FALLING BACK INTO TEACHING:
A TRIPTYCH OF TEACHERS' MOTIVATIONS, DECISIONS AND CONSEQUENCES

by

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for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
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You can always fall back into teaching. This thesis explores the meaning of this statement as it pertains to teachers’ motivations related to their careers, the decisions they make in both their daily work and their professional goals, and the consequences of those decisions. I investigate why teachers choose to teach. What are the reasons that lead teachers to ‘fall back’ into teaching? Upon beginning their career, what do these teachers experience during their daily work in the classroom? How do they negotiate how they feel with what they do?

Falling back into teaching is an arts-informed thesis. I am an artist and a researcher who communicates in text and images. I combine autobiographical writing and the language of art, the elements of design, to explain my academic and artistic journey. The thesis employs the metaphor of a triptych, a three-paneled painting that has been and continues to be used specifically by visual artists. The left panel encompasses the introduction: a definition of ‘fallback’, an explanation of arts-informed inquiry as a method for researching
fallback, and a first meeting with my parents and me who inform the thesis. The middle panel follows my research process in understanding 'fallback' using the elements of design: line, shape, space, colour, value and texture. The final panel provides a reflection on the process and a response to those who have read and relate to 'fallback'.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I thank my thesis committee. My supervisor, Mary Kooy, has been with me on this journey the whole time. Thank you for your unwavering commitment to me and my writing. I am forever grateful for your constant support. Ardra Cole helped me find my artistic voice and rekindle my love for writing this dissertation. Thank you for helping me in my darkest hour, always showing me the light at the end of the tunnel. Clare Kosnik found the time to read and advise in the friendliest way. Thank you for your time and effort to help me see this through. My external examiner, Fiona Blaikie, encouraged me to see my work through different eyes. Thank you for your illustrative conversations and notes.

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I am an artist.
I visualize.
I connect what I know to images.
Pictures inform my understanding of the world around me.
It is natural for me to think in images and use metaphors to define what I mean.
By "imagining in this way, one small word or phrase immediately evokes an image that explains what pages and pages of text could not"
(Bautista, 2005, p. 9).

I have drawn all my life.
I have a picture that I drew when I was 18 months.
I remember all of my notebooks having doodles in the margins.
I drew pictures for my friends for their projects.
I won the visual art award several times throughout high school.
I designed bulletin boards for my mother's elementary classrooms.
I wanted to be an artist and pursued a B.F.A. in order to become a graphic designer.
And I became a visual art secondary teacher.
The teacher within is the voice of conscience who says, 'this fits and this doesn't', 'this gives me life and this makes me wish I were dead' (Palmer, 2000, p. 30).
Before the pencil touches the page, an artist must think. What am I going to do? What do I intend this to look like when I am done? What do I need to know before making the first mark? Contemplating the content or idea, the use of the tools of art known as the elements of design and a medium of choice, whether it is paint, clay or computer, the artist must make some thoughtful decisions before beginning the process of making art.

To be an artist means to look, feel and think constantly as one engages with the continuous deluge of visual stimuli. An artist takes notice of objects or events that sparked her interest and tries to pinpoint what makes them extraordinary such as colours, patterns, or emotions they elicit. Afterwards, she translates her visions into something meaningful and connected to her; she gives the original object an abstract identity before rendering it into its artistic form (Doyle, 2009; Madeja, 1997). The need to decipher the complexity of feelings, ideas, and knowledge into a visual interpretation with which others can engage is the beginning of the artistic process.

I am an artist and a researcher. With every artwork I have made, I begin with the same process of deliberation and wonder before making the first dot. I realize that I have a different way of processing the information I want to communicate to people because I visualize; I see everything as an image. Even as I embark on this thesis, I do not hear words in my head or write things down as I read. I see the structure of the dissertation as blocks of blank areas that must be filled with chosen lines, shapes, colours and textures, and then fit together purposefully like pieces of a puzzle.

In this thesis, I tell the stories of my parents and me as teachers who 'fell back' into teaching. We each wanted to be something else: a doctor, a businessman, and an artist. However, we made the choice to abandon our original professional ideals and become teachers. In order to discover an explanation for our decisions, my parents and I explore our life histories, especially as they pertain to our education and career journeys. I cannot present the stories in a chronological life history; I envision the stories as the pieces of a puzzle that must be placed in the right spot in order to see the image I want my viewers to
see. This means presenting stories alongside my visual art as they evolve from the artistic process into the creation and form of my thesis.

I follow a template that has been embedded in all my artistic endeavours: the elements of design. I first learned of the elements during art classes in elementary school. They became increasingly important to my art studies in secondary school. When I enrolled in Graphic Design at York University, the elements (and principles) of design were the curriculum; they defined everything I created. And, as a visual art secondary school teacher, I created and implemented a program that communicated the elements of design, similar to what I had learned as a secondary school art student.

The elements of design are seven characteristics one uses to describe art or that one understands well in order to make art. They are line, shape, space, colour, value, texture and form. They are defined as follows:

Line is the path of a moving point.
Shape is an area enclosed by line.
Space refers to distances or areas around, between or within components of a piece.
Colour is seen by the way light reflects off a surface.
Value is the lightness or darkness of colour.
Texture is the actual feel or simulated feel of a surface.
Form is the three-dimensional shape or gives the illusion of three-dimensionality.

I need to use this language to remember how to make art. Even though I may not include all of the elements, I feel comforted by the sense of order in which certain elements are used before others. For example, a line is made before creating a shape, or a colour must be chosen before deciding on the value, or lightness or darkness, of it. Many analogies run through my head when trying to envision making a visual artwork such as peeling back an onion or layering pastry on a mille feuille dessert or making coloured prints on a press.

For me, doing arts-informed research is similar to making art. Instead of working in a chronological or linear manner typical of traditional research methods, my research
process can follow the artistic process, a layering of form and content, overlapping each other, making room to revisit and rework when moments of epiphanies occurred.

I use all six elements of design as both an organizational tool for the inquiry and a metaphor for the building blocks of culminating life histories. I exclude form because it relates directly to three-dimensional art, i.e. sculpture, which I do not employ in this inquiry. The first chapter of the middle section, the element line, shows the beginnings of our stories and of the research, conveying the simplest, yet most important element of the artwork. And, like an artist assembling an artwork as she makes decisions on how to use the next element, I construct an arts-informed inquiry that connects the stories of my parents to literature about teachers' motivations to my final artwork, a visual triptych.

The triptych format is an exhibit of three artworks, hinged together to form one large display. Each panel can be viewed and interpreted as a singular work. As a triptych, the three pieces communicate a different message, and provide a different learning experience. I use the triptych in many forms: as the structure of this thesis, as metaphors for my family and for teacher identity, as a way to present stories, and as an artistic form used in conjunction with the written work.

I learned about triptych in art class during secondary school. The three-paneled painting was a form used in all genres, most often in the Renaissance period. The number three was central to several applications in the Renaissance art movement (Janson, 1980). Leonardo da Vinci invented three-point perspective, a technical drawing skill that creates the illusion of three-dimensional space on a two-dimensional surface. Perspective utilizes three types of space in successfully illustrating three-dimensional effects: foreground, middle ground and background. Michelangelo organized his paintings based on a triangle, replicating the holy trinity as part of his dedication to religious subject matter.

A lesser known Renaissance painter, Bosch is most famous for his triptych “The Garden of Earthly Delights” (1503). This religious visualization is painted on three extremely large panels, representing the three realms of existence: earth, heaven and hell. He focused primarily on humanity on earth and the images of afterlife. Believing that humans made decisions dependent on the conflict between their desires and their morality, he illustrated the consequences of these decisions in vividly detailed imagery. God’s kingdom
and the devil's home were painted on separate panels, held together by a central piece displaying human reality on earth. Each panel is a single artwork, but Bosch intended the audience to view the three panels as one piece. Viewers could interpret his message differently depending on whether they viewed the panels individually or as a collective.

The following triptych illustrates a visual map to the different parts of my work: the two bookends, an introduction and a response, and the central piece that holds the significant content of my work. Although each can be read separately, I intend for my readers/viewers to absorb all three sections together. Each bookend complements the central section and work together; each piece interrelates to the others.

The left adjoining piece explains the beginnings of the artistic process: the intent, the perception, the explanation of medium, content, and form. The central piece which holds most of the picture shows the process unfolding. I use the elements of design, line, shape, space, colour, value and texture, as chapter headings and as metaphorical layerings of the thesis, and create my work of art. As the work unfolds, I make aesthetic decisions based on changing perceptions, and a balance of reasoned judgment and my intuition. The right flanking piece provides a reflection on the process, followed by an epilogue in which I review the issue of 'fallback' and identify the challenges 'fallback' teachers face.
BEGINNING THE ARTISTIC PROCESS:

'FALLBACK'
What does it mean to 'fall back' into teaching?
How does 'fallback' relate to teacher motivation and job satisfaction?

'FALLBACK' AND ARTS-INFORMED INQUIRY
What is arts-informed inquiry?
How do I use arts-informed research to explore 'falling back' into teaching?

'FALLBACK', MY PARENTS AND ME
Who are the participants?
How do they tell us more about 'fallback'?

CREATION

LINE is the path of a moving point. In Line, the research process begins with an illustration that inspires the creative making of a personal "pathway". The 'pathways' deconstruct the autobiographies and portraits, the initial step in creating my arts-informed inquiry. Who are the teachers?

SHAPE is an area enclosed by line. In Shape, I begin to clarify the dots or events into forms or stories, detailed through different shapes. My parents and I are shown through snapshots (the stories within represent a small event encapsulated in a specific time and place, initiated from a point on the "pathways"), spotlights (cropped images taken from developing portraits) and stories (the first of many tales shown here, placed strategically as the inquiry grows). Why did we become teachers?

SPACE is the area around, between or within objects. Positive space is an area containing the principle subject matter in a composition. Negative space is the absence of shape or the space not occupied by subject matter, but still used as part of the overall design. What events affected our professional decisions? What events have we overlooked?

COLOUR is seen by the way light reflects off an object. Colour theory dictates certain colours produce a corresponding physiological and emotional response. The Teacher I Fear, the Teacher I Am, the Teacher I Hope To Become is a metaphor through which I examine teacher identity viewing experience through these three lenses. What defines us as teachers?

VALUE is the lightness or darkness of a colour. The Teacher I Fear is dark. The Teacher I Hope To Become is light. The Teacher I Am floats between the two. What consequences did we experience during our teaching?

TEXTURE is the actual or simulated feel of a surface. Texture is the element that adds realism to artwork and concludes the thesis.

REFLECTION ON THE PROCESS:

MAKING JUDGMENTS
Did I discover through the examination and aesthetic exploration of my parents' and my life histories an answer about our motivations for choosing and staying in teaching?
Did we actually 'fall back' into teaching?
The concept of ‘fallback’ begins here with a story. This particular story relays my first encounter with the term ‘fallback’. As with many of the autobiographical excerpts found in this thesis, this story is meant to read like a conversation. It includes all the nuances and informalities that people use when they talk to each other. Here, I invite the reader to participate in a discussion with me, the first of many the reader will have with my parents and me about why we teach.

I wanted to be a graphic designer. When I told my parents that I wanted to apply to universities for a Bachelor of Fine Arts, they were not surprised. They knew how much I liked to draw. However, Dad was worried.

“What are you going to do? Paint under the bridge by the Ottawa River? Go to York University and take the concurrent program with your B.F.A as back-up. You can always fall back on teaching,” he said.

I wasn't happy with this advice. I wanted to be an artist. In high school, during my art classes, I dreamed of working downtown, in a fancy office, drawing logos, designing advertisements and seeing them in magazines. I imagined living in a two-storey loft decorated with my abstract artwork hanging on exposed beams. I spent most of my school efforts on my Grade 13 art course, knowing that what I made in that class would be judged at my university interviews.

I didn't want to be a school teacher. I've always known the world of teaching. My mum took me to her school to do her bulletin boards the week before school started. I brought coffee and donuts to my dad at his high school when I knew he was having a bad day. I would walk through their school hallways, into their staffrooms, and say hello to all their co-workers. The environment of teaching was already so familiar to me. And I wanted a different, more glamorous life.

Dad insisted on stability. He pointed out that all of my part-time teaching jobs paid for the things I wanted; teaching piano, tennis, skiing and refereeing soccer would continue to pay for my university degree and for my future. If I decided to teach for a living, teaching would take care of me.
I continued to dream of the university experience, going away to school and living on my own, but making the dream a reality was problematic. My parents couldn’t comfortably afford it. Mum, the straight shooter as always, said that it was not feasible. She wanted me to do what makes me happy but she knew I could study art and commute. She also thought that I should go to York, borrow their car and pay my own tuition with my savings.

I was upset knowing that the dream of academic residence was slipping away. I became quiet, feeling apathetic about the decision I had to make. Eventually Dad, the emotional one, could not handle my silence. One night, he blew up at me, saying I was lucky to go to university and have a car to borrow, a luxury that he didn't have until much later in his life. And he stormed off. I was quiet once again but for different reasons. I felt ashamed of what may have been greed on my part. On the other hand, my life was at a crossroads; I didn’t want to miss out on my dream.

Later, he wrote me a note saying that if I wanted to go away to school, I could. Accompanying the note was $5000. I told Mum about the note. She was upset at Dad for writing the cheque because they didn’t really have $5000 to give. But she said it was my decision because it was now my cheque.

I felt horrible. Fortunate to have the grades to get into three universities and lucky to be able to borrow a car and have my own money to attend, I felt guilty for treating these privileges lightly, especially having willing parents who gave money they didn’t have for my happiness.

After reflecting on the situation, I visited Dad at his classroom. He was teaching accounting to grade eleven students and was in a sad mood, probably because of the tension that still hung in our house. When he saw me walk in, he was surprised, his face brightening, and I suddenly realized that I hadn’t been to his school for a long time. I walked up to him and said that I didn’t want the money and I would go to York, which had a very good fine arts program. He said he felt bad and wanted me to do what I thought was right. We hugged.

Of course, the students were bewildered, having never seen me before. He introduced me to the class. And then he said, ‘We are going to do a new problem. Get out your pencils!’ He proceeded to discuss our problem of how much money does it take to go away versus commute to university. He explained the $5000 gift versus the use of a car. As
a class, we discussed the pros and cons of the situation. We had great fun and the students concluded that the monetary value of a car over 4 or 5 years was more than a $5000 gift. So, a group of young accountants solved our family crisis. I was going to York University for Fine Arts.

York students were able to begin the Concurrent Education program in the second year. Although I was enjoying my program, I reluctantly took Dad's advice and applied. I was confident that my first year marks and wealth of teaching experience would be more than sufficient and I thought it might be somewhat prestigious to have two degrees instead of one.

I was not accepted.

As I reread the rejection letter in shock, I thought to myself, 'How could this be? Did they miss something? How could they not see all the teaching experience I had accumulated while working at Malvern or Lakeridge or with Carswell Studios?' Perhaps, my high school self might have felt relieved and pursued the original dream, but I was so angered that someone thought I couldn't do this, the one thing that I had been doing all my life, for my parents, in my part-time work. I was not about to let this go.

Throughout my second year, I kept up my teaching jobs, I acquired references and recommendation letters, and I acquainted myself with the faculty to make sure I had everything I could to ensure a spot in the teaching program. Whether it was anger, spite, or Dad, my motivation and persistence was rewarded. I entered the Concurrent Education program in my third year (Lara, autobiography, June 2003).

The importance of family influence in the decision to teach was reflected in a remembered conversation with a father in which the candidate had articulated the option of 'fall(ing) back to being a teacher'. The seriousness of the father's response left an enduring impact after his admonishment 'not to talk that way about teaching because there were already too many individuals who entered the profession with that frame of mind and they were the worst influence on students' (Duemer et al., 2002, p. 3).
fall·back,  [fawlˈbak]

-noun
1. something or someone to turn or return to, esp. for help or as an alternative: His teaching experience would be a fallback if the business failed.

-adjective
2. of or designating something kept in reserve or as an alternative: The negotiators agreed on a fallback position.

[Origin: 1750–60, Americanism, n., adj. use of v. phrase fall back]

(http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/fallback)
My father once told me, "You can always fall back on teaching." When researching my life history, I realized that this statement had a huge impact on my professional journey as a teacher. I recognized I was unhappy in teaching because I decided to 'fall back' into it. I did not become a teacher because I was 'called' to it, or because I felt 'responsible to give back' to society. I did it for others reasons: my father and my mother are teachers, I knew what it meant to teach, I had taught sports and piano part-time, my father wanted me to be one, and to teach meant to be safe and secure. In this thesis, I question whether these types of motivations can support and nourish teachers' dedication to lifelong learning and teaching. I want to know if 'falling back' into teaching results in disillusionment. And if so, what are the consequences of working only for the 'perks'?

In this study, I investigate how others interpret the meaning of 'fallback' as it relates to teaching. Rather than begin my search for information by looking for texts about the topic, I tapped into my artistic sensibilities and imagined a blank page. What will this page look like? What do I want to show? An image of random newspaper clippings spread on a white sheet appeared in my mind. I could see a variety of small clips of texts, in various sizes and fonts, united by the repetition of the phrase 'fallback'. It reminded me of a ransom note, a cautionary letter that, at first seems to be an arbitrary collection of different letters and words, but on second glance, transforms into a strong statement.

I used an internet search engine to randomly find documents that included the words 'fall back' and studied several resulting articles. Consciously rechecking my original visual thought, I cut and pasted sentence fragments onto a blank document file, redesigned fonts and sizes, printed and cut or ripped them into strips, and randomly placed the pieces onto a blank page to create my art.

After completing it, I reflected on my work and made some surprising discoveries about the concept of 'fallback'. There was no shortage of excerpts from which I could choose. The diversity of sources of the excerpts was far reaching. Excerpts came from all professional walks of life ranging from sports to agriculture to art. These diverse sources unanimously referred to teaching as the 'fallback' profession. Most shocking of all was observing the phrase "You can always fall back into teaching"; this statement I heard was also repeated to others, who in turn, publicized it.
This artwork illustrates how teaching can be considered a ‘fallback’ profession; when the dream career is unattainable, one can always ‘fall back’ into teaching. Why? Is it easy to do? Is it a secure and stable work environment? Is it safe? Is it familiar, like the schools attended as a student? These assumptions emerge in the following visual interpretation and perhaps some of the external factors teachers consider when reflecting on their motivations to teach.
"I reached a time in college when I didn't know what I wanted to do," she said. "At that time, women's careers were essentially nursing, secretarial and teaching. My mother advised me to get my teacher's certificate. She said, 'You can always fall back on teaching.'

"Well, I failed at actually doing this stuff, so I might as well get a teaching job."

I would love to work for a huge enterprise as the head network administrator, but I do not want to cross the line of being *over* qualified. That being said, I would like to fall back on teaching at a university during retirement.

"Once you get in, they can never kick you out."

There are individuals who experienced less success in their chosen field of endeavor than they expected and decided to 'fall back' on teaching as a contingency plan.

**If your NFL career is cut short by injury, you can always fall back on teaching calculus.**

"In case the job you want doesn't work out..." The unpretentious self-made millionaire and long-time poultry industry leader graduated in 1952, with a degree in agriculture education. "I chose ag education because I knew I could do anything with that. I could have done an ag business degree, but I wanted to know I could always fall back on teaching if I ever had to," McElrath says. That was never necessary.

"Well, there's pension, seniority, summers off, and you're home by 4.00pm"

"What are you going to do with a B.A.?"

Perhaps the majority of students do not look up to teachers. The community in general sees teaching as a necessary profession, and not much else. Female students who wished to go to NIDA, but would 'fall back' on teaching if all else failed.

"You can't survive painting pictures under the bridge of the Ottawa river."
Teacher candidates are accepted into a Bachelor of Education program because they passed a test, the benchmarks that determine their potential to become "good" teachers. Their acceptance is measured by several factors: academic grades, prior teaching experiences, their "profile" or personal essay describing their reasons for choosing teaching as a profession, and, in some cases, interviews. They are part of a select group; the competition to earn a spot in an Ontario teachers' college has intensified throughout the last decade due to a high volume of applicants (Professionally Speaking, Ontario College of Teachers, March 2006, para. 2).

Before beginning their coursework, teacher candidates are placed into one of three divisions: primary/junior (Junior Kindergarten to Grade Six), junior/intermediate (Grade Four to Grade Ten) or intermediate/senior (Grade Seven to Grade Twelve), normally by their own choice and by their qualifications. For example, a number of subject-specific courses are pre-requisite to enroll in the intermediate/senior panel. As Ontario pre-service candidates, they participate in similar programs that ready them for their initial teaching experiences, similar because of standardized and regulated coursework and an accepted practice of apprenticeship in teacher education.

Although Ontario faculties of education have different departments and types of programs, all teacher candidates learn through a balance of coursework, classroom observation and teaching practice. For example, the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education offers a one-year consecutive program that requires their students to take education courses, and observe and teach in a classroom for specific blocks of time (Hennessy, 1996). York University offers a concurrent program over three years in which students complete bachelors' degrees in both their field and in education. During my experience when enrolled in York University's program, I had the opportunity to observe and teach in all three divisions in three different schools before earning my certification as an intermediate/senior teacher.

After teachers' college, and surviving the first year in the classroom, teachers begin to accumulate stories of experience. Teachers connect their professional accounts to other teachers' stories by a collective understanding of what is mean to be a teacher (Burgess &
Carter, 1996). Upon my initiation into teachers’ college, I began constructing my narrative that defines me as a teacher, a story that contains certain features to which any educator can relate. For example, teachers know the meaning of these words in the context of teaching: bells, attendance, announcements, principal, curriculum, report cards to name a few.

Teachers also develop a unique perception of what it means for them to teach, commonly stemming from their initial motivation for entering the profession. I began teaching for reasons other than an internal desire to serve society. And, as my daily teaching turned into a struggle, I increasingly surrounded myself with stories that elaborated on the persistent and disturbing thoughts of my unhappiness.


Teachers who approached their work with a rational set of beliefs and expectations didn’t persist (in teaching) as those who had non-rational beliefs, who stopped believing in a higher purpose. Those who had a pedagogic belief system were able to accommodate the frustrations and failures. Those who were pragmatic or had realistic reasons did not draw upon personal beliefs or an explanatory story that would insulate them from their daily work (Brown, 1995, p. 5).

Brown’s notion of a philosophy or belief system can be analogous to teachers’ intrinsic motivations to teach; I interpret it as a ‘calling’ or ‘need to give back to society’. Stiegelbauer and Hunt (1996) studied their teacher candidates’ motivations for choosing their professional path and discovered that a large contingent of them wanted to ‘make a difference’, citing that “(teacher candidates) emphasized a sense of caring and recognition of their responsibility for laying the foundation for learning in later years” (p. 89). As some teachers learn to transform their understanding of curriculum, children and learning into classroom activities and routines, it is their genuine, yet intangible desire to teach that may inspire them to continue. As they progress through their career, these teachers who are emotionally, morally and socially bound to their profession may be more likely to remain committed until retirement.
There are teachers who continue to teach and teachers who leave. Are there teachers who continue to teach but do not share the internal motivations, the indefinable ambition to excel in their responsibilities? In the graphic montage below, I integrated survey results from the Ontario College of Teachers (Professionally Speaking, Ontario College of Teachers, September 2004) with text to explore this question.
Your future in education

Will you be a teacher in five years’ time?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>definitely</th>
<th>probably</th>
<th>probably not</th>
<th>definitely not</th>
<th>don’t know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What keeps you in teaching? What keeps you from leaving?

ambigious

Why do you want others to teach if they must work harder than before?

What are the perks?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MEAN</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>dnk</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Each year more is expected of me as a teacher.</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel appreciated as a teacher by the students I teach.</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoyed teaching this year as much as I did before.</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would recommend teaching as a career.</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When asked "Will you be a teacher in five years' time?" less than 50% of the surveyed teachers replied yes. What is significant and relevant to my research is the 32% of teachers who weren't sure whether or not they would continue teaching. Why can't they stay or leave? What rationale keeps them from deciding?

56% of teachers believe that more is expected of them in the workplace. Do these statistics mean that other factors of the job are desirable enough to teachers that 32% would recommend teaching as a career despite the growing workload? What factors would attract someone to teaching? And, in the end, are any of these motivations enough without the internal belief of one's 'duty of care' to the students?

I return to Brown's (1995) concept of philosophy of education as the supporting element of success in teaching. I interpret his notion of a rational set of beliefs as encompassing the external reasons for teaching, and this concept helps to answer two questions: what motivates teachers to choose teaching as a secondary option for a career, or to 'fall back' into teaching, and what motivates teachers to remain in teaching if they are unsure of whether to leave?

This inquiry does not investigate teachers who wanted to become teachers. It does not explore teachers with a basic belief system more likely to commit to the "ongoing process of examining and refining their own practice" (Cole & Knowles, 2000, p. 2). This inquiry does not investigate teachers who have left the profession. I seek to understand the reasons why teachers choose this profession as one to 'fall back' on, who enter and remain in teaching because they are motivated by reasons other than the desire to make a difference.

The value of a teacher's own personal growth and satisfaction in the context of teaching students is integral to the success both teacher and student will experience. "It is what teachers think, believe and do at that level of classroom that ultimately shapes the kind of learning that young people get" (Hargreaves & Fullan, 1992, p. 8). When teachers begin to experience detachment from their jobs, the sense of disillusionment affects the classroom environment, robbing teachers and students of opportunities to make connections with themselves, their worlds and each other. As each day passes, teachers in this predicament may begin to suffer through their daily work.
The ways (teachers) teach are grounded in their background, their biographies, in the kinds of teachers they have become. Their careers, hopes, dreams and opportunities, aspirations or frustrations, are all important for teachers’ commitment, enthusiasm and morale (Hargreaves & Fullan, 1992, p. 8).
Arts-informed research pushes the boundaries past what is acceptable to what is possible in research representation. By exploring the artistic process and using artistic forms, I try to "communicate the human experience in a way that is true to itself" (Cole & Knowles, 2008, p. 58). I require such an alternative method to explore the complexity and sensitivity that surrounds the issues related to 'fallback'.

When writing my Master of Arts thesis, "The Yearbook Program: Observation and Analysis of Secondary School Yearbook Teachers and the Implementation of Their Curriculum" (Boudignon, 2001), I missed what could have been a more powerful and engaging experience for me and my readers. The intimate stories of yearbook teachers, including my own, motivated my research, and yet, I disregarded them as a valid part of the data and analysis. I failed to disclose the unique quality of my participants' experiences. No one had researched the life of a yearbook teacher, except yearbook teachers who wrote about themselves. Their articles were styled like entries in a diary or letters to a friend. How they created their curriculum was directly affected by the details of their personal lives such as teaching part-time due to illness or working night school three times a week while taking care of four children. In retrospect, I realize that I neglected to explore the lives of the participants and reflect on my own story as a yearbook teacher in order to represent my impression of acceptable research.

I research the group of teachers who entered teaching in spite of their hearts being elsewhere. These teachers may not have heard the statement "You can always fall back into teaching" before, and yet it perhaps has defined their professional self all along. I realize the possibility of uncovering uncomfortable, perhaps disturbing insights when looking at myself as a 'fallback' teacher. Arts-informed processes are ambiguous in nature and invite more questions and opportunities to delve deeper into the rationale of 'fallback'. Arts-informed research welcomes a new awareness of ourselves as teachers (Barone & Eisner, 1997).

In my arts-informed thesis, I rekindle my love for art and embrace new aesthetic forms such as breaking up the chronological narratives of my parents and me to show my research. "Telling, living, retelling and reliving stories" (Connelly & Clandinin, 2000, p. 128)
changes to “forming, informing, reforming and transforming meaning of self” (Halen-Faber, 2004, p. 10).

Arts-informed research is a mode and form of qualitative research in the social sciences that is influenced by but not based in the arts broadly conceived. The central purposes of arts-informed research are to enhance understanding of the human condition through alternative processes and representational forms of inquiry and to reach multiple audiences by making scholarship more accessible (Cole & Knowles, 2008, p. 59).

Arts-informed research attempts to bring together what traditionally is separated: knowledge and experience, community and the academy, head and heart. It is rooted strongly in the epistemology that honours the construction of knowledge and meaning through experience (Dewey, 1938) and emphasizes the need to discover alternative forms with which to express different kinds of meaning (Eisner, 1991). When the researcher’s ability to comprehend and conceptualize her ideas exceeds the language available to express those ideas, she needs different modes of representation in order to extract meanings from experiences that cannot be represented by the written word alone.

For me, it makes sense to be an arts-informed researcher. My ways of knowing are built upon both my experiences with visual art, and the familial scripts (Cole & Knowles, 2008) recounted every night at the kitchen table. I choose these as aesthetic forms to communicate my research. I tell stories to share special and unique information about my parents and me that is “expressive, 'thickly' descriptive of what may be called the 'dailiness' of life, and is highly accessible to readers who can easily make meaning from the text” (Barone & Eisner, 1997, p. 77). I draw pictures and create collages to piece together fragments of meaning (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). I make maps to represent where I have come from and what I have learned. I know that the conventional language of academic research falls short when explaining myself. In order to craft my life, I must engage in the creation of art ((Neilsen, Cole & Knowles, 2001).

There was a time when I felt disconnected from my research; I felt I had to confine my writing (and withdraw my art) in order to feel accepted. I realized I could not continue. The integrity of the methodology, defined by the close relationship between the form and text, justifies why I must use visual art and stories as the chosen way to represent my research. The artistic process, specifically using the elements of design,
informs the research because it is my metaphor for the inquiry process, my template for situating the research, and my explanation on how I make art. And it is the only way for me to do research, for the readers to truly know who I am and what I want to say.

Cole and Knowles (2008) state that the “form is the main defining element of arts-informed inquiry” (p. 62). The binding relationship between inquiry and art form determines how the researcher will reach her goals in both engaging her audience and advancing knowledge. My metaphor of the elements of design to create visual art is directly related to the method of arts-informed research; experiencing a process of creating, learning, questioning and knowing as both the art form and the research unfold together. What form will it take? What questions will be answered? The researcher can find the art form that fits the research through studying her data, her artistic identity, and her intended audience.

I integrate my ability to draw and manipulate images in my research because it is how I incorporate what I learn from the world around me. I loved to draw from a young age. As I grew and matured, visual art became more than a favourite pastime; it became part of my identity. I chose a professional pathway that integrated my love of drawing, and, despite the detours, visual art is still an integral part of my life. Aesthetic ways of knowing transcend the limits of language and free me to express my experience outside of conventional thesis borders (Polyani, 1983).

Arts-informed research must be accessible to audiences other than the academy, and the chosen forms must engage the audience (Cole & Knowles, 2008). I felt disconnected to my own research when it was in a form I could not understand and I realize that others who want to read my research must find it approachable and relevant. My audience must be able to associate their own professional lives to my provocative, dynamic, and intriguing art forms. Like Greene (1995), I embrace "the ways in which art can release the imagination to open new perspectives...(and) offer new lenses through which to look out at and interpret educative acts" (p. 18).

My creative inquiry process, reflected in my researcher’s intuition, shows how I respond to the flow of research and artistic experiences that occur, how connected I am to my artistic strengths and sensitivities, and how I react to the myriad of possibilities for how my work will proceed. The arts-informed researcher can feel like she is journeying into
a fog until she experiences the 'eureka' moment of comprehension (Diamond & Mullen, 1999). For example, I just 'knew' that the stories heard at the kitchen table would be part of the data. Polanyi claims "we know more than we can say" (1958, p. 4); my instincts urged me to explore these conversations because they seemed congruent with what I wanted to represent in my research.

Arts-informed inquiry has strong reflexive elements that identify the presence of the researcher (Cole & Knowles, 2008). I postulate that my research intimates who I am. Autobiography is one of my chosen art forms because it is a vehicle of communication to which I can connect. It motivates me to do research. I use this aesthetic form to create what I consider an atmosphere of informality as I befriend my readers into listening to the personal stories that, for me, became another comfortable way of learning and understanding the professional lives of teachers. Upon beginning my inquiry, I realized the 'academy of the kitchen table' (Neilson as cited in Coles & Knowles, 2008, pg. 56), the dinnertime conversations between me and my parents were not simple stories that we shared, but the data for my research.

Writing (and engaging in) personal stories leads to an exploration of their influence on professional decisions as my parents and I struggle to voice the personal truths of our experience (Brown & Gilligan, 1992). For example, the reasons my father became bitter near the end of his career may be embedded in earlier circumstances of his life, hidden in his stories. Stories may explain to me why I am both similar and different from him in both professional and personal terms. By listening closely to our autobiographical voices, my parents and I learn what connects (or does not connect) our personal and professional dispositions. This is of substantial concern when we examining why we teach (Goodson, 1992).

Arts-informed research, like other research methods, contributes to educational theory and/or practice. It attempts to provide insight into these professionals who have 'fallen back' into teaching, and imagine new ways of knowing themselves as teachers. The concept of 'fall back' as a basis for inquiry is original. Upon reading about teacher motivation, and finding the words, "he could fall back into teaching" pulled from a qualitative interview in a journal, I experienced a serendipitous moment of realization and knew I had heard them before, later discovering my father had said them during family conversations.
about teaching and career choices. I researched ‘fallback’ to begin the discussion of professional motivation and consequences for choosing teaching as a ‘fallback’ career.

Estrangement from who we are (means) endlessly seeking a way out. Shall I have the spirits resolve me of all ambiguity? (Maitland, 2005, p. 49).
'FALL-BACK, MY PARENTS AND ME

For teacher families, the accepted practice of teacher apprenticeship happens well before going to teachers' college. Teachers with teacher-parents participate in conversations that revolve around teaching as their daily work. They learn what teachers do through the everyday observation and dialoguing with their parents about their careers. "The strength of parental role models was illustrated by reflections on listening to teacher-parents 'rehash' the day's events" (Duemer et al., 2002, p.2). The discussions that begin with "How was your day, honey?" subtly, perhaps subconsciously communicated the teaching experience, and, through later reflection, do teachers of teacher-parents realize that the dialogue taught them how to teach.

The informal family conversations about teaching may persuade children of teacher-parents to become teachers themselves more than the overt suggestion to follow in their parents' footsteps. Many teachers cite parents as a key factor in choosing their career. (Duemer et al., 2002; Schneider, 1999) I understand this because I have teacher-parents and I have lived a teacher's life through my parents' stories and their lives. I designed my mother's bulletin boards and organized her classroom for the "first day". I visited Dad during his classes and talked to his students. I listened to their daily activities over dinner every night. I know their influence on my professional decisions is paramount to other factors because it informed my professional self first. However, I wanted to be an artist. What did they say to change my mind?

My relationship with my father and mother is an integral part of this inquiry. My parents are teachers. Even though I wanted to be an artist, they convinced me to become a teacher because, as they said, "You can always fall back on teaching". My father was a 'burned-out' teacher who, by the end of his career, valued only the tangible benefits of working as a teacher such as pension, summer vacation, and money. My mother enjoyed teaching at one school for 33 years, despite initially wanting to become a doctor. And I still became a teacher.

I entered the world of teaching believing that it was a profession that would provide security, stability, ongoing financial support and some promising "perks". After four years, however, I could not continue teaching in a visual art secondary school classroom. I knew my
dissatisfaction infected me and my students. I became a mediocre, if not poor, teacher. "We have a special responsibility for self-awareness because teachers are in such a powerful position to influence choices of others" (Ayers, 1993, p. 27). In this inquiry, I expose conflicting feelings about my past teaching experience; I was unhappy and needed to understand why.

I introduce myself and my parents in the following stories and pictures. They were specially chosen because they signify a connection to 'fallback'. My picture was taken during my third year as a visual art high school teacher, the year I left my position. My father left home soon after his photo was taken because of his disillusionment with his family life. His story was recorded when he was near retirement and reflects his job dissatisfaction. His picture and story bookend each other. My mother's picture as a young girl beginning middle school connects to her story of choosing her academic pathway.

In the following stories and pictures, I purposefully employ the triptych. The reader will begin to see the triptych format emerge several times, particularly when reading the autobiographies of my parents and me. I choose myself as the central panel, and my dad and mum as flanking panels, yet I always place my stories first. It is natural for the eye to rest on a centre point such as a perspective point or a person's face before paying more attention to details to the left, right or perimeter of a painting (Janson, 1980). I treat the readers as viewers of art and guide them to read/view the centre point of my work.
Lara
My first teaching position as a visual art secondary school teacher began mid-year because the former teacher suddenly resigned from stress. I felt lucky and excited; there weren't many job openings in 1995, let alone jobs in a specialized area such as visual art. Two days before classes began, my principal handed me a timetable that included computer studies and communication technology, courses I didn't expect to teach. I didn't have an office and had to move from classroom to classroom according to my schedule, forcing me to cart around my resources and personal belongings.

The art classroom had one sink, very few supplies and was claustrophobically small. One wall was lined with deep storage closets, shaving thirty square feet from the already tight space. Large drawing tables left narrow paths for walking. My desk was pushed against the large window on the adjacent wall. I felt restrained because I was constantly worried that I would shift papers or wobble tables as I circulated to see students.

Despite these negative circumstances, I was teaching my area of specialty and very aware that several of my teacher college peers were still supply teaching or unemployed. I spent hours creating interesting projects and constantly jotted ideas for new lessons and teaching strategies in a small black book kept in my briefcase. The other art teacher and I met several times to prepare curriculum together, and we became friends. She gave me gifts such as a chalkholder and a keyring for my many classroom keys, saying that these items signified my initiation into the profession. I felt like a real teacher.

Problems began to occur during my second year of teaching visual art. I became frustrated by the lack of materials, space and accommodation for my art classes. I did not have enough pencils, brushes or rulers. Larger classes in the same small art classroom led to more restraint and less mobility. I began to feel that my art courses were devalued. I wondered if the students felt the same way. How could they take our projects seriously with no tools or room to move? If they did, I didn't blame them. It was ridiculous to ask someone to paint without a brush.

Of all my courses, the Grade Ten Crafts course was the worst. Most of my students were older, workplace-bound male students who needed an arts credit in order to graduate. My first question to myself was "what crafts do I do with 18-year-old boys?" Many of them
handed in work of such poor quality and questioned me when I gave them a low mark. Some didn't hand in anything at all. I felt like I was talking to people who didn't want to listen, who didn't really care. Sometimes, I had to wake students up. Sometimes, I had to argue with them just to get a pencil out. I became more depressed as the course progressed. I didn't want to motivate them, and I resented the school community for creating what I believed was a problem for me.

I remember walking down the overcrowded hallways and being irritated by having to tell students who were old enough to drive, vote, and drink alcohol to "take off your hat and tuck in your shirt!" The constant policing of immature behaviour wore me down. My life was governed by the sound of a bell. I didn't like ending my days without remembering half of what I had said to my students. And I was tired, always tired.

As time gradually passed, my impatience and aggravation grew as I worked through four years of teaching secondary school. Though students and co-workers noted my calm and collected persona, I felt an increasing frustration and anger growing inside like a live pain in my chest. It showed itself through physical duress; I needed massage therapy for the knots in my shoulders and took two weeks sick leave every winter for chronic sinusitis.

During my third year, a semester when I had no planning period, my day consisted of teaching from 8:45am to 2:50pm with a thirty-five minute lunch period. My frustration with the situation degenerated into depression. I woke up every morning sad to face another day. I crossed off days on my calendar, counting how many were left until the summer holidays. My last class of the day, a Grade Ten Drawing class, probably suffered the most because I felt too drained to talk, let alone properly plan their curriculum. At the end of the semester, I decided I needed to take some time off. It was too much of an emotional pain to think of teaching another day in that school.

I wanted to take a leave of absence. I rationalized the leave as a way to complete my Masters degree because I wasn't ready to verbalize how unhappy I was. I was embarrassed to explain why. Everyone suffered through the same daily workload as I did. What made me different? Why did I feel so terrible that I could not return?

As I was packing up my belongings on my last day, I looked at some yearbook photos of me teaching. They made me confident about my choice to leave; I wore a frown in every
single picture. The pictures also made me wonder how I affected other people, especially students, who saw my sad face everyday (Lara, autobiography, June 2003).

Underlying all of my dissatisfactions with being a classroom teacher was the ideological gulf that separated me from many of the school administrators and school trustees with and for whom I worked (Knowles, 1999, p. 133).
Dad
I wish I had developed in other ways. Nate (a co-worker) has his MBA, but he just sits in school like he's furniture. I get upset at him because he does nothing with it, just the bare minimum. If I had my MBA, I wouldn't be teaching. Or I would teach at the university or college level, or something like that. He has what I wanted and never used it effectively. So, I guess I should be happy with what I've done with what I had. I'm still only 75% of my best self, today.

I have developed a personal philosophy - the 4 Ps: Paycheck, Proximity (a short commute to the school), Pension (which has been accumulating), and Professional, therefore I must take the bad with the good, and not look for greener pastures. The 4 Ps have justified my stay at Pope. Now having come to terms with this, oddly enough, I am able to deal with the negative aspects more easily. Developing a method that suits the situation has been part of my professional journey.

In the beginning, I involved myself heavily with students to fulfill some of my emotional needs. I still get involved, on an academic level, but I try to step back and detach myself from them, now. That's how I cope. I don't feel guilty about not being a complete teacher because I protect myself and, perhaps, them, too. They probably need me but I need the distance more. I don't go looking for adventures anymore. It's sad but for the best (Dad, autobiography, June 2003).

There are times when we must work for money instead of meaning, ... but it doesn't release us from continually checking the violence we do towards others and ourselves. Nor does it change the idea of whether integrity is a luxury (Palmer, 2000, p. 20).
Mum
Things began to change during my time in secondary school. I began to worry about how others perceived me. In my third year, I went to a school dance and, in those days, we wore dresses with petticoats. Mine was flouncy. Here I was, a chubby little girl wearing this outfit that did nothing for me. No one asked me to dance. I thought that I was pretty, but in retrospect, I probably wasn't.

I always wanted to be a doctor because I wanted to help people. Doctors were always placed on a pedestal. The title of doctor meant you reached a certain level or attained some prestige. I thought I was smart, but to be a doctor, you had to be really smart. Working class people never became doctors. I never believed that I was smart enough to be one, so I never pursued it.

In high school, there was a careers day where we looked at different jobs. I thought of myself as a math or science person, so I interviewed for technology jobs. Having decided that I wanted to immigrate to Canada, I couldn't do something that required too many years of schooling, but most jobs needed five years of studying. I thought that I would be too old when I got to Canada to start a family. My friends decided on teachers college, which only took three years. I knew that I wanted to be a professional, but not spend too much time in school. So, I enrolled in teachers' college, too (Mum, autobiography, 2003).

To understand teachers, we must know more about their priorities (Goodson, 1992, p. 111).
Upon deciding to invite my parents into my research as co-participants, I made an artistic analogy to the visual concept of triptych. It was fitting to communicate the teacher-family relationship in a triptych format, naturally in visual art form. And I was confident that as my parents and I progressed through an artistic process together, more information about my inquiry would present itself.

In beginning of the research process, my parents and I took all of the information from our own autobiographies and created collage portraits. Each displays many things: significant events, influential people and places, and the identities of the many types of teachers we were, are and will become.

My story became the central panel of the triptych. I reviewed my varied teaching experiences from part-time instruction in piano, tennis, and skiing to my present position as teacher librarian, and included images that represented my teacher college experience and secondary school teaching. My parents' stories were the two flanking panels of the triptych. My father, who left a career as an accountant to teach, recalled his experiences in a teachers college at a northern Ontario university, his three years as a substitute teacher, and his experiences in both elementary and secondary schools. My mother, a Scottish immigrant, remembered her student teacher experiences in Glasgow, her adventurous emigration to Canada and her teaching life of thirty-plus years in three schools.

When making the collages, my parents and I colour-copied photographs and images. We cut each picture and placed it strategically on a clean white page, constantly making decisions about the images, such as whether to keep them, to rearrange them, or to make it permanent and glue them down. At the end of the activity, we looked at our triptych. Each portrait was meant to be an original and individual disclosure of personal experience and a singular work that stands on its own. When placed together, our portraits were supposed to display a more complex examination of our teacher stories. We influence each other; we are tied together by familial circumstances. The purpose of our art was to illustrate the relationships not only of the visual imagery, but of the people within each work.

The following is the resulting triptych of our collages. Each panel is an exact replication of what each person completed the day of the activity. When my dad had finished his part of the triptych, I realized that my work was far from complete. His art did
not look anything like my expectations, and worse, it did not do justice to his stories, or answer my questions. This is not what I envisioned for my work.

As the thesis progresses, these collages transform. During the inquiry process, I extract information and construct understanding about our motivations and experiences in teaching, resulting in redefining our autobiographies and changing our images. I needed to deconstruct the art we had made and transform this information into meaningful research, I needed to reform the layers in a different way to make more meaningful connections to the triptych metaphor, to our reasons for becoming teachers and subsequent decisions we made during our journey, to reveal information related to fallback, to myself as artist.
CENTRAL PANEL: CREATION

Once she has organized her thoughts, prepared her materials and made her rough notes and sketches, the artist is ready to work. She places her tool on her canvas and makes a first mark, then a second, and continues as the artwork evolves. Along the way, the artist may stop, and change her style, her material, or her content in order to progress to the final product.

This panel encompasses the process of my creation. I prepared my information through definitions, stories and images. I am equipped with tools of communication; I use the elements of design, autobiography, visual art and metaphor. I am ready to make the first mark.
the path of a moving point
I wanted to be an artist (Lara, 2003)

I wanted to be a businessman (Dad, 2003)

I wanted to be a doctor (Mum, 2003)
The Stroll

As I walk along
a long walk,

I see the sea    Far    Wide    Blue...    and big too.

As I walk along
a long walk,

I feel the field    Far    Wide    Green...    with a stream.

As I walk along
a long walk    Far    Wide

For as long as I can walk,

longing to walk

a long walk

again.

Lara Boudignon
The preceding illustrations introduce the chapter titled line in several ways. They depict the literal use of line as a visual vehicle for communication. The illustrations introduce the thesis journey visually, using line as a metaphorical pathway. They use my preferred mode of explanation: imagery. It is sometimes easier for me to visualize what I want to say than to state it in words.

In the first illustration, my parents and I provide our opening statements. These sentences begin a dialogue about why we became teachers when we initially wanted to choose another profession. The lines seen after the sentences forge a trail that invites us into the research process.

The second illustration is a drawing intended to explain how I engaged with the pathway-making activity. It also helped me to show my use of line as a metaphor for beginning the autobiographies.

*Exploit the power of the form to inform*

As a family, my parents, my brother and I often shared the events of our day at dinnertime. I remember the tales of my parents' teaching experiences, funny, scandalous and sad stories, but I never really connected what my parents thought about being teachers to myself until I started teachers' college. In starting this research, I realized quickly that my teaching stories were the vehicle to understanding my questions, and knew that these stories linked to those I heard from my parents over the years.

I discovered that my mother was empathetic and patient with her angry and defiant special needs children when other teachers were not. Very distressed, some teachers were desperate to send those students to my mother and were amazed at her ability to remain calm and caring. She liked her job.

My father spoke of resentment, frustration and anger with many students and some teachers who did not understand him or ignored him. When he got angry, his confrontations with students or teachers often made the situation worse, periodically putting him in serious situations. He continued to isolate himself from his school community to the point when he did not tell stories to us anymore because there were no more tales to tell. To him, it became just a way to make money.

After listening to my parents, I realized that those dinnertime anecdotes coupled with new discussions of understanding why we teach would be important to my inquiry. However, these oral stories were scattered and disorganized; they needed to be pinned down in order to be explored. My parents and I needed to sketch out what we wanted to say to each other about our teaching lives.

My parents and I constructed visual interpretations that briefly outlined the important points of our life histories and indirect incidents that we saw as relevant to our teaching journeys. The visual interpretation used the concept of a pathway or river (Diamond & Mullen, 1999). I offered the visualization of being travellers who walked along a river or on a road, stopping at points of interest and taking note of the distinct experiences and events that made impressions during our lives. This exercise was akin to making an outline before writing an essay. For me, it was obvious to illustrate the chronology of our lives' events on the metaphorical pathway through an image of a path; it was analogous to the artistic process, making the first mark to build a story.
We sat at the kitchen table in my parents' house, reminding me of all those dinnertime stories. With tea in hand and cookies on a plate, we took a blank piece of paper, a pencil and began with a line. Each of us drew lines that resembled a pathway, road or river, and penciled in points relating to specific events. Some events were physical, professional or personal benchmarks, such as schools attended, workplace dates, marriage dates, etc. Or they were specific events that inspired certain feelings or change in our lives.

After drawing and redrawing our lines, Mum asked,

"So, what should I write first?"

I stopped and thought about how to answer. Dad was already drawing and writing.

Dad worked intently and at a frenzied pace as he wrote and drew. He gave particular attention to his points of interest as he constructed a complicated series of sub-points, drew arrows and listed numbers to connect events and people, and attached a legend that provided the viewers with a way to view and read his personal map. As seen below, Dad's pathway grew into a larger geography of streams and ponds, water running everywhere, shooting off in several directions.

After asking her question, Mum tentatively began with a table of dates and accompanying events, quickly abandoning her drawing. She stopped writing after five dates and asked me to draw for her a pathway as she relayed her memories orally. I realized that she would rather tell me her stories than write them down. I drew her pathway and she traced the path and wrote her points on it, looking over what we had made together.

While talking, Mum and I brainstormed questions that would incite memories. When did you decide to be a teacher? Who helped you? Describe your teachers' college experience, your practicum, and your first job. Even though I used these questions informally to help me complete my pathway, I thought later that these were good "starter" questions for beginning the process of writing a teacher autobiography.

I relished drawing the path more than recalling and writing the memories that accompanied it. I drew my path, erased and drew it again to accentuate curves and turns. When I wrote my events, I gave more significance to their location on the pathway, the spaces between them, and the overall "look" of the page.
After an hour or so, between talking, writing and eating, we looked at the pathways together on the kitchen table. Dad wanted to guide us through his drawing, and explain how each point connected to another. I knew we would settle for a long discussion. When he was done, my mum was amazed at my dad’s intricate creation, but not surprised. “Your father talks a lot. Of course, he would write a lot, too.”

As always, she complimented my artistic ability, noting that she wished she had my talent. I did not think mine was so artistic at all. It did not work out to be what I thought it would be. But this did not upset me; I knew from my other artistic experiences to expect the unexpected, that the process more often takes a different path from the original intent.

The following images are the pathway drawings that we created during this session. The following stories are small biographies that I composed as an accompaniment to the pathways. My parents’ bios are written in the third person; I listened to them while they explained their pathways and I translated what they said and drew into an aesthetic account that combines both the images and the conversations that happened during their creation.

This initial step in creating autobiographies and collages made our life histories easier to access because we compiled influential memories in both written and visual forms that conveyed the details and broad chronology of our journeys. We used the points on our pathways to tell stories and, from these anecdotes, developed questions that inspired different details and forgotten stories. This collection of narratives became the basis for exploring the question, “Why did we become teachers?”

*We can visualize and draw our teaching and researching life as a winding river *(that) can be run through the phases of its development from the source.*

*We can scrutinize how we use words, images and interpretations in deciding and naming which moments and aspects of self are important to us*  
(Diamond & Mullen, 1999, p. 80-81).
Lara’s pathway drawing, 2004
Teaching has been an underlying thread throughout my life. At fourteen, I began teaching piano lessons to a few children on our street, a small part-time job that turned into a business. I created lessons from music books and my own piano experiences. Dad encouraged me to become certified in different sports such as skiing, snowboarding, tennis and soccer, so that I could teach them too. I used what I learned from these courses to give ski and snowboard instruction at different ski resorts, and give tennis lessons. Although I briefly worked at a few retail shops, my formative years were dominated by experiences of teaching.

Yet, I did not want to be a school teacher. I wanted to be a graphic designer who worked downtown in a fancy office, drawing logos and seeing them in magazines. I've always known the world of teaching and wanted a different, more glamorous life. Nevertheless, my father's often repeated sentiment, "You can always fall back on teaching", compelled me to achieve both a fine arts and education degree, leaving two career options open. Although I still wanted to draw for a living, I was also tempted by the safe and stable prospects of a teaching career.

I applied to a concurrent education program, thinking I could easily achieve both. I was shocked when my application was not accepted, and applied a second time to prove to the university that they made a mistake, that I was more qualified than other applicants and had the ability to teach. With all the experience I gained to that point, it surprised me that they didn't see that.

Finally, I was accepted and began in my third university year as an intermediate/senior education student. During this year, my interest in graphic design diminished. The work became tedious and boring, and my art peers complained about the lack of jobs and the paltry starting salaries. By my fifth year, I chose courses to learn more about my secondary teaching areas of music and sociology.

My first position was teaching in a large secondary school. The principal hired me as a visual art teacher, but I ended up with computer studies, communication and technology, and graphic design on my schedule in addition to traditional visual art courses. She
considered all these courses art classes and, because of my knowledge of graphic art computer software, she thought they were tailored to my interests. I saw my schedule as a patchwork quilt: the courses, which I thought were like night and day, were situated all over the school, using different resources and supplies and supervised by different departments. However, I was flexible, and was simply excited to be there, so I didn’t complain or feel upset about it.

During my second year, the principal initiated a credit course for creating the yearbook; a colleague and I were chosen to teach it to a small group of students. Teaching this course transformed my view of making and implementing curriculum. In every other course, teachers were responsible for implementing a set curriculum, using generic assessment tools, and submitting grades the same way as everyone else. This course was different. I was given full autonomy to do what I wanted. I ran the course like a business, where students chose specific responsibilities and worked both independently and collaboratively to create a product. They worked before and after school with people outside of our classroom. My role was to guide, acquire resources, and create schedules and channels of communication for students. Amazed by the alternative experience of this course, it informed my M.A. thesis, a study into how yearbook teachers create their curriculum.

Even though I enjoyed teaching the yearbook course, my teaching life was turning into a downward spiral of frustrating events, a transition difficult to explain. After four years, I took a leave of absence to finish my M.A. degree with the intention of never returning to teach at my original secondary school and unsure of whether to continue teaching at all. I was already thinking of a doctoral degree, wondering how working in a post-secondary environment would compare to my teaching experience.

During my two-year leave, I did some supply teaching and long-term contracts in both elementary and secondary schools. When the leave was ending, I was faced with the decision to quit or return to a school position. A full-time position and beginning a doctoral program was too heavy a workload. Luckily, a principal offered me a part-time position in the school library - no lesson preparation, no evaluation, no report cards. It was a perfect job to accompany my academic work.
(Dad’s pathway drawing, 2004)
DAD

Dad began teaching at the age of 39. Beforehand, Dad had a volatile career in accounting and business; he quit and was fired from a variety of departments in both large and small companies. His father was an accountant, so Dad became one, but he was unhappy and unsure about why. He sought career counselling and was advised to try teaching.

He lived in Thunder Bay for ten months while completing his Bachelor of Education degree in primary education. From 1987, he taught in elementary and secondary schools. Although he remembered his initial four years teaching junior division classes as fun, Dad felt a strong urge to incorporate his accounting knowledge into his teaching and watched closely for high school opportunities. He spent the remaining 18 years of his career teaching accounting in a secondary school.

Dad initially enjoyed teaching, especially the freedom to create original and enjoyable moments for his students. By the end of his career, he became tired and stressed, jaded from what he considered was a rapidly changing world of education. He felt the curricular and student demands impacted on his professional freedom during the last eight years. Although he tried to implement his innovative, almost wacky ideas in his classes, he often talked harshly of loneliness and his long, mostly unpleasant journey towards retirement.

Dad had a love/hate relationship with teaching; he focused on students who remind him of himself as a young man and strived to give them chances that he never received. He resented the often defiant, rebellious, and indifferent behaviour of difficult students, grumbling that he wished someone had given him the same support and guidance. He muses often on what he believes is 'his wasted life' as a teacher, and yet, loves to hear from former students, emailing and talking to them about their professional goals.

Dad viewed his teaching life with the same unhappiness that he associated with his past. His stories are often coloured with a dark and pessimistic tone. Dad believed that the deaths of his father and stepmother may have relieved some of his anger and resentment perhaps from living such a terrible childhood. However, he still lives in the past, recollecting his regrets daily, punctuating his sentences with 'If only'.
(Mum’s pathway drawing, 2004)
Mum

Mum immigrated to Canada as a young woman after teaching for two years in Scotland. From her beginnings as a young teacher to her retirement, her life as a teacher had been an act of caring observation, watching people and events evolve during her thirty-plus year career.

Mum wanted to be a doctor, but never felt smart enough. Although she set herself on the path to a teaching career long ago, Mum recently admits to wondering what would have happened if she had attempted to study medicine. She gained confidence over the years and believes only now that what she thought was impossible may have been attainable. However, she does not regret her life. She achieved her goals: she came to Canada, had her family, and enjoyed success and happiness in her career as a teacher.

Mum followed her friends into the teaching profession. She didn’t have strong professional ambitions, but she always wanted to come to Canada. She refers to it as her “big adventure”, a trip that no one would stop her from taking. Although most of her family followed, and her sister was already here, many people wondered why she would want to leave her newly appointed teaching position in Scotland. She just did. Even a boyfriend did not distract her. As she quoted in her school yearbook, “I am going to seek a great Perhaps”.

After arriving in Canada, she taught in downtown Toronto in a Portuguese neighbourhood. Many of her students did not speak fluent English. Although she needed to discard her illusion that teaching in Canada would be easier than Scotland, she enjoyed her experience in her first school. She liked the children, she socialized with the staff and she met her husband during her time there.

Mum liked being a teacher. After working downtown, she transferred to a Scarborough school and stayed there for twenty-five years, never once thinking about leaving. After retiring, I often ask her if she misses teaching. She always laughs and says no, but adds that, when she was teaching, she didn’t want to stop. She liked talking to her friends at school. She liked teaching the kids, whether they were in her Kindergarten or Grade One classes, or when they visited her for Special Education work periods. “Not all days were shiny and bright, but I looked forward to it. It was my job and I liked it”.

shape

an area enclosed by a line
As with line, the decisions an artist makes concerning shape are important. The shapes in the left image above are clearly defined. By contrast, the shapes in the right image are barely discernable. This difference in clarity of shape is part of the meaning of these works: one conveys a sense of orderliness and confidence, while the other communicates a sense of vulnerability and uncertainty. The shapes of the objects that an artist creates are positive shapes. The spaces around these shapes are the negative shapes. It is just as important to be attentive to the negative shapes as the positive shapes. (Department of Art, Western Illinois University, Elements, 2008, para. 2).
My parents and I began with a line; we created an image of the series of events we believed important to describing our professional journey. The next step is to look at each event and ask the question, "How did this affect my decision to become a teacher?". Some events, like the shapes in an artwork, are distinct; they are clearly connected to our teaching journey. Others are subtle, perhaps hidden and need to be examined closely, like the negative shapes obscured or blocked in an artwork.

I use shape to represent the process of moving from the pathway to the beginnings of autobiographical writing. Similar to the artist expanding the first single line to objects of different shapes, sizes and volume, I show how the work is taking shape. In this chapter, the inquiry progresses to the next stage when I present three devices: snapshots, spotlights and the first series of many stories that I chose from my parents' and my autobiographies.

The following triptych is a series of "snapshots" (Veale, 2000) that describe my parents and me. Like a shape in an artwork, the story within each snapshot represents a small event encapsulated in a specific time and place, initiated from a point on the pathway. The snapshots illustrate a more intimate, aesthetic and significant picture of each person, but they also provide the possibility to dig holes around the singular event, creating negative shapes, or spaces. It is important to remember what circumstances caused each event. What happened before? What happened after? Who influenced our decisions and how did we feel about the consequences? The points on the pathways stretched out to lines that housed several shape stories. Now, I look outside each shape into the unknown spaces that surround them to find out more.

Experiencing the snapshots is similar to viewing a photo album, pointing to pictures and saying, "Here’s me. And, here’s my dad. And there’s my mum".
My feet hurt. I’m not wearing my orthotics today. The shoes they’re in don’t match my grey, wool skirt and long, red sweater. I stood for too long at work, and forgot to sit down once in awhile. I sit in front of a group of six people, a committee of judges watching as I begin my presentation. Having gone through an interview process for an academic appointment, I know what to expect and what to say. But, I am still nervous. I look at the papers in front of me and begin to circulate my photocopied handouts. Noticing my hands, I realize that I have been biting my nails again. “I’ll need to fix them, later”, I think to myself.

I’m used to making presentations, having made so many while as a student and a teacher. When preparing the outline, I often connect stories to the content, create metaphors, slip in jokes. And people always comment on how calm and collected I seem while talking. I don’t see myself that way. I always worry about what I say. Even when I shake the committee’s hands with my ice-cold fingers, I always perspire.

I am ready to begin. I introduce myself, remembering the eye contact and the smile, a nice, friendly smile. I hope I get this job.
I am sitting at the kitchen table with a cup of tea. Dad walks in, his face grey and frowning. He takes off his metal-rimmed glasses. The safety string gets caught in his collar, as always. He yanks it up, finally freeing it, and throws the glasses on the table. His white, wavy hair is getting long; I think he’ll need a haircut soon. I ask him about a new college night course he is taking, but he doesn’t answer the question.

“I was at school today. This teacher, (Jim), asked me if I had any good handouts from the course that he could use in the classroom. I ignored him. I mean, I am the one who has to take the course to teach and he sits on his butt, doing nothing. He won’t even meet after class to discuss the course.”

I listen and nod, knowing what’s coming as I’ve heard it many times before. Dad seems ruffled. He roughly rubs his face with his hands, leaving his tanned skin red and streaky. I reroute the conversation.

“How are things at school, anyway?” I ask.

He takes out his red pen, blue pen, and white scribble pad from his chest pocket. It’s an older shirt. I can tell by the ink on the pocket and the slightly yellowed armpits. He sighs,

“(Jane) was talking about her accounting course. You know, people don’t share anything. She wouldn’t give me help. All she cares about is herself.”

“Did you ask her for help?”

Dad burrows his eyebrows. “I don’t want her handouts.”
Mum and I are having lunch in the staff room of my school. She offers me some grapes from her lunch, knowing they are my favourite fruit. She says she likes my hair today and wishes she had my wave (“you get that curl from your father, you lucky ducky!”). I find it funny since we have the same hair cut. I tell her how I wish I looked more modern like her. We’ve had this conversation a hundred times. We gossip about the Grade Five class that she is supply teaching. I make a face and tell her how they often behave badly in the library. I lament about one boy I find especially obnoxious.

“Oh, I know. He is talkative. Just talks right out loud. So, first thing I did, I took him aside and said to him, ‘We are going to have a secret code between us. And when I think that you are talking too much, I am going to tug my ear, like this.’” Mum pulls her earlobe to show me the secret code.

“So, then, later on, when (John) started up again, I look at him and pull my ear. He looks at me and quiets down. He thinks it’s like an undercover operation that nobody else knows.” Mum says, smiling. She cuts a tomato and puts the slices on her turkey sandwich.

“Where do you get these ideas? You know so many,” I said. She amazes me with these stories about her ‘tricks’. “Does it work for all talkative kids?”

“It works for him.”
After completing the pathway, my parents and I talked. I wanted to relive our casual discussions so I kept my interviewing technique unstructured. Even though I taped our meetings, we talked easily without the aid of many questions or transitions. After listening to their lives in informal storytelling at the dinner table or conversation over tea, I was confident before starting my thesis that we would engage in positive and productive collaboration about the same stories they have shared throughout my life.

As with the pathway activity, my parents and I experienced the interview process differently. Mum, who strained through the pathway activity, talked freely and openly, providing great detail and drama. She amazed us with her ability to recall what people had said to her. As she recounted an incident from her high school days, she yelled in a heavy Scottish accent, "Be gone, varlat! The maidens are abed." Storytelling came to her naturally as if she were reciting from a well-crafted script. For example, when she told me about her students from her Special Education class, she recalled specific physical and behavioural characteristics. She said, "I remember a present that Dave brought me. It was wrapped up in newspaper. He said to me, 'You have to be very careful because it's...um, it's...glassable.' I realized he meant breakable, but he couldn't find the right word. I smiled and was very careful with his gift." She mimicked holding the precious item carefully as she told the story with a mesmerizing intonation and expression. I often felt as if I was there in her stories, transported from the kitchen of my parents' home to the time and place of her recollections. Composing the written form was easy because there was very little to change.

Dad, who spent much time creating an elaborate pathway, spoke freely as well, but sometimes struggled with emotions that arose during specific stories. Sometimes, he lost track of a story. He repeated details or jumped to another story and became annoyed when I missed the connection between his tales. I saw in his facial expressions, especially his eyes, that he relived the pain or pleasure of certain events as he talked. His language was poetic and haunting, from his first words, "My life is a cause and effect, complicated and eventful..." to his last, "I don't go looking for adventures anymore. It's sad but for the best". I was challenged to listen carefully and follow the thread of his life history closely. Immersed in his words, I tried to capture the quality of his dialogue as I transcribed.
I expected my story to take the least amount of time to write because I could skip interviewing and transcribing myself and go straight to writing on the computer. Instead, explaining my life was a lingering, tedious task. I envisioned the events of my life and wrote them down to match the series of points on my pathway. I constantly revisited what I wrote and chastised myself for not writing what I visualized when recalling a memory. I spent twice as long finishing my stories and had double the length of writing when I finished. Why was it a more difficult process?

The individual characteristics of our life histories paralleled the differences we experienced in the process of making them. Mum's storytelling was clear, concise, linear, and engaging. "Mother Superior was the administrator and gave lectures to us about 'ladylike behaviour' and acceptable summer job prospects. She always said, 'Ladies do not sell strawberries in the basement of Simpson's!' If only she knew that I spent my summers working in a whiskey factory."

Dad recalled a past affected by how he sees himself presently and the feelings he holds for events and people gone by. "When Ryerson had announced that they were offering degrees in specific subjects, I returned (there) to get a degree in accounting... York University was young and University of Toronto wouldn't even look at you...and I wanted a degree. I wanted to get that degree and show them. And myself." Despite the engaging qualities of his stories, I had to work at understanding him. While listening and reading, I tried not to judge him; I did not dismiss some of his discussion as ranting or blathering on. I wanted to witness and capture the unfolding of his complete life history. I wanted to see where the process of telling would lead us.

My autobiography had elements from both my parents' stories. Like Mum, I clearly described my life as a conversation between two people. Like Dad, my stories are sometimes emotional and dissonant. For me, it was the most difficult to write because I wanted to include all relevant stories, despite their positive or negative nature.

Each story begins with a "spotlight", an image which reveals a specific part of the final artwork. The spotlight intends to connect the element of design with the stories in the chapter. Each spotlight reflects the layering of each element, (i.e., shape, shape and colour, shape, colour and value) and, with each spotlight, more of the final triptych is revealed.
In Lara's shape spotlight above, I chose an image of myself as a little girl wearing a dress Mum had sewn for me. My parents and I always laughed at this dress with the big "ME" on the chest, saying how it fit my personality, because everything was always about me.

This image introduces the first silhouettes of my life.
I received the art award in grade eleven - three art history books signed by my art teacher, Mrs. R. She sometimes commented on how she really liked my work. The following year, Mrs. R transferred to the new Catholic high school, and a new art teacher, Miss B, took her place. That year, Miss B gave the annual art award to a student who had the highest mark in our art class. I felt cheated. I remember telling my friends that this student copied ideas from magazines for her winning work. I complained to Miss B about it, but she said I was a sore loser. I was surprised that I had said anything at all, because I was normally a quiet student.

I knew that if I wanted to be an artist, I didn't need to take any Science OAC credits to get into an Art program. At the time, all students planning to attend university needed six OAC credits, one in English and other courses needed to get into specific programs. Everyone felt the pressure to take Math and Sciences, even if they knew that they didn't need it. I felt it. I took Chemistry, Physics, and Calculus. I struggled with calculus. A guy I nicknamed "Calculus Bill" helped me, only, I suspect, because he liked me. I skipped test days for extra study time. My parents were worried about my mark and supported my skipping off, if it helped. When my Calculus teacher sent a notice about my low attendance to my parents, they told him that they knew. Another teacher may have lowered my grade based on attendance, but my teacher was strictly about the grades on the tests. My 52% rose to an 80%.

I began working part-time when I was in high school. I taught piano to some of the kids from my neighbourhood. I began my business in 1985, teaching three kids. By 1994, when I dissolved my registered business, Treble and Clef, I had sub-contracted to other studios, received tax breaks, and taught over thirty kids in the Greater Toronto Area.

My first experience with playing piano was in Grade Four. My teacher asked me if I would play a piano duet with my friend, Lisa, for the class recital. I didn't know much about playing the piano; I had only ever fooled around on Lisa's piano. I liked the idea so I agreed to play. My teacher showed us a song on her classroom piano. I remember watching her finger movements and mimicking them on the piano. Lisa and I practiced this song, one that
I can't remember now, at recess times. We felt so lucky that we got to stay inside for recess for such an important task.

At the recital, my parents watched me from their small plastic classroom seats set in rows. I felt nervous, and remember my hands being sweaty and slippery, but I think we did well. Afterwards, my teacher said to my parents that I should take lessons because I might be good at it. Soon after, my parents bought me a piano, and I went for lessons to my parents' friend, Mrs. S, who worked in musical theatre and taught piano to a few students. I visited her on a weekly basis for years until the day she told me that she was going to stop teaching piano. I was thirteen and in a high piano grade. She asked me if I wanted to teach three of her young beginner students. I agreed and began my piano instruction business.

I began teaching piano from my family room, sitting in my parents' low, uncomfortable, pumpkin leather chair. The students came to my house for a half hour lesson every week. They paid cash and I stuffed this money in the top drawer of my bedroom desk. At one point, there was a hundred dollars in cash, so Mum helped me open an account and put it in the bank. I kept putting the money in the bank until Mum and I registered my piano instruction as a business.

My students' parents bought a specific beginner book for me to use with their children, the book that Mrs. S had used with me. There were songs on the left side of the book and theory questions on the right side. The students practiced the songs and played them for me at the beginning, and then we completed questions for the rest of the lesson. Sometimes I instructed the students to do the questions for homework, and, the next week, I marked it. If they didn't do it, I would give them time during the lesson to finish the questions because we could not proceed until everything on that lesson was complete.

My other teaching experiences came from my love of sports. When I was growing up, my dad enrolled me in soccer, tennis and skiing, and took me to all my games and competitions. I liked playing them so much that eventually I became certified to teach them.

Dad introduced me to refereeing soccer. He encouraged me to take the coaching test and helped me get a summer job refereeing games twice a week for a few years. I was in my early teens and, in retrospect, a quiet person, but I didn't fear calling the shots during
a game watched by dozens of people. It reminded me of teaching in that I was responsible for leading young children to learn a skill. It wasn't always easy, but I liked doing it.

In the winters, I taught skiing. I discovered my first ski instruction job from Tommy, a boy I dated in Grade eleven, who told me about a new ski resort, Lakeridge, opening up east of the city. Tommy said that he was going to get a liftee job (a person who works the lifts). I asked my parents about me working at the new resort, mentioning that they were hiring for all positions, including instructors. Dad thought it was such a great idea that he wanted to get involved, too. We both took our Level 1 Ski certification that year and worked at Lakeridge for three years.

My third job was teaching tennis. I was director and head instructor of the Malvern tennis club for the City of Scarborough, a big-shot name for a small-time job; it was just me and one other instructor. I planned the camps and lessons and taught throughout the year.

These job experiences did not propel me towards teachers' college. In fact, I protested applying because I wanted to be a graphic designer. When I applied to universities for a Bachelor of Fine Arts, my parents were not surprised. Dad was worried about the stability of an artist's life and said, "Go to York University and take the concurrent program as back-up. You'll always have a job teaching art." Even though I wasn't happy to be enrolled, I always remembered my parents' stories, stressing independence and jobs.

I completed a Bachelor of Fine Arts, specializing in visual art and a Bachelor of Education during a five-year period. I entered the B. Ed. Program during my third year, an uncommon but not unknown occurrence among my peers. I had several experiences in both pre-service and in-service teacher education that ranged from absurd to inspirational. It was absurd when one of my host teachers told me never to laugh while teaching students. And I was inspired by a wonderful Adjunct Professor who encouraged me to try ideas and always have fun.

After my first year in the concurrent program, my mind was set on teaching high school, even though I had not yet experienced it. I felt I was going through the motions of finishing the general year in elementary school. High school was where I should be, teaching
the more difficult content and having cerebral discussions about art, history, and life with people who would actually understand.

During the second year of the pre-service concurrent program, the teacher candidates were divided into three groups: primary/junior (P/J), junior/intermediate (J/I), and intermediate/senior (I/S). Initially enrolled as a J/I student, I changed my status to I/S because I always wanted to teach high school visual art and music. In high school, you taught whatever your subject was...hopefully. My second year practicum was teaching visual art in a secondary school.

My last year of teaching began with vague expectations. My second teachable subject was supposed to be music but, after having difficulty with wind instruments in the music education course (I nearly fainted from playing a trumpet!), I switched to sociology. And, because I wanted some experience in a Catholic school, York allowed me to find my own school and secure a host teacher who would be willing to participate in the program. I ended up teaching law and sociology in my dad's Catholic high school.

I began substitute teaching in September 1995, a difficult year for new teachers. The availability of teaching positions was limited as the cycle of education was in a downturn. I knew this and fully expected a year of supply teaching ahead of me. Being a visual art specialist, I didn't expect any opportunity to teach my subject area. For every ten English teachers in a school, there may be only one art teacher. So, I was ecstatic to be offered a visual art position in a Catholic secondary school after only supply teaching for four months.

I received a phone call from my former high school art teacher who was now teaching at the secondary school in the town where I lived. She didn't even know that I was a teacher until my brother visited the school and told her about me. She told me that the other art teacher was resigning and a replacement was needed for the second semester, and "Would you be interested in the position?". Would I?! It seemed perfect: I knew the school, I knew some people there, it was a short drive from home and I had the help and support of the department head. I interviewed with the administration team and my former art teacher, Mrs. R, and got the job.
After teaching high school for nearly four years, I saw myself as sarcastic, skeptical, tired and unhappy. I was negative towards the profession, sometimes towards the students and other staff. I needed a change. I began my Master's degree part-time in 1998. I took a leave of absence to finish the final courses and my thesis while supply teaching for extra money. People were puzzled with my decision. Their often-asked question, "Why do you want to leave?" was met with my impatience. I had difficulty explaining that I liked being in education, I just didn't like teaching here.

I am currently a teacher-librarian in a small elementary school, working alternate days while completing my doctorate. Some of my fellow staff members ask me if I like the job, commenting on it being easy. Wondering what their definition of easy is, I answer honestly, from experience, that "Yes, I find it less stressful than teaching high school and I recommend it to anyone who needs a change."

I am at a cross-road right now, deciding what to do next. I would like to try teaching at the university level. Sometimes I think I could go back to the classroom because I enjoy my position in my elementary school. Sometimes things happen that are either inspirational or frustrating, changing my mind about returning to the classroom again. I know that I want to finish my degree and remain a part of the education system. In what capacity? I'm not sure (Lara, autobiography, 2003).
This image is central to my Dad’s panel and the best point to begin his story. It depicts a younger, smaller boy, engulfed by the negative presence of his step-mother, a predicament that taints his beliefs towards his future endeavours. The angry lines and overwhelming eyes that stare down at him illustrate her influence on his life.
DAD

My life is a cause and effect, complicated and eventful. My mother abandoned me at the age of 1. I don’t remember much of what happened, but I do know that it had a huge impact on my life thereafter. Even if I can’t remember the events, I attach a very bad feeling to it.

My grandmother picked me up afterwards and took care of me. She was the only parental model that I see as good. Who else could I reference that didn’t fail me, disillusion me? No one. Not even my father. She was loyal to me where others failed.

Then I was taken away to the evil witch (my stepmother). I can remember our first meeting. I can see it so clearly. I was four years old. I walked into this house and was introduced to this woman. At that moment, I knew that this was bad news. And it was only my first time meeting her. But I knew. And I was afraid.

I met her at her mother’s house in Alliston. It was a typical 40s brick house, with a veranda and two columns. I don’t remember if my father had married her at this point, but I can see the meeting so clearly. This woman came to the door and I saw her eyes, always the eyes. Seeing those eyes gave me a fear I had never felt - fear of something bad happening - an intuition of a terrible change in my life. I’m not sure. But, the second time we went to visit, it was to stay. We were dropped off for good. That was it. It was simply put, “We are moving here and living with this woman, now.”

After we moved in, much of what happened for the next 10 years is lost. There were a few good times, like little lights within a vast darkness. I felt no more impact than when my mother left me. My life was just there.

We stayed in Alliston briefly before moving to Sudbury, where my father started working at INCO. We used to live in a third or fourth floor apartment, with a veranda that hung off the back. I was riding my tricycle on the veranda and I wanted to cover my head in a blanket so I couldn’t see anything. I wanted it to be dark. I rode and fell off. I could feel the floor give way to air, but I couldn’t see anything. Then I hit the ground. After that, I hated heights.
We lived on Cedar Street, which was in a relatively nice area, on the edge of the right side of the tracks. She wanted to live on the "hill" with the community elite. She always belonged to the right church congregation, groups, whatever. Everything was for appearances' sake. She always complained about money, but she never worked.

I took salvation from my darkness in reading books and being outside. Had I not had those things, who knows what the outcome would have been? I used to hunt, hike, and ride my bike. I used to read a lot. I would bury myself in books about nature, hunting, war, science, and fiction written by the likes of Kipling, Frost and Jules Verne. She told me to go outside and stop reading all the time. I hated her for that.

When I left Sudbury at sixteen, I went to Toronto. I started out at trade school and worked at different jobs. In trade school, I met Gordon McKenna, a Scottish guy who helped me. He was three years older than me. He ended up working at GM. He took me under his wing, like an older brother.

When I came out of trade school, I worked for TR services, a telecommunications business. It didn't last. Then, I worked for Phillips Electronics and became an apprentice. My friend went to work at Motorola and said I should come too, but I felt committed to Phillips. It was frustrating working there because they would lay me off and rehire me when there was work, like a contract job. I wanted to get ahead so I got a job at Serberling. I could have worked at Nortel, and, if I did, I probably would have stayed there. It could have changed my life. Again, I felt committed to Serberling and realized that the more jobs I went through, the more I needed to finish high school. Society was changing and you couldn't get jobs without the piece of paper. So I moved back to Sudbury to get my high school diploma.

I went back to Toronto because of my father. He was reading the newspaper and noticed an ad from Ryerson Polytechnical Institute. They were offering a prep semester and enrolment into a diploma program, one time only, for students who did not complete their Grade 12. It was a great opportunity, but I didn't have enough money. The bank would provide me with a loan, but I needed a co-signer. She didn't want him to do it, but my father stood up to her for the first and last time. He co-signed the loan and I was off to the city again.
I went to Toronto and became a Ryerson (Polytechnical Institute) student. They had accepted 300 students and, by the end of the three-year program, only 30 had stayed. It was hard to break through into my desired job market. Anywhere that I tried to get certain jobs, I was turned down for people with a B.A. I was only a community college graduate.

When Ryerson had announced that they were offering degrees in specific subjects, I returned to get a degree in accounting. It was big news when Ryerson became a university. They had already changed other diplomas into degrees. York University was young and University of Toronto would not even look at me. Ryerson created a bridge for the college grad. It opened a lot of doors. And I wanted a degree. I wanted to get that degree and show them. And myself.

I got my degree, but after doing finances at IBM and other places, I wasn't happy. As Mum has told me, my interpersonal skills needed some improvement. Sometimes, I didn't stay long in jobs because of my interpersonal skills. I went to the YMCA for career counselling, which I should have done long before. The counsellor said that I should never have got into accounting. I needed to talk to people who were working at the same level as me. He said I should be in sales or teaching. I liked sales because I was not afraid to cold-call, but I was older. Big business wouldn't hire me when they could get a young hotshot at half the pay. I thought of teaching, but that meant returning to school to get another degree. Teachers' college meant money, and with two kids, it was a hard choice to make. Mum suggested teaching at a private business school to see if I liked it.

I taught business subjects at Shaw College and enjoyed it. But the pay was peanuts and it was run like a private school, with total control over your working life. I wasn't a real teacher. And I wouldn't go any higher in Shaw. Mum said that if I wanted to teach, I should get qualified. So I applied to teachers' colleges and, with my marks, the only place that accepted me was Lakehead University in Thunder Bay, a 10-hour drive from Toronto. This was going to be difficult.

I drove to Wawa from Toronto. I don't remember if I dropped in at Sudbury to say hello or kept driving. I don't know. I stayed in Wawa overnight and drove to Thunder Bay the next day, realizing I had never been north of Sault Ste. Marie. During my second day drive, I could not believe the great expanse of nothing - a bare desolate land. When I arrived at
Lakehead, I was surprised because I had envisioned something much different. I registered and realized I was the oldest student around. I know that it’s not that way now with so many second career people applying to teachers college, but I was ahead of my time. I was 39.

When I finished and came home, I started supply teaching right away for the Scarborough Board, Durham Catholic Board and the Metro Separate School Board. I supplied until June, and then took summer courses while waiting to see about September. Might as well get higher qualifications to get the money.

In the fall, my name was with the same three Boards, Scarborough, Durham, and Metro. I couldn’t get enough supply work from one board only. I supplied for two years before getting a full-time job because there wasn’t as much work as there is now. The cycle was down and I had to wait for opportunities. Even Durham didn’t put me out there right away.

I finally got a position teaching Grade Four at Holy Spirit Catholic School, Toronto, in September and it was good - the students, the staff, the environment, the experience. It was a great time in teaching. They were the best years, not the same as now. I got involved in things with my students that I would not be allowed to do now. Creative, wacky, off-the-wall lessons that can’t be fit into the packed curriculum we teach now.

So many things happened in our portable. The Grade 4 students and I built paper castles and weaponry for a medieval unit, and then we destroyed everything once the unit was done, like we were medieval warriors. There was also the business of shoes on the floor. We were supposed to keep our classroom in order, clear the floor, and put the shoes on the chairs, before going outside. Some kids wouldn’t do it, so I put their shoes on the fluorescent lights. Of course, they wanted them back, and they were sorry for leaving them on the floor. So I got the shoes down, gave them to the kids to put on their chair, and told them to say a prayer to the chair, apologizing for leaving the shoes on the floor. I made up the prayer, something like “holy spaghetti, blessed bologna…”, I forget the rest. It was a joke. Unfortunately, a parent took it seriously, calling me sacrilegious. She got so upset about it that she called the Director of Education at the time. I got in trouble, but the kids loved it.
During this time at Holy Spirit, I still wanted to teach high school. All along, I was watching and waiting for my chance. After five years of applying for positions, an opportunity at Pope John Paul II finally came my way. I was ready to change at that point. It had taken so long because there was an excess of teachers, people who hadn't retired yet. So, I had to wait. During that time, I took all kinds of courses and became qualified for high school.

I started teaching business and accounting right away, lucky to get what I wanted. I remember saying to people that I would teach keyboarding, a course that all students had to take in Grade 9. Because I supply taught in high school and knew about the course, I knew that a lot of business teachers had to teach keyboarding, so I was willing to teach it to get into high school. Business subjects have expanded since then, into more than secretarial stuff. I was fortunate to get what I wanted right away.

I can't believe that I worked at Pope for 15 years. My experience was sometimes fun and active, and sometimes political. There was a lot of interacting going on between people, and everyone had their opinion. I wasn't used to such a large staff (130), coming from elementary school, with a staff of 25. There were many social groups. Had I had more experience when I started, I may have done better. The teaching experience I have now is what I needed. I didn't get much direction or support. At the beginning, teachers had big egos in my high school. It was a real trip for them. Times have changed, with the cuts, and people swallow their pride. I didn't do things as efficiently as I do now such as cutting out the creative stuff and sticking to the textbook. But the teaching was better than it is now (Dad, autobiography, 2003).
This image is also central to my mother’s panel. It shows the most important events of her life all in one drawing. She is a young girl with curly hair and a happy disposition, she is married to my dad and she has two babies, my brother and myself. These things are always a factor in her decisions about teaching.
Mum

Most kids cry because they don’t want to go to school. I cried because I couldn’t go. I was too young to be enrolled. You had to be five years old to enter, and my birthday fell in October, so I had to wait until the next session. I was so happy when the day came, and my mum took me to my classroom. And I loved it. I was the fastest runner, good at many sports, and got prizes for being best at schoolwork in my class.

In high school, there was a careers day where we looked at different jobs. I thought of myself as a math or science person, so I interviewed for technology jobs. Having decided that I wanted to immigrate to Canada, I couldn’t do something that required too many years of schooling, but most jobs needed five years of studying. I thought that I would be too old when I got to Canada to start a family. My friends decided on teachers college, which only took three years. I knew that I wanted to be a professional, but not spend too much time in school. So, I enrolled in teachers’ college, too.

I met my best friend, Ann, at Notre Dame College of Education. The Catholic girls went to the Catholic Teachers College. We had to be residents because the nuns believed that by living together, we would form bonds with other teachers and foster a close-knit community. The government paid for our education, so I never worried about fees. However, there was a shortage of teachers, and more students enrolled than the number of rooms available, so only the first year students lived in residency.

Our program lasted three years, and each year was divided into three terms: the Fall Term lasted from September to December, the Winter Term ran from January to April, and the Spring Term was from April to June. For our practicum, we taught three weeks a term the first year, four weeks a term the second year, and five weeks a term our final year. I think it had more teaching than other teacher education programs.

After graduation, I got a job at St. Robert’s. There was no Kindergarten and the initial two years were called ‘the infants’. Because students enrolled twice a year, in August and January, the year was split into two sessions. The August kids were called Primary 1,1, and these kids became Primary 1,2 in January, to distinguish them from the new group of 1,1s who started then. I taught the 1,1 and stayed with them until they were 2,2. And then
they would go with a new teacher and I would start with the 1,1 kids again. I worked there for two years, before leaving for Canada.

In 1966, there was a shortage of teachers in Canada and recruiters visited many countries including Scotland to do their hiring. I attended an interview with an employee of the Metro Separate School Board. My sister, who was already in Canada, was sending me newspaper clippings about the large number of available jobs at the different boards of education in Toronto. I was confused because, in Scotland, there was only the Scottish Board of Education.

At the interview, the Board representative laid out a map and said, 'You can work here, here, here, here, or here', pointing to several places around Toronto. I looked at St. Mary's near Adelaide Street.

"This would nice because I could go swimming in the lake after school, and sit on the beach." I said, imagining the sandy coasts of Scotland that I was used to.

He looked at me and said, "Uh...yeah, sure."

I heard that there were many immigrants in Toronto and told him that I didn't want to teach students who couldn't speak English. He assured me that this would not be a problem and offered me a position teaching Kindergarten. I was excited about the job - a beach close by and only 35 students in my class. I thought that the job would be a breeze.

Shortly after our arrival in Canada, my cousin and I took the streetcar down Bathurst Street. We were shocked to find that there was no swimming, let alone a sandy beach. When I arrived at St. Mary's for my first teaching day, I was surprised to find 90% of the school community to be Portuguese. And they did not speak English. I thought to myself, 'That man from the Board is probably laughing at me right now.'

The school staff was made up of immigrants, too. There was only one 'Canadian' girl, a person who was actually born here. And she really wasn't, she said, because she was born in Newfoundland before Confederation. Although I was dismayed by such differences from my expectations, I had a wonderful time with the staff and students at that school.

My cousin and I came to Canada by ship and got an apartment when we landed. Margaret was an office assistant and I got a job at Industrial Overload, a temporary employment agency. I worked days there all summer and, after starting at St. Mary's, I
stayed on to do the payroll Thursday nights. During that time, I met Dad, who worked nights. I was behind the counter and saw this man walk behind without my permission. I thought he was one of the ‘rummies’ waiting for a job. I said, ‘Excuse me, but you’ll have to wait over there.’ He looked at me and replied, ‘I work here.’ We were engaged a month later and married before the first anniversary of our meeting.

I married Dad during my first year of teaching at St. Mary’s. I went shopping on Spadina Avenue for wedding dresses with some of the other teachers. Dad and I lived in a few apartments before buying a house in Agincourt. The trip on the TTC from there to downtown was a very long one, so, when I became pregnant, I decided I wanted to be closer to home. I transferred to St. Aidan’s, where I worked for the next 27 years, until my retirement.

St. Aidan’s was a brand new school. Until the new building was constructed, we were housed in a temporary facility. It was a portable, open concept school made up of a number of pods. I was teaching with three teachers, two who were from England. They had very loud voices with distinct accents. Joan had a very precise voice, enunciating every word with her proper accent, and Sandy spoke with a shrill Midland accent. The sounds in that large classroom would bounce off the walls. You could hear everything all at once, making it difficult to teach. The idea of open concept classrooms came from the States, and anything the Americans did, Canada got five years later. And, of course, if the Americans did it, it must be good.

Later on, an addition was built; a little hallway was added and some moveable walls were installed. We had returned to single closed classrooms and the idea of open concept was out the window.

I taught Grade 1 during my first year at St. Aidan’s. Everyone spoke English; there were no kids with English as a second language (ESL). They were so bright, smart and I was teaching concepts to them that I taught in Grade 2 at St. Mary’s downtown. I thought, "Wow! The suburbs are great. I’m so glad that I moved here." I remember twin boys from that class, who eventually received scholarships to Harvard. They were all so smart. The whole class was wonderful. And then the following year, it was back to reality, to what I had experienced before. It was a fluke that I had such a great class. They were together as
they went through the grades of our school, and the teachers who taught them thought they had died and gone to heaven. Everyone thought, "This is the class I've been waiting for!"

After a short three-month pregnancy leave, I returned and taught Kindergarten with a teacher named Pat. We were given a great deal of autonomy, basically left alone to do what we wanted. With two senior kindergarten groups in the morning and two juniors in the afternoon, we decided on our own that we would work together and team-teach everything to both classes. We technically had our own classes, but we grouped them in a way that was best for them, mostly by ability. There were some children who knew colours, words, and could spell their own name, where others did not know red from blue. We had thirty kids each, but we amalgamated our classes and worked as one. For directed tasks, I taught the 'lower' ones and Pat took the rest, who were working at a higher level.

I took my Special Education qualifications course many years later, and I only ever took the first part of the three courses. I taught Special Education for 12 years. Before that, I never had much to do with older kids. Even after teaching them, I don't know if I would ever teach a whole Grade 7 or 8 class, but I really liked some of the kids who came to see me. I felt bad for them because they were going to high school and they couldn't even read yet. What would they do when they got there? What would their lives be like? They will be the new working poor. If they manage to get a little job that pays minimum wage, how do they live on that? It's not their fault. It's just that they don't have the equipment to do any better. When you get the older kids who aren't so bright, the self-esteem problems begin.

I had another team-teaching situation with the other Special Education teacher, Matt. But we worked differently. I always felt that, with special kids, you have to give a little, be bendable, because they are different from regular kids, and they have a lot more baggage. Matt taught them as if they were a regular class, speaking to them gruffly, telling them to 'sit down and do those papers'. He always made fun of my 'primary tendencies' when I would turn lights off to get their attention, like I would for Grade 1 children. He probably though I was too easy on them. I certainly did not have the same team-teaching experience with him as I did with Pat.
Matt and I taught children from the primary grades in the morning, during their math and language periods, and the intermediate kids in the afternoon. Occasionally, we combined our groups together and do a lesson, but it rarely happened. We had different philosophies. It didn't seem to work. I still enjoyed his company; we talked and joked, and exchanged ideas. We gave to each other what we lacked in our own professional experience. He gave me ideas for intermediate kids and I gave him ideas for primary kids. Later on, as the student population decreased, Mike returned to the classroom and I was the sole Special Education teacher, so I had to teach them all.

I retired with the 90 factor (retired with full pension, when your age and your years of experience add up to 90). The year they brought in the 85 factor (when they add up to 85) I had already reached 90. I worked for 34.9 years. It didn't make sense to keep working, although I kept wondering what I would do with myself when I stopped. Am I going to miss teaching? Now that I'm done, I don't miss it at all. I supply teach and think, 'There's no way I'd come back' (Mum, autobiography, 2003).
space

the areas around, within or between objects
When shapes are partially obscured by other shapes in front of them, we perceive them as further away than the covering objects. We do not see them as incomplete forms, just further back. Shapes which are further away generally have less distinct contrast. They may fade into the background or become indistinct dark areas that need to be explored (University of Saskatchewan, Space, 1999, para. 2).
When an artist thinks about space, she must recognize that how she manipulates it in her work can determine how her artwork is perceived. Spaces that are filled with objects of colour and patterns can be busy or full of movement, while empty spaces can be lonely or tranquil. In design theory, shape and space often work together; positive space means an area containing the principal subject matter in a composition, or the shapes, while the absence of shape indicates negative space, the space not occupied by subject matter, but still used as part of the overall design.

It is interesting to note that positive space is commonly characterized by what the artist deems important to share with her viewer. What about the empty space around it? Is it really empty? Will it remain empty as the art making process continues? She must consider this space because it will be important when she judges her overall composition at completion.

I discuss different types of spaces in the following chapter: school spaces, pre-service teaching spaces, teaching spaces and others. The stories are represented under certain headings for different reasons. They chronologically fit. They are important stories from points on our pathways that also incite curiosity; what's behind the story? They also begin exploring the positive and negative feelings attached to the events. Preceding each set of stories are “spotlights” that are intended to visually emphasize the relationship between these positive and negative spaces.
This image of a paintbrush and piano keys illustrates my varied life as a teacher, instructing music, sports and camps, while negotiating my desire to be an artist. The shapes overlap each other, making difficult to decide which is more important.
SCHOOL SPACES

In Grade six, I was a good student who finished all my homework. Maybe I found the work easy, or I could multi-task because I often doodled in the margins of my notebooks while the teacher was talking. The small spaces would be filled with all sorts of pictures of people, animals, flowers, and abstract shapes. I liked looking at these drawings, but my teacher thought it was messy. I received little notes from him all the time, reprimanding me for marking up my notebook and not listening. I eventually drew on the inside covers and backs of all my notebooks. I was scolded for that, too.

In Grade Eight, I was sitting in the library. I was a secret doodler at this point and drew only on concealed white papers, stuck in my binders. I drew women wearing different fashions, dreaming of what I looked like in such clothes. I drew the women with tiny waists, big breasts and short legs. I did not have the tiny waist or big breasts. Maybe the legs were the link between my drawing and my reality. Anyways, I had shown my friends and they were amazed at the beautiful clothes and bodies, perhaps wishing they could have them as well. One day in the library, a boy in my class approached me, asking if I could draw one of my woman pictures for him. I did and thought nothing of it. Then, another boy came up and asked me if I could draw him one too. Only this time, he wanted her in a bikini. I said I wasn’t sure. He said he would pay me a dollar, so I agreed. I had already drawn women in bathing suits. So I drew the bikini and he was thrilled. When a third boy asked for a drawing of a naked girl, I realized where this was going. Even though I probably could draw it, I was too embarrassed. It didn’t occur to me until later that drawing naked women could be considered wrong, especially in my Catholic school. I never thought that if I had drawn her, I may have been suspended.

In our Ontario Academic Course (OAC) for Visual Art, we were working on our independent project of seven paintings linked by a single theme. My theme was about snow, skiing and snowboarding, three things I loved. But the paintings were not working out well. Miss B didn’t like what I was doing, and I was receiving 60-70% on the first three. I was terrified. This was the one class I expected and needed to do well. Chemistry, English, or
Math didn't matter as much as Art. I needed it to get into a Bachelor of Fine Art program (B.F.A.). I was frustrated. So, I asked Miss B if I could see her after school. My intention was to pry some information about what she wanted. But I was disappointed when she simply told me that I needed to find out what was important to me, that I was not working at my potential and I hadn't found a topic of personal importance yet. Yet?! I was running out of time. I became defensive and barked at her, "You don't care about us, about me!" Miss B's face became dark and sad. She said, sarcastically, "Hmph! That's right, I don't". Surprised at her response, I left the room. At my locker, I replayed the conversation in my mind and realized that I had been unfair. Worrying about my marks, university, and everything else caused me to be callous. The next day, after school, I visited Miss B. Her expression told me that she had not been having the best of days. Feeling ashamed, I apologized. She accepted it but seemed cold and reserved. I began, "It's just that I...I am...so worried...." and burst out crying. Miss B ran over to hug me. She sat me down and dried my tears. She said, "Don't worry. You are a smart person. You are a great artist. I know that you will find a way to make this work." I didn't have complete faith in what she said about me, but I felt better.

PRE-TEACHING WORK SPACES

For my first few working summers, I was a camp counsellor, first in the town of Pickering, then for the City of Scarborough. One year, I was given Special Duties. Essentially, I was a substitute camp counsellor - I would travel to different sites in Scarborough and fill in for an absent counsellor, or, on days where there were no absences, I would travel to the busy sites to help. It was fun and I met many people. I had hoped that I could continue this job for as long as I needed a summer job.

However, there was a camp director who diplomatically referred to my position as 'redundant', but I think she thought I was a waste of time and money. At the end of the summer, she mentioned to my supervisor that my position needed to be reviewed and axed. The three of us sat in a meeting, and the director and supervisor discussed me as if I was not there. I sat there and listened, but could not speak. I was frozen by the way they had dismissed me. Only once did my supervisor ask my opinion, but I was already deflated. I had
nothing to say. They laid me off and didn't have another position for me. It was the last summer that I was a camp counsellor.

Of all the ski classes I taught at Lakeridge, I especially enjoyed teaching the Kinderski program. The kids were so little; my youngest student was 2 ½ years old. I didn't think it was possible for kids to learn to ski at such a young age, but their extremely small legs and arms and fearless attitude made them perfect ski students. Most kids learned to ski independently by the end of their six-week session, despite the few negative incidents such as kids falling off the lift, running into other skiers, and crying for Mummy.

My most vivid memory was a very positive one. I taught a group of six kids where some needed more attention than others. There was a four-year-old boy who was a natural and able to ski right away. He was skiing by himself by the second week, turning by week four, and speeding down the hill by the end of the session. He never needed help, so I turned my attention to the others. At the end of the season, his father approached me and said, "(Mikey) has had so much fun in Kinderski. I was so afraid he would not like it. But now he can ski with me, thanks to you." And he gave me a gift certificate. I'm not sure how much I actually taught that boy, but I knew that I done something good.

I spent my first high school summers teaching part time as a soccer referee. One game that resonates with me happened when I refereed the small kids, from age 6 to 10. These parents were vocal about their children; they were very competitive, even though their children didn't know what it meant to compete. I was refereeing at a girls' game and called an offside penalty. One parent was not happy with the call and started to yell at me. I tried to ignore him, but his voice was so loud, it had attracted the attention of other parents and some of the players. I walked over to him and asked him to be quiet, explaining that he was interrupting the play. He called me a bitch and said I couldn't referee to save my life. I walked away, stunned and unsure how to respond. I started the game again. Thankfully, his yelling turned to grumbling. It was my first negative experience with parents during my jobs.

As I got older, I spent my summers teaching full-time at the Malvern tennis facility. I was outdoors five days and two nights a week. It was a long and tough summer, but I loved tennis and being outside.
I taught with an instructor called John who had been working there for three years. I noticed right away that more kids were showing up for the camp than space allowed. Some were older kids who didn’t seem to fit in. While we took attendance, we divided the students into two groups. John took these older kids with him, and I would see them teaching the lessons to the beginners while he was teaching one kid by himself. I soon realized that John was running private lessons during his city instruction time, charging the single older kid and still receiving pay cheques for the groups he did not teach. I was shocked by the situation, yet too quiet and insecure to say anything.

One day, John came up to me and said that he was going to a tournament with some kids and would not be at Malvern that day. “Could you sign me in anyway?” I was scared to respond, but plucked up enough courage to deny him his request. He tried to charm me, persuade me, but I was already angry enough from his scam that I refused. I didn’t know how he solved his problem, but I do know that he was discovered by the facility manager and was fired. I remember he made a big fuss, shouting and cursing. I thought that he had no right to act that way because what he did was wrong.

PRE-SERVICE SPACES

At York, each candidate was matched with an Adjunct Professor, a liaison between the university, host teachers and candidates. Mine was the teacher-librarian of my host school. Her first words to the group were, “Don’t get in the way of the teachers; they don’t care who you are.” She spoke to us around a large table in one of the university classrooms. The candidates looked around at each other nervously. As she continued, no one responded. It was dead quiet. I felt disconnected and began to worry.

On our first visit to her school, she introduced the candidates to their host teachers. When it was my turn, I was suddenly alone with her. We began a short superficial discussion about routines, but she was intimidating. I felt extremely isolated and anxious like a frightened animal backed into a corner. I reached out by apologizing, trying to bridge the emotional gap between us. Maybe, I had offended her. She responded with a cackle, an evil laugh accompanied by the statement, “You’ll never make it in teaching. You should just leave now.” And, she turned and walked away, leaving me standing there in shock. My heart
dropped into my stomach, and it took every bit of strength to hold back tears for the rest of the day.

I wanted to leave her group immediately. Thinking of spending the next year with her put knots in my stomach. When I approached my supervising professor, she offered two solutions, a group discussion with a mediator or a switch to another school group. I chose the latter, and I am so glad I did. My new adjunct professor, a veteran Grade Four teacher, led my new group. He was one year away from retirement and insisted on being called by his first name, Brendan. I felt welcomed and needed. Brendan's first words to me were what I believed should be said to all teacher candidates: “Teaching can be fun. Everyday is new. Try to enjoy it.”

My first year of practicum consisted of a weekly visit to my host teacher's classroom, in which I gradually moved from observation to teaching full units. This routine ended with a two-week block in May. I was placed in a Grade Four class with an older, female teacher who used traditional methods, but kept an open mind. I enjoyed participating in many activities and took advantage of opportunities such as teaching integrated units, team-teaching and initiating special events. She once told me that she drove like a maniac using her "lead foot". It was the first time I had ever heard that expression. More than that, I was surprised that such a small, old, conservative lady could be a speed demon in her car.

The next year, I was in a visual art education class with six other intermediate/senior education students as we began our subject-specific learning. My supervising professor surprised us, informing us that she was not an education professor, but a visual art professor and that she had absolutely no knowledge of the concurrent program or current issues in education. She thought that we, the students should lead the course and she should facilitate. I liked the freedom, but felt wary of having an untrained person evaluating my practicum. It didn't surprise me that the faculty had to hire her. I guess visual art education professors are few and far between.

My professor, Mrs. S, shared her specialized knowledge and invited us to places that were part of her artistic experience. We initiated all the assignments and conducted many of the lectures and seminars, whether they were based in art or education. Although there were no major problems, I thought the course definitely did not connect art to the
classroom. At the end, I felt I was back where I started, as if I didn't really learn anything. And it didn’t help that my host teacher was difficult. I made a promise to myself that, in the future, I could teach this visual art education course better.

For my visual art practicum, I was placed in a secondary school and continued my weekly visits. What I had hoped to be the best experience resulted in the worst practicum of the three schools. My host teacher, Mr. D, was a middle-aged male who was stubborn, emotionally indifferent and did not embrace the liberal art education that I was taught at York. We clashed on many ideas, with regards to both art and education. He scolded me on how I laughed when I was nervous or how I joked with the students. And Mrs. S saw me only once at the school, and didn’t offer office hours to talk about it. I began to feel small and insecure, quickly regressing to the quiet little girl who stayed in for recess to avoid people. I never slept the night before my teaching day with him. And, at the same time, I felt shortchanged because no one was helping me. I was losing faith in the program and couldn’t wait for it to be over. Mr. D said that I should learn not laugh because teaching is serious and students will not take you seriously if you show emotion. I disagreed but couldn’t tell him. Not being able to say things was a constant in my experience at this school.

My third and final practicum was surprisingly the best, even though I cared little for my second teachable subject. I worked at Dad’s school with a history and law teacher, who was very amicable and supportive of any initiatives that I had. In fact, some of the strangest lesson plans happened in his Grade Eleven History class. I conducted an Egyptian art history critique and invited my brother to discuss Greek philosophy. He enjoyed all these surprising, cutting-edge lessons, and encouraged me to experiment as much as I wanted. My supervisor, a media professor, was also very supportive and kind. I remember him giving me documents and discussing my portfolio with me.

TEACHING SPACES

In June 1995, the principal offered me the position of teaching yearbook the following September. The teacher who had held the position was transferring to another school. I had been teaching full time for three months as an art and computer studies teacher. Many teachers regarded the yearbook course as a difficult assignment and I
became aware of the negative feelings it elicited. However, as a young teacher, I felt that I was not in a position to refuse the principal’s request.

I accepted the assignment and held the position until June 1999. It was difficult teaching the course during the first year because there were no resources, no support and little information about the subject. I worked many hours outside of class and during the summer in order to finish the book. However, I enjoyed it more than all my other courses because it was different from all other classes. The students and I worked collaboratively together to create a book that represented a melding of all our ideas.

My second year teaching the course was spent more on creating a curriculum that would empower the students to produce the book themselves. A new group of students met their deadlines while I reviewed final drafts only, removing myself from the hands-on work. I was more organized and better able to teach the course. However, other factors interrupted the flow of the course such as requiring the services of a new publishing company and a new principal who watched the budget scrupulously.

During my third time teaching yearbook, I created a curriculum that let students work independently and efficiently to meet my primary objective for the course: to complete the yearbook. I wanted to communicate my ideas to other yearbook teachers who were experiencing the same difficulties that I had encountered in the past. I initiated a workshop that was made available to all yearbook teachers in the Board. I discussed and shared my curriculum with the new yearbook teacher who would be taking my place when I began my leave of absence (Lara, autobiography, 2003).
My dad had two people whom he believed helped him become the professional he is today: his grandmother, Memere, and his father. Both are depicted here, separate but in the same style of drawing. Without them, his panel would be empty of school experiences.
SCHOOL SPACES

Things got darker for me. Especially when I went to the mental ward. It came to a point where I was unable to cope with life at home. This resulted in my admittance to a psychiatric ward, a section of the local hospital. I wasn't asked if I wanted help; I was suddenly told that I was going to the hospital. I don't remember who told me, but she was behind it.

When I first arrived, I didn't talk. I used to look out at the canoe club and the waters through my window. It took me weeks to speak up. I was probably having a breakdown. Finally, I befriended the staff and opened myself up. I was admitted at Christmas and left in June, and I didn't want to leave. I finally felt safe and secure.

I spoke to my doctor twice during my six-month stay. The first time I saw him was for two minutes and I didn't say a word. The second time, during the middle of my stay, he said, "If you can't cope, you must leave. Otherwise, it will break you."

When I got home, she said she would give me time to adjust, but that there were still expectations. I thought it was going to be different but things ended up being the same. So, at sixteen years old, I took my doctor's advice and left home.

When I returned home, I tried doing high school courses through correspondence but it was frustrating juggling school and working at the mines. It didn't work. I used the money to buy cars, and the academics went out the window. With my first car, I was driving in a snowstorm and hit the front of another car, taking the engine out. I was charged and had to pay the insurance. With my second car, a guy hit me and drove me into a pole. In the hospital, the nurses told me that I was wrapped around a fire hydrant and could have been killed. I still had to pay off the car, so I was broke and couldn't work to pay for it. It was hard.

PRE-SERVICE SPACES

For ten dollars, a Ryerson professor told me what career direction I should take and where I should look for a job. I needed more than ten dollars worth of advice. I needed
mentoring. But, there was little to no career counselling at Ryerson. He told me to go into accounting, marketing or sales. He also said that I shouldn't go into technologies or engineering. I'm not sure why.

I took finance and computers since I'm good at math. I've always been good with figures but I didn't get all the training. I should be in sales but I didn't have the confidence. When I worked at IBM, in the finance department, I felt like a glorified clerk and didn't see a future in it. IBM was too big, a huge monstrosity of a business. I worked hard to get my CGA (Certified General Accountant certificate), but took too much time doing it. I should have my CA (Certified Accountant) status, but I don't.

I had not completely fallen off the path of my professional journey. I worked in different directions with limited results. My father was a general accountant at INCO, which partially referenced my life, but the ten-dollar special said I had to choose. So I chose accounting. I believe finance is a skill. Marketing is not. The world runs on finance, not marketing. There is a lot of insecurity in marketing jobs whereas accounting is safer, whether you are in a big company or small company. I wasn't happy doing these financial jobs, anyway.

When I arrived at Lakehead University to begin my one year of teachers college, I found my room and met my roommate. I chose residency because I was unsure of the off-campus housing; I had no idea what Thunder Bay was like. It was easier to stay within the school sphere. I met people and took a general tour of the place. Upon entering the common house, all my housemates saw me and said, "The silver fox is here!" (I was already grey, at that time). They wanted me to be housemaster, their surrogate father figure. All I wanted to do was adjust to this new environment, being away from my family and getting through the year. But being an easily persuaded person (that's my problem, I'm always trying to please people), I accepted the position. I didn't want extra responsibility, especially being responsible for young people at university. But I did enjoy the limelight and the attention.

My classes were boring - they didn't do too much for me, but some of the teachers were good. The primary/junior crafts class was artistic and creative, which I liked. I got many great ideas from that. We also took an audio/visual class, which included learning to cut and paste pictures properly and use the 16mm projector. The history of education
course was a disaster since I didn’t study for the preliminary exam in October. It was worth 40% of my final mark, and in a snap - it was gone. After that scare, I slowed down the partying, cutting out Tuesday nights. It was getting out of hand.

My greatest learning experiences were in the classroom, practice teaching. My first school was River St. Public School, down at the waterfront. It was completely open concept with no walls. I was with these little Grade Twos and a mean host teacher. I remember a Grade Six class watching a show on the VCR and we heard and saw what they were watching. More time was spent educating the little ones to walk along that ‘invisible corridor’ than spent on academics. We taught them where to walk because there were no halls or walls to guide them. We spent so much time figuring that out!

I would never want to be in an open concept classroom again. Structure is important. Artificial structure is as important as educational structure, against the openness, which is flimsy and unknown. It’s great to be global but we still need managing structures.

I also remember the other Grade Two class next to us where the teacher set up a fridge box theatre. One day, their class was having a birthday party and playing in the theatre, with puppets and everything. Their teacher gave my host teacher and me a piece of cake. All of my little Grade Twos watched the teacher and me, with our cake. I felt terrible. I had to give back my cake. I said, ‘I can’t accept this’. I was embarrassed. It was a terrible thing to do to these kids. It wasn’t right.

TEACHING SPACES

I bounced between Boards, sometimes getting three calls in the morning. I would have worked for Scarborough if they were hiring. Their interview process was impersonal, basically “hello, way you go!”, and there was no problem getting on their list. Metro was a bit more critical, but nothing to get worried about. Durham was like the inquisition. They questioned me in a long extensive process, asking why I wanted to work for them, or was I worthy of them. Being honest, I told them I was working for other boards and they were disgruntled, wondering why. Excuse me?! I have bills to pay. It was as if they didn’t want me to work anywhere else, but they weren’t going to guarantee me work. “Are you going to give
me a contract?” “No,” they said, “we’ll call you when we need to.” For the interview, I smiled and said the right things, and I got on their list. But I continued working for the boards. It worked most of the time. If more than one board called, I just told another that I wasn’t available.

A dilemma arose during my second year of supplying. I resigned from the Scarborough Board because of their lack of calls and work, and continued supplying for Durham and Metro. A LTO (long-term occasional job) came up at Durham, needing me for three weeks in one class. I took it and told Metro that I wasn’t available during that time. Even though it was full-time work, Durham still refused me a contract. They wouldn’t commit themselves to me. The three weeks turned into two months, right up until Christmas. At this point, I was afraid to lose Metro; I signed a written contract with them as a supply teacher. Durham, however, didn’t even give me a paper. I was at their whim, put on a list that didn’t exist.

When Durham asked me to return after Christmas, I needed to know for how long. I needed to make a decision and choose a Board. If I said yes to the LTO, I would resign from Metro. Durham could not tell me how long the LTO would be and they still refused to sign a contract. So, I said no to the LTO. Maybe I should have told them before Christmas, but I sat on the fence for too long. They were upset with me, scrambling to fill my place. They took me off their supply list and let me go. If they had just given me a commitment, I would have stayed with them. Luckily, it didn’t matter. In September, I got a full-time job with Metro, as a Grade Four teacher. Had I stayed with Durham, I wonder what would have happened? I may have advanced further. Durham was growing. I could have been a vice-principal or department head. Who knows?

When I started teaching business in secondary school, I realized that the students taking business courses don’t realize its importance. The world is business. It doesn’t matter that people become engineers, nurses, doctors, lawyers or whatever. You have to have business acumen. You have to have some sort of business background in order to function in the work world - the world outside school. The schools have diminished the need for business so much so that everybody wants to do science and math. They all want to go to
university, and take math and science courses. Why this narrowed focus on specific subject areas in university when there are colleges and other routes?

Students take business courses because they can't handle the science and math. They see business as a bird course. Now that I have developed the expertise as a business teacher, the students, or "clientele", are either not interested, or they're not operating at the level of which they are capable. They either don't get it or they don't care. So, here I am, my level of knowledge has gone up, but my client's level has gone down. I have to water everything down, which is very unsatisfying (Dad, autobiography, 2003).
This is a drawing of my mum and her best friend and teaching partner, Pat, surrounded by balloons as they pose for a photo. They are celebrating their retirement. This image provides a summary for my mum's many school experiences.
MUM

SCHOOL SPACES

My high school guidance counsellor, who was really the math teacher, sent me to places where I could get a job using science and math. He sent me to the eye infirmary for a job interview as a technician. The job description made it sound easy, performing routine tests on little kids and stuff like that. It was ‘airy-fairy’ and didn’t require much schooling, skill or intellect. In the waiting room, I sat with four other girls. We chatted, telling each other what school we went to and what we were doing. When they said where they were from, I knew they attended public schools, which is the equivalent to Canadian private schools. As intimidating as it seemed, I knew I was smarter than them. I had more education than them because I had my “highers” (equivalent to OAC courses). Later, I received a letter saying that I didn’t get the job. Looking back, I was probably overqualified. At the time, I sensed the employer knew I was not from a private school, maybe through my accent or mannerisms, something about the way I spoke or dressed.

PRE-SERVICE SPACES

The college was in a beautiful old building. I shared a room with two other girls in the upper attic. We were expected to eat all our meals in the refectory. Every table had to take a turn at serving the meals to everyone else. We were also expected to attend mass every Monday, Wednesday and Friday, before lectures in the morning. Tuesday and Thursday were optional. We attended lectures five days a week and Saturday morning until noon. After that, we were free to leave until Sunday, returning at 5:00pm for Benediction.

I learned to smoke at college. There was only one room for smoking, and my friends would often go there, so I went and ended up smoking with them.

The sisters of Notre Dame were a teaching order and ran the college. There were also lay instructors. The nuns were divided into two distinct groups, those who lectured and those who did domestic chores, and everyone could see the pecking order amongst the nuns.

Mother Superior was the administrator and gave lectures to us about "ladylike behaviour" and acceptable summer job prospects. She always said, "Ladies do not sell
strawberries in the basement of Simpson's!" If only she knew that I spent my summers working in a whiskey factory. I worked there for the month of July and travelled in August. My first summer, Anne and I hitchhiked across Scotland. The second summer, we visited Ireland and, in our last summer, we travelled across Europe.

There was a nun who spoke in olde English, and, when boys phoned after curfew, she answered the only telephone and said, "Be gone varlat! The maidens are abed." She taught Theology and Sanity on Saturday mornings ("Is there a stone too heavy that God cannot lift?!"). She always ignored the clock that signalled the end of class, worrying the girls about missing their bus. We all thought she was hard of hearing. One girl brought in an alarm clock, a little travelling clock that collapsed into a case. We hoped its loud ring would catch Sister's attention. It was set to go off at the end of class, but it rang before the real clock did. The girl tried desperately to turn it off, and it collapsed on itself and clattered to the floor. Dead silence, while we waited to see what the nun would do. The real bell rang. She glared at us over the rims of her glasses and slammed her book shut. She gathered her long skirt and strode out the door, like royalty. We paused for a moment before we burst out laughing.

There was a really old nun who worked in a science lab in the school. She didn't teach, but she was always at mass. She looked to be a hundred years old. I found out later that she discovered the amoeba.

During our practicum session, there were four students assigned to each school, and one had to accompany the nun who supervised their teaching. My friends and I would draw lots to see who had to sit next to the nun on public transportation and talk with her. We dreaded it. It wasn't like today where students can be open and friendly with their teachers. We had to be prim and proper, spoke when spoken to. When we returned after teaching, we lined up outside our lecturer's door for our "crits" - criticisms on how well or poorly we had done that day in school. The classroom teacher had little to say about our teaching. Only the college personnel evaluated our teaching.
IN-SERVICE SPACES

Maria, a Scottish teacher who I met at St. Mary’s, had said to me that I should go back to school and get a university degree. I thought that would be a hard thing to do. But she laughed and said, “No! If I can do it, you can too! You’ll never earn the big bucks without a degree.” So, I talked to the universities to see if I could get credit for my schooling in Scotland. I sent my paperwork to the University of Toronto and started a Bachelor of Arts degree, taking accounting courses. I chose accounting because I thought I should take something that Dad could help me with, and I knew that I wouldn’t get credit for it, since I had never taken accounting before. They subsequently responded that they wouldn’t consider any of my work because it was primary, Grades One to Three. They didn’t understand that, in Scotland, primary meant elementary, Grades One to Seven.

While doing my degree at University of Toronto, York University offered me 6 credits for my Scottish education, so I switched to York. I began in 1972 and graduated in 1978. I took psychology and I made sure to take courses with no presentations or essays, only tests. I wasn’t comfortable talking in front of people and I didn’t have much confidence in my essay writing. Psychology always had multiple-choice exams.

I was never on time once. I was even late for the exams. I was always rushing with all the things I had to do. One time, the professor was handing back the exams and I was late as usual. I sat down, realizing I would have to wait until break to get my paper back. The person beside me leaned over and whispered, “Someone got 100% on their exam.” Wow, I thought, that person must be smart. At break, I picked up my paper and looked at the mark. I got the 100%! I thought to myself, “I am as smart as the other people here.”

TEACHING SPACES

Every morning, all the Kindergarten students came together, the kids sitting on the carpet and Pat, my teaching partner and I at the front. We did our introductory song, the calendar, and the weather. We did creative movements, where we would listen to music and dance. Then, we split into two groups to do a directed activity. For playtime, there were two areas; a large area housed the sandbox, water table, bikes and other large equipment, and the other area had smaller activities like puzzles, blocks, and Lego. Play is very important.
You can learn a lot from children by watching the way they play. Observing who was doing what, we tracked the kids. We had a lot of fun together and we did that for ten years.

I was lucky when I began in Special Education because the vice-principal had been a resource person in that area. She knew everything and was very helpful. I was so surprised by the paperwork; there were always mountains of paperwork to do. I had to complete a four-page booklet for each child when I was reviewing the children in November. In my first year, I received a bunch of new kids and needed to write a detailed account to be presented at the annual review, to see what would happen to them. I felt I didn’t know them well enough to write about them. I talked to their present teachers who, of course, didn’t know them that well yet. And I talked to their past teachers to get a sense of who they were. I wanted to be able to get a handle on them, not short-change them. A quote that struck a chord and remained in my mind reminds me of them; “There is nothing more unequal than the equal treatment of unequals.”

I realized that I had to slow everything down for these students. It was no different from my downtown school, except there was no ESL. As time passed, the demographics of the neighbourhood changed. The socio-economic mix became interesting: low rental housing was built next to the very expensive houses on Huntingwood. As they built more, we began to see a cross-section of people.

The first ethnic group to move into the neighbourhood was Chinese. That was when ESL was brought in. At one point, we had three ESL and three Special Education teachers because of the shift in the school community. We began to see more behavioural and social problems, and academic delays. We were designated an inner city school in order to get more funding because we had so many low-functioning children.

Over the years, many Chinese people moved north to Markham, and new groups of immigrants moved in, mostly Ethiopian, Sri-Lankan people. As well as not speaking English, many of these kids had little schooling experience. Some were twelve years old and had never been to school in their own country. These kids had very high needs (Mum, autobiography, 2003).
colour

seen by the way light reflects off an object
How colour behaves in relation to other colours and shapes is a complex area of colour theory. Successful design requires an awareness of how and why colours communicate meaning. People associate colour with familiar things. Occurrences of colours in nature are universal and timeless. Other meanings may be more complex and, sometimes, negative. Does blue remind you of sadness or the bright, clear sky?
(Colour Matters, colour theory 2008).
Colour theory is written about more often than any other element of design. More than its definition illustrates, a colour is important because of its visual impact within specific colour combinations. For example, the primary colours are red, blue and yellow, and these colours can be combined to make all other colours. Certain colours placed together will produce a physiological response. When an artist decides to use colour, she will change how the viewer will respond to the art. What response she wants depends on the colours she uses.

Within the broad area of colour theory are several sub-topics. The science of colour studies colour's relationship to optics, light, and biology. Colour is central to marketing and business studies. What interests me is the study of colour and emotional response. The artist tries to specify the colours or colour combinations that appear harmonious, or discordant, depending on what she wants to communicate. However, her viewers might respond differently according to their own experiences.

Blue is often judged as a sad colour, especially when used with sad lines or shapes such as teardrops or vertical thin lines. Blue becomes electric when placed close to the colour orange. Or, for some, blue can be happy because it reminds them of the clear sky, their cottage lake, or a favourite sweater.

I use the element of colour to illustrate the feelings my parents and I associate with our teaching experiences. "Colours, like features, follow the changes of the emotions" (Picasso, 1885). As I reviewed our autobiographies, I visualized the stories in colour, different colours depending on the elicited emotion. I found I was overwhelmed with the array of almost infinite colours, finding it difficult to translate and organize my images and words. I needed to find an image that would communicate the colours I associate with specific emotions.

During my doctoral studies, I participated in an exercise from The Post-modern Educator (Diamond & Mullen, 1999) that utilized a framework called 'The Teacher I Am, The Teacher I Fear to Be, The Teacher I Hope to Become' (p. 74). In this exercise, my fellow students and I compiled a list of descriptors, words to identify our teacher selves as explained by the framework, and categorized these words under the framework's three headings. The first category, the teacher I am, "shows which qualities (we) perceive
ourselves as embodying” (p. 74), the second category, the teacher I fear to be, illustrates
the traits we despise and wish to shed, and the last category, the teacher I hope to
become, describes characteristics important to us, that we aspire to incorporate into our
teacher selves.

I completed the exercise by reflecting on my past teaching experiences and what
emotions they elicited. I wrote words and drew pictures as the memories started to flow.
When thinking of the teacher I am, I thought of the words or phrases that teachers used
when they worked at school such as ‘announcements’, ‘bell’ or ‘principal’. I mentally
reviewed my daily work in images similar to watching a film. I focused on specific scenes
that produced strong emotions, situations in which I reacted angrily and became frustrated
or in which I felt thrilled and excited. It was easy for me to find and categorize the
emotions for the teacher I feared and admired. Some of the words and art I used worried
me in that it clearly depicted how strongly I felt, especially when discussing the fearful
aspects of my teacher self. I was convinced I would be alone in feeling this way.

The following artwork is an interpretation of Diamond and Mullen's framework, and
an integration of some of the words and images from the exercise. I chose specific colours
that represented for me these three categories, analogous to my responses to certain
events in my teaching experiences: red and black for fear, light blue and lilac for hope, and
yellow and orange for my daily experience. Some of these colours are commonly associated
with their respective emotions: I remembered well-used adages such as ‘I was so angry, I
was seeing red’ or ‘rose-coloured glasses’ while I was contemplating which colours to use.
Upon deciding, I deliberately chose the lines and shapes to enhance the connection between
the colour and emotional responses. Again, I reflected on commonly seen objects like
lightning strikes for fear or calm waves for contentment when I chose my lines and shapes.
In this chapter, I choose stories of my parents and me that depict circumstances in which we responded a particular way, perhaps with anger, with excitement, or in a predictable manner. The preceding illustration inspired the following stories; I connected words from the image to a story of an event and subsequent feeling and behavior. I graphically altered the font of the words to visually imitate the words in the image and placed them at the bottom of the page, on top of the colours from which they came. I replicate the colours, lines and shapes indicate which area of the illustration to which they refer.

Similar to my use of Veale’s ‘snapshots’ (2000), I provide a series of quick stories that portray a moment in time with the intent of rousing the same emotion my parents or I felt. These stories further illustrate positive and negative spaces in our daily work, and disclose our behaviours in reaction to these events. I want my audience to feel how we felt, and imagine those feelings in colour.

The three constructs of self represent leading players in the unfolding drama of our professional development...

We experiment with permutations of self to explore their developmental possibilities

(Diamond & Mullen, 1999, p. 73)
These two images are indicative of my frustration as a visual art secondary school teacher. The dripping paintbrush is coloured in red, a hue of anger for me. And this photo was taken during a class I was teaching, and clearly shows my sadness with my circumstance.
During my first education practicum, I have a vivid memory that involved a behavioural student in the Grade Four class. He was blond, disheveled, and always talking out of place. He wasn’t rude or manipulative, he just didn’t fit in. After teaching a lesson, I circulated around the room to see how the students were working. As I approached this boy’s desk, I noticed a picture on his binder, strategically placed behind his blank worksheet.

“What’s this?” I asked. He pulled his binder away from me, trying to shove everything into his desk. I reached over, took hold of his binder, and looked at his papers. It was a torn-out centerfold of a naked woman. I didn’t know what to do.

“Where did you get this?” He just looked at me. I called over my host teacher and showed her the picture. She pursed her lips, asked the student to stand up and led him out the door. I continued teaching the lesson, and never found out what happened to him. I thought to myself, ‘Hmmm, teaching this class is going to be interesting’ (Lara, autobiography, 2003).
I taught a Grade Nine art class one semester. One day, I was marking papers while my students were finishing an art project. I don’t know if I was tired, or felt overwhelmed, but the normal student chatter began to bother me. I looked around at the students and saw one chewing gum. I felt a swell of resentment; students knew that they weren’t to chew gum for safety reasons. I asked him to throw it in the garbage. He ignored me, and I persisted. After insisting a third time, he finally threw away the gum. A few minutes later, I saw him chewing a fresh piece, and looking at me with that look, the one that says, ‘Ha ha, I got you!’ I thought to myself, ‘Is this what I have to put up with? This immaturity and silliness from a pre-pubescent boy?’ Feeling the anger building inside me, I blurted out to him,

“I can see you chewing, you stupid idiot!”

He stared at me and stopped chewing. He threw out the second piece and began working. My face was hot from anger and I had to breathe deeply to grab hold of myself before I said something worse (Lara, autobiography, 2003).
High school physics was so difficult for me. After my problems with calculus, I was not ready to jump through hoops for science and math again. Three days in and I called it quits. My physics teacher talked about how he loved science and has never done anything else. I thought to myself, "I don't like Physics. I don't need it for my Bachelor of Fine Arts program. Why am I doing it? Why?" I couldn't answer with more than 'everyone else is doing it'. So, I dropped physics. I did complete my Chemistry OAC course. I liked Chemistry. I was good at drawing the molecule diagrams.

In retrospect, I realized that this was the beginning of many teachable moments. I always told my art students that if you love art, you must pursue it. And no matter what your parents or the government says about the importance and stability of science and math, you must do what you love. Otherwise, you will be unhappy, spending the rest of your life trying to please others.

I really enjoyed teaching the Grade Twelve Computer Art course and was sad to witness its demise. Both the students and I were free to explore and be creative, working outside the boundaries of traditional art. Even under the duress of an overbearing Business department head and a lack of working computer and resources, we all had a lot of fun. Ironically, I also liked teaching Grade Nine Visual Art. I found that Grade Nine students were still in "elementary" mode and having a straight-forward, structured routine helped them function as high school students. It seemed logical to teach them this way because it was easy and suited to the craziness of my first year of teaching (Lara, autobiography, 2003).
This multi-media image uses photo, pencil, paint and crayon. It is my vision of my step-grandmother, a scary, spider-like creature who sits in a cobwebbed corner of my dad’s mind, sending out threads to remind him of his anger and resentment.
I needed to make the career change. My decision involved paralleling, doing something new without giving up my financial situation or starting all over again. Otherwise, I would have gone back to sales. It was a compromise to go into teaching because if I had gone back to sales, I would have to go into a risky area, which meant a sacrifice on the family's part, both in time and finance. It wasn't fair to them that I start from scratch, either, and give up all that I accomplished for a second career. I was never worried about success. I was more concerned about stability, finances and time. I had already tried sales and in the short term, it wasn't the most profitable way to go (Dad, autobiography, 2003).
There were times when I became impatient with some students, and identified those who were bad by making them wear stickers from the top of wine bottles or bananas. I didn’t care where on their face they put it; I was already annoyed with them. One girl put it on her forehead, and her brother made fun of her. Racial slurs were said and caused more politically incorrect problems for me. It never used to be that way, but I could see that society was changing and many things were no longer innocent. Instead, they were issues.

I started calling students “clients” when I started losing respect for them. The government refers to them as clients so I’m being facetious in my response. A gradual change occurred after the social contract was implemented, and the never-ending strikes. Over this period of time, my views changed. The whole system has deteriorated since. The attitudes of the students, administration, and teachers have changed, and they have all detached themselves from the others. There’s a loss of continuity and connection between these groups. It has had an impact. I see it as three groups functioning separately amongst each other in an institution. Students disrespect the school by leaving food in the halls and there is no recourse for their behaviour. Administration urges teachers that “we must work together”, but teachers lack their support when disciplining students. A division exists. The system is broken and will never be the same again.

In the last five years, I have become more negative mainly because of my department. Sometimes, authority is given to teachers who shouldn’t be teaching. In my department, some teachers handle authority badly, while some teachers handle each other badly. They create riffs in relationships. I reached a point where my desire to teach high school was the only factor that overrode these negative circumstances, and it’s the only thing that keeps me going now. It is a matter of getting to the end of the road, and maintaining what I’m doing (Dad, autobiography, 2003).
At one point, I switched to from Grade Four to Grade Six. When we were doing our environmental unit, we discussed the problems with Styrofoam. The kids wanted to picket in front of a McDonald’s restaurant down the street from school. So, they organized it and invited other classes to join in. I was the only teacher who participated; some people thought “yes!” while others were mad. And McDonald’s wasn’t too thrilled, either.

In Grade Six, the religion program studies other denominations. I integrated this unit with a science project we were doing on life cycles. We watched mealworms turn into beetles. Unfortunately, the beetles continued their life cycle into death. So we made small matchbox coffins for the beetles and set up funeral pyres in tinfoil plates. The kids wrote prayers in different languages and from different religious texts. I liked the prayers the kids wrote for the beetles and their souls.

I remember spraying lighter fluid and setting fire to the coffins, hoping the vice-principal wouldn’t walk by. The flames soared three feet high. No, he wouldn’t have been impressed, but, man, we had fun (Dad, autobiography, 2003).
I chose this picture of my pregnant mum and my dad on Christmas Eve, three days before I was born, because it illustrates the beginning of many things that causes both heartache and happiness for my mum: teaching at St. Aidan's, an intense relationship with my dad, and caring for me and my brother.
One student I remember from my Grade One classes was a boy name Shane. His mother was very young when she had Shane. Her grandmother, Shane's great-grandmother, looked after Shane and her son, Shane's "uncle", an unmarried truck driver. Shane was a little, skinny, red-headed kid who looked like butter would melt in his mouth. But, he had the foulest language. He was a six-year-old racist! Shane had great difficulty controlling his temper. When he was angry, he would throw pencils, books, chairs, whatever was handy. And he always got into fights. His worst ones always involved a tall black girl who wasn't intimidated by him. One fight escalated to a point where he screamed at her, "I'm going to break every fucking white bone in your fucking black body!" He was getting his language and his racist attitude from an adult, no doubt the uncle.

For a short time, I was able to get an educational assistant (EA) from the Special Education department to help Shane. And she was a tall, black woman. She knew what he was like, so she sat down with him, and said, "I'm big, I'm black, and I'm mean." He glared at her, but didn't talk back to her. I felt bad for him; I could see a spark during those rare moments when he was engaged in some reading or math, but his behaviour always interfered with his learning.

We had so many meetings about him, trying to get him more help. It was such a lengthy process that took many months and involved so many different specialists. Eventually, Shane was formally assessed. And the moment we were ready to implement his new program, the family transferred him to the public school across the street (Mum, autobiography, 2003).
We bought a house and moved outside of the city. Bob got his job at IBM. It became very hectic for us. I travelled downtown to St. Mary's, rushed home, fed Lara, did some schoolwork, then homework, and rushed off to a university course. I remember cooking, studying for an exam, and talking to Lara, reviewing psychology definitions. Dad was also working and starting CGA courses at night. Life was busy. I worked, went to school, and had two babies.

We didn't have a washer or dryer. Every weekend, I took Lara to the Laundromat to do the wash. We took our books and crayons, and read or drew while the clothes were washed.

When I graduated in 1978, Bob stopped taking courses for his CGA. He only had three to go. He wasn’t happy with accounting, or many things, at that point. He went through a number of jobs at various companies such as IBM, Honeywell, Universal Studios, and Harlequin. He worked in finances and marketing. Bob had difficulty with people, and he would leave jobs or be fired. He had a hard time staying with a job. I remember coming home one night and finding him sitting on the stairs, crying. He had lost another job. And my heart hurt for him. He was constantly striving to get somewhere better, and getting frustrated. Sometimes, our marriage wasn’t good because he was so dissatisfied with himself (Mum, autobiography, 2003).
Pat and I often sat in a circle with the children and did all sorts of things. At the beginning of the year, we did an activity set up in stages to assess what the kids knew. In the first stage, each child received a ball of plasticene. We said, “We are going to show you something special. You can’t start playing until you hear the magic word.” We let the children choose the magic word. At first, they chose obvious ones like “Abracadabra”, but when we explained that any word can be magic, they chose interesting, funny words like “rainbow” and “french fries”. Then Pat and I would demonstrate by molding the plasticene into simple shapes such as two balls. Once we finished, we told the kids to make what we made and said the magic word to get them started. One of us would observe while the other demonstrated or helped the kids. For the second stage, we increased the level of difficulty by changing the shape, such as one ball and two snakes, or telling them what to make without a demonstration. These changes occurred over a long period of time. By the final stage, the kids were partnered and told each other what to make, so we were not the leaders in the activity anymore. This allowed us to see who understood, who performed, and who looked at what others were doing. We saw who was independently working and who needed help. We found out so much about their hand-eye coordination, listening, and motor skills from simply watching what happened in that circle. And we did it with sixty kids (Mum, autobiography, 2003).
The artist witnesses a transition in her work when she adds the element colour. Her black lines, flat shapes and non-descriptive spaces suddenly become vibrant with the different hues she has added. She sees the artwork in a different way and, perhaps, reflects on and changes her purpose. Her artistic process is affected by this new layer. The meaning of the artwork has changed.

This chapter delved deeper into the positive and negative teaching spaces and added a new layer; stories that connected teachers’ daily work to their feelings and responses. Some of the stories illustrated a teacher who reacted with anger, showed sadness and harboured regrets. Some show a teacher who found the good in a situation, recognized a special moment and was happy about it. Stories that convey how my parents and I feel when confronted with good and bad teaching experiences help to answer the question, “Did I fall back into teaching?”

As an artist-researcher, I added the next element of design, colour, to transform the understanding of my parents and me as teachers. We disclosed sensitive and intimate details. We became vulnerable to the audience who learned that we yelled, cried, and were disillusioned. We also showed confidence, persistence and inspiration. As I read the stories, I see my parents and me in various hues. Red, hot anger. Uplifting, ‘reach for the sky’ blue. The routine yellow of the sun I saw most days. As I analyze each tale, I can ask discomforting questions: was teaching a black, cynical experience? Was it rosy and pleasing? Which colour defines the teaching journey most clearly? I also wonder how strong do feelings must be before I consider whether they describe a ‘fallback’ behavior. How dark is disillusionment? How bright does the blue need to be to relieve cynicism?

We discount the idea of a singular truth, and competing selves. Our multiple selves are interconnected and with us in all our endeavours (Tierney, 1993, p. 129).
value

darkness or lightness of colour
Potters expect and frequently delight in color mutations. The very act of submitting wares to a trial by fire is a surrender of complete control. Those who use gas kilns and raku processes frequently marvel at the results.

On the other hand, commercial institutions invest substantial amounts of money and time into the importance of exact colour. Nothing can be more frustrating than discovering the colors of a web site are different on a client’s computer. Can we demand a logic for the things we can’t control?

(J.L. Morton, Colour Matters, 2008)
Value is an element that cannot exist without colour. Even shades of grey created through subtly combining certain amounts of white and black, are considered colours in all strands of colour theory. Yet, the meaning of a colour can change depending how dark or light it is. The example of blue being a sad or happy colour is made more complex when the artist makes it a light blue, or a dark blue. How does one feel about blue when it is transformed into a completely different colour?

My teacher selves are illustrated using specific colours in my artwork. Fear is black or red, hope is blue or lilac, and yellow and orange are my daily experience. Consequently, I equate darkness with fear and lightness with hope. Black is the embodiment of dark, and red remains a dark colour by nature; it becomes pink if lightened at all. Lilac is the lightest version of purple. And my happy, hopeful blue is a light blue.

The following stories uncover darker or brighter times during the journeys of my parents and me. I present negative or positive stories that subtly suggest a change in how we felt about teaching. Why did we feel dark and cynical about teaching, leading to disillusionment? What happened that lightened our minds and hearts and inspired us to continue teaching? These excerpts extend events of meaning and may have differently coloured our feelings, perhaps changing the path of our teaching journeys.
Here, I combine images of complexity in both form and content. They show a lengthy chronology of my life and the layering of elements as my panel nears completion.
I had many friends, but never had a boyfriend. Boys saw me as fat. Although I was not really fat, more pudgy than anything, I was bigger than most of the girls in my class. Once, a boy called me fat and I stayed in for recess, too afraid to face him outside. I lost the ‘fat stigma’ by Grade Eight, but, by then, I was already insecure about my body and self.

From very young, I was instilled with a sense of independence that was achieved through having a job. My father told me his story numerous times of how he worked the mines of Sudbury, leaving at sixteen to work in Toronto. My mother told me how she worked in the whiskey bonds of Glasgow, earning a shilling or something per bottle, and has hated the smell of whiskey since. I understood the meaning of work and embraced it when I took my first part-time job while in high school.

While working at Lakeridge resort, I became bored with skiing. The hill was very small and teaching there three times a week became tedious. As instructors, we were allowed to use the hills and borrow any equipment. My friend and I asked one of the snowboard instructors if he could teach us to snowboard. Our first lesson was difficult; we fell more than we stood up, and ended up with bruised pelvises, swollen knees, and a pair of broken sunglasses. My friend hated it and never got on a snowboard again. But I liked it. I saw myself teaching snowboarding, too. There were not many girls doing the sport, so I wanted to teach girls not to be afraid of a boys’ sport. After a few more lessons, I became quite good. I competed in some local competitions, and won a third prize, despite the fact that there were four entrants. The following year, I received my Level 1 Snowboard instructor certificate and taught snowboarding for three years afterwards, at different clubs in Toronto.

When I made friends through skiing and snowboarding, and wanted to sit with them, Dad always felt left out. Although he was friendly with the older instructors, he was angry at me sometimes, leaving him for other people. After a while, we stopped working there, and worked for other skiing companies together.

I also taught tennis indoors during the fall and winter months. Once, I substituted for another tennis instructor who taught at another tennis facility. It was a Sunday night
and I was not thrilled about having to go out in the cold to Scarborough to teach strangers at an unfamiliar place. They were adult students of intermediate ability, the majority of them older and male. I started with an easy warm-up exercise, discovering quickly that they were past this level and needed a challenge. So, I facilitated fast moving, quick paced drills and ended the evening with a round robin tennis game. At the end of the night, the students politely thanked me and said good-bye, nothing special or generous. As I gathered my things, two older men from the class passed by, discussing the drills. "I've never been worked that hard. That was great!" Even though they were not talking to me, I felt good.

My tennis achievements were always seen as more important than other sports. I knew my dad thought that I was able to achieve a level of competition that I didn't think I wanted or was capable of, but I always wanted to please him. He knew that I could not reach the high standards set in soccer or skiing, although he did try. He brought me to the try-outs for competitive soccer and enrolled me in ski racing. I was cut from both. I liked tennis a lot and I was good at it. I controlled the game, as it was not a team sport, and I could athletically handle it better than skiing.

I played in local tournaments and won, I played the community competitions and won. Dad believed I could play provincial, even professional tennis. He bought private lessons and paid for my membership in the Ontario tennis circuit. However, I never got past the first or second round of the tournaments I played there. One time, I luckily received a bye at the Durham round of the provincial competition and proceeded to the central Ontario round. Winning this tournament meant a place in the Ontario finals. My dad was so excited. He bought me more lessons, hoping it would help me. The day of the tournament, I met my opponent at 10:00am and finished twenty minutes later, scoring five points from her. She crushed me without breaking a sweat. I worried that Dad was disappointed, but he surprised me with sympathy, realizing that I was out of my league. It was a happy moment for both of us; I had made him proud and he, to this day, says to people, "See that Canadian player in Wimbledon, Lara played in the provincials with her...."

Thinking that was the high point of my tennis career, I happily took another chance at tennis when I made the York varsity tennis team for a year. Again, Dad was excited, especially after seeing my bright white York tracksuit, t-shirts, and shorts. I was surprised
to attend so many tournaments because I was a substitute player. Most girls had been with the team for at least a year, and were very experienced players, so I felt lucky to play alongside them.

My big moment in varsity tennis was playing doubles with the team at home, in the York University stadium. This was no mere university court; this was where Canada hosted an international tournament. My games were slotted for Centre court, the same court where many famous players had played. My dad attended most of my tournaments, but this one was different and my whole family came to watch. It was a fine game; I don't remember who won or lost. The moment that stuck in my mind occurred after the game. I was walking with some of my tennis friends, with my family trailing behind. Dad kept interrupting our conversation, wanting to talk to them and be a part of the group. I gave him looks, silently telling him to go away, but he didn't understand. Finally, I said that I would meet him later with Mum and Marc, my brother. He became angry and grumbled “go to hell”, storming off. I knew he was angry because I, once again, deserted him for others, but I was angry because this was my day, not his. We didn't talk comfortably for a while. I was dropped from the varsity team the following year. I explained to Dad that I wanted to play for fun, and I will never be the next Steffi Graf. He has difficulty understanding my lack of competitiveness, but we still play together.

I also experienced moments that tested my confidence in art. In my Grade Twelve art class, we were trying to create abstract art by doing an exercise with colour and paint application. My friend, Jamie, was frustrated with his work, which was a large white sheet with three stripes of yellow, green and blue, and a large, wet, red circle. Miss B said it was missing something. I looked at his work, and said, "I know what's missing." And before he could say anything, I pounded my fist down on the blob of red paint and slid it across the stripes. James yelled, "What are you doing?", but his face of horror soon turned to surprise. His static painting had become dynamic. The large dot transformed into a series of fast moving lines that cut open the stripes, revealing many exciting shapes and colours. James gave me the painting after he received his A.

During the OAC mid-term, after receiving mediocre marks in visual art, I contemplated ways to make my last project work. I remained committed to my theme, snow,
skiing and snowboarding, but I needed to connect them to a general, broader topic that affected other people. One afternoon, watching T.V. in a daze with my sketchpad on my lap, a funny commercial caught my eye. A boy who was chewing gum perked up as a voiceover said, "How long does Trident gum last?". Then, a large group of cows in a pink Cadillac drove past the boy into the background as he says "Until the cows come home." Ha ha. Not that funny. But the cow image and the punch line got me thinking. I muttered to myself, "...until the cows come home", reflecting on how things shouldn't end and, when they do, it's as shocking as cows driving a car. I thought about snow and skiing and how weather conditions due to global warming and environmental disruption have resulted in warm weather, shorter ski seasons and less snow. I drew madly, creating images of cows, hills, and skiers. I filled my information file with all my thoughts and drawings. The result was three wonderful paintings, a triptych in retrospect, illustrating my environmental concerns. Cows on skis, surfing muddy hills, into a disturbing abstract sunset. I made it work and ended up with 90% as a final grade.

During my second practicum at a high school, I felt my self-confidence as a teacher was tested. My host teacher had an impromptu meeting about multiculturalism with other staff members and teacher candidates. The teachers excitedly discussed the topic, while the candidates rarely spoke. One teacher talked at length of the unequal funding for religious school systems. He felt it unfair that Catholics received full government funding and other religious educators did not. Bringing the subject into his personal sphere, he mentioned that his son will be attending university, but his daughter would not because their culture dictates that she must stay at home. I felt angry that this person with so much authority can be so blind to his unjust actions towards his daughter. How will she feel when her Canadian friends go to university and she can't? Again, I wanted to say something but couldn't. I felt I had no voice. It was probably my fault for not being confident enough to speak.

During my time in the Bachelor of Education program, I developed some personal theories about teacher education. I questioned the qualifications of some of my professors and their experience in education. This led me to believe that education professors should be educators themselves; they should have experience in teaching students at the subject
and level that they guide teacher candidates to teach. For example, I thought I was missing things in my experience with visual art education because my professor did not have the knowledge or experience to share more with me. The theory of education plays an important role in teacher education and the practice is indispensable. I often hear teachers say that the practice teaching taught them more than any course they attended. It helps if the professor can share practicum or teaching experiences that relate to the circumstances the teacher candidates face in the classroom.

My first term of teaching consisted of two Grade Nine Visual Art classes, a Grade Twelve Computer Art class and a Grade Ten Computer Technology class. Because of my background in computer design, I was able to teach Computer classes. I began teaching the Art classes in a small classroom adjacent to Mrs. R. This classroom was much smaller than hers and had only one small sink installed in a corner by the door. I taught the computer classes in a room “belonging” to the Business department, a cause for many political battles, ultimately terminating the future of any more computer art classes.

After teaching high school for nearly four years, I took a leave to finish my Masters of Arts. Many people didn’t understand why I would want to pursue graduate studies in education if I wanted to stop teaching high school. As I reflected on this thought, I acknowledged that I had my share of students who made me laugh, smile, feel proud, but it did not outweigh the number of people, especially older, male students, who made me question why I was wasting my time and effort, and affecting my health for people who do not appreciate, understand and don’t care to attempt either. Is it because I teach art? Am I too cerebral, sensitive or impatient? Or did I teach at the wrong school?

Many art teachers leave the profession of teaching. They teach to support their art, but never find the time to practice their art because teaching takes so much of their time. Teaching art can be a form of torture; art teachers must watch students create art, as they long to do, but they can only watch and evaluate. Making art is not the primary reason why I stopped being an art teacher, but I did have the desire to create again, to write stories, to draw pictures, to make instead of watch.

I have observed the behaviours of teachers from the many staffrooms and schools that I have visited. Some teachers become defensive if asked about their job, especially by
parents or "non-teachers". Teachers often feel the need to rationalize or qualify certain aspects of their job such as summer vacation or the early end to a school day. Remarks such as "I'm taking courses in the summer" or "Gosh, I have to mark papers every night" are normal responses in such conversations. I am learning the language of teachers.
I return to the same image used in the first snapshot. Here, Dad is more prominent, but is still watched over by her eyes. Even though he has changed so much, Dad remembers his past and includes it in his daily work. Does the gray represent his disillusionment?
I had to move back home to finish high school. I had finished Grade Ten when I left and needed to complete my high school equivalency diploma through adult education. I also worked in the mines and paid her rent. Life at home wasn’t as bad as before. We had a business agreement. I paid for a place to stay and she welcomed the money. I basically just slept there and, when I wasn’t sleeping, I was working shifts at the mines. I had relatives who worked in the mines; it was what men did in Sudbury for work. You were expected to work in the mines at one point during your life. The money was good and I was trying to save up to go to business school.

She never trusted me. She used to call me ‘a loser’. She never wanted me to succeed and would do anything to make sure that I didn’t. I wonder what would have happened if she had acted differently, with kindness instead of contempt.

Years later, when I knew accounting wasn’t for me. I tried teaching college courses at Shaw College. By testing the waters at Shaw, I had the opportunity to experience teaching before committing myself financially and time-wise. I could have continued teaching there, or at another private school, but there is a risk when you teach at a privately owned institution. The whims or decisions of the owner could affect you. You could be gone the next day. Shaw closed anyway, and I knew it would. I still enjoyed it. If I was going to teach, I wanted to go into the public system and teach business at high school. With my interests, academic background and intellect, I would have to teach high school. If I had more academics, I would have continued teaching at community college.

I applied to University of Toronto, a complete joke. My academics were so poor, there was no way they would accept me. Anytime I talked to UofT (University of Toronto), they weren’t interested in me. I also talked to York but they said no. I was interested in University of Windsor and the business program within their teachers’ college but they were full.

I had already committed myself, so I started to scramble. Where would I go? I found about Lakehead University, who was still accepting applicants. So, I applied and was accepted. Of course, I was. They were so far away that no one wanted to go. It meant that
I had to teach primary/junior, which wasn’t what I wanted, but I had no choice. As it turned out, it was a good move. Although I still wanted to teach high school, I had a really positive experience.

There was a combination of factors that led me to go to teachers’ college. First, going back to school meant making up for what I missed the first time around. My school years sucked. They were terrible, probably the worst time of my life. Not so much because of school, but because of home. So, school was a disaster from square one. Second, being a teacher meant allowing me to save students from going through the same experiences that I went through. When you suffer, you tend to want to prevent the suffering of others. Third, my intent was to stay connected to business and teaching allowed me to continue working in that same environment or area of knowledge. When I teach, I teach in a selling mode. I sell. I sell the subject. I sell the philosophy. I sell myself. Which is what I should have been doing all my life, being a salesman. The only problem was I never had the confidence to develop into the person I should have been. Teaching has provided me with career satisfaction, stability and personal growth. There are days that I wish I were still in business, but, generally, teaching obviously has given me a venue that has been successful.

I went to Lakehead University for the academics, to get that piece of paper, but I found there was a whole world, a unique social entity. I got heavily involved in the social scene which involved partying, socializing, being with people, and, most of all, sports. All the things I didn’t do growing up in school were sitting there in front of me. So I played baseball, football, and tennis. In the winter, I went for Ski Patrol; I did dry land training before the snow fell and logged so many hours skiing. I played intramural hockey. I was even made housemaster of my residence. As the partying continued, the academics fit in there somewhere.

I was never around. I attended various meetings but they were unhappy because I was never there to implement new things for the house. I wasn’t paying attention to their needs and being the father they wanted. I told them that in the beginning. So, eventually, they wanted me out of the position.

That’s probably what upset my housemates. I was gone. And I wasn’t mad that they didn’t want me as housemaster anymore. I felt guilty that I didn’t live up to their
expectations, but I didn't want the job in the first place. People still liked me. There was no real animosity in the end. It was just people being annoyed. That's me. It reminds me of an incident at Ryerson, when a buddy and I went drinking at a dance. They asked for volunteers to sing. So, I went up and sang. And I didn't do a good job. They asked me to get off the stage. In fact, the dance organizer wanted me kicked out of school. He was an academic brown-noser who ended up working at Ryerson. But he called me up to sing in the first place. You shouldn't ask me to be a part of something if you don't want me to embarrass you. I never asked for it.

I didn't mind my experience at Lakehead. I was glad to get in. It gave me a positive outlook, that anything was possible. I was in for a few surprises, but that didn't concern me. I was more concerned about going to a university as a full-time student in a place I didn't know. And I worried about the distance from Toronto. Emotionally, it was hard, very hard. I left the family and I took it badly. Socially, it was both difficult and a blast. Academically, it was a great learning experience. And each part had its roller coaster ride with many ups and downs. It was a gift because it was the opportunity to make up for all the life experiences that I never had. It was a year to remember and one that I cherish now, knowing it will never be duplicated. Had I gone to another university and commuted, I would not have experienced the small, cohesive group, the family that I had at Lakehead.

I went up there perceiving myself as a father figure. I was older and had kids of my own. But, regardless of your age, children look at you as a teacher. Not quite an authoritative figure, but a teacher. I found that in teaching primary, I had to actually let go of my father figure attitude, which was automatic for me, being a father, and become the "teacher". Since I began teaching, I have been exposed to a full range of teaching experiences and grades. This whole teaching gig has been a personal development journey for me. It's interesting how people are superficial and dismissive of teachers. Teachers are a special breed. They really are. They're not authoritarians or bullies. They aren't parents. They are more than educators. They are different. I think that they are so maligned, it's ridiculous.

Now, school is so structured and organized. The government has taken all of the fun out of it. The curriculum is too directed and lacks creativity. We used to do plays, and visit
the other classes to perform for them. The kindergartens ate it up! We used to play sports, soccer, track and field. It's not the same now.
I also return to Mum’s initial image. Her caring nature and desire to accomplish certain goals has carried her to this point.
Mum

I needed a new challenge; I didn’t want to sing songs anymore. Pat and I were going to ask to change grades when Pat found out that she was pregnant while she was having a new house built. She decided not to change that year and stay in Kindergarten, but I wanted to move. The principal decided in his wisdom to change Pat and leave me in Kindergarten. I tried several times to change his mind, presenting him with a Plan B and saying to him that if you moved this person to this grade, I could move grades too. And every time, he said no. I returned in a couple of days, and presented another alternative, and he denied me again. He was quite insistent. I think it was because another teacher, Margaret, had asked for Kindergarten and she and Pat didn’t get along, so he moved Pat instead of me. I don’t know why he chose her wish over ours. To this day, Pat says that Margaret took her job and is still upset about it.

I taught Kindergarten for one year with Margaret. She taught very differently from me. Pat and I were in sync; we had the same philosophy about teaching and were friends. Margaret implemented directed-activity centres, which I thought was a real waste of time. For example, she had a math centre, a writing centre, and an art centre. She was running around trying to explain three things to three groups at once. When a small group was learning, the others had to wait or were lost because there was no one to direct them. At that age, many kids are not self-sufficient. You need to be there while they are writing and you can’t be in two places at once. I believe that if you’re going to teach, introduce something, you introduce to everyone at the same time. The class should come together as a group and discuss it, and do the same activity. I never saw the purpose in these types of centres. It seemed like paying lip service to the fact that you are implementing someone’s theory, because centres were the “in thing”.

When I was the Special Education teacher, I had PEPs, now called IEPs (Individual Education Plans) and, in those days, I wrote them on my own, without the classroom teacher’s help. We had a different model from the inclusion model we see today. A regular day for me meant taking groups of kids for a block of time, normally an hour or 90 minutes for math or language. In our school, some kids were so far behind that I couldn’t simply
modify the existing curriculum for them. I had Grade Eight kids who were working at a
Grade Three level. It is too hard to translate the Grade Eight curriculum to something the
students would understand. Some of them could hardly read.

I had to follow certain steps in order to identify if a child needed help. In team
meetings, the teacher, the principal and I would discuss the problem. I would ask the
teachers if they had tried different things, this and that, to solve the problem, which I
always felt was demeaning for the teacher. I don't think they would call a meeting if they
hadn't tried everything they could first. But, we had to follow set procedure before calling
in other people such as the social worker, speech pathologist, etc. I had to prove that this
kid needed the extra help. Sometimes, I would try to take kids who hadn't been formally
tested, but who were obviously struggling, basically doing nothing in class. They would tag
along in the larger group. Soon enough, the principal found out and put a stop to it, saying
that I couldn't take kids who were not identified. It was so sad when this poor kid would sit
in class completely lost.

Dave was a low-functioning child who I taught from Grade Two through Eight. He
had speech problems and was intellectually low with behavioural problems. His mother
couldn't read or write. As he got older, he became aware that he was different from his
classmates. Once, when he was in Grade Seven, he got frustrated with the fact that he was
working from a primary math book. He would get so upset and yell, "I don't want this fucking
Grade Three math book. I'm in Grade Seven! I want hard math!" I would get different Grade
Seven math books from various companies and give him the first few pages to try, which
were often addition and subtraction review. Or I would cover the primary books with Grade
Seven covers. I tried to give him something he considered 'grown-up', do anything to make
him feel better about himself.

Jane the secretary used to give clothes to Dave's mother because she threw away
clothes once they became dirty instead of washing them. She couldn't be bothered with
washing. Dave's father was dead. In fact, he used to bring a photo of his dad in a coffin to
school. He was very proud of that photo. He would show it to everyone, saying "Here's my
dad." He died before Dave was in Grade Two.
I remember a present that Dave brought me. It was wrapped up in newspaper. He said to me, "You have to be very careful because it’s...um, it’s...glassable." I realized he meant breakable, but he couldn’t find the right word. I smiled and was very careful with his gift.

Anne and Anita were two best friends who came to my class at the same time as Dave. Anne was Indian and Anita was Jamaican. Anita was a hair more intelligent than Anne. Neither of them would set the world on fire. When they left for high school, they were reading at a Grade Three level. They were really nice girls, very kind to each other. I watched them grow up, from little Grade Ones to Grade Eight girls, with their high heels and lipstick.

I also remember an interesting pair of twin girls in my class. At their previous school, they were fighting in class, and the teacher sent them to the office. The secretary showed them into the principal’s office and asked them to wait until he came. Leaving the door open, she went about her business, answering the phone. When she heard noises, she went back to check on them, only to discover that these two girls had trashed the whole office. They were transferred. And they were in Grade Two.

The first time I met them, I was on yard duty at recess time. I went over to tell one of them to stop doing whatever she was doing. She turned to me and said, "Fuck off, you stupid bitch! I’ll do what I want." I stood there, with my mouth open, thinking, "Okaaay...". The next day, I met both of them in my class. Matt, my partner in Special Education, had a very hard time with these girls but I realized early on that the trick was to get on their good side, try to talk to them and be sympathetic and non-confrontational. It made life easier for me. Boy, did they have some beautiful fights! They shouted across the room at each other and swore at each other. They pulled each other’s hair and scratched and kicked.

There was no father, but the mother visited the school all the time. They had a brother, who attended a behavioural class in another school, and I’m sure he was their greatest influence. What a family.

When I decided to retire, I asked Pat if she was too. All those long years together, I couldn’t imagine either one of us sitting without the other in the staffroom. Pat was very agitated about retiring. I knew she didn’t have much of a life outside of work. For her, it
would be a big change. I had to convince her to retire. Her husband pressured her to keep working and that money was an issue for them. At the retirement meetings, they said that, after the 90 factor, you were working for peanuts. She wrote her letter of resignation, but didn’t send it until the very last day it was due. On that day, the principal, Pete, and I walked her up to his office before the bell, and watched her put the letter in the courier bag. And during the day, Pete called on the P.A. system to Pat, saying, “Okay, Mrs. B, the courier’s here. Are you sure you want the letter to go?” We laughed and she said, “Yes, yes, I’m sure!” She was worried all day and many days after.

We both started supply teaching the first year of our retirement. Pat would say, “Isn’t this fun? It’s so nice to teach at different schools.” Now, she hates it. She dreads the phone call in the morning. We both complain that teachers don’t know how to do bulletin boards anymore, they don’t understand the importance of routines, they don’t this and that and blah, blah. Gosh, we go on about it. It’s funny; when I visit a new classroom, I always think to myself, “If only I had two weeks here.... “
texture

actual or simulated feel of a surface
We experience texture when we touch objects and feel their roughness, their smoothness, their realness. Texture is the artist's way of mapping these tactile impressions onto the two-dimensional picture (University of Saskatchewan, Texture, 1999, para.1).

Texture is one of the more subtle design elements. It can make an image richer and more interesting. It is always a factor in a composition because everything has a surface and hence a texture. (Princeton University, Elements, 2009, para.5).
After an artist works through the elements of design before reaching the last one, texture, her art is very close to completion. Texture often seems like an afterthought because, through the use of line, shape, space, colour and value, it has already been incorporated into the art, consciously or unconsciously. For example, dots placed closely together create a bumpy surface, or the gradation of bright yellow slowly becoming deep orange depicts the sunset she sees in her environment. However, despite its dependency on all the other elements, especially line and colour, texture is the closest thing to representing reality through art. Without it, art can seem plastic and artificial.

The element texture is the final stage of my inquiry. Like the artist who uses texture to illustrate the realistic nature of her art, I present a final triptych which illustrates my parents and me as teachers who negotiated between our best and worst teacher selves and decided to remain teachers. I want to construct a response to why we teach. I incorporated all the information learned through stories and art and, through the process of "forming, informing, reforming and transforming" (Halen-Faber, 2004, p. 8), I crafted my thoughts in my art.

As with all the stories, I present my panel first, my Dad’s second and my Mum’s last.
I am a writer and an artist. I use words and images to create this arts-informed inquiry. Even though I prefer to see, envision, draw my thoughts, I know I need words to explain myself. I feel the tug of two selves throughout the process. My writer-self communicates appropriately and is socially accepted, while my artist-self is gratifying a childhood desire to draw all the time. However, I feel confident as an artist and I struggle with and sometimes despise myself as a writer. But what of the researcher who has seen the two selves and knows how they compete with the other to surface? I continually compromise between these identities, always contemplating conflicting meanings from the text and the art.

This section engages the audience in a process similar to judging a finished piece of art. As an artist-researcher, I used one element of design at a time, slowly layering and building until I felt my work was complete. As one who now reviews the inquiry, I work backwards and deconstruct the layers to form my opinions and comment on the form, function and accessibility of the work to a larger group.
After recreating the triptych, I asked my parents to read what I had written and look at what I had drawn. I wanted all of us to revisit our words, now in a new, recontextualized format (Conle, 2000) and have a final conversation with each other and the reader about how we believe these stories and pictures made sense of our professional motivations and decisions. I wanted to find out if we actually did ‘fall back’ into teaching.
Lara

Most of my memories revolve around three specific areas: art, teachers, and relationships. These areas interconnect in most cases and play a role in my present endeavours.

In elementary school, I noticed quickly how teachers reacted to my drawing; they thought I was distracted by it and labelled it "problem behaviour". I think I learned that I was making art when and where I wasn't supposed to: art was only done in art class or when the teacher expected it. Because I drew in non-art books and during non-art classes, I needed to hide my art like a secret in order to be a good student in the eyes of my teacher. This was the beginning of a separation of my public self from my private self. I was an introvert, the extremely quiet student who caused no trouble. I was tested to reveal my "secret" in Grade 8 when my peers asked me to draw, but, at a certain point, I refused because I didn't want my "bad" drawing activities to cross over into the public sphere, especially my teachers.

In high school, people reacted differently to art. My art teacher welcomed and nurtured my desire to draw and my peers envied it. However, my art was measured against a set of standards different from those set in elementary school, but benchmarks nonetheless. My elementary teachers wanted me to stop or I would suffer the consequences. However, I made art as valid student work in high school, but my artistic ability was pitted against other students' abilities and the curriculum expectations. I wasn't allowed to draw just anything in any way that I wanted.

Once again, I made decisions on what to produce for others versus my own pleasure because it was more important for me to remain a good student. I revealed a little more of my secret self, the artist, because I realized that my high school art teachers provided different opportunities from other teachers. They responded by encouraging appropriate standards of my art production which influenced my behaviour as a good student.

Meanwhile, my teacher self slowly developed through my many part-time jobs. As a counsellor or instructor in sports and piano, I became keenly aware that I was responsible for deciding what "good" behaviour was, and I controlled not just how I behaved but how
others behaved, too. The freedom to talk, to pursue, and make decisions based solely on what I thought was right contradicted my experiences as a student who pleased others and behaved according to others' ideas of "good".

During my years as a teenager, I balanced two selves: my introverted, high school student self subjected to an imposed definition of "good" and my teacher self as decision-maker and leader. When I needed to decide on my post-secondary goals, I quickly chose to pursue art; I always wanted to be an artist. As I progressed through university, I believed that I should be a teacher, too.

Both teachers, my parents had different ideas about the profession. Mum knew that I should do what I want to do because, in her opinion, the worst thing would be working in a job I hate. After seeing Dad upset from various work experiences, she wanted me to pursue what made me happy. Dad also wanted me to pursue art, but worried about the stability and security of my future. He remembered intensely how he was affected by his past: a constant changing of jobs, homes, and people in his life. Not wanting me to succumb to his fate, he suggested I complete both an art degree and education degree. "You'll always have a job teaching art."

Teacher education both silenced and inspired me. I learned quickly that teachers defined for themselves and their students how to behave, and those definitions varied far and wide, from school to school, classroom to classroom. I believed that their explanations of how to teach was often conceived from past experiences in their families, as a student, and as a novice teacher. Once I got my own class, I decided for myself what kind of teacher I would be.

After a year of teaching secondary students, I began forming connections with the school community; teachers, students, parents and I were interdependent on each other for many things. The school was a living organism with each class, teacher, and student a bodily extension. I had more authority or autonomy in my art classes than my computer classes. My older yearbook students enjoyed more freedom than my grade nine art students. It was clear that no teacher, student, or class functioned within a vacuum. Gradually, my despair grew as I could not fit into the teacher role I envisioned.
"Dominate" is a word found in some of my art-based activities when describing how I feel when I teach. To "dominate" is something Dad and I are both uncomfortable with, or contend with in our jobs and lives. We don't want to feel "dominated" over and we resent being given the responsibility to "dominate" the students, yet a central factor to teacher success is effective classroom management, and classroom management is defined as "maintaining control over the students". My biggest frustration with teaching is being responsible for the behaviour of others, especially those who I believe are old enough to be accountable for their own actions.

After four years of teaching secondary school, I regressed to the introverted grade school girl who lost her voice. Drowning in unwanted obligations and negative environments, I projected a contented public façade, while privately, I degenerated into depression. In the beginning, my responsibility to plan lessons, teach and evaluate was paramount to anything else, including drawing, and I engaged in this responsibility with excitement. As time passed, I was so detrimentally affected by my teaching experiences that I no longer made time to draw. I didn't want to. I functioned in the classroom, performing the normal daily routines and forfeiting creativity and excitement. My peers always commended me on being calm and collected, but they were mistaken. I needed to leave; I forgot what I liked about teaching and art in the first place.

Even though I was depressed about teaching art in high school, I wanted to explore what happened in my own teaching experiences. Why didn't I, the daughter of two teachers, a part-time tennis, skiing and piano instructor, an Ontario certified teacher, not want to teach anymore? My journey took me to graduate school, not in art, but in education. Perhaps, I couldn't completely let go of teaching. Like Dad, I spent a lot of time and effort doing something, and I couldn't just throw it away.

My life as a graduate student led me to try elementary school, a different type of organism that changed how I viewed school communities. There were no crowded hallways where I was pushed about, no complaints about uniforms, attendance and other rules from students, and much less indifference or apathy. My young students welcomed me and listened to me, close to what I had experienced in my part-time jobs during high school.
Wanting to teach at the university level propelled me to continue my studies in a doctoral program. When I embarked on graduate studies, I found an environment unlike any other education institution I had experienced. Teachers and students were connected and dependent on each other, but were free to speak, to be responsible for their work, and to decide individually and collaboratively the rules and behaviour for everyone involved. I pursued the prospects of teaching within the university community because it meshed together the things that excited me in teaching art and education: respectful interaction with others, commitment to learning and discussing specialized areas of knowledge, and time allotted for personal growth and research (Lara, autobiography, 2005).
DAD

As I read my stories to myself, I see peppered through the writing a very familiar phrase: "I should have done this...". I know that I'm guilty of regretting things and looking back. Mum and Lara always said, "No shoulda, couldas!", meaning stop living in the past and look at what's happening now. It's hard sometimes, though, because I wonder what could have happened if my life had gone differently.

There are three constants that control my life in a negative way: abandonment, distrust, and lack of confidence. My mother abandoned me as a young child, my father abandoned me repeatedly by his passivity, allowing my step-mother to take over, workplace after workplace abandoned me, and educational institutions let me down. It seems that I was involved in several incidents where a harsh authority has controlled my life in a negative way. These people all stopped me from doing things that I really wanted, in some cases needed, to do. I felt stifled and stripped of my desire to achieve, as if I had hit a wall over and over again.

These abandonment issues carry over to how I treated others at my school. Those people who neglected me in the past did not trust my ideas and skills; I was treated like I didn't know anything or that I didn't follow through with action. My bad relationships set the tone for future relationships with my students, peer teachers, and the school community. I distrusted others because I thought they would abandon me, too. I could have achieved more with my students if I had let go of my distrust of others. Students' apathy or indifference developed distrust in me and I wanted to distance myself for fear of them completely ignoring me.

I experience the pain of abandonment when I teach every day, and this connects to my perception of abandonment as a negative aspect of my teacher identity. I have a visualization of being abandoned, similar to a scene from the movie, "Ghost", where black apparitions take sinning humans to hell. Why do I fear those little black assassins, creeping up behind me and dragging me down? Why do I perceive others doing that to me?

I don't want to ignore others: this causes distrust, lack of confidence, fear of failure, and regret or resentment of dreams unfulfilled. I am acutely aware that people
expect things of me, and this plays a role in how I behave. I don't want to disappoint them, having done that my whole childhood. If I feel that I had disappointed someone, it's easier to distance myself and be quiet. It's hard to not worry about others, when you feel uncomfortable around them.

Because of my childhood, I never gained enough confidence to succeed early in life. My decisions were always made because I needed to do something, and few people helped me get where I am today. I want to achieve more, foster better relationships, counter fear in order to succeed, and to prove to others, rather than gain approval, that my success is so obvious to those who neglected me before that they must acknowledge me now. It is self-preservation - to be a successful teacher counteracts the fear of failing.

Teaching as a service to others becomes difficult because I resent my past and my missed opportunities. I don't see teaching as the pinnacle of my achievements. I am capable of more. I want to try a different profession because I have abilities that would allow me success in areas where I had no chances. It is a constant struggle to give and accept from my students when I see teaching as a rung in a ladder that I still want to climb.

I want my students to attain what I didn't achieve. When I feel those positive qualities of drive and desire, I relive my academic experience through my students' success. It fills the holes in my past and eliminates the abandonment. I try to make sure no one else is abandoned. During times like these, teaching takes my mind beyond my own preservation or achievement and focuses it on the needs of my students. Whether it's hockey practice or after-school help, whatever they get from me, I succeed through them because I saved them from my fate (Dad, autobiography, 2005).
Mum

I always feared being a dull, uninteresting teacher, where the students just sit there and listen to me go on, and can't wait to leave my room because I am so boring. I don't think I was that way, but I never perceived myself as being creative.

I was jealous of Dad's creativity in his classroom. When he used to teach grade school, and talk about all the things he did with the little kids, I envied him because I could never think of those things on my own. I could do stuff with the kids such as handwork and art, and I could take an idea and modify to suit the students I was teaching, but I never could make up the original ideas on my own.

Bulletin boards are an area I always focused on; I see them as a mirror of your classroom, the place where you present yourself, your ideas and beliefs to the community. I often compared mine to others in my school and other schools when I began supplying. As I said before, Pat and I would snicker to each other about how people don't know how to do bulletin boards. I hated seeing that store-bought stuff go up on the walls, so dull and generic. I tried to be original and make it from scratch. I also put the kids' work up there, too, even when it looked really bad. It may have seemed like garbage to some people, but it was important to them.

I think a good teacher should give the kids' ownership of their work. I see other teachers who don't let the child find their own way. Letting them decide or choose gives them a sense of pride of their work and classroom, but is this being a creative teacher? By not initiating the ideas in the first place, am I just a follower?

I felt so sad for some of those Special Ed kids that I wanted to help as much as I could. Yes, I did get frustrated and angry sometimes. I worried that their behaviour would get out of hand one day. But even if it took the whole afternoon to get back on track, it was important for us to keep at it. You have to give a little, especially for them.

It's important to be open to integrating the ideas of others into what one does, or to aspire to what others do. I was always motivated by others who gave me ideas or made me decide what I thought was good or not good in teaching. Pat and I were very lucky: we had a special teaching relationship and friendship that I know rarely exists among teachers.
We definitely encouraged each other to be our best teacher selves in that Kindergarten classroom, and I was always excited to work with her and those kids. But even later, when I worked with Margaret or Matt in Special Ed., I still observed them and agreed or disagreed with what they did in the classroom. I’m sure that affected how I taught.

There were some teaching practices that I disagreed with such as centres, which I thought was a real waste of time. In that case, I thought what I was doing made more sense, even though it may not have been that original. But, I watched other teachers in the classroom, who were doing interesting things and wondered, “How did they come up with that?” I envied their ability to be dynamic.

My lack of ability to diverge may stem from a worry that children won’t learn, but I believe in incidental learning. Perhaps, I need to be in control, or conform to behavioural standards because I want to please others. The expectations of certain grades decide the behaviours. Maybe that’s why I never wanted to teach high school or grade eight.

Looking back at what happened to me as a student, I would probably say that a lack of confidence held me back or made decisions for me. For example, I said that I always wanted to be a doctor, but I never thought I was smart enough, so I never attempted to become one. I don’t regret or second-guess this decision much. It just never became an option. And, when I needed to decide what to do, I did what my friends did and became a teacher.

I wasn’t insecure about everything; I knew that I wanted to go to Canada and have a family. Anything that could interfere with those goals was not part of my life. For example, I was seeing a boy before I left Scotland and he was quite serious about our relationship, but I told him that no matter what, I was leaving for Canada. He tried to convince me to stay, but there was no use. He ended up following me, but I had already found Dad.

I know that I sometimes lack confidence; I was never comfortable when other teachers watched me teach, and I hate public speaking to a group of my peers. And, when others complimented me, saying that they wished they had my patience, or my teaching ability, I always thought that there was nothing to be envied about me, but many envy me. I don’t know what seems so good about what I do, but, as time passes, I realize more and more that the things I do are special (Mum, autobiography, 2005).
EPILOGUE

The researcher's ability to engage, resonate with and motivate the readers/viewers discerns her work's potential to transform their thinking. My work, like all arts-informed research, must reach its intended audience. I have experienced 'falling back' into teaching. My research invites readers/viewers to learn about the concept of 'fallback'. I encourage a specific group of teachers who may have fallen back into teaching to relate to the 'conversations' my parents and I shared about our motivations for choosing teaching and the consequences we experienced as a result of our decisions.

'Fallback' is a concession. 'Falling back' into teaching means choosing teaching as the alternative in lieu of the ideal, or, in some cases, in the absence of the ideal. When defining 'fallback', I visualized a trust exercise, where people stand with their back to their partners, and fall back onto them, anticipating that they will be caught. My father told me, "You can always fall back into teaching", and I followed his advice and became a teacher.

After working through this inquiry, I realized that I fell back into teaching with the hopes of safety and security by letting myself go into the hands of my professional decisions and expecting to be caught and cradled into a happy life. Instead I became unhappy and needed to change. My disillusionment was my motivation to begin the process of exploring other teachers who may have 'fallen back' into teaching. I began my investigation with my parents, who were both 'fallback' teachers. What motivates 'fallback' teachers to become teachers and stay in the profession? What, if any, consequences do they endure as a result of their decision to remain in the profession?

Reason and Marshall (1987) defined research as a personal process in which they provided a triptych of audiences: me, us and them.

For me: the motivation to do research is often personal and often expresses the need for personal development, change and learning. For us: it is a cooperative endeavour which enables a community of people to make sense of and act effectively in their world. For them: for the community of scholars of which the research is a member or a potential member (p. 112).
I address my potential audiences, me, us and them, by explaining the importance of the 'fallback' phenomenon to educational research in three respective sections.

FOR ME

This inquiry began with 'me' and my personal motivation to understand my discontent. 'Falling back' into teaching was a compromise. I wanted to be an artist, but as I progressed through my university studies, my simple goal to become one was complicated by other realities: economy, stability, security, finances, and family pressure. I negotiated my professional ideals and decided to become a visual art secondary school teacher instead. However, as I progressed thorough my career as a teacher, the reality of my daily experiences overtook the aspects of work that I enjoyed. Conle (1999) discusses “empty time” as a way to explain her own despondency with her work.

There are dangers within 'empty time’, the time I experienced during...a period in which I felt I functioned on the surface only, distant from people and places, experiencing sequences of more or less equally unimportant events, unimportant because they did not touch my depth (p. 25).

This research is important to me because I continue to 'fall back' into teaching. I left my secondary school visual art teacher position because the incentives I found appealing did not outweigh the sadness I felt. However, they were still enticing enough to me because I remained in an educational setting; I supply taught on my leave of absence while completing a Masters of Arts in education, and then I accepted an elementary position instead of ending my contract with the Board. I sway between positive and negative factors: security, stability, convenience and steady income versus stress, anger, and anxiety. I am part of the 'probably' or 'probably not' groups of teachers who cannot decide whether to stay or leave their profession.

In doing this research, I discovered that my parents were told to fall back into teaching. My mother, who wanted to be doctor, followed her girlfriends into teachers' college, and my father, after so many failed attempts in business, followed my mother's advice and became a teacher. Although it was not their ideal career, my parents chose
teaching and remained teachers for the rest of their working life. My mother retired in 1998 from the same school where she had taught for twenty-five years and supply taught for seven years after her retirement, including substituting for my maternity leave and two other teachers in my school. My father retired in 2005 from the only secondary school in which he taught, and supply taught for two years after his retirement in one secondary school five minutes from his home.

My parents and I searched for the "pauses or changes in the flow of (our) experiences" (Dewey, 1934, p. 36) as part of the inquiry process, and explored the consequences of our professional choices. Mum’s only regret seems to be questioning what her life would have been like if she became a doctor. She enjoyed being a teacher. She liked working with her special students and her teaching partner, completing her degree, working in primary and Special education, and was happy to remain in teaching. Dad compromised and gave up the volatility of business for the security of teaching. However, he became disillusioned and ended his career somewhat regretting becoming a teacher.

Dad reflected on whether to remain in teaching, and, like myself, stayed. Cappelli (2000) offers the term, ‘the golden handcuff’, and defines it as “a term used for compensation packages that pay employees for staying with the company.” (p. 14) Dad felt ‘handcuffed’ to his external incentives: paycheque, proximity, pension and being professional. He realized he would require different types of support if he left teaching: financial, educational, and emotional. He also acknowledged the absence of perks: eight weeks of summer vacation plus two weeks at Christmas and one week for March Break, twenty sick days, a pension and benefits, and short hours in the classroom. Dad asked himself the question ‘Is it better to stay or to leave?’ These deliberations are the challenges that other ‘fallback’ teachers might face.

FOR US:

This inquiry began with ‘me’ and my personal motivation to understand my dissatisfaction with teaching. It grew to include a small ‘us’, my parents, whose stories provided another perspective on ‘falling back’ into teaching. Further research revealed that
there are other teachers who could be considered ‘fallback’ teachers. Korb (2009) identifies 18% of the participants from her study chose teaching as a "last resort" career. As previously referenced in the Ontario College of Teachers survey, 32% of Ontario teachers cannot decide whether to continue teaching or to leave their profession. In their study of 1650 teachers from the time they began university with a view to becoming teachers to their first years in schools, Watt and Richardson (2008) found that 28% were "desisters", teachers whom described themselves as "disaffected with their choice of teaching as a career...(and) that they would become 'jaded'" (p. 418).

Watt and Richardson (2006) developed the FIT-Choice framework (Factors Influencing Teaching Choice) to investigate teacher motivation. They name one of their FIT-Choice factors as 'fallback career'. When asked to finish the statement "I chose to become a teacher because...", teachers in the 'fallback career' cohort chose one of the following sentences: "I was unsure of what career I wanted", "I was not accepted into my first-choice career", or "I chose teaching as a last-resort career" (p. 34).

My thesis adds to the research about teacher motivation, and specifically addresses the motivator 'fallback' career. I connect three teachers, my parents and I who, by Watt’s FIT-scale, would be part of the 'fallback' cohort, and explore more deeply our motivations as 'fallback' teachers. Using stories and visual art, I am able to illustrate in distinctive detail the factors that influenced us as 'fallback' teachers to choose teaching. I also explain in depth our feelings about teaching as we lived through the consequences of our decisions. My research is relevant to the larger community of teachers, and may be of particular interest to two specific groups: student teachers and practiced teachers who are feeling negatively towards their professional daily work.

This thesis is a cautionary tale for student teachers who are considering a career in teaching because it is their 'fallback' career. I offer my readers potential consequences as a result of making an important professional decision based on 'fallback' through reading about my parents and my stories. I provide the opportunity for them to examine assumptions about future careers in teaching in light of the fact that teachers have more difficulty maintaining a long-term commitment to their profession if their initial motivations are extrinsic (Brown, 1995, Brown, 1992, Yong, 1998). I illustrate examples in an informal,
intimate manner that promotes reflection on motivations for pursuing teaching as a career. When they learn that my father and I both contemplated leaving teaching, my hope is to affect student teachers’ thinking about career choice; would they want to continue pursuing teaching if they thought that disillusionment is a consequence they would face?

This research also offers a unique forum for discussing the sensitive and complicated circumstances of ‘fallback’ teachers. Experienced teachers who are feeling disenchanted, depressed, or cynical, and are contemplating leaving teaching may relate to the feelings and reactionary behavior my parents and I displayed in our stories. I speak to them from the viewpoint of ‘fallback’ teachers and emphasize the difficulties ‘fallback’ teachers may confront when making professional decisions.

As they progress through their career, teachers engage in a process of learning that reveal truths at different times and in different ways. Like “stringing together the beads on a string, (teachers’) day to day teaching events become episodic evidence of (their) changing perspectives”. (Cole, 2000, p. 22) When teachers become disillusioned, they may weigh the incentives against the aspects that discourage them from their work. The controversial nature of 'mentioning the unmentionable' means these teachers may feel they cannot discuss their dissatisfaction without the worry of discrimination or scrutiny.

This research communicates the need for other teachers to learn about ‘fallback’ and regard their discontented colleagues with empathy and concern. Researchers have noted that almost all teachers “experience disillusionment with their profession and that teacher disillusionment must be treated differently depending on the stage of professional maturity” (Sandell & Sullivan, 1992, p. i). The inquiry considers ‘fallback’ teachers as individuals who have encountered problems on their professional journey; by examining the specific nature of ‘fallback’ teachers’ circumstances through storytelling, I believe other teachers may better grasp the reasoning of their dissatisfaction. In his story, Dad felt not only disillusioned about teaching, but also misunderstood and abandoned by his fellow teachers when he was working at his secondary school. In my story, I could not tell my colleagues about my problems and continued presenting my calm and collected façade. I want to facilitate learning about ‘falling back’ into teaching for teachers who have not experienced it and promote collegial support in teacher communities.
I recognize that it is not enough to name 'fallback' teachers as a small group with questionable motivations and professional instability. 'Fallback' teachers are an under-researched group who require more attention. As Reason and Marshall (1987) state, 'fallback' teachers need a community within the realm of educational research to "make sense of and act effectively in their world" (p. 112).

FOR THEM:

The 'fallback' phenomenon is relevant to teachers, school systems, teacher educators and education scholars. 'Fallback' as a motivation for becoming a teacher has implications for several institutions such as teacher recruitment authorities, government policy makers, and faculties of education. The percentages of teachers who stay and who leave the profession directly influence teacher employment and retention. The reasons why student teachers enrol in teachers' college affect the dialogue between universities, government and school systems. Teaching as a 'fallback' career alters the public's view of the profession of teaching and this has consequences for all education institutions.

I begin a discourse on 'fallback' as a complex social phenomenon. I encourage the audience of larger educational communities to understand teacher motivations in a way that is not as immediately apparent in educational research. Intrinsic and extrinsic motivators play a significant role in making decisions about enlisting and retaining teachers. Extrinsic rewards influence career decision, despite not being primary attractors for teachers, and these factors retain teachers who become disillusioned or jaded. If educational researchers consider 'fallback' a teacher motivation, the following questions should be considered: does 'falling back' into teaching lead to disillusionment? If so, what is the strength of these external factors that cause teachers to stay in teaching despite their unhappiness?

The following researchers indicate the existence of teachers who 'fall back' into teaching, but deem it a small concern on the larger scale of teacher motivations for career choice. Watt and Richardson (2006) found that the lowest rated motivation was choosing teaching as a 'fallback' career, followed by social influences of others encouraging them to undertake teaching as a career, concluding that "teaching was not typically considered a 'fallback' career" (p. 51). Kiline and Mahiroglue (2009) concluded in their research on
teacher motivations of Turkish biology teachers that extrinsic factors such as security, money and ‘fallback’ were not as significant as intrinsic factors. Lipka and Brinthaupt (1998) stated intrinsic motivations are most frequently identified as the primary attractors of teachers to the profession.

‘Fallback’ as a motivator, however, is of great to concern to teacher educators and their programs, and teacher recruitment agencies, school systems, and the government. Teachers choosing to teach because they were ‘unsure of what career (they) wanted’, or ‘chose teaching as a last-resort career’ (Watt and Richardson, 2006), or for extrinsic rewards such as holidays or pensions requires these educational communities to look closely at several issues: ‘fallback’ teachers’ view of teaching as a profession, the effectiveness of teacher education programs to educate ‘fallback’ teachers, ‘fallback’ teachers’ level of contribution to the school system, and if, and how, educational institutions would retain these teachers in the profession.

Ontario faculties or schools of education are accredited based on three factors: their programs reflect the Ontario College of Teachers’ “Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession” and the “Ethical Standards for the Teaching Profession”, they are producing current research in teacher education, and they demonstrate an integration of theory and practice in teacher education (Accreditation of Ontario Faculties of Education, Ontario College of Teachers, 1996). Adhering to the ethical standards of practice means to accept and apply four values: care, trust, respect and integrity. And faculties strive to produce teachers who in turn demonstrate these values in their practice, and help teachers to become "agents of educational and social improvement" (Fullan, 1996, p. iii).

Teacher educators expose their students to several concepts central to effective teaching such as partnership, collaboration and community. They demonstrate the importance of these concepts, hoping their students learn how to transfer this sense of teamwork into their daily work as qualified professionals, in both their classrooms and with their fellow staff members and administration. However, “between the idea and the reality...falls a shadow” (Eliot as cited in Sumsion, 2004, p. 1) the unknown factor being the teachers themselves. The greatest challenge for teachers is translating what they have learned into a personal philosophy of education. If ‘fallback’ teachers are not motivated by
intrinsic qualities, how can teacher educators facilitate a program that requires these teachers to nurture such qualities?

Universities are charged with promoting education programs and maintaining steady enrolment. Teacher educators are put into an untenable situation of teaching to teacher candidates and teachers who may have chosen teaching as a 'fallback' career. These individuals may not have the invested interest, may be critical of the program, and the education program may in turn have limited impact on their knowledge. Their view of education programs could deter their continued professional development.

Teacher education communities are expected to uphold the standards of practice in teacher education and screen teacher candidates based on their abilities to convey these standards. In contrast, Kyriacou & Coulthard (2000) suggest teacher recruitment agencies need to focus more attention on those factors that undergraduates who are undecided about teaching as a career view as important in influencing their choice of career. They state that students from their study would reconsider teaching as a career if measures such as 'quality of resources', 'improvement in working environment', 'higher salaries', 'lower class sizes', and 'improved public opinion of teachers' were negotiable (Kyriacou & Coulthard (2000), p. 125). Defining the variety of factors that motivate teachers depicts a disparate view of the profession. Are teacher recruitment agencies expected to encourage prospective teachers by emphasizing the advantages to choosing teaching as a career while teacher educators impress on them the challenging nature of the profession?

Researchers realize that teachers' professional actions affect the success of school systems and concern themselves with teachers' abilities to recognize how they function in the classroom. They agree that teachers have a responsibility to be self-aware and participate in their own professional and personal development (Cole and Knowles, 2000, Connelly and Clandinin, 2000, Hargreaves & Fullan, 1992, Raymond, Butt & Townsend, 1992). Watt (2009) states

We need to be supporting and retaining teachers in the profession, but we also need to consider the question of how long teachers should stay. Is it really our hope and expectation that these people should have their entire working life as a teacher, or is it in fact renewing, re-energising and revitalising to have people in the system for however long, if they're making a good contribution for the time they are there? (p. 2)
If there is a contingent of ‘fallback’ teachers, and, as stated, all teachers experience periods of disillusionment in their careers, then school systems as representatives of educational leadership would want to learn more about this phenomenon.

Principals, superintendents and directors of education are responsible for differing levels of leadership, school effectiveness and success. For example, principals require their teachers to develop an annual learning plan; teachers decide what professional learning they hope to achieve and their principals collaborate and advise on the process of reaching their goals. If ‘fallback’ teachers feel intimidated or isolated about their circumstances, how would educational leaders encourage them to discuss it? It is the interest of both parties to confront and deal with the issue of teacher disillusionment.

My arts-informed inquiry investigates ‘fallback’ using stories and visual art, forms that are comfortable and part of my way of knowing, in order not to provide an answer, but to have the readers examine themselves as they incorporate their comprehension of the phenomenon. Multiple audiences mean multiple points of significance. I use arts-informed methods because my form is intentionally ambiguous to allow for many interpretations.

It is also an opportunity to honour the methodology and to advance the understanding of phenomena through alternative and personalized forms. Using my parents and my stories and writing them as conversations with my audience emphasizes the need to explore the individualistic nature and singular circumstance of each teacher who may have ‘fallen back’ into teaching. Reconnecting to visual art was part of a personal artistic journey; using visual art as part of the research process provided the opportunity for readers to interpret my inquiry through a different lense, one that I use to decode my world on a daily basis.

When I began my inquiry, I had specific expectations for what could occur. I was certain of my own story, I trusted in my parents to tell their stories, and my connection to art and storytelling committed me to entering the arts-informed process. The nature of using arts-informed methods meant welcoming and working through new ideas. During the process, my parents surprised me with new stories mixed in with repeats of well-loved tales, including reliving the memory of being told to ‘fall back’ into teaching. I also reconnected to
art and the elements of design when I reflected on my past experiences as an art student and teacher. I began to visualize my thoughts again and I welcomed back my artistic self by picking up a pencil with the intent to draw. The elements of design became my overarching template for my inquiry. My metaphors, concepts and artwork continually transformed, paralleled with my evolving comprehension of the 'fallback' phenomenon.

The difference between what I expected and what I achieved is the learning that took place. I needed to use the arts-informed process, my art and the stories of my parents and me to deliberate my initial question: Why did I not like working as a secondary school visual art teacher? Listening to and analyzing my parents' stories revealed the concept of 'fallback' to explain my motivation for becoming and remaining a teacher. I realized that I felt most confident when I used visual art to communicate the concept of 'fallback'. I entered a process of discovery when I decided to share information through imagery and use my parents' and my stories to learn about teachers' motivations for choosing their profession, and the consequences of their decisions.

This inquiry has taught me that what motivates teachers to enter and remain in their profession is a complex issue with several mediating factors that change the result for each individual. I realized that asking teachers if they 'fell back' into teaching is a sensitive topic that is difficult to broach. In my own experience, I felt intimidated to talk honestly about my circumstances in the several education venues I attended: my graduate classes at OISE, my professional development courses, and the schools in which I worked.

There is a need for candid discussion about 'fallback' as a teacher motivation, teachers' discontentment as a consequence of 'fallback', and the process of negotiating the difficult reality for 'fallback' teachers. Upon identifying 'fallback' teachers, further research is needed to learn more about the numerous and distinctive factors that played a role in their career choice, and discovering this information raises questions about general views of teaching as a profession. More importantly, there is a need to investigate the dilemma of 'fallback' teachers who are working in a school system, and continue to work despite their disillusionment. A thorough examination of this issue requires a high level of disclosure, a commitment to qualitative assessment of 'fallback' teacher stories, and openness to collaboration between different educational communities. The dialogue begins
with the same question I asked myself in the beginning of this inquiry: 'Is it better to leave or to stay?' My hope is that the conversation continues.

The joy (of teaching) has gone out for me and I don’t know how long I can keep doing this. Should I get out now and do something else or can I find a way to stay and make it good again? (Emmons, 2005, p. 30).
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