in their selfhood with her. Beyond the test score, these are two indications of learning that goes beyond the fifth grade classroom.

A Non-Traditional View of Amy’s Effective Instruction

One aspect of Amy’s instruction that may encourage lifelong learning was Amy’s focus on growth over instant achievement. On a number of occasions, Amy reinforced with her students that their learning was a process; not only did this bumpy road take time, but they could be in charge of checking themselves and their progress. Amy’s self-assessment cards were one example of this, and her statement to her class that their progress was their business only, “If there’s something that you don’t quite understand, it’s OK. There’s not a problem with that. That means you’re learning and you’re growing.” When Amy shared the Bandid activity with her students to highlight the importance of differentiation in the classroom, she told them that all that was important to her was that they grew in their knowledge, “getting smarter from where we are today.”

Amy also focused on the feeling involved with learning. She mentioned to me and to her students often that she believed in the importance of confidence while learning. In the above example, when Amy was showing her students how to use their assessment cards, she made a point to say, “It is very important for me for all of you to feel safe for where you are with your education.” She adjusted three spelling lists because, “When you’re getting F’s on everything, I mean, that feels horrible.” When they practiced their fire drill as a class, she asked if they felt safe.

Amy’s focus on the *feeling* of learning is something I found fairly unusual, given my experience in a number of classrooms and upon reflection on my own teaching practice. She worked hard to get students to see that learning was a process, and she wanted them to feel confident and safe in their learning, ideally so that it would be something they could continue in their life outside her classroom.

My interviews with students provided me another way to look at Amy’s practice: from the perspective of those most important to the process of relating, noticing, and responding—the students. Truth told me that he loved school. The only times he did not love school were when they had substitutes, and this was confirmed by Jeffrey, Jaylia, and Tyra. Truth confirmed the importance of Amy’s responsive instructional style, and assured me that it was not only about feelings, but was also about learning.

Ms. L is always bragging about us, she’s always, she, how should I put this, she will always make sure we’re doing something right, she won’t just let us do our work, she’ll break things down into itty bitty pieces, which, that really helps me, that, because like with grammar, that’s probably my worst subject, I’m still pretty good at it, but it still trips me up, so when she breaks it down, it helps me.

Brooklyn shared a different type of information. A strong student, her comfort in class was important to her, so she expressed to me how nervous she was on the first day of school, but how happy she was that she had been placed in Amy's classroom. Brooklyn had been at this school for a number of years, and knew Amy by sight and reputation. She described Amy as one of the individuals who knew her best in the building:

Brooklyn: Butterscotch my best friend and, ooh, that's a hard question, Amia started being my best friend this year so not Amia, so probably Mrs. L.

Alexis: Yeah? How did they get to know you so well?

Brooklyn: Butterscotch because I tell her everything and she tells me everything. Ms. L because we did this like, what will you tell your teacher, thing, I couldn't think of anything, and I thought back to this one moment in time that got me so embarrassed in preschool, I hated it. I'll tell you.

Brooklyn was referring to the activity I described early in this paper, one where Amy had invited students to write a letter to her, describing something they wish their teacher knew about them. Brooklyn initially had a difficult time writing something down, but then seemed to feel comfortable enough telling Amy an embarrassing story, and felt that this was an initial activity that helped Amy get to know her well. The *invitation* to share was a vital part of this activity, not necessarily what the students shared in response.

Amia shared a similar activity that helped Amy get to know her well:

Like, we have this thing, Stuck with Me? It's with the post-it note, you write what stuck with you, and you put it on the board, and even though we started in August, we still get to write questions and stuff to know each other even more. [Alexis: That's neat.] So that's how, and another one, it was in my mind, and on the tip of my tongue [Alexis: and

it just flew out?] uh huh, and one time, was when we did What I Wish My Teacher Knew and so I did one for Ms. L, and no one else could see, and I did one for Ms. S, for Ms. S, I said not much, because basically she's been here a long time and she's been with us, this was before she left, like two weeks ago, before she left, and we did one for Ms. L, and that was at the beginning of the year, so that's why it had a lot of stuff to write about, [Alexis: sure, sure] so now I bet she knows much more about me, cause if I wrote it right now I'd say not much, I think you know a lot about me.

Amia took this a step further, and suggested some extra work with the school curriculum at home, implying her extended interest in school that might result in lifelong learning:

I'm gonna try to recite my poem. They took to the road and went cross Georgia. Skipped over the tracks in East St. Louis. Took the bus from Holly Springs. Hitched a ride from Gee's Bend. Took the long way through Memphis. The third deck down from Trinidad. A wrench of heart from Gory Island. A wrench of heart from Gory Island to a place called Harlem.

Alexis: Wow! And you only got it on Monday? That's awesome.

Amia: I practiced at home, and I wrote it down, cause she [the arts teacher] didn't know what I meant when I did it on the cookbooks last year, so I wrote it down, and I forgot the part where it was "took the bus from Holly Springs," I kind of forgot, then I tried it again, and then my mom like read it again, and my mom was holding the paper, and I was reciting it, and I said, "Did I do good?" And she said, "You did all the words. Do that for the real thing."

George commented on Amy's responsive style as "fun." When I asked him to discuss his feelings about school, he was not alone in his dislike of getting up early in the morning to get to

school, but he acknowledged that he liked school, and if he did not come to school, he would not get to do any of those fun things. He also described her style in ways that expressed deep appreciation for her, and an awareness that if she were a different teacher, he would have had a very different experience in fifth grade.

George: Um, like she just been trying to compromise with me, and I thank her for that, because if she wouldn't, if she would have been a different teacher, and somebody that was real mean, like she woulda just, just, like I wouldn't have done so good and stuff, like I'm gonna try to do better when I get into middle school and stuff, cause they don't take late work.

Alexis: Yeah, usually they don't. But does Ms. L?

George: Yep, but it gotta be in that week.

Alexis: Ok, that makes sense. I like that word that you used, that she *compromised* with you, that's a good work. Ok, can you think of two people in this school building who know you best?

George: Um, Ms. M and...Ima say Ms. L because she knows what I gotta go through.

Alexis: How'd they get to know you so well?

George: Because at first, I wasn't taking my medicine so well, and then, because she [Amy] had my big sister, when my big sister was here, and then I just started knowing stuff, but it's a lot of people at this school that I think know a lot about me. Like Ms. J, Ms. S, Ms. M, Ms. L, I really can't think about many more.

I frequently caution my preservice students against producing activities in school that are purely *fun*. Fun does not necessarily result in learning. There are a number of activities in school that are designed to be fun, while the learning is superficial. Yet George is describing a teacher who

sees, hears, and responds to *him*. Having observed George in the classroom, there are many fun activities that would be taken away from him based on his classroom behaviors, yet Amy compromises and pushes him to do better.

Nicholas, sharing his experiences as a student with a significant visual impairment in his first year of public school (after years of homeschooling) shared a different reason why school was an interesting, safe place to be:

Nicholas: I've been made fun of most of my life, and at school I actually expected that to be worse, but when you compare and contrast my friends and enemies before school started, I had maybe 3 friends and 50-70 enemies.

Alexis: Oh my gosh. And now?

Nicholas: And now...hmmmm...it's more like 10-11 friends compared to maybe 80 enemies.

The friendships were obviously important to Nicholas, as they were the first thing he mentioned in our second interview. I have already mentioned the ways Amy facilitated a classroom environment that respected Nicholas—yelling “safe” when he tripped in PE, inviting his vision teacher to tell the class about his needs, etc. When I asked Nicholas more specific questions about Amy’s instructional style, he described characteristics of that he appreciated: being “nice and kind and understanding.”

At one point, I had missed a piece of homework, so I had a warning sheet, and the next day, I didn't get my reading log signed, but she understood, because my parents went on a date, and they were gone past 12:00 at night [Alexis: oh, wow], because they went to the movies, so she understood that I didn't get that signed, but I still read.

After 11 weeks in his classroom, I knew Nicholas to be a very responsible student who would obviously have read in the evenings even though he could not get his reading log signed, and I have no doubt Amy was aware of this as well. Nicholas is describing how Amy understood *him*; it is possible that she would have pushed another student for their missing reading log a little harder, but knowing Nicholas's responsible nature, she was aware that he was following her reading expectations, regardless of his mother's signature on a form.

In summary, the students in Chapter 4 and the above discussion section appear to feel safe, comfortable, and able to be themselves. They see and appreciate their teacher as a whole person, which enables them to express themselves more honestly and authentically. They know their teacher will understand them and will compromise, and because she expresses excitement in the content, students are more likely to express interest and excitement as well. At least one was even motivated enough to take her work home and practice it with her family, later sharing it with me, the researcher. All of these qualities of Amy's instruction and interactions with students lead me to believe that students have a much greater chance of feeling like school, and by extension, learning in general, is engaging and something they can enjoy.

Significance for Teacher Education

This work presents a number of implications for the field of teacher education. First of all, the description in Chapter 5 of Amy's move from a position of unawareness of privilege to increased knowledge of her Whiteness demonstrates that even if learning does not happen in one place, it can in another. If our students leave our undergraduate programs with beliefs we would rather they not have, it is possible, even likely, that at some point they will encounter a learning opportunity that will change their mindset. Amy was in her ninth year of teaching at this time, and having worked in the same school and district, I know that there were a number of

professional development opportunities in which Amy might have learned similar messages about privilege, Black history and the role of Whites in oppression, and how one must continually reflect on one's own background to become aware of possible prejudices. Somehow, Amy either missed those workshops or was simply not ready to become aware of its importance in her classroom work with students.

In my empirical literature review, I discuss Tettegah's (1996) work on levels of racial consciousness. By one scale Tettegah described, Amy might be classified as "avoidant," preferring not to consider minority concerns. This does not mean that Amy was, when I conducted my research, ignoring her students as individuals, but it does mean that her background influences caused her to be less aware of how their Blackness and her Whiteness influenced their relationship in the classroom. By the end of that school year, Amy had certainly moved into the "dissonant" category, as she was changing how she felt about students of color and their experiences. To state it plainly, this university class worked for Amy in ways that other classes had not. We can not assume that a teacher at age 22 will be that same teacher at 30 or 40. Amy was growing and developing as this year progressed.

Another issue this work presents is the need to consider what our focus is in preservice and inservice teacher education. Teaching is enormously complex, and while undergraduate students and inservice teachers often hope for their instructors to tell them what to do, teacher educators must avoid the simplistic, and continually and forcefully push past *do this to think about this*. Part of this educational experience for the teacher should ask individuals to reflect on what they are experiencing in the classroom as well as what they are implementing in their classroom. Amy's emotional experience of teaching in this way presented itself enough in my data collection to warrant half a chapter in this project; it was impossible to separate what she

was doing from what she was feeling. Yet I cannot think back to my preservice or inservice experience and think of a time when I was encouraged to think about how *what* I was doing influenced how I *felt* about what was happening in my classroom.

This emphasis on the emotions involved in teaching lead me to consider how Amy often reflected on feelings of worry and frustration because of schooling limitations. With these numerous limitations: The classroom split and removal of seven of her students, her schedule on some days limiting her ability to teach her whole class, miscommunications and requirements from administrators; all of these limited her ability to teach, let alone to teach with heart and high expectations. While not perfect, as none of us are, Amy was able to fulfill many of Buber's, Noddings, and van Manen's requirements for a caring and effective classroom, though it took an enormous toll on her. Teacher education should prepare preservice students to consider work as keeping the student first and foremost in mind when presented with significant limitations.

Chapter 7

Conclusions and Further Research

In a recent conversation with a fourth-year student in the College of Education, one who is in her fall student teaching placement, I learned that she had spent several weeks during the beginning of her time in the classroom asking students about their weekends during the Monday morning meeting. She learned about their hobbies, their families, and more importantly, she showed them she was interested in them beyond the academic. Shortly before my meeting with her, her cooperating teacher, in whose classroom she was placed, told her that she needed to stop asking so many questions during morning meeting. As a class, they “did not have time.” There were so many curricular requirements each day, the teacher did not feel as though she could spend so much time asking students about their home lives.

The student and I both expressed sadness and resignation at the elimination of this opportunity to build relationships and develop knowledge of her students. My university student felt disappointed and wished she would not have begun this activity in the first place; it was as though she said to her students, “I’m interested in your lives, please trust me and share about yourselves,” and then, “I’m sorry, we have no time for your interests anymore.” She felt as though she had begun to relate to them, and then stripped the relationship away in order to complete additional academics in the mornings.

I told her, and wished I were able to tell her cooperating teacher, that what this student teacher did was time well spent in the classroom. First of all, it is hard to disagree that it is important to know your students well in order to teach well. One can use a weekend trip as a story starter, for instance, or the knowledge that a student’s parents are getting divorced to send home the weekly newsletter to two email addresses. These are very simple adjustments to

classroom instruction, but they are impossible without the knowledge of a student's interests, background, and home life.

Viewing the student-teacher relationship as merely the way to more personal instructional techniques is overly simplistic, as Noddings (2005, 2013), van Manen (1986, 1991), and Buber (1955) would agree. "A professionally acknowledged moral language would allow teachers to think about their daily practices as essentially pedagogical interactions" (van Manen, 2000, p. 315). When a teacher focuses solely, or even mostly, on academic requirements at the expense of the personal, the pedagogical interaction as described by van Manen is lost. Effective classroom instruction is often the way to an enriched knowledge of students, as shown in the way Amy learned more about Amia by selecting her for an advanced math group, or how Amy used writing assignments to learn what her students valued in people.

It is also disappointing that this particular teacher felt as though the knowledge my student teacher gained about each student, and her expressed interest in students' lives, was not worthy of their classroom time. This teacher is not alone; in my teaching experience, pressures teachers currently face to cover an enormous amount of curriculum causes some to eliminate recess, prepare students for standardized tests, and in the above case, shorten morning meeting to the bare minimum. The time to learn about children as human beings—the topics they love and are passionate about, the fights they have with their siblings, the sense of humor they employ—is required in order to respond to their needs.

It is possible that my conversation with this university student left out the guilt, worry, and frustration her cooperating teacher felt, emotions Amy was familiar with. It is possible she wanted to feel she was able to spend this time in the classroom. As I alluded to in Chapter 5, teachers are expected to know all and be everything to others, and it is possible that this teacher

went home from school each day, frustrated that the curriculum she was pushed to implement kept her from personal conversations she wanted to have with her students. Maybe she was tired and resigned at being constantly put in the position to respond only to her students' academic needs. While van Manen (2000) suggested that teachers are held hostage by the emotional consciousness we feel when faced with vast needs in our classroom, this teacher may have felt she was held hostage by the current educational era, one that suggested test scores were what mattered in teacher evaluations.

“It seems that we constantly betray the call of caring responsibility in our efforts to be caring in the general sense of duty, as in our professional practice” (van Manen, 2000, p. 324). I stated in my introduction that teaching is a fundamentally unique and human task, and sadly, this is lost in many classrooms. While one case study is not enough to say that all teachers can mix the instructional and relational consistently and successfully, it does demonstrate that one teacher, in a school with logistical limitations and students from high poverty backgrounds, *can do this well*.

While I described numerous ways Amy worked with students' instructional and personal needs in Chapter 4, Chapter 5 highlighted some of the ways Amy, at the time of my study, may *not* have known her students. After all, her limited awareness of her Whiteness and how that privilege related to their position as Black students—students with limited power in a traditional school setting—was a barrier to her understanding of them and her relationship with them. Landsman (2009), also a White teacher in a predominantly Black classroom, highlighted an important point, “To know is 'to understand as fact or truth, to apprehend clearly and with certainty'...I cannot know what it is like to be any other color than my own white color...I am convinced that if I can imagine, I might be able to understand” (2009, p. 12). The idea that any

teacher can apprehend the reality of their students' existences with certainty is difficult to accept. Yet by the end of the semester, Amy was beginning to *imagine*, which, as Landsman stated, is one step toward understanding.

Looking Forward

Future research that combines the emotional and the academic, the relational and the instructional, would push this field further. There is laudable empirical and theoretical work done on the emotional lives of teachers (Hargreaves, 1998; Zembylas, 2003), differentiated instruction (Tomlinson, 2001, 2003), ethic of care (Noddings, 1984, 1986) and White teacher perceptions of students of color (Kumar & Hamer, 2012; McCombs & Gay, 1988). What would be helpful is if this were somehow combined in a way similar to the framing of this project. Without this integration, practitioners and teacher educators run the risk of oversimplifying important work, and believing that one can be an effective instructor but must not spend time on the relational, or that the emotional existence of teachers is a barrier to quality instruction. While this one particular case study cannot be considered replicable, it is a rich case from which others can learn. It highlights the possibilities for future research in these connected areas.

In the future, I plan to extend my research in a number of connected ways. First of all, I would want to explore this in different contexts, with different participants. I conducted this study in one White fifth-grade teacher's classroom, and this teacher had nine years of teaching experience. Would I find similar types of interactions in a Black teacher's classroom? What if I conducted this study in a first-year male teacher's classroom? In order to see if these patterns exist across experiences, I would need to vary my participants and repeat the case study multiple times.

An increasing interest of mine is how teachers develop personal and professional theories of teaching in an era of increased distrust of teachers. My dissertation has furthered the research of others (Hargreaves, 1998; Zembylas, 2003) in terms of understanding the emotional nature of teaching. I wish to explore further how this emotion can be normalized as opposed to stigmatized. For example, the impact of teachers' emotions on their instruction is an intriguing area of study. Fear is one emotion Amy expressed often, and one I have seen having a direct impact on instruction—many of my students and their cooperating teachers avoided direct instruction or classroom discussions on the presidential election of 2016. An amazing opportunity to teach about the electoral college, our nation's democratic processes, the need to check online sources for reputability, etc., the election of 2016 was a missed opportunity for many classrooms. According to my student teachers, the main reason these educators avoided teaching about the election was because of their fear. They feared that they would unfairly influence their students toward their particular political views. They feared that parents would be upset that they were teaching about the election in such a negative national climate. This fear directly impacted their instruction, and this is only one way that teachers' emotions and their instruction are directly interrelated.

The case study presented here does not imply perfection on Amy's part, or that all teachers should emulate her example. It is one example of what is possible in the classroom when one pays attention, when a teacher considers students' humanity to be as important as instruction, and when reflection is a regular part of an educator's practice. These are valuable characteristics that can be enhanced in teacher education programs—both preservice and inservice programs. A focus on the relational does not imply that a differentiated instruction workshop, for example, is a worthless task; on the contrary, many teachers including myself

have learned a great deal from professional development on Tomlinson's work. I would merely state that teacher education focusing solely on instructional strategies is lacking. In sum, I recommend the addition of the *person* to the conversation about the *student*.

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Appendix A

Fall 2015 Teacher Interview Questions

August Baseline Questions

1. How do you build relationships with your students?
2. How do you grow as a teacher?
3. What do you think of as your greatest struggles as a teacher? Your greatest successes?
4. What are some professional goals you have for yourself? What are goals you have for your students?
5. Why did you decide to participate in this study?

Anticipated Weekly Questions

1. While observing your lesson on <Month> <Day>, 2015, I noticed the following: [Insert classroom observation data.] Can you describe how you came to respond to student needs in that particular way?
 - [If not observed] How did Student A/Group A respond?
 - [If student response was observed] In what ways did Student A/Group A respond in the manner you were anticipating? What surprised you?
2. How do you decide where to take Student A/Group A now? What are your next steps with this student/topic/issue/class?
3. What else do I need to know about this particular student in your classroom?
 - Was there something that you know about this student that made you respond in that manner?

Appendix B

Fall 2015 Student Interview Questions

Initial Interview Questions

1. What thoughts and feelings do you have about coming back to school this year?

Possible follow-up questions:

- Are you looking forward to anything? What are you looking forward to?
- Are you nervous/concerned/curious/wondering about anything? What are you nervous/concerned/curious/wondering about?

2. What do you want your teacher to know about you before you get further into your work together this year? Why is that important to you?

3. Would you point to which phrase on this scale most closely matches how challenging or boring you like school to be most of the time?

Boring or too easy----OK, mostly easy-----Just right, a little difficult at times-----Really challenging

Possible follow-up prompt:

- Tell me a little about why you picked that one.
- Is this the same way you felt last year? Tell me more about that?

4. What else would you like to tell me about yourself or your thoughts on this year in fifth grade so far?

Final Interview Questions

1. What thoughts and feelings do you have about the last few months of school?

Possible follow-up questions:

- Any favorite things you want to mention?
- What things about school have you shared at home? Why did you share those things?
- Anything you would like your teacher to know so she can plan for the next few months with your ideas in mind?
- Are there any changes you would like to see that I can share with your teacher?

2. Name two people in this school building who you think know you best. How did they get to know you so well?

3. How did you feel each morning when you thought about coming to school?

4. Would you point to which phrase on this scale most closely matches how challenging or boring you thought school was most of the time:

Boring or too easy----OK, mostly easy-----Just right, a little difficult at times-----Really challenging

Possible follow-up prompt:

- Tell me a little about why you picked that one.

5. What else would you like to tell me about yourself or your thoughts on this year in fifth grade so far?