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Exploring dialogic teaching with middle and secondary English language arts teachers : a reflexive phenomenology

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EXPLORING DIALOGIC TEACHING WITH MIDDLE AND SECONDARY ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS TEACHERS: A REFLEXIVE PHENOMENOLOGY

by

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

PH.D. THESIS

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation study focused on middle and secondary English language arts teachers' experiences with dialogic teaching. In contrast to teacher-focused triadic sequences whereby teachers initiate an interaction by asking a question, students respond to that question, and the teacher evaluates the response and/or follows up with a question or comment (Mehan, 1979), dialogic teaching involves the use of student-centered activities to promote collaborative, reciprocal, and engaging classroom interactions (Juzwik, Borsheim-Black, Caughlan, & Heintz, 2013). Dialogic moments in the classroom robustly correlate with students' literacy learning (Applebee, Langer, Nystrand, & Gamoran, 2003); however, dialogic moments do not figure prominently throughout the larger educational landscape (Lyle, 2008). Further, the ways in which these moments come about is highly contingent on a variety of circumstances for which planning is difficult (Nystrand, Wu, Gamoran, Zeiser, & Long, 2003).

This study sought to further explore these complex contingencies and circumstances by examining teachers' lived experiences with dialogic teaching, using the primary research question, *What is it like to teach dialogically in middle and secondary English language arts classes?* To address the research question, I facilitated a series of conversations about dialogic teaching with five middle and secondary English language arts teachers: We met in groups during the summer of 2014; and I visited their individual classrooms and interviewed them during the fall of 2014.

Using methods derived from the phenomenological concepts of intentionality, manifold profiles, and textures/structures (Husserl, 1931/2002; Sokolowski, 2000; Moustakas, 1994), I established a reflexive phenomenology, which calls forth the study's purpose in examining lived

experience (van Manen, 2014) and also highlights my role in the research process and ensuing interpretations (Denzin, 1997; Glesne, 2006; Merriam, 2009).

Two approaches were used to explicate the data: I created portraits (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997) of each participant to offer a rich description of their respective experiences with dialogic teaching; and I thematized (Moustakas, 1994) their experiences in order to offer a broader look of the dialogic teaching experience as a whole. The portraits are a collection of descriptions arranged in paragraph form, each paragraph presented as an aspect of dialogic teaching. The themes are a set of four statements, each statement presented as a way to look across the participants' collective experiences. These statements are (a) The experience of dialogic teaching involves constant calibrations and persistent tensions, (b) The experience of dialogic teaching involves moments of excitement and moments of frustration, (c) The experience of dialogic teaching is structured by various ways of conceptualizing a "good response," and (d) The experience of dialogic teaching is structured by the various (and contradictory) roles students play.

I offer three plausible insights (van Manen, 2014) based on the explication of the participants' experiences with dialogic teaching. First, I highlight elements of design features that align with a dialogic teaching stance; second, I highlight dispositional features that align with a dialogic teaching stance. I call these insights *dialogic by design* and *dialogic by disposition*, respectively. Third, I suggest two modalities in which researchers might conceptualize lived experience: the invitational and the inspectional. The invitational is a mode of sharing stories and shaping intuition about what an experience involves, and the inspectional is a mode of scholarly attention to the presumed causality that emerges in descriptions of lived experience.

PUBLIC ABSTRACT

The ways in which teachers and students speak to each other in middle and secondary English language arts classrooms is integral to the type of learning that occurs there. Ways of engaging in "classroom talk" can be characterized as teacher-centered or student-centered. Teacher-centered classroom talk typically unfolds as a sequence of three steps – a teacher asks a question with a predetermined answer, a student responds, and the teacher evaluates the response. In contrast, student-centered classroom talk is engaging, collaborative, and reciprocal – in these scenarios, teachers and students both ask questions that have multiple answers, students talk to other students, and the discussions grow organically. Working with students in the student-centered way is called dialogic teaching, and while we know dialogic teaching is beneficial to student learning, we also know engaging in this type of teaching is fraught with difficulties. This study sought to explore these difficulties by examining the lived experience of dialogic teaching through the perspectives of five middle and secondary English language arts teachers. The study offers portraits of each teacher's respective experiences as well as themes that cut across all the teachers' experiences. Insights are offered about dialogic teaching in terms of lesson planning and attitudes toward students; these insights are termed *dialogic by design* and *dialogic by disposition*, respectively.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Teacher: [Role Call: Reading names]

Students: [Responding]

Here.	Riiiiight.	Here.
Here.	He. Are.	Hola.
Here.	Not here.	Here.
Absent.	Yep.	Celloha
Here.	Here.	Here.

Teacher: Okay, thank you guys.

Teacher: You guys wouldn't use metaphors for evil, would you?

Students: [multiple responses] No. [one response, whispered loudly] *I would.*

Teacher: What were you going to talk about? I'm not going to talk until you say something.

What were you going to say?

Student: I was going to say about those two girls…

Teacher: That's what I was going to say!

Student: I agree with what you just said.

Teacher: What did I just say?

Student: I don't know.

Teacher: You guys are dead today, c'mon…do your best zombie groan.

Students: [Various groans]

Teacher: Not bad. Let's move on.

The exchanges above are examples of classroom talk from middle and secondary English language arts classrooms. By presenting them, I do not mean to uncover an underlying pattern within them or analyze their respective qualities individually. Instead, I mean to present them under the guiding premise of this dissertation study: that classroom talk is part of the experience of teaching, and explicating teachers' experiences with it can inform our overall understanding of it. In my reading, the examples above are revealing of the rich nature of classroom talk – it can be funny, lighthearted, and dynamic. And it can be a struggle. And much, much more. The purpose of this dissertation was to explore the nature of classroom talk in middle and secondary English classrooms from the teachers' perspective. By visiting classrooms and conducting interviews, I sought to generate plausible insight about teachers' lived experiences with dialogic discussion – a type of talk that is collaborative, reciprocal, and student-centered. While theoretic and empirical literature on English language arts classrooms suggests dialogic discussions are beneficial to student learning (Applebee, Langer, Nystrand, & Gamoran, 2003) and offers guidance about which discussion moves tend to promote dialogic moments (Juzwik, Borsheim-Black, Caughlan, & Heintz, 2013), little is known about the nature of dialogic discussions from the teacher's perspective. This dissertation study sought to move in this direction by asking the question, *What is it like to teach dialogically in middle and secondary English language arts classes?*

I arrive at this question through my own experiences as an English language arts teacher. As I reflect on my time working with 9^{th} – 12^{th} grade students, I'm struck by the complexity of classroom life generally and the complexity of facilitating classroom discussion specifically. I think about how often I was energized by class discussions that went well on one hand and how often I was perplexed by ones that didn't go so well on the other.

I kept journals about my experiences, and in one entry, I describe a time when I asked, "So why would you *text* someone when just *calling* the person would be so much more, I don't know, efficient?" I asked the question in a World Literature class to a mix of 10th, 11th, and 12th graders, about 28 students total. It was winter, and we were in an old building, reading *MacBeth*, in a room that happened to be next to the furnace, which made it 80-something degrees inside, and everyone was a little slouchy from the heat. But then: Someone's phone did a little jingle, and the class, including me, collectively perked up and honed in on the sound, and someone said, "Oooh, someone's in trouble," and someone else said, "texty texty" and the student with the phone told me, "Sorry Sulzer, it was a late night last night—forgot to turn it off, okay?" Perhaps from the heat or the admittedly dry lesson plan I had for us on *Macbeth*, we made a group decision to go off script. I wondered what it was like to go through high school with a cell phone on your hip. Students started chiming in about texting a person who "you like," and I ended up asking the question above about the decision to text rather than call – not from a place of judgment or as a strategy for getting my students to think more deeply. I was simply curious.

We proceeded to have an engaging discussion about the influence of new technology on relationships. My students lived in this world, and they had lots to say. The time lag between messages allowed for elaborate strategizing, word choice was crucial, the time interval between texts conveyed meaning, emoticons and acronyms allowed for a complex range of inferences, and even spelling choices indicated important personality traits. What's particularly important is not that my students were teaching me something; it's that they were also teaching *each other*. Disagreements drew out shades of meaning; agreements reaffirmed common experiences; and through it all, we were using each other to build understanding and competency.

Cast in academic terms, this conversation might be referred to as a "dialogic spell" (Nystrand, Wu, Gamoran, Zaiser, & Long, 2003) where the discussion unfolds through student questions, clarifications, hypothetical reasoning, one person building on another's response, and so on. In the literature on classroom talk, these ways of interacting have become empirically associated with student literacy achievement (Applebee et al., 2003) and theoretically grounded in liberatory stances toward education, i.e., as a means of liberating knowledge from a constrained teacher-lecture format by redefining social relations in the classroom and society at large (Shor & Freire, 1987). However, engaging with students in "dialogic spells" is not simply a matter of following a simple formula. I wish it was. Perhaps many more of the discussions in my classroom would have been more successful – but alas, try as I might, great discussions would often pop up unexpectedly and less-than-great discussions would just simply pop often. My five years of experience as a high school teacher has led me to see dialogic classroom interactions as an ideal for educational processes, but also fraught with difficulties that are hard to name. This study was an effort to begin the naming process.

My overall strategy was to study dialogic classroom talk by not looking at it directly – but by examining teachers' told experiences of classroom discussions. In turning to lived experience, I leveraged concepts within phenomenology to produce robust descriptions of classroom talk in the form of both portraits and themes. I offer two insights about what teachers and teacher educators can do to establish a dialogic stance in the classroom. I argue that dialogic classroom talk can be conceptualized in terms of *design* and *disposition*. Design refers to a way to think about lesson planning in terms of how students can enter into a conversation and enact dialogic interpretive practices. I discuss macro, meso, and micro level entry points and suggest the macro level is most important for establishing a dialogic classroom. Disposition refers to

ways in which we, as teachers, can think about students. I suggest students take on a variety of (often contradictory) roles in the classroom – from troublemakers to meaning-makers – and being deliberate about noticing students as meaning-makers is integral to taking a dialogic stance in the classroom.

Chapter Overviews

Chapter Two

In chapter two, I outline my empirical and theoretical framework. Beginning in the 1960s, researchers began looking to classroom talk as a viable resource to better understand learning (Nystrand, 2013). Classroom talk became a way to theorize, interpret, and account for student learning. The guiding question became, *What's going on with classroom talk? What do students learn? How does it happen? What can teachers do to encourage learning?* I argue that these questions are approached in the literature through three major undertakings: the identification and analysis of the triadic sequence, the theorization and study of monologic and dialogic patterns, and the integration of new theoretical frameworks. In turning to phenomenology, I align my study with the last of the three undertakings.

The triadic sequence involves an overall observation that classroom talk tends to divide into three parts: the teacher initiates, a student responds, and the teacher evaluates or follows up on that response (Heath, 1978; McHoul, 1978; Mehan, 1979; Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975; Wells, 1999). The intent of research on the triadic sequence is to draw on, in comprehensive fashion, the rules by which classroom talk operates. Classroom talk is analyzed as a type of talk separate from "natural conversation" (McHoul, 1978, p. 211) that is delivered through school specific registers (styles matching a situation), discourses (the slow of the speech patterns), and features of control (directives, prompts, or requests for action) (Heath, 1978). The triadic sequence

follows rules, but those rules can be broken momentarily through improvisations – such as a question with no response or a student answers a question without being called on. When improvisations occur, however, class participants engage in "recovery work to restore the turn-taking allocation machinery to normal" (Mehan, 1979, p. 122). The identification and analysis of the triadic sequence became important in understanding how teachers enact an orderly progression of learning in their classrooms – and how they get the class back on track when needed.

New learning goals, however, called for a new way to conceptualize the triadic sequence. The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, for example, began using terms such as "conjecturing, inventing, and problem-solving" (as cited in Cazden, 2001, p. 48), which implied a different type of classroom talk than the triadic sequence could offer in its normalized or improvised forms. The study of classroom talk took on a new undertaking: the theorization and study of monologic and dialogic patterns. This line of research draws heavily on the work of Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of dialogue (Nystrand, 2013), particularly the ways in which Bakhtin theorized dialogue in terms of language, thought, and authority. In Bakhtin's (1986) writings, the "utterance" takes on special significance as something that can be monologically oriented (associated with authority and control of participants) or dialogically orientated (associated with reciprocity and equal status of participants).

Using an utterance's monologic/dialogic orientations as guiding principle, this line of research seeks to identify the discussion moves that lead to "dialogic spells" (Nystrand, Wu, Gamoran, Zeiser, & Long, 2003). Many variables are identified in this endeavor, and four are prominent in research: authentic questions, uptake, high level evaluations, and cognitive level (Christoph & Nystrand, 2001). Authentic questions are ones with no pre-specified answer;

uptake involves follow-up questions or building on someone's response; high-level evaluation involves a student contribution that is selected, often by the teacher, to direct the discussion to a new topic; and cognitive level is a scale corresponding to the level of thought students would need to use to answer a teacher's question. Using these variables and many others (e.g., Boyd & Markarian, 2011), this line of research has established large scale data sets by the use of software that can, in real time, record teacher questions, students responses, level of authenticity, uptake, cognitive level, and so on.

Studies investigating monologic and dialogic patterns in classroom talk suggest that dialogic patterns correlate with students' increased literacy learning (Applebee et al., 2003), increase students' substantive engagement with course content (Nystrand & Gamoran, 1991), and benefit students' writing performance (Nystrand, Gamoran, & Carbonaro, 1998) as well as reading performance (Nystrand, 2006). However, classrooms were also found to be "overwhelmingly monologic," with dialogic sequences accounting for, on average, less than a minute of class time per class. The recurrent finding from this line of research is that triadic sequences – which are interpreted as monologic – remain the predominate mode of classroom discussion pattern (Lyle, 2008). The tendency of this line of research, however, is to conceptualize monologic and dialogic patterns as entirely separate types of classroom talk, so much so that it has privileged one pattern over the other and "demonized the research regarding the effectiveness of teacher talk" (Boyd & Markarian, 2011, p. 517).

The last undertaking in classroom research is to open up interpretive possibilities – beyond that of monologic/dialogic sorting – by calling on a diversity of theories and methods. A study using narrative inquiry, for example, reveals dialogic elements in what would previously be interpreted as monologic teacher talk (Juzwik & Ives, 2011). Calling on sociocultural theories

of language (Gee, 2011), the classroom space, and the talk that emerges there, becomes envisioned a micro-macro interface whereby individuals perform their specific identities with the social, cultural, and historical resources available to them (Renshaw, 2004; Wortham, 2006). These studies reveal that students gain agency in the classroom by appropriating roles different from those suggested by the teacher (Ares, 2008), that emotion rules are integral to how talk proceeds in discussions about literature (Thein, Guise, & Sloan, 2015), and that normative "scripts" in the classroom are formed by sociocontextual factors (Gutierrez, 1994). The proliferation of methods and theoretical frameworks has been integral moving research on classroom talk forward.

This dissertation study aligns with this last undertaking – that is, the use of different methods and theoretical frameworks to re-interpret dialogic classroom talk. However, my study also stands apart in that I approach dialogic talk by shifting away from dialogic talk. In other words, I did not look directly at classroom transcripts to generate insights; rather, I turned to the people who experience classroom talk to generate insights about the nature of teaching dialogically. To explore the idea of classroom talk as an experienced phenomenon, I turn to the methods and concepts of phenomenology.

Phenomenology is the study of lived experience (van Manen, 2014). Through the writings of Husserl (1931/2002), Heidegger (1962/2006), Merleau-Ponty (1962), and Speigelburg (1975), among others, phenomenology has provided a framework for describing lived experience in such a way as to call forth its varied, complex, manifold profiles (Sokolowski, 2000). This theoretical and methodological approach is generative for education research. For example, in studying In-School Suspension (ISS), Evans (2011) studied the lived experience of students who had been in ISS, giving the experience a full description through

"verbal portraits." These portraits resist the framing of ISS in purely abstract terms – as a form of exclusionary punishment, for example – and instead work to thicken the reader's understanding by allowing access to real-life experiences of real-life students. My study of teachers' experiences with dialogic teaching works in the same direction: i.e., to thicken our understanding of dialogic teaching by attending to what it is as a real-life experience.

Chapter Three

In chapter three, I describe my particular use of phenomenology. While I drew on phenomenology for guidance in establishing my methods, I also orientated the study to a deeply held value for many qualitative researchers – that of reflexivity (Denzin, 1997; Glesne, 2006; Potter, 1996). Thus, I refer to my study as a reflexive phenomenology, which differs from many branches of phenomenology where researchers engage in the epoche and reduction process (Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 2014). The epoche and reductions involve "bracketing" (Sokolowski, 2000) or "suspending" (Embree, 2011) habits of thought that interfere with "phenomenological looking" (Ihde, 2012, p. 17). The epoche involves the researcher's initial suspension of belief about the phenomenon of interest, a deliberate and sustained distancing of oneself from the knowledge one knows about it, done in the spirit of seeing the thing itself (Heidegger, 1962/2006). The epoche is followed by reductions, which is both a further distancing of oneself from what one knows as well as a style of thinking about the phenomenon of interest (van Manen, 2014); in this way, *re*duction is similar to other styles of thinking such as *in*ductin, *de*duction, and *ab*duction. In different branches of phenomenology, the epoche/reduction takes on slightly different forms (cf. Husser, 1931/2002; Heidegger, 1962/2006; Merleau-Ponty, 1962), but important for this introduction to the study is the idea that I turned away from the epoche/reduction process altogether. While many phenomenological

concepts were leveraged in the establishment of my methods, I could not reconcile the idea of "bracketing" or "suspending" my knowledge with the understanding of myself as integral to the goings-on of the research process. Thus, I establish a reflexive stance toward the study, noting my own role in the methodological choices and resulting interpretations.

I used three main phenomenological concepts to leverage my methods: intentionality, manifold profiles, and textures/structures. Firstly, intentionality involves a philosophical configuration of consciousness and the world; under the rubric of intentionality, the "intended objects" of consciousness are taken *as such*. That is, descriptions of dialogic teaching are not understood as needing verification or confirmation. Any description of a state of affairs, or sensation, or memory is interpreted as part of the lived experience of dialogic teaching – and thus, all descriptions about dialogic teaching are taken into full consideration.

Secondly, the concept of manifold profiles promotes the idea that experiences are like three dimensional objects; one cannot see them in totality. If part of an object comes into view, becomes present, then another part goes out of view, becomes absent. Therefore, our understanding of objects builds up from the premise that they are comprised of a blend of presences and absences. Dialogic teaching, imagined in this way, follows suit. Descriptions of dialogic teaching are aspects, sides, and profiles (Sokolowski, 2000) of the experience. This idea was used to create dialogic teaching portraits, collections of paragraphs that all contribute to an overall portrait of what dialogic teaching involves.

Thirdly, I use the concept of textures/structures to envision lived experience as made up of both textures – the *what* of experience – and structures – the *why/how* of experience (Moustakas, 1994). The textures of experience involve *what it's like; what happens; what sensations it evokes; what observations, judgments, and states of affairs are articulated*. And the

structures of the experience are related to *how it happens; why it ends up that way; what it can be attributed to; what forces are at play*. These two modalities of experience allow for separate interpretive stances. This concepts was used to develop thematic statements about the textures and structures, respectively, of the dialogic teaching experience.

To guide the study, I followed Vagle's (2014) suggestion about formulating a primary research question that broadly identifies the topic, followed by secondary research questions that give direction to the data collection and explication processes. I used the primary research question, *What is it like to teach dialogically in middle and secondary English language arts classes?* The research was further guided by a series of secondary research questions: *What textural descriptions do the teachers offer of the experience (sensations, adjectives, metaphors, sequences of events)? What structural descriptions do the teachers offer of the experience (explanations about why a class proceeded/felt a certain way)?*

To explore these questions, I recruited five middle and secondary English language arts teachers. In the summer of 2014, the participants and I began a conversation about dialogic classroom talk as a group, using Juzwik, Borsheim-Black, Caughlan, and Heintz's (2013) *Inspiring Dialogue: Talking to Learn in the English Classroom* as a focal text. In the fall of 2014, I visited the participants to continue the conversation about classroom talk, this time in their individual classrooms as they engaged their students in various dialogic discussions. I collected video and audio data of class sessions, field notes, and post-discussion interviews with the participants.

To explicate the data, I used two approaches. The first was to create portraits (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997) of each participant's told experiences. To guide the process, I used van Manen's (1997) concept of deeply embedded language to seek out moments in the participant's

descriptions that contain elements of concreteness, evocation, intensification, tone, and epiphany. Concreteness involves the phenomenon being "placed concretely in the lifeworld so that the reader may experientially recognize it" (p. 351); evocation involves bringing the experience "vividly into presence" (p. 353); intensification involves giving "key words their full value" (p. 355), that is, seeing expressions such as metaphor or alliteration as being irreducible in the making of meaning; tone involves representing a unique character of the experience so that "its deeper meaning has a noncognitive effect on the reader" (p. 359); and epiphany involves calling forth "a transformative effect…a sudden perception or intuitive grasp" (p. 364). The portraits are presented to offer a thick description of the participants' experiences.

The second approach involved thematizing (Moustakas, 1994) the data. In this approach, I examined the textural and the structural elements of the participants' descriptions to generate themes. To guide the process, I used a two-cycle coding strategy (Saldaña, 2013). The themes are presented as broad strokes of the participants' experiences.

Chapter Four

In chapter four, I present the portraits of the participant's experiences as well as four themes. The portraits are meant to align with the descriptive approach of phenomenology – that is, to describe at length and let descriptions speak (Husser, 1931/2002; Heidegger, 1962/2006; Merleau-Ponty, 1962; van Manen, 2014). I preface each portrait with background information on the participant as well as information about how many times I visited that participant's classroom and what dialogic discussions I observed. The portraits are presented in paragraphs, each paragraph positioned as an aspect of the experience of dialogic teaching. Because these portraits can potentially be unwieldy, I offer two reading suggestions – offered in the spirit of making best use of the portraits and gaining insight from them.

1. Imagine each portrait as a many-sided object, each paragraph as one side. Look across the sides, knowing that the presence of one side necessitates the absence of another. The many-sided object can be held up and spun, looked at quickly or slowly, in order or not, in total or in part. It is the collection of sides that gives the object form.

2. Imagine each portrait as a voice in a conversation. The conversation involves teachers talking about dialogic teaching in their classes – perhaps at a coffee shop, or on a bus, or a get-together with friends. Reading is overhearing. Flip from one portrait to the next, randomly if need be, to put the voices in conversation with one another.

Next, I present four themes to explicate the data in broader strokes. These themes are meant to highlight the experience of dialogic teaching in terms of commonalities. These themes are:

1. The experience of dialogic teaching involves constant calibrations and persistent tensions (textural).
2. The experience of dialogic teaching involves moments of excitement and moments of frustration (textural).
3. The experience of dialogic teaching is structured by various ways of conceptualizing a "good response" (structural).
4. The experience of dialogic teaching is structured by the various (and contradictory) roles students play (structural).

These themes were written with the intention of naming important aspects of the experience in order to establish (and continue) a conversation with both preservice and practicing English language arts teachers about dialogic teaching.

Chapter Five

In the final chapter, I offer three insights from this phenomenological study of dialogic teaching. I suggest that dialogic teaching should be conceptualized in terms of design and disposition. I call these suggestions *dialogic by design* and *dialogic by disposition*, respectively. Dialogic by design begins with the premise that the bell rings, something happens, and then the bell rings again – and I look at the question of how that middle something takes on a dialogic quality. I suggest that design elements of repeatability and elegance are integral to dialogic teaching. Repeatability involves plans that have a routine quality to them whereby students might take leadership roles within a discussion on multiple occasions throughout a semester, trimester, or quarter. Elegance involves the way English language arts content is approached at the beginning of class; I identify three levels of approach (macro, meso, and micro) and suggest students enter into dialogic discussions most readily at the macro level. Dialogic by disposition begins with the premise that the exchange of words between two people is primarily contingent on how each one thinks of the other. I suggest that envisioning students as *meaning-makers* stands in contrast to seeing them as *people-in-development*; and cultivating a dialogic disposition involves making a commitment to noticing the meaning-making that students do.

Lastly, I offer a suggestion about future research about teachers' experiences. Using van Manen's (1997) concept of reverberation, I suggest that understanding teachers' experiences becomes realized in both invitational and inspectional modes. As the term implies, the invitational mode invites – that is, it invites teachers and researchers to share experiences about dialogic teaching to establish shared understandings and a continual shaping of intuition with respect to the nature of the experience. Likewise, the inspectional mode inspects – that is, it encourages aspects of the experience to gain scholarly attention through a continual process of

inspecting the particular circumstances and conditions that seem to impede or promote dialogic moments in the classroom. The invitational and inspectional modes represent two ways of listening to teachers' experiences, and I suggest that classroom research would do well to integrate both modes into data collection and explication processes.

CHAPTER TWO: EMPIRICAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In the foreword to *Inspiring Dialogue: Talking to Learn in the English Classroom*, Martin Nystrand (2013) identifies the 1960s as an important decade for the study of classroom talk. Researchers James Britton, Douglas Barnes, and Harold Rosen ushered in a new emphasis in the study of classrooms, that of the "learning role of exploratory and expressive talk and writing" (p. ix). The patterns with which teachers talk to students became central in theorizing, interpreting, and accounting for what students learn and how much they learn. The question became, in the words of Cazden (2001), "How does the observable classroom discourse affect the unobservable thinking of each of the students, and thereby the nature of what is learned?" (p. 60). Since that time, questions about classroom talk have proliferated: What's going on when teachers speak to students about literature? Or writing? Or the news of the day? Or controversial issues? What's going on when students respond directly? Or behind the teacher's back? What's going on when a classroom is rich with discussion? What's going on when communication breaks down? How can we understand power and privilege through patterns of talk? Or the construction and enactment of knowledge? Or identity? Or thinking? In the broadest sense, what's going on with classroom talk?

To answer these questions, the observable patterns of classroom talk – teachers to students, students to teachers, students to students, and so on – have become the methodological entry point. Observable patterns are, after all, observable. They are methodologically friendly. Patterns of classroom talk can be transcribed and taxonomized; counted up and correlated; framed up and theorized about. Studies of classroom talk have been generative for describing normative patterns of talk, identifying alternative patterns, and interpreting these patterns in terms of student learning. In this literature review, I follow three major undertakings within the

field: the identification and analysis of the triadic sequence, the theorization and study of monologic and dialogic patterns, and the integration of new theoretical frameworks. These undertakings are abbreviated as Triadic Sequence, Monologic and Dialogic Patterns, and New Directions, respectively.

The Triadic Sequence

The triadic sequence is a series of three turns between a teacher and student wherein the teacher initiates an exchange, the student responds, and the teacher responds to the response. Heath (1978) provides an example:

> Teacher: Who knows where our story for today takes place?
>
> Student: I do—Switzerland.
>
> Teacher: Good. Now, Jeremy, can you point Switzerland out on the map? (p. 1)

This triadic sequence emerges often in classroom talk and goes by various names: the opening-answering-follow-up pattern (Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975), the question-response-evaluation pattern (Heath, 1978), the question-answer-comment (McHoul, 1978), the initiate-respond-evaluate pattern (Mehan, 1979), and the initiate-respond-follow-up pattern (Wells, 1999). Following the majority of contemporary research on classroom talk, the triadic sequence will be abbreviated IRE in this review.

The research on IRE patterns is oriented toward an organizational understanding of classroom. In other words, when do orderly patterns emerge in classroom talk? For what purpose? By what rules do they operate? These questions imply descriptive answers. Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) set out to "produce a descriptive system" by which "all the language in the classroom" might be characterized (p. 15). They used the "function of an utterance" as the unit of analysis, "function" being defined in terms of "whether it is intended to evoke a response,

whether it is a response itself, whether it is intended to make a boundary in the discourse, and so on" (p. 14). Thus, the methodological intent of the research was to draw out organizational practices of the classroom talk in a comprehensive fashion: finding the rules, stating the rules, and describing what happens when the discussants deviate from the rules. To that end, the descriptive approach underscores "a sequential organization and a hierarchical organization" (Mehan, 1979, p. 35), which might be charted out to gain a perspective on classroom talk and the implicit rules by which it operates. The charts are often presented in three major parts corresponding the IRE sequence, and those parts take on labels to describe the quality/nature of the sequence. For example, Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) label IRE sequences with descriptors such as "elicit" (a prompt or question), "direct" (a command), "repeat" (a repeated question), "boundary" (transition into a new activity), and so on (pp. 63-111).

These descriptors are a bid toward a comprehensive representation of classroom talk, a type of talk distinct from what McHoul (1978) calls "natural conversation" (p. 211). Rather, classroom talk is a modified version of the way people speak to each other, and understanding the rules is tantamount to understanding educational processes in classroom settings. McHoul's description of classroom talk foregrounds the rules by which it operates, calling forth three technical differences between classroom talk and natural conversation, stated in lawyerly fashion:

> (1) The potential for gap and pause is maximized (2) The potential for overlap is minimized in that: (2a) the possibility of the teacher (or a student) 'opening up' the talk to a self-selecting student first starter is not accounted for (2b) the possibility of a student using a 'current speaker selects next' technique to select another student is not accounted for. (3) The permutability of turn-taking is minimized. (p. 189)

The detail of this approach assumes a certain stability and universality to the forms of interaction that go on in classrooms. Teacher and student utterances resolve into forms governed by rules

governed by sub-rules. Understanding how the governing structure works is tantamount to understanding educational processes in classrooms. Thus, classroom talk in this line of research is put forth as a coherent "turn-taking system" (p. 211), a system set apart from natural conversation, that becomes the system by which learning is realized in classroom settings.

Additional interpretive concepts supplement this line a research. Heath's (1978) analysis of classroom talk involved concepts of register ("style appropriate to the particular situation"), discourse ("flow of speech in interaction"), and the specialized language of control ("directive, or requests for action"), which might be used to help "teachers make their directives more explicit" (p. 2). Importantly, the purpose of engaging in this type of analysis is to draw attention to how classroom talk proceeds, and illuminate ways in which teachers might be explicit in involving students in the process. Heath writes, "Examination by teachers and students of the features of teacher talk as register, discourse, and specialized language of control can help supplement traditional methods of teaching language arts" (p. 2). In so doing, teachers might align the tone and flow of their interactions with students to their educational goals.

In this line of research, IRE sequences became regarded as the heightened, formal language of the classroom; and rather than identifying the IRE sequences to steer clear of them, the aim was to identify, understand, and leverage – i.e., teachers might gain awareness of the IRE and become more deliberate about how they use it to achieve their instructional goals. Thoughtful management of the IRE sequence became an emphasis. In other words, how do teachers manage the IRE sequence amongst the dynamic realities of the classroom? Using data from a year's worth of classroom interactions, Mehan (1979) identifies four improvised forms of the IRE sequence: A student might answer a teacher question without being officially "nominated" by the teacher; a teacher might initiate a prompt/question and get no response; a

student might see an "error" in another student's response, correct it, and subsequently achieve a high evaluation from the teacher; and the teacher could accept an unexpectedly "good" answer, even though the student violated the turn-taking IRE sequence. When improvisations occurred, classroom participants "engaged in recovery work to restore the turn-allocation machinery to normal," and the improvised and normalized forms of turn-taking contributed to the "interactional mechanism for maintaining social order during classroom lessons" (p. 122). Underlying Mehan's study are the assumptions that IRE sequences represent the "social order" of the classroom, and good teachers are capable managers of the IRE sequence and its improvised forms. While this study is often cited for its naming and analysis of the IRE sequence, the notion of alternative ways of speaking are not fully realized by Mehan. Instead, the prevailing idea in this work is that the IRE sequence is a sturdy mechanism for classroom interactions, and quality classroom talk is realized through a teacher's maintenance and operation of the mechanism.

This line of research gained more nuance with Cazden's (2001) classic book, *Classroom Discourse: The Language of Teaching and Learning.* In it, Cazden draws on Mehan's data to delineate traditional lessons from nontraditional lessons, the former aligning with IRE sequences and the later aligning with more fluid sequences, characterized as "reform," "ambitious," "inquiry," or "discourse-intensive" (p. 31). It also seems important to mention that Cazden not only draws on Mehan's data, she was a participant in it – she was the teacher Mehan observed during his year-long study. In Cazden's view, a teacher's choice of classroom talk, whether traditional or nontraditional, should be dependent on the objectives of the lesson, and, using the guidelines set forth by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) as an example, Cazden concludes that "some curriculum goals being advocated now require a different kind of

talk" (p. 47). A representative NCTM guideline calls for less "mechanistic answer finding" and more "conjecturing, inventing, and problem-solving" (as cited in Cazden, 2001, p. 48). Thus, the patterns of classroom talk should resonate with instructional goals. The potential for students to engage in "conjecturing, inventing, and problem-solving" requires forms of teacher talk and teacher questioning that produce such a reaction.

Drawing on activity theory and discourse analysis, Wells (1999) reevaluated the description of IRE sequences, suggesting that rather than "E" for evaluation, the third move in the sequence should be "F" for follow-up. This change signaled a corrective to past descriptions of the IRE sequence by acknowledging that teachers are often not in the business of evaluating student utterances outright (as in saying "good" or "bad"), but rather, "the third move functions much more as an opportunity to extend the student's answer, to draw out its significance, or to make connections with other parts of the students' total experience during the unit" (p. 200). Wells's reevaluation of the triadic sequence also came in response to "those calling for its demise" (p. 206). In part, new educational standards promoted new views of classroom talk (or, at least, initiated an amplification and resurgence of old views), and the triadic sequence began to take on an antiquated quality – as it became associated with "recitation" and "tradition" (e.g., Nystrand, 1997). Despite Wells (1999) attempt to save the IRE – or IRF – sequence, a competing line of research on classroom talk used it as a theoretical placeholder for monologism, teacher-centered, authoritative discourse. Opposite the monologic, teacher-centered, "authoritative discourse" was a potential for dialogic, student-centered, "internally persuasive discourse" (Bakhtin, 1973). This formulation of classroom talk is explored in the following section.

Monologic and Dialogic Patterns

Research in the 1980s and 1990s began to use the terms *monologic* and *dialogic* to characterize classroom talk patterns – *monologic* being associated with teacher authority and recitation and *dialogic* being associated with student freedom and reciprocity. And importantly, as Nystrand (2013) points out, "This research could not have been done without the Western introduction of Russian philosopher and literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin in the mid-1970s" (p. ix). For Bakhtin[1] (1973), the terms monologic and dialogic signified a highly nuanced worldview of language, thought, and authority. "*Any true understanding*," Bakhtin writes, "*is dialogic in nature*" (p. 102, original emphasis). This statement is foundational for this line of research on classroom talk. What the statement means, however, requires some background on Bakhtin's worldview generally.

Bakhtin (1986) criticized abstract views of language – which were views that lead to the diagraming of language according to who is speaking to whom, what is said, the nature of what is said, and the ways in which the content of what is said might be traced through speech acts. This approach to language is methodological and scientific, seemingly rigorous, but ultimately incomplete: "One cannot say that these diagrams are false or that they do not correspond to certain aspects of reality. But when they are put forth as the actual whole of speech communication, they become a science fiction" (p. 68). Ironically, analyzing language to understand language is a dead end. Such an orientation leads to what Bakhtin regarded as ambiguous terms, such as *speech*, *our speech*, and *speech flow*. While he rarely wrote in

[1] On one level, the name "Bakhtin" evokes the work of the philosopher, linguist, and philologist Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1975). On another level, however, Bakhtin's name also operates as a placeholder for a larger collection of authors/thinkers who would meet and develop their ideas together through extended conversations – people now associated with Bakhtin Circles. Using Bakhtin's name as a placeholder for this larger group is a convention endorsed by scholars such as Clark and Holquist (1984) and one that I will follow throughout this dissertation.

methodological terms, Bakhtin was a keen observer of them in the work of others – and critiqued the work of linguists on those grounds. He writes, “The terminological imprecision and confusion in this methodological central point of linguistic thinking result from ignoring the *real unit* of speech communication: the utterance” (p. 71).

Bakhtin (1986) develops his definition of “utterance” by exploring the work of novelist Fyodor Dostoevsky. By attending to Dostoevsky’s treatment of heroes and other characters, Bahktin works through notions of dialogic/monologic properties of language. In dialogic novels, such as Dostoevsky’s, the author positions her/himself in dialogue with the characters, on equal terms with them. In contrast, “writer monologists” (Tolstoy was Bakhtin’s favorite target) exerted complete control of their characters – their thoughts and actions wholly determined by the author. Through interpreting Doestoevsky’s novels, Bakhtin develops ideas about “dialogic interaction,” a type of interaction that assumes the completeness of characters – i.e., assumes their status as capable and creative beings aside from the work of the author.

Classroom researchers have taken up Bakhtin’s ideas by envisioning the teacher as the author of the classroom space (Lensmire, 1997) and developing observation protocols to identify dialogic interactions among the teacher and students (Nystrand, 1997). The controlling idea in this work is that teachers can “go dialogic” by offering “instructional designs and practices that provide students with frequent and sustained opportunities to engage in learning talk” (Juzwik, Borsheim-Black, Caughlan, & Heintz, 2013, p. 5).

This line of research on classroom talk establishes variables that can be used to identify dialogic patterns. For example, four key variables are used in Christoph and Nystrand’s (2001) study of one teacher’s transition from monologic to dialogic teaching (see Table 1). The

frequency and point-value (for cognitive level) of these variables provide a perspective as to the extent to which the classroom talk might be considered dialogic.

TABLE 1: Four Variables for Dialogic Talk

Key Variable	Description	
Authentic Questions	A question with no pre-specified answer	
Uptake	A follow-up question about something said previously	
High-Level Evaluation	Occurs when a student's contribution changes or modifies the topic of discussion	
Cognitive Level	Level of cognitive function a question elicits, operationalized by a 5-point scale:	
	1. Record: elicit what students are observing, feeling, or thinking	What's happening?
	2. Recitation: report of old information	What happened?
	3. Generalization: display of inductive reasoning	What happens?
	4. Analysis: display of deductive reasoning	Why does it happen?
	5. Speculation: elicits new information that cannot be answered with prior knowledge	What might happen?

Table 1: Adapted from Christoph and Nystrand, 2001, Appendix A, pp. 283-284

Leveraging Bakhtin's notion of "dialogic" through the observation of certain variables, however, is not straightforward. While the notions of authentic questioning, uptake, high-level evaluation, and cognitive level tend to be mainstays within the literature, plenty of other variables are of interest: closed questions, direct speaker nominations, didactic statements, revoicing, feedback, interthinking, tie-ins, directive statements, explications, and rebuttals (see Boyd & Markarian, 2011, p. 525 for a full list with definitions).

This methodological approach to classroom talk allows researchers to code discussion events in real time, and Martin Nystrand and colleagues have developed a program called CLASS for this purpose. As described by Juzwik, Nystrand, Kelly, and Sherry (2008):

> Researchers using CLASS can – in real time – categorize class periods by activities (e.g., discussion, group work, etc.), activity segments and episodes, and questions. Questions are a primary unit of analysis in CLASS. A researcher records and codes all questions asked according to the source (teacher or student), response (yes or no), authenticity (whether or not the asker has a prespecified answer to the question), uptake (whether or not the question builds on a previous answer), cognitive level (report or high level), who answers the question (student name), whether the question is part of multiple response, and teacher evaluation and follow-up (whether the question is elaborated or unelaborated). (p. 1123)

The CLASS program provides summary statistics that can then be used to answer questions, such as, “How dialogic was Ms. Gomez’s instruction?" (p. 1125). Measures of dialogic teaching can then be correlated with other measures of interest, such as engagement and test performance. These investigations suggest that increased instances of dialogic interaction in the classroom robustly correlate with students’ literacy learning (Applebee, Langer, Nystrand, & Gamoran, 2003), increase students’ substantive engagement with course content (Nystrand & Gamoran, 1991), and benefit their writing performance (Nystrand, Gamoran, & Carbonaro, 1998) as well as reading performance (Nystrand, 2006).

However, following a sample of 8th and 9th grade students over a two-year period, Nystrand (1997) reports that the classrooms were “overwhelmingly monologic” and dialogic sequences averaged less than a minute per class, but even small increases in dialogic sequences were associated with increased student performance on responses to literature (pp. 32-33). A similar study is from Burns and Myhill (2004), who found a “quantitative dominance of the talk by the teacher, with a discourse pattern of teacher-pupil-teacher-pupil being the most prevalent [and] an average four word utterance for pupils was obtained" (p. 43). In part, the authors

attribute this imbalance to “a heavily accountable teaching culture” where teacher-centered modes of pedagogy “are considered valuable, safe approaches” (p. 47).

Aside from cultural constraints on classroom practices, dialogic discussions also unfold in highly dynamic (and oftentimes unpredictable) ways within individual classrooms themselves, even when dialogic moves are enacted by teachers as students. Nystrand, Wu, Gamoran, Zeiser, and Long’s (2003) event-history analysis demonstrates that “dialogic spells” in the classroom are not a dichotomous, on-or-off condition. Instead, teachers and students continually make “dialogic bids” during the course of discussion in the form of authentic questions or uptake. But while these moves influence the dialogic nature of the classroom talk, they do not determine it. Nystrand et al. use a fire metaphor to explain: “If dialogic spells represent an ‘ignition’ of teacher–student interaction, dialogic bids may be thought of as ‘kindling’ generating ‘sparks’ that increase the odds of ignition; but the sparks, until ignition, are not ‘the fire’” (p. 173). Some dialogic moves, this study shows, hold more of a spark than others. An authentic question asked by a student is the most influential in encouraging the overall “spell” to last. Without a student to ask that authentic question, the dialogic nature of discussion could go unrealized.

The recurrent finding in this line of research is that monologic patterns – often represented as IRE sequences and associated with recitation – remain the predominant mode of classroom discussion pattern (Lyle, 2008), a finding often positioned as troublesome because teacher-led recitation "reduc[es] education to a gameshow in which the prize for successful display of the required answer is continued teacher approval; but it is a game which many students are bound to lose" (Skidmore, 2006, p. 513)

This line of research also demonstrates, however, that the dialogic and monologic divide tends to lose its interpretive value when considering specific classroom and specific teachers

close up. Kachur and Prendergast (1997) took a closer look at two teachers in Nystrand's (1997) study. Mr. Kramer's classroom questions were coded (by the CLASS program) as closed, meaning they have predetermined answers and therefore should bring about monologic patterns; Ms. Janson's classroom questions were coded as authentic, meaning they do not have predetermined answers and therefore should bring about dialogic patterns. It turns out the opposite was true. Kachur and Prendergast write,

> The bottom line in dialogic instruction, then, is not any one 'do' or 'don't'—asking open-ending questions, setting up discussion formats, or totally eschewing lectures and review sessions…what matters most is taking students' input seriously, so that a context for the kind of dialogue that leads to learning can take place even in situations that might seem univocal, as in a class dominated by lecture. (p. 88)

The idea of "taking students' input seriously" is not captured, methodologically, by sorting out monologic and dialogic utterances. The sorting itself becomes the culprit in dismissing too much information too early: It promotes too stark of distinction monologic and dialogic interactions, digs too deep of a boundary, and becomes too evaluative too quickly. As Boyd and Markarian (2011) point out, the "increasingly inflexible belief in and adherence to the privileging of one linguistic syntax over another – such as teachers employing 'open' questions over 'closed' questions – has demonized the research regarding the effectiveness of teacher talk" (p. 517). I argue that avoiding "inflexible" beliefs or the "privileging of one linguistic syntax over another" necessitates new interpretative frameworks to understand classroom talk. In other words, the interpretation of classroom talk would do well to make a methodologically shift away from identifying monologic and dialogic utterances and instead focus on the nature of such utterances. The next section briefly reviews some promising approaches to that end.

New Directions

Juzwik and Ives's (2010) study on short teacher narratives demonstrates the power of new interpretive lenses to re-imagine classroom talk. Using narrative inquiry, they drew out dialogic elements in a teacher's univocal utterance, which, under a different approach, might have been interpreted as purely monologic. The univocal utterance was a 2 minute, 33 second story called "My Worst Mistake" told by Ms. Wagner, a veteran English language arts teacher. During this story, there is no turn-taking between Ms. Wagner and her students. Within the story, however, are traces of the students' presence, and Ms. Wagner's "decision to extend her story [was] in response to and, with the assistance of, the students in her class – an interested audience" (p. 58). The seemingly monologic stretch of classroom talk became, in Juzwik and Ives's analysis, a dialogic performance of identity. They write, "This approach further allows us to capture dialogicality in the classroom where it might not appear on the surface" (p. 58).

Uncovering "dialogicality" in classroom talk requires theoretical frameworks and methodological approaches that open up possibilities for interpretation – and it also requires a clarification of what talking is. Drawing on Bakhtin, Renshaw (2004) explains, "To talk is not merely a technical exercise; it necessarily involves identity work that reveals and constructs who one is, and is becoming" (p. 4). In the classroom, to talk is to establish a way of being in the world, i.e., to draw on and align with capital "D" Discourses that establish "ways of behaving, interacting, valuing, thinking, believing, speaking, and often reading and writing, that are instantiations of particular identities" (Gee, 2011). Thus, classroom talk involves far more than IRE sequences or distinctions between monologic and dialogic patterns. Classrooms become micro-macro interfaces (Renshaw, 2004) wherein individuals are constructed via social, cultural, and historical influence across multiple timescales (Worthham, 2006).

This larger conception of talk revitalizes the question, *What's going on with classroom talk?* This question is theory- and method-dependent. Classroom talk takes on new meaning depending on what theories and methods are recruited to answer it. For example: Using situated social practice theories, Ares (2008) study demonstrates ways in which students appropriate different roles from the ones suggested by the teacher in small group work, thereby taking control of the academic life of the classroom; using sociocultural theories of emotion, Thein, Guise, & Sloan (2015) demonstrate the ways in emotion rules change across settings, evoking different types of talk about and interpretations of literature; using activity theory and conversation analysis, Gutierrez (1994) demonstrates the ways in which a "constellation of sociocontextual features formed 'scripts' that were characterized by various patterns of social action, discourse and activity" (p. 339).

While different theoretical and methodological frameworks open up different interpretive possibilities, these possibilities remain linked to the transcriptions of classroom talk. In a paper called "Trapped by the Transcript," Young (2014, August) the "danger of entextualizing" the classroom world into the confines of a transcript:

> The classroom is not a world to itself and classroom discourse cannot be captured in the text, the sounds, or the pictures recorded in a transcript. In the world beyond the classroom, the personal dispositions of students and teachers accumulated over a lifetime and sometimes longer, the power that they exert and resist in their most mundane of actions, the institutional constraints and affordances of school and public policy are contingent interactions of social life that cannot be entextualized in a transcript, and yet the classroom is the empirical location in which these social patterns and political warrants exist and are transformed.

A question naturally emerges about how to go about studying the classroom, "the empirical location" of interest for understanding social patterns and political warrants, *without transcribing what goes on there*. Young's answer is to emphasize three qualitative approaches that go beyond a transcript in their methods and theoretical framing: case studies, classroom ethnography, and

narrative inquiry. My answer is to circumvent the classroom transcript altogether. Instead of asking the broad question, *What's going on with classroom talk?*, I ask, *What's it like to experience classroom talk?* To explore that question, I turn to phenomenology. I outline my theoretical justification for this turn in the section that follows.

Phenomenology: A New Approach to Studying Dialogic Classroom Talk

As I have articulated in this chapter, the dominant mode of studying dialogic teaching is to examine observable components of classroom talk. These moments might be instances of uptake, authentic questions, tentative thinking, challenges, collaboration, and so on (Nystrand, 1997). To study these moments, researchers have attuned their methods to teacher and student language as it plays out in the classroom. Video and audio data, field notes, and transcripts allow for classroom researchers to study dialogic interactions in both broad sweeps and minute detail. For example, Nystrand and colleagues (1997) developed various versions of the CLASS Program, which tracks discursive moves in real time and allows for data collection across many classrooms, while Juzwik and Ives (2010), drawing on narrative inquiry, explored the multilayered, dialogic aspects of a 2' 23" stretch of teacher talk. Research on dialogic classroom talk is bound up with the challenge of representing it in its complexity and richness, a challenge met with methodological diversity: correlation and regression analysis (Applebee et al., 2003; Nystrand, 1997; Kelly 2007), conversation analysis (Gutierrez, 1994), discourse analysis (Boyd & Markarian, 2011), and case study (Juzwik, Nystrand, Kelly, and Sherry, 2008), among others.

What these studies have in common is a methodological commitment to classroom language as a pathway to understanding. To contribute to the field, I shifted the methodological commitment from language to lived experience. Rather than asking questions about what's going on within a classroom transcript – how/what learning is brought about, or identity is performed,

or sequences enacted – this study asks, *What is it like to teach dialogically?* Thus, I orientated the methods of this study away from the observable language of dialogic classroom talk to dialogic classroom talk as a lived-through experience. I sought to understand how teachers live through dialogic teaching amongst the particulars of their classroom environments. To explore this direction, phenomenology seemed an appropriate philosophical and methodological framework. Below is a portrait of phenomenology and an explanation of how I drew on phenomenological thought to inform this study.

A Picture of Phenomenology

Phenomenology arose in opposition to positivism and its associated methodological discourse of certainty through experimentation in the realm of the physical (Valle, King, & Halling, 1989; Moustakas, 1994; Willis, 2001). The inadequacy of the physical sciences to address everyday life, such as how people live through experience and in so doing make meaning out of the particulars of their lives, provided a backdrop for early phenomenologists to invent conceptual understandings of the world and new methods of inquiry. Turning their attention to human consciousness, they asked questions about what potential meanings emerge through experience and how those meanings are structured (Polkinghorne, 1983).

Beginning with Husserl (1931/2002), phenomenology offered an alternative vocabulary and method for describing and investigating lived experience, a framework that was clarified, revised, and expanded by thinkers such as Heidegger (1962/2006), Merleau-Ponty (1962), and Speigelburg (1975). While this work has since branched into many directions, phenomenological thought remains rooted in a postmodern tension. Lived experience is multiple, fragmented, and fragmenting – but also proceeds in such a way that one could, with phenomenological techniques, explore the essence of an experience and derive plausible insights from such an

exploration. Essence is taken broadly, as something associated with a phenomena's identity, meaning, and otherness (van Manen, 2014). Phenomenology is unique in that it explicates essences not just through scholarly discourses of argument and logic, but through "our noncognitive mode of knowing" (van Manen, 1997, p. 361). To use a recent example, Evans (2011) used phenomenology to explore middle school students' experiences with in-school suspensions (ISS). Essential meanings of ISS were presented in both a thematic interpretation (the more familiar scholarly discourse) as well as "verbal portraits" of each student, which involved "[weaving] together various parts of quotes in order," with the goal of "understand[ing] what it was like for middle school students who had been in ISS and to present in a coherent way how they each made meaning of that experience" (p. 120). These portraits are meant to call forth an essence of ISS, a lived experience of ISS, a manifold identity of ISS as middle school students come to know the experience, express the experience, and re-experience the experience. The following paragraph is an example from Shocky Miller, a 6th grader who had been sent to ISS a total of 14 times.

> *Like there's like these little cubicles and they have like these little walls to it so nobody can like see each other or mess with each other, but if you lean back* [Shocky demonstrates leaning back in his chair] *you can see like other kids like doing their work because the cubicles, they not fully closed on you so, like duh…It's not fun because you like can't move around and like you barely have any space in there for your own books.* (p. 122, original emphasis)

The full portrait is approximately three pages in length and is followed by 12 others portraits of approximately equal length. Phenomenological research attempts to describe an experience at length and let the descriptions speak. Presenting lived experience in this spirit is inseparably part of phenomenological method because, as van Manen (2014) explains, "inquiries into the phenomenality of human experiences and truths require the full measure and complexity of the language of prose and the poetic, the cognitive and the pathic" (p. 29). The pathic quality of

phenomenological research that van Manen emphasizes is not an extra dimension of phenomenological research and writing, but inseparable from the primary impetus of phenomenology: to attend to the things themselves. As Heidegger (1962/2006) famously proclaimed,

> Thus "phenomenology" means…to let that which shows itself be seen from itself in the very way in which it shows itself from itself. This is the formal meaning of that branch of research which calls itself "phenomenology." But here we are expressing nothing else than the maxim formulated above: 'To the things themselves!' (p. 58)

"To the things themselves!" – This oft quoted maxim of phenomenology is at once purposefully enigmatic and enigmatically purposeful. That is to say, "things themselves" are made strange by phenomenologists, a useful strangeness that motivates the entire theoretical and methodological enterprise of phenomenology. "Things themselves" become known through a deliberate abstention of previous theoretical models and inductive/deductive thinking. Perhaps *a little* more clearly expressed, phenomenology seeks pathways to understanding through the anecdote, the example, the detail, the epiphany – fluid expressions of appearance, a collection of which invoke and evoke what an experience is *in its essence*. An important implication of this emphasis is that the research becomes less about linking experiences to a specific individual, where an experience might remain remote, isolated, or "over there" with that one person, and more about holding up an individual's told experiences to understand the essential qualities of the experience itself. As Vagle (2014) explains,

> When we study something phenomenologically, we are not trying to get inside other people's minds. Rather we are trying to contemplate and theorize the various ways things manifest and appear in and through our being in the world…Phenomenologists are interested in trying to slow down and open up how things are experienced, as scientists, theologians, students, teachers, nurses, leaders, bricklayers, electricians, plumbers, mechanics, and so on, are doing what they do. (p. 22)

Thus, Evan's (2011) phenomenology slows down the students' experience of ISS – portraying what ISS is like for them and how their experiences take shape through the particulars of their environments – to approach the essence of ISS.

This picture of phenomenology offered so far needs troubling. What it means to go "to the things themselves" is not straightforward conceptually and has been developed variously in traditions of ethical phenomenology, existential phenomenology, embodiment phenomenology, and hermeneutic phenomenology, among others (van Manen, 2014). And some thinkers have even followed Ihde (2012) into *postphenomenology*, which combines a classical understanding of phenomenology with pragmatist thinkers, such as James, Dewey, Pierce, and Rorty. Ihde argues that the tendency toward descriptivism in phenomenology is generative for making robust descriptions, but making meaningful contributions to policy, ethics, and social issues "do[es] not seem to be a phenomenological *forte*" (p. 118). I share this concern about phenomenology, but at the same time, I borrowed heavily from phenomenological traditions in theorizing "lived experience" for this study and developing methods for interpreting the participants' experiences with dialogic teaching. These methods are orientated to description, and – addressing Ihde's (and my) concern – also orientated toward the more pragmatic question, *What are we supposed to do with these descriptions?*

In chapter three, I flesh out this question as I explain the methodological choices I made in studying teachers' experiences with dialogic teaching. I introduce the concept of "reflexive phenomenology" to characterize my specific use phenomenological thought. While I leverage concepts and insights about lived experience from phenomenological thinkers, I also turn to the idea of "reflexivity" to both account for the inseparability of the researcher from the research and envision how pragmatic implications for this scholarship.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I outlined an empirical and theoretical framework for my study. I examined three undertaking in the research on dialogic teaching: the identification and analysis of the triadic sequence, the theorization and study of monologic and dialogic patterns, and the integration of new theoretical frameworks. I then positioned my study – a phenomenology of dialogic teaching – as aligned with the third undertaking.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Framing the Study: Reflexive Phenomenology

In framing this study I adopted (and adapted) concepts from phenomenology to explore teachers' lived experiences with dialogic teaching – but I hesitate to call this dissertation a phenomenological study belonging squarely within any particular phenomenological lineage. A comfortable framing of the study would be to say it is a qualitative study about teachers' experiences with dialogic teaching that uses a lineup of devoted phenomenologists and their work to theorize experience and guide methodological choices, but is, nonetheless, a study that stops short of embracing a few key tenets of phenomenological thought, namely the epoche and the phenomenological reduction (addressed in the following section). A more ambitious frame is to say that this study is the first in a new lineage, which I might term, reflexive phenomenology. In using the term "reflexive" (Denzin, 1997; Glesne, 2006; Potter, 1996), I point to myself as the primary instrument of the inquiry and therefore bound up with how the study proceeded at every step of the way: what topic was chosen, what participants were recruited, what methods were enacted, and what theories were taken up. Reflexivity is a commitment during the entire research process to self-awareness, knowing full well that complete self-awareness is impossible. To demonstrate how this commitment represents a departure from previous work, I present two concepts from phenomenology that are, in my reading, at odds with reflexivity.

The epoche and phenomenological reductions

The epoche and the phenomenological reduction are two concepts variously expressed by foundational phenomenological thinkers (e.g., Heidegger, 1962; Husserl, 1931/2002; Merleau-Ponty, 1962) and variously enacted by contemporary phenomenological researchers (e.g. Adams, 2010; Evans, 2011; van Manen & Adams, 2009), but in any case, the epoche and

phenomenological reduction are defining features of both the transcendental tradition associated with Husserl and empirical traditions associated with psychology, nursing, and education (Moustakas, 1994). The concepts belong together in a somewhat linear temporal order, the epoche followed by the reduction, which allows for what Ihde (2012) calls "phenomenological looking:"

> The first steps of phenomenological looking are usually called an epoche, which means to suspend or step back from our ordinary ways of looking, to set aside our usual assumptions regarding things. Within this general stance, particular levels of stepping back are then determined; these levels are termed *phenomenological reductions*. (p. 17)

Taking a step back from "our ordinary ways of looking" and proceeding to phases of reduction is often explained through the bracketing metaphor, a temporary putting aside of beliefs "so as not to interfere with seeing or intuiting the elements or structure of the phenomenon" (Merriam, 2009, p. 25). But prevalent as this metaphor is, it tends to configure epoche as a one-time event rather than a process involving multiple stages. Embree (2011) suggests epoche is "best translated as 'suspension' or, better, 'suspending of acceptance" (p. 123), which tends to configure the concept as a habit of thought that must be maintained, a way of identifying taken-for-granted knowledge. The nuanced piece of the epoche process is that the knowledge in need of suspending is not imagined as connected to a domain, such as teaching knowledge or knowledge of riding a bicycle, but is instead imagined as connected to a way of being in the world, what phenomenologists call the natural attitude. Moustakas (1994) explains,

> In the natural attitude we hold knowledge judgmentally; we presuppose that what we perceive in nature is actually there and remains there as we perceive it. In contrast, Epoche requires a new way of looking at things, a way that requires that we learn *to see* what stands before our eyes, what we can distinguish and describe….In the Epoche, the everyday understandings, judgments, and knowings are set aside, and phenomena are revisited, freshly, naively, in a wide open sense, from the vantage point of a pure and transcendental ego. (p. 33)

Thus, the epoche is a mental operation that initiates a shift into a new kind of attitude, which is "an 'all or nothing' kind of move that disengages completely from the natural attitude and focuses, in a reflective way, on everything in the natural attitude, including the underlying world belief" (Sokolowski, 2000, p. 47). The new attitude is the phenomenological attitude, where the essential meanings of experience can be investigated through phenomenological reductions. "Reduction," however, is a misleading term. At first glance, reduction seems to indicate a desire to reduce, diminish, or make smaller; but phenomenologists tend to emphasize the concept for its capacity in the "unbuilding" of what seems natural and real and self-evident, which is "*in no shape or form a 'reductionism'*" (Kersten, 1989, p. 72, original emphasis). In this way, "reduction" is probably best associated with other ways of knowing, such as *in*duction, *de*duction, and *ab*duction – terms that indicate styles of reasoning. Together, the epoche and resulting reductions constituted the crux of any phenomenological knowing, as van Manen (2014) writes, "The methodological idea of the phenomenological epoche and reduction is less a technique than a 'style' of thinking and orientating, an attitude of reflective attentiveness to the primordialities of human existence, to what it is that makes life intelligible and meaningful to us" (p. 52). The full nuance of epoche and reduction is beyond the scope of this chapter, but suffice it to say, much of the reason phenomenology branches into different lineages is due to the interpretation and practice of the epoche/reduction. The epoche/reduction is to phenomenology what the Eucharist is to Christianity: exactly what the doctrine means and how and why it's enacted becomes a definitional feature of the tradition.

Husserl's (1931/2002) doctrine of the epoche/reduction has the most transcendental quality to it, as he claims it establishes a modified consciousness that "completely bars me from using any judgment that concerns spatio-temporal existence" (p. 114). Thus, Husserl's

phenomenology is sometimes defined as transcendental. Heidegger (1962/2006), a student of Husserl's, could not go so far as to step out of spatio-temporal existence in the epoche/reduction and maintained that being and time are inherently entwined, and phenomenological investigations begin with a *person in a state of being in time*, so, "We are ourselves the entities to be analyzed" (p. 67). Thus, Heidegger's phenomenology is often associated with hermeneutics. And Merleau-Ponty (1962) emphasized the body as the original place of knowing, the place where all perception begins, which sets limits on the epoche/reduction: "I am the absolute source" and nothing would exist "if I were not there to scan it with my gaze" (p. ix). Thus, Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology has become associated with embodiment. Of course, other names could be added to this list to make a comprehensive family tree of phenomenological thinking and more detail could be drawn out, but the point is this: epoche/reduction is a place of contention as to how to go about a phenomenological study, and in formulated the methods for this study of teachers' experiences with dialogic teaching, I wanted to be deliberate in how I went about working with, through, and around that contention.

A turn to reflexivity

My own thinking aligns with phenomenological researchers who maintain a comfortable distance from the epoche/reduction process, some of whom still do a modification of it. For example, in the study of ISS mentioned earlier, Evans (2011) includes epoche as a part of the research process but, citing Thomas and Pollio (2002), "recognize[s] the impossibility of completely relinquishing our own interpretative lens" (p. 101). My view is that engaging in the epoche/reduction in any capacity still remains methodologically suspect when doing research with participants about their experiences, as LeVasseur (2003) asks,

> Thus, the vexing question of whether we can ever be free of our own conceptual understanding and particular historical point of view is doubled: Even if we, as

> researchers, can bracket our own viewpoints, what of the participants? Does the fact that participants do not bracket their own preconceived notions in the telling of experience mean that our knowledge is based on a flawed understanding, already skewed from the things themselves? (p. 416)

These questions are not answerable by making adjustments to the epoche/reduction; the safer course is to dispose of the epoche/reduction altogether, which is the course of action in reflexive phenomenology. In reflexive phenomenology, I make no claim to go past myself "to the things themselves" but instead embrace a different formulation: *to the things themselves, I go.* A reflexivity statement appears at the end of this chapter to address why I chose to use phenomenology to guide the methods, what decisions I made along the way, and how I tracked my decision-making process. Key phenomenological tenets were used to leverage methods, and the assumptions associated with those tenets are addressed in the section below called Data Explication.

Research questions

Questions about lived experience begin at a broad level. As described by van Manen (2014), phenomenological questions ask, "What is the nature, meaning, significance, uniqueness, or singularity of this or that experience as we live through it or as it is given in our experience or consciousness?" and "How does this experience present itself as a distinguishable phenomenon or event?" (p. 39). Or, as Vagle (2014) suggests, the questions might begin "What is it like to…," "What does it mean to…," or "What is it to find oneself…" which can be helpfully supplemented with secondary research questions specific to the data collection and analysis of the study (p. 126). Following this advice, I began with a primary research question and developed supplementary questions as the study progressed, allowing the interpretive techniques to proceed in a recursive fashion.

The research was guided by the following primary research question: Given a group of eight teachers who participated in professional development of dialogic teaching, What is it like to teach dialogically in middle and secondary English language arts classes? The research was further guided by a series of secondary research questions: What textural descriptions do the teachers offer of the experience (sensations, adjectives, metaphors, sequences of events)? What structural descriptions do the teachers offer of the experience (explanations about why a class proceeded/felt a certain way)?

Research design

The study was carried out in two phases. The first phase was conducted in the summer of 2014, and the second phase in the fall of 2014 (with some carry over to the spring of 2015 with one participant). The purpose of the first phase of the study was to begin a conversation about dialogic teaching with middle and high school teachers as a group, and the purpose of the second phase of the study was to continue the conversation with the teachers individually by visiting their classrooms and interviewing them about their experiences.

Participants and contexts. Following the study's approval from the University of Iowa's Internal Review Board (IRB), the study proceeded with the recruitment and consent process. Beginning with a purposive sampling plan, I used the criterion that "all participants have experience of the phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 2013, p. 155). Gathering middle and secondary teachers' experiences with dialogic teaching is central to the purpose of the study; therefore, I used word-of-mouth recruiting to find teachers who took a scholarly interest in their teaching and would be willing to (a) meet as a group to discuss dialogic teaching for phase one of the project and (b) allow me to visit their individual classrooms and interview them about their experiences with dialogic teaching for phase two of the project. Six participants joined the

project. Three participants chose the recertification-credit option in phase one; and three chose the single-meeting option. Phase one began in the summer of 2014. For phase two of the project, I visited with five of the participants in the fall of 2014, and I visited with a sixth participant in the spring of 2015.

The participants were invited into the study through two separate consent processes, one for phase one and two, respectively. All participants were given an overview of the project and were informed that should they choose to participate, they could discontinue their involvement at any time and for any reason. For phase one, participant signatures were collected, indicating their consent to be video and audio recorded and to have materials from the meeting(s) collected (i.e., their reflective writing in response to discussion prompts). For phase two, participant signatures were again collected, along with signatures from each participant's respective principal, indicating consent to have me visit each school, collect data from class sessions (video/audio recording, field notes, class materials, pictures), and audio record interviews with the participants. See Table 1 for information about the participants and Table 2 for demographic information about the schools.

Phase one: group discussions. To facilitate the conversation in the first phase, I offered two options for the participants. These options were meant to accommodate participants' schedules, and if desired, offer the participants a professional courtesy in the form of a recertification credit for their teaching license. The first option was a week-long class scheduled through the state education agency, which took place from July 28 through August 1, meeting from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. each day. For this option, participants received one credit toward recertifying their teaching license. The second option was a single meeting on August 8 from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. For this option, participants did not receive recertification credit. For

both of the options, I facilitated a conversation about dialogic teaching, using Juzwik, Borsheim-Black, Caughlan, and Heintz's (2013) *Inspiring Dialogue: Talking to Learn in the English Classroom* as a reference point. This book was chosen because it introduces major aspect of dialogic teaching in accessible language, it offers "reproducibles" and classroom transcripts in a companion website, and it approaches issues in contemporary education policy, such as the Common Core State Standards. I also used writing prompts, videos, and activities to provide a space for a discussion about dialogic teaching to grow organically, beginning with the broad question, "What has been your experience with class discussion?" I also offered a handout that briefly outlines some philosophical underpinnings of dialogic teaching to direct our conversation to what it's like to work with students in a dialogic way (see Appendix A).

TABLE 2: Participants

Name	**School**	**Grades Taught**	**Years of Experience**
Alexa Elon	Central City High School	9^{th}, 10^{th}	9
Marcus Brooks	East Central Jr. High	7^{th}	3
Leonie Bell*	North Freemont High School	9^{th}, 12^{th}	2
Mason James*	North Independence High School	10^{th}, 11^{th}, 12^{th}	3
Zoe Jacobs*	Trenton Middle School	6^{th}, 7^{th}, 8^{th}	9
Olivia Kay	Statesville High School	9^{th}, 12^{th}	2

Table 2: Participant and school names are pseudonyms. The asterisks (*) indicate participants who chose the recertification-option for phase one; participants without an asterisk opted for the single meeting.

TABLE 3: Demographic Information on Contexts

School	School Type	Pop.	Demographics							FRL
			H	NA	A	B	PI	W	MR	%
Central City	High School, urban	1536	200	2	52	255	2	985	40	36.8
East Central	Junior High, urban	678	49	2	74	144	1	376	32	33.6
North Freemont	High School, rural	250	8	1	2	2	0	228	9	22.4
North Independence	High School, rural	317	175	0	9	1	0	127	5	54.3
Trenton	Middle School, rural	143	2	0	0	1	0	138	2	22.4
Statesville High School	High School, suburban	616	16	1	3	18	1	553	24	23.9

Table 3: Information obtained from the state education website for the most recent available year, 2013. Abbreviations are Hispanic (H), Native American (NA), Asian (A), Black (B), Pacific Islander (PI), White (W), Multi-race (MR), and free and reduced-priced lunch (FRL).

Phase two: individual visits. To extend the conversation from the first phase into the second, I visited the participants' classrooms, observed their classes, and interviewed them about their experience. I visited each participant at least three times, and interviewed them at least once per visit. All visits occurred on self-nominated days. In the email sent to the participants, I wrote, "When I come in and which class I visit is completely up to you, but I'm looking for times when you have a dialogic element to the lesson plan – broadly defined in *Inspiring Dialogue* as providing students with 'opportunities to engage in learning talk' (p. 5)." The participants invited me into their classrooms, often for two or more class sessions per visit, and the interviews took place after the class sessions.

The interviews were semi-structured in that I prepared an interview protocol to guide the process (Merriam, 2009; see Appendix B for the interview protocol), but as they played out, the interviews tended to be unstructured. I began the interviews by saying, *I'm going to ask you some broad questions about your experience with dialogic teaching. They are deliberately broad*

so you can take them wherever you see fit. Oftentimes, I would offer one of my own observations – such as when a class discussion turned lively at a specific point, or a student asked an authentic question – and ask the participant to comment on that particular moment and what that moment might mean for dialogic teaching. This approach aligns with Vagle's (2014) interpretation of a phenomenological interview in that "all interviews are treated as exciting opportunity to potentially learn something important about the phenomenon" and that "the interviewer needs to be responsive to the participant and the phenomenon throughout. The structure of discipline process comes into being throughout the interview—not through an a priori protocol" (p. 79). Therefore, my goal as an interviewer was to provide a space for the participants to talk about dialogic teaching and to follow the unique directions in their thinking.

Data collection. Data were collected in the form of video/audio recordings, class materials, interviews, field notes, and pictures. Additionally, after each instance of data collection, I audio recorded an analytic memo, a mode of initiating cycles of thinking in order to approach my own role in the research process (Saldaña, 2013), including thoughts about my relation to the research decisions, the participants, and the phenomenon under study. These memos proved central to the concept of reflexive phenomenology, and I approach them again in my reflexivity statement below.

In phase one, data were collected from group meetings (audio/video of six sessions), participant responses to discussion topics (20 handwritten pages from in-class discussions; five typed pages from online posts), and individual interviews (audio of three interviews with participants who chose the recertification-credit option). In phase two, data were collected from class sessions with individual teachers (audio/video of 26 sessions), participant-generated handouts (67 documents), pictures of classrooms, e.g., room walls and notes on the board written

during class (61 pictures), field notes (95 handwritten pages), and individual interviews (audio of 20 post-observation interviews, plus one interview conducted via email). Additionally, I used contact summary forms (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014) to keep a running record of salient data and persistent questions that emerge from classroom visits; and I kept a reflection log to facilitate further thinking and try out ideas in writing (21 single-spaced pages in Word). Finally, I transcribed the individual interviews from phase two, which was then used as the primary source of data to address the research questions. These data are represented in Table 3.

TABLE 4: Phase Two Interview Data

Name	Interview Date	Audio Length (minutes: seconds)	Pages of Transcription (single-spaced in MS Word)
Alexa Elon	9/17/14	18:58	7
	10/16/14	N/A	4 (sent via email)
	11/7/14	24:43	7
Leonie Bell	9/16/14	15:29	5
	9/16/14	24:23	8
	10/20/14	28:44	8
	12/8/14	42:10	6
Marcus Brooks	9/25/14	15:14	5
	10/29/14	30:35	9
	11/20/14	25:29	8
Mason James	10/7/14	9:39	3
	10/24/14	19:40	6
	10/24/14	20:21	6
	12/15/14	21:23	7
Olivia Kay	4/21/15	37:34	N/A
Zoe Jacobs	9/9/14	19:37	6
	9/19/14	19:21	6
	9/23/14	43:05	14
	9/23/14	23:09	8
	10/28/14	37:24	12

Data explication

By using the term “explication,” I follow other researchers (Groenwald, 2004; Hycer, 1985) who warn that “analysis” is a troublesome term for phenomenology because it connotes

breaking things apart. The project of phenomenology is not to break anything apart, but to hold something up, spin it, and look at its sides, aspects, and profiles (Sokolowski, 2000). Thus, a phenomenological study emphasizes description as a way to keep something alive, as Moustakas (1994) explains, "Descriptions keep a phenomenon alive, illuminate its presence, accentuate its underlying meaning, enable the phenomenon to linger, retain its spirit, as near to its actual nature as possible" (p. 59). John Steinbeck, as told by Merriam (2009), captured this line of thinking in an anecdote about understanding a fish: Traditional analyses of the fish require that one catch it and take it apart, analyzing the whole in terms of its parts (the scales, the spines on the dorsal fin, and so on), but Steinbeck points out that this approach embraces "the least important reality concerning either the fish or yourself" and further, the researcher has "set down one truth and has set down many lies" (p. 213). Phenomenology attempts to explicate a phenomena using description – and thus, attempts to keep the studied thing alive.

With "explication," I also mean to emphasize my stance as a researcher: In doing this study, I sought to involve myself with the data through a method of listening and reading and writing, re-listening and re-reading and re-writing in the "production of insight" (van Manen, 1997, p. 345) – not answers. In working with the data, I developed methods aligning with phenomenological configurations of lived experience, namely the concepts of intentionality, manifold profiles, and textural/structural descriptions (explained below). Transforming phenomenological thought into a set of coherent methods, however, involved many false starts, even when using other researchers' work as a guide (e.g., Adams, 2010; Evans, 2011; Groenwald, 2004; Giorgi 1975; and various examples from Moustakas, 1994, among others). The lack of established methods within phenomenology is well-known, which throws into question the intelligibility of the entire enterprise on one hand but creates a promising,

exploratory space on the other. As I've discovered in developing methods, to do a phenomenology is to invent, a view aligning with what van Manen (2014) says about qualitative research generally and phenomenology in particular:

> Qualitative methodology is often difficult since it requires sensitive interpretive skills and creative talents from the researcher. Phenomenological methodology, in particular, is challenging since it can be argued that its method of inquiry constantly has to be invented anew and cannot be reduced to a general set of strategies or research techniques (p. 41).

The following methods, therefore, are my own. Phenomenology has several key tenets that, if fully embraced, have implications for how to explicate data.

Key tenet one: phenomena as intended. Any experience, from teaching a class to riding a motorcycle to planting a flower garden, includes a multifaceted focusing of attention. The experience of teaching a class involves in-the-moment sensations (e.g., having a thought on the tip of your tongue as students look on), judgments about how things are going (e.g., They seem to get the directions, I think), observations (e.g., The fire alarm is going off), and so on. In more general terms, lived experiences involve bringing into consciousness a great many particulars. Unique to phenomenology is how those particulars become configured under the rubric of intentionality. Sokolowski (2000) writes,

> The core doctrine in phenomenology is the teaching that every act of consciousness we perform, every experience that we have, is intentional: it is essentially 'consciousness of' or an 'experience of' something or other. All our awareness is directed toward objects. If I see, I see some visual object, such as a tree or a lake; if I imagine, my imagining presents an imaginary object, such as a car that I visualize coming down a road; if I am involved in remembering, I remember a past object; if I am engaged in judging, I intend a state of affairs or a fact. Every act of consciousness, every experience, is correlated with an object. Every intending has its intended object. (p. 8)

The unique philosophical thread in this passage is that intended objects are not limited to the physical domain: intended objects can be imaginary things, or memories, or judgments about a state of affairs; objects can be as elaborate and expansive as a worldview or as momentary and

fleeting as a breeze. Objects are the stuff of the world and are only known via the special operation of intending. The implication of this formulation is that determining an essential nature of an experience is right there in intended-intending relationship. Husserl (1931/2002) described this relationship using the terms noema and noesis, which are inseparable correlates of the essential nature of experience. A noema expresses an object-correlate, a *what*, as in what is experienced as such – a perception as such, an image as such, or a judgment as such – and a noesis expresses a subject-correlate, the giving of the various *whats* of conscious space – judging, remembering, feeling, thinking. Husserl explains that "…in the sphere of essence there are no accidents, everything is connected through essential relations, and in particular through noesis and noema" (p. 251). Thus, when studying how teachers experience dialogic teaching as a phenomenon, the expressed judgments, perceptions, images and so on are taken *as such*. When a participant describes a state of affairs, that participant has expressed an "essential relation" of the phenomenon, an intending-intended dyad, of which there are "no accidents." A description about dialogic teaching – including judgments of what's involved and what matters – is an essential relation *of* the phenomenon. Through this approach, Vagle (2014), explains, "One is not studying the subject or the object, but a particular intentional relationship (i.e., of-ness) between subject and object" (p. 36). The implication of this idea for working with interview data is enormous. Consider the following interview excerpt from Zoe Jacobs, who was describing the nature of participation in classroom discussions:

> …and it's not like [the boys] don't have good things to say, but they're, they need to learn how to cut—like Jason[2] is a great example of a boy who can lead a discussion but is also, like he's the one who's like, "Okay Tricia we're gonna ask you questions," and so she can participate. That's just because he's got that really nurturing nature to him, um, but a lot of the other guys are sort of in that hyper masculine phase where they just ah like, are very like tunnel vision on what they need and what, you know, I mean, yeah, and

[2] All names of students here, and throughout, are pseudonyms.

> they are really interested in um, performance, and they like to be watched so that is a little different from girls who maybe are not comfortable in the gaze, in the gaze, for whatever reason. (Zoe Jacobs, Interview 5, lines 244-251)

Zoe Jacobs presents a state of affairs of classroom discussion: that participation in the discussion involves "boy" and "girl" tendencies, boys who are interested in performance and "like to be watched" and girls "who maybe are not comfortable in the gaze." Zoe's judgment about this state of affairs is an essential relation of Zoe to the phenomenon of interest, dialogic classroom discussion. If I was using a different theoretical approach to the data (such as the Critical Discourse Analysis of Fairclough, 1989 or the Discourse Analysis of Gee, 2011), I might focus my interpretive efforts on how Zoe's words are infused with societal capital "D" Discourses. I might look at how this state of affairs is expressed within a dominant boy/girl gender binary, how "that hyper masculine phase" implies a biological state of being that produces the behaviors of "a lot of the other guys [besides Jason]," or how representing "tunnel vision" as a biological fact for many boys might imply the inevitability of girls being "not comfortable in the gaze." And I might conclude that Zoe's description of the state this state of affairs is occupied by a discourse of inevitability that could be interpreted as an expression of male/masculine hegemony. In contrast, phenomenology configures judgments differently: A judgment of a thing is an expression of what the thing is. If dialogic teaching is imagined as on object with multiple surfaces, the boy/girl participation that Zoe describes is one such surface. My data explication strategy involved systematically collecting these surfaces to interpret them as a whole rather than peering into any particular surface with a critical lens.

Key tenet two: phenomena as manifold profiles. Another important idea informing my methods was that of manifold profiles. To clarify how I used this idea, I call on Sokolowski's (2000) chapter "Perception of a Cube as a Paradigm of Conscious Experience" (pp. 17-21). It is

not possible to perceive a cube without a blend of presences and absences: If I look at the cube from a particular angle, for example, I only see parts of it; if I shift the angle, I might see different parts; but understanding that the object is, in fact, a cube involves a simultaneous understanding that some parts of the cube are present and some are absent. The identity of any phenomena follows this pattern. Dialogic teaching might be expressed from one angle by a participant, but that angle renders other expressions from other angles absent. Another way of stating the idea is that a participant's description of dialogic teaching is always comprised of presences and absences, and no one description can call forth the phenomena as a complete identity. For example, consider the following interview excerpt from Mason James as he describes a class discussion about *Lord of the Flies* with his 10th grade class:

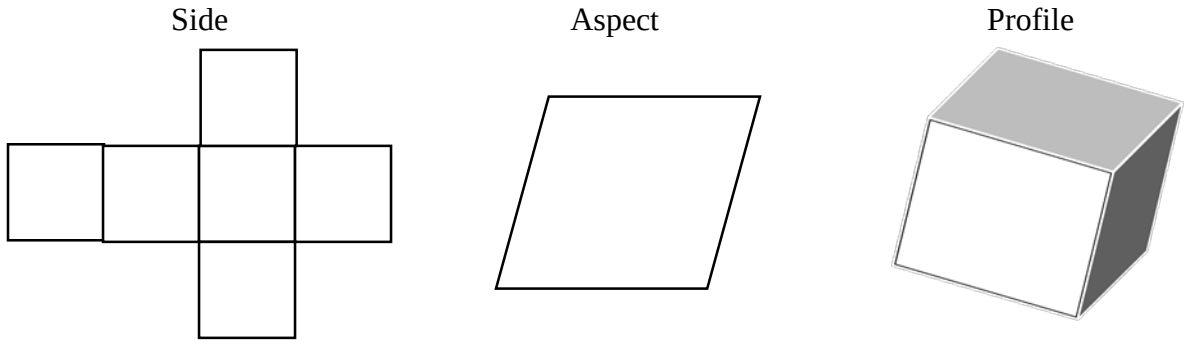
> Oh, I thought that they started out strong, um, because they seemed to know chapter one very well. They did a good job reviewing that and, ah, there was a lot of people responding, people who don't usually respond and then chapter two was just an absolute mess. I felt like they really clammed up. I also, I don't, upon review, um, especially considering the level of involvement, it didn't end up being all that dialogic, I felt like, so…I felt like I was leading them a lot of the way or trying to present things to them, mostly spoon-feeding things to them, I mean I was getting responses and things like that but they were mostly just feeding back into what I was trying to get them to understand. (Mason James, Interview 1, lines 15-23).

Mason James's description of the class discussion includes a "strong start," as the class "seemed to know chapter one very well" and did a "good job reviewing" with "a lot of people responding [who] don't usually respond." And then shifts to the next phase, which was "an absolute mess." This part of the description is about – or *renders present* – the part of the discussion that "upon review […] didn't end up being all that dialogic." Simultaneously, when the "absolute mess" is rendered present, the previous part of the discussion, the "strong start," is rendered absent. In working with these data, it was important conceptualize presences and absences in terms of the primary research question: What is it like to teach dialogically in middle and secondary English

language arts classes? Using the phenomenological concept of presences/absences, this question is the same as, What is it like to *not* teach dialogically in middle and secondary English language arts classes? Both questions are equally valuable when studying the experience as a whole.

Exploring the cube paradigm further, a cube is comprised of six square sides, but these squares rarely appear as squares, but as *aspects* of squares, i.e., rhombuses and trapezoids. A collection of aspects comprises a profile of the cube (see Figure 1). The identity of the cube is known through a manifold of profiles, momentary visions of the cube as the perspective changes.

FIGURE 1: Phenomena as Manifold Profiles



The important idea to extract from the Sokolowski's (2000) cube paradigm is that studying any phenomena involves studying its manifold profiles. I derive two insights from this paradigm for my methods, (a) because I was the interviewer, I had a central role in what profiles of dialogic teaching were offered during the interview process, which I approach in more detail in the reflexivity statement below, and (b) because the essential identity of dialogic teaching emerges through its manifold profiles, I needed to develop a method of collecting all of them and working with all of them to get a sense of dialogic teaching as a whole.

To collect profiles, I worked with one participant's collection of interviews at a time. I printed out copies of the interviews and cut them into exchanges. I defined an exchange as an excerpt including at least one turn taken by me and one taken by the participant (usually in a

question-answer sequence). I then separated these exchanges into two piles, the first pile for exchanges that offer a description of dialogic teaching and the second pile for exchanges that do not. To sort the exchanges, I used the following rules. The exchange went into the first pile if any of the following applied: (1) The exchange had a specific description of classroom discussion, (2) the word "dialogic" or any related term was used, such as "uptake" or "authentic question," (3) the participant talked about the class discussion just observed, e.g., who participated, the content of the discussion, details to explain what it felt like or why it proceeded a certain way. The exchange went into the second pile if the topic of the exchange was about something else (e.g., what we had for our respective lunches). On the digital versions of the interviews, I then copy/pasted the participant's words of each exchange from the first pile into a new document, process referred to as horizonalization (Moustakas, 1994). Isolating the participant's words helped in focusing my attention the descriptions; having the physical copies of the exchanges in hand allowed me to review the interview question if needed. The point of this process is to consider each profile of the experience equally – to, in a sense, flatten out the profiles and consider them as part of a horizon of the experience. I then considered the horizon in terms of textures and structures.

Key tenet three: phenomena as textures and structures. The descriptions collected in the horizonalization process can be conceptualized in two, dynamically related, ways: the descriptions suggest textures and structures of the experience. The descriptions can be understood in terms of *what people experience* (texture) and *how that experience comes about* (structure). My methods of identifying textural and structural components of descriptions are inspired by Moustakas (1994). Moustakas writes, "The challenge of description is to determine the textural components of experience, the 'what' of the appearing phenomenon" (p. 78) and

then to determine the 'how' of description, "the conscious acts of thinking and judging, imagining and recollecting, in order to arrive at core structural meanings" (p. 79). To make this distinction in the interview data, I guide my thinking with the following analogy: When people describe what a rollercoaster is like, many of the descriptions are textural: that feeling of sudden concentration at the point of acceleration, that feeling of sudden heaviness when being pressed against your seat on a turn, that feeling of airiness in your stomach (or "losing your stomach" as I used to say). A textural description informs us what the experience is like. A structural description attempts to say why those textures occur. It could be a reconceptualization of something, such as *Your body is actually not one solid whole, but full of parts, and in free fall, those parts – including your stomach – move around and could give you that sensation of "losing your stomach."* Or it could be an appeal to another concept altogether, such as *You feel heavy against the seat because moving bodies have inertia, which keeps your body going in whatever direction it's going, so when the rollercoaster took a turn on the track, your body's inertia pressed onward in the previous direction while the seat moved in another, giving you the feeling of being pressed against the seat.* The structural description of an experience brings forth the possibilities and conditions that produce the experience's textures.

To build a textural descriptions, I read and re-read the horizonalization document for each participant, highlighting moments that speak to what the experience of dialogic teaching is: *what it's like; what happens; what sensations it evokes; what observations, judgments, and states of affairs are articulated.* To build structural descriptions, I went through the horizonalization document again, this time bolding moments that speak to why a texture is the way it is: *how it happens; why it ends up that way; what it can be attributed to; what forces are at play*. From a methods standpoint, it's important to note that textures and structures are dynamically

interrelated. In the early phases of identifying textures and structures, I was often left wondering if I was doing it right. Textures and structures do not separate easily. In developing the method, I established a guiding principle: Not all structural material is textural material, but all structural material is also textural material. This principle allows the textural material to retain a broad emphasis in the explication process while structural material becomes more focused. An example will help clarify the approach: The following interview excerpt is from Marcus Brooks speaking about his 7th grade students who just engaged in a dialogic discussion:

> I think today went really well…I think a lot of the kids are really amenable to [dialogic discussions] in this particular group, but then there are some kids, ah, some kids on one end of the spectrum…the receptivity spectrum maybe, and then on the other end, there are some kids who really maybe, ah, it's more of a reach for them, or at least it doesn't fit their expectations as much, um, **it could be…classroom organization and the teacher's relationship to them as a learner. I have a lot of kids, this class is maybe away from this a little bit as a whole, but I have a lot of kids who really struggle with, ah, I raise my hand…they're used to the IRE, so it's like I raise my hand, you tell me if I'm right and if I try to not do that, they really look for any kind of subtle signal that is in my body language or in what I say to find out if [an answer is] there, and they feel like the exchange isn't complete until I say, "That's correct and now let's move on,"** you know?

This first part of the description was highlighted because it speaks to the textural aspect of the experience, i.e., Marcus Brooks voices a judgment ("I think today went really well") and articulates a state of affairs ("I think a lot of the kids are really amenable to [dialogic discussions] in this particular group […] but then there are some kids on […] the receptivity spectrum […] it's more of a reach for them"). The bolded part of the excerpt was considered structural material because it explains part of the texture, i.e., the part beginning "it could be" is an explanation of why some students do not respond as well to dialogic discussions – it's a reflection on why the state of affairs is the way it is. The structural material is also highlighted because structures tend to imply additional textures, i.e., a feeling that the students "really look for any kind of subtle signal that is in my body language" to seek assurance.

This method of identifying textural and structural components of a description might be considered a form of simultaneous coding (Saldaña, 2013, pp. 80-83), which allows a single stretch of words to assume double consideration through the explication process. After coding the interviews in this way, I created two new documents, one for textural material and one for structural material. The highlighted-and-bolded stretch of words in the excerpt above would then appear in both of these documents (see Table 4).

TABLE 5: Textural and Structural Documents

Textural Document	Structural Document
I think today went really well…I think a lot of the kids are really amenable to [dialogic discussions] in this particular group, but then there are some kids, ah, some kids on one end of the spectrum…the receptivity spectrum maybe, and then on the other end, there are some kids who really maybe, ah, it's more of a reach for them, or at least it doesn't fit their expectations as much, um, it could be…classroom organization and the teacher's relationship to them as a learner. I have a lot of kids, this class is maybe away from this a little bit as a whole, but I have a lot of kids who really struggle with, ah, I raise my hand…they're used to the IRE, so it's like I raise my hand, you tell me if I'm right and if I try to not do that, they really look for any kind of subtle signal that is in my body language or in what I say to find out if [an answer is] there, and they feel like the exchange isn't complete until I say, "That's correct and now let's move on," you know?	it could be…classroom organization and the teacher's relationship to them as a learner. I have a lot of kids, this class is maybe away from this a little bit as a whole, but I have a lot of kids who really struggle with, ah, I raise my hand…they're used to the IRE, so it's like I raise my hand, you tell me if I'm right and if I try to not do that, they really look for any kind of subtle signal that is in my body language or in what I say to find out if [an answer is] there, and they feel like the exchange isn't complete until I say, "That's correct and now let's move on," you know?

Separating the descriptions in this way allows them to take on multiple meanings, which aligns with Keen's (1975) comment that "It is not possible to describe texture without implicit notions of structure," but "The interlocking of texture and structure does not preclude the possibility of focusing on one or the other at any given stage of phenomenological work" (as cited by

Moustakas, 1994, p. 79). This method, then, allows for the textures and the structures of the overall experience of dialogic teaching to take on separate consideration while still maintaining their "interlocking" quality. The full enumerated list of textures and the full enumerated list of structures are termed "naïve" textural and structural descriptions, respectively (Moustakas, 1994; Polkinghorn, 1983), although I prefer the term "initial." In either case, naïve or initial simply emphasizes the rawness of the data at this stage. Take, for example, the following excerpt of an initial (or naïve) textural description derived from Zoe Jacob's series of interviews:

First Three Descriptions from the First Interview

1. "I thought, okay this would be a good, it's short, it's easy to understand, and I thought, they would probably have a great wealth of background knowledge to talk about it and I used it, we started it last week and I was doing a presentation and I don't like to do presentations for the whole class period because they can't sit still for that long, so we would present for the first half of the class and the second half I started introducing this, like a piece at a time, so we'd write about this journal, journal entries about this topic, kind of a pre-discussion, you can see we have our four corners that we did, so we did four corners and then um we read the article and then they generated their own questions about what they wanted to know about what other people thought, and I collected all those and kind of just looked for the common types of questions that were being asked and then I rewrote 'em in a better way [laughter, yeah] and then I put those up, that was a teal discussion guide sheet that they had with them, and that was just to make sure they all had something to talk about if they froze up or [...] what I was doing is I was walking around, was just making sure that they weren't being turds basically [laughter] and so I'm going to give them points for you know, was anyone like mean to somebody else as I was walking by or did I, like, last year in the eighth grade I had one kid be like, 'This is stupid,' you know, and I'm just like, 'Okay, zero for that, for you because you just were negative for no reason,' um, or if I see kids that are like 'Well, I don't want to talk to him,' then I'll be like, 'Yeah you do, you have to because this is a class thing, so you need to just check your baggage at the door.'"
2. "Their conversations were a lot deeper and more meaningful and they were really applying it more to their own experiences. 'Okay, well what did you put for number one? I put this.' 'What did you put for number one?' You know, so I kind of told them not to do that yesterday, but they did it anyway, but that's okay, developmentally that's where they're at, I think that, that's okay."
3. "I think as they grow up, they're more comfortable branching off conversation if that makes sense, so instead of, they're not so worried about staying on topic, like this is exactly what I'm supposed to talk about, they're more, ah, willing to let it grow organically, on its own, so a student would say, 'Well that reminds me of this,' and they'll, they'll take it in that dialogic direction, where it grows kind of on its own, like a,

a vine growing on something. 7th graders are very much like, 'We will maintain this manicured lawn, and we will not let it grow in any other way."

…

Last Three Descriptions from the Fifth Interview

98. "They even had a debate in which those students' views were pretty much, you know, not shut down, but there were fair arguments on the other side to be like, you know, 'You need to rethink some of the things that you've said about stereotyping,' and yet they still are like, 'Well whatever, I just think what I think,' so and that might just be a developmental thing, but by 8th grade it's a little bit, I feel like they, and that, I haven't heard really anything this year about, that was kind of sketchy, so, but it's not an explicit discussion that we ever have really."
99. "We talk more about culture than we do about, and race is obviously a part of culture, but we highlight more of the cultural side of it than the race side of it, just 'cause I don't want to, I don't want to hear, I don't want to, I just don't want to go there sometimes, maybe that's just me being a coward as a teacher, but I just can't handle it."
100. "But ah, yeah, I try to subtly encourage you know like, that, just subtly like bring in that race narrative, but not enough of an overt way. I don't know, anyway."

Explicating textures and structures. From these initial textural and structural descriptions, I proceeded in two directions simultaneously, each direction informing the other. The first direction involved creating textural and structural portraits (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997) of the experience for each participant; and the second direction involved thematizing (Moustakas, 1994) the textures and structures. My purpose in going these two directions was to stay true to the overall project of a phenomenology in "gaining a deeper understanding of the nature or meaning of our everyday experiences" (van Manen, 1990, p. 9) while also being responsive to different audience needs and expectations – to, in a sense, make a bid toward accessibility, readability, and deliverability in different domains, such as a conference presentation or a peer-reviewed article.

Verbal portraits. I created verbal portraits for each participant by reading/re-reading the initial textural descriptions (which also contain structural descriptions). To guide the process, I used five features that van Manen (1997) suggests are helpful for phenomenological writing: concreteness, evocation, intensification, tone, and epiphany. *Concreteness* involves the

phenomenon being "placed concretely in the lifeworld so that the reader may experientially recognize it" (p. 351); *evocation* involves bringing the experience "vividly into presence" (p. 353); *intensification* involves giving "key words their full value" (p. 355), that is, seeing expressions such as metaphor or alliteration as being irreducible in the making of meaning; *tone* involves representing a unique character of the experience so that "its deeper meaning has a noncognitive effect on the reader" (p. 359); and *epiphany* involves calling forth "a transformative effect…a sudden perception or intuitive grasp" (p. 364). I first attempted to craft portraits by writing them myself, and in my own words, contemplating the themes that emerged in the thematization process (explained below) and van Manen's five features; however, I wasn't satisfied with the result and wasn't persuaded that I could capture the participants' experiences with my own writing. Thus, I made a departure from phenomenological writing as described by van Manen and instead looked for moments of concreteness, evocation, intensification, and epiphany that the participants themselves offer. The portraits, then, are an arrangement of the participants' words. Some descriptions are rife with van Manen's features, and I orientated the arrangement process to these descriptions. Take, for example, this description from Alexa Elon:

> I mean this is the other piece honestly with discussion that I've struggled with this year, my students in that class, like one pulled me out before class to tell me, she's taking four AP classes and she said, "My parents are furious at me, I'm not keeping up with stuff, I don't know what to do," and I said, "Well, you know…" We tried to brainstorm some solutions and a number of these kids are in that boat, and they have repeatedly said to me, "We have so much homework" so their stress level on an average day, I mean to get them to engage authentically has been my great challenge because they're stressed, they're tired, they're going through the motions, they're doing what they need to do, and when Anna who was in the front there, when I said, "Let's go to small groups," she said, "No, this is fun." I thought, Holy crap! [laughter] We haven't, I mean we just, it's so hard to get that fun going because I feel like I'm having to really pull them, I mean I do feel like a dog and pony show some days. (Alexa Elon, interview three, lines 92-103)

In arranging the portraits, I looked for rich moments like this one that indicate multiple layers to the experience: student stress, a moment of surprise, feeling like a dog and pony show, among

others. Within these moments, I especially paid attention to intensifications within the language, e.g., anaphora such as "*they're tired, they're going through the motions, they're doing what they need to do*," turning points in a story such as "'*No, this if fun.' I thought, Holy Crap!*," grammatical metaphors such as "*so hard to get that fun going*," and conceptual metaphors such as "*feel like a dog and pony show some days*."

In creating portraits of the participants' experience, I took guidance from Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997), who identify a central tension: "In portraiture, the voice of the researcher is everywhere," but at the same time, "it is also true that the portraitist's work is deeply empirical, grounded in systematically collected data, skeptical questioning (of self and others), and rigorous examination of biases—always open to disconfirming evidence" (p. 85). The decisions I made in arranging the participants words were my own, and there are certainly many possible portraits to arrange from the interview data, but I also used the process as a way to question my own experiences and thoughts about dialogic teaching. I listened to the interviews multiple times during the arrangement phase to re-approach what was said, but more importantly, to orientate my ear as to how it was said. Also, I focused specifically on finding "resonant metaphors" with the descriptions, which Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis describe as being "not only expressive of the central themes and values of human experience, [but] also generative" (p. 198). Some examples from Zoe Jacob's initial textural description above were "*just to make sure they all had something to talk about if they froze up*," "*just making sure that they weren't being turds basically*," and "*you have to because this is a class thing, so you need to just check your baggage at the door*." And an extended example was about the 8th graders, who let a discussion grow "*as a vine growing on something*," while the *"7th graders are very much like, 'We will maintain this manicured lawn, and we will not let it grow in any other way.'"*

Collecting and representing the participants' metaphors helped in aligning the portraits to subtleties in their experiences with – and ways of thinking about – dialogic teaching. Because metaphors play "a central role in our everyday realities" (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003, p. 3), I wanted to work them into representation as much as possible.

Thematizing. Thematizing is helpful in highlighting aspects of the phenomena of interest and identifying its essential characteristics (Moustakas, 1994). Because textural descriptions (the *what* of experience) and structural descriptions (the *how* attributed to the experience) offer different perspectives of the overall experience, I developed separate sets of codes and categories for each, using Saldaña (2013) for primary guidance.

To develop textural themes, I began with initial coding, which included labeling each enumerated textural description with at least one descriptive phrase. Examples include, "Hardest thing about discussion: choosing when to intervene" and "Tension: validating student contributions without misleading class about content." This procedure yielded 40+ initial codes. I then used pattern coding through an iterative process to generate five categories: sensations, metaphors, judgments/beliefs/observations, couplings, and sequences (see Table 5). These categories represent ways in which the participants talked about their experiences – modalities of expressing the textures of dialogic teaching. I developed themes related to these categories by looking across all the interviews and using the sentence starter "Dialogic teaching involves…" to guide the process.

TABLE 6: Four Categories of Textural Descriptions

Category	Definition	Example(s)
Sensations	Description of a feeling	• agony • surprise • excitement
Metaphors	Description of an experience using metaphor	• "they should've taken the wheel a little bit more" • "dead space in the discussion" • "they discuss, I'm just tech support"
Judgments/ Beliefs/ Observations	Description of a state of affairs (a judgment as such, a belief as such, an observation as such)	"[Changing the desk configuration] gives [the discussion] a good level of excitement…this particular batch of kids handles it really well and they work well with it"
Couplings	Description of two things on a spectrum, or two things in some other relationship	• being too sensitive v. being too callous to student comments • Pain/suffering of Hurricane Katrina v. discussing Hurricane Katrina with a game involving blocks of construction paper and candy prizes
Sequences	Description of at least two chronologically ordered parts	"I screwed up at one point and called her Ally [wrong name], and she said you have no idea how often people do that"

Structural descriptions point to the precipitating conditions of the phenomena of interest – in other words, structural description approach the question, "How did the experience of the phenomenon come to be what it is?" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 98). To address this question, I approached the initial structural descriptions in two ways. I began by using causation coding. As described by Saldaña (2013), "The goal [of causation coding] is to locate, extract, and/or infer causal beliefs from qualitative data" (p. 163). In the context of the present study, the goal was to identify components of the experience that the participants represent as being influential. In other words, I identified moments when the participants were touching on the question, "Why did the

experience proceed/feel a certain way?" This procedure yielded 20+ codes. Some examples include "Variation in student response: readiness and experience with content" and "Student nature: developmentally disparate at this age, varied capacity for abstract thought." To support this coding process, I used the phenomenological technique of imaginative variation. "The task of imaginative variation," Moustakas writes, "is to seek possible meanings through the utilization of imagination, varying the frames of reference, employing polarities and reversals, and approaching the phenomenon from divergent perspectives, different positions, roles or functions" (p. 97-98). Reflecting on the participants' experiences in this way allows structural elements of the experience to emerge and take shape "in which many possibilities are examined and explicated reflectively" (p. 99). While many researchers practice imaginative variation through implicit methods, my method is deliberately explicit and formulaic. From early in the research process, I was concerned that employing imaginative variation could too easily become an autobiographical exercise. While my experiences with and knowledge about dialogic teaching are integral to the possibility of imaginative variation, I feared that explicating the data in this way would go too far afield from the participants' words. My own lens would become what the explication looks *at* rather than looks *through*. To address this concern, I created a counterfactual sentence format that allows for imaginative variation but keeps close to the participant's words: "Were it not for _____, the experience would have been different."

Take, for example the following interview excerpt from Marcus Brooks, who tells a story about dialogic teaching. To facilitate an authentic conversation, he used a fishbowl technique, which involves arranging the class into two circles, one inside the other. In the inner circle (the fishbowl), students bring up topics and share their ideas about a story the class is studying or an issue the class has researched. Students in the outer circle listen to the discussion,

and when an outer-circle student wants to speak, that student approaches an inner-circle student, taps in, and the two students switch spots.

> One kid started [the fishbowl discussion] off by, we were talking about **bullying**. He said something about how he thought that it was true that people are bullied because of differences from others, and the reason that he thought that was true was because he was **adopted by his grandparents** and when his peers see him with his grandparents in public and they notice how much older they are, then it makes him a target, and then so [this student] Drew kind **of likes to be funny and class clowny, but that kind of turned the tone more serious**, and then **another student jumped in** and said something about I was adopted too, and so it started this whole conversation where everyone was really intently listening, ah, and so um it was great, and so of course then, I thought oh my fifth period, they're going to do gr—[starts saying "great," laughing]. They really struggled. The whole idea of **tapping somebody on the shoulder to change spots** turned into a moment for them to be goofy (Marcus Brooks, interview one, lines 125-137)

In short narratives such as this one, I bolded words and phrases that stood out to me – words and phrases that seemed to intimate reasons as to why the experience felt/proceeded in a certain way. Using imaginative variation – calling on my own teaching experiences and the participant's words to imagine the possible meanings and structures of the phenomenon – I took the bolded material and placed it into the counterfactual sentence frame, sometimes using verbatim language from the participant, other times imagining a plausible phrase to capture the idea. Examples include: Were it not for **the serious topic of bullying**, the experience would have been different. Were it not for **a student sharing information about being adopted by his grandparents**, the experience would have been different. Were it not for **that student typically being funny and class clowny**, the experience would have been different. Were it not for **another student jumping in and reinforcing the tone of the discussion**, the experience would have been different. Were it not for Marcus Brooks' **expectation that 3rd period would have difficulty with the activity and 5th period would do well**, the experience would have been different. Were it not for the **5th period students acting goofy while tapping each other on the shoulder**, the experience would have been different.

A collection of counterfactual statements, then, provides a perspective on how this experience was structured. It was structured by an expectation that 3rd period would have difficulty; a moment from third-period student, a typically "funny and class clowny" person, who was able to turn the discussion serious by sharing a personal story and insight; another third-period student who agreed and reinforced that insight; an expectation that a discussion of similar caliber would happen in 5th period; and the 5th period students defying expectations and acting goofy. At a broader level of abstraction, the experience was structured by teacher expectations, unique student contributions, and classroom group mentalities that emerged differently (serious v. goofy) based on unique student contributions/actions.

Taking causation coding and imaginative variation through an iterative process of pattern coding, four categories emerged: students, the self, the content, and the school culture (see Table 6). These categories represent ways in which the experience of dialogic teaching become structured. I developed themes related to these categories by looking across all of the interviews and using the sentence starter "The experience of dialogic teaching is structured by…" to guide the process.

TABLE 7: Four Categories of Structural Descriptions

Category	**Definition**	**Example**
Students	Description of how students shape the experience	"Fifth period can be my rowdiest but most creative class, and so it depends on their engagement level more heavily than others and when they're really engaged they're able to suddenly channel things forward a lot more."
Self	Description of how the self shapes the experience	"I think period one I had to bail out once…where they just sort of ground to a halt, and I bailed [them] out because I got uncomfortable."
Content	Description of how the content shapes the experience	"We talk a lot about classes having different characteristics but it really shows its face I think when we're working with figurative language."

School Context	Description of how the school culture shapes the experience	"There's a very homogenous community. It's a very middle class and white, um, working class and white I'd say, and rural … things just don't fly here that would fly eight miles down the road."

Reflexivity Statement

Aligning with other methodologists (Merriam, 2009; Glesne, 2006; Creswell, 2013; Denzin, 2001; Saldaña, 2013; Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997; Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011), I viewed myself as the primary instrument of this phenomenological investigation. I chose the topic of the study, decided how the study would be carried out, and made continual adjustments along the way. Being aware of these realities requires that I approach them directly and attempt to make them visible – that I take a critical approach to my involvement. In this respect, I agree with Reason's (1994) thoughts on critical subjectivity:

> Critical subjectivity means that we do not suppress our primary subjective experience, that we accept that our knowing is from a perspective; it also means that we are *aware of* that perspective and of its bias, and we *articulate* it in our communications. Critical subjectivity involves a self-reflexive attention to the ground on which one is standing (p. 327, original emphasis).

To organize self-reflexive attention, and to articulate the nature of my own subjective experience, I offer three questions: Why dialogic teaching? Why phenomenology? Why reflexive phenomenology? What practices of "self-reflexive attention" occurred throughout the research process? The purpose of answering these questions is to dissuade any understanding that I am "an objective, politically neutral observer who stands outside and above the study" and instead to address myself as being "historically and locally situated within the very processes being studied" (Denzin, 2001, p. 3).

Why dialogic teaching? I had no idea what dialogic teaching was until I came to graduate school. The term "dialogic" had never surfaced in my years of teaching high school

English, instructing drum lines, and tutoring students. And yet, reading the term "dialogic teaching" after the fact seemed to give a name to my teaching philosophy: It allowed me to reinterpret my previous work as a teacher, and it provided guidance for teaching classes as a graduate assistant. I have been intrigued by the nature of dialogic moments – how they come about, what they mean for education generally, and what they mean for reading and writing instruction specifically. In studying the empirical literature about dialogic teaching, however, I became concerned that the primary mode of understanding it was through surface features of the classroom – and by that, I mean the features of the classroom that would be observable to an administrator walking by or a researcher sitting in. I became concerned that dialogic teaching was primarily understood as a function of language: types of questions, types of responses, types of reasoning, and so on. In thinking about my own experience, I sensed there was something else going on with dialogic teaching, and I used this research as a way to explore that something else. The tension I felt between my experience as a teacher and the empirical literature (most of which has a language focus) is the occasion for the study.

Why phenomenology? For me, this question is political. As I look at media representations of teachers and the ways in which education policy approaches teachers under the rubric of high- and low-quality, I see an emphasis on individuals. Keeping individual teachers accountable is a current theme in education policy, and teachers become dominantly understood in terms of whether or not they are "doing their job," which is then linked to larger notions of societal progress and democratic goals. Teachers become envisioned as "soldiers of democracy" or "enemies of the state" (Goldstein & Beutel, 2009), and rather than focusing on the complexities of teach*ing*, the national discourse holds teach*ers* as central (Larsen, 2010). Teachers become envisioned as gatekeepers of student learning and educational progress.

To a lesser extent, and with more subtlety and nuance, this discourse of teacher centrality is methodologically reinforced in the empirical literature on dialogic teaching. A case study might be framed as one teacher's transition into dialogic teaching (Christoph & Nystrand, 2001) or teachers might be encouraged to "go dialogic" (Juzwik, Borsheim-Black, Caughlan, & Heintz, 2013) – and the focal questions become, Why do teachers enact dialogic teaching, what does it look like when they do, how do they do it, and how can they avoid monologic teaching? To make my position clear, I see tremendous value in these questions. But I also see an emphasis on teachers as the central decision-makers in the endeavor, as executives with signature pens, as if their decisions are based solely on being persuaded by a scholarly argument or ideal and having the pedagogical competence to enact their vision of dialogic teaching. In this formulation, teachers again become central, and the focus slips away from the range of meanings dialogic teaching assumes through lived experience. In short, dialogic teaching becomes understood as a matter of teachers enacting it as opposed to experiencing it. In formulating the primary research question of this study – What is it like to experience dialogic teaching with middle and secondary students? – I sought to disrupt notions of teacher-as-executive. The focus is not on how a teacher enacts dialogic teaching and what forms of pedagogical competence are required to do so, but instead on what meanings dialogic teaching take on. I sought to methodologically foreground the experience of dialogic teaching by embracing phenomenology, a meaning-giving mode of inquiry that begins and ends with lived experience (van Manen, 2014).

Why a turn to reflexive phenomenology? As I worked with my data, I reread Merlau-Ponty's (1962) influential preface to *Phenomenology of Perception* where he approaches the question, What is phenomenology? I read, "It is a matter of describing, not of explaining or analyzing" (p. viii). I could not reconcile this idea with my view that I am a socially and

culturally constituted person in the world. How could describing not be a form of explaining? How could describing not be a form of analyzing? Someone, after all, must do the describing, making decisions on what to describe and how to do it. This underlying situation complicates the notion that a description of an "essential nature" of a phenomenon and its "invariant structures" is at all possible. To borrow a phrase, these lines of demarcation, rather than being solid, for me seem to suggest "the porousness of certain borders." Phenomenological thinkers and researchers attempt to address this issue through the techniques of epoche and layered reductions, methods of promoting a phenomenological perspective to emerge – the conscious bracketing of the self to engage in a style of thinking about the phenomenon of interest. The problem, for me, is not in the spirit of that endeavor, but the possibility of it, which has been noted by various phenomenologists, including Merlau-Ponty: "The most important lesson which the reduction teaches us is the impossibility of a complete reduction" (p. xiv). Regardless, phenomenological method remains committed to the epoche/reduction.

Vagle (2014) has approached this issue directly, arguing that phenomenology has developed over the years, taking inspiration from the "old phenomenology" but branching off enough that contemporary approaches cannot be "positioned today as if it is that same phenomenology from yesteryear" (p. 111). I agree completely. Many phenomenologists, including Vagle, have moved away from the epoche/reduction by reorganizing the metaphor: It's not bracketing, but *bridling*, a way of conceptualizing the world as a horse and ourselves as saddled onto it. The metaphor suggests that we should lay hands on the saddle and loosen its threads, but it's not desirable to cut the threads: "Bridling means a reflective stance that helps us 'slacken' the firm intentional threads that tie us to the world" (Dahlberg, 2006, p. 16), not a bracketing out or cutting off of previous knowledge and experience with the phenomenon.

However, this approach, for me, does not go far enough. The epoche/reduction, in whatever form, still prioritizes of the researcher's relationship to the thing being studied in terms of its visibility – i.e., the visibility of how the researcher relates to the thing being studied and the surrounding world. The question remains, What about *in*visibility of intentions? In thinking about this question, I came to the conclusion that the epoche/reduction had to be disposed of. Rather than bracketing or bridling, both of which begin with assumptions of visibility, I turned to reflexivity. In this context, then, I define reflexivity as a way to understand my visible influence on the research process, and simultaneously, a detailed acknowledgment the invisibility of my influence on the research process and all it entails.

What practices of "self-reflexive attention" occurred throughout the research process? A major source of self-reflexive attention came through my analytic memos that I recorded after each data collection. I guided each analytic memo with three questions suggested by Sunstein and Chiseri-Strater (2007): What surprised me? What intrigued me? What disturbed me? These questions were helpful in reflecting on the research project and developing thoughts throughout, and they were also were integral to assuming (and staying committed to) a reflexive stance. Paraphrasing Sunstein and Chiseri-Strater, the surprised-me question helps in articulating and tracking preconceived notions; the intrigued-me question helps in paying attention to how my evolving interests influence what I record and how I record it; and the disturbed-me question leads to insights about my own boundaries and prejudices. In short, these questions help in tracking assumptions, positions, and tensions (p. 106). Through these memos, I recorded instances where I thought my presence significantly changed what happened in the classes I visited and what was said in the interviews.

For example, Zoe Jacobs read an article to her students during one visit, but she admitted in the interview while she normally goes "all out" and does an expressive reading, she held back because I was there and the camera was on. Mason James talked about how the students were much more willing to discuss and give effort throughout the class when the camera was on, but at the same time, he felt that he needed to make the discussion "go somewhere," which he attributed "partially" to my presence and what he thought I would want to see, something that was "maybe a little disingenuous of me." I recorded instances such as these throughout to keep track of my role and the power relationship assumed throughout the process. I found myself trying to convey the idea that I was researching "lived experience" of dialogic teaching rather than "pedagogical competence" with dialogic teaching, and I found that conveying that idea required changing how I talked about the research with the participants. The word "study" too strongly signaled a positivist mindset, and at one point, Leonie Brass asked me whether or not she was in the "experimental group." I stopped saying the word "study," and began preferring the term "project." *Project* seemed to bypass the discourse of treatments, experimentation, and results.

Throughout the recordings, I also considered my relationship to each participant and my developing rapport with them. Marcus Brooks, Leonie Brass, and Olivia Kays I met when working as a graduate assistant. Mason James I met as a student teacher three years ago. Zoe Jacobs looked extremely familiar when we met at the beginning of the project, both of us thinking we knew each other from somewhere, and then we came to find out that we had actually gone to college together nine years ago. (She found a group picture of us at a bar to prove it.) And Alexa Elon and I had never met, but as I was looking for teachers in the area who would likely have a strong voice and plenty of insight, she came highly recommended. I invited others

into the study who did not respond. I also did not include two teachers from early on because they taught elementary school and high school social studies, and I wanted to keep the focus on dialogic teaching at the middle and secondary level in English language arts – where my past teaching experiences as a high school English teacher and tutor/mentor for middle school students would more helpfully guide the process.

The decisions about who would be involved set the frame for this research, allowing possibilities for topics to emerge in the interviews. I tried to be explicit about my role as an observer, saying, *I'm interested in the realities of dialogic teaching in the classroom, and you have a front row seat to those realities, so I'm interested in talking to you about what you see.* Still, I wonder how me being white, male, middle-class, English-speaking, heterosexual, and a former English teacher and current PhD student influenced the interviews. I recorded thoughts on this in my memos, and used them to guide my interactions. For example, in one memo, I questioned if the participants' occasional use of technical language, such as "differentiation" or "performance assessment," was entirely due to my presence and whether or not this elevated way of talking about teaching was conducive to a project of lived experience. In another memo, I wondered if topics of "classroom management" and "student behavior" came up with implicit assumptions that I would want to see the students act in a certain way. I wondered, in a couple of instances with white participants, about how my being white too might have played a part in our tendencies to talk about students in terms of socioeconomic status, not race.

Throughout the process, I also came to discard a critical theory that was originally included as a part of the analytical strategy – critical youth studies, which seeks to uncover and trouble dominant conceptions of young people. I felt uncomfortable reducing the participants' experiences, opinions, and interpretations to a demonstration of the ways in which dominant

discourses about young people become articulated. To be sure, dominant views about young people do surface throughout the data, but for this project, I decided that this type of interpretation becomes too narrow when my purpose is to explicate full portraits of lived experience with dialogic teaching.

Lastly, I collected all my journals and writings from the time that I was a high school English teacher. I read through these spiral notebooks, leather journals, and index cards regularly during the process to gain a deeper sense of awareness and understanding about my experience in the classroom and the way I expressed that experience as compared to the participants. Through these journals and writings, I was taken back to particular moments, students, and activities, which helped calibrate my awareness of the complexities of the classroom generally and dialogic teaching in particular. In explicating the data – creating portraits and themes – I attempted to fairly represent the participants' lived experiences with dialogic teaching.

Chapter Three Summary

In chapter three, I described my particular use of phenomenology, explaining two foundational concepts of phenomenology, epoche and reduction. I then explained why I did not use these concepts in my study and instead committed to reflexivity as a guiding concept. In introduced my research questions and research design, and finally, I described three phenomenological concepts that I used to leverage the research methods.

CHAPTER FOUR: EXPLICATION

This chapter includes an explication of the participants' lived experiences with dialogic teaching, guided by the primary research question: Based on the participants' descriptions, what is it like to teach dialogically in middle and secondary English language arts classes? To help explore this primary question, I worked with the descriptions in terms of their textural and structural modalities; that is, I looked at the *what* of experience using the question, What textural descriptions do the teachers offer of the experience (sensations, adjectives, metaphors, sequences of events)? And I looked at the *how/why* of the experience using the question, What structural descriptions do the teachers offer of the experience (explanations about why a class proceeded/felt a certain way)?

To answer these questions, I offer two approaches to the data, the first approach involving individual portraits (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997) and the second approach involving themes across the participants' textural and structural descriptions of the experience (Moustakas, 1994). With these two approaches, I mean to establish a detailed look at various aspects of the participants' experiences, rich moments that are particularly revealing of what the experience of dialogic teaching is; and I also mean to establish a wider view of the participants' experiences, broad sweeps indicating shared textural and structural articulations of the experience.

On Reading Portraits

The portraits are meant to offer manifold profiles (Sokolowski, 2000) of the participants' experiences with dialogic teaching, as if the experience of dialogic teaching were imagined as an object that could be held up, and turned, and contemplated. The beginning of each portrait features background information on the participants, contextual details about their schools, and

brief descriptions of the discussions I observed. The background information on the participants was derived from the participants' own introductions to each other during the summer; and the information about the schools is derived from personal memos I recorded before each visit, the participants' descriptions, and government records.

The portraits are organized into paragraphs of varying lengths with ellipses on either end and oftentimes ellipses within the paragraph. The ellipses indicate where I made omissions, which were often in the form of "ums" and "ahs;" multiple starts, such as "I think, what I was thinking, ah, I'm thinking;" and brief asides, such as "and Trevor, well you know, his mom works…" The omissions were made in the interest of fairly representing the participants' descriptions and bringing forth the textures and structures of their experience.

Each paragraph should be considered a part of the participant's experience with dialogic teaching rather than the entirety of that experience. Individual aspects are suggestive of a type of meaning that van Manen (2014) calls "strongly embedded," which indicates an untranslatable quality to the language (p. 45). Even if I wanted to paraphrase a given aspect, I would not be able to do so without losing essential meanings that are bound up with the play of language. The collection of aspects contribute to an overall understanding of what it is like to teach dialogically for a respective participant. According to van Manen (1997), understandings of experience are much like reverberations, which are evoked by the ever-present tension of "what is unique and what is shared" – and it is within that tension that readers might "break through the taken-for-granted dimensions of everyday life" (p. 346). Thus, to read a phenomenological portrait in a phenomenological spirit, the reader is asked to listen for reverberations. To state the obvious, this idea about reading and understanding is markedly different from many scholarly discourses,

where clarity and conciseness are valued. The following portraits are not clear or concise, but they are meant to offer reverberations. I provide two suggestions for reading:

1. Imagine each portrait as a many-sided object, each paragraph as one side. Look across the sides, knowing that the presence of one side necessitates the absence of another. The many-sided object can be held up and spun, looked at quickly or slowly, in order or not, in total or in part. It is the collection of sides that gives the object form.

2. Imagine each portrait as a voice in a conversation. The conversation involves teachers talking about dialogic teaching in their classes – perhaps at a coffee shop, or on a bus, or a get-together with friends. Reading is overhearing. Flip from one portrait to the next, randomly if need be, to put the voices in conversation with one another.

Alexa Elon

Alexa Elon is originally from New Jersey and came to the Midwest for graduate school. She has been teaching at Central City High School for 11 years, primarily classes for 9th and 11th grade students. Since having children, she has taught part-time and currently co-teaches a class designated for freshmen struggling readers (as identified by junior high teachers) and a section of U.S. Lit. Honors for juniors. What she misses most are the students in the middle; her 9th grade students walk in late and say, “Shut up, you’re bogus!” whereas her 11th grade students walk in late and say, “I’m sorry, I’m 45 seconds late, I’m so sorry!” She misses students in the middle, who say, “Dude. I’m late.” Central City High School is situated in a residential area, just past a downtown whose skyline is populated by cranes. The joke of the town is there are three seasons: winter, summer, and construction. The high school has an expansive lawn with winding sidewalks that lead to a massive structure of towers and arches and bricks; the parking lots are typically full, with many (presumably) student cars parked at creative angles and in creative

places. Overflow parking goes to nearby streets. Central City serves approximately 1500 students from 9th to 12th grade, the biggest demographic group of which is White (64%), followed by Black (17%) and Hispanic (13%). Approximately a third (36.8%) of the students receive a free and/or reduced-priced lunch. In addition to her teaching duties, Alexa took on a new role during the time of the study as a team member for Central City's implementation of RtI (Response-to-Intervention), a school-wide program intended to identify students who would benefit from additional educational services.

Favorite Units

Alexa enjoys teaching a unit on *Forged by Fire* by Sharon Draper and units on early American literature, especially the Romantics, where kids say, "Yeah! Why *are* we sitting in desks? Why *are* we listening to you?" Alexa's favorite novels to teach are *To Kill a Mocking Bird* by Harper Lee and *Beloved* by Toni Morrison.

Discussions Observed

First visit: A large group discussion on Frederick Douglass's memoir, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* with juniors in U.S. Lit. Honors

Second visit: A large group discussion with freshmen about Dr. Seuss, talking about relationships between sound and meaning; a large group discussion with juniors in U.S. Lit. Honors about Hawthorne's "Young Goodman Brown," talking about symbolism

Third visit: A large group discussion with juniors in U.S. Lit. Honors about *Huckleberry Finn*, talking about and interpreting passages through various critical lenses

Alexa Elon: Portrait

…throughout the class, we have about five essential questions we're trying to answer to see how all of this is in a big conversation…we've really had to go back to them because it's a layer of thinking that's hard for them. I mean it's hard for them to see, "What are we doing with this?" And they want to see it as, "So I fill out this worksheet, and then I do what? I just give it to you, right?"…

…I have struggled a little bit with this group just because it's so big, to get everyone to get a voice in, but there were three kids who participated today who have not yet, so that was a victory…

…she is very conscientious and terrified of speaking in class, but she does her work, so she had things prepared to share…

...I guess the beginning of the year is always hard because there isn't that sense of genuine passion in them, you know? It's more like, "Okay, I'll discuss Frederick Douglass"…

…part of it happens over time. We have a lot of food, and I'm a believer in this. I say to them all the time, that when you share food with people you get to know them in new ways. So different people have bought treats and our tradition is you have to go to the person, get the food from their desk and say thank you. And the girl who was in the front corner…brought cookies one of the first few days, and I thought, "That cemented her place," you know? I mean she is at least investing. I know it sounds kinda silly, but she's at least investing in wanting to be part of this community, so…it will change too once we get to more contemporary literature. A lot of kids were complaining yesterday that "Douglass is hard to read," "Douglass is depressing," "The syntax is too hard," "I don't even know what he's saying," so… and I was a little nervous opening it up to, "Okay, who wants to get us started?" because it can start that way, and then I

have to take it to, "Alright, so we've griped. This is challenging, and now what're we going to do about it?" But I think the fact that they came with something prepared…I will say that to them, that "The work you put in changes the quality of our discussion"…I was super impressed with their ability to get to big ideas, and then somebody brought up an idea…"That connects to this part of the text and this part," and they were making some really nice connections…

…it's such a big group, I can already see immediately, and I don't often see the clear social divides in there…there was one girl who made a comment one day…she made a comment about feeling like the American Dream is truly not open to everyone, that education is so expensive. And people jumped on her and said, "You can get scholarships if you wanted. There's plenty," and I said, "Hey," you know, "I think she's making a valid point. We're in a different position maybe than a lot of people because we have access. We know what's out there. We have these great guidance counselors, and what if you don't have any of that?" "Well, I just think if you try hard enough…"…but it was one of those moments where you could see how they feel about her and, you know, so it's that intangible element of discussion that we talked about…I did a lot of like, "Hey, you know, maybe you're both right" kind of thing, but what sticks in my mind about that is the need to pull that student back into discussion. I mean, she does tend to say things to try to annoy people. This was not one of them, but so then, I need to get her reading response and then be able to say, "Hey, you know, you were thinking about this too, look, you agree." […to the rest of the class:..] "How do you like them apples there?" without saying that, but to try to bring them together in nonthreatening situations and try to build that community that really is more around ideas than who we're friends with outside of class…we're all exploring the ideas…

…it felt very dialogic to me…I was thinking a lot about what dialogic actually means last night, but the kids seemed to be listening and learning from each other and what I was able to map from the conversation, in my notes on the [board], to me, was they're learning about these big ideas…and when we get to that synthesis assignment, and I say, "How does Frederick Douglass answer these big questions?" They went there today. I mean they talked about religion, they talked about education, the perseverance. That was one where I have never thought about that as a concept before in this text, but she had clearly thought it through very, I mean, beautifully, and but also problematized it on her own…and those are the moments where I wish we could just stop and think for a min—where, you know, I'll say to the kids, "Gosh, I would just like to go back and reread it with that lens now." So I mean, I felt like it was dialogic very much in the sense that they made meaning…and in a way, they did such a good job, that our second discussion, we won't be able to do that again. It will feel too redundant. We'll break into small groups then and probably try to formalize some of these answers with support from the text…

…And I didn't feel like it beat a dead horse at any point, which a lot of classes tend to do, and I felt like it was really well supported. I mean, I had my notes up there of the passages that I want to hit, and they hit them…

…one kid asked me, "Am I gonna read from this [reading response] in class," and I was like, "Heck no. We'll stab our eyes out"…and I said that those reflections should be fairly informal, I mean, "Talk to me, and you don't have to have an answer to a question, like the perseverance, is it good or bad? I don't know. You're raising a really good question that you don't have to have the answer to," and I think that's too where…kids tend to recoil at things like this because they say, "You want me to write an essay about it?" "No. I want to reflect on what you thought while you were reading. Show me your mind at work"…

...and actually one girl came up to me at the end of that discussion, and that's the other sign that I think it was really good learning talk, she said, "My response stinks. What happened in here is nothing…," so it made her evaluate her own thinking about the text, and I think in a way that can be an intimidating element of an honors class where they think, "I'm not that smart," but, like two girls who didn't speak did really great small group work…so I actually can use their responses next time and pull them out that way and say, "Just to start us off today, Kelly, do you want to start us with what you said about…?"…

…I suspect my biggest challenge with them is going to be that certain kids want more air time than 31 people allows in a big group…

…what I was keenly aware of was the kids who were not part of it…there was a girl kind of playing with her hair and, you know, it's learning talk only to the extent that you engage in it…I think a lot of that [discussion] operates over her head. She has a hard time moving from summary to analysis, and that is where concrete tasks and small group work, and, "I want you to talk through this question in a small group" is much better for her…I worry a lot about the ones who, in a big class like that, you know, there are ones who didn't participate who I'd love to get in…

…whether or not they can fly under the radar…there was a boy who walked out today, who's I think intimidated. He said to me at one point, "I don't think I'm smart enough for this," and I was like, "Anthony," he hasn't taken honors classes before…"Three of the kids who did not participate today did not take an honors class last year"…they're not necessarily used to this culture of discussion or feeling empowered or trained in it. I mean, that takes a certain level of practice to be able to do what those kids did [today during discussion]. I don't think they're used to peers who engage like that, so it's, in a way, I think a little bit of culture shock at first, which I

try to address at the beginning of the year and say, "It's very easy to feel like an imposter or the one who doesn't belong. You all belong"…

…Well, I'd say dialogic teaching comes from students having the will to participate and make meaning. That's tough because not a lot of our students see school as meaningful or enjoyable. We have also struggled with behavior in this class because a few students want to dominate the discussion. I was happy to see so many students participating on the day you visited, but we struggled to achieve that balance…

…In terms of demographics, class shapes our demographics more powerfully than race, although they are obviously inexorably linked. Many of the students in our second hour class wrote at the beginning of the year about their desire to be the first in their families to go to college. I see dialogic teaching as necessary to giving them the thinking skills to make this happen…

…This class is largely dialogic—students are motivated and want to construct their understanding of the big ideas (answers to the essential questions). However, I noticed of late that they'd slacked off on the reading. I think sometimes they mistake my compassion for their schedules for permission to slack off. That's a balance I have a hard time striking…

…My challenge is that this is a large group with different social groups at play. Recently there has been a rift in the cool, athletic girl group that has carried over into my class. I also had a weenie moment from a boy who recently said, "I hate most of the people in this class." He retracted his statement, but I have struggled to make this a really comfortable, supportive community. We actually have the food tradition in place because, as I tell them, once you share food with people, you get closer to them...

…I want to share some of my enthusiasm for intellectual conversation with my students. I tell them that what's fun about this job for me is seeing new elements of texts and understanding new ideas, not hearing what Spark Notes have to say. I think kids largely believe that...

…I'd say that this group of students is largely privileged and driven. They all see college as an absolute in their futures, and they may not like school, but they understand the importance of playing the game well. I struggle with this group to instill a desire to learn, not just to get As. Many see the importance of this, and I have a few students who took the class because they wanted to be challenged as writers. But I have others who are not terribly interested in feedback or growth. That makes dialogic teaching a challenge because they will raise their hands, get their participation credit, and check participating off their to-do lists...

…that one moment where Cameron said Huck doesn't want to be himself, you know, I want them to see that genuine like, this gets me thinking, and what's exciting about this is not trying to figure out the answer, you know, what does the teacher want or what's going to be on the study guide, or—it's about you making meaning in a way that makes us go, "Huh."… I say, "This is nerd fun. This is like where you say, 'I don't really believe this, but I want to see if I can make it work'"…so have some fun overanalyzing it and see if we can poke holes in it…

…I mean this is the other piece honestly with discussion that I've struggled with this year, my students in that class, like one pulled me out before class to tell me, she's taking four AP classes and she said, "My parents are furious at me, I'm not keeping up with stuff, I don't know what to do," and I said, "Well, you know…" We tried to brainstorm some solutions and a number of these kids are in that boat, and they have repeatedly said to me, "We have so much homework" so their stress level on an average day, I mean to get them to engage authentically has been my great challenge because they're stressed, they're tired, they're going through the motions,

they're doing what they need to do, and when Anna who was in the front there, when I said, "Let's go to small groups," she said, "No, this is fun." I thought, Holy crap! [laughter] We haven't, I mean we just, it's so hard to get that fun going because I feel like I'm having to really pull them, I mean I do feel like a dog and pony show some days…

…I think I have two kids in my class who wanted to drop down, one was in the front…you probably can pick her out, never got her book out, never…I just don't think she likes it at all. I think she's miserable. She missed a bunch of school at the beginning of the year because she was sick, and I think probably tried to change level and was told no…because the regular honors sections are all at 34 and 35 and they won't add another kid…I really feel for them…I've said to them, "I need you to get the reading done on time. The other deadlines, if you need flexibility, I can work with that as long as stuff gets done"… I think for some of them though they really just can't keep up with all the work and all the deadlines and like for chemistry, AP Chem, when they're in and not allowed to change, that's brutal…and it's been part of the unintended effect of our AP proliferation in an effort to put ourselves on the same level as [other schools in the area] and up our scores…the last three years I've taught this class, it has been a reality of their lives, like they're not just stressed, they are, I mean some of these kids are just breaking under the pressure…

…I think part of [participating in discussion] for them is a moment of feeling like their voice matters, that it's not about just being right. I do think they like that, when they have the energy to do it…

…what if [a discussion] lands on the day of the AP Chem test?...sometimes they come in, and I'm like, "What came before this? Oh, Bio," you know? And kids are on the brink of tears…or what if it lands on a day when a big project is due for AP World History, and I see three kids trying to

get their AP World History out during class?...so [a good discussion] is almost like the perfect storm…

…I mean Lauren threw out something that I thought made no sense whatsoever, but I didn't really think it was worth pointing out the problem with that, and I think I probably should do more of that, like that's not really a textually supported reading, you're kind of in left field, but I'd rather they, so what? You know? Nobody's listening, nobody's writing it down, no one's going to be like, "Oh, that's the way to read Jim's character," and if I see them run with a misreading, as they've done in the past, I'll say, "Hey, you know, do you think the text supports this?" But I think generally they realize that whatever they throw out I'm going to run with. I'm just so happy to talk. There's a level of desperation there that works for me…

Leonie Bell

Leonie Bell teaches 9th and 12th grade students at North Fremont High School. Previous to becoming a teacher, she earned a B.A. in English and Religion and worked in various capacities in social services: Human Subjects Review Board, substance abuse research, and assistance for low-income housing. After staying home with her children for eight years, she pursued a master's in teaching degree while teaching college courses on human relations. With college-level teaching, she used discussion as a way to explore course content, but then at the high school level, she recounts, "I got into a room full of 31 ninth graders, and discussion lasted about 6.8 seconds." North Fremont High School is situated in a rural community. The two-lane road leading out there is perfectly straight and overlaid on rolling hills, angling cars skyward before each rolling top. The expanse of corn and bean fields is intermittently broken by houses surrounded by trees. In the town is a sign for the public library and a sign for the ATM. A little car is decked out in camouflage. American flags are here and there on the houses, and if a lawn

might need mowing, it's noticeable, by comparison. The baseball field is on the left leading into the school, and the parking lot is part paved, part gravel. The largest demographic group is White (87%), and approximately a fifth (22.4%) of the students receive a free or reduced-priced lunch. Leonie Bell has taught here for two years.

A Favorite Unit: The Spark Note Challenge

Leonie had her 9th grade students not read *Lord of the Flies*. Instead, they researched the book using various sources, such as Spark Notes, and after researching it for several days, they took a test. Confidently, the student took the test; resoundingly, the students failed the test. They then read *Lord of the Flies* for real, as a class. At the end of the unit, they wrote a reflective essay guided by the question, "With all the stuff we can access these days, why bother to sit down and actually read this piece of literature?"

Discussions Observed

First visit: Oscillating small group and large group discussions as 9th grade students work toward a definition of "theme"

Second visit: A fishbowl debate in 12th grade composition where students articulated arguments on a topic, which was previously chosen and researched by the students

Third visit: Small and large group discussions as 9th grade students collaboratively write a unit test that they will later take

Leonie Bell: Portrait

… so what we wound up doing was what I thought was a very dialogic lesson in which we talked about the purposes of education…I found a quote that I thought, "Yes, that's right. This is

exactly right"…it was a quote in like a looong book where somebody said, "The highest function of education is to teach people to do what needs to be done when it needs to be done whether they want to or not." And as I was reading it and getting ready for the school day, I was like, "Yes, that's exactly right," and so then I put it up as a quote for them to write about in their journals, and then I thought, "No. That's grim and awful. That is not the highest function of education. I don't believe that at all. How could I have thought such a thing?" And I believe that it was actually at the point that it was on the screen for their journaling that I was like, "Maybe we should talk about this"… In every class, they more tended to the function and skills of education, and I said 'I think that's school, and this is education.' Education is when you're six years old, and you know everything there is to know about a dinosaur. EVERYTHING. And no one ever told you, you know? And so we just kind of talked about that... and we took the conversation beyond 'acquiring knowledge,' and the things that they came up with were 'honing your skills,' 'exploring your interests,' 'discovering your passions,' 'doing what needs to be done,' 'taking responsibility,' 'nurturing relationships,' 'opening your mind,' 'practicing for the real world,' and 'taking risks,' and that was between all six sections that I teach, those were nine things that came up, in some or all of them.…

…at one point last year, I had brought in lamps…and the students seemed to really, really respond to that…they said it's "homey"…I mean there's a vanilla air freshener and lighting and they like it. They're relaxed, they're not as rigid, which is good and bad [laughter] depending on what you're doing…

…you know you always think, "Oh, and then I'll say, and then I'll say, and then I'll say," and you get up here and like, "I've been talking too long. I need to stop talking. I need to make someone else talk"…

…I think of it as being dialogic when there's not a specific answer I'm getting at in the end, and that's one thing I feel good about with this and the composition assignment is…"You guys are taking this. I have a direction, but you're finding the path there"…

…there are a couple of kids with like severe anxiety in here that are really, really quiet people, prone to absentee, and they like to be invisible, and for [some] of those kids, I think this kind of teaching, or this kind of learning…drives them away because they can't be invisible, and so it's problematic in that it's kind of inclusive of everyone, except for those who are really uncomfortable with being included…

…the other thing is, I think there are a couple kids in period two who are just lost, looost, when there's not that direct [teaching], for whatever reason, and so I think [dialogic teaching] can be detrimental to those kinds of students…and it's good for a lot of them…nothing's ever good for all of them, and I don't think it would be good for a lot of them if every single class were like that, but I think that this particular platform works for the greater good in here most of the time…

…it was really nice to see that they used a lot of like transition words and like piggy-backing techniques, but we didn't talk about any of that stuff or anything. It just sort of came naturally to some of them, as it does when you talk…

… I was looking for examples of [fishbowl discussions]…they are always using them as discussion, but not argument. So they're kind of a tool for like discussing literary texts. You tap in if you have something to say, and the idea is…you're trying to build on one another and piggyback in and build this thing. And that's a little artificial I think, but I think that here, like for me it, it just seems like it has to be an argument, at least for the high school level. They're not

going to ever tap in if they don't care. You know what I mean? They don't care about what Mike has to say about To Kill a Mockingbird*, but if Mike starts talking about rape, that's gonna trigger a response, you know?...*

…You always have those quick thinkers though, like Matthew, who think from brain to mouth…how much research did he do? Five minutes. But he could just come to the game and play, you know what I mean?...

…for all of my classes, I try to get as much choice and variety as I can. And one of the go-to methods I have for doing that is I have people generate individual lists, and then I have them collaborate in small groups to come up with a list of ten, "Everybody give me ten things that are topics, just topics of the day, things that happen, a two-sided position," so a list of ten. I put them in a small group and say, "Okay, now come up with five. Circle five of those."…and then, "Now compare your five with the five of these four people, and as a group, you settle on five, so we put five on the board, and we just start talking through a process of elimination and voting, and this particular time, I actually physically sat back and handed them the marker and said, "Okay, great now how're you going to decide…how're you gonna decide what you guys are going to talk about?" And then they had to decide on how they were going to decide. And they did a pretty good job, you know…they did it and they didn't…they needed some redirect from time to time. I don't have quite as much success in doing that when I have my English 12 kids…we went through this huge process in every class to come up with a definition of theme, and by the end of it, I was like, "Okay now you have this possibility, and this possibility, and this possibility, and how are you going to decide?" And English 12 was like, "We're just going to look it up." [laughter]…working on it on the board for a week, and they just Googled it

[laughter] and they were just not going to do it, and I was like, "Oh, okay, to each his own. So."…

…period one was much livelier than I anticipated. I thought they used their research [for the fishbowl discussion] really well. I was, you know, I'm deep in my second, third semester of teaching high school right? So in my <u>vast</u> experience of having these talks twice before, I found that people either sort of just went off the cuff, like Matthew…they made sense, but it was more hypotheticals and "What about this? What about that?" Or they just read from a website…so I thought that period one did a good job of having research, being prepared, and sort of being able to talk without strictly reading from the screen…I would say of the two groups, they are the most studious-er at least quieter groups but it was good to see them sort of awake…this class is offered first and eighth, so I mean the people who want to sleep in first are going to be in eight…I just really think it's the time of day has a huge impact. I think the fact that those kids walked in here at 10:15 instead of 8:15 was big, a really big deal…

…the places that intrigued me were the places of silences where you could see that someone got stumped…and they were sort of cycling through, "Wait, wait, my top five arguments are not going to fit in here"…I think period one I had to bail out once…where they just sort of ground to a halt, and I bailed them out because I got uncomfortable…

…When there were asides, it seemed like they were [makes whispering noise] about that [topic being discussed]…instead of like snap chatting or whatever…

…so one time I went in in period one, and I felt like, "Okay, this thing is gonna die if I don't."…I felt like they didn't know how to make that leap, and they were like, "Oh yeah, good, let's talk about that." I really think that's all I needed to say there…Here, I really regretted saying

anything when I asked about the internet because that was of course a question that occurred to me over there, and I desperately wanted to know, and I wanted to talk about it too, and then I thought, "I'm just going to ask that," and then it didn't happen, and then I was like, "Oh we're running out of time, I want to ask that," and then immediately, I killed the conversation…they were like [makes a bomb-dropping sound] [laughing]… I got my question asked, and they stopped talking altogether. And so it was just like one of those things where you're like, "Oh yeah, that's right. It's not your show."…I interrupted them, and when people interrupt you, no matter what you're doing, you stop doing what you were doing and start thinking about what they want you to do…

…I think the thing that helped and hindered it most was that…period eight had a very passionate subject…such a personal and sort of, gender-based, gender-divisive issue that everyone could relate to just well enough to make 'em uncomfortable. I think that that probably kept it from the kind of conversation where they're actually trying to attain understanding, you know what I mean?... Um so I think that, for them, what made the conversation interesting is what also made it one in which they're probably going to stick to their own guns from beginning to end…For period one, I think that it was probably more dialogic in the sense that it was a learning activity because I do feel like they listened and heard…and were willing to take on the new information…I think it was topic-based..it has to be a topic that is interesting enough that they feel passionate about it, but not so passionate that they can't see past the passion…

…I tried to do social identity unit with these guys last year [makes a face]… "No. We're just fine, thank you. We're fine the way we is."…

…I personally think the fact that they are the upper level. I think the fact that it's a tracked class makes a big difference. It does. Just what you can talk about, and the ways you can talk about it

are entirely different when you don't have someone, like, goof balling, you know, just to goof off…'cause I mean I love to love the bad kids, but it does make it difficult to have that kind of a direction…

…in the back there is a student…she's the president of everything. She's the nicest, most unassuming student in the room. She's pretty quiet. She's usually kind of a quiet leader, and she'd been gone to the World Food Prize this whole last weekend…she never popped in [to the discussion]…I had set the expectation that everyone would tap in at some point, and I was a little surprised that everyone really did except for her…

Mason James

Mason James teaches at North Independence High school. Previous to working as a teacher, Mason worked at Target for a year and a newspaper for five years. He went back to school part-time while working full time to earn a degree in teaching. At North Independence, Mason teaches all the sections of 10th grade English, a variety of electives that serve a variety of grade levels, and one section of senior composition. North Independence High School is situated in a rural, small town. On the way into town are corn and bean fields, places that store and rent large-scale farm equipment, and a grain elevator. The school building is modern, with a rectilinear look, rectangles upon rectangles in two shades of tan, blue trim around the windows and along the top of the structure. The largest demographic group at North Independence is Hispanic or Latino/a (55%), followed by White (40%). About half (54%) of the students receive a free or reduced-price lunch. Mason has worked here for three years.

<u>Favorite Unit</u>

Mason teaches a unit covering *Lord of the Flies* by William Golding and *Night* by Elie Wiesel. To prepare for the unit, he begins a spy game by saying, "I am a tyrant and a dictator and the unchallengeable ruler of this room. You can have a resolution and depose me if you can get 25 signatures on a secret ballot to start your revolution. But I have been recruiting spies for the last three weeks, and they will be watching you." Mason's spies leak information about who is trying to start a revolution, and each morning, Mason puts names of would-be revolutionaries on the board. Being found out means you're out. If the students win, they get pizza. Mason describes "rampant paranoia" and "chaos in the hallway." This spy game is used to initiate an extended conversation about fear and trust and scariness during the unit.

Discussions Observed

First visit: A large group discussion with 10th grade students where they explored symbolic material in *Lord of the Flies*; and a workshop style discussion with creative writing students where they gave feedback on individual student stories

Second visit: A large group discussion with 10th grade students where they explored the meaning of the beast in *Lord of the Flies*

Third visit: Small group discussion with 10th grade students about "Mask of the Red Death" by Edgar Allan Poe where they search for symbols through textual details and then and share out and put their ideas on the board in a large group discussion

Mason James: Portrait

…none of my classes are really comfortable yet with this topic [symbolism], like super comfortable, like for example, I would not feel it was appropriate just to tell them to give me the symbols and then leave it at that. I knew we would need to present some things and then walk

through it…I thought that they started out strong, because they seemed to know chapter one very well. They did a good job reviewing that, and there were a lot of people responding, people who don't usually respond, and then chapter two was just an absolute mess. I felt like they really clammed up…upon review, especially considering the level of involvement, it didn't end up being all that dialogic. I felt like I was leading them a lot of the way or trying to present things to them, mostly spoon feeding things to them. I mean, I was getting responses and things like that, but they were mostly just feeding back into what I was trying to get them to understand…

…In a best case scenario, they would've taken the wheel a little bit more and talked a little bit more about what was going on in the book, but I think honestly, I think I was one of the biggest problems is that because I'm not sure that I necessarily allowed them to do that…I should've probably gotten out of the way more. I think I seemingly purposefully dominated the conversation, which I shouldn't have done…

…I'm not confident in their ability to do this by themselves yet. There were times when I asked them for a contribution, and they didn't, you know? They didn't, like I asked them, "Was there anything else that you saw?" And there was a lot of dead space or whatever, so I kind of went to plan B. That's kind of when I went into talking about Santa Claus and the Monster Spray and all that stuff…

...second hour, there's pockets of them that like each other and things like that, but there's a lot of division too. Some of the bigger personalities really don't care for each other, so…like in previous years I would take some of those big personalities and pit them against each other, but this class can't really handle that when I've tried that before. You've got some of the personalities that they get very offended…as opposed to an actual discussion, they go after each other, like the one girl in the front who was speaking up and contributing and disagreeing with

certain things…she gets, not really picked on, because she really doesn't care what people think about her, but some of the boys have her as a target and will just knock her, which just derails the class a little bit…

…I find that when I'm leading things heavily that we can at least get through the content…

…even calling on some of the kids is a risk because they like to show off for each other sometimes…

…in that class specifically the dynamic seems to be way more focused on, I don't know, almost like a call and response, and they'll riff off of each other, and they'll agree with each other a little bit, but I'm still the gatekeeper of what goes on in that class…

…even my strong students…the one student in the front, she is perfectly fine never saying anything… she's just perfectly fine getting it, understanding it, and then just keeping quiet, and then some of the other students are just, even the quite good students are pretty shy partially because when you speak out in that class, you become a little bit of a target maybe, I don't know…

…there was some interesting stuff that came up, you know, the kids started talking about, "Did the island make them do this? Is the island making them violent?"…I loved it. It was great. It kind of died out pretty quickly 'cause it was basically just two kids discussing…I hope we get back to that in fifth period, with the next class because yeah, that is one of the basic questions of the story, "Is it the island that makes these boys do these things or the boys that bring it to the island?" I think most people would say the boys bring it to the island, but just that level of thinking is really cool and fascinating...

…the kids all know that Piggy dies, because the upper classmen, they just run around the hall screaming that: "Piggy dies!" They think it's funny, and one of the big foreshadowing moments we kind of talked about yesterday was the fact that, Piggy kind of acts like a mother to the kids on the island. He's usually the one who's the leader, he's always scolding them or doing things like that, and when the boys kill the big pig, and they put its head on a stick, it is a mother pig who's got a bunch of piglets, and so, one of the kids said, "Well, that's kind of like Piggy"…so that was a fun thing that they picked up yesterday…not necessarily something I would force…

…this class is typically not great at discussion. They don't interact well with each other usually, as far as openly. They're closed off as far as groups go. This was actually, I mean honestly, as far as total participation and sharing with each other, this is probably the best day they've had as far as that openness that I've been able to get them to do, anyhow…

…there are a lot of smart kids in the class, and they pick up things, but not many of them are sharers or communicators, and one of the things that I've noticed is that when I do work like this where I ask them to pull directly from the text and then try to get them to talk about it, that tends to open them up a little bit more…

…I don't really know how to describe it…maybe it's just because of my experience… I always try to remember, "How did my teachers set up discussion?"…because you're not aware of it unless you're looking for it…but I remember having a lot of discussion in high school…people would respond and talk about things that they read in the story, and it seems like these kids don't do that as well, like they don't remember specific things that they read, and I don't know if it's a reading comprehension thing or whatever, but when I ask them to pull [quotes], force them to look directly at the text, I feel like it helps them get that level of, "Okay, now that I'm looking for it, and I see it…I've read it, and I've looked for it specifically, and when I hear other people

talking about things, I have better…" It seems like they've got a better chance of actually having a discussion like that, but it's not the easy free-form discussion that I've seen in other classes…this doesn't work as well as when I was student teaching at Roosevelt, it doesn't work as well as I remember it when I was in high school, or when I was in college…and I'm not entirely sure if it's just my experience that's differing or if it's the demographic here or it could be a million things…discussions don't go anywhere in that class specifically…

…kids would be talking about things, and I'd be trying to direct it a certain way, and then I realize I should just shut up and let the kid finish their thought, you know? Or I would try to do the thing where I restate for clarification, and then I realize that I was restating and adding something to it, which is not dialogic, and then there was also the point when I brought up the [topic of religion]. I'd been trying to get them to go for the religion angle for like a week and a half, and it's just not happening and not happening at all…they don't' want to go there, and I thought about it and eventually I was like, you know, "I need to show them this," and I don't know, I probably could've waited until next week, but I was like, "Ah screw it," you know?...

…I want to have this discussion about morality and things like that with them, and I want them to engage with it on that level, you know?...

I went home and thought about it last night and then I stood in the shower for about an hour this morning thinking about it…I decided, "Okay, I need something that they can discuss, that they can try to argue about…I need to give them a problem that they need to solve together," and so what I wanted to do was say, "What is the beast?"…'cause I figured that was a good thing because that's a question that has been plaguing the characters in the book for so long, and so I went back through, and I looked for all of the quotes that I could find or spots that I knew had very rich subtext about the beast, and then I went through…so I thought…several different

stages…small group discuss, large group discuss, small group discuss, large group discuss, and then hopefully by the end we come to…as a group decide, "What is the beast?"…

…I'm worried sometimes that I either don't prepare too much or prepare too much because…there were a lot of steps, a lot of, "Okay, now you do this, now you do that." And I feel like I either lose them in the shuffle or don't give them enough time to freely think on their own, but I don't know. What do you think?...

…well, the [state] tests are all based on giving them a piece of text they know nothing about and saying, "Here are some questions. Answer them." And you need to be able to pull directly from the text…you need to be able to say, "Okay, this is my information, this is how I answer this question," and so one of the reasons why I'm trying to focus on that as much as possible is because it does prepare them for the assessments better…they give them the material, they don't have to seek it out, it's just right there in front of them, so it's limited context based on the information. You're not supposed to bring anything else into it, and so that's why, part of the, the gradual release of responsibility for the Core as far as they're concerned is, ah, you have a focus lesson where I tell them what we're doing and I show them how I would do it…how I found these things…which I think is just good, I think is probably best practices anyhow, in my opinion, because we want the kids…even if they're just discussing things, they should have a reason, they should be able to explain their position so their peers can understand them, I guess…

…I feel there's two ways to look at discussions, right? … like when you do improvise, there's this rule, "Never say no," you know? And I always thought that's kind of interesting because when you're improvising a scene, if you say no, you shut things down, and I like that idea when I'm thinking about discussion, but at the same time, arguing actually creates, you know, it gives people a reason to try to develop their thoughts more openly, right? I think discussions suck

when everybody agrees with each other because there's no discussion, you know? You don't even really have to refine your points. If there's no disagreement, there's no explanation. You never have to explain your stance, so I think argument has to be a part of discussion, you've got to try to get that happening, right?...

…it's a creative process for creative writing. It's a lot of listening and responding, asking questions, and I try to ask a lot of questions because I feel like it makes them provide more information, you know? I think that is pretty dialogic… I'm still maybe guiding them to where they want to go, but if I ask a lot of questions of them, then they are the ones who are trying to pick something out…I'm mostly just helping them talk their way through it. I think it's dialogic because basically…basically I just kind of help them decide what they're already thinking, you know?...

…I think that's maybe an answer to another question about dialogic instruction for myself anyway that I was wondering for myself, "What do you do to plan authentic questions?" And maybe that's it. Maybe you find a question that is simple, but provocative enough that the students have to feel that void, you know? And so maybe that's the answer for me, that I need to write questions that make them answer in a longwinded sort of way and give them an opportunity to discuss and know that there's not necessarily a right answer…because then I can literally just turn them on and get out of the way. I can still redirect, but I don't have to refocus them because they already know that there's a lot of answers out there…

…I want more than simple answers, you know? I'm hoping for anything that, where a kid says and connects the book to something more than just the book itself, you know?...responses that are more than just surface responses, responses that say, "I'm thinking about not just the

immediacy of this question, but how it connects to other parts of this book or even beyond the book itself…

…I always want to say to them, "Does anyone else have something to say about that?...Do you agree with that?" …Sometimes I try to say, "Does anybody else have any evidence to back up that?," especially if it's something that I won't say is the correct interpretation but that's basically what it is, an interpretation where I'm like, "Oh yeah, that makes sense, that's something I was hoping that somebody would say…anchored in some sort of truth"…

…and the other thing is that I tried to have more or less the same response whether if it's the quote right answer or wrong answer…I don't try to immediately dismiss bad answers. I try to let the students dismiss that answer, you know, through evidence, which is hard because I feel like a lot of time it probably shows on my face…and I try not to do that because making mistakes is part of the process too…

…the two boys are usually just jokers and jerks, and they actually were asking a lot of questions of me in the small group section…we started asking the question, "Should you face your fears, or should you ignore them?" And you know that was a fairly insightful connection that he was making with that character…and then they just turned into kind of turds in the large group talk, like they didn't share much you know?...I actually called on one of them because [in small group discussion], he was asking about the section where Ralph is talking about how everything has gone wrong since they started talking about the beast, but he sure as hell wasn't going to say anything about it until I called him out, you know?...

…I thought third period went awesome. I think the class really got out of their own way, you know, and they were really engaging each other…especially for so early on in the trimester.

That's got me really excited honestly because I've got a got a full—I've got the rest of the year with those guys…

…Well, just the fact that they're willing to step in like that and to banter with each other…they were willing to take risks, to say weird things. I had to coach it out of 'em a bit, but they were willing to own up for it, and part of it is that, especially those girls that sat over in that one side of the room, they were more than willing to argue with each other openly about the meaning, which I think lent itself to the continuation of the discussion…

…Holy crap! You know, like this is awesome. They're really getting at stuff and real—I mean, at one point I was really more of a facilitator just being like, "Okay, now put that on the board," you know what I mean? I'd ask like, "Anybody else?" That sort of thing…it was really great…

…Well, that's my class that has some students with IEPs and there's a couple of behavior disorder kids and they choose, they chose not to engage, you know…

…I think it went pretty well, I guess, but I had to lead them a lot harder, guide them a lot more, and I don't know actually. There were times when I just started talking and I wasn't—like I'd just be distracted by something, realizing that something else is happening in the classroom that I needed to fix, and so I feel like I was railroading it real hard, and I didn't like that, but I wasn't really sure what the other option was because when I tried to just let them discuss with each other, not really a lot came out. That class also seems to more actively want to engage me than each other…I say something, they respond to me, I say something, they respond to me…

…I don't remember exactly what I said, but I think it was to the effect of, "There isn't necessarily a right answer" and that I don't know an answer, and they want to know, "Well, what do you think?"… Well, it doesn't necessarily matter what I think…but they did, they really wanted a

right answer…that's not what a dialogic framework is…they just so desperately want to know what I think of it as opposed to what it just is…

...Well, honestly the big thing is, it's been a question I've had. One, "How do you asses their dialogue when kids won't talk?" Two, "How do you formulate a discussion when you have that many children, when you don't have time for them to talk?" Even if all of those kids in fourth period wanted to say something, how many things would I have time for them all to say in an hour?...

…So here's a rhetorical question: One of my favorite moments from today, going back to what you asked earlier, when they asked me what my teal shirt symbolizes about me, that whole costume tangent was really cool, and it found its way toward something really specific, but I think the best part about it…just the idea that we were able to take that wild walk about and somebody found themselves pointing back into [the story, "Mask of the Red Death"]…but so I think dialogic instruction can be very playful. I think that's what makes it engaging for kids, but you gotta have the right kids, so the rhetorical question: Dialogic instruction posits that through discussion when students and their educator discuss with themselves and each other and all around and everyone's actively listening and communicating, that learning happens in that…so if we have dialogic instruction, and we write it up on the board, and the other kids write it down because it's going to be tested over, did they learn anything?...Do they have to have the discussion to learn it? So if they chose not to engage, but they were listening, can you just listen to dialogic instruction, not participate, and learn?...I mean, there are some kids who just don't like to talk. It doesn't mean they don't learn things, you know what I mean?...

… if you're a teacher, and you're in your classroom, and it's not going real well right at this moment, you've gotta know when it's time to dig in, right? Like with fourth hour today, I was

holding the bit pretty tight most of the period, just because that's fourth period, and that's what you do. But third period, if I didn't know those kids, I would've wanted to tighten up a little, because there's a lot of side-talking still and whatever else…the girls in there with the boy, talking about anything other than what was going on with the story, but I let it go. I was like, "I'm goin' to let this ride because this group will make something happen," and they did. It paid off great…there is a trust thing. I've got to trust them to be able to get to the point. They've got to trust me that I'm going to (a) protect them if they say something silly to support them in the class, and (b) that it's okay to say things in front of the teacher. It's totally a dynamic, you know?...

Marcus Brooks

Marcus Brooks teaches 7th grade at East Central Junior High and comes to the teaching profession after having served in the military. He did not originally envision himself as a teacher, as he comes from a family of teachers and never thought it was something he wanted to do. However, in looking for a job where he could work with literature and young people, and after guidance from some college professors, he chose to pursue a teaching career and found a position at East Central Junior High, teaching 7th grade English language arts along with a section of Success Center. East Central is situated in a residential area with mature trees, single-family homes with one or two car garages, and nearby parks; about a mile away is a four-lane stretch of road called the "strip," which features restaurants, hotels, and other businesses. East Central serves 7th and 8th grade students, the two largest demographic groups of which are White (55%) and Black (21%), followed by Asian (11%) and Hispanic (7%). Approximately a third (33.6%) of the students receive a free or reduced-price lunch. Marcus has taught at East Central for three years.

Favorite Unit

Marcus teaches a unit on Jackie Robinson. He says that getting authentic discussions going on topics like race or gender is difficult, but introducing these discussions through sports "helps students relax a bit."

Discussions Observed

First visit: A fishbowl discussion on a short story

Second visit: Small group and large group discussions on metaphor and simile

Third visit: Online activity where students used individual Chromebooks to find topics for an upcoming essay and posted their findings and thoughts on an online chat forum

Portrait: Marcus Brooks

…One kid started [the fishbowl discussion] off by, we were talking about bullying. He said something about how he thought that it was true that people are bullied because of differences from others, and the reason that he thought that was true was because he was adopted by his grandparents and when his peers see him with his grandparents in public and they notice how much older they are, then it makes him a target, and then so Drew kind of likes to be funny and class clowny, but that kind of turned the tone more serious, and then another student jumped in and said something about "I was adopted too," and so it started this whole conversation where everyone was really intently listening, and so it was great. And so of course then I thought, "Oh my fifth period, they're going to do gr—" [starts saying "great," laughing] They really struggled. The whole idea of tapping somebody on the shoulder to change spots turned into a moment for them to be goofy…

…agreeing they do a little more naturally I think. "I agree with that because"…they have trouble with respectful disagreement. They kind of sometimes launch into personal attacks or you know calling each other "stupid" or things like that…we have worked in terms of how to disagree respectfully and offer reasoning or evidence for their opinions…

…My first time directing kids this age in discussion…crashing upon the rocks of failure…that's something that my first year I had a really hard crash course in kind of understanding not only with discussion, but with a lot of things about teaching this age group. Pacing was a big one for me, appropriate kind of teacher talk…anticipating what kids this age, how they will respond to text and to each other's ideas is something that I just have done a lot and really concentrated on...I love being in that environment of facilitating a discussion, so I feel like that is partly a natural strength for me, but with this age, it really took a lot of, a full year at least, and I'm still getting better at it..

…I think they're still kind of in their egocentric style of thinking. I think that they don't always, they're not all mentally able to consider the other person's position or point of view, and I think that part of them – Oh, I shouldn't psychoanalyze too much – but I think in some ways they kind of naturally objectify their peers, so they don't fully see them as human beings. Sometimes they're just stereotyped objects to them and so they don't react with their personal feelings in mind or it's hard for them to consider how what they're saying might offend or hurt somebody else's feelings…

…the toughest thing for me to figure out is, "What do kids need to be explicitly taught before we just go do it?" So there was this huge level of assumption that I had, like "Oh, this is something we'll be able to do," and it took me a while to realize that if I even want them to start talking to each other in a respectful way, I need to explicitly teach that…instead of, "Okay that's

something that I can just mention, 'We should be respectful in this discussion,'" and then launch into it. That does not work at this age…

…I think a lot of the kids are really amenable to it in this particular group…there are some kids on one end of the spectrum…the receptivity spectrum maybe, and then on the other end there are some kids who…it's more of a reach for them, or at least it doesn't fit their expectations as much…it could be classroom organization and the teacher's relationship to them as a learner…I have a lot of kids who really struggle…they're used to the IRE, so it's like I raise my hand, you tell me if I'm right. And if I try to not do that, they really look for any kind of subtle signal that is in my body language or in what I say to find out if it's there, and they feel like the exchange isn't complete until I say, "That's correct and now let's move on."…Affirmation is important for some of them. Others, you know...there are some kids who don't do as well in other aspects. Like I'm thinking of James who was really eager to get involved in the conversation today, and he can be reluctant the more teacher directed things are, but all the sudden he's able to call on background knowledge and be able to translate that and relate it to what we're doing…because sometimes the conduit of teacher direction doesn't allow for that as much.

…another challenge for me of it is learning how to like get kids to be creative while still understanding the concept 'cause I feel like sometimes there are just more limited questions …like when a kid gives a response to my prompt for a metaphor and they give an example that's more like simile, sometimes I struggle with how to validate their input, but without letting the rest of the class think, "Yes, that's what we're looking for, that qualifies as a metaphor"…

…it's almost more of an effort thing like, "Oh, he just expects us to have more detail. Okay, I can do that now," whereas other kids are like, "Oh, why do I have to say more than that?"...

…I mean that's a challenge …those situations where a kid says something, and I don't know, like with the style of teaching that we're trying to move towards, being more dialogic, including more classroom talk, I feel that's just one of the hurdles to get over…we were talking about it in the teachers' lounge the other day. There are just some things that feel like they're right or not, so how do we get that across without limiting kids' willingness and desire to express their ideas?...

… Sometimes when I've spent hours and hours and hours preparing a single lesson, I really want to make sure I have all these things. I have anticipated…I get so fixated on that end goal that I'm less able to improvise and be spontaneous and take advantage of teachable moments, whereas sometimes if I haven't, I guess I might say over-prepared so much, I could more easily shift, and I don't have hangers on…Well, that doesn't mean that I should not prepare, but what is it in that? What nugget of truth can I extract and use in the future?...

…They're such different kids by May than they are when you first get 'em, and if you were here in the first couple weeks of school, you would've seen far less participation. They're still so nervous, they're all from these different elementary schools…

…I'm someone who has a lot of energy, so I can run with them about ninety percent of the time but they always have that extra ten percent, and then I'm chasing behind them...that's who they are as people. They're very energetic, they're very honest. You can't be insecure in who you are as a person, because the feedback they give you is so blunt and unfiltered…which is refreshing in a lot of ways, but it's also, can be, you find things out about yourself that you feel like you had no business knowing…it's almost like this – I shouldn't compare them to animals, but like my dog I feel like when she wakes up every day, she's not thinking as much about all the previous days. They don't really weigh on her. She's like, "Today's a new day. I'm just starting all over again," and I feel like a lot of them are like that…they might say something to you or you might have

some kind of unpleasant conversation with them…I'll spend all night thinking about it, and then the next day, they'll come in and they've forgotten about it and it's a whole new day. And you're like, "I was just agonizing over how things went yesterday, and now it's a totally new day for you"…

…fifth period can be my rowdiest but most creative class…and when they're really engaged, they're able to suddenly channel things forward…

…I don't know how it happened, but we started talking about nouns, and then we started talking about abstract nouns and so we started making these lists and comparing them and so that took a big chunk of time out of simile and metaphor, so I don't know. I allowed myself to get out of that because I felt like it was important to their understanding, and they had brought up a critical question that I felt like it made sense to get back to…

…it's just interesting how the concepts or even the wording can be not that different, but just the fact that, "Oh, they feel confident in that arena, all of the sudden, it's in their court" like, "Oh yeah, I know about rap. Oh, yeah, I know it now," and then they start coming up with all of these similes and some of them—we had to stop because it would be like, not appropriate for school. "Well, I can think of a bunch of 'em from Little Wayne," like, "Okay, well, slow down. Those are probably good examples, but we have to talk about those"…

…They are at the period now when they're comfortable enough where, especially if I make a competition out of it or something, they want to contribute as a class. They really want to have what they said appear on the board, so I try to get out there as quick as I can, and they'll say things…like a name of a neurophysicist or a nuclear physicist…"You don't know how to spell that? You're an English language arts teacher." I'm like, "I don't know how to spell every name

*ever, you know"…like if you ever were to actually spell something wrong [makes a *gasp*] "How could you?!" like I should have my teaching license revoked immediately…*

…I think what [dialogic teaching] feels like for a teacher, for me, it feels like being comfortable enough to let the reins off of them. It's like taking a restriction off of them, and just feeling comfortable that they're going to go…almost like when you're teaching a kid to ride a bike, like letting them, taking your hand off the seat and feeling comfortable that they're going to be able to ride off and be able to do things, but you're still going to be there to help facilitate and be there if they stumble…and getting out of the mindset of, "I have to manipulate and provide every single instance of growth and learning they experience"…thinking of it more as something that can develop a little bit more organically…

… something simple like how to do split screen in Windows, so they could have the questions on one side and the text on the other, and they were like teaching their partners that… you could kind of see it ripple out from the one kid that knows in each section of the room, and I like when that kind of thing happens, but to be honest, I was frustrated and somewhat disappointed…I mean I just see all of the potential there for them to use it in such a constructive way, but I have my doubts…'cause it's such a distraction for them at the same time that it's such a powerful tool…I mean the temptation is so strong for them just go to YouTube and watch cat videos…

Zoe Jacobs

Zoe Jacobs teaches 6th through 8th grade at Trenton Middle School. Previous to Trenton, Zoe worked for two other middle schools, a smaller, rural school for five years and a larger, urban school for two years. After getting married, she found a job at Trenton, which is close to where her husband, who also a teacher, works. Through these contexts, Zoe has worked with students in predominately white communities as well students in a racially, culturally, and

socioeconomically diverse community. Trenton Middle School is situated in a single-gas-station town that has a main thoroughfare with storefronts and large oak trees with swings. Coming into town, on the left, cornfields transition to baseball fields, and on the right, a one-lane bridge goes over a creek. A grain elevator and train tracks are near the school, which is housed under one roof with the high school and elementary. The school is predominantly White (97%), and approximately a fifth (22.4%) of the students receive a free or reduced-price lunch. Zoe has taught at Trenton for two years.

Favorite Units

Zoe teaches a unit on New Orleans where the students read about Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath from authors who are from the city. Through research and activities, the students explore the music, food, rituals, and overall culture of New Orleans. Zoe also enjoys teaching a project-based learning unit about comics.

Discussions Observed

First visit: A speed dating discussion where 7th and 8th graders talked about social media through an article called "The Intimacy of Anonymity" and recorded their discussion moves

Second visit: A discussion game created by an 8th grade group involving construction paper die and candy prizes where students discuss a book chapter on New Orleans

Third visit: A full circle discussion with 8th graders guided by student-generated questions where they discussed New Orleanian culture and recorded their discussion moves

Fourth visit: A full group discussion with 6th graders involving poems about food

Fifth visit: A small group discussion with 8th graders about jazz funerals where each group comes up with a plan for discussion, discusses, and then breaks apart to form new, jigsaw groups in order to share what they had discussed previously and continue the conversation

Zoe Jacobs: Portrait

… they generated their own questions about what they wanted to know about…and I collected all those and kind of just looked for the common types of questions that were being asked and then I rewrote 'em in a better way…that was a teal discussion guide sheet that they had with them, and that was just to make sure they all had something to talk about if they froze up…

…I was walking around, just making sure that they weren't being turds basically, and so I'm going to give them points for you know, "Was anyone mean to somebody else as I was walking by?" or like last year in the eighth grade, I had one kid be like, "This is stupid," you know, and I'm just like, "Okay, zero for that, for you because you just were negative for no reason," or if I see kids that are like, "Well, I don't want to talk to him," then I'll be like, "Yeah you do. You have to because this is a class thing, so you need to just check your baggage at the door"…

…"Okay, well, what did you put for number one? I put this," "What did you put for number one?" So I kind of told them not to do that yesterday, but they did it anyway, but that's okay. Developmentally that's where they're at. I think that that's okay"…

…"I think as they grow up, they're more comfortable branching off conversation if that makes sense. They're not so worried about staying on topic, like, "This is exactly what I'm supposed to talk about." They're more willing to let it grow organically, on its own, so a student would say, "Well, that reminds me of this," and they'll take it in that dialogic direction where it grows kind

of on its own, like a vine growing on something. 7th graders are very much like, "We will maintain this manicured lawn, and we will not let it grow in any other way"…

…they're really good at, you know, artfully getting off topic and doing things that they're probably not supposed to be doing…

…I have a colleague who has them like 8th period or later in the day, and she says they're awful, so I think whoever you get in the morning, they just automatically do better…

…It's hard, I mean you can't get started. We won't be able to get started until we're back from lunch …they know like, "Lunch is coming, lunch is coming, lunch is coming, oh my god, in ten minutes we're going to be eating something, holy shit!"…the nature of the beast I guess…

…that particular second period class, they all want to do well in school, so they're like, "Oh try me, 'Going off of what Alex said,'" you know, kind of cheesily, but they're doing it. Or, "I'm going to ask a question of the group"…

…as I was going around, I still saw kids that weren't marking down anything that they were doing, so I visited pretty much every kid and said, "Hey I just heard you make a question. You need to put an X there, every time you talk, where should you put it?" and if it goes nowhere then, "Eeeeah, should I have said that comment?" And then they're like, "Oh, I get it now, I get it,"… there's a lot of kids who are like, "I wonder what I did last night," and their brain is just somewhere completely different, so that group is just a bit day dreamy…

…like one group, I shared a story with them…where these kids had made a fake Facebook account and pretended to be a kid from another school, and then online dated this girl, and it was a really, really terrible case of cyberbullying, and the school ended up doing nothing about it because it all happened off campus, even though all the drama exploded at school, so I just

told them that story briefly and I said, "Now, I want you to talk to each other and tell each other what you think the school should've done, are they liable for it? What would've you done?"…

… I usually do this motion, like a dropping motion, like [makes a sound, expelling air]. "Don't talk about it," and I just walk away because I want them to talk to each other…

…the only thing that's kind of a drawback is they're so used to each other. I feel like even in class discussion, their eyes aren't going to be open to any new cultural facts or information or outside experiences from their own just because they know each other so well…'cause if you're in a college class, and you're doing a dialogic thing, you might not know the people, but you're going to get so much more out of it because if they do open up and share, you've got this whole new like, "Oh, this person's from Cambodia." You get this whole new thing. You just learn so much more, and I don't know, I feel these guys are just marinating in their own juices sometimes…

…once we had already started, I had to go get Aaron organized, and then he had left [his discussion sheet] in his locker, and some other things…and Caleb missed the whole thing, but showed up right at the end, and I was like, "Oh, you know what I didn't anticipate was if someone was going to be absent today. What am I going to ask them to do to make up for it?" and I'll figure something out. You don't have to know that right away I don't think...

…part of the circulating was for me to basically just, if the more physically close I am to kids, the more they're going to stay on topic. They're not going to be talking smack, and then I can immediately jump on, you know, like, "I don't want to talk to them," and I can be like, "Alright, now we're going to have a conversation about how sometimes you have to talk to people you don't want to talk to"…

…and I didn't want the kids to necessarily sit there and just read all the articles and have a discussion…one of the original groups of five had this idea to make a game for the discussion and they came and asked me, I said, "Okay, well how do you want to discuss this article?" And they're like, "Can we make a game?" And I said, "Sure."…two of the leader girls in that group…they're very good at getting things done early, so I'm always constantly coming up with things for them to do to keep 'em occupied so they're still learning, and they're not just sitting there…I know that they like to lead, and they like to be in charge, and so that gives them a good opportunity to do that. I was sad that they didn't include more members of their group in it, but at the same time they couldn't. It wouldn't have worked that way…whatever contention was going on [during the game], I mean there was a lot of contention obviously because the rules where terrible, terrible! … you gotta let kids learn, you know, and as they went, I was listening and they said things like, "Oh, we really shoulda said that first, shouldn't we have?" And so they're learning about, you know, when you're in charge of a big group of people, you have to be thinking about their emotions, and how you're going to present the information. So I let them fail so that they could see, and the kids were very quick to point out like, "They changed the rules in the middle of it!" "Oh no, those were the rules, but we just didn't say it." "Well, that's not fair"…When they were explaining the rules, and I didn't understand, I was like, "Yeah, this is, no"…once you bring in candy, that's when the boys started getting mad about cheating…"They didn't say that first," "This is stacked," or Brian was about ready to explode because someone moved their piece and then they didn't move the other piece or something, and he's just throwing his hands up…I started doing a little crowd control as they start getting more, 'cause I don't want them to get super pissed at each other, and they do need to learn it's just a game, so I just let them know, "We're just trying this, and you guys are like the guinea pigs

…I thought their conversations where phenomenal. I mean they really, like once they got started and they started getting that competitive edge and they all really wanted to make a point, they were able to just disagree without being disagreeable for the most part with, you know, a few turds here and there, but they really kind of took it on themselves and I felt very hands off…

…I hope those other boys over there, I just felt like they weren't really, they felt like they had lost, so they were going to quit, basically, in their heads, so I kept trying to feed them a few lines here and there to be like, "Hey, you could say this"…I don't blame them. It was a terrible game, let's be honest, but that's okay. I didn't want them to shut down because they didn't feel it was fair…

…It was pretty damn dialogic…I think I underestimated this group. I think I expected the game to be even less, like opening than it was…

…Aaron winked at me! [laughter] …'cause I keep trying to teach them the dialogic discussion moves, and I often comically wink at kids…the comic wink is kind of a Jacobs maneuver…

…in the interest of being dialogic, I didn't want to say, "You will sit where I put you because it's my rule is the law," and that sort of thing, so I said, "Okay, well, I'm trying to turn you into a democratic citizen that makes your own choices, so there's that side, but then there's also the fact that I'm saying that if you choose your seat, you might not make a good choice and not do as well, so what can we, how can we negotiate so that?"…

…I mean I don't want to discount something just because I'm pretty sure it's not going to work. I've been surprised many times in my job where I thought kids either couldn't handle something or could, and the opposite was true, so it's more of an experiment. Each day is an experiment in something…

…what stuck out to me [about the discussion] is that Joe is going to be getting a zero on his paper 'cause he was copying off of Andrew, and Andrew also will be receiving a zero… as a grade level, they're really irresponsible about using their time wisely…like those guys are smart enough to be able to do [the pre-discussion sheet]. They're just being lazy, and god knows what they were doing out in the hallway. I went and checked on 'em. They looked like they were working [laughter] apparently not…

…I liked how Matt stepped into the role of facilitator for me, 'cause I don't want to be that person that's like, "Okay, all of you have your hands up, but we're going to move onto the next question"…I want them to talk, but he was right. We were beleaguering the same point over and over, so that was really nice, and that's why I just went with it 'cause I was like, "You know what, you're right, and I'm glad somebody else said it"…

…This is not a one-sided transaction…I've often said that, "My goal is to never be your bad memory." I tell that to my kids a lot. We all have those cringe-worthy moments in school. Sometimes it involves a teacher yelling at you in front of everyone or making a snide comment about you, or just being a horrible bitch…I don't want to be that for any kid, and then I'm sure there's gotta be some moments, my record is not clean…I try to keep that connection with my middle school self, who would have said, "This is stupid"… because if you don't remember your roots of being that age, you're gonna quickly fall into being one of those teachers that just doesn't like their job, or is teaching the same thing every year, or is like, "This technology, I can't figure it out"…

…and I just wanted to make sure that they have practiced a lot of different things in the discussion, so it's not just like, raise your hand, say what you think, and then put your hand

down…that's been so engrained in them. If we, by the end of the year, can get them so that, in a big group like this, they're talking to each other, then that would be awesome…

…I was suddenly very aware that they were looking straight at me when they were making their responses, and I always nod to make kids, not that I necessarily agree with them, but to say, "Keep going." That's what my nod means, and so they're reading my body language, and if I'm not nodding and looking at them, they're not going to keep talking, or they're going to feel like, "Oh crap, I'm not…," so maybe I need to try to break them of that, it's like weaning them off of looking for my approval…

…we need to stop framing ourselves as the knower of all facts and knowledge, but at the same time, you just have to be a person. You do know about stuff. Don't pretend that you don't know anything, or don't pretend that you know everything. You have to find the happy medium…

…There are some very dominant male personalities in here and what I'm trying to do, I'm trying to cultivate the girls, and that's partially my own political agenda, and I would never say to a parent like, I'm trying to sabotage your son so he doesn't think he's all that hot shit all the time…I'm not actively doing it every single day. It's not like I have a checklist of ways that I'm going to empower the girls in the classroom, but I have become more mindful of, "Okay, I need to really make sure that the girls are getting called on a lot," and I'm leaving those spaces open for the ones that are just getting their courage up to kind of try stuff and then praising them whenever I can, be like, "That was really good, keep going, get your voice out there"…

…they're [the boys are] good discussers. They have good points sometimes, but at the same time, yeah, they definitely don't really care what other people think…

…I feel like I probably could've coaxed some of the quieter kids out a little bit more…

…well, I totally underestimated these kids because I think I just took their like overall lack of organization skills as being an indicator that they didn't have like really deep critical thinking skills, and clearly that is not the case…I don't know but there's been lots of disorganization with like losing papers and things in general, so I guess I just thought they wouldn't know how to discuss, but clearly they're very verbal, and they really handled the whole like rules of discussion well, and I was just shocked. I felt like they must've really learned that last year at some point…

…I was very surprised at their grasp of metaphor…the earth is a table, and I hadn't read it that way at all…

…they're very much in agreement with each other all the time, unless it's Spencer, in which case they will do anything in their power to make him look stupid…

…I had a set of questions prepared, didn't need 'em…I'm like, "Oh my goodness, I didn't think it would take the whole class period." I thought I was going to need my questions. I thought we were winding down at one point, and then I was like, "Okay, last chance," and everyone still had so much to say…

…[laughing] I thought it was interesting though that "we make men at it, we make women," [lines from the poem the class discussed], they were like, "You must mean sex." [laughing] It's like, "Really?"…I didn't read that that way at all…I don't want to get phone calls from—I've never gotten a phone call about a poem, but you know…trying to avoid that and interestingly, it came up anyway somehow with Rachel, and she's very mature for her age, so she's probably just, that's where her mind went type of a thing…we talked it through and we figured out that that's not what it was, so, yeah, I don't know, it worked out…

…That's like the hidden part that you never see, but I think in your videos you're going be able to see, you know, the kids that have their heads down and never talk the whole time type of a thing…

…but I don't know how to get that kid in the discussion really and how I'm supposed to, 'cause he's going to get a zero on participation 'cause he didn't do anything, but you know, how do, what do I do with that? Is he going to get better?...How do I kind of train him to at least try and say something?...

…It was amazing, yeah, it was a good group. I don't know, I was so surprised. I really took them for granted…I mean I still kind of bailed them out when they didn't have much to talk about, but that was so rare…

…I didn't want them going around in the discussions with their computers when they're sitting and talking, there should be no screen anywhere…and their discussion was just richer because they weren't fiddling with, "Well what color of highlight do I want on my word document?" It's like, "Who cares?"…so none of my discussions ever feature the Chromebook use…

…there was a girl who's really quiet, and she in general just doesn't do well in these discussions 'cause she just never talks, and I don't know why, and her group mates were kind of cajoling her nicely about it, like, "Oh Casey, you better be quiet. Jeez, you're really dominating this discussion," you know, but in a nice way, and then they'd say like, "Alright, we're going ask you a question, so you get a chance to talk, so they were setting it up, and they did it when I was nearby so, 'cause they knew that she's going to be evaluated and they wanted here to get the points. So I was surprised that they were looking out for each other that much…

…When we talked about Katrina, we talked about, you know, this many thousands of people died, and in a video I showed, there's a brief clip where you see a person's body floating down the street, and I think this is kind of the age where, you know, I don't want them to feel like I'm dumbing things down for them …I want them to start just kind of yeah, like just trespassing over that line a little bit…'cause I mean next year, in 9th grade, they're going to basically be considered old enough for a lot of that stuff…

…We don't talk a lot about race too much just because that can be sensitive…obviously it's a very white school, and it's one of those things where it's like one of those can of worms…sometimes when kids open their mouths, the dumbest shit you've ever heard will come out, and it's like, "How do I not be offended and respond to this in like a way that's like not going to just, like, beat the kid down" because I don't want to lose students because I'm like, "You just said something racist"…

…They even had a debate in which those students' views were pretty much, you know, not shut down, but there were fair arguments on the other side to be like, "you know, you need to rethink some of the things that you've said about stereotyping," and yet they still are like, "Well whatever, I just think what I think," so and that might just be a developmental thing…We talk more about culture than we do about race, and race is obviously a part of culture, but we highlight more of the cultural side of it than the race side of it just 'cause I don't want to, I don't want to hear, I don't want to, I just don't want to go there sometimes. Maybe that's just me being a coward as a teacher, but I just can't handle it…

Second Approach: Themes

The second approach I use to explicate teachers' experiences of dialogic teaching involves thematizing (Moustakas, 1994) the data to take a broader view of the phenomenon of

interest, the experience of dialogic teaching. These themes address the primary research question – *Based on the participant's descriptions, what is it like to teach dialogically in middle and secondary English language arts classes?* – by focusing more closely on the secondary research questions:

- What textural descriptions do the teachers offer of the experience (sensations, adjectives, metaphors, sequences of events)?
- What structural descriptions do the teachers offer of the experience (explanations about why a class proceeded/felt a certain way)?

I offer two themes related to the textural descriptions and two related to the structural descriptions. As explained in the methods chapter, these themes were derived through a two cycle coding process (Saldaña, 2013) for the textural and structural material, respectively. To reiterate, this process involved separating textural and structural material; first cycle coding of the textural and structural material through initial coding and causation coding, respectively; second cycle coding of these initial and causation codes through pattern coding; and finally, looking across the separate textural and structural patterns to develop thematic statements of the experience. The end result of the process was four thematic statements, two for textural and two for structural.

5. The experience of dialogic teaching involves constant calibrations, persistent tensions, and precarious balances (textural).
6. The experience of dialogic teaching involves unrepeatable moments and unique classroom dynamics (textural).
7. The experience of dialogic teaching is structured by various ways of conceptualizing a "good response" (structural).

8. The experience of dialogic teaching is structured by the various (and contradictory) roles students play (structural).

These four themes were chosen out of numerous possible themes. I reject, therefore, any notion that these themes represent "invariant structures" of an experience, which is an emphasis in many branches of phenomenology (e.g., Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 2014; Valle, King, & Halling, 1989). Rather, in a reflexive phenomenology, I emphasize my own position and role in what themes emerged. My thematizing process was guided, in part, by my intended audience: I wanted to create themes that would be useful in establishing a conversation about dialogic teaching with preservice English teachers in methods courses (which I will be teaching in the fall) and also themes that would be useful in continuing the conversation about dialogic teaching with the participants of the study (with whom I will be meeting in the summer for a study group). The following themes, then, are not envisioned as definitive; they are, rather, explications – ones that (I hope) will encourage substantive scholarly and practical conversation. Also, as described in the methods chapter, the textural material and structural material is not physically separate in the data. Therefore, the textural and structural labels should be taken as interpretive emphases for the themes rather than indications that one precludes the other. Any textural theme could be converted to a structural theme; any structural theme could be converted to a textural theme.

Textural Themes

To reflect the idea that textural material describes the *what* of experience – *what it's like; what happens; what sensations it evokes; what observations, judgments, and states of affairs are articulated* – I began the textural themes with "The experience of dialogic teaching involves…" My intention with this sentence format was to promote the metaphor of lived experience as a multifaceted object, one that can be characterized with general statements, somewhat

analogously to “The surface of a baseball involves smooth parts and ridged parts” or “The surface of a crystal involves a collection of angles and sides that reflect light in different directions.”

The experience of dialogic teaching involves constant calibrations and persistent tensions. As the participants described their experiences with dialogic teaching, they often highlighted the various calibrations involved. Calibrations involve adjusting to the conditions on the ground. For example, Zoe Jacobs talked about calibrating the flow of the lesson plan and the instructions of the dialogic activity of that day (a speed dating discussion) to the fact that a quarter of the class came in late from band rehearsal, other students needed to go get their pre-discussion guide sheets from their lockers, and still other students were absent altogether. Calibrations often have a hydra quality to them, as if dealing with one thing leads to two more, and two more, and two more, and so on. Zoe describes,

> I just thought people would be to school on time [makes a face, laughter]. Who would’ve thought? So I had to go like, once we had already started, I had to go get Aaron organized, and then he had left it in his locker, and some other things…and Eli missed the whole thing, but showed up right at the end, and I was like, “Oh, you know what I didn’t anticipate was if someone was going to be absent today. What am I going to ask them to do to make up for it?”

The experience resolves into a series of mini-issues and mini-calibrations, which are at once solvable but distracting, and the overall experience takes on an if-only texture. *If only Aaron brought his discussion sheet, if only Eli was here today, if only band rehearsal hadn’t let out late…* Or in an example from Alexa Elon, the reading schedule needed recalibrating so that students might have a better chance of entering into class discussions, as many students were getting behind and becoming stressed from their other coursework (which was often a complete menu of AP courses). *If only the students didn’t have so many AP courses…* Marcus Brooks described needing to recalibrate the fishbowl discussions of his morning classes due to an

assembly that sent the schedule "off kilter." *If only that assembly would've happened on a different day…* These constant calibrations were pervasive in the participants' descriptions of the experience, calling to mind Alexander's (2001) observations that schools are dynamically organized places, with single teachers serving many students in the course of a day, which suggests, Skidmore (2006) writes, "that we should not underestimate the powerful constraints placed on possible forms of practice by the structural conditions of schooling" (p. 510). The experience of dialogic teaching, then, involves a continuous exercise in calibrating to the normative constraints of schools, i.e., individual teachers working with about 150 students who are themselves moving from one place to another during the school day and trying to manage their own coursework and commitments. Calibrating to the continuous stream of circumstances that occur through the day defines the experience of teaching generally, and complicates dialogic teaching specifically, as dialogic teaching is premised on "talking to learn" (Britton, 1989) and requires participants who are physically and mentally present.

The experience of dialogic teaching also involves persistent tensions of when to intervene in an unfolding discussion. A prevalent description involved the sequence of watching, waiting, and wanting to intervene. Mason James' description, for example, of a discussion on *Lord of the Flies* followed this sequence. He watched his students discuss the book ("I'd been trying to get them to go for the religion angle for like a week and a half"), waited in anticipation for the topic of religion to come up ("it's just not happening and not happening at all"), which he viewed as being integral to interpreting the book ("I need to show them this"), and finally, a feeling of giving in as he finally stepped in ("Ah screw it"). Implicit in descriptions such as these is the idea that if the intervention were not to occur, it would feel like a missed opportunity or a feeling of not upholding one's duty as a teacher – that is, a responsibility of heightening the conversation

by bringing in lenses and ideas with which to interpret the material. This aspect of the experience aligns with an overarching value of keeping the discussion accountable to the content (Michaels, O'Connor, & Resnick, 2008), which in the participants' descriptions of dialogic teaching, feels like a waiting game: How long can I wait before I need to get in there?

This waiting game is not limited to content, however, but also includes the ways in which a discussion proceeds more generally. In a student-designed discussion game, Zoe Jacobs describes a sense of growing resentment among the students as they played the game, mostly because the student-designed rules were "terrible, terrible!" But Zoe watched and waited to see how the discussion would play out because "you gotta let kids learn." The content of the discussion, Zoe described, was "pretty damn dialogic," and similar to Mason James's description of deciding to intervene ("Ah screw it"), Zoe described reaching a breaking point where she had to intervene: "I started doing a little crowd control as they start getting more, 'cause I don't want them to get super pissed at each other." The experience of dialogic teaching, then, involves persistent tensions about when (or whether) to take on an authoritative role. In these examples, taking on the authoritative role is associated with heightening the content of the discussion and quelling a potential conflict.

Other persistent tensions were associated with managing participation, as Alexa Elon described, "I suspect my biggest challenge with them is gonna be that certain kids want more air time than 31 people allows in a big group," and Mason James asked, "How do you formulate a discussion when you have that many children [and] you don't have time for them to talk?" These tensions were often associated with more specific tensions about particular students, the ones in class who are shy or have severe anxiety or are too tired to participate. Prevalent in the participants' descriptions was an ever-present awareness of who is *not* speaking, *not* uptaking,

and *not* asking or responding to authentic questions (Nystrand, 1997). The experience of dialogic teaching is textured with this awareness of the nonparticipators, the students at the fringe of the social life of the classroom, and the knowledge that the classroom has too many students for everyone to participate in every discussion anyway.

The experience of dialogic teaching involves moments of excitement and moments of frustration. The participants often described their experiences with dialogic teaching by pinpointing specific student contributions that left them feeling excited or feeling frustrated. Alexa Elon, for example, felt a sense of excitement when a student introduced the concept of "perseverance" to the reading on Frederick Douglass:

> That was one where I have never thought about that as a concept before in this text, but she had clearly thought it through very, I mean, beautifully, and but also problematized it on her own…and those are the moments where I wish we could just stop and think for a min—where, you know, I'll say to the kids, "Gosh, I would just like to go back and reread it with that lens now."

The feeling of excitement becomes associated with a desire to reread or rethink, and importantly, excitement becomes associated with a shift in role. Excitement effects a feeling of letting go, stepping back, allowing the students to do their thing. Mason James described an initial reaction of excitement during a discussion ("Holy crap! You know, like this is awesome, you know, they're really, they're really getting at stuff") and then described himself taking on "more of a facilitator role." Marcus Brooks offered a parallel sentiment as he described dialogic teaching as being similar to teaching kid to ride a bike: "…taking your hand off the seat and feeling comfortable that they're going to be able to ride off and be able to do things, but you're still going to be there to help facilitate and be there if they stumble." This description points to a shift in roles (from doing the work to letting the students ride), but the prevailing textural detail of this shift is a sense of excitement. In other words, the main insight about shifting-roles, the "taking

your hand off the seat," is that is not a matter of a teacher's choice to change the typical teacher-student power structure and the IRE sequences (Mehan, 1979), but a matter of excitement to do so. And excitement, as described by the participants, happens in a quick moment, as does the shift in roles. For example, Alexa Elon described a moment of excitement when a student used a post-colonial lens to interpret the character Jim in *Huckleberry Finn*. The excitement was immediate, as was the shift in role: "I was like, 'Great. Now Go.'" While generative classroom discussion sometimes occurs as a gradual release of responsibility (Kong & Pearson, 2003), the participants' descriptions also point to a fast release, as if flipping a switch.

Participants also described moments of frustration in the experience of dialogic teaching. These moments involved observations of students' subversive activity, disinterest in the activity, or general intractability. For example, Zoe Jacobs noticed subversive activity between two students during a full group discussion, "What stuck out to me [about the discussion] is that Joe is going to be getting a zero on his paper 'cause he was copying off of Andrew, and Andrew also will be receiving a zero." Leonie Bell described her English 12 students' disinterest a dialogic activity organized around an exploration of theme that culminated in a group: "And English 12 was like, 'We're just going to look it up [laughter]… they just Googled it [laughter] and they were just not going to do it…' And Mason James described the students as being generally intractable: "They didn't [contribute], like I asked them, 'Was there anything else that you saw?' And there was a lot of dead space or whatever, so I kind of went to plan B."

These examples contribute to a potentially mundane texture of dialogic teaching: that it involves being frustrated when students don't play along. The texture gains more life when considering Burbles's (1993) framework that casts dialogic interaction as a type of play marked by "the to-and-fro of exchanged comments and responses" (p. 50). The participants' describe a

dialogue game where “to” happens plenty of times, but “fro” is harder to come by. The prevailing description is that of a state of affairs whereby students either don’t play or might not know how, or they might know how but choose not to, or they might want to but haven’t prepared for the game.

The participants described their frustrations in association with a feeling that they need to try something else, to go to “plan B,” to use a more direct style of teaching, as Leonie Bell described, “I think there are a couple kids in period two who are just lost, looost, when there’s not that direct [teaching].” Similar to how the excitement aspect of the experience becomes associated switching roles to give the students space, the frustration aspect becomes associated with switching roles as well, but this time to “the talk of traditional lessons” (Cazden, 2001, p. 31).

Structural Themes

I formatted the structural themes to underscore the *why/how* of experience – *how it happens; why it ends up that way; what it can be attributed to; what forces are at play*. To reflect this emphasis, I used, “The experience of dialogic teaching is structured by…” This sentence format in passive voice is meant to establish the possibility that the experience of dialogic teaching is acted *on*. In other words, the experience includes conditions, explanations, and reasons that work to explain why/how the experience was what it was. For example, in going with my nephew to a professional baseball game, I might say (texturally) that the experience was extremely special and something I will never forget as long as I live; and I might say (structurally) that it was like that because my nephew was six years old, and it was his first baseball game, and we were in the way upper deck, and we were being goofy and pretending to be the batter when the pitcher threw the ball, and we celebrated and took credit for any ball that

was hit, and afterward when I asked him his favorite part was he said, "When we were pretending to hit the balls." These are the conditions, explanations, and reasons that worked *on* the experience – that structured it to make it what it was.

The experience of dialogic teaching is structured by the complex nature of a "good response." Throughout the participants' descriptions was a prevailing notion that what counts as a "good response" in a discussion is difficult to control. A "good response" is contested territory, with plenty of forces at play. One such force was described by the participants as involving the students' expectations – and their predominant understanding that a "good response" becomes realized through the teacher's evaluation that a response was, in fact, good.

Marcus Brooks explained, "They're used to the IRE, so it's like I raise my hand, you tell me if I'm right…and they feel like the exchange isn't complete until I say, 'That's correct and now let's move on.'" And Mason James described the situation in his class metaphorically as him spoon feeding the students while "they were mostly just feeding back into what I was trying to get them to understand." The spoon feeding metaphor is particularly illuminating because it's suggestive of a potential complicity in the situation; despite Mason's intentions to *not* spoon feed, he ends up being doing so because, he explained, "They just so desperately want to know what I think of it as opposed to what it just is."

Throughout the participants' descriptions, the idea that students expect some form of completion in a teacher-student exchange was not a trivial matter, and the participants often associated these student expectations with sudden feelings of being watched: students reading facial expressions and subtleties in body language that might give them a hint as to what kind of response will be valued. Zoe Jacobs described,

> …I was suddenly very aware that they were looking straight at me when they were making their responses, and I always nod to make kids, not that I necessarily agree with

> them, but to say, "Keep going." That's what my nod means, and so they're reading my body language, and if I'm not nodding and looking at them, they're not going to keep talking, or they're going to feel like, "Oh crap, I'm not…," so maybe I need to try to break them of that, it's like weaning them off of looking for my approval…

These descriptions suggest the experience is structured by (what I might call) "the student gaze" and calls to mind early research on classroom talk that often emphasized the "reparative techniques" by which deviations from typical triadic sequences tend to find their way back to the default (McHoul, 1978, p. 197; also in Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975; Mehan, 1979). In a sense, deviations from traditional triadic sequences became repaired under the student gaze as students *read into* the teacher's body language to find the E of the IRE, even when that body language is intended to mean something other than an evaluation.

Thus, the experience of dialogic teaching becomes structured under the watchful eye of students insofar as it sent messages about what they might expect out of classroom interactions with the teacher: "affirmation" (Marcus Brooks), "desperately want[ing] to know what I think" (Mason James), and "approval" (Zoe Jacobs). In short, the participants described a "good response" as being contested territory that the students have considerable control over through their reading of body language. Even when trying "to have more or less the same response" to student contributions, Mason James explained, "I feel like a lot of time it probably shows on my face."

A second force at play in a "good response" is the various ways of being (Gee, 2011) at school. In these descriptions, the participants positioned dialogic teaching as working against perfunctory (and often typical) ways of being in the school environment, e.g., turning an assignment in, getting credit, and moving on. Take, for example, Alexa Elon's description of a student's response when asked to use the class assignment (a reading response) to engage with overarching, authentic questions about the readings: "So I fill out this worksheet and then I do

what? I just give it to you, right?" This student is characterized as having internalized typical school routines, which then interfere with the emphases of dialogic teaching – that of engaging with the content, elaborating on each other's ideas, taking a risk on a hypothetical thought, and so on. These descriptions highlighted competing definitions of a "good response:" a perfunctory getting it done v. engaging substantively in what Alexa calls "nerd fun." The perfunctory way of being in school is further layered with complexity in descriptions that highlight the emotional tenor and busyness of the students' lives. Alexa explains, "they're stressed, they're tired, they're going through the motions, they're doing what they need to do," which means the students are more interested in "check[ing] participating off their to-do lists" than engaging the teacher or each other in what Boyd and Galda (2011) call "real talk."

A third force at play in a "good response" is (what I might call) the "institutional voice," by which I mean the voice of state tests, federal standards, and other perceived authorities. The institutional voice was prevalent in some participants' descriptions, but others mentioned it rarely. The participants described feeling a need to prepare their students for the style of reasoning promoted by the tests, and to vary degrees, a sense of affiliation with that style of reasoning. Mason James explained,

> The [state] tests are all based on giving them a piece of text they know nothing about and saying, "Here are some questions. Answer them." You need to be able to pull directly from the text, you know, and you need to be able to say, "Okay, this is my information. This is how I answer this question," and so, one of the reasons why I'm trying to focus on that as much as possible is because it does prepare them for the assessments better…it's like they ask us to find direct, strong, and thorough evidence, you know?… which I think is just good, I think [it] is probably best practices anyhow, in my opinion, because we want the kids…even if they're just discussing things, they should have a reason. They should be able to explain their position so their peers can understand them, I guess.

In this description, Mason explains the relationship between what constitutes a "good response" on the state assessments and the types of response he favors in class discussion. The tests have a

clear-cut format to judge the quality of a response (claim + "direct, strong, and thorough evidence"), and practicing that format in class discussion becomes a mode of test preparation, which "is probably best practices anyhow." The institutional voice defines "good response" not by saying anything specific about any specific text, but by establishing a super-structure by which to judge all responses.

In other descriptions, the institutional voice was integral to the class activity, but imagined as something to negotiate with. For example, Leonie Bell described an activity where students were given copies of the standards "and then I asked them to just go through, pick out what they thought [were] the key words, put the real definition, put their own definition, and then I asked them to think about the things we'd done in class." In these descriptions of the experience, the institutional voice became present in classroom talk both in terms of its favored claim + evidence formatting (Mason's description) and in terms of how to think about past experiences in the class (Leonie's description). The institutional-voice version of a "good response," then, works to structure the experience of dialogic teaching, but of course, suggests a peculiar crosstalk between this version of "good response" and many descriptions of dialogic teaching within the empirical and theoretical literature, e.g., "A dialogic perspective on discourse and learning starts with the premise…that discourse is essentially structured by the interaction of the conversants, with each playing a particular social role" (Nystrand, 1997, p. 8). The participants' descriptions of dialogic teaching suggest that the classroom discourse is indeed "structured by the interaction of the conversants," but these interactions are themselves structured by an uber-conversant that speaks through the institutional voice.

Aside from the institutional voice being associated with tests or standards, it also came up for Mason James in the idea of being observed, by someone with a camera, and a digital

recorder, and a field journal. In one interview, Mason described my presence as being influential to how the class discussion played out:

> I realize that maybe I was being a little bit disingenuous, maybe there's a part of me that's realizing that I'm being observed so I want to show something, you know, of a certain type, because you're there, which just doesn't make any sense, you know? Because it really of course should be about the students, but I don't know.

What Mason was referring to in "being a little bit disingenuous" was how he felt like he needed to get the students to "some sort of conclusion" by the end of the discussion. If the students didn't *make it there*, then that would somehow reflect poorly on him from my perspective. This description of the experience is revealing of what Mason perceived that I would want to see in a classroom discussion, and it's also revealing of the guessing game played out when an outside observer comes into a watch a classroom discussion: *What will this person think about this class discussion? What does this person think a good discussion is? What will this person think about how I'm facilitating the discussion?* My presence evoked a desire to show something "of a certain type," and like it or not (I don't), an institutional voice spoke through me and shaped what counted as a "good response" according to Mason's description. The experience was marked by a feeling of wanting to impress, wanting to do it right, wanting to get somewhere;

In sum, "good responses" structured the experience of dialogic teaching for the participants, and these "good responses" were themselves structured by the student gaze, ways of being in school, and the institutional voice.

The experience of dialogic teaching is structured by the various (and contradictory) roles students play. The participants' descriptions of dialogic teaching often included portrayals of students as certain types of people who have certain character traits. A helpful metaphor in working through this theme is students-as-actors, the classroom-as-stage, and the teacher-as-audience. Teachers watch the discussions as if watching a play production; and their students

take the stage as “goofballs,” “jerks,” “jokers,” “turds,” “class clowns,” “smart kids,” “right kids,” “big personalities,” “dominant male personalities,” “cool, athletic girls,” “leader girls,” “good discussers,” “bad kids,” “quick thinkers,” “presidents of everything” – and collectively, the students take on traits of being “studious,” “quiet,” “driven,” “closed off,” “nervous,” “energetic,” “honest,” “privileged,” “day dreamy,” “stressed,” “irresponsible,” “lazy,” “lively,” and so on. The experience of dialogic teaching is structured by these roles as they play out on stage, and in the participants’ descriptions, the roles work to define what dialogic teaching looks and feels like. Two predominate roles emerged in the participants’ descriptions, *students as developing characters* and *students as meaning-making characters*.

The participants described *students as developing characters* in classroom discussions. In these descriptions, the possibility of dialogic teaching – and what dialogic teaching might look like – was tied directly to perceptions about where students are on a developmental trajectory. For example, after a speed dating discussion where the students used pre-discussion questions to guide the process, Zoe Jacobs described how the students interacted, taking on the voice of two students engaging in the discussion:

> “Okay, well, what did you put for number one? I put this.”
> “What did you put for number one?”
> So I kind of told them not to do that yesterday, but they did it anyway, but that’s okay. Developmentally, that’s where they’re at. I think that that’s okay.

Zoe described the students as having a less-than-dialogic interaction, an attempt to get them “not to do that,” and finally attributes that level of discussion to development. Similarly, Marcus Brooks described his students as being in a stage of development marked by an “egocentric style of thinking” where they’re “not all mentally able to consider the other person’s position or point of view.” Therefore, he explained that he focused on the concept of respectful disagreement to set up the fishbowl activities in hopes that the students wouldn’t “launch into personal attacks.”

The developmental stage of the students becomes a way to explain the type and quality of classroom discussion as the students interact with each other, and it also becomes a way to explain how the students interact with content. Leonie Bell described her organization of a dialogic activity centering on finding a definition of theme, prefacing it with a statement about the students' general place on a developmental trajectory. In 6th and 7th grade, theme was taught one way, which at the time was developmentally appropriate; and now that the students are in high school, they're ready for a new definition consistent with their developmental level.

> [What is] developmentally appropriate for a 6th and 7th grader is to just get them to pick out the big idea. That's a huge achievement right? But then I presented it as that. It's like, "So Mrs. Peterson was absolutely right in 6th and 7th grade. The theme is the big idea, but now you're moving into high school, and so now theme is something a little more complex, and theme is *about* the big idea."

Interesting in this example is the air of deference to a previous teacher who worked with the students at a previous developmental level. The students had different capacities, so the content took on a different definition. This appeal to development becomes a rhetorical device to communicate to students that that was then, this is now, and we're doing something different. The activity that followed was a series of small group and large group discussions about "theme" where the students worked with various definitions and came up with their own. The students, as characters going through a developmental trajectory, were ready to engage the topic at that level, and thus set the parameters for what a dialogic activity about theme could, and should, be. More broadly, students' capacity for engaging in content through dialogic discussion was often associated with the students' capacity for abstract thought more generally. Marcus Brooks, in reflecting on a class discussion about similes and metaphors, explained,

> I really believe that this kind of abstract thinking, thinking metaphorically, has a lot to do with readiness, so I think some of the kids, since they're developmentally really disparate at this age, some of their capacity for abstract thought, some of those kids really are still

> developing that, and so they struggle, I think, to create or to think metaphorically in a deep way, even at the most basic level that we're starting at with right now.

In these descriptions, the students' uptake of the content is linked with their capacity *to* uptake. Some of the students were successfully able to work with the content, some were not, revealing, in the above example, that "they're developmentally really disparate at this age." Had all of the students reached a developmental point of being able to think abstractly, they all would have been able to contribute to the conversation equally. These descriptions portrayed students as characters in development, and evaluations about how a dialogic activity went or what a dialogic activity could involve became linked to the participants' inferences about where the students were on their developmental trajectories. Watching students as developing characters became associated with a sense of certainty and inevitability, as if watching stock characters of heroes or villains come on the scene: Well, we know what they're going to do. That's who they are.

These descriptions of *students as developing characters* worked in tandem with descriptions of students as abstract thinkers, authentic contributors, and generally knowledgeable people in the world – in short, *students as meaning-making characters*. In reflecting on a discussion about food poems, where the students pulled phrases that they thought were meaningful, Zoe Jacobs explained, "I was very surprised at their apparent grasp of metaphor…the earth is a table, and I hadn't read it that way at all." The surprise of the experience became structured by the role the students took up on stage – that of full participants in the meaning making process, abstract thinkers who offer something new and unique to the discussion. When described in these roles, the students are portrayed more in terms of the distinctive knowledges, experiences, and preferences rather than their developmental capacities. Marcus Brooks, for example, described James, who "can be reluctant the more teacher directed things are," but during the discussion, he was "able to call on background knowledge" and

"relate it to what we're doing." The student, James, in this example, takes on a role as someone who has learning preferences and is able to relate his background knowledge to the discussion – rather than someone who may or may not have the mental capacity to do so.

In the participants' descriptions, watching *students as meaning-makers* becomes associated with a sense of enthusiasm, as Alexa Elon explained,

> I want to share some of my enthusiasm for intellectual conversation with my students. I tell them that what's fun about this job for me is seeing new elements of texts and understanding new ideas, not hearing what Spark Notes have to say.

Importantly, enthusiasm became associated with the "new," rather than the rehashing "what Spark Notes have to say." Watching students as meaning-makers was associated with an image of unexplored territory, which was often articulated in spatial metaphors, such as going on a "wild walk" (or conversely, being stuck on a "railroad" or needing to "pull them along"). Interestingly, the new territory was also described in terms of politeness, as if interfering with the students' explorations would be rude. Leonie Bell described a time when the students were taking up the role of meaning-makers, exploring territory, and she decided to intervene:

> I got my question asked, and they stopped talking altogether. And so it was just like one of those things where you're like, "Oh yeah, that's right. It's not your show."…I interrupted them, and when people interrupt you, no matter what you're doing, you stop doing what you were doing and start thinking about what they want you to do.

Leonie portrayed her question as a faux pas ("Oh yeah, that's right. It's not your show.") in the conversation, which points to the status associated with the meaning-making role. Students became envisioned as doing a certain type of important work, and thus, become important themselves. To disrupt important people doing important work, to make them "stop doing what [they] were doing," evoked a feeling of rudeness, somewhat analogous to an audience member enthusiastically taking in a theatrical performance, taking a picture, and realizing the flash was

on: Oops. And now everyone is looking at me. In short, watching students as meaning-making characters became associated with a sense of enthusiasm and politeness.

Chapter Four Summary

In this chapter, I presented to explications of the data. First, I presented portraits of the participants' experiences with dialogic teaching; second, I presented four themes, two orientated toward a textural interpretation and two orientated toward a structural orientation. These portraits and themes were presented to provide both a detailed look at the experience of dialogic teaching as well as a broader look.

CHAPTER FIVE: IMPLICATIONS AND DISCUSSION

What is it like to teach dialogically in middle and secondary English language arts classes? In exploring this question, I visited middle and secondary English language arts classrooms and asked the teachers about their experiences. I situated dialogic teaching as a phenomenon with a manifold sides, aspects, and profiles (Sokolowski, 2000), created portraits of the experience for five teachers (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997) and thematized those experiences into four statements (Moustakas, 1994). The purpose of the portraits was to present dialogic teaching to readers as an object to hold up and consider, as if examining the complex shapes and angles of a crystalline structure; or conceptualized in another way, to present dialogic teaching as a series of voices in a room, as if overhearing parts of a conversation.

…I think part of [participating in discussion] for them is a moment of feeling like their voice matters, that it's not about just being right. I do think they like that, when they have the energy to do it…

-Alexa Elon

…you know you always think, "Oh, and then I'll say, and then I'll say, and then I'll say," and you get up here and like, "I've been talking too long. I need to stop talking. I need to make someone else talk"…

-Leonie Bell

…in that class specifically the dynamic seems to be way more focused on, I don't know, almost like a call and response, and they'll riff off of each other, and they'll agree with each other a little bit, but I'm still the gatekeeper of what goes on in that class…

-Mason James

…it's almost more of an effort thing like, "Oh, he just expects us to have more detail. Okay, I can do that now," whereas other kids are like, "Oh, why do I have to say more than that?"...

-Marcus Brooks

… I usually do this motion, like a dropping motion, like [makes a sound, expelling air]. "Don't talk about it," and I just walk away because I want them to talk to each other…

-Zoe Jacobs

Through these aspects, a complex description of dialogic teaching emerges; and the attempt is to let the description speak as a question-generating and meaning-giving resource (van

Manen, 2014). For me, the collection of quotes above calls forth a variety of topics: students feeling that their voices matter balanced against their energy to participate, a feeling of needing to get out of the way to let someone else talk, classroom dynamics that make the discussion more teacher-centered, effort and expectations, taking on stances of secrecy to heighten interest in the discussion. For others, the above quotes will take on different meanings – as they should: They are meant to be a resource for conversation and further.

Thematically, the experience of dialogic teaching involves constant calibrations, persistent tensions, exciting moments, and frustrating moments; and it is conditioned by the complex nature of what makes a response "good," as well as the various and contradictory roles students take up in the classroom space. Together, the portraits and themes work toward the generation of plausible insight (van Manen, 1997) about dialogic teaching. Below, I discuss two insights, the first related to the design of dialogic teaching and the second related to the disposition of dialogic teaching. Additionally, I discuss a third insight about listening, taking in, and gaining insight from teachers' experiences.

Dialogic by Design

By "dialogic by design," I mean to call forth the classroom space as the location of designed, planned, and orchestrated events. The bell rings, something happens, and the bell rings again. The question becomes, How can we design that intermediary something as a *dialogic* something? The data from this study reveal that the organization of school life often stands in opposition to principles of dialogic teaching. Students might come in late. There might be an assembly that shortens the class schedule. There might be too many students in class for everyone to participate. Some students might not want to participate for their own reasons. The students might be tired from their other classes. The teacher might be tired from their other

classes. And much more. The emergence of dialogic discussions amongst these conditions is, as Alexa Elon put it, “a perfect storm.”

The metaphor of dialogic discussion as a perfect storm calls to mind Renshaw’s (2004) observation that, “There is an irreducible tension when the terms 'dialogue' and 'instruction' are brought together, because the former implies an emergent process of give-and-take, whereas the latter implies a sequence of predetermined moves” (p. 10). The descriptions for the participants support the observation that dialogue and instruction exist as something of an antimony: concepts of dialogue pulling one way, concepts of instruction pulling the other.

First, the participants’ descriptions suggest that feelings of excitement are important to dialogic discussions – moments of being surprised at the students’ creative contributions, a feeling of “Yes, that’s what we’re looking for.” These are moments where participants described themselves as shifting to decentered roles, that of “facilitators” or “tech support,” in the ongoing discussion. In terms of design, these roles can be anticipated through teacher-decentered organizational schemes. Fishbowl discussion, speed dating discussions, and small groups are all indicative of teacher-centered organizational schemes. But while the teacher is out of the center, which allows space for students to discuss, the teacher is still present in an overseer role, as a documenter of participation and evaluator of contributions. Thus, the teacher still remains central to the goings-on of classroom discussion. I would also like to suggest that teachers can take on decentered roles in a slightly different way, a way that, as I interpret it, opens up more possibility for authentic responses and excitement. To show what I mean, consider this episode in Alexa Elon’s class. At the beginning of class, students do a routine called “Poem of the Day,” which involves students finding poems on their own, reading them in front of the class, and listening to the class’ reaction.

Ms. Elon: Who's up? I don't care who goes first. Let's just make the magic happen.

Keegan: [walks to the front of the room while Ms. Elon sits in a student desk] I was looking around last night, and ah, [students shushing each other] I think there's some really depressing stuff. It was like all these things about children dying of cancer, and I was like, that's not going to happen – just too sad. So I got something else. I spared you the children-dying-of-cancer poem.

Ms. Elon: Well thank you. So what is it?

Logan: So this is "These Few Presidents." [reads]

Ms. Elon: It's still kinda sad.

Logan: A little bit.

Melia: That was a little sad. I was expecting something more upbeat. [voices of agreement, classroom talk unfolds into a discussion about what makes a poem sad, what kind of poem is expected on a Friday]

Logan: No children died of cancer. That's my justification. [laughter]

Ms. Elon: So it's relative you see. [Ms. Elon banters with students] Who's next?

Matt: Someone!

[The next student takes his place at the front of the room, and Logan sits down. Clapping. Two more students read poems, followed by short discussions of each one.]

The Poem of the Day not only decenters Alexa Elon as she sits down in a student desk, it also reconfigures her role as being primarily a facilitator-spectator rather than as being primarily an evaluator-grader. Alexa is in a position to react to the poem in similar fashion as everyone else. In the post-observation interview, she said, "I'm always amazed at what they find." In the participants' descriptions of dialogic teaching, these spaces were important for evoking a sense of excitement about student contributions. In another example, Mason James talked about the enjoyment of listening to his students in creative writing as they discuss short stories that they were taking through the drafting process. The students share their work via email, the class

members read each other's work, and then they discuss, focusing on the work of about three students per session. The organization of the class has Mason seated in a circle with the students, everyone offering comments. Again, students have space to contribute to the discussion, and it is almost as if the teacher is in a position to take the class right along with the students. To be sure, that's not exactly what is happening, as the authoritative role of the teacher is always present in the inherent teacher-student power structure of the classroom, but, similar to Nystrand et al.'s (2003) finding that "dialogic spells" become realized through "dialogic bids," the intent of the teacher to take a decentered role as a facilitator-spectator seems to be a particularly powerful dialogic bid.

In terms of design, these example activities have some important qualities worth highlighting: They are repeatable, and they are elegant. By repeatable, the student who took the leader role on one day (came in with a poem to read, or a piece of writing to share) could easily assume that leader role again at a different point in the semester. The activity is orientated to recurrence rather than one-and-done. The activities are also orientated toward elegance. By elegance, I mean to suggest simplicity without *making it* simple: the activity has intuitive appeal whereby the discussion participants know what to do, but what they're doing is not a diminished. There is an elegance to a dialogic discussion organized around the reading of a poem, for example. Possibilities for what might happen in the discussion are not diminished, but are informed by the history of interpretive practices the discussion participants have used throughout the class. Activities designed with repeatability and elegance give space for creative contributions and, I argue, the type of excitement the participants describe in their experiences with dialogic teaching.

Another way to think about repeatability and elegance is in terms of three interrelated levels of abstraction with respect to English language arts content: a macro, a meso, and a micro level. I define micro level as the types of things requested on a test or piece of writing – a claim plus evidence to support that claim or an example of a metaphor or a simile. I define the meso level as a level of abstraction directly above the micro level – concepts about how to support an idea in writing or the concepts about what makes a metaphor or a simile. And I define the macro level as the type of artifacts that potentially involve and subsume the other two levels – so a piece of writing, a poem, a picture, a story from the news, or even a t-shirt. I suggest that repeatable and elegant activities – the type that are rich for dialogic discussion – are orientated toward the macro level. At the macro level, students generally have an easier point of an entry into a discussion – let's listen to this poem, let's look at this picture, let's read this news story, let's listen to this song, let's consider the shirt I'm wearing today. These are all macro-level entry points. These are in contrast to meso level entry points (Let's talk about the definition of theme) or micro level entry points (what symbols did you see in Chapter two?). The excitement that the participants described as being associated with dialogic moments were often descriptions of students responding to a macro level artifact and naturally transitioning to the meso and micro levels. In my classroom observations and the participants' descriptions, beginning at a micro or meso level in a discussion tended to be associated with mixed success and overall disappointment in the students' ability to respond. Beginning at the macro level tended to be associated with authentic, dialogic responses from both students and teachers

Dialogic by Disposition

By "dialogic by disposition," I mean to call forth the idea that teaching dialogically has as much to do cultivating beliefs and attitudes about students as it does with knowing what kind of

questions to ask. Words exchanged between two people are contingent on how each one thinks of the other. Bakhtin (1973) described this idea through concepts of reciprocity, shared territory, a bridge, and verbal shape:

> [The word] is determined equally by *whose* word it is and *for whom* it is meant. As word, it is precisely *the produce of the reciprocal relationship between speaker and listener, addresser and addressee.* Each and every word expresses the "one" in relation to the "other." I give myself verbal shape from another's point of view, ultimately, from the point of view of the community to which I belong. A word is a bridge thrown between myself and another. If one end of the bridge depend on me, then the other depends on my addressee. A word is territory shared by both addresser and addressee, by the speaker and his interlocutor. (p. 86, original emphasis)

In reading this passage, I am reminded of the two teachers that Kachur and Prendergast (1997) wrote about, Mr. Kramer and Ms. Janson. How could it be that Mr. Kramer asked closed questions that should have led to monologic talk patterns, and Ms. Janson asked authentic questions that should have led to dialogic talk patterns – but it turned out opposite? The passage above seems to suggest a possibility: that the word involves a reciprocal relationship between addresser and addressee. The exchange of words is not understood as a matter of possible responses allowed by closed or authentic formulations, but by the relationship between the people within the exchange. How a teacher thinks of her students, and how her students think about her is integral to how they exchange words – as Kachur and Prendergast suggest, closed questions could be met with dialogic responses and authentic questions could be met with monologic responses. The governing rule seems not to lie in the word exactly, but in the shared territory the word implies; that is, in the relationship.

The participants talked about themselves in relation to their students by talking about the various roles they assume within the classroom space. Throughout the participants' descriptions, student roles became a mode of explaining why the experience of dialogic teaching felt/proceeded a certain way. Students became *meaning-making characters* and *developing*

characters, the former being associated with students' status as full intellectual participants in the classroom and the latter being associated with students' developmental capabilities. The participants' descriptions of the role of *meaning-maker character* calls to mind Aukerman's (2013) argument that sense-making activities should be considered "unassailable," and people engaging in sense-making activities should be granted equal status at the table. The participants described their relationship to the students in this way and implied a certain politeness and reverence toward students when they were imagined in the sense-making role. The participants' description of the role of *developing character* calls to mind Lesko's (2012) observation that descriptions of young people are often constructed through powerful signifiers that "provide a template [by which] to judge the appropriateness of actions" (p. 91). The participants described their relationship to students in this way as well, using their students' age as a shorthand for what they know and what they are capable of.

These two ways of talking about students tended to live together, but not harmoniously. In descriptions of dialogic interactions, the students tended to take on the meaning-maker role; in descriptions of interactions that felt less than dialogic, the students tended to take the developmental role. Within the descriptions, these two roles might appear one right after the other. I suggest that cultivating a dialogic disposition as a teacher requires a commitment to noticing the students' meaning-making in classroom talk. I offer two guiding questions for reflecting on students: (a) What does this scenario reveal about the world that students experience? (b) How could their thoughts, behaviors, and knowledge be envisioned as insightful, rational, and generative?

As an example, consider Leonie Bell's reflection after a class discussion. In the discussion, students debated with each other about the rights of alleged perpetrators of sexual

abuse to remain anonymous. The debate was split fairly equally, some people arguing that alleged perpetrators should have rights for anonymity, others arguing that they shouldn't. At one point, Leonie asked the students, "Does the internet change things, or should it?" The students did not respond. The debate stopped. In the interview, Leonie said, "I got my question asked, and they stopped talking altogether" and she talked about regretting her choice to step in. And as she continued reflecting on this moment, she said,

> I think that I forget about just how truly young they are that, you know, for them there was no before September 11th, for them there was no before the internet, you know, there was no, you know, even things as simple as teaching them how to cite in MLA, like the Freshmen, that they might not know that the *New York Times* is a newspaper because they only see it on the internet, so when they're citing the website for the *New York Times*, and they're putting it in a website format instead of the newspaper found on the web, they didn't fucking know that it is a newspaper. I had no [makes a bewildered sound]. I was just like, "Oh, oh yeah, they have no idea about publications," you know like…That was forever ago. It's like oh my god, but literally they were born then. They were born in '97, that particular class, '97/'98.

What does this scenario reveal about the world that students experience? How could their thoughts, behaviors, and knowledge be envisioned as insightful, rational, and generative? As I look at Leonie's reflection with these questions in mind, I see an acknowledgement that the students are growing up in a time different from many adults. Their world is, for the most part, post-911, post-internet, post-newspapers-in-print. But they make sense of that world by, for example, citing the *New York Times* as a newspaper found on the web. That's not indicative of error – it's insightful, rational, and generative. It's indicative of sense-making. Viewing students' sense-making in this was leads to further questions: What kinds of knowledge can students generate that we can't as teachers? What insights about the world do they have access to that we, as teachers, don't? Reflecting on students in this way might inform how they become envisioned and engaged within the classroom. Cultivating a dialogic disposition is about making a commitment to seeing students as full intellectual participants, as people who make sense of the

world and their lives with the resources available to them, just like anyone else. Commenting in a similar vein, Sarigianides, Petrone, and Lewis (2015) write, "Re-imagining adolescents as capable, knowledgeable, complex, and contradictory—affordances we allow for adults—affects one's position in relation to youth in the classroom and in the world" (p. 18). In short, a dialogic disposition is what allows students to take "verbal shape" (Bakhtin, 1973, p. 86) as sense-makers in the classroom space – and cultivating this disposition is the foundational work of dialogic teaching.

On Listening to Reverberations in Teachers' Experiences

The final insight I offer from this study is one that is orientated toward future research on teachers' experiences in the classroom. It's cliché to say that when teachers get together, they talk about teaching. Two teachers meet who've never met before? They talk about teaching. Two teachers who've known each other for a long time and meet for dinner? They talk about teaching. Two teachers who actually teach together as co-teachers in the same room for four periods a day and then happen to sit next to each other at their school's football game on a Friday night? They talk about teaching. From my personal experience, I can say I have been involved in these scenarios – and from one perspective, teachers talking about teaching is commonplace, mundane, unremarkable.

What I would like to offer is a formulation of these scenarios that might lend itself to a direction for research methods: What teachers talk about when they talk about teaching is *the experience* of teaching. This formulation stands in contrast to imagining these moments solely as identity performances or ways to align oneself to a certain discourse community. To be clear, identity performances and community affiliations are part of what's going on. But what is also going on is an exploration of what teaching is. What is teaching as a lived through experience?

Imagined as an object with sides, aspects, and profiles (Sokolowski, 2000) the exploration of this question will never be complete because the object can always be rotated to a different angle. From a research point of view, the question becomes, *How do we explore the manifold surfaces of lived experience in the interest of producing actionable insight?* The overall argument of this dissertation is that phenomenology offers a conceptual framework that contributes to this endeavor – a framework involving intentionality, manifold profiles, and textures and structures (concepts outlined in Chapter Three). But I would also like to suggest that aside from using phenomenological concepts to leverage methods, gaining actionable insights about teachers' experiences necessitates a certain type of listening.

To develop this idea, I call on van Manen's (1997) metaphor of "reverberation." According to van Manen, reverberations are produced by strongly embedded language – language with qualities of concreteness, evocation, intensification, tone, and epiphany. Recall from Chapter Three that these are the qualities that I used in arranging the portraits of the participants' experiences. My intent was to (attempt to) evoke reverberations for the reader, which van Manen explains is felt through the ever-present tension of "what is unique and what is shared" between people – and it is within that tension that we might "break through the taken-for-granted dimensions of everyday life" (p. 346). To extend van Manen's metaphor, I suggest that reverberations tend to emit at two frequencies, which I term an invitational frequency and an inspectional frequency. To listen to teachers' experiences – and gain insight from them – is to tune into these two frequencies.

I associate the invitational frequency with textural descriptions, the *what* of experience. As participants describe their experiences through textural appeals – that is, sensations of agony and surprise, metaphors of growth and death, observations of students and self – the invitational

frequency emits. And listening for it might evoke responses from the reader, such as *Yes, that's it! I know that feeling. That's the way it is. I hear that. It's not just me? I know, right?! Happens to me too.* The invitational frequency invites the reader to share similar experiences.

I associate the inspectional frequency with structural descriptions of an experience, the *why/how* of experience, that is, explanations of precipitating factors and conditions that make dialogic teaching proceed/feel a certain way. For example, a participant might explain why dialogic teaching is difficult for a certain class by talking about the conditions of the difficulty: the students go to lunch midway through, so they're thinking about lunch and can't focus. In these descriptions, the inspectional frequency emits. And listening to it might evoke responses from the reader, such as, *Oh, that's why. I see how that would matter. That makes sense to pay attention to. Yep, that's important to how it all plays out. I somewhat agree, but we should look at that more deeply. I see what you're saying, but I disagree, and here's why. That could be part of it. Let's take that up.* The inspectional frequency encourages the reader to inspect, or take a closer look at, the conditions of the experience.

Both the invitational and inspectional frequencies are important to the overall reverberation, and they are listener specific. One listener might hear an invitational frequency where another does not; another might hear an inspectional frequency where another does not. Take, for example, a description of the experience given by Mason James:

> …I think it went pretty well, I guess, but I had to lead them a lot harder, guide them a lot more, and I don't know actually. There were times when I just started talking and I wasn't—like I'd just be distracted by something, realizing that something else is happening in the classroom that I needed to fix, and so I feel like I was railroading it real hard, and I didn't like that, but I wasn't really sure what the other option was because when I tried to just let them discuss with each other, not really a lot came out. That class also seems to more actively want to engage me than each other…I say something, they respond to me, I say something, they respond to me…

For me, I hear both the invitation frequency and the inspectional frequency in this particular description. When Mason talks about having to "lead them a lot harder" and being "distracting by something…that I needed to fix," which was accompanied by the feeling of "railroading it real hard," I want to say, *I know that feeling*. *I hear that. That has happened to me too*. I have definitely experienced the apparent paradox of being more and more distracted with various matters going on in the periphery of the classroom while simultaneously taking a more and more central and authoritative role in the discussion. "[R]ailroading it real hard"? Guilty. Mason and I could probably exchange story after story about this aspect of the experience of facilitating a classroom discussion, and in so doing, we could explore the many different ways that that aspect of the experience emerges amongst the various realities of classroom life.

But I also hear an inspectional frequency in this part of Mason's description: "I wasn't really sure what the other option was because when I tried to just let them discuss with each other, not really a lot came out. That class also seems to more actively want to engage me than each other." When Mason talks about not being "sure what the other options was" because trying to engage the students in a discussion seemed to fail, and the students seem to "more actively want to engage me than each other," I want to say, *I see what you're saying, but there's room to explore that idea*. The inspectional frequency is about holding up an explanation, inspecting it, and then seeking out alternative explanations. For example, it could be that because Mason was "railroading it," the students had a hard time jumping on the train. And the observation that the students "more actively want to engage me than each other" might be explained alternatively: That's just what the scenery looks like when you're on the railroad as the conductor of the train, in the central, authoritative position. But from my field notes and the video data of Mason's class – as well as from my personal experience as a classroom teacher – I might point out the multiple

ways students do engage with each other, and I also might point to instances where students chose not to respond because their thoughts didn't fit with the particular constraints of the question. For example, in the discussion about the *Lord of the Flies*, Mason's asked the question "Is the beastie real?" and called for a class vote, yes or no. One student rejected the question outright because her thoughts didn't fit into those categories. She sat back and didn't vote. These moments call to mind Gutierrez, Rymes, and Larson's (1995) study on classroom "underlife" – the multiple and creative ways students respond to dominant classroom "scripts" by producing their own "counterscripts." Sitting back, not voting: That is a compelling counterscript that might recast Mason's observation that students didn't seem to want to respond. The inspectional frequency calls forth these alternative explanations.

From a research perspective, the invitational and inspectional frequencies might be used as guiding frameworks for further studies of teachers' experiences. The invitational frequency is a call to gather experiences – which allows a more expanded understanding of experience; and the inspectional frequency is a call to further understand those experiences – an unending scholarly process whereby inspections beget inspections. A generative project might be orientated around gathering teachers' experiences to create an oral history of classroom talk, or grading, or writing instruction, or the many of other activities of classroom life. Some guidance as to why such a project would be important comes from the mission statement of Story Corps: "We do this to remind one another of our shared humanity, to strengthen and build the connections between people, to teach the value of listening, and to weave into the fabric of our culture the understanding that everyone's story matters." In the study of classroom life, these stories might be used as a basis for understanding the fabric of teaching activities – *what it's like; what happens; what sensations it evokes; what observations, judgments, beliefs are involved –*

and they could also be used as the basis to establish scholarly, inspectional stances toward experience.

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APPENDIX A: Overview of Dialogic Teaching

What is dialogic teaching?

Inspiring Dialogue: "Dialogic teaching refers to instructional designs and practices that provide students with frequent and sustained opportunities to engage in learning talk. Learning talk refers to student talk that actively stimulates learning—what Britton (1989) called "talking to learn"—as opposed to talk simply displaying what students already know" (p. 5)

How is that different than other teaching?

"Dialogic" teaching is often positioned as an opposite of "monologic" teaching. Here are a couple quotes from Mikhail Bakhtin, whom classroom-talk scholars often draw on for inspiration.

Bakhtin (*Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics,* 1981):

> In an environment of…monologism the genuine interaction of consciousness is impossible, and thus genuine dialogue is impossible as well. In essence idealism knows only a single mode of cognitive interaction among consciousnesses; someone who knows and possesses the truth instructs someone who is ignorant of it and in error; that is, it is the interaction of a teacher and a pupil, which, it follows, can only be a pedagogical dialogue. (p. 81)

> The dialogic means of seeking truth is counterposed to *official* monologism, which pretends to *possess a ready-made truth*…Truth is not born nor is it to be found inside the head of an individual person, it is born *between people* collectively searching for truth, in the process of their dialogic interaction. (p. 110; emphasis in original)

How do these ideas apply to the classroom?

Martin Nystrand, a prominent scholar of classroom discussion, applies Bakhtin's ideas by thinking about the questions teachers ask, the responses students give, and the nature of the discussion that unfolds. He defines a monologic discussion like this:

> Teachers regularly strive for monologism when, for example, the 'prescript' both the questions they ask and the answers they accept, as well as the order in which they ask the questions. (*Opening Dialogue*, 1997, p. 12)

He encourages teachers to look at the epistemic roles (or roles related to building knowledge) that students assume in their classrooms. He writes,

> This is the most fundamental way that classroom discourse shapes learning: Specific modes or genres of discourse engender particular epistemic roles for the conversants, and these roles, in turn, engender, constrain, and empower their thinking. The bottom line for instruction is that the quality of student learning is closely linked to the quality of classroom talk. (p. 29)

APPENDIX B: Interview Protocol

Interview Questions for After Each Observation

Participant:

Observation number and date:

1. Talk about what was going on in class today.
2. How does this lesson fit in with your larger unit (what you've been doing in class or what you're aiming at for the future)? What contributed to planning the lesson in this way?
3. What moments during class would you characterize as being dialogic (authentic questions, uptake, etc.)?
4. What helped or hindered the potential for dialogic moments today?
5. How would you characterize this class in terms of their "class chemistry"? In what ways does this particular class resonate or not resonate with a dialogic teaching stance?