Supporting Diversity Through Journaling: Seeing all our Learning Selves Reflected in the Academy

by

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Abstract

This qualitative study examines the use of the learning journal in educational settings characterized by many forms of diversity: in particular, language, culture, and literacy practices. Journals are often discussed in scholarly literature and assigned in classrooms without examining issues of identity and power or exploring the historical, cultural, and gendered parameters of journaling practices. This study considers socio-cultural aspects of academic literacy practices related to journaling. It seeks to identify ways in which to expand journaling to access identity toolkits with a range of cultural, linguistic, and literacy resources. This study considers how the learning journal can be a praxis of testimony that supports the integration of personal narratives and the finding and inventing of language(s) to speak about suffering and the re-integration of selves.

This exploration is framed by interrelated strands of new literacies theorizing, as well as by feminist autobiographical concepts of public and private domains. While tracing my own connections to journaling as a student, educator, and writer, I draw on the power of personal anecdote and poetry to assemble a hybrid text that probes both subject and the process of writing about it. Participants include learners and instructors in a post-secondary setting. Findings indicate that the learning journal can support diverse identity frameworks when flexibility and negotiation are applied; however, the risks of autobiographical writing in an institutional setting can be ameliorated only through trust and relationship building.

Keywords: Academic literacy practices; journaling; learner diversity; learner identity; socio-cultural literacy theorizing

Dedication

To the memory of grandparents John Boschman and Margaret Peters with gratitude for the words you left and to grandmother Edith Boschman for all that you taught me those summers.

To granddaughter Edith Marie Corman Epp who has already taught us much about the languages of love and joy.

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In the "shadow of the silent majorities," then, as teachers learning along with those we try to provoke to learn, we may be able to inspire hitherto unheard voices. We may be able to empower people to rediscover their own memories and articulate them in the presence of others, whose space they can share. Such a project demands the capacity to unveil and disclose. It demands the exercise of imagination; enlivened by works of art, by situations of speaking and making. Perhaps we can at last devise reflective communities in the interstices of colleges and schools. Perhaps we can invent ways of freeing people to feel and express indignation, to break through the opaqueness, to refuse silences. We need to teach in such a way as to arouse passion now and then; we need a new camaraderie, a new en masse. These are dark and shadowed times, and we need to live them, standing before one another, open to the world. (Greene, 2009, pp. 95-96)

Chapter 1.

Beginning the Speaking and Making

Although in the literary sense the imagination is crucial to writing, the use of language is not highly regarded in academic discourses that claim to be scientific. The concept of imagination, when employed as a sociological tool, is often reduced to a way of seeing and understanding the world, or a way of understanding how people either construct or are constructed by the world. As Morrison argues, however, the imagination can be a way of sharing the world. This means, according to Morrison, struggling to find the language to do this and then struggling to interpret and perform within that shared imagination (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999, p. 37).

Journal Entry: September 13, 2013—"small sparks"

The struggle began long before, and this
sharing of the world,
part of my/our heritage, the voices
of those who refused silence.
With them I begin this re/search
these voicings small sparks.

Mention the term "journal" in a social context and, more than likely, a variety of responses will ensue from enthusiasm for and dedication to the practice of recording personal reflections to indifference and even distaste for seemingly solipsistic musings. Mention the term in an educational space and the same range of responses will occur along with questions such as "How do you define *journal*?" "How can student journals be marked fairly or in an unbiased manner?" and "How can students express what they really think in their journals when they are being graded?" In both contexts, there is a range of possible definitions, approaches, experiences, and ethical conundrums concerning journaling. Evoking both the personal and educational contexts of journaling at the outset reflects the fact that journaling is a traditionally private literacy practice that

has been adapted for pedagogical purposes. The tensions between the two modalities spin off a complex series of challenges for learners and educators alike.

The dilemma that ensues, though, is not only one of tension between private and public identities and the complexities of institutional power relations. Many forms of diversity and difference mark contemporary classrooms. The schooled journaling practice characterized by a print-based, individual approach may favour those who have experience with journaling and enforce dominant linguistic, cultural, and schooled discourse practices, which are not part of all communities (Cadeiro-Kaplan, 2002). Furthermore, a traditional print-based approach to journaling may ignore cultural practices, border literacies (Ivanic, 1998), and multimodal channels that students may actually use for reflection and communication (Cope & Kalanzis, 2000; Ivanic, 1998). Despite the complexity and risks mentioned above, the learning journal continues to be a commonly used pedagogical tool, especially in pre-service programs such as teacher education, nursing, and social work where it is seen to support reflection and professional growth. The challenge is to deepen and broaden an understanding of the risks and benefits afforded by the learning journal in educational settings marked by diversity and to identify an effective approach to assignment design and ethical evaluation frameworks.

The first objective of this research study is to situate the practice of journaling in the academy and to trace its ontological and epistemological origins. I will examine its pedagogic affordances and risks through the lens of interrelated strands of new literacies theorizing such as New Literacy Studies, academic literacies, critical literacy, multiliteracies, and Bourdiean theoretical frameworks. The second objective is to identify journaling practices that may support the many forms of difference and diversity in contemporary classrooms, including language, cultures, and literacies. Finally, ethical evaluation practices will be considered. While several studies of academic journaling have considered its pedagogic origins and aims, assignment types, and evaluation practices, critical theoretical approaches and considerations of learner diversity have been absent. The aim of this qualitative study is to expand the understanding of academic journaling practices in the context of classroom diversity by means of socio-cultural and critical theoretical perspectives and by consideration of both practitioner and participant experiences of academic journaling.

1.1. Searching for Tools in the "Contact Zone"

Standing "open to the world" as Greene (2009) urges practitioners to do, might begin by making connections between forms of learner diversity and difference encountered in my professional background and the interests of this research. In other words, I am providing a biographical context for the above stated goal of expanding the understanding of academic journaling, as the learning journal is a tool that I have used in learning settings characterized by diversity. For the past twenty-one years I have taught college courses in composition, various literature surveys, creative writing, and now most recently, community capacity building and curriculum studies in the university setting. In each context I have been cognizant of differences amongst learners in gender and age (college classrooms are often characterized by a wide age range), differences that I have tried to accommodate through awareness of cognitive development, communication styles, and systemic biases.

Working in an institution in north-western British Columbia where several First Nations territories converge, my classrooms were marked by cultural diversity so I attempted to include First Nations content in course materials. Indigenizing practices took the form of use of a talking stick, inviting elders to the classroom, and respecting protocols connected with ownership of cultural knowledge. These practices came about through a process of negotiation and collaboration between the learners and me.

Advances in computer technology increasingly affected my work in institutional communication and record keeping and eventually my classroom practice, including the forms that classroom journaling has taken. Students who had experienced early exposure to computers exhibited different learning styles and expectations concerning presentation and sharing of course content than students who had grown up with print-based literacy. Modes of delivery have also shifted over the years, in some instances compounding class-based differences and urban-rural dichotomies due to a lack of equal access to digital technology. In other cases, access to educational resources was expanded through distance technologies. In the 1990s, all my courses were taught in face-to-face mode with classrooms of twenty-five students on average. In contrast, from 2009-2011 I taught online courses for Northwest Community College that included

students in geographically remote areas. In 2011, I facilitated the Poetry Warriors program for the Malahat First Nation with a group of eight participants who met weekly in a rural community where they walked from their homes to the village Health Centre and sat around a table in a small meeting room. Participants could only access computers used by staff in the Health Centre.

In 2011-2012, I was the instructor for the Stepping Stones program offered through Continuing Studies at Simon Fraser University in four First Nations communities. Stepping Stones was a blended program with a tutor mentor in each community and online instructor based in Vancouver. Many of the Stepping Stones learners came from cycles of unemployment and poverty. In the 2012 (February 9th-15th) edition of the Georgia Straight, an editorial article decried the level of poverty and despair amongst the Lil'wat First Nation, despite the 2010 Olympics legacy promises. One of the participating Stepping Stones communities is described in this article as struggling with a lack of adequate housing (Cole, 2012, p. 13). In addition to the focus in the Stepping Stones curriculum on Aboriginal people's struggles for justice on a global scale, somewhat ironically, advertisements and images of dominant culture affluence were brought to these communities through the worldwide web on computers loaned by the university.

In an attempt to address the historical legacy of colonialism, the Northwest Community College has begun to develop First Nations programs, institutional planning based on consultation with local Aboriginal government bodies, and signage in local languages (North West Community College website). Despite these efforts and those undertaken by many post-secondary institutions in Canada, issues of power and equity are still a focus. Administrators, faculty, staff, and students continue to find themselves in what Pratt (1991) termed "contact zones," that is, "social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today" (p. 1).

In spaces such as those described by Pratt, my quest has been to find effective pedagogical tools that can accommodate and support many forms of diversity. Having learners keep journals is a practice I have used frequently in all the subject areas and

modes through which I have taught. From diary-type records of connections between personal experience and course materials that learners kept in their personal time outside of class, to those written only in class, as well as digital journals, I have viewed the learning journal as a shape-shifting practice, adapting it to varying subject matter, delivery modes, and learner interests.

1.2. Why This Study?

The rationale for this study is grounded in a concern with learner diversity as explored in the above section and a concern with challenges faced by learners across the age spectrum that will be further elaborated upon. In considering the particular challenges of mature students, Ivanic (1998) stated, “The values, beliefs and literacy practices they have developed outside education affect the way they view and undertake academic writing assignments” (p. 5), and fortitude is required in order to break through the barriers and disconnects they face. Based on my own observations that mature students often juggle multiple responsibilities and initially lack confidence in their academic ability, I agree that their success often requires determination. However, I do not concur with Ivanic’s statement that that their younger counterparts entering the academy directly from secondary school have had a “smooth, uninterrupted path” (p. 5), and that academic success comes easily. Younger students also experience challenges in the form of “crises of confidence, conflicts of identity, feelings of strangeness, the need to discover the rules of an unfamiliar world” (p. 7).

The following 2011 Statistics Canada figures represent the general Canadian population and reflect an increasingly diverse society: 20.6% of population foreign-born; more than 200 ethnic origins reported; 19.1% of population self-identified as visible minority. The language statistics also reflect growing diversity: 23.8 % English mother tongue; 3.4% reported French; 74.5% multilingual. Two-thirds of the population identified as Christian and the rest were spread across a wide array of other Faith communities (Statistics Canada, National Household Survey, 2011). What these statistics may suggest is that classrooms are increasingly diverse and that at least some students will have experienced interrupted educational trajectories.

Beside the issue of identity faced by all students, younger students have been implicated in higher rates of mental illness such as depression. An article in the 2012/09/05 issue of *Macleans Magazine* reported on the situation and cited statistics such as a 200% increase in demand for counselling services at Ryerson University. Fifty-one percent out of 1,600 students polled at the University of Alberta reported a sense of hopelessness (Lunau, 2012, p. 2). The article explored a complex range of factors such as increased pressure to score high grades, heavy student debt, and addiction to technology. The role of the university in mental health is one still being explored, according to Queen's University principal, Daniel Woolf, who admits a connection between mental health and academics and a responsibility on the part of the institution to offer support to young students (Lunau, p. 9). Ivanic (1998) asserted that the academic community must take mature students' alienation seriously and that there is an "urgent responsibility on the part of the academic community to provide adequate theoretical understandings of 'identity'" (p. 9). I would take this a step further to suggest that theoretical understanding of learner identity and practice be linked when examining alienation and issues of identity for learners of all ages.

In educational spaces characterized by differences in age, language, culture and so on, hegemonic and restrictive notions of learner identity can either be reinforced or disrupted and challenged, depending on curricular approaches and pedagogical practices (Lewis, Enciso, & Moje, 2007). Dominant understanding of social difference based on culture, language, religion, class, and sexuality can either be questioned or presupposed by traditional classroom literacy practices involving reading and writing (Cadeiro-Kaplan, 2002; Luke, 2000). Thus, examining the ontological and epistemological underpinnings of the academic journaling assignment may open up connections between subjectivity, socio-cultural values, and learning. Moreover, it may help to improve understanding of other classroom literacy practices.

I have frequently observed the polarized response of students to the journaling assignment. Some embrace it enthusiastically while others unequivocally dislike it; however, I have not delved deeply enough into the causes behind such responses. Journals are a discursive space in which the grappling between cultures described by Pratt (1991) could take place. In this study, therefore, I explore the socio-cultural

underpinnings and parameters of the journal as course assignment. Examining the journaling assignment through new literacies and autobiographical theorizing allows a deeper exploration.

This research examines a pedagogical tool that has been integral to my practice as well as to that of many other educators. The purpose is to prevent its being used to box learners into colonized and restrictive discursive spaces but rather to explore and invent new and open-ended sites of exploration. Pratt's reference to "arts of the contact zone" (p. 1) signals this kind of decolonizing practice. In addition, I trace my own connections to this literacy practice in order to uncover the assumptions I bring to this assignment as an educator. This study thus brings a new critical theoretical perspective to the subject in the context of learner diversity, described above.

1.3. Framing the Research Problem, Research Questions, and Definitions of Central Terms

Regardless of the assignment design or approach to evaluation, I have observed recurrent patterns when reading student journals. Some journals display detailed and sometimes creative integration of personal framing and curricular material while others are characterized by spare and mechanical commentary. In the first case, through the details of a narrative, tangential musings on course materials, poems, and drawings combined with text, or whatever means, the learners make connections between their own world(s) and the subject matter at hand. They may, for instance, apply curricular materials to other courses, to their personal relationships or occupation. It is the manner in which these connections are made that I would like to understand more deeply. The instances of synthesis stand out in contrast to journals in which learners reign in their expression, saying the minimum, most often in tightly controlled academic prose.

In the first scenario, the particular thoughts or memories that are disclosed in relation to a classroom activity, a work of art, literature, or course concept are often infused with imagination; personal experience and emotions may be evoked. This is not simply an instance of personal disclosure or emotional venting. Something else is

occurring—a connecting of multiple dimensions; Fecho and Meacham (2007) described this process in the following manner:

> The most effective learning invariably involves contact and connection. Specifically, school-based learning occurs as connections are made between the 'spontaneous' conceptual frameworks that all human beings inherit from their primary family and social spaces, and the "schooled" learning frameworks encountered in the classroom. (p. 169)

In both cases, learners bring with them familial and social frameworks in the form of their cultural, linguistic, and literacy toolkits and practices. The ways in which these frameworks intersect with the schooled practice of journaling is at the heart of this study and the research questions that arise:

- How can the classroom journal be a learning tool that draws upon learners' identity frameworks, which include a diverse range of socio-cultural, linguistic, and literacy resources?

- If the research supports the finding that the classroom journal can support and strengthen learner diversity, which effective pedagogical approaches to assignment designs can be employed, and which evaluation practices are most ethical?

- How do my own cultural identity, linguistic background, literacy practices, and experience with journals influence my practice as an educator?

These questions are related to academic literacy practices, student diversity, assignment frameworks and ethical evaluation practices. They are intended to elicit a deeper grasp of the benefits and risks of post-secondary classroom journaling assignments and the implications for post-secondary pedagogical practice. They are also intended to address this study's goal of increasing understanding of academic literacy practices.

Schooled journal assignments may be identified as learning journals, reflective journals, learning logs, and a range of other terms. In this study, the term "learning

journal" will be used to identify an assignment in which learners are required to reflect and comment upon course materials and concepts in instalments over a period of time. Considering that journals are assigned in courses that span a range of subjects and fields, the pedagogic context for this study is any and all post-secondary classrooms in which a journal assignment may be an assigned component of a course.

1.4. Order of Presentation

Chapter 2 explores the literature on theoretical approaches to literacy. I begin with an exploration of post-structuralist theorizing of identity, examining in particular the connections between culture, language, gender, and literacy practices. Literacy practices related to journaling are examined through interconnected theoretical frameworks: New Literacy Studies, academic literacies, critical literacy, multiliteracies, and Bourdieu's theory of habitus. The uses of the learning journal in learning settings are examined by feminist autobiographical theorizing that takes into account notions of public and private space.

Chapter 3 outlines the methodology used in this dissertation. I describe the way in which this qualitative study is framed by auto-ethnography, Law's descriptions of "method assemblage," the concept of bricolage,[1] and poetic inquiry. In addition, I describe the site and participant selection, use of interviews, focus group discussions, surveys, and documents. Ethical considerations and limitations are considered.

Chapters 4 and 5 discuss the research findings from the learner and instructor participants respectively. The backgrounds of these participants is described and the approach to identification outlined. In Chapter 6, I examine in more depth my own

[1] In the practical arts and the fine arts, bricolage (French for "tinkering") is the construction or creation of a work from a diverse range of things that happen to be available, or a work created by such a process.

connection to the journal in terms of personal literacy practice and as an educator. In these three chapters, major findings are first presented in point form and then described in greater detail.

Chapter 7 offers an analysis of the research findings in terms of the literature. First, the findings are summarized and the themes that arose are discussed in depth. As this is a grounded study, in some cases, additional literature not discussed in Chapter 2 is considered.

Chapter 8 concludes this study with a consideration of the overall challenges and opportunities for learning that were encountered. Questions that arose and suggestions for further research are offered.

Chapter 2.

Literature Review

Journal Entries: February 1989 and July 2003—"the girl"

February, 1989, 263 Prinsengracht, Amsterdam
Early morning before catching a flight, pulled a few guilders from my pocket, heels overhung steep staircase from girlhood reading I knew which room doubled as bedroom and dining room, but could not have imagined how small Anne's room decorated with pictures of movie stars on peeling wallpaper bookcase in its place again, concealing the door that gaped open, spawned silence on that last day.

July, 2003, 263 Prinsengracht, Amsterdam
An hour in line this time, narrow houses across the canal, gables that claim meagre space in the sky windows at the very top, small eyes that witness we push through the turnstile, buy tickets, check our bags everything stored securely, professionally displayed, magazine cut-outs behind plexiglass seem much further away, viewers quicken their pace near the lit exit no one speaks above a whisper, and the girl whose stories grew large in this narrowness is a lump in the throat of the 20th century

Outside a swastika, also freshly painted, on the statue of the girl gazing upwards, hands clasped behind her back all day clouds gather, merely threaten but as we walk away rainfall is explosive.

2.1. Tracing Interwoven Strands

In the domain of a vast body of literature arise questions: "Who should be included?" and "How far should I go back when tracing influential writers—both theorists and practitioners?" Madison (2012) imparted the following advice to those embarking on critical research:

> Keep in mind that it is your responsibility as a critical researcher and as a member of a particular interpretive community to know what others are imparting about a subject and community that you have made a commitment to interact with and to learn with and from. (p. 23)

In considering this statement, I realize that I cannot include everyone from whom I have learned; however, I feel that it is germane to this exploration of literature to trace my connection with journaling as far back as my reading (at the age of twelve) of Anne Frank's The Diary of a Young Girl. No doubt, I was as intrigued with Anne's personal revelations of family conflicts, first crush, and the burgeoning moral questions of adolescence as thousands of other young readers have been. The personal voice shed a more intimate light on events that I would soon learn about in high school history classes, often in the form of fact-based lists of names and dates.

The voices I discovered in the space between the private and public spheres continued to capture my attention. While majoring in literature as an undergrad, I often sought out the journals of the poets and novelists whose literary works I was studying. I read the journals and letters of the Romantic poets, particularly those of Mary Shelley. Her journal entries provided the everyday domestic details behind iconic poems of the era and her novel Frankenstein—works that fired my imagination. Her descriptions and musings described how a young woman could become an author in a male-dominated literary world, as did the journals of Virginia Woolf and Sylvia Plath. I continue to read diaries and memoirs, savouring the rich details that form worlds, at least imaginatively, that I could not otherwise know. This ongoing engagement with the varied forms of the journal creates a personal backdrop for this study.

In this research I consider the literature review forms a vital part of the investigation. It is integral to the approach as reflected in Anderson's (2006) description of analytic auto-ethnography. This approach "does contribute to a spiralling refinement, elaboration, extension, and revision of theoretical understanding" (p. 388). In the following sections, I first consider the absence of the ideologically complex history of the journal as pedagogic tool, the problematizing of identity, power, and diversity in much of the research literature on academic journaling. This absence is then examined through

poststructuralist theorizing of identity. I explore issues of power and diversity through the theoretical framework of new literacy studies. I consider theoretical reflections on the connection between language, culture, and literacies, along with contributions by feminist scholars to the field of autobiographical writing.

2.2. History of Journaling as a Pedagogic Tool

In her study *Gender and the Journal: Diaries and Academic Discourse*, Gannett (1992) began by framing language as constitutive and social in nature, a view that is central to this study. Gannett traced the use of journals in educational settings to the 1960s and 1970s writing-process movement, which shifted emphasis from the final product to the process of pre-writing (p. 21). My own secondary education intersected with this movement and during my time in high school in the late 1970s, I kept many journals in a number of subjects because pedagogic emphasis was placed on reflection and creativity.

During that era, critics of the pedagogical use of journals stated that they saw journaling as just a pre-writing tool that should lead to more formal writing. It was not a credible genre itself; thus, they ignored a rich body of historical writing (p. 34). Educators and parents took issue with what they saw as the excessively personal, confessional, and testimonial nature of the journal, which could result in students revealing personal information about their families, and in some cases, instances of abuse that placed educators in an ethical quandary. Surveying the research literature on journals from that period, Gannett (1992) noted there are few cases of literacy learning theory being connected with pedagogy when using journals as a learning tool. Rather, she found that the majority of the articles offered a practical approach to classroom journaling, while a deeper level of analysis was virtually absent (p. 32).

In commenting on the facets of journaling that she stated have been under-researched, Gannett (1992) provided a history of the Western journal tradition from early public or communal forms of record-keeping to the Renaissance with its emphasis on the individual (p. 148). Her main purpose emerged as “the set of tensions among traditional academic and literary discourse communities, women as marginalized users

of discourse within those communities, and the marginal discourses of journals and diaries" (p. 17). Gannett's study explained the importance of the meaning of key terms:

> We need to consider the tension that has developed around the issue of public/academic and private or personal writing captured in the tense relation between the term journal, which in composition and education parlance has become the preferred term, the generic name, and term diary, which is denotatively similar, but which has come to be associated with connotations such as overly personal, confessional, trivial, and, as I will argue, feminine. (p. 21)

Observing early in her book that journals seem to be an effective learning tool for some students but not for others, Gannett traced this polarization to the tensions mentioned in the quotation above: (a) a lack of knowledge on the part of educators about the history of journals, (b) the way in which gendered identity has been linked to forms of private and public discourse in general, and (c) journal and diary writing in particular.

2.3. Constructivist Approaches to Academic Journaling

In the research literature on journaling, studies based on a constructivist framework contribute valuable insights into how knowledge can be constructed in an agentive manner by learners. As well, scholars who look at classroom journaling from this perspective offer useful commentary on meta-cognition, reflection, and emotional facets of learning. These benefits are outlined in the following section while observing, as well, their lack of consideration of the socio-cultural dimensions of learning and literacy. In addition, the way that these researchers conceptualize identity will be examined. In the case of the following studies, I will outline both the contributions and interrogate the lack of a critical perspective that leaves a gap that this study endeavours to fill.

Rolfe (2006) cited the need to develop skills of reflection, synthesis, and creativity in pre-service teachers as reasons for incorporating journaling into the teacher education program for future dance educators (p. 95). Other benefits are emotional

expression, the ability to deal with material that is “not straightforward,” the development of metacognition, and the ability to use language that is closer to everyday speech (p. 97). In the study conducted by Rolfe, student teachers’ journal entries were based on a series of prompt questions.

Rolfe’s (2006) constructivist theoretical framework encourages learners to make their own knowledge. Connections between language, culture, and literacy practices and issues of institutional power are not considered in her study and neither are poststructuralist views of identity. As indicated in Rolfe’s conclusion: “The ability to engage in discourse with one’s self, to step back from events and explore possible alternatives is important for students to develop” (p. 106). This perspective does not consider the various selves that students may bring into the academic setting such as those they enact in social or familial settings, nor does it attend to the various “I” voices and the ways that some might be silenced and others might be employed in assigned journaling.

O’Connell and Dyment (2006) based their research on learning journals on faculty focus group discussions and a questionnaire in order to gather information about faculty attitudes toward learning journals. Their study raises ethical issues and the need for problematizing identity, power, and language, as participating faculty reported that “when journals were evaluated, students were less focused on being creative, critical and reflexive, instead directing their energies towards trying to meet the evaluative criteria” (p. 683). In an attempt to account for the student response described above, they cited attitudes in education that construct teachers as experts and rely on quantitative evaluation. These attitudes are at odds with the objectives of journaling in which “students are drivers of their own learning, where outcomes are less easy to control and more difficult to measure and where learning experiences are more fully embodied” (p. 684). However, they fail to push beyond a constructivist framework into critical theorizing that examines dimensions of power in institutional literacy practices.

Hubbs and Brand (2005) also ignored issues of institutional power and identity in their study of the use of learning journals with counsellor education students. Their study is based on a constructivist view of learning as well because early on they refer to

Rogers' (2006) description of the benefits of learning that originates and is owned by the subject (p. 62). Drawing upon Kolb's theory of experiential learning, they ground their exploration of the benefits of journaling in the learning theories of Vygotsky (1986): "The reflective journal provides a vehicle for inner dialogue that connects thoughts, feelings, and actions" (p. 62). The authors use the metaphor of the mirror to note the potential of the journal: "The reflective journal holds potential for serving as a mirror to reflect the student's heart and mind" (p. 61). The benefit of journaling is described as the ability to assist learners in becoming more critical and insightful.

Hubbs and Brand (2005) began to move closer to a critical stance in their description of transformative learning seen as the ultimate goal of this pedagogical approach, when learners question their former beliefs and move away from assimilative learning in which they merely absorb information unquestioningly from their environment (p. 63). Hubbs and Brand examined the ethical dilemmas raised by journaling that involves "personal disclosures" (p. 64) but suggested that these dilemmas can be solved by clear instructional guidelines and a tacit understanding that personal judgment does not come into play. The assumption that judgment can be suspended is one that needs to be challenged, especially in light of the authors' summative description of the benefits of journaling:

> Reflective journaling can provide instructors with glimpses of the inner workings of the students' minds. Journal entries allow the instructor to view, through the students' words, the quality of comprehension and mastery of the material, as well as affective response to the content. (p. 65)

The privileged position of the teacher and evaluative criterion described above seem by nature intrusive, and terms such as "quality" and "mastery" contradict the claim that judgment can be suspended. In the studies described by these researchers, power relations and identity are not addressed satisfactorily, various forms of learner diversity are not taken into account, and various literacies through which they may express their learning are not considered.

In her often-cited book, *Learning Journals: A Handbook for Reflective Practice and Professional Development*, Moon (2006), likewise, did not address these issues.

While concentrating for the most part on practice, she offered a theoretical discussion of reflective practice, a discussion of evaluation parameters, and examples of journal types and activities that educators can use, particularly in pre-service programs. Moon's description of reflective learning was based on a process she described as "cognitive housekeeping," one in which learners re-order internal experience when focused on "tasks of the learning process" (p. 25). The journal, according to Moon, can be part of this process by encouraging the recursive forging of links between ideas. Moon cited six main ways by which journals may enhance learning:

> [Journaling] slows the pace of learning, can increase the sense of ownership of learning, acknowledges the role of emotion in learning, gives learners an experience of dealing with ill-structured material of learning, encourages meta-cognition (learning about one's process of learning), enhances learning through the process of writing. (p. 26)

Although there is undoubtedly merit in these points, in the pedagogical framework described by Moon, the socio-cultural determinants of identity and learning are not acknowledged.

Moon (2006) defined a learning journal as "a vehicle for reflection" (p. 1). Her guidance was meant to support and deepen learner reflection through the use of journals. Often in classroom settings, the assignment signals this goal because it is called a "reflective journal." Thus, it is worthwhile exploring the definition of reflection that is advanced by Moon. She described reflection as follows:

> Reflection is a form of mental processing—like a form of thinking—that we may use to fulfil a purpose or to achieve some anticipated outcome or we may simply "be reflective" and then an outcome can be unexpected. Reflection is applied to relatively complicated, ill-structured ideas for which there is not an obvious solution and is largely based on the further processing of knowledge and

The term "meta-cognition" is often used interchangeably with reflection; however, Moon (2006) distinguished between these terms by citing several definitions of meta-cognition that point to knowledge about cognitive states and processes (p. 31). Ultimately, the

important point is what learners know and how they know it. While these are worthwhile goals, the cognitive focus ignores the human qualities of emotions that accompany reflexivity, along with the socio-cultural context and issues of learner identity.

2.4. Poststructuralist Theorizing of Identity

Before proceeding further with a discussion of aspects of identity and literacy practices, I will describe the understanding of identity in this study. In Culture and Identity: Narratives of Difference and Belonging, Weedon (2004) traced humanist notions of identity and challenged the notion of a "sovereign knowing" (p. 8) subject that expresses self-knowledge through language, positing instead a social construction of identity. Weedon is concerned with the ways in which cultural narratives and practices constitute new forms of identity and agency, and in particular the role that language plays in this process. Language constitutes identity rather than expresses its meanings, according to Weedon and through its means, individuals take up subject positions (p. 18). Weedon described the way in which "discourses of identity" are part of discursive fields that "are structured in relation to a range of cultural and other institutions" (p. 18). In educational institutions, literacy practices are one of the means by which subject positions are taken up.

This process of taking up subject positions is one that is emphasized by contradiction and conflict and is "relational," signifying that identity is constituted in terms of what one is not (p. 20). Furthermore, Weedon (2004) pointed out how identity is "plural, fractured and reconfigured by gender, ethnic and class relations, and constructions of identity are always historically specific" (p. 20). Similar to Weedon's identification of contradictory and conflicting processes of identity, Giddens (1996) described the way in which the self is tied to "social connections of a very wide scope" (p. 32) in high modernity. Giddens defined modernity's reflexivity as "the susceptibility of most aspects of social activity, and the material relations in nature, to chronic revision in the light of new information or knowledge" (p. 20). In terms of identity, this uncertainty produces new forms of anxiety that "extend into the core of the self . . . the self becomes a reflexive project" (p. 83). Giddens pointed out that self is always constructed by connecting "personal and social change" (p. 33).

Relationality, reflexivity, and plurality underpin the poststructuralist understanding of identity in this study. These qualities can be observed when considering language and culture, elements of identity that will be examined in the following sections. Before looking at learner identity, I first offer an exploration of these facets of my own identity as context for later discussions of complexity, transformation, and hybridity.

2.5. Culture and Identity—"The self I was last night"

> How could I go on with such meagre proofs of myself?
> I woke day after day.
> Day after day I was gone
> from the self I was last night.
>
> (Eavan Boland, 1980, p. 2297)

Asquith, the town in Saskatchewan where I grew up, was named after a British lord, who declared that it had the distinction of being located in the geographic centre of the British Empire (which is the motto proudly displayed on a sign by the road leading into the town). Many of the first settlers were of British and Scots origin, although my family was not. The first thing to explain about being Russian Mennonite is that I am not actually Russian. An Anabaptist group formed in the 16th century with doctrinal roots of pacifism similar to the Amish, Mennonites fled to escape religious persecution from German- and Dutch-speaking countries. Many settled in the Vistula Delta and then moved to Russia in the 1700s at the invitation of Catherine the Great. It was from Mennonite settlements in what is now the Ukraine that my grandparents emigrated to Canada. Since the 1600s the Mennonite Diaspora has extended across Europe from the Netherlands and Switzerland to Kazakhstan and North America, as well as Mexico and several countries in South America (some of my relatives settled in Paraguay).

A debate regarding Mennonite identity—whether one's relatives remained in Europe or settled elsewhere—concerns the term "ethnic Mennonite," which implies identifying oneself as Mennonite while not being a church member. There are some who would say that there is no such thing and that being Mennonite is entirely predicated on active membership in one of the denominations that cover a range of practices from

urban churches to Old Colony. I have not personally managed to solve that conundrum but depending on the context, I do identify my ethnic background as Mennonite.

On Remembrance Day, as a schoolchild, while colouring poppies to embellish the verses of In Flanders Fields, I would not have disclosed that although most of my male relatives took non-combatant service, one of my great uncles was interred as a conscientious objector during World War II. This would have been a source of deep embarrassment in contradiction to the discourse of patriotism that was commemorated each year with the visit of local veterans. A kind of cultural dissonance played out in my childhood as my parents had both left the Mennonite Church, yet I spent part of my summer holidays with my grandparents, who were devout and traditional in many aspects of their lifestyle such as diet. If asked about my cultural identity, in order to simplify the matter, I proclaimed myself to be an "English Canadian." Since then, I have often been identified as Dutch because of my name and appearance, and twice recently I have been asked if I am from South Africa because apparently, I was told, I have an Afrikaans name.

In terms of regional identity, my prairie roots are tenuous, as I have lived more than half my life in British Columbia (the "British" connection still there) but regional identity is in flux, as I have moved from the north-western part of the province, and although I now live on Vancouver Island, do not really identify myself as an Islander. Gender, age, and shifting family connections come into the identity paradigm, along with the loss of a parent and birth of a grandchild. Add to that being a student again and in professional flux at mid-life, I identify myself as a poet, and no doubt, all of these facets of identity inform my engagement with journaling and classroom practices.

2.5.1. Culture and Literacy Practices

My exploration of personal cultural identity affirms Chang's (2008) description of culture as internal and human beings as "not only bearers of culture but also active agents who create, transmit, transform, and sometime discard certain cultural traits" (p. 20). Chang emphasized an external aspect of identity and the reciprocal relationship between individuals and collectives, the need for interaction, multiple cultural group

memberships, ongoing effects of culture after leaving a group and the possibility of having non-official memberships in cultural groups (pp. 22-23). Cultural expressions or effects can take many forms but this study is concerned with the ways in which the literacy practices of journaling are connected to culture. I was exposed to a range of cultural literacy practices such as religious literacy at a young age and have explored cultural identity through the practice of journaling. Ivanic (1998) described how identity, culture, and writing are interconnected: "Writing is an act of identity in which people align themselves with socio-culturally shaped possibilities for selfhood, playing their part in reproducing or challenging dominant practices and discourse, and the values, beliefs and interests which they embody" (p. 32). Schooled journaling practices may either accord with or challenge a learner's cultural identity, and educators may assign journals on the basis of their own cultural assumptions or discuss with learners how the keeping of a journal accords with their values, beliefs, and interests.

Clarke (2008) adhered to a post-structuralist view that sees identity as socially constructed and unstable. He rejects the concept of "culturalism," in which culture is seen as the main category by which social differences are understood. Rather, he posited a more "dialogic relationship" (p. 22) between the individual and culture, and viewed identities as "already complex and multidimensional, constructed across innumerable sites and situations and within a range of contexts by individuals, utilizing the resources of imagination, as they negotiate and make sense of multiple, often competing discourses" (p. 26). This complex relationship between culture and discourses and the "authorial stance" (p. 27) that Clarke stated is the possible outcome of this view of identity could underscore an approach to journaling that incorporates improvisation and imagination.

Ferdman (1990) explored the connection between culture and literacy. While he acknowledged individual differences within cultures, he stated that cultural identity "both derives from and modulates the symbolic and practical significance of literacy for individuals as well as groups" and that literacy itself is a "multifaceted and multilayered construct" (p. 182). Rejecting the functional view of literacy as a universal skill set, he saw variation in cultural definitions, processes, and texts:

> Since cultures differ in what they consider to be their "texts" and values they attach to these, they will also differ in what they view as literate behaviour. An illiterate person is someone who cannot access (or produce) texts that are seen as significant within a given culture. That same person, in another cultural context, may be classified as being quite literate. When a number of cultures co-exist within the same society, it is more likely that we will encounter variant conceptions of what constitutes being literate. (p. 186)

Variations in values connected to literacy may involve group versus individual reading, writing, and decoding. In some cases, originality or creativity may be valued, while in others, it may be the ability to copy cultural master texts. Ferdman (1990) pointed out that there can be a "mismatch between the definition and significance of literacy as they are represented in a person's cultural identity and in the learning situation" (p. 195). This mismatch may affect the way that students respond to a particular literacy activity as they navigate the dissonance between schooled literacy and cultural identities.

Despite the multi-faceted and shifting nature of my own cultural identity, journaling is part of my literacy heritage. At a young age, I was exposed to forms of journaling that I took up both in my personal writing practice and then transferred to an academic context. My grandparents' journals, which I read as an adolescent, combined personal reflections on life events, on religious doctrine and texts, and practical information in the form of lists. In addition, the journals contained a sense of dialogism based on the expectation of a reader who would witness and possibly respond; at times, they even "conversed" with one another across the page in a jointly kept journal. Thus, when faced with a journal assignment in school, I engaged with a high level of comfort and expectation that the assignment presented an opportunity for meaningful connections with curriculum and potentially other learners and instructors. It cannot be assumed that this is the case for all learners because "cultural identity mediates the process of becoming literate as well as the types of literate behaviour in which a person subsequently engages" (Ferdman, 1990, p. 197). Ferdman described questions that give learners the opportunity to explore and identify their own cultural definitions and experiences of literacy learning and texts. Asking questions that link culture and literacy

practices would allow students to locate the journaling assignment in terms of their own identity and explore more consciously their own tendencies for resistance or engagement.

2.6. Language and Identity—“welcome home”

While the Mennonites left this part of Europe many centuries ago and have many peregrinations behind them, they are blonde northern Europeans and speak a language that is much like Dutch, familiar and yet incomprehensible. (Hoberman, 2008, www.villagevoice.com)

Admirably unpredictable and with a continued knack for choosing evocative locations, Reygadas followed up these calculated shocks by making the world's first talking picture [Stellet Licht] in the medieval German dialect, Plautdietsch. (Reygadas, 2007, www.filmfestivalrotterdam.com)

I had a thought on the way home from the rock field that the things we don’t know about a person are the things that make them human, and it made me feel sad to think that, but sad in that reassuring way that some sadness has, a sadness that says welcome home in twelve different languages. (Toews, 2004, p. 98)

A ninety-year-old friend of my grandmother was recently bemoaning one of the disadvantages of being less mobile. She described how she became a captive audience to one of the residents in her senior care home, who was in the habit of doling out unsolicited advice on everything from diet to hairstyles. I commiserated with her, saying, “It sounds as though she’s just being an oola nase (Plautdietsch for busy body, literally translated as “old nose”). With equal parts of surprise and amusement, she remarked, “Aah, so your parents did teach you some Plautdietsch.” In truth, it had been years since I had thought of the expression, one of a small collection of words and phrases I remember from my childhood. It is amusing on one level for me to see one of the first languages I heard described as “incomprehensible” and “medieval” and then to compare those descriptors with a more scholarly definition:

> Mennonite Plautdietsch (ISO 639–3: pdt) is a West Germanic (Indo-European) language belonging to the Low Prussian (Niederpreußisch) subgroup of Eastern Low German (Ostniederdeutsch), a continuum of closely related varieties spoken in northern Poland until the Second World War (Ziesemer 1924, Mitzka 1930, Thiessen 1963). . . . It was adopted as the language of in-group communication by Mennonites escaping religious persecution in north-western and central Europe during the mid-sixteenth century, and later accompanied these pacifist Anabaptist Christians over several successive generations of emigration and exile through Poland, Ukraine, and parts of the Russian Empire. As a result of this extensive migration history, Mennonite Plautdietsch is spoken today in diasporic speech communities on four continents and in over a dozen countries by an estimated 300,000 people, primarily descendants of these so-called Russian Mennonites. (Epp 1993; Lewis, 2009, as cited in C. Cox, J. M. Dreidger, & B. V. Tucker, 2013)

The little I really knew about this language (of which my recall is scant) does not diminish the fact that it nevertheless influenced the way I viewed the world from a young age. Likewise, I was influenced by the diglossic tradition of using Plautdietsch in everyday conversation and German in religious contexts as parents, grandparents, and other relatives switched between English, Plautdietsch, and German.

About a year ago, a young woman from Paraguay with the same first and last name as myself contacted me on Facebook. Not accustomed to having such a namesake, I was eager to know more about her. As it turned out, we did not share a language in which we could communicate. She speaks German, Plautdietsch and Spanish, writes German and Spanish and knows only a few English words. What we learn of one another's lives comes through pictures and the handful of words we share in common. The circumstances of Diaspora keep us from chatting away like long-lost cousins.

Throughout secondary school I studied French and also for two years in university and am still able to write passably well, if needed. In a second-year French literature course, I read Camus's L'Etranger, but because I never had a chance to polish

my conversational skills in an immersion context, I did not consider myself bilingual. Last year while taking a French conversation class at my neighbourhood community centre, I found myself enjoying interjecting French phrases in my journal entries. Moreover, Canada's two official languages policy and two founding nations ideology was taught in high school history, leaving me nowhere to place the Aboriginal languages, such as Cree and Michif, that were spoken in the homes of Aboriginal students. Official language policy, social discourse, and actual practice were at variance during my formative years and continue to be for many Canadians.

2.6.1. Shifting Subjectivities and Code-Switching

The examples of code-switching in my grandparents' journals reflected linguistic underpinnings of identity and what Kramsch (2009) described as a "symbolic system" that is a "semiotic, historically and culturally grounded, personal experience" (p. 2). She explored the way in which language evokes a subjective response, one that is tied to "emotions, memories, fantasies, projections, identifications" (p. 2). To ask learners to (a) reach more deeply and connect their learning on an affective level, and (b) reflect in a language that is not their first language without offering the possibility of code-switching may account for the terse entries sometimes seen in student journals.

There are myriad complex historical, cultural, and emotional factors underpinning the choice of words spoken in a particular language, and equally so when speakers switch between languages. The aspect of play and invention possible in switching between languages is also present when language learners or pluralinguals code-switch. When code-switching in my own journal, I was trying on a different subjectivity, something not emphasized in my weekly classes; yet, as Kramsch (2009) pointed out, "Below the radar of tasks and exercises, the students discover in and through the foreign language subjectivities that will shape their lives in unpredictable ways" (p. 3).

Kramsch (2009) described a poststructuralist approach to subjectivity in which the subject is seen as "decentred, historically and socially contingent" and "discursively produced" (p. 20). It is this last point that is most salient, as Kramsch saw identity as generated in language that forms the basis of a symbolic and affective relationship with the world. Consequently, learning new languages results in the possibility of new

identities, which can be both exciting and troubling. Kramsch described how “foreign and second language learners around the world are turning right now to all forms of artistic expression to make sense of the sometimes puzzling, contradiction-ridden world that surrounds them” (p. 22). The journal could provide a vehicle for these kinds of creative attempts at meaning-making, if learners are not constrained by dominant and mono-lingual expectations and parameters.

Many authors who look at the ways in which identity is bound up with language and culture invoke the concept of heteroglossia as articulated by Bahktin (1981) who examined the social and dialogic nature of discourse and identity:

> For any individual consciousness living in it, language is not an abstract system of normative forms but rather a concrete heteroglot conception of the world. All words have the “taste” of a profession, a genre, a tendency, a party, a particular work, a particular person, a generation, an age group, the day and hour. Each words and forms are populated by intentions. (p. 295)

The degree to which learners feel that their conception of the world and their group affiliations can find linguistic expression in a literacy activity will, in all likelihood, determine their engagement with that activity. Learners sense, no doubt, that words “exist in other’s mouths, in others people’s contexts, serving other people’s intentions” and if they are to “take the word, and make it [their] own,” (Bahktin, 1981, p. 294), the literacy activity must allow the scope for this.

Student discourse described by Martinez-Roldan and Sayer (2006) echoes this heteroglossic quality as students engage in learning English while speaking their native Spanish at times in the process. The authors described a “linguistic borderland that the students used not only to make meaning of texts but also to negotiate and appropriate the reading events” (p. 294). The social context of identity formation is the basis of their perspective and they see learners’ code-switching and access to various discourses as an “identity kit” (p. 300). Use of the various tools in the kit emphasizes learners’ agency and “the notion of a linguistic borderland captures the idea of belonging to both, but not exactly to either” (p. 315). How could the qualities of hybridity and liminality that

accompany language learning and literacy acts and texts find expression and support in the classroom journaling assignment?

It seems that acceptance and perhaps even encouragement of code-switching and the use of various discourses linked with the learner's professional, cultural (etc.) group affiliations may be a starting point. Perhaps, at times, we all want to be welcomed home, even if home is an ever-shifting, poly-glottal borderland where we can feast on words that taste of a mélange of traditional home-cooking and unfamiliar spices.

2.7. Gender and Identity—"more simply human"

If art is not to be life enhancing, what is it to be? Half the world is feminine—why is there resentment about female-oriented art? Nobody asks The Tale of Genji to be masculine! Women certainly learn a lot from books oriented toward a masculine world. Why is not the reverse also true? Or are men really so afraid of women's creativity (because they are not themselves at the centre of creation and cannot bear children)? Why does a woman writer of genius evoke murderous rage and must be brushed aside with a sneer as "irrelevant?" (Sarton, 1973, p. 43)

> And now we who are writing women and strange monsters
> Still search our hearts to find the difficult answers
> Still hope that we may learn to lay our hand
> More gently and more subtly on the burning sands.
> To be through what we make more simply human,
> To come to the deep place where poet becomes woman.
>
> (Sarton, 1948, pp. 1686-1687)

In my youth along with girls my age, I was given diaries as birthday gifts, while my brothers were in no way encouraged to engage in this literacy practice. A generation later, my daughter kept journals from the age of ten throughout her adolescence, while my son wrote notes and reflections on pieces of scrap paper that I would find stuffed into his pockets, left on shelves in his room, etc. It may be worth considering the ways in which the tension between the terms "diary" and "journal" with its gendered implications manifests itself in the present generation of learners. I have observed the polarization of

students' responses to journaling assignments along gender lines. Perhaps the roots of these responses to literacy practices can, to some extent, be found in our early years.

I bring in the work of Gannett (1992) who began her discussion of the male and female traditions of journaling by stating: "Language engenders us. This engendering functions at both the micro level of conversation and macro level of institutions. It results in gender difference through socialization and explicit sanction." Gannett noted that women's response to this muting has ranged from "accommodation" through "resistance" and "subversion" (pp. 50-51).

Consonant with this gendered view of discourse, women's speech has been associated with the private sphere, for instance, letters and diaries. While men also wrote diaries, their speech acts were associated with the public domain and their ways of speaking considered superior: "Men have been the creators of public written forms and controlled access to writing and publishing, as well as the evaluation of publishing" (Gannett, 1992, p. 96). Gannett supported this view of men as literary "gatekeepers" by citing examples of well-known male diarists such as Pepys, Samuel Johnson (via James Bothwell), Darwin, and Audubon, while fewer women diarists have enjoyed the same recognition. Furthermore, she pointed out that influential collections of diary writing have been edited and dominated by men, while only a few women such as Virginia Woolf or Anaïs Nin have been recognized through inclusion (p. 118).

What Gannett (1992) called women's "muted discursive status" (p. 128) accounts for their often apologetic approach to writing and "gaps and silences" (p. 128) in their writing. Nevertheless, women did keep journals, which, according to Gannett, "fulfilled the domestic-discourse function of family and social chronicling" (p. 133) and allowed women to "inscribe themselves on the world" (p. 136). While journal writing became an infrequent literary form for men by the twentieth century, both men and women have used the journal for "intellectual empowerment," and as "an aide-memoire, a way to cultivate close observation and careful reflection" (p. 149). The increasingly gendered nature of the journal leaves women and men with "overlapping and complex sets of traditions to draw on" (p. 149). According to Gannett, the problem is that educators

assign journals without exploring these traditions, and that they do not take into account the biases and resistance that may arise due to the gendering of the genre.

Discussing these issues and students' experiences with journaling and their associations with the tension between the terms "journal" and "diary" is one of several recommendations made by Gannett (1992). While focusing primarily on gender and literacy practices in her own research, she acknowledged that "considerable work needs to be done to look carefully at the ways in which class and race and other such critical facets of identity shape or are shaped by diary and journal traditions" (p. 208). While Gannett mentioned black women's diary traditions, perhaps students from the wide range of backgrounds found in contemporary classrooms could be engaged in discussions about diary and journal traditions in non-Western cultures. In addition, an exploration of the gendered nature of discourse in non-Western traditions could form the context for the journal assignment.

2.7.1. Feminist Autobiography Theorizing

In extending this consideration of gendered identity as grounded in social discourses and literacy practices, it is important to acknowledge the work of scholars in feminist autobiography theorizing. Benstock (1988) interrogated the intersection of the self with the private and public, theory and practice, and genre and autobiography in women's writing: "It is a theory of selfhood that is always under examination in analyses of autobiographical writings, whether or not this analysis overtly raises questions as to how selfhood—and in this case female selfhood—is defined" (p. 1).

According to Benstock (1988), the question of where the subject or "I" locates itself in autobiographical writing depends on whether one sees this subject as authoritative or in control of the subject. Benstock posited that women in the patriarchal order have struggled to represent this kind of agentive or authoritative identity. Their autobiographical texts are marked by a decentring or even absence of the self so that "the very requirements of the genre are put into question by the limits of gender" (p. 20). While it is important to point out that such absence and lack of agency can in no way be generalized to all women's autobiographical texts, it may be worthwhile to consider a

range of female voices in a variety of journaling traditions in order to interrogate the link between gender and genre.

Is it authentic self-presence and access to a broader humanity that Sarton (1948) described in her writings? Virginia Woolf wrote in her famous essays, “Shakespeare’s Sister” and “A Room of One’s Own,” about the material barriers and cultural sanctions against women writing. At the outset of a classroom journaling assignment, an exploration of barriers and sanctions may evoke issues of gender and selfhood in autobiographical writing. The discussion may include questions such as who defines our selfhood and who is the “I” that is writing in a journal? Hesford (1999) traced the connections between gender and identity in autobiographical writing and then located this genre in the post-secondary setting to expand on these questions:

> When studying autobiography, we should consider the textual, performative, and institutional frameworks that shape and authorize certain expressions of the self. We must ask: Who is authorized to tell the truth? Whose truth is being told and to whom? (p. 20)

Asking such questions, according to Hesford, could be a way to create community and “positions of resistance” (p. 61).

Smith and Watson (1998) looked at questions of selfhood and agency from the perspective of postcolonial autobiography theory, asking, “How might subjects come to voice outside, or despite, the constraints of Western models of identity?” (p. 28). Linking the tradition of autobiographical writing with the “unified, rational, coherent, autonomous, free, but also white, male, Western” (p. 27) Enlightenment subject, Smith and Watson call for decolonizing modes of autobiography that are “hybrid, marginal, migratory, diasporic, multicultural, minoritized, mestiza, nomadic, and ‘third space’” (p. 29). It is precisely this decolonizing autobiographical mode that Wang (2004) employed as she explored the possibility of a third space where gendered and cultural aspects of self interact and Western and Chinese configurations of identity can dance in “a conflicting hybrid interplay of positioning and displacement” (p. 147).

2.8. Socio-cultural Theorizing of Literacy

In considering the journaling assignments based on a critical decolonizing theoretical framework and that consider aspects of power and identity, it is useful to examine theoretical accounts of literacy proposed by New Literacy Studies, academic literacies, critical literacy, multiliteracies, and Bourdieu's theorizing about language and power. These theories are interconnected and build upon one another as they examine (a) increasing learner diversity, (b) the impact of technologies on learning, and (c) the need to unravel the ways in which literacy, language, and identity are enfolded. It is crucial to acknowledge that while these new literacies frameworks may have differing epistemological starting points, they are fundamentally intertwined. For instance, Bourdieu's concepts of social and cultural capital are central to understanding issues of power, dominant discourses, and identity in institutional settings. Each of the following frameworks, although presented in a separate section, offers perspectives that elaborate the socio-cultural dimensions of literacy practices.

2.8.1. The New Literacies Studies and Academic Literacies

In the 1990s, the New Literacy Studies scholars advanced the theoretical perspective that literacy should not be viewed as a set of functional skills but as a socially situated practice (Gee, 1990; Street, 1995). This is the fundamental distinction of new literacies: the mechanical functions of language and literacy are displaced from the centre of attention and replaced by an emphasis on social, cultural, and ideological dimensions of literacy practices (Gee, 2008). Street (1995) described this position in Social Literacies:

> Within this framework an important shift has been the rejection by many writers of the dominant view of literacy as a "neutral," technical skill, and the conceptualization of literacy instead as an ideological practice, implicated in power relations and embedded in specific cultural meanings and practices. (p. 1)

According to Street (1995), literacy advocates often advance "a very Western-oriented and narrow image of what 'literacy' is, a model based upon the particular uses

and associations of literacy in recent European and North American history" (p. 14). This description of hegemonic views of literacy and literacy practices echoes the approach to print-based reflective practices in academic settings (whether or not the Western tradition of journaling is explicitly stated), leaving the literacy practices of indigenous populations "undervalued and marginalized by the standard being introduced" (p. 15).

Street (1995) advocated acknowledging this colonizing aspect of literacy education and for "sensitivity to indigenous cultures and recognition of the dynamic process of their interaction with dominant cultures and literacies" (p. 44). In addition, he brought attention to the ways in which non-schooled literacies are seen as inferior in the "pedagogization of literacy" and the need to take into account "the many other uses and meanings of literacy evident from the comparative ethnographic literature" (p. 106). If the journal or diary were viewed "in its full range of cognitive, social, interactional, cultural, political, institutional, economic, moral, and historical contexts" (Gee, 2008, p. 2), and students were given the opportunity to discuss the way in which the schooled journal assignment accords with their own everyday and cultural literacy practices, perhaps there could be room for negotiated accommodation.

Street (1995) stated that literacy learning involves not just learning "content" but "process" and "cultural models of identity and personhood" (p. 140), which are directly connected with types of text and literacy practice. With a diverse type of text and writing process such as journaling, there is need of a "critical social practice" that makes "explicit from the outset both the assumptions and the power relations" (p. 141). Gee (2008) affirmed this need in his assertion that individuals are socialized into mainstream discourse practices in a way that can result in a "change of identity and the adoption of a reality set at odds with their own at various points" (p. 88). Gee's influential perspectives on discourse are based on a distinction between discourse with a capital "D" and that with a lower case "d." The former implies "much more than language" (p. 2); rather, it encompasses "ways of behaving, interacting, valuing, thinking, believing, speaking and often reading and writing, that are accepted as instantiations of particular identities" (p. 3). Small "d" discourses include the ways in which people use language and literacy. The kind of writing expected of learners in schooled journals may challenge their cultural ideas of the kind of discourse that is appropriate for individuals in general, and students in an academic setting in particular.

The New Literacy Studies theorizing of the connection between language, culture and discourses sheds a constructive light on the dissonance described above. Also, in drawing instrumental theoretical connections, Lankshear (1997) stated that language is simultaneously "(a) a necessary precondition for culture and cultural process and a consequence of cultural engagement, (b) a medium of culture and cultural process, and (c) a "broker" of cultural process" (p. 11). His defining culture as "the making and sharing of meaning" or "the capacity to create" is seen as a process in which "language is integral and central" (p. 12). Lankshear viewed language and culture as "co-constitutive elements" (p. 25) and the relationship between them as "reciprocal" (p. 24). He described a critical link between culture and language in an individual's socialization in the discourses of his or her society, a link that has important implications for literacy practices:

> Discourses, or forms of life, involve agreed-upon combinations of linguistic and non-linguistic behaviours, values, goals, beliefs, assumptions, and the like, which social groups have evolved and which their members share. The important point is that the language component is inseparable from the other elements in these "combinations." Language is interwoven with them to make up each particular Discourse or form of life. (p. 25)

With this interwoven relationship in mind, it becomes possible to see the necessity of considering the cultural, linguistic, and discoursal dimensions of any literacy practice as it is grounded in language and thus intersects with core components of culture.

Individuals learn to communicate in what Lankshear (1997) referred to as the "Primary Discourses" of their cultures; in addition, they learn "Secondary Discourses," for example, the discourse practices of the academy. Asking learners to write in a journal and engage in "dialogic reflection" (Rolfe, 2006, p. 96) is a practice that will most likely involve their reliance on practices and values of their primary culture, yet having those ways of meaning-making and expression judged by the discourses and language practices of academia sets the scene for unfair evaluation. This is not to say that journaling is not a viable educational tool, rather that the cultural and discoursal dimensions of literacy practices must be taken into account. Lankshear's work provides

a perspective that is foundational to literacy studies, as he describes the salient links that indicate a shift from a functional view of literacies to one that acknowledges the connections between language, cultures, and ideologies.

Lea and Street (1998) brought the New Literacies perspective to the study of academic literacies. They based their research on "the understandings of both academic staff and students about their own literacy practices" (p. 158) in order to demonstrate the ways in which values and meanings are contested and to challenge a deficit view of literacy amongst students. The academic literacies model focuses on many of the issues central to this study:

> It views student writing and learning as issues at the level of epistemology and identities rather than skill or socialization. An academic literacies approach views the institutions in which academic practices take place as constituted in, and as sites of, discourse and power. (p. 159)

Added to this concern with issues of power and identity is an examination of the writing strategies that learners must employ when moving from setting to setting, both within and outside the academy, which involve a range of academic disciplines and workplaces.

2.8.2. Multiliteracies

Expanding upon the scholarly work in the literacy field in the 1990s, Cope and Kalantzis's (2000) Multiliteracies: Literacy Learning and the Design of Social Futures has influenced subsequent studies. Linguistic and cultural diversity and multimodal channels are central in their book. Cope and Kalantzis extended socio-cultural and critical theorizing and advanced new approaches to literacy learning. Their sweeping educational project considers literacy practices as the "basis for a cohesive sociality; a new civility in which differences are used as a productive resource and in which differences are the norm" (p. 15). Cope and Kalantzis and the other researchers who contributed to this generative text interrogated the connection between the local and global and offered concepts such as design and innovative uses of narrative as a basis for innovative literacy practices.

Multiliteracies theorizing challenged the power structures and hegemonic discourse practices of schools described in the previous section. Cope and Kalantzis (2000) noted the pedagogical implications of these shifts:

> Local diversity and global connectedness mean not only that there can be no standard; they also mean that the most important skill students need to learn is to negotiate regional, ethnic, or class-based dialects; cultural discourses; the code switching often to be found within a text among different languages, dialects, or registers; different visual and iconic meanings; and variations in the gestural relationships among people, language, and material objects. (p. 14)

The multiliteracies approach offers a critical view of the interconnections between languages, cultures, and literacies and suggests pedagogical approaches that examine challenging issues of diversity. Following the multiliteracies theorizing, journals can be spaces in which the kind of negotiation described above can occur—one that is inclusive of previously excluded dialects and registers and in which code-switching may be a form of resistance. Central to a multiliteracies approach and journaling practices in contemporary classrooms are the possibility of multimodal channels used in digital journals and blogs in which visual objects, audio clips, and a wide range of design factors can be incorporated.

In their study of a multimodal approach to the study of literary texts, Early and Marshall (2008) described how students with limited English proficiency benefited when they were able to create visual representations of their interpretations. They define "transmediation" as "the generative process of translating meaning from one system of signs to another" (p. 380) and have learners collaboratively create mandalas to represent their learning. The possibilities for applications of multiliteracies approaches to learning are also suggested in Blaeser's (1999) exploration of the relationship between orality and textual practices. Blaeser described the dilemma faced by native authors who move from an oral tradition of story telling and take up the language of the colonizer. This contradiction is inevitable and results in a struggle against established literary practices and what Blaeser called an "Indian discourse" (p. 58) in which code-switching is used as a form of resistance and an attempt is made to "write voices speaking" (p.

61). This type of interplay between culture and language and the possibilities of incorporating orality into text could be the basis of journaling for learners whose second language is English.

2.8.3. Critical Literacy

In her discussion on institutional literacy practices, Cadeiro-Kaplan (2002) stated, “Any methodological approach to what it means to be a ‘literate’ person is based on an ideological construct that is inherently political” (p. 373). Children’s first-language socialization determines their proximity to the dominant language and subsequently their access to various cultural and economic settings (Heath, 1983). The ideologies and practices of schooled literacies are not part of all communities, and the fact that the contemporary classroom is marked by diversity calls for an approach that encourages learners to “critically examine and challenge the content of texts and discourses” (p. 373) at the same time as they bring their own “cultural capital” (Bourdieu, 1997) to their learning.

A progressive ideology based on constructivist and constructionist theorizing, according to Cadeiro-Kaplan (2002), is “politically neutral,” whereas critical literacy is defined as transformational in placing political agendas in the forefront and directly challenging power imbalances (p. 377). There is an inherent risk that non-critical journaling practices may produce voices that parrot the dominant discourse in fear that they will otherwise be dismissed, or voices that go unheard or are critiqued for their variance from dominant discourse styles. Cadeiro-Kaplan described how critical literacy practices can lead to appreciation of the discourse practices of the marginalized and interrogation of the intent of any text. This critical approach involves “critique, dialogue, and reflection on [students’] learning process” (p. 378). Most significantly, Cadiero-Kaplan noted that it works towards “valuing student voice, linguistic diversity, cultural pluralism, and democratic schooling while emphasizing literacy and biliteracy as processes of empowerment” (p. 378).

Luke (2000) affirmed, “[The] project of critical literacy [is] one of access and equity” and that literacy must be relocated “in the visible domains of language and

social life" (p. 459). He cited Gee's (2008) assertion that learners bring "multiple discourse repertoires" to learning, and described the pedagogical challenge in the following manner:

> The practical pedagogical task is about teaching students to use discourses to 'read' and critique other discourses, about developing languages for talking about language, in ways in which those students whose access to multiple discourse (from communities, from diverse cultural backgrounds and life histories) might have been viewed as lacking can be taken as part of their toolkits for making sense of the world—taken and augmented, expanded and blended with new school-based discourses. (p. 459)

Journals could well be such domains where learners' socio-cultural and linguistic repertoires could serve as a starting point for developing critical languages and awareness of discourses. These repertoires might be drawn from forms of family and community-of-origin discourses, popular culture, digital domains, and other hybrid discourse landscapes through which they travel. Graff (2001) stated that seeing the connections between various literacies could lead to "a potentially revolutionary remaking of education" (p. 15). Thus, a learning tool such as journaling can lead to reproduction of discoursal and institutional values and practices or their transformation, depending on the theoretical underpinnings of its use.

2.8.4. Language, Power, and Institutionalized Forms of Linguistic Discrimination

An exploration of the nexus of language and power must take into account the theorizing of Bourdieu (1997), who rejected a structuralist view of language in favour of one that is relational. According to Bourdieu:

> All particular linguistic transactions depend on the structure of the linguistic field, which is itself a particular expression of the structure of the power relations between the groups possessing the corresponding competences (e.g., "genteel" language and the vernacular, or, in a situation of multilingualism, the dominant language and the dominated language). (p. 647)

If the educational institution is the “field,” it is possible to observe how it reflects the “power relations” between post-secondary learners and faculty in its organization. The “linguistic transaction” involves an instructor assigning a learning journal in which learners will reflect; furthermore, the learners are expected to be honest and creative, all the while knowing that their words will be evaluated. The “corresponding competences” that come into play are the discourse practices of the academy and the learners’ own discourse repertoires. In order to understand the ensuing power issues, it is necessary to unpack the concerns inherent in setting out a journaling task and to begin the process by acknowledging: “Language is not only an instrument of communication or even of knowledge, but also an instrument of power” (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 648).

Bourdieu (1997) considered the educational institution to be a key arena of struggle because it is a site of production of “producers and consumers” in society and consequently, the “reproduction of the market on which the value of linguistic competence depends” (p. 652). He stated that in this marketplace, “language is worth what those who speak it are worth” and that languages are not “socially equal” (p. 652). Linguistic dominance is maintained by “the introjections of supervision and corrections which inculcate, if not practical mastery of the linguistic norm, then at least recognition of it” (p. 656). Journaling is unlikely to result in meaningful reflection nor draw upon the strengths of the learners’ toolkit of multiple discourses if the learner is subject to correction aimed at inculcation into legitimate or dominant language practices.

In *Verbal Hygiene*, a trenchant commentary on language and power, Cameron (1995) asserted that prescriptivism and anti-prescriptivism are part of the attempt to define language and are concerned with “value” (p. 9). It is in the “privileged space” of the academic institution, however, that Cameron stated that language is often used for the purpose of “exclusion” and “intimidation,” and that “linguistic bigotry is among the last publicly expressible prejudices left to members of the Western intelligentsia” (p. 12). This sharp critique of hegemonic academic discourses reveals the risky nature of reflective journal writing and its potential for conceptual messiness and linguistic hybridity. It is most often considered to be a textual product of exploration. Extending Hubbs and Brand’s (2005) metaphor of the mirror, it is a kind of bricolage comprised of varying textures and coloured glass, its design elements influenced by a wide range of cultural

contexts and styles. However, according to Cameron, attempts to maintain a “single standard of communication” persist and are based on institutional power, racism, and xenophobia (p. 23).

Morita (2009) explored socialization in academic discourses and the ways in which international students may be prevented from participating in the academy due to their perceived lack of linguistic capital. Morita connected power relations with the structure of the field in terms of “the value-laden nature of academic discourses and centrality of power negotiation to the process of entering and participating in academic communities” (p. 444). Her study examined barriers faced by a Japanese graduate student as he attempts to enter and participate in his doctoral program community in a Canadian university. One of the conclusions reached by Morita is the need for faculty to “socialize themselves and their domestic students into increasingly multilingual and multicultural academic communities” and that “creative means” may be needed to accomplish this socialization (p. 457). Journaling, particularly collaborative journaling, could be such a means.

Theorizing that interrogates the relationship between language and power in academia influences the research of Morgan (2008). He considered the challenges of “fostering the role of transformative practitioner for critical EAP [English for academic purposes]” (p. 86) in an academic milieu that typically assumes an “uncritical stance regarding content . . . compounded by dominant discourses of neutrality and scientificity in many academic fields” (p. 89). Morgan described what he considered to be crucial elements in fostering transformation. These elements, according to Morgan, do not lie in texts or instructions alone but must be part of a “co-constructed alignment or shared opportunity dependent as well on a student’s specific needs, memories, and abilities—at a given moment—to perceive and utilize this meaning potential in order to realize particular self-directed goals, transformative or otherwise” (p. 91). This element of co-construction and awareness of individual factors that affect the learner may help to redress the power imbalance. “Multiple readings of texts” are necessary “for students to construct their own critical insights across texts and across lessons” (p. 91). Along with the elements of reflection and collaboration, this criterion could underlie journaling practices that support the learning of a diverse student population.

2.9. Summary

The approach to the literature survey has been to interweave autobiographical details, theory, and practice in ways that problematize issues of identity and power when considering the use of journals in schools. Poststructuralist theorizing challenges humanist notions of identity as unified, stable, and knowing, while the interconnected facets of culture, language, and gender bear particular consideration when examining the ways in which literacy practices affect learners and vice-versa. New literacies theorizing offers ways to re-conceptualize the pedagogical underpinnings of literacy practices and processes. By taking into account learner diversity and ever increasing multimodal channels of communication and expression.

Chapter 3.

Methodology

I think what we are seeing are efforts to map an intermediate space we can't quite define yet, a borderland between passion and intellect, analysis and subjectivity, ethnography and autobiography, art and life. (Behar, 1996, p. 14)

Writing cultural accounts, like interacting with a trusted comrade, can and should feel intimate, imaginative, and dialogic. (Berry, 2006, p. 2)

My life began on a farm near Aberdeen Sask., (S.W. ¼. sec. 3, top. 39, Rgs. 3 W 3rd) on December 29, 1905. Born of Dutch parents who had come from Russia in their childhood, I could speak nothing but Low German (a sort of dialect) until I was 9 years of age and went to Friedland School, where I learned my first English.My attendance was fairly regular till I was 14, and, in my eighth grade, work was considered before school so I stayed at home to help on the farm. At 22 I felt the need of further education and completed my Grade VIII in Aberdeen, at the same time as my brother Wm, who was 13 years old. The ambition to continue for the teaching profession was kindled during this first year. Grade IX and X were completed in the next year at Rosthern G. E. A. and Grade XII at Aberdeen the following year. With many privations I was successful in passing Grade XII the year of 1931-32. Normal School training 1932-33 prepared me for that much-coveted position of teacher. That spring I was able to secure the position of teacher in my own home district—Friedland. My marriage with Margaret Peters took place July 12, 1934 at Margaret's home. John Arnold, born Aug. 3, 1935. Marvin David, born Sept. 17, 1936, Willard Daniel, born March 27, 1938. (Boschman, J., 1938)

Ein Shones Lande

(for grandfather, John Cornelius Boschman)

(i) September 14, 1940
"Sunday night. A big beautiful moon in the south-east,
an occasional dog rude enough to break the peaceful night
with its hideous yelp. Looking up at the star-spattered sky,
moon, a silent shepherd watching star-sheep,
I can't help believing *Dort uber jinem Sternmeer*,
Dar ist ein shones Lande."

(ii) April 4, 2004
sunday night. rain intones a timeless psalm,
falls far from the prairie another migration
but your words revisit me here.
widower, left with three small boys,
school teacher unable to profess
anything but your sorrow. those sunday nights
bombs dropped over europe,
you imagined grievous losses across the ocean,
while your own pain stained these pages.
tonight alone, too, without moon or star-sea,
i hear how hiss of your gaslight chorales with coastal
cloudburst in a language i had almost lost.

(Boschman, L., 2009)

Trans. of German: "Over beyond that sea of stars, there
lies a beautiful land."

3.1. Auto-ethnography

Since childhood, I have kept some form of a diary or journal and journaling continues to be an integral part of my practice as a poet. However, the observation that a journal could be personally significant or even transformative, came to me in the form of my paternal grandparents' collaboratively kept diary, along with earlier diaries my grandfather had kept prior to their marriage. Many people are curious about the lives of their forebears and I am no different. This text filled in for me not only family history but a gap created by the accidental death of my grandmother in 1940. She left behind her three young sons and a grieving husband who recorded his struggle to carry on as a

single parent, a teacher, and a community member. Having sensed that her loss reverberated through generations, this gap was partially filled when, in my late teens, I was able to read her journal entries and my grandfather's descriptions of her and their life together as well as his eventual re-marriage. I begin this section with a personal tracing of my own relationship to journaling as a way of beginning to locate myself in the research as researchers are inevitably "to some degree connected to, or part of, the object of their research" (Davis, 2008, p. 3).

While it is difficult to find agreement on the definition of auto-ethnography, the idea is often advanced that in qualitative research the researcher's own identity, experiences, and values are not absent but rather implicated in his or her observations and interpretations of social phenomena (Davis, 1999; Heath & Street, 2008). Thus, reflexivity at this point takes the form of giving an account of my relationship to the subject under study as I began to do early in this chapter. While rejecting the notion that the connection between the ethnographer's personal interests and choice of research subjects and sites is either practically or theoretically a new one, Atkinson (2006) stated, "The autobiographical has been an element of ethnographic imagination for almost as long as social scientists have been engaged in such work" (p. 401). The nature of this integration is tied to the principle that governs an ethnographic understanding of social life, that being the "homology between the social actors who are being studied and the social actor who is making sense of their actions" (p. 402).

Both the personal and educational journaling practices I have engaged in throughout my life make me a "social actor" deeply implicated in the subject of my research. In some cases, I have received similar literacy traditions and artefacts to those participants included in this study, and in other cases, vastly different ones. These similarities and differences are significant, and I cannot stand completely apart from the subject or the participants. As Atkinson (2006) asserted, "[I am] implicated in the phenomena." Moreover, the data collections and interpretations I engage in are "co-constructed with informants" (p. 402) as we dialogue and question meanings together.

This understanding of researcher positioning underlies the concept of reflexivity. Atkinson (2006) made a salient connection between reflexivity and imagination when he

stated, “The ethnographer’s interpretation of phenomena is always something that is crafted through an ethnographic imagination” (p. 402). As with Greene (2009) and Tuhiwai Smith (1999), Atkinson’s sense of imagination implies a making (crafting) that is collaborative. The imaginative dimension of auto-ethnography implies that (a) I as researcher cannot know all the answers, and (b) the conclusions I may offer do not take the form of objective fact-based accounts of social reality. Rather, in the manner of an artist, I co-create understandings and provisional interpretations by forging new connections between myself and research participants, between the past and the present, between disparate theories, stretching beyond and returning to the familiar ground of my experience, which becomes in the process, unfamiliar.

Besides the complex dialogic relationship between researcher and research participants, there is the presence of a significant third party who can offer direct input—that of audience and reader. According to Berry (2006), “Audience members of auto-ethnography are made aware of our implicated status in both enriching and distressing ways” (p. 9). In the exchange that ideally follows from an encounter with auto-ethnography, audience members can engage in a process of reinterpretation and re-examination of fundamental values. In turn, through the responses they receive, auto-ethnographers can become “more self-aware” and “self-confrontational” (p. 10). This is a different self-awareness than the charge of self-absorption sometimes brought against researchers who engage in auto-ethnography. Four Arrows (Don Trent Jacobs) (2008) pointed out that the gaze of auto-ethnography is never one way because the researcher is simultaneously “turning the ethnographic gaze inward on the self (auto), while maintaining the outward gaze of ethnography—looking at the larger context wherein self-experiences occur” (p. 190).

3.2. Law—Method Assemblage and Kincheloe—Bricolage

In *After Method: Mess in Social Science Research*, Law (2004) advocated for methodological reform. He challenged the basic ontological and epistemological tenets of social science research. Law stressed the impossibility of certainty and generalizability and proposes the possibilities of “slow method, or vulnerable method, of quiet method. Multiple method. Modest method. Uncertain method. Diverse method” (p.

11). The reformed ontological position that he described is one in which the essence of being, thought, and social reality is characterized by indefiniteness and instability. It is one in which processes cannot be fully grasped, and the methods and metaphors that we create must reflect this condition. Research methods, following Law's ontological positioning, must be based on a ways of understanding that are open-ended and varied. These approaches to knowing must be ways of "trying to open space for the indefinite" (p. 6). It is really a complete remaking of methods that Law proposed:

> To do this we will need to unmake many of our methodological habits, including: the desire for certainty; the expectation that we can usually arrive at more or less stable conclusions about the way things really are; the belief that as social scientists we have special insights that allow us to see further than others into certain parts of social reality; and the expectations of generality that are wrapped up in what is often called "universalism." (p. 9)

According to Law, "method assemblage" is based on the vision of research described above and allows for "multiplicity, indefiniteness, and flux" (p. 14). The attempt to create metaphors that reflect these qualities is not easy but necessary, according to Law (2004), who uses Serres's (1980) image of islets and archipelagos to capture the sense of transformation caused by the wearing away of the sea. In this process, connections are not obvious and any sense of fixity and right answers must be relinquished. The choosing of metaphors conditions the response to what is present and what patterns will resonate and be chosen, even as the corresponding methods allow for indefiniteness, pluralism, and the unknown (p. 117). Although Law's ideas about method are most often aligned with actor-network theory, I bring them into this study because they resonate with the exploratory and discursive nature of the journal.

Kincheloe (2001), who also called for multiple methods, took into account complexity and indefiniteness. In tracing the background of the term "bricolage," Kincheloe described how Lincoln and Denzin (2000) used it in the same manner as Levi-Strauss (1961) to denote the use of any tools that come to hand in completing a task (p. 680). He pointed out that the term can "also imply the fictive and imaginative elements of the presentation of all formal research" (p. 680). Along with this, Kincheloe stated that

social science is in a state of upheaval and its “socially constructed” and “value-laden” nature has been exposed (p. 681). He described the epistemological factors that bricoleurs must keep in mind:

> As bricoleurs recognize the limitations of a single method, the discursive strictures of one disciplinary approach, what is missed by traditional practices of validation, the historicity of certified modes of knowledge production, the inseparability of knower and known, and the complexity and heterogeneity of all human experience, they understand the necessity of new forms of rigor in the research process. (p. 681)

In response to these factors, this study employs methods that span a range of disciplines and researcher reflexivity, and attends to complexity of method and object of inquiry.

According to Kincheloe (2001), any object of inquiry must be seen as part of a context and through the lens of “perspectival variety” (p. 682). Superficiality is avoided through what he calls “a dialectic of disciplinarity” (p. 684); in other words, the understanding of how disciplinary boundaries and paradigms are constructed. What this means for researchers is (a) an “awareness of the diverse tools in the researcher’s tool box” (p. 685), (b) attending to the unique qualities of the object of inquiry, and (c) avoidance of standardization. Furthermore, by attending to the importance of difference, which is cultivated in bricolage through use of diverse forms of research, more complex understandings are gained in terms of subject, society, and educational domains (p. 687). With its connection to the fields of history, literature, anthropology and education, the journal invites multiple perspectives and methodological frames and tools.

3.3. Lyric Inquiry

While acknowledging the pitfalls of arts-based inquiry that may be “self-indulgent” and reflect “a “lack of attention to aesthetics,” poet and literacy scholar Glenn (2008) described the quality and purpose of such inquiry, especially lyric inquiry, as follows:

> Lyric inquiry marries lyric expression with research. It is a methodology that acknowledges the role of the expressive and poetic in inquiry and in the aesthetics of communicating the results of such inquiry, regardless of discipline. Lyric inquiry acknowledges the processes and demands, as well as the tropes, conventions, semiotic and sensory interplay involved in the creation of an aesthetic work. To engage in this inquiry is to engage in all manner of non-rationalist writing—narrative, poetry, fiction and creative non-fiction, journals, prose poetry, dialogue, and monologue (among other forms usually thought of as written artistic expression) to explore for oneself and to communicate to others an issue, dilemma, or phenomenon. (p. 108)

Having written poetry for several years and integrated it in many forms into my practice as an educator, I turn to it in this dissertation not as a personally favoured and familiar way with language but rather to evoke vulnerability, uncertainty, multiplicity, and embodied meanings. The poems of others and my own poems in various forms are not offered as "proof, as with our conventional practices in social science, but as illumination and connection" (p. 108). In attending to the aesthetic possibilities of language, I hope to make space for imagination, resonance, and intimacy in this study.

In her exploration of resonance, poet and philosopher Zwicky (1992; 2011) described this concept as a "root metaphor" (p. 33). By the inclusion of lyric elements in this text, an effort is made to avoid a mechanical progression through the various components; rather, a deeper integration of parts is sought. Quotations at the beginning of sections, poems, and journal entries are intended to quietly evoke connections in the manner Zwicky described: "To sound an utterance in a resonant thought-structure is, among other things, to produce sympathetic vibrations of varying intensities throughout—to cause other utterances to sound, some faintly, some more" (p. 33). The lyrically expressed ideas of poet Hirshfield (1997) and philosopher Serres (1997) are also brought in to this study to contribute to this sense of resonance.

Lyric inquiry contributes to a different sense of endings. Rather than concluding with finality or determinacy, it may be possible to open up spaces in which more questions may germinate, for there are always more questions. Glenn (2008) asserted

that lyric inquiry "asks back with questions that touch on the emotional, the psychological, the philosophical, the spiritual, and the ethical, as well as aesthetic" (p. 109). The forms of lyric inquiry that I use such as narratives, journal entries, prose poems, and lyric poems may correspond to those "techniques of deliberate imprecision" (p. 3) described by Law (2004) as he challenges the academy's dominant theme of "knowing." Law's concern with the generative potentiality of metaphor is echoed in the practice of lyric inquiry. Through the discursive means of lyric inquiry, I offer related experience, conceptual possibilities and zesty questions that arise from the dark, rich loam of imaginative compost.

3.4. Mixed Ethnography

The use of personal narrative with the tropes of poetry does not imply indeterminacy, obscurity, and solipsism as outcomes, or that this study will produce results that have no bearing on others. Rather, I align this research with the transformative goals of critical ethnography. Thus, elucidating the aims of critical ethnography to bring about social justice and dialogue, Madison (2012) asserted, "*Critical* ethnography is always a meeting of multiple sides in an encounter with and among others, one in which there is negotiation and dialogue toward substantial and viable meanings that make a difference in others' worlds" (p. 10).

This interest in multiplicity and dialogue accords with Glenn's (2008) assertion that through poetic inquiry the researcher can come to know more deeply how we are "singular and connected" (p. 110). Anderson (2006) echoed the way that this connectivity "entails self-conscious introspection guided by a desire to better understand both self and others through examining one's actions and perceptions in reference to and dialogue with those of others" (p. 382). Anderson laid out the possibility of such reflexivity comprising part of analytic auto-ethnographic research that engages with theoretical understandings while offering "distinctively grounded opportunities to pursue the connections between biography and social structure" (p. 390). Similarly, Chang (2008) stressed the analytic aspect of auto-ethnography:

> Like ethnographers, auto-ethnographers attempt to achieve cultural understanding through analysis and interpretation. In other words, auto-ethnography is not about focusing on self alone, but about searching for understanding of others (culture and society) through self. (pp. 48-49)

Thus, I interweave theoretical accounts with my own experience and those of study participants, exploring the ways in which "cultural meanings" are "constituted in conversation, action, and text" (Anderson, p. 383).

This methodology corresponds with the theoretical framework outlined in the previous chapter by interrogating the intersections of my own and others' socio-cultural, linguistic and literacy backgrounds. The goal of this research is to discover decolonizing and emancipatory approaches to academic literacy tools such as the classroom journal. Informed by Law's (2004) concept of method assemblage and Kincheloe's (2001) bricolage, auto-ethnography combined with lyric inquiry corresponds with the multiple and varied discoursal elements of the journal. The mixed ethnographic research design of this study is intended to encompass both researcher experience and what Pratt (1991) identified as "interests, histories, and attitudes of others; experiments in transculturation and collaborative work" (p. 6). Rather than identifying systematic procedures or fixed interpretations, the study explores theoretical underpinnings and experiences that indicate how a classroom literacy practice could either prevent or precipitate open-ended and empowering explorations of identity and learning.

3.5. Site and Participant Selection Process

The picture of method starts to shift. The argument is no longer that methods *discover* and depict realities. Instead, it is that they participate in the *enactment* of those realities. It is also that method is not just a more or less complicated set of procedures or rules, but a bundled hinterland. This stretches through skills, instruments and statements (*in-here* enactments of previous methods) through the *out-there* realties so descried, into a ramifying and indefinite set of relations, places and assumptions that disappear from view. (Law, 2004, p. 44)

In his description of method assemblage, Law (2004) signalled the constitutive and multiple nature of method and inquired into the nature of research findings that ensued. In order to do so, he described a study carried out by Mol (2000) into the treatment of atherosclerosis in a hospital in the Netherlands. What emerged were many different versions of this condition, depending on the site and diagnostic methods. Each research site, then, is its own "method assemblage" that produces its own version of the phenomena under study. In pointing this out, Law stated that multiplicity is different from pluralism or fragmentation of reality but rather "different realities *overlap and interfere with one another.* Their relations, partially co-ordinated, are complex and messy" (p. 61).

In considering this spectre of a multitude of overlapping possibilities and interpretations, the approach of parcelling out a research design into discreet categories of site, participants, and methods becomes problematic; yet, that is the usual order of business. Although identifying one post-secondary institution and two campuses would be the obvious way to begin this section, the sites for this research actually comprise a complex web of cyberspace, public transportation, formal institutional spaces, informal institutional locations, and shared and private habitations of space. I chose to carry out my research with students and faculty in the education department at a university in British Columbia for reasons of access; ironically, access to sites and participants often proved to be challenging.

The major consideration in terms of site selection was my concentration on academic literacies and thus the need to conduct the research in a post-secondary institution, one composed of a myriad of ever-shifting "relations, places and assumptions" (Law, 2004, p. 45) where I would have access to both undergraduate and graduate students in education programs. Access to the sites was officially granted through the ethics review process. While I lived in Vancouver when the research was initiated, after one year I relocated to Vancouver Island. Thus, the reading of related materials, mental planning, preparation of documents, and discussions with students and faculty took place at and between these two campuses and on a range of transportations modes from personal auto, bus, sky train, ferry, and floatplane as I travelled between home and Vancouver. Each locale in this dispersion resembled a "bundled hinterland"(p. 45) with its own complex amalgam of materiality and

communicative channels that affected perceptual and temporal aspects of the research process.

In terms of participant selection, I hoped to locate learners who would have a range of experiences with classroom journaling, if not in primary and secondary school, then at least in their post-secondary studies. A wide enough range of learners would mean that some of them would have had experiences with personal journaling practices.

Although I was working for ten months as a curriculum developer and lead instructor for the Stepping Stones project, I had reservations about approaching the program coordinator to discuss the possibility of using the program as a site. The program curriculum is based on a de-colonizing learning framework and contains statements about how research on Aboriginal peoples has been exploitative (Stepping Stones, 2013). This material, I had observed, evoked strong emotional responses in many of the learners. I did not want to trigger such conflicted emotions by asking for permission to conduct research, even if it was framed by a de-colonizing approach, following ethical protocols. The degree of trauma was an important consideration and I thought it would be possible to bring aspects of social justice into my research without involving the participants in this project.

In the meantime, my supervisor suggested that, as a research assistant for a new M.Ed. program, I could base my doctoral research on this group. The research for the program concerned the application of program material to the learners' professional lives, and the learners would reflect and share instances of these connections. To elucidate these connections, the learners were to keep journals throughout the two-year program. This process of reflection connected directly with my interest in journaling. I first went to meet the cohort in October 2011 with my supervisor to be introduced as a site assistant and to touch on the subject of journaling. We went to the classroom and the meeting was cordial and brief. The learners briefly introduced themselves and I did likewise.

3.5.1. Trapped Inside the Medicine Wheel

My next meeting with this group took place a few months later. It was thought that the required journaling would need some elaboration and that the learners might need some support in the form of my visiting them to discuss approaches to journaling. At that point, my supervisor and I discussed the possibility of my including the cohort in my own research. It was understood that all the learners had signed the consent form to participate in the program research. When I met with them the second time, I immediately detected a mood that was vastly different from the first visit. Because the first meeting had been so brief and I could not recall their names, I suggested that we begin with a round of introductions. To my surprise, the suggestion was rebuffed and through cross-talk and asides, I gained the impression that there was confusion and some resistance to journaling, although my understanding was that it constituted both a course requirement and research activity to which they had all voluntarily signed on.

I had prepared a two-sided handout that included definitions and descriptions of reflection, approaches, and benefits; this document was not in any way meant to be prescriptive but rather to spark discussion. In the uncertain atmosphere, I clung to the handout as to a lifebuoy. Still, my commentary was met with assertions that busy professionals did not have time for journaling. More importantly, they did not understand how it fitted with the requirements of the program. At one point in this confusing verbal mêlée, with the tension rising steadily in the room, one learner declared, “I would carry out any program requirement if the purpose was clear but in this case, I just don’t see the point.” As my rapport with the group and grasp of their program requirements was becoming shakier by the moment, I decided to explore the possible benefits of journaling through the main pedagogical framework of the Stepping Stones project—the Medicine Wheel. While I drew the Medicine Wheel on the whiteboard, I could hear disgruntled whispering behind me. My commentary on the interrelated cognitive, emotional, physical, and spiritual components of learning was met with seeming indifference. Beginning to break into a cold sweat and feeling totally bewildered, I simply ran out of ideas that could help to ameliorate the growing sense of dissonance and bid a hasty good-bye. On leaving the campus, I remarked to my partner that I did not think things would work out. In an attempt to clarify, he asked, “You mean including this cohort

as research participants?" to which I replied, "No, I mean my research—period!" I was deeply discouraged by this encounter.

Over the next eighteen months, curricular issues in the M.Ed. program, my role and the parameters of the journaling requirements became clearer, and each meeting with the cohort became easier. A couple of months later, I returned and gave an in-depth presentation on my own connection to journaling including personal history, theoretical and pedagogical interests and applications. In the beginning the haziness of my role as site assistant, research assistant, and doctoral student researcher caused uncertainty. When it came time to conduct the focus group discussions with the learners, the fact that I was not one of their instructors perhaps allowed for more open-ended and frank explorations, and the earlier confusion about journaling became an interesting focus of our discussions.

A second group of learners was included in this study after I had been their instructor for Educ 820 Contemporary Issues in Curriculum and Pedagogy, a graduate seminar. A journal had been one of the assignments in this course and I had shared with this group my interest in academic literacy practices and, in particular, the learning journal. The approach to the journal evolved over the semester but early on in class the practice of journaling, followed by sharing in pairs or with the class as a whole, sparked interesting discussions and strongly influenced social relations and perspectives on the topic of discussions. I noted many of my observations regarding journaling in this course in my field notes.

3.5.2. Background Noise

The other population that I wished to include in my research was instructors in the education department. I felt it would be important to find out about their theoretical understandings, assignment rubrics, and personal experiences with journaling, so I sent out several solicitation letters. After three months of receiving polite and thoughtful messages declining participation on the basis of busy schedules and perceived lack of connection to the topic, I was feeling discouraged and stalled. On May 18, 2013, while volunteering at a Faculty of Education *Learning Together* conference, I had several

conversations about my research interests with faculty and students that resulted in the possibility of two interviews with faculty members. Both had an interest in reflective practice and, in one case, a great deal of experience with journaling in academic settings in two countries.

In one instance, because of facility problems in the Education Building, the interview was carried out in a pub on campus. I was somewhat surprised at the noise level at 11:00 a.m. as we shouted at times over the ambient pub din of voices and music but I was grateful for the opportunity to conduct the interview (and that I had spent the extra money on a high quality voice recorder). In the other instance, the interview was carried out in the faculty member's office, as she stated that everywhere she had worked as an educator (Canada was the third country), there were always facility problems in the Education Building so this was nothing new. During the course of the interview, the faculty member's son called her three times because he had misplaced his key and was locked out of their home. The other interview was carried out with a sessional faculty member by phone. With each interview, despite the logistical challenges, the background mental noise of doubts about the worth or viability of my research diminished.

3.6. Data Collection Methods

To be sure, readers often speak of the *validity* of the work of ethnographers in terms of whether the situation and scenes depicted come alive or not. In methodological terms, the basis of this judgment relies on the extent to which ethnographers convey *co-occurrence* through rich details of time, space, artefacts, and interactants. Central to such co-occurrence is communication—whether gestural, musical, dramatic, or verbal. Visual and performative dimensions of communication have to ring true in terms of interlocutors as well as audience and eavesdroppers. (Heath & Street, 2008, pp. 45-46)

My data collection methods included semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, document analysis, surveys, and field notes. Each method functions within its own nexus of interactions, and by its communicative and material exigencies constitutes its own versions of the subject (Law, 2004). These methods allow for

triangulation of the data and are interconnected; there are reverberations between them that I try to capture. The interviews were carried out with two faculty of education instructors and one sessional instructor over a period of eight months. The focus group discussions took place with the M.Ed. cohort in two groups separated by a period of four months. The surveys were distributed amongst the learners in Educ 820 after the course had ended and grades submitted. The document analysis is based on entries from my own, my grandfather's, and a learner participant's journals, as well as a found text. My own field notes were kept in the form of a reflexive journal, noting details, resources, and observations in the context of the various "hinterlands" over a period of three years from the time I began to consider a topic for my research through the first drafting of this dissertation.

3.6.1. Interviews—Opening Windows

Interviews constitute one of the most effective forms of collaboration, referred to earlier. They are a fertile ground for exploring intersections of personal and professional identity, along with the entangled strands of culture, language, and literacy practices. Devising questions before the interview is necessary for research design and ethics approval, and use of the script is tied into notions of validity; however, conversations inevitably take their own course. On a consistent basis, I circled back from wherever the conversation had taken us to the next question on the script, only to then embark on another exploration. This discursive flexibility is what the "semi" in semi-structured interviews implies. Madison (2012) described the interpersonal aspects of the semi-structured interview as follows:

> The beauty of this method of interviewing is in the complex realms of individual subjectivity, memory, yearnings, polemics, and hope that are unveiled and inseparable from shared and inherited expressions of communal strivings, social history, and political possibility. The interview is a window to individual subjectivity and collective belonging: *I am because we are, and we are because I am.* (p. 28)

Each interview question somehow invited an exploration of the intersections between personal experience and the subject. Each interview response consisted of a combination of personal history and topical commentary.

In addition to the ideas, experiences, and personal history shared by the interviewees, one of the most valuable resources was their time. As mentioned earlier, it was not logistically easy for me to set up the interviews, and the physical environment and technology affected each interview differently. In addition to the logistical factors that are at times awkward to navigate, issues of identity and power affect the relationship between interviewer and interviewee. For instance, the student interviewing a faculty member may be hesitant to "dig" more deeply into personal background or issues of praxis. Issues of cultural identity and language may be overshadowed by practicality and fact-based information and thus, not explored deeply enough. I tried to formulate questions ranging through behaviour and experience, opinion and value, emotions and knowledge (Madison, 2012). My hope is that the rich conversations provide worthwhile considerations of this subject.

My interview questions were formulated as I worked through my initial study details. My supervisor, who offered input, then checked them. Finally, they were included in my ethics proposal. In addition to the interview script, I had a faculty solicitation letter, and each faculty member was given the consent form before the interview. In each case, I initially spoke informally with the interviewee in order to establish rapport. Then I signalled that I would turn on the voice recorder to begin the formal interview. Each interview lasted between thirty and forty-five minutes.

3.6.2. Focus Group Discussions—Inaugurating the Dialogue

My interest in dialogical process sparked a strong interest in the potential of the focus group as a data collection method. All the discursive relational potential of a shared space and time for engaging with the topic held promise that interesting observations, experiences, and views might result in deeper understanding. In elucidating my approach and thinking about the focus group discussions, I drew on Giroux (2009) and Freire (2007) because they described the "principles of dialogue" that

I hoped would frame the discussions (Giroux, p. 454). Although there was a question script that was used in each case, the number of participants (five learners), diverse in terms of their background, indicated that the discussion could go in innumerable directions.

Although each discussion began with some degree of formality because the question script was summarized, the learners were encouraged to engage in the dialogue as social actors who had authority or authorship over their own experience (Giroux, 2007). Their voices overlapped and circled around the questions. Giroux described how "the concept of voice represents the unique instances of self-expression through which students affirm their own class, cultural, racial, and gender identities" (p. 454). While learners are, no doubt, accustomed to engaging in class discussions, they may be affected by an awareness that they are evaluated in terms of the substantiality of their comments; in other words, the "class participation" mark may drive their input and impact their voice. Therefore, there may be a sense of artificiality about the dialogue that ensues in the classroom, which stems from perceptions of judgment and evaluation. The possible means of classroom discussion may be prescribed by these perceptions or the possible channels of what Giroux described as "the category of voice," which he stated, "refers to the means at our disposal—the discourses available to use—to make ourselves understood and listened to, and to define ourselves as active participants in the world" (p. 454). I was conscious of the fact that these discussions did not take place in neutral spaces but I endeavoured to open up the discussion to a wide range of discourse.

In the focus group discussions, I tried to allow space for the topics and directions that would emerge in the group and to find a balance between following the question script and free-flowing discussion. Freire (2009) provided a description of this process:

> The investigation of what I termed the people's "thematic universe"—the complex of their "generative themes"—inaugurates the dialogue of education as the practice of freedom. The methodology of that investigation must likewise be dialogical, affording the opportunity to discover generative themes and to stimulate people's awareness in regard to these themes. Consistent with the

> liberating purpose of dialogical education, the object of the investigation is not persons (as if they were anatomical fragments), but rather the thought-language with which men and women refer to reality, the levels at which they perceive that reality, and their view of the world, in which their generative themes are found. (pp. 96-97)

Although I tried to create a free and dialogical framework, the discussions were held in the institutional setting in a limited time frame.

The focus group discussions were held on the M.Ed. cohort program days, and learners chose whether or not to participate. In each case, I spent time providing background in terms of both the program and my personal research. I would tell the learners when I turned on the voice recorder and they understood that anonymity was ensured. I engaged at times in the dialogue by asking clarifying questions but mostly listened between asking scripted and clarifying questions to probe the themes that were emerging.

3.6.3. Survey

The survey (Appendix 2) was distributed to the learners in the Educ 820 course after the course was completed. The questions are similar to those discussed in the focus group discussions and intended to gain a snapshot of their experience with academic journaling. In fact, the learner participants who completed the surveys elaborated on their responses so that this data collection method became a richer source of information than originally expected.

3.6.4. Document Analysis

The documents used in this study consisted of journal excerpts and found text. Analysis of these documents helped to further an understanding of the subject by providing examples of the phenomenon under discussion. In the case of the learner journal excerpt, one longer text was chosen as opposed to several shorter excerpts in order to probe the possibilities of identity exploration, emotional engagement in learning, and potential for transformation.

3.6.5. Field Notes—Researcher Reflexive Journal

From the time that I began exploring possible topics for this dissertation, I kept field notes; this was in addition to my personal journaling practice. However, since I have kept a personal journal for decades, inevitably, my approaches to field notes overlapped with my personal journaling practice. Moving between visual and print literacy practices, I began to map out prospective topics in diagrams and concept trees. Listing is a common practice in my journaling. I kept notes of interesting comments made in class discussion and seminal passages that I came across in books and articles. The American poet Snyder (2013) described how he looks for poems “that see the moment, that play freely with what's given” (website). For me, a journal is a space in which to be present and to play, and playing in the often-serious discoursal ground of theory helps me to loosen up conceptually and see my subject from a new angle.

I kept notes during phone and face-to-face conversations with my supervisor, faculty members, and interview and focus group participants. Note keeping also took place during data collection sessions in addition to recording. Basically, I tried to be open to the field of possible ideas, perceptions, opinions, and experiences connected to my topic.

3.7. Ethics

Ethical considerations were in the background from the beginning of this study, as codes of ethics and ethical standards were discussed in the methodology courses taken in my program. In addition, I was familiar with the issues and importance of protocols from the curriculum of the Stepping Stones program. A concern arose when I first thought of including the M.Ed. cohort in my study. At that point, I was hired as a research assistant and had been part of discussions about the process of consent and the focus of the program research, which was mainly concerned with program evaluation and development.

Since there was already some confusion about that research and my early connection to the topic of journaling had been somewhat rocky, I was hesitant to broach

the subject of my own research. When I did, however, it was with the intent to make clear that participation was voluntary. The program research and my research did dovetail, but the parameters of both were made clear. Confidentiality is ensured by use of pseudonyms.

This project underwent a process of review by the university ethics department. I attended a presentation that the ethics manager made to students in my program. From learning about the application procedures at that presentation, I was able to ask questions over a period of a few months, as I prepared my study details and the other related documents. The consent form (included in the appendices) gives a brief overview of the study, its subject, questions, and goals, and the benefits of the study as well of participation in the study. It informs potential participants of procedures for ensuring anonymity, storage of data, and long-term contact with me as researcher. Sample documents are included in appendices of this study.

3.8. Data Analysis

- Organize documents and visual data;
- Transcribe texts, e.g., focus group and interviews;
- Read through the data;
- Code the data;
- Assign labels to codes;
- Group codes into themes and/or categories;
- Interrelate themes (or categories) or abstract to smaller set of themes;
- Represent findings in discussions of themes or categories;
- Assess how the research questions were answered;

- Compare the findings with the literature;
- Reflect on the personal meaning of the findings;
- State new questions based on the findings;
- Triangulate data; and
- Check for the accuracy of the data. (Cresswell, 2011, p. 205)

The procedures listed above are “recommended data analysis procedures” (p. 205) for qualitative studies. In the case of this qualitative study, an inductive approach was followed, and the grounded nature of the study made for a flexible application of these procedures. Coding of data was not based on a formal system but rather involved reading and re-reading the focus group transcripts, interview transcripts and the surveys to discern themes that emerged from these data sets. From there, sub-themes were identified and the discussion or presentation was drafted. Accuracy was enhanced through discussion with and feedback from supervisory committee members who asked additional questions.

3.9. Limitations

The study is intended to explore the pedagogical underpinnings, risks, and benefits of the learning journal assignment in the academy. In positioning myself as a student, educator, and writer who has kept various kinds of journal, I consider my own experience in an exploration of the relationships between culture, language, and literacy practices. The auto-ethnographic data is considered along with that gathered from participants. The participant sample size is small, and the results are meant to represent only a small cross-section of the university population, although the intention is to suggest a range of ways in which the journaling assignment can be expanded and polished, depending on context.

Initially, my relationship to the learners was fraught with confusion because I had been introduced to them as a research and site assistant. My own interest in learning journals was elucidated as time went on and I attempted to explain how their participation in my study would contribute to a deeper understanding of this pedagogical tool.

My long-standing experience with journaling, both personally and professionally, may be viewed as a form of researcher bias. I view this study as grounded, however, in that I am looking at the theory and findings as to how I would or would not use journals in the future as an educator. That is, I am aware that I have assumptions about journaling and attempt to uncover and examine them within the scope of this study, as it is intended to follow an inductive trajectory.

Chapter 4.

Research Findings—Learner Participants

The idea of the *knower and known* is provocative in its implication of identifying who knows and who is striving to know. As ethnographers, our knowing is always leveraged by a level of unknowing that we struggle to fill by asking the knowers. (Madison, 2012, p. 79)

4.1. Introduction to Research Findings

This research examines journaling in an academic context. It also examines the potential for the journal to be a learning tool that supports learner identity frameworks, particularly the diverse range of linguistic, cultural, and literacy resources from which they can draw. As an educator, I have observed polarized responses to the journaling assignment in terms of learners either resisting or embracing the assignment. I have noted the vast range of content that learners produce from formal academic prose to entries characterized by a personal voice and creative approach. Although I have a sense that the journal assignment supports learning, I wanted to know the benefits of journaling adult learners and instructors in the academy would identify. However, just as important to this study is a concern with the barriers and risks that learners face when engaged in academic journaling. In addition, the identification of possible benefits of journaling as well as barriers and risks could lead to a clearer grasp of effective pedagogical approaches to assignment frameworks and effective approaches to assessment. Finally, the instructor's history with the practice of journaling may influence their approach to this learning tool.

The research findings for both learner and instructor participants are based on the themes and key words that emerged in the coding and analysis of the data and are examined in topical order of the research questions in separate chapters: first, the

learner participants; second, the instructor participants. In response to the third research question regarding the effects of the educator's experience with journals, my own history with journaling, both personal and professional, is explored in a separate chapter. These chapters are followed by an analysis of the overall findings in light of the literature.

4.2. The Learner Participants

In total, this study included eighteen post-secondary learners, all of whom were enrolled in masters of education programs in the same university in British Columbia. In the first group, which will be identified as Group One, ten of the students (Participants A-J) were part of a cohort in the first iteration of a program designed for professionals in a niche career area. The remaining eight in the second group (Participants K-R) were teachers in the public education system ranging from kindergarten to adult basic education. This second group of learner participants, which will be identified as Group Two, had completed a graduate seminar, Educ 820 Contemporary Issues in Curriculum and Pedagogy, for which I was the instructor.

Overall, the participants had diverse cultural backgrounds and amongst them they spoke ten languages. The religious backgrounds included Christianity, Sikhism, Buddhism, and Islam. In terms of age, they ranged from mid-twenties to early sixties. There were fourteen women and four men, a ratio that seems representative of the gender balance in the education department. Focus group discussions were carried out at a satellite campus of the university. Surveys were distributed to the Group Two learners through Education Building mailboxes on the main campus. Only three of eighteen student participants were keeping a personal journal at the time they participated in this study, while fourteen had kept one in the past within particular timeframes: during adolescence, when children were young, or when travelling. While the term "knowers" (Madison, 2012) is immediately complicated by these details, all the student participants had been required to keep a journal as part of their course and program requirements. So, while few engaged in journaling as a private literacy practice, all were familiar with a range of schooled approaches to the journal.

4.3. General Findings

1. Although early in the discussions about half of the learner participants identified general cognitive benefits of journaling, almost all of the learner participants in Group One subsequently identified challenges presented by the journaling assignment and wanted clearer definitions and guidelines.

2. While learner participants born outside of North America whose first language is not English made few direct connections between their cultural identity, literacy practices and journaling, the majority indicated that use of their first language (L1) in their journal would support their learning.

3. All learner participants felt constrained by a traditional print literacy format approach to the journal assignment and stated that, if permitted, they could employ other literacies that would align with their personal literacy practices and allow greater scope for creativity.

4. Based on their varying understandings of journaling and the concept of reflection, participants had widely divergent ideas about assignment design; however, trust- and relationship-building were identified as necessary factors by all the participants in Group One.

5. In regard to assessment, the issue of concern identified by learners was whether or not the journal assignment should be graded.

4.4. Cognitive Benefits of Journaling

Finding 1: Although early in the discussions about half the learner participants identified general cognitive benefits of journaling, almost all the learner participants in Group One subsequently identified challenges presented by the journaling assignment and wanted clearer definitions and guidelines.

While assignment titles themselves often point to the purpose of journals—learning logs or reflective journals—the focus groups and the survey participants were asked (a) to consider the range of journaling assignments they had had in the past, and (b) to comment on the outcomes (including benefits or barriers) that they had experienced. When asked if and how journaling had enhanced their learning experience, Participant P stated, "[It] documented the focus and change in my understanding over time. It also acts as an artifact of time and place." Echoing this idea, Participant K said that journaling gave her an opportunity to "rethink," while Participant M noted, "As the course went on, I could track my own growth." Similar to the previous statements, Participant O's remarks focused on having a record of learning: "I can write my reading response when I read material and review it later. I can find it in previous journals. It makes me think more and learn more." Participant K presented this observation of the journaling process: "It enhanced my learning experience by forcing me to focus in on my thoughts, reflect and in a sense 'write to learn.'"

In the following comments, participants observed that a less detached and more subjective voice is connected to deeper thinking. Participant M noted, "It was nice to give a more personal opinion and reflection." Participant Q described a sense of cognitive authenticity in the following statement:

> Journaling made me more accountable, made me think more deeply, gave me a private way to communicate with the instructor, was safe and was often transformative. Sometimes when I write, I can sort out my ideas and can even end up being surprised by what ends up on the page. If I write quickly, I think I am getting an authentic representation of my thoughts. Spoken and written ideas often differ . . . it is often counterintuitive.

An awareness of her pattern of cognition was echoed in Participant N's observation about academic journaling: "I liked it because my mind works like a 'web,' which is how I like to jot down my ideas." Suggesting a component of journaling that supports emotional processing, Participant H observed, "If I am upset about something then I find that it is a very good way of venting if you want to say that so . . . I think the journaling has become very much part of my program here."

The role of journaling in the transference of learning from the academic setting to the workplace is described in Participant I's statement: "I actually find it very beneficial to journal also for that knowledge transfer to go from classroom into my workplace." This "knowledge transfer" is also described in Participant D's statement:

> I do my journaling here, talk to myself about what I'm learning and what the importance of that is, and I think that sometimes you aren't necessarily aware of what assignments or readings are impacting other aspects of our lives. So, what I did was I took a look back and said: What changed? What am I doing differently in my work away from here? Honestly there were some changes and the only variable was this program. The journaling was the way to go back and to highlight.

Reflected in these remarks is an awareness of the potential of the journal to support reflection and transform professional practices. These comments were made early in the focus group sessions, and the participants who offered them voluntarily offered positive commentary, at least initially. To Question #7 ("Do you think that the learning/reflective journal enhanced you learning experience? Please explain why or why not in a few sentences."), none of the survey respondents from the second group replied in the negative; in all cases, they reported some benefit of journaling.

4.5. Challenges: Anxiety and Confusion

A little further into the focus group discussions, as Group One participants became more at ease and cross talk ensued, an increasingly complex picture of the academic journaling experience began to emerge. When learners in Group One expressed frustration with a journal assignment, issues of institutional power and linguistic hegemony came to the forefront. Participant F referred to the difficulty in letting go of the elements of formal composition: "I think it's the anxiety of journaling and the journal looking perfect." The Group One participants described how figuring out the best way to respond to the journaling component of the program was complicated and challenging. Participant F expressed her wish for clarity:

> For me it's the rational "Ws" and "H" [what, why, who, and how] questions . . . what is journaling, why am I doing it, who am I doing it for, who is reading it and all the different ways I can journal and just be crystal clear? Because people are already overloaded with assignments.

All but one of the participants in Group One indicated that they needed more guidance and information at the outset in order to feel confident in fulfilling the journaling assignment.

The Group One learner participants described the confusion that ensued when instructors in the program presented different versions of the journaling assignment. Participant P depicted this predicament in the following way: "There was so much confusion about okay it's not a journal, it's a critical journal. It's a critical response you have to do, it's not a journal, and then, oh, you have to journal for this class." Their frustration was palpable as they recalled how this continuing lack of clarity resulted in a negative association with the journaling assignment that proliferated over the course of their two-year program.

One Group One participant stood out in that he did not express any irritation or anxiety about the journaling assignment. Participant D is a post-secondary educator in the college system who assigns journals in his own courses and, by his own description, has had a long history of personal journaling. At one point, responding to other participants grappling with the purpose of the journaling assignment, Participant D coolly explained his lack of perturbation when he remarked, "I keep a journal anyway." His long-term extensive experience with journaling enabled him to make a distinction between the kind of journal he would keep as a schooled assignment and his personal journaling practice: "My real journal is done in my own world." It was interesting to hear how this participant was comfortable navigating between different kinds of journaling texts with various purposes and maintaining them with a sense of commitment. In response to Participant D's passionate descriptions of the benefits of journaling, Participant E wistfully replied, "I wish I had kept a personal journal when I started my career because things I would have put in there would have been very valuable."

I wondered whether or not there would be a strong correlation between ease with the journaling assignment and gender but, interestingly, Participant D, who had a strong connection with journaling, and Participant E, who admitted that he did not journal, are both male. As the discussion delved more deeply into this aspect of identity, some participants observed diverging histories with journaling based on gender that may have an impact on the present. Reiterating Gannett's (1991) observation that the interior life of emotions has been associated with women's speech acts, Participant I affirmed that:

> I'm talking from my personal experience—a lot of the internal content of female's journals are very emotional reflections. Like a lot of emotional stuff goes on there. Even between my own children I see the difference. I've never seen my son journal.

Participant J mused on why he has not engaged in a personal journaling practice and has been reluctant to engage in academic journaling:

> This is my observation when I was a teenager or younger—classmates that are girls do very well in journals and very neat work and when I just glance at what they are writing it makes me feel bad because I'm just like drawing. Maybe that explains why I've never been interested because they can make it so neat.

These comments seem to indicate that stereotypes about what a journal should look like e.g., "neat" or the notion that only females can include expressions of emotion could possibly, in some cases, be a source of anxiety in personal and academic journaling.

4.6. Challenges: Definition of Journal

A major source of confusion for many of the participants in Group One stemmed from a fundamental lack of certainty as to how to define a journal. However, the Group Two participants from the 820 class did not mention this issue as a problem. Their anxiety might have been allayed by the in-depth discussion at the start of the term about journaling and the many forms the journal has taken in the past and can take in both a personal or academic setting. In addition, there were wide parameters for how the 820

learners could approach the assignment format, with some opting for traditional hand-written journals, others later typing up the journal for submission, and two keeping digital journals using a range of multimodal tools. Noteworthy, too, is the fact that some of the learners in Educ 820 had asked for a very detailed assignment outline, which was then provided. The learners in Group One were not provided with detailed requirements at the beginning; nor did their instructor talk with them about journaling as a literacy practice. Participant F's question, "What is journaling?" was echoed as the first group grappled with conflicting opinions regarding the differences between the personal journal tradition and what is found in the academy.

Participant C stated, "As soon as it becomes an assignment it's not a journal. It's an assignment, and I'm looking to fulfil the requirements." In response, Participant D said, "I can do a journal for grades and enjoy doing it and learn from it." Reflecting on the question of what constitutes a journal, he stated, "I think that anything can be a journal. If, for a year, I just simply listed and dated the things I have to do, at the end of the year it would constitute a slice of my life." Offering another example, Participant A suggested, "You could do a series of photographs that you keep on your camera that is sequential in some way and that could be a visual journal. There is no limit to what a journal could be." Participant C responded by saying: "But that's not a reflective journal." Participant A's reply was "regardless of what they are, if I go back and revisit them, they become reflective for me." Perhaps not surprisingly, Participant D, with extensive journaling experience, favoured openness while Participant C, who stated that he did not keep a journal and had only briefly kept one while travelling as a youth, wanted more structure.

Being mindful of the often-polarized responses to the journal assignment observed by myself and other educators, it is especially interesting to consider Participant C's final striking comment on this topic: "It seems to me like we are dealing with something so open-ended, all these possibilities. It can be pictures, it can be songs . . . I find that really almost terrifying because I don't even know what it is." This question of how to define the journal was never satisfactorily settled by the Group One participants, and while a few could live with a fairly wide range of flexibility and open-endedness regarding the journal assignment, the majority expressed a need for a clear definition and assignment design. This need for clarity, also expressed early in the

semester by several of the Group Two learner participants, had been followed up by class discussion and elaboration of the assignment. These types of concerns did not figure significantly in the survey responses of this second group.

4.7. Journaling and Cultural Identity

Finding 2: Learner participants born outside of North America whose first language is not English made few direct suggestions as to how their cultural identity could be connected with journaling. The majority indicated that use of their L1 in their journal would support their learning.

As an instructor, I had observed that L2 learners and those not of North American or European descent often expressed more uncertainty about the journaling assignment, and their journal entries more frequently adhered to the formal discourse of academic essays. In a couple of instances, I found that L2 speakers had even plagiarized material from blogs on the Internet. It seemed likely that there would be a connection between cultural and linguistic identity and how learners take up academic journaling. Bearing in mind the literature that asserts that an individual's cultural identity is intrinsically bound up with literacy practices and notions about the value of literacy (Ferdman, 1990; Gee, 1991; Street, 1995), I asked participants to consider how aspects of their cultural identity might be incorporated in a learning and reflective journal.

While not elaborating on cultural or religious practices, Participant M stated, "Culture and religion are just a part of who I am that are mutually exclusive in the way I think and way of being. It [culture] inevitably would be incorporated into journaling." In a similar vein, Participant P said, "I'm sure I inadvertently incorporate my culture and language in a reflective journal." Other participants identified important practices related to culture and religion that are part of their self-reflection process. Participant M stated, "I meditate on a regular basis" and noted, "Whenever I get stressed out and need some reflection I do pray." Participant G described how her religion influences her outlook on life:

> The practices of Buddhism really help because that has become part of our life and we basically exist on that. We constantly examine why we are here, who we are, what do we do to others, what we can contribute, right, and all kinds of things.

Participants seemed uncertain when asked if they could somehow link the cultural values and practices that they identified as significant with the journaling assignment. They acknowledged that thinking about the intrinsic connections between cultural identity and literacy practices was something they had not considered before and this topic would require deeper consideration.

Participant O made the most direct link between her cultural identity and academic journaling: “I am Chinese and usually more silent than Westerns. So actually, I’d love to express my opinions in journals rather than speaking out.” This response diverged from the approach to journaling that I had observed, for the most part, taken by students of Asian background whose journal entries were generally formal and impersonal. Somewhat surprised by this response, as well as the lack of direct connection made between journaling and cultural identity and practices, I next asked participants about the possibility of using their First Language (L1) to support academic literacy practices, such as journaling.

4.8. Journaling, Languages, and Identity

Almost all the multilingual participants indicated that if it were possible to employ code-switching in their journals, they would navigate the linguistic field in the way that they naturally do anyway, switching between languages. Participant J’s comment reflects the way that context determines his use of language resources:

> When I talk about Chinese history or something related with uh . . . irrelevant with English then of course it is going to be in Chinese but otherwise if it’s social justice-related and particularly my work-related issues the reflection is definitely in English. . . . So it’s theme-related and audience-related issue.

Participant I described how she goes “back and forth in English and Hindi” although her L1 is Punjabi. Circumstances of schooling and geography have contributed to her multilingualism and (with laughter) she observed how the only time she speaks in Punjabi now is when she is upset about something in relation to her children.

Participant J described the editing that she does in moving between her L1 and L2:

> For me, Chinese is so precise I can say exactly deep down to the core what I meant. In English I have to edit edit edit until really got the sentence what I meant. So that a little effort but still I can do that just not free flow.

She indicated that a journal is sometimes the place where “free flow” is desirable so having the chance to express thoughts without all of the editing would be welcome.

Participant F mused that she would switch between English and Italian in her journal if possible, and particularly if expressing anger “because Italian has certain ways of expressing it, yeah, so probably would for certain emotions.” Participant H echoed this comment:

> For me, yes I do switch between languages and it depends on the emotion, too, and like how I’m feeling at that time and where I am. Even with my conversations with my friends and my dad both languages are used—English and my Punjabi mother tongue.

For these participants, being able to code-switch allowed them to express their thoughts more accurately. Participant E described the frustration that occurs when that option is not available: “I wish I can describe to you what I want but there is no English term to try and capture what I’m trying to say.” As it is something they already do in various contexts, it made sense to the multilingual participants that code-switching would lead to increased fullness and accurate expression of thoughts and feelings in their journals.

4.9. Other Literacies

Finding 3. All learner participants felt constrained by a traditional prose and print format approach to the journal assignment and stated that, if permitted, they would employ other literacies that would align with their personal literacy practices and allow more scope for creativity.

All learner participants indicated that they would appreciate the opportunity to access a wider range of literacies to explore ideas and express meaning in their journals. This comes as no surprise since the technological channels for communication, information gathering and learning in general have greatly expanded in the past few years. In addition, the majority of participants in this study were mature learners with complex lives juggling careers and education, so multimodal complexity characterized their approach to academic work, professional duties, and home life. As adults, they had developed communicative resources and habits of expression and communication. They readily identified a range of literacy practices that echo the plurality of multimodal resources cited by Cope and Kalantzis (2009). These literary practices include oral language, visual representation, audio representation, tactile representation, gestural representation, representation to oneself, e.g., emotions, and spatial representation (pp. 178-179). The following literacies were the ones most frequently cited by the participants as ones they would use in academic journaling if the possibility and the means existed.

4.9.1. Journaling and Oral Language

The form of reflection and integration identified most frequently by participants was conversation or dialogue. Thirteen participants mentioned the importance of conversations, discussions, chats, talk, and dialogue with a number of partners that included friends, peers at work, husband, a teacher, mother, instructors, and family. Learner participants saw learning as a social endeavour and exchanges with these various interlocutors as a central part of their learning process. They saw the possibility of incorporating the oral language modality in their journals in the form of transcripts of conversations and inclusions of interview segments in digital journals.

4.9.2. Journaling and Digital Literacies

Half of the participants preferred a digital format for journaling rather than a traditional hand-written approach. This, again, is not surprising. It is reflective of the fact that most were not keeping a personal journal and approaching the journaling assignment as they would any other schooled literacy activity. In addition, a couple of social media tools were mentioned. Participant B talked about her use of Twitter in everyday communication, a multimodal literacy in that it may include symbols and images:

> I would have loved if I thought about it to tweet so less than 140 characters do that once every Sunday and do a reflective journal that way if I had thought of that. That would have been easy for me to do because 140 characters I mean I can get that off in two minutes I have to be very precise in a language I use um . . . even though I'm not using necessarily uh . . . academic daily life. I think it could be reflective.

Participant E described the importance of email messages, a print literacy that is part of the digitalized world and that would make for what he called "colourful" reading. He also talked about unsent email "letters," a practice that falls within representation to oneself (Cope & Kalanztis, 2009, p. 179).

> It's a way to make myself feel better to deal with frustration or anger or what I have been feeling . . . to get it all out. I read it. Of course, there is no intention of sending it.

4.9.3. Journaling and Everyday Literacies

Three participants mentioned the importance of making lists and how this practice intersects with other literacy practices. It is an aid to memory and could take the form of a journal. Participant D described how he combines lists with pencil drawings and calls himself "a serious list person." The use of everyday or border literacy practices as they are sometimes called (Ivanic, 2009) such as clippings from newspapers and magazines were given by participants as examples of an almost scrapbook type of

approach that appealed to them and that they would like to apply to the journaling assignment.

4.9.4. Journaling and Visual Literacies

Two other participants identified drawing and one participant mentioned painting as reflective practices that they would incorporate in their journals, if possible. Participant H talked about how “just doodling” helps her to develop her ideas to the point that she can present them more formally, but the early visual stage is where connections are made. Participant P mentioned the importance of digital photo albums as a form of reflection. Participant R indicated that the practice of working with glass fusion is a way for her to connect with her “creative side” and suggested that she could take photos of this work to include in her journal.

4.9.5. Journaling and Gestural Literacies

When identifying activities that enable reflection and integration of learning, nine participants mentioned the importance of walking, running, yoga, and (unspecified) exercise. Participant G mentioned the act of driving as an activity that is central to processing and “how I put myself together at the end of the day.” Learner participants did not see these activities simply as physical movement unconnected to the cognitive or even emotional aspects of learning but, rather, connected to meaning-making and processing of information and ideas.

4.10. Ideas About Assignment Design

Finding 4. Based on their varying experiences with journaling and understanding of the concept of reflection, participants had widely divergent ideas about assignment design; however, all the Group One participants identified trust and relationship-building as necessary factors.

Based on past academic journaling assignments such as journals that were optional and for personal use only, learner participants offered ideas as to how such

assignments could be effectively structured. Participant D's comment: "Once you make it an assignment, it gets done," indicates that making a journal optional may not be effective in all cases. Learners often commented on how they felt weighed down by assignments and one that was optional would most likely be cast aside due to time constraints, no matter how valuable it may be as a learning activity.

Several participants mentioned the importance of clear assignment guidelines and rubrics. Participant C said, "I would need very clear guidelines in terms of what medium it [the journaling assignment] is going to take." Participant J suggested that he needed "a reason" and a "methodology." On the other hand, Participant M stated that what is important to her with the journaling assignment is "flexibility." Likewise, Participant N found it hard to come up with ideas for assignment guidelines because "journaling can take so many forms."

Learners identified sample entries and time in class as examples of practices that could support their academic journaling. Five participants identified having the instructor provide samples as being helpful in the fulfilment of the journal assignment. Participant Q specified her request for examples: "Perhaps some samples (sample layouts not content) because we might try something new and like it!" Participant R suggested that she would like to have "a variety of examples given as to the format and content." Participant K suggested that having time in class would be "great . . . because not everyone will have time on a daily basis." Participant P appreciated having "time given in class because it is always more valuable to reflect 'in the moment.'" A predominant wish emerged amongst learner participants that details and support, such as the ones mentioned above, could be discussed when a journaling assignment is first given.

Participant A made it clear that even if journaling was an official assignment with clear requirements, submitting it and not receiving feedback made the activity seem of little worth:

> We were expected to submit those journal entries, um, often they didn't come back to us at all and often they came back to us with, you know, no real helpful or concrete information or suggestions that I felt enhanced my teaching practice.

She indicated that this lack of response to learner journals occurred too often in PDP programs, and she had recently spoken with a student teacher who expressed “extreme frustration” about journals that were not returned or commented upon. Her conclusion was that journals are a “make-work project” and “busy work to fulfil the requirement of the PDP [Professional Development Program].”

Participant A’s frustrating experience of not receiving feedback on the journal assignment was not necessarily typical. Participant B countered this negative impression by recounting that her own experience with journaling in a PDP program was “very positive.” The feedback she received seemed to be the basis of her positive experience with academic journaling:

> Facilitators made sure they got back to us and we needed to answer whatever questions they had from the previous two weeks on our journal reflections so you always had a good starting point of where to go because they asked reflective questions and I would answer back to them, and I think that by asking those questions even though the criteria wasn’t on the sheet word for word, as they were asking the questions you understood what they wanted from the journal.

Clearly, this emphasis on ongoing dialogue, questions and responses, and consistent responsiveness on the part of the instructor was very important to these learner participants. Their comments indicated that in their program (most were enrolled in the Curriculum and Instructional Foundations M.Ed., M.A. program) there was scope for relationship-building through the dialogical aspect of the journal assignment.

4.11. Trust and Relationship Building

Building on this relational aspect of journaling, trust and relationship- building were identified as key factors by all of the learner participants in Group One. According to Participant G, relationship-building is the most important factor in laying the groundwork of the assignment:

> I do not have trust in you unless I have that relationship with you and if someone asks me to reflect on my thoughts deep down I will just reflect on a shallow level, but I would love to tell more. The relationship-building should come first.

Participant F reiterated this need for trust: “I want to know who is going to read my journal—it’s personal.” Participant I also noted that the difficulties with a class journaling assignment were connected with “a lack of relationship-building at the beginning.”

Interestingly, an emotionally charged tone predominated in focus group discussions with the Group One learners when they discussed the challenge they had had with the first instructor in their program who informed them, with no accompanying discussion, that they were required to keep a journal. The only sense of the purpose they had connected with the journal was that it would be used for program evaluation. By the end of the term, their relationship with this instructor (who left the program at the end of the first semester) had deteriorated. They agreed that some aspects of the program, including the journal assignment, were tainted by this experience. Participant J made a direct connection between the negative association with the journal assignment and “relationship-building lacking at the beginning.” The fact that the assignment had not been open to negotiation was also a factor in their negative attitude toward the assignment.

Conversely, participants in Group Two were not concerned with this topic of trust. The closest they came to alluding to trust was that one learner participant stated that the journal should be shared only with the instructor (as opposed to sharing with classmates). Another member of this group described the contents of the journal as “very personal,” but this was mentioned in regard to a need for flexibility, as learners would inevitably approach journaling in their own way. In the Educ 820 class, these learners were assured that they would choose the contents to be shared, and the purpose and range of approaches to journaling constituted an ongoing topic of discussion. Perhaps, most importantly, a dialogical approach to the course materials and topics contributed to relationship-building throughout the term so that a sense of trust was gradually fostered.

4.12. Learners and Assessment

Finding 5. In regard to assessment, the issue of concern identified by learners was whether or not the journal assignment should be graded.

The concern most often cited by learner participants was whether or not journals should be assigned a grade or not. They were split in terms of their preferences. Four participants felt that receiving a mark was important in their being motivated to fulfil the assignment. Participant E asserted that if there was no mark assigned, it dropped down his list of priorities. He described the need for a mark as a kind of "quid pro quo—you give me this, I'll give you that." Participant D wryly remarked that once you attach a grade "everything becomes real." Two participants preferred not to have the journal assignment graded at all. Participant M indicated that by not having a grade, learners could be "fully honest and themselves." Two participants stated that they would prefer a pass or fail, or (in)complete grade for the journaling assignment. This lack of consensus regarding assessment was evident in both groups.

4.13. Summary

The first research question in this study is concerned with the potential of the classroom journal to be a learning tool that draws upon learner's socio-cultural, linguistic, and literacy resources. Learner participants' response indicated that the connection between cultural identity and literacy practices is profound but that it requires further consideration. They were, for the most part, hesitant to make superficial assertions about how cultural identity should be supported in the journaling assignment.

They found it easier to make the links between their linguistic identity and literacy texts and practices. Code-switching, or the possibility of moving between their L1 and L2 in their journals, was seen by participants as increasing authenticity and emotional connection to learning.

Learner participants identified several everyday literacy practices that could support journaling as an academic literacy practice: lists, tweets, emails, letters, drawing,

and other creative visual practices. Conversation or dialogue with others was considered by participants to be a vital aspect of integration of learning, and activities such as walking, running, yoga, and driving were connected with deep reflection. According to the data collected from participants regarding their socio-cultural, linguistic, and literacy resources, the academic journal would inevitably be a learning space characterized by hybridity and multimodality. Its varied history lends itself to the rich, endless possibilities of expression.

In response to the second question that asked about pedagogical approaches to assignment designs, participants' comments revealed a diverse range of preferences and concerns. In general, learner participants were seen as benefiting from a discussion of the purposes of reflective practice and journaling. Most participants indicated that flexibility would be appreciated, and making it a required assignment and feedback were central for there to be meaning and value attached to it. There was a lack of consensus regarding assessment, indicating a need for discussion of assignment goals and room for negotiation. Group One was concerned about the establishment of trust and relationship-building because the group had experienced a breach of trust that left them with negative associations about the journaling assignment.

Chapter 5.

Research Findings—Instructor Participants

5.1. The Instructor Participants

The three university instructors, who will be identified by a letter, teach a range of subjects in the education department, although their core subjects are as follows: Instructor S teaches science education, Instructor T teaches language education, and Instructor U teaches social studies education. Instructor S has been particularly interested in reflective practice and focused on dialogue through videotaping in the classroom rather than journaling. However, he was able to make a number of salient connections between various reflective practices. Instructor T is multilingual and contributed valuable perspectives from her academic teaching experiences in the Middle East, Australia, and North America. A sessional instructor at the university where this research was carried out, Instructor U's teaching experience spans both the secondary and post-secondary systems, and within the secondary system, both regular and alternate school settings. All the instructors had experience in teacher education and were willing to talk about both the successes and challenges they have faced with the journal assignment and other reflective practices. None of them were keeping a personal journal at the time the interviews took place.

5.2. General Findings

1. Despite the resistance they sometimes faced when assigning journals, the learning benefits that they observed guided the instructor participant's approach to assignment design.

2. Like the learner participants, the instructors considered the issue of trust to be a key factor in the effectiveness of the journal assignment.

3. Instructor participants found assessment of the journal assignment to be challenging and they continued to experiment with a range of approaches.

5.3. Uncertainty and Resistance

Finding 1. Despite the resistance they sometimes faced when assigning journals, the learning benefits that they observed guided the instructor participant's approach to assignment design.

A theme that emerged in the interviews with instructors was uncertainty about the concept of reflection in general and resistance to journal assignments in particular. Instructor S indicated that he had given a great deal of consideration to Shoen's ideas about reflection but sometimes found the application of these ideas to be difficult. He mused that "people don't really want to talk about reflection, and there is a grey cloud hanging over it. Even in terms of research, it's all over the map, difficult to define, and perhaps that leaves people feeling vulnerable." Nevertheless, he did employ a range of reflective practices in his courses.

Instructor U described how his ideas about reflection and reflective practices are evolving and how he sometimes meets with resistance in the classroom. He recounted how a learner reacted strongly to the reflective journaling assignment and ultimately withdrew from the class: "He said he had done a lot of reflection in PDP and if he heard the 'R' word one more time, it was going to make him sick." Other students added their voices to the complaint, according to Instructor U, "and they made quite a dramatic thing out of it." Instructor T also described student resistance when they questioned the assignment: "Why should a portfolio be part of a master's comprehensive exam?" In spite of this resistance, all three instructor-participants maintained that reflection supports learning in valuable ways, and Instructors T and U continue to assign journals.

5.4. Learning Benefits of Journaling

Although the instructors interviewed for this study continued to refine their pedagogical approach to reflective learning activities and journaling assignments, they found that convincing some learners of the value of these activities and assignments could be challenging. Interestingly, they not only considered reflection and journaling assignments to be important for learners, but they all saw benefits for themselves as instructors. While using approaches such as discussions of video recordings of student teachers rather than print journals, Instructor S stated, “Reflection is a way of sort of becoming a little more tolerant and for a teacher a little more understanding of diverse populations.”

Instructor U described how he found passages in journals for which he has obtained learners’ permission to keep and show to students in subsequent courses. He described the moments of insight on a topic of class discussion: “I go, wow, I never saw it that way but that’s very interesting to look at it like that.” Instructor T recounted how class journals could be a way for her to know if she is really “hearing” learners, and how journals help her to “personalize my teaching and instruction and to be more sensitive to their [learners] investment and their needs.”

5.5. Assignment Design

According to the instructor participants, flexibility and experimentation characterized their approach to reflective practice and the journaling assignment. Instructor U recounted requests from learners to spell out which form the journal should take, as they frequently asked, “What do you want?” He described his reluctance to offer explicit instructions: “Because it’s a learning log, or a journal, I’m really reluctant to say it should be like this because it takes away creativity and authenticity on their part.” In response, he told learners: “Show me how you are learning, how you’ve changed and how the information has become more solidified . . . show me your learning.” Instructor T stated she is “quite flexible” in her approach and gives learners “a little bit of freedom to navigate through this assignment.” Instructor S sometimes offered the examples he has saved from past learners’ journals when asked to provide examples.

Instructor T included an autobiographical component to the journaling assignment as a way to get to know the students and "how they felt about English language teaching and the position of English language teachers in their countries and why they think it's an important decision or important move to come here to learn English in Canada." She went on to elaborate on how in one program she had twenty-four graduate students to supervise; thus, it was logistically challenging to get to know each one personally. The journaling assignment allowed her to develop a "closer kind of contact" and to "get to know them more."

5.6. The Issue of Trust

Finding 2. Like the learner participants, the instructors considered the issue of trust to be a key factor in the effectiveness of the journal assignment.

As in the case of the learner participants, trust emerged as a major issue for the instructor participants when it came to the journaling assignment. According to Instructor U, "Students do write some pretty personal things" in particular about their background and struggles, and he felt that a sense of trust is paramount. Trust does not come automatically, however, and Instructor T described the lengths that learners will go to protect themselves when they feel that it is missing. She recounted how a group of students in the TEFSL Department established their own website on which they could discuss coursework and program issues in order to escape the "judgments" to which they felt they were constantly subjected. After a year, they gave her access to the site, but only after trust was established: "They trust, you know, that I had no intentions of judging them."

Thinking further about that experience and the resistance that instructors sometimes meet when giving a journaling assignment, Instructor T connected the issue of trust to that of "institutional identity." She said, "In their portfolio writing, sometimes they hesitate to be quite frank and open, because they feel that it might have some consequences, you know, for them in the future, career or in terms of their institutional identity." She elaborated on this concern saying that students had confided in her that even conversations were seen as risky, as they feared that they would "say something

that would undermine their position, legitimacy, all these things."

In addition, if they were non-native English speakers, in order to protect their sense of legitimacy, "they sometimes prefer to avoid any unneeded interaction." Summing up the issue of trust, she noted as follows:

> This kind of assignment can only be successful if that trust is built between the students and the instructor, otherwise the student won't reveal much or if they do, it won't really reflect how they feel. And, yes, once that trust is built and once that space is negotiated I think it [journaling] could be very useful.

The emphasis placed on the establishment of trust as precursor to the journaling assignment was observed in comments made by both learner and instructor participants.

5.7. Assessment of the Journal Assignment

Finding 3. Instructor participants found assessment of the journal assignment to be challenging, and they continued to experiment with a range of approaches.

Instructors T and U indicated that they encountered challenges when devising ethical assessment procedures for the journal, and Instructor S agreed that assessment of reflective practice was complex. Instructor U described assessment as the "biggest difficulty" when it came to journaling assignments. He described an approach he had developed and remarked, "I'm not going to say it's totally fair; it's a *fairer* evaluation practice." This practice consisted of having learners choose one entry that really "resonates" with them. Instructor U then chose a week when he marked everyone's entry. Finally, he randomly selected one from each learner's journal. He admitted this third component is partly to motivate learners to keep up their journaling.

Regarding assessment, Instructor T said, "It's challenging, it's very challenging" and went on to describe in general terms the methods she employs and the principles that guide her assessment procedures. For instance, she does not mark spelling, grammar, or punctuation. Besides not failing anyone, she described how she is

“sensitive to the range, as well, how diversity shows itself, manifests itself in this kind of activity rather than a framework.” Overall, she felt that a principle of “generosity” would prevail when she marked an assignment with a strong autobiographical component. Most importantly, the instructor participants’ remarks indicated that rather than maintaining a prescribed rubric when assessing the journal assignment, they constantly adjusted their methods as they took into account the fact that learning outcomes reflected the learners’ diverse range of goals and experiences.

5.8. Summary

The second research question was: “If the research supports the finding that the classroom journal can support and strengthen learner diversity, what effective pedagogical approaches to assignment frameworks can be employed, and what evaluation practices are mort ethical?” In considering this question, the instructor participants’ comments actually extended the concept of learner diversity. For instance, Instructor S described the way in which reflective practice can enhance the learning of “shy student teachers” as well as those who seem to be “totally confident.” Instructor T described the “huge diversity of the student cohort that we have in the program in terms of they are coming from very different places, many different cultures, and many many different agendas for choosing this program.” Taking into account this increasingly diverse student population, the instructor participants in this study indicated that their approach to reflective practice and the journaling assignment was not a one-size-fits-all method but rather it changed over time.

Despite the resistance that they sometimes faced, the instructor participants found that the journal assignment supported learning in valuable ways. When asked about assignment designs, they mentioned certain journal components such as mind maps, “burning questions,” and article critiques; however, they placed much more emphasis on the pedagogical principles of flexibility, sensitivity, and trust. Instructor U summed up the need for flexibility when he described the journal assignment as one that would inevitably “evolve and grow and become better.” The instructor participants’ approach to assessment of the journal assignment changed over time and was connected with the principles mentioned above in a way that indicated that they were

aware of issues of power and identity. Ultimately, like the student participants, they indicated that the positive learning outcomes were contingent on relationship-building and the establishment of trust.

Chapter 6.

Research Findings—A Researcher's Experience With Journaling

In this chapter, I present material that takes into account the goals and concerns of auto-ethnography that were described in Chapter 3. I offer an account of my relationship to the subject and my attempt to understand more broadly the intersection of personal identity and literacy practices. This increased self-awareness is intended to result in a deeper questioning of my own literacy practices, both personal and professional, so that I can make informed adjustments to my pedagogical practices. I share my stories as a journal writer, an instructor who uses journals in the classroom, and as a researcher as part of my search to find congruency between what I write about and my experience of writing about it. The reflexive tracing of connections in this chapter includes personal anecdotes, an excerpt from a learner journal, found text, and quotations. Throughout, I attempt to maintain the two-way gaze, both inward and outward, in an attempt to understand both self and "larger context" (Four Arrows, 2008, p. 190).

6.1. General Findings

1. Multiple strands of identity can find expression in the journal, and academic subject positions can be challenged; however, power relations and the risks of autobiographical writing in the academy must be addressed.

2. The journal can be a dialogical space in which the emotional self is not split off, so that the sharing of uncertainty and suffering can take place;

yet, while this sharing may enrich learning, an educator must be conscious of increased relational responsibilities.

6.2. Multiple Strands of Identity

Finding 1. Multiple strands of identity can find expression in the journal, and academic subject positions can be challenged; however, power relations and the risks of autobiographical writing in the academy must be addressed.

Every metaphor, every description that moves its reader, every hymn-shout of praise, points to the shared existence of beings and things. The mind of poetry makes visible how permeable we are to the winds and moonlight with which we share our house. (Hirshfield, 1997, p. 99)

As I attend to the details of this study and examine where they have led me, I find myself once more in the terrain of the subjective, and the critiques of the journal in the academic context echo—overly personal, confessional, trivial . . . feminine. The learner participants talked about the journal being a place to vent, disclose, and express different personas but they also spoke about the inherent risk of exposure. I am struggling to locate myself in this writing as I go on, wary of how I might be judged, nervous about labels.

Who is the "I" that is writing here? Like some learners faced with a journaling assignment, I feel nervous about relinquishing an authoritative "I," the one that Smith and Watson (1998) characterized as the independent, rational and coherent Western model of selfhood. Yet, it is the possibilities of the relational, plural, and reflexive self that I explore in my own journal writing that is always a mélange of prose, poetry, details of the everyday, and the metaphorical offspring of imagination. The "mind of poetry" (Hirshfield, 1997) helps me to avoid false dichotomies. It enables me to be open to generative connections and relationships and to appreciate the porous fabric of existence. In this text, I see myself straddling both academic and individual subject positions, discursively hopping from one to the other, seeking a space where identities and languages co-exist.

Over the years, my journals have provided such a space in which to blend diverse voices, writing styles and to give free reign to experimentation, synthesis, and playfulness. I bring an awareness of these diverse possibilities of journaling to my teaching practice and encourage learners to explore them. However, through my own discoursal dilemma in this text and through the commentary of participants in this study, I am becoming more aware of the risks of academic journaling. To deepen this awareness and examine the third research question (how my own experience with journals affects my practice as an educator), I include a personal narrative that recalls a time when journaling helped me navigate an experience that brought about a shift in my own identity.

6.2.1. Not the Same Self

It was during the summer that I was ten years old, staying with my grandmother in the neighbouring town where she and my grandfather lived and taught school. Actually, my grandfather had died a couple years before and Grandma lived alone in the house but with other family members close by. While aunts and uncles and several cousins lived there, I sometimes sensed that not being from that town was a source of difference for me. The difference was subtle, but I was aware of it nonetheless. My cousins visited Grandma on a regular basis, and there was a slightly different character to her relationship with them, a certain shade of familiarity. In addition to that, they all had her as their Grade One teacher, which naturally made for complexity in the relationship, and as adults, more than one of them has told me that it wasn't always easy to have one's grandmother as their first grade teacher. But all this happened in a small town, a small school, and another option wasn't available. Into the picture I came from a different town and without this additional link to Grandma.

Did I try a little harder to win her approval? Perhaps, sometimes. It was during a scuffle after lunch that my sense of identity splintered in an unexpected way. Grandma was washing the dishes and I was vying with my cousin, who was a year younger, to pick up the wet bowls and plates more quickly. Flicking with dishtowels gave way to shoving, and my cousin stormed out of the room. Before she did, though, she uttered something unintelligible at me. After shouting fairly harmless insults such as "bossy" and

"pushy," pretty standard fare, she followed with "and Grandma is not really your grandma. She's my grandma, and she's not even your real grandma!!" I managed to mumble something along the lines of "that doesn't even make sense. You don't know what you're talking about." My confusion was apparent, though, and I looked to Grandma for an explanation. In her calmest, most matter-of-fact Grade One teacher voice she told me that Grandpa had had another wife, who had died in an accident a long time ago. That other wife was my father's mother, and she was the mother of my cousin's father. Then, seeing the question still on my face she reassured me, "Yes, dear, I am your Grandma."

Despite this reassurance, with the kitchen clock ticking and my cousin triumphantly plunking the keys of the piano in the living room, a space opened up: a space between real and not real, between who I was a moment before and who I was now. I was old enough to know that biological and non-biological familial connections were different, and that the difference invoked prefixes such as "step," although in that moment "step-grandmother or step-granddaughter" did not seem right. Still, I was not the same granddaughter that I had been just a few moments before.

Looking back on how I dealt with this event, I recall writing about my initial response in my diary. Although I no longer have that diary, I realize that journaling helped me to find equilibrium in the third space of my new identity. Eventually, I read my grandparents' journals. I was able to see how my grandfather charted a course through loss and grief and eventually remarried. In his journal, he disclosed conflicting feelings at times, how moments of discouragement contradicted what he believed to be a Christian imperative to be stoic and selfless. He gave voice to paradoxical thoughts and emotions, and a complex, non-unitary identity emerged, one that allowed for contradictions between public and private selves. He admitted that he was not the same self as before the death of his first wife, and that in the terrain of loss, conflicting emotions—sorrow and hope—co-existed.

Witnessing this account of a complex identity transition and emotional expression in journaling, no doubt, set the stage for my own expanding engagement with journaling. When assigning journals in the classroom, it is with the hope that learners will also

discover creative and emancipatory possibilities that support their learning. To that end, examples of journals, both my own and those of others, can be explored in identifying possible approaches. Making space for learners to experiment with a range of approaches and modalities can occur in and outside of class exercises. However, this exploration takes place increasingly with an awareness of the need for dialogue about the risks of autobiographical writing in the academy.

6.3. Identity Under Construction

Depart. Go out. Allow yourself to be seduced one day. Become many, brave the outside world, split off somewhere else. These are the first three foreign things, the varieties of alterity, the three initial means of being exposed. For there is no learning without exposure, often dangerous, to the other. I will never again know what I am, where I am, from where I'm from, where I'm going, through where to pass. (Serres, 1997, p. 8)

The following journal entry, based on an exercise from the Stepping Stones curriculum, was written in class by a learner in Educ 820 following a classroom discussion of indigenizing practices in education and holistic learning frameworks. The participant's entry reflects the nature of identity that is in flux through exposure to the "other" as described by Michel Serres in the above quotation. It challenges the objective, independent subject position of Western academe. It is included here as an example of journal writing in which the learner reflects on experience from a range of subject positions—as an educator herself, as a learner, and a daughter.

Framed in Heart, Spirit, Mind, Body

Nov 15/12

-un-but-sort-of-related.

For the past 13 years my family has been trying to heal after a traumatic event occurred at our family cabin in a remote location in Northern Ontario. Hurt was inflicted

on mind, spirit, and heart in such a way that bodies were also indirectly impacted by stress and fatigue.

Finally a resolution appears to have occurred that allows our family to return to the place we have loved this summer and feel like we can be physically and spiritually safe there.

It has been a goal of mine to heal the relationship of my memories of the trauma and people who inflicted it with the thousands of wonderful times I have had in the place. Can there be a reconciliation?

This past weekend my mom and I went to circle craft and a dream catcher caught my eye as a gift for my cousin. The animal represented was one she liked after reading the story about the animal provided by the First Nations woman who had crafted the dream catcher; it related to challenges my cousin has been having. I mentioned to my mom that we should look for one for our family cabin.

The woman listened to the situation and my mom mentioned that she wanted to do a smudging to clear the evil away. The woman helped us choose a dream catcher that we were drawn to and described some of the ceremony we would want to use. She was very open to helping us. Finally she took a shell filled with dried plants and put the contents in a bag. She told us to use them because when medicine is given instead of purchased it is more powerful.

I have taught First Nations students and seen aspects of their culture from a distance. I was surprised at how easily this woman gave us a piece of her culture to help heal our family and our relationship to a place. This isn't really a goal to do with mind, body, heart or spirit, except that a goal I do have is to share more of myself as the woman who helped my mom and I, has.

I would like to have the strength of spirit to help my mom go back to a place that has not been safe for her and to help her perform the ceremony she needs to do. The healing we need is of the heart, mind and spirit so that we can be present again in a

place we so love. I think that this small, but significant interaction with First Nations people and culture will help us." (Participant L, Educ 820)

In this narrative, the author allows the purpose of the story and her place in it to develop while allowing for an inexact fit between the supposed purpose of the exercise and her own emergent personal purpose. The fixed identity—someone who is a distant observer of Aboriginal culture —is fractured. Her identity shifts in this regard, and she considers the possibilities of a new sense of agency—she can be someone who shares more. Something valuable has unexpectedly been given, and healing is possible within a new social web consisting of the learner herself, cousin, mother, and a First Nations woman. As an instructor reading this journal entry, I wondered if perhaps my attempts to transmit my own sense of the potential of journaling (through classroom discussion and even sharing my own writing) had created a space in which this learner felt safe to describe the unfolding of a new subject position in a personal voice. Pushing off from the secure mooring of a familiar identity and becoming "many," as Serres exhorted, requires a sense of trust.

6.4. One For Sorrow

Finding 2. The journal can be a dialogical space in which the emotional self is not split off and the sharing of uncertainty and suffering can take place; yet, while this sharing can enrich learning, an educator must be conscious of increased relational responsibilities.

One for Sorrow

One for sorrow,
Two for joy,
Three for a girl,
Four for a boy,
Five for silver,
Six for gold,
Seven for a secret never to be told. (Anon.)

There are many versions of the verse above and although it is not attributed to an author, it is usually thought to be about magpie sightings. In Geddes's (2013) spirit of

playing with the found, I bring the verse into this discussion in connection with a found text that I believe attests to the dialogical nature of journal writing. Intersubjectivity in this writing can take many forms, such as the complex, shifting relationships described by the learner participant in the excerpt above, as well as the way that she shared a personal experience with me, her instructor. As a result of her sharing in this way, I understood her better and supported her learning. The intrasubjective is another important aspect of this literary practice. Participant D mentioned that the journal is a space in which he can talk to himself about what he is learning. It is a dialogue in the learner's psyche that may result in insights, although this process is complicated by tensions between public and private realms.

A year ago in a second-hand bookstore, I purchased a copy of a book entitled *Wise Women*: *Over 2000 Years of Spiritual Writing by Women*. When I got it home and opened it up, a card fell out. On the front of the card was an image entitled *Lane With Magpie* (Martin Giessen, 1992*)* a watercolour depicting a winter landscape. What appear to be car tracks in the snow begin in the foreground and continue until they almost merge in the background. Trees line either side of the tracks, both deciduous and evergreen with clumps of snow on their boughs. The trees cast their shadows in between the tracks, and there is no human presence. Off to the right side of the track and seemingly incidental to the scene is a magpie.

I am familiar with magpies because they are common on the prairies and I have often heard their raucous calling to one another. In this picture there is a lone magpie, which seems odd, as they are usually seen in flocks. However, I am reminded in a tangential way of a magpie from my childhood. Visiting a park one summer for a picnic with relatives, we were told that there was a small zoo with local species of birds and animals. In particular, we heard about a talking magpie. Intrigued by the idea of a talking creature, as children are, we were anxious to see if this was true and what it could say. I recall asking questions about whether a bird's tongue had to be split in order for it to talk, as I had heard this somewhere. Soon, we found out that the magpie could indeed speak, but its vocabulary was fairly limited. It rasped, "Hello," "Gimme a smoke," and a few words that we children had been instructed not to repeat.

While I was disappointed by the magpie's inability to converse, I think of it now as emblematic of the way that in academia we sometimes take up other discourses, repeat in styles and words not our own, even as I do at times in this text. The image on the card, too, offers up metaphorical representations of the writer's quest in academic writing, including journaling. The tracks that do not quite meet in the background represent divergent discourses and voices; the shadows between the tracks conceal selves that cannot find expression in that space. The bird has its own rich language that it uses to call to its compatriots and a borrowed dialect that is limited and possibly limiting.

As intriguing as the cover image of the card was to me at that time, it was what I discovered inside that I found even more thought provoking. Expecting perhaps to find birthday wishes that might accompany the gift of a book, instead there was a message intended for the inscriber herself:

> Dear Barbara,
>
> These are the things that
>
> make you feel bad and
>
> that are destructive in your
>
> life. Please try to eliminate
>
> them.
>
> Cigarettes
>
> over indulgence in
>
> caffeine and fat (chocolate, coffee,)
>
> fatty meat and too much food
>
> and wine
>
> dread of failure
>
> worry that artists aren't needed.

These things are positive. Try

to keep them.

Walks

hikes

work (writing, workshops

laundry and housework. Shopping,

cooking, communicating with

other people

All the best,

Yourself

Like the solitary magpie on the cover, it seemed that the voice I discovered inside the card was that of a lone artist, albeit one struggling to find her place in community. Her concern about the necessity of artists evokes my own concern about the place of the poet in this text. Moreover, the fact that she writes to herself strongly confirms the dialogical nature of writing.

The experience of inadvertently listening in to a conversation the author had had with herself is not unlike being the reader of a learner's journal. It reminded me that the tensions in classroom journaling (between private and public and self and other) need to be navigated with care and consciousness of power relations. As in the case of the message in the card, journal writing is often a textual space for disclosing and grappling with personal struggles, losses, and sometimes-difficult emotions. When discussing journal writing in the classroom, I have found that learners who are not presently keeping a journal will often say that they have previously kept one when they were going through a challenging time in their lives.

6.5. Classroom Journaling and Increased Relational Responsibilities

Despite learners' concerns about exposure and judgment, the classroom journal at times becomes a space for the expression of a range of emotions, placing increased responsibility on the instructor to respond in a way that is supportive and ethical. I share a story that illustrates this increased responsibility. In my first year of teaching college freshmen, the end of fall semester found me sitting with cardboard box full of student journals after my colleagues had already submitted their grades and gone home. It was late in the evening and outside heavy damp snow was falling. The quiet was disrupted occasionally by the footsteps of a security officer on his rounds. I had promised my children that we would celebrate the beginning of Christmas vacation with treats and board games, and I could picture them waiting for me in their pyjamas, the board games piled on the dining room table. Finally, I was down to one more journal. I would soon be heading home.

However, what I read caused me to pause, as a learner wrote about his struggle with very dark moods and even suicidal impulses that he attributed to pressure his father was exerting on him to go into the field of dentistry. He described how he wanted nothing more than to take some time away from school, fix up an old car, and drive across the country. He was torn inside—cognizant of the sacrifices his immigrant father had made for the family but deeply wishing to experience something new in life. He wrote with passion about the things he imagined he would see on his travels, the interesting people he would meet. It was difficult for me to focus on those details. My quandary was what action I should take in response to the suicidal thoughts he had expressed. I knew that I had an ethical responsibility to inform counselling services, and in the end, he did receive support.

This experience affirmed that the journal assignment does open up a space for emotional sharing and helped me realize that supporting learners who share in this space constituted a relational responsibility more complex than reading academic essays usually entailed. The dialogical aspect of journaling was apparent, as this learner was voicing his thoughts and feelings to himself in a way that he had perhaps not done

before. He knew he would have a reader and he risked exposure by moving into this personal terrain. I could not simply eavesdrop on his thoughts without responding, and in this case, response required intervention. I had a conversation with him about what he had written in order to ensure that he received appropriate support.

6.6. Summary

In this study, I asked how my own cultural identity, linguistic background, literacy practices and experiences with journals affect my practice as an educator. In Chapter 3, I considered the ways in which my own cultural identity and linguistic background have been influenced by factors such as a family history of Diaspora and a heritage language. I took into account the importance of geographical, professional, and personal changes. These factors sensitize me to the complex and multidimensional range of identities negotiated by learners in my classroom. Moreover, I am aware that my own literacy background, such as early emphasis on written literacy and exposure to personal journaling, affect my approaches to journaling in the classroom. In my experience, journals were seen as culturally valuable texts and, since childhood, I have continued to explore a range of expression in my journals.

Examining my personal experience with journaling helps me to be aware of the assumptions and biases that underlie my approach to academic literacy practices. I may view challenging academic subject positions and exploring multiple aspects of identity as beneficial facets of journaling, but many learners may find deviating from acceptable academic discourses to be too risky. In my classes, dialogue about these risks has increasingly accompanied journaling assignments. I have observed that when learners explore different identities, write from non-academic subject positions, and share personal emotional challenges, responsibility devolves on the instructor to build trust and suspend judgment.

Chapter 7.

Discussion of Research Findings

The previous three chapters presented the research findings based on data from learners, instructors, and the researcher. The findings from this study suggest that (a) the classroom journal can draw upon and support learners' identity frameworks if learners can access their L1 and incorporate a range of literacy practices; (b) in order to accommodate learner diversity, assignment designs and approaches to assessment should be flexible and negotiable, but trust and relationship-building invariably need to be established to ameliorate the risks of autobiographical writing in the academy; (c) finally, by examining one's own socio-cultural and linguistic identity as well as personal history with journaling, an educator can be aware of his or her assumptions and appreciate the complex negotiations of subject positions and discourses involved in such writing, as well as the increased relational responsibility.

This study uncovered a sense of unease with the journaling assignment for over half of the learners. This negative response was linked to relational dynamics in the classroom and the need for trust. The learner and instructor participants identified often unacknowledged risks involved in autobiographical writing, indicating that issues of institutional power, sanctioned discourses and subject positions affect the way that learners take up academic literacy texts and practices. A noticeable lack of consensus about assignment design and assessment procedures became evident, and both learner and instructor participants stressed the need for dialogue and the accommodation of differences. In this chapter, critical perspectives will be brought to bear on these issues, and explanations for the findings will be offered. By examining the literature, it is hoped that both theoretical understandings will be deepened and pedagogical practice will be advanced. The organization of this chapter is based on themes that arose in the

previous three chapters, and the sub-sections follow the order of the themes as they arose.

7.1. Issues of Power, Language, and Identity—Giving Voice to the Unspoken

The attendant risks involved in academic journaling and the connections between power, identity, and literacy practices only gradually emerged in discussion with the learner participants. The tendency for these issues to be submerged was evident when learner participants initially focused only on the cognitive benefits of journaling. Their early comments reflected the constructivist paradigm commonly used to frame discussion of journaling in scholarly literature. The participant responses described the negotiation of meaning through interaction with text and an emergent sense of agency through writing, while not questioning institutional power or broader issues of identity. Rather, they initially focused on the potential of the journal to support reflection and transform professional practices. While participants may have actually observed these learning benefits, the picture of journaling that eventually emerged was much more complex.

In initially emphasizing differences in individual learning styles and representation of knowledge and a range of modes, e.g., writing and speaking, many of the participants' statements and observations are congruent with Lea and Street's (2000) description of the academic socialization model. Participants' comments move beyond the study skills model with its focus on surface and technical features of language, such as grammar and punctuation, to a concern with "student orientation to learning and interpretations of learning tasks" (p. 34). Issues of institutional power and identity are not considered in these initial remarks, with the implication being that similar benefits for all learners could be derived from academic journaling. The academic socialization model, according to Lea and Street, "tends to treat writing as a transparent medium of representation and so fails to address the deep language, literacy and discourse issues involved in the institutional production and representation of meaning" (p. 35).

Eventually, it became clear that the journal presented some real challenges when it came to producing and representing meaning. Anxiety about the appearance of the journal and its looking “perfect” indicates that learners were hesitant to stray from sanctioned academic literacy practices. The fact that the majority of students took care to stay within the disciplinary boundaries of literacy production, adhering to formal grammar, spelling, paragraph format, etc. in their journals, even when invited to use a looser, more informal style reflects their sense that there is in the academy, as Cameron (1995) posited, a “single standard” (p. 23) and that there are consequences for straying from this standard. Rather than being a neutral medium, these learner participant experiences affirm the value-laden nature of language, and any learning tool that purports to open up possibilities for non-dominant discourses and subject positions will leave them vulnerable to sanction and “exclusion” (Cameron, 1995, p. 12). It was the fear of such exclusion that Instructor T touched on when she described learners who admitted that many kinds of language transactions, even those seemingly ordinary, are perceived as dangerous for learners.

The unease stemming from the journaling assignment as eventually described by these participants could be considered in light of the academic literacies model as: “[It] views the institutions in which academic practices take place as constituted in, and as sites of, discourse and power” (Lea & Street, 2000, p. 35). Concern about the journal looking “perfect,” presumably by the standards of the academy, reflect the learner’s preoccupation with being judged by those with power but also echoes Lea and Street’s assertion that “one explanation for student writing problems might be the gaps between academic staff expectations and student interpretations of what is involved in student writing “ (p. 35). Moreover, the confusion about assignment parameters and requirements will inevitably arise with a journaling assignment, considering its multifaceted history as both a public and private literacy practice. The “WH” questions raised by Participant F are, indeed, complex, and the discoursal and identity issues they evoke are often not addressed in classrooms.

The tensions evoked by and resistance to the journaling assignment described by the instructor participants could be understood in the light of gaps in interpretation of assignments. These gaps could be reduced by discussing the value of reflection and

negotiation of assignment parameters and by dialogue about the particular discoursal, historical, and cultural facets of the journal. The risks involved in autobiographical writing in the academy could be considered, along with issues of institutional power and linguistic hegemony. Bourdieu's (1997) notion of the "field" could be evoked while exploring the ways in which the "structure of the linguistic field" (p. 647) in the academy is not level.

7.2. Discourses Through a Critical Lens

As suggested in the preceding section, a critical lens is needed through which to consider the larger historical, pedagogical and discoursal issues as well as what is at stake for learners engaged in academic journaling. Luke (2012) said of critical literacy that "there is no correct or universal model" (p. 9); however, he stated that it "entails teaching students the analysis of a range of texts—functional, academic, literary—attending to lexico-grammatical structure, ideological contents, and the identifiable conditions of production and use" (p. 8). Addressing Participant F's question "What is journaling?" could be a useful starting point involving a discussion of how the conditions of personal journaling may be different from those of academic journaling, along with the complexities and risks of navigating between private and public contexts.

The learner's relationship to the curriculum is only one strand in a larger web of power and discourse, and the need to move beyond a constructivist framework is evident in the Group One learner participants' negative experience with the journaling assignment. Cadeiro-Kaplan (2002) made this need clear in her description of the critical literacy approach:

> This literacy expands on the progressive notion of personal discovery by placing both teacher and student in a historical context and advocates the interrogation of the curriculum, which is that of the everyday world. (p. 377)

No doubt, reading the word and the world (Friere, 1970) in a situation such as the one in which first group of participants found themselves involves observing how both learners and instructors can be caught up in a power network with sometimes confusing and competing authoritative imperatives and outcomes that, nevertheless, have significant

ramifications. In this case, the learners associated the journal assignment with a sense of confusion and feelings of suspicion and resentment.

The learners were struggling to understand the implications of the academic journaling assignment, but as Bourdieu (1977) pointed out, “Understanding is not a matter of recognizing an invariable meaning, but of grasping the singularity of form which only exists in a particular context” (p. 647). The need to address the context and to carry out “the analysis of how texts and discourses work, where, with what consequences, and in whose interests” (Luke, 2012, p. 5) is a necessary step for students to not only maximize the possible pedagogical benefits of the assignment but to bring about a transformation of the social context of learning.

Just as autobiographical writing can free the writer from the objective, non-reflexive model of subjectivity, it is a literacy practice enmeshed in ideology and power relations. As Gannet (1992) pointed out, personal writing has been associated with the form of the diary, with women’s discourse, and has been marginalized as a literary form. Conversely, personal narratives, such as slave narratives, have been used to counter and expose hegemonic discourses. Hesford (1999) asserted that autobiographical writing can be used by learners to “expose the partiality and presumptions of institutional histories and truths” and to “fracture fixed autobiographical scripts and to represent the shifting identities and multiple identifications among communities” (pp. xxi-xxii). Not only is the self viewed as a “discursive and cultural construct” (p. 60) in this critical approach, but possibilities for agency can be taken into account. Interestingly, Participant D, who had a Western European background and who was familiar with a wide range of journals and engaged in this literacy practice both personally and professionally, was entirely comfortable navigating the potentially subversive and unsettling discourses of journaling.

7.3. Literacy and Interwoven Strands of Identity

Learner participants were willing to discuss cultural identity but hesitant to be defined by any unitary concept of culture or cultural practices. Accordingly, Clarke (2008) cautioned against static connections between individuals and culture: “While we need to recognize that individual lives take shape and have meaning within cultural worlds, we

need to resist seeing any single construct such as 'culture' as all-determining" (p. 22). Nevertheless, even with a more nuanced and multifaceted view of cultural identity, the reality is that many learners do navigate between languages and cultural contexts, resulting in complex relationships to texts and literacy practices. Cumming (2013) advocated for a pedagogical practice that acknowledges the complex relationship between language, culture, and literacy practices:

> Language learners need to develop their senses of identity in relation to literacy practices in their additional language and culture; and a proven, initial basis for doing so is through writing that makes full uses (in and across the L1 and the L2) about their knowledge of themselves and their multilingual, multicultural identities. (p. 135)

This statement echoes Ferdman's (1990) assertion that "a person's identity as a member of an ethnocultural group is intertwined with the meaning and consequences of becoming and being literate" (p. 182).

Several of the multilingual participants expressed an interest in the possibility of code-switching in their journals. Based on his work with multilingual adult and adolescent learners, Cummings (2013) described what he calls a "heuristic strategy:"

> Language switching is a cognitive process that occurs naturally and spontaneously among multilinguals. So it cannot be turned off cognitively any more than it can be legislated away by classroom polices that might encourage learners to think in the second language. (p. 134)

According to Cumming, the real goal should be assisting learners to use the strategy "judiciously and effectively" (p. 134). Martinez-Roldan and Sayer (2006) reiterated this point, asserting, "Bilinguals have special linguistic resources beyond what monolinguals in either of the languages, have, and that bilinguals are able to employ these resources strategically and with great sensitivity to contextual factors" (p. 296).

Without considering the logistics of code-switching in their academic journals, the bilingual and multilingual participants in this study expressed interest in the possibility of

being able to do so. Talking about this possibility with learners would be a salient starting point for exploring issues of identity and the ways that language, culture, and literacy practices intersect. Precedents in literature and film could be considered in terms of how translation is handled. Provocative questions could be addressed. What is lost or gained in translation? What are the implications in films or works of literature when code-switching occurs but no translation is offered? Certain examples, especially of journals, where code-switching occurs could be considered and, if appropriate, post-colonial theorizing could be brought into the discussion. The connections between language and fundamental aspects of identity are at the heart of this discussion. In the following passage, Kramsch (2009) described this connection:

> As a sign system, language elicits subjective responses in the speakers themselves: emotions, memories, fantasies, projections, identifications. Because it is not only a code but also a meaning-making system, language constructs the historical sedimentation of meanings that we call our "selves." (p. 2)

It is difficult to imagine separating these deeper layers of the self from learning, but that is precisely what occurs when a monolingual approach is taken to literacy practices such as academic journaling.

The gendered aspect of selfhood was considered in relation to journaling practices, and participants observed diverging histories with journaling based on gender that may extend to the present. Gannett (1991) observed that the interior life of emotions has been associated with women's speech acts, and Participant I echoed that observation in her description of the emotional content of women's and girls' journals. However, more than the gendered nature of literary texts and practices is indicated in these observations; Gannett pointed out, "[How] indeed, the gendering of literacy practices called journals or diaries may accompany the acquisition of literacy itself" (p. 187). These gendered dimensions of literacy texts and practices could be the basis of rich and illuminating conversations with learners and could help explain, in some cases, the ways in which learners resist or adopt classroom journaling.

7.4. An Expanding Universe—Multiliteracies and the Journal Assignment

The learner participants in this study readily acknowledged the multimodal complexity of their lives and enthusiastically expressed their wish to integrate a diverse range of literacies into not only the learning journal, but all their assignments. Their openness to a multiliteracies approach to academic texts and practices reflects the theoretical perspectives in this field. In addition to moving away from the autonomous view of literacy to seeing literacy texts and practices as socially situated, literacy scholars acknowledge the proliferation of modalities, genres, and artifacts (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000). In revisiting the multiliteracies framework almost a decade after the publication of *Multiliteracies: Literacy and the Design of Social Futures*, Cope and Kalantzis (2009) reiterated the point that "one of the most significant challenges to the old literacy teaching is the increasing multimodality of meaning" (p. 178). It seems likely, according to this view, that the "old" print literacy approach to the classroom journal could be expanded in a way that both learner and instructor participants were open to exploring.

Moving away from the dominance of print literacy, the multiliteracies scholars include the following modalities: oral language; visual representation; audio representation; tactile representation; gestural representation; representation to oneself, e.g., emotions; and spatial representation (pp. 178-179). According to Ivanic et al. (2007), this growth of the "semiotic landscape" challenges the crisis narrative of literacy and can be seen rather as "the increasing abundance of text and screen literacies and multimodal minglings" (p. 20). This "pluralisation of literacy practices" (p. 20) is reflected in the many modes of reflection and communication identified by participants.

While the majority of participants were not keeping a personal journal when this data was collected, they readily identified reflective practices that fitted into Cope and Kalantzis's (2000) list of modalities. It is not difficult to imagine how these practices could be incorporated into journaling, whether it be in a traditional print literacy form or through digital technologies. Barriers in the academic setting, however, may be as basic as treating these non-academic literacies as "non-existent or detrimental to learning" when,

according to Ivanic et al. (2007), they are “abundant, and can be embraced as positive resources for students’ success in their courses” (p. 709).

Participants discussed the possibility of filming gestural acts and including them as part of digital journals. In their study of the writing component of a university choreography class, Mitchell et al. (2000) described the resistance learners experienced when faced with an essay requirement that accompanied a choreography assignment. The authors pointed out how very often written assignments such as essays (and possibly journals) function “to legitimize the work of the student in the conventions of the academic, largely text-based, institution” (p. 90). In 1933, Dewey was already thinking of the semiotic significance of multiple modes when he considered language as including “[g]estures, pictures, monuments, visual images, finger movements—anything deliberately and artificially employed as a sign” (Dewey as cited in Fairfield, 2009, p. 117). Discussing the relationship between modes of meaning with learners could be a starting point for challenging the text-based bias and the notion of what constitutes a text.

7.5. Assignment Design

While there was no consistency in terms of what learners considered to be effective assignment designs, discussion and negotiation were seen to be desirable. Nevertheless, it is difficult to ignore Participant C’s declaration that he found the open-ended nature of the journal assignment to be “terrifying.” Would it help this participant to hear that the pliable nature of the journal is a feature that, historically, writers have embraced with enthusiasm? For instance, Virginia Woolf (1919) famously spoke of the journal as a “capacious hold-all, in which one flings a mass of odds and ends” (p. 42). Acknowledging that the journal, with its lack of prescriptiveness, has served as the creative template for writers and inventors alike may be an interesting starting point from which the parameters of an assignment could be negotiated.

Considering the multifaceted nature of this literacy practice as well as the paucity of literature on the relationship between personal and academic journaling, Gannet (1992) suggested that unravelling these discoursal links should begin with instructors:

> We need to understand more about the history, traditions, and social conditions in which journal forms have been practiced if we intend to be able to bridge the gap between our perceptions of the journal in the college composition classroom and those of our students. . . . We need to be able to provide a much more comprehensive context for the notions of the journal and diary if we want to come to terms with them. (p. 41)

While presenting an extensive history of this literacy practice may not be possible or even necessary, pointing at least briefly to the variety of forms that journals and diaries have taken may be helpful. For instance, it may be useful for learners to know that some early journals did consist of records in the form of lists and that many journals have included visual material such as botanical drawings.

Considering the two groups of learners in this study, the Group Two learners were educators who, no doubt, had more experience with journals in their own schooling and possibly their own classrooms. The learners in Group One, in contrast, were mostly professionals in non-school settings. Although this consideration of their background may help to explain their comfort level with journaling, broaching a journal assignment with a discussion that includes questions such as the following may be helpful for learners who are feeling the terror, as well as for those who are comfortable with the practice. What is your understanding of the purpose, typical contents, etc. of a journal? What is the difference between the term “journal” and “diary?” Are you aware of journaling traditions in your own culture? In what ways have social conditions, e.g., social class, gender, etc. affected journal keeping? How would you characterize the differences between personal and academic journals? In some cases, instructors employ related terms such as “learning log” (used by Instructor U) or “portfolio” (used by Professor T). The relationship of both similarities and differences, between these terms and “learning” or “reflective” journal could be discussed.

Questions need to be asked about the nature of reflection, a term often used in connection with the classroom journal. This need could be justified in consideration of Instructor U’s description of how a learner actually left the class in response to the journaling assignment and specifically the “R” word. One way of approaching the

reflective aspect of a journal assignment may be to frame it as a way of thinking about a subject; thus, it could be useful to consider Dewey's (1933) definition of reflective thought: "The [a]ctive, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends" (as cited in Fairfield, 2012, p. 114).

Fairfield (2012) amplified this definition by emphasizing the "connecting links in human experience between one problematic situation and another, between different lines of inquiry or whole fields of study, and between a particular subject matter and its larger significance for human life" (p. 114). Requiring that learners reflect but not engage in an exploration of which activities constitute reflection and the purpose for engaging in it sets the scene for confusion and resistance. Therefore, in addition to discussing the questions above, a helpful starting point for the journal assignment could be: (a) asking learners to consider what they see as the benefits of this active form of thought, and (b) which situations, fields, and larger connections might be made.

Participant A's comments revealed that a hazy understanding of the concept of reflection was not the only reason that learners might resent the journal assignment. Learners would begrudgingly undertake an assignment, although they considered it to be nothing more than what she called "busy work." Ivanic et al.'s (2007) exploration of effective assignment parameters affirms that just because learners complete an assignment does not mean that they have had a meaningful learning experience. They establish a list of characteristics for learner engagement that includes "clear audience" and "student's preferred literacy practices," and qualities such as "shared, collaborative and interactive," and "purposeful" (p. 711). Both learners' and instructors' comments validate the importance of this criterion. According to Ivanic et al., "identification" is the real key to the effectiveness of the assignment, and they describe its manifestation as follows: "When students see literacy practices to be associated with their sense of who they are or who they want to become, they participate in them wholeheartedly" (p. 718).

Participant A's comments also indicate another problem in teacher education—the journal that documents the learner's progress and experience in the field is often not returned with meaningful feedback. Ivanic et al. (2007) attributed this type of complaint

to the “preoccupation within educational institutions with assessment and accreditation” (p. 712). They asserted that many written literacy practices are concerned only with “the demonstration of knowledge, understanding and competence, or on the completion of log books to provide evidence of what has been learned” (p. 712). While these concerns cannot be completely put aside, assignment design must be attuned to learners’ goals, emerging identity in a field, and sense of relationship with those who are mentors.

Participant B, whose instructors did get back to students and asked questions that guided the journal entries, described a “positive” experience with journaling. This positive impression confirms the value of a clear audience and interaction and while a further pedagogical step could involve the learner formulating her own questions, this account confirms that meaningful learning occurs at “the intersection of the individual and the social” (McMillan, 2000, p. 161).

7.6. Assessment—The Importance of Trust

Most important in the discussion of assessment of the journal is the consideration of trust, an element that was emphasized by both learner and instructor participants. It is worth bearing in mind, at the beginning of this discussion, that Street’s (1995) description of literacy as “a critical social practice” (p. 141) as well as Gee’s (2008) challenge to the traditional autonomous view that “rips literacy out of its socio-cultural contexts and treats it as an asocial cognitive skill with little or nothing to do with human relationships. It cloaks literacy’s connections to power, to social identity, and to ideologies” (p. 67). This asocial, autonomous view is challenged by the attention that participants gave to the issues of trust and relationship-building. Participant P pointed out how, for example, in one class complex issues of morality and ethics were discussed openly with personal examples because “within the group there was a lot of trust.”

A strong connection can be made between levels of trust in the classroom and approaches to assessment. Because honest reflection requires an environment that is open and accepting, some educators recognize the limitations if learners are preoccupied with judgment. Boud (2001) described the scenario in the following: “It is in the interest of learning that writers express their doubts, reveal their lack of

understanding, and focus on what they do not know. Consequently, there is a tension between assessment and reflection that must be addressed" (p. 16). He suggested that, in some cases, journals be kept private, and if they are not kept entirely private, the decision can be postponed as to what, when, and to whom the journal material will be shared (p. 16). If journals are not shared, they can be seen as resources that can be drawn from for other assignments.

Some participants in this study indicated that they would be unlikely to keep a journal if there were no assessment, begging the question of how, ultimately, assessment can be carried out in a manner that is ethical. Fenwick (2001) proposed that clarifying the role of the assessor could make the process more transparent and fair. She suggested possible roles that could guide self, peer, and instructor evaluation: comforter, mirror, provoker, learning director, friend-in-dialogue, evaluator, biographer (p. 41). Clarifying the role of the assessor at the outset may relieve some of the tension involved in the assessment stage of the assignment.

A willingness to shift and adopt new approaches, as described by the instructor participants, is echoed in Fenwick's (2001) description of pedagogic principles that could be employed in the assessment of journals:

> When we, as responders, insert ourselves into the intensely personal process of journal writing, we must be absolutely clear about our purposes and rationality, as well as our potentially repressive influence. We need to be thoughtful about the mode and role of response that we adopt at different times in the process…adjusting our responses to the journal writer's needs and checking how our responses are understood or misunderstood. (p. 46)

Thinking through our roles in assessment and clarifying those roles with learners is an important part of the introduction of a journaling assignment if trust is to be established. Fenwick acknowledged the need for educators to practice self-care, as she acknowledges that it is "easy to become overwhelmed by the sheer volume of text to read" when it comes to journals.

No matter how flexible instructors are, their approach to assessment may not work for all learners. After all, the learner participants themselves were not in agreement regarding the assessment methods that they considered most fair and effective. Looking at these divergent views from a wider purview, the necessity of taking into account diversity becomes a pedagogical imperative. Cope and Kalantzis (2009) identified their goal as promoting this kind of diversity and creating "the conditions for learning that support the growth of this kind of person: a person comfortable with themselves as well as being flexible enough to collaborate and negotiate with others who are different from themselves" (p. 174). This kind of negotiation could be initiated and modelled by instructors.

7.7. The Dialogic Nature of the Journal

With the risks of academic journaling acknowledged, the learning potential of the journaling assignment can also be explored. Hesford (1999) invoked Bakhtin's (1981) notion of dialogism in outlining a pedagogical approach to autobiographical writing in an academic setting. Hesford described how this concept could underscore and support the diverse, competing voices operating in a classroom and in an autobiographical text (p. 60). That individual words have a social dimension and that discourses are interwoven in complex social and institutional contexts means that ideas, images, and identities are born in a kind of exchange between parties, between speaker and interlocutor. The frequency with which participants in this study mentioned the importance of conversational exchanges points to the intersubjective nature of learning that can be reflected in literacy practices such as journaling.

This dialogical aspect of communication is evident even in personal journal writing, a text form that on the surface is produced by and for the self. In 1931, my grandfather, John Boschman, started a journal with these words:

> In the following pages I will try to enter incidents, events and other things of interest and importance to me. I sometimes feel like talking to some intimate friend, expressing my feelings and views about things or matters pertaining to life and to the heart.

There is an implied reader or listener and Culley (1998) described the need to acknowledge this audience:

> The importance of the audience, real or implied, conscious or unconscious, of what is usually thought of as a private genre cannot be overstated. The presence of a sense of audience, in this form of writing as in all others, has a crucial influence over what is said and how it is said. Friend, lover, mother, God, a future self—whatever role the audience assumes for the writer—that presence becomes a powerful "thou" to the "I" of the diarist. (p. 218)

Engaging learners in a discussion of how they envision or identify the audience of their journal writing could be a starting point for delving deeper into issues of identity, power, and discourse. While one of the obvious audience members would be the instructor, the role that the instructor plays and the identity of the instructor (race, class, gender) could be further elucidated. There is a need to discuss this complex role that the instructor as audience plays, as being "thou" to the "I" and fulfilling an evaluative role implies a double and conflicting position.

Finally, Gannet (1992) spoke of the hazards of personal disclosure in the classroom journal that caused some critics to see it as "a tool of invasion" (p. 36). Teachers set limitations on how personal the content could be after certain learner entries placed them in a position of having to report to legal authorities. My experience with the journal written by a young learner expressing suicidal thoughts attests to the complex nature of these disclosures. The pressure to distance themselves from the private content associated with the diary has sometimes caused educators to view the classroom journal as "reserved for kinds of cognitive and discursive activity appropriate to school" (Gannett, 1992, p. 40) and to structure assignments accordingly.

This kind of dichotomizing cannot silence the myriad voices and experiences connected with learning or split off the emotions from the self. The story shared by Participant L in her journal attests to the intersection of identity, experience, and emotions in learning. The journal could support this diversity of voices, identities, and connections and be a learning space that Participant Q described as "often

transformative," and where both instructors and learners can be "surprised by what ends up on the page."

7.8. Summary

The range of responses to journaling and the uncertainty regarding definitions was mentioned at the beginning of this study, and I draw attention to the lack of consensus about what constitutes a journal, its typical content, etc. It would seem that the journal is both an individual and societal construct as each person may come up with his or her own definition based on a complex congruence of culture, language, and literacy practices. That the journal in its many forms has a established place in the public imagination and discourses is an undeniable fact. A recent example would be the popularity of memoirs (closely related to the journal) such as the 1853 memoir of Solomon Northrup made into an award winning film *Twelve Years a Slave,* sparking interesting discussions of racism and the history of slavery in North America. Some examples of controversial memoirs are discovered to lack truth, revealing the construction of identity, while some diaries raise the question as to whether or not it is ethical to expose others in revealing details about the self.

If the journal carries with it all this controversy and cultural baggage, in the classroom there are the added factors of institutional power relations along with tensions between the public and private and academic and personal dimensions. Despite the uncertainties, disagreements, and risks, educators continue to assign journals in classrooms increasingly marked by many forms of diversity. The findings of this study could be of use to educators in the following ways:

- Consideration of the way that restrictive or hegemonic views of learner identities can be reinforced or challenged by pedagogical approaches to assignments such as classroom journals.

- Realization of the importance of taking into account how learners' conceptual frameworks and cultural and linguistic identities coincide with schooled literacy texts and practices such as the journal.

- Examination of how an educator's own conceptual frameworks, cultural and linguistic identities and histories with journaling affect their approach to the journal assignment.

- Understanding the benefits of discussing the history of the journal as a literacy practice, the relationship between terms such as diary and journal, and unpacking terms such as "reflection."

- Appreciation of the need to move beyond a constructivist theoretical framework and apply a critical lens to interrogate the connections between identity, power, and literacy practices.

- Recognition of the ways that learner diversity implies a need for flexibility and negotiation in regard to assignment design and assessment.

- Recognition of the social dimensions of literacy practices such as journaling and the need to establish trust and assume the relational responsibilities that are inherent in the journal assignment.

This last point evokes Greene's (2009) vision of education. She stated "Perhaps we can at last devise reflective communities in the interstices of colleges and schools" (p. 95). The findings of this study indicate that the classroom journal, with its inherent benefits and risks, could enrich and contribute in meaningful ways to learning communities.

Chapter 8.

Conclusion

No system can do justice to the intensity and complexity of lyric experience. Nor can lyric language succeed where system fails by *referring* more precisely.

What is needed is not words that pretend they are doing justice, but words that convey an awareness of their own inadequacy, their inevitable conditioning by grammar and culture.

And for *this*, one needs words that are full of their own being *as words.*

(Zwicky, 1992 & 2012, p. 108)

8.1. Final Thoughts and Further Questions

Tracing the genesis of my own interest in journaling and the questions that arose over the years that led to this study would be to trace variegated and, at times, circuitous lines. I strongly believe that this interest has its origins in what Jan Zwicky (1992 & 2012) referred to as “lyric experience,” that is, interconnected ideas and experiences that form a resonant non-reducible matrix. Looking into the past, I wonder if the seed of interest was planted when my grandparents decided to keep a journal together in 1938, or before that when my grandfather, while a student at Normal School, feeling lonely on a winter’s night in 1931 began to put down his thoughts in a notebook. I still recall the click of the lock closing on my first diary. No doubt this interest was cultivated in my own early journaling experiences. My interest has its roots in my earliest years as an instructor observing the multitude of ways that learners engaged with the learning journal.

In the course of carrying out this study, fascination has been fed by conversations with other students and educators. The way that my concern with this subject has intersected with that of other students in both my program and even other academic fields has linked it in interesting ways with disciplines such as imaginative education, life writing, translation studies, cultural studies, workplace and work-life writing, and even folklore and mythology. These conversations continue to be rich and generative. The questions that arise will, no doubt, guide my future explorations in the areas of pedagogy and literacy studies. As I conclude this study, I am aware that words and systems cannot capture all that is possible to know about a subject, so I readily admit that there is more that could be said about the learning journal as an academic literacy practice.

At times, I have been surprised by the strength of feelings with which learners and educators have spoken of their experiences with the journaling assignment. In regard to a literacy practice and text so marked by lack of official definitions and varied in its forms throughout the span of history and amongst many cultures, the stated need on the part of learners for clearer definitions and guidelines may at first seem contradictory; however, a closer look at this need has uncovered risks of autobiographical writing in the academy, risks that may too often be underestimated. For instance, both learner and instructor participants called attention to (a) the power of dominant discourses and subject positions in the academy, (b) the frequent lack of opportunity to incorporate learners' L1 and a multitude of multimodal tools and border literacies, and (c) a lack of clarity or flexibility regarding assignment parameters. This study has also uncovered some of the possible benefits of academic journaling: (a) the journal can be a tool for challenging hegemonic discourses, and (b) it can incorporate diversity of identity – all our multilingual, multicultural selves.

As the journal, like many other literacy texts and practices, is affected by technology, it will no doubt continue to change and be characterized by flexibility and multimodality. Some of the questions for further study are related to a concern with changing technology and conceptions of private/public spaces:

- How will the shifting lines between private and public space in a digital age of blogging, YouTube, and reality television affect conceptions of autobiographical writing, and in turn, impact academic journaling?

- In a so-called 'surveillance society' will learners become more reluctant to share private reflections that are more frequently posted on course websites?

While travelling in Canada and abroad in a range of public settings, I am more aware than ever of the code-switching that takes place continually in conversations from groups of students on the bus alternating between Farsi and English to fellow students in my own classes who in their research texts move between English, Korean, Mandarin, and Japanese. This kind of code-switching may become a discoursal norm that will inevitably find its way into classroom assignments:

- Concerning assignments in which code-switching occurs, how can instructors who do not speak a learner's L1 approach assessment?

The next question stems from the observation of stylistic cross influences between literary genres such as memoir and other types of journals and the fact that journals are assigned in many academic programs where conventional academic discourses remain the standard:

- How can aesthetic, creative, and imaginative impulses and expressions be integrated in the journal so that learners can make use of the literary devices of lyricism and fiction?

Trust and relationship building were seen to be vitally important to the success of the journal assignment. The following question takes up this concern with the social context of learning:

- How can power relations be addressed in ways that trust and relationships be fostered in order to lay the groundwork for the success of the journaling assignment?

- Specifically, what classroom practices, kinds of conversations and negotiations can nurture trusting relationships?

It is this concern with the social dimension that I would like to consider further in the next section.

8.2. Sharing Our Learning in the Realm of the Unpredictable

Loss is perhaps the ultimate philosophical problem—and death only incidentally and to the extent it is experienced as loss by those who remain alive. The great absolute architectonics of systematic thought are intended to secure the world against loss. Maturity is achieved when things are let go, left to be on their own, allowed their specificity—for when things become most fully themselves, they also become most fully losable. (Zwicky, 1992 & 2012, p. 89)

The issue of fostering trust and relationships cannot be underestimated since what is at stake is the opportunity to create a space for our shared humanity. As a learning tool, the journal can be a discoursal space in which learners "rediscover their own memories" (Greene, 2009, pp. 95-96) and if it provokes them to "unveil and disclose" (pp. 95-96) as in the case of the learner who dreamed of driving across the country or Participant L and her story of the dreamcatcher and the gift of medicine, learners can decide how much to disclose. Inevitably there will be stories of loss and sorrow. For instance, Wang (2004) described the harm done by repressing hurt caused by racism as "more devastating than the negative feeling themselves" (p. 161). Part of the reluctance to make space for the wounds is a sense of protectiveness on the part of the educator, but Wang said that she has gained the needed faith that her students can "grapple with their own inner struggles" (p. 161). Suffering, she indicated, is in itself transformative:

> Suffering teaches as it is transformed and the loving guidance of the teacher becomes essential in helping students meander through their discomfort to reach the other side of the world. Along the way, the pain—social, personal, or

> psychic—is alleviated (although perhaps not totally gotten rid of) through creating new meanings for both self and community. (p. 162)

In my own experience and according to many learners I have spoken with, journaling has been a space for meandering through suffering and creating new meanings.

I do not mean to simplify the process of such meandering or letting go—it is a process, and it takes time. As an educator, situations will inevitably occur in which some form of intervention is needed. That is not to say that personal content of journaling should be excluded. Reading my grandfather's journals was at times a difficult experience. It was painful to encounter his descriptions of my father as a three year old grappling with the loss of his mother, asking in the middle of the night if the angels could take her wings off, so that she could return to her family. Yet, in a sense, I witnessed the sorrow that on a psychic level I always knew had occurred, and such witnessing opened a space for compassion.

Again, Wang (2004) spoke of the complex nature of such compassion and the role of the teacher in establishing the pedagogical parameters of such a response to inner experience, some of which will be difficult:

> The rigorous and sharp edge of compassion and tenderness toward the other is not in letting the other go but in opening the other's capacity for self-renewal, and the teacher's role as the third party between external imposition and anarchical letting go is to play with pedagogical distance, inspiring students to journey upward through touching what is swirling inside. (p. 162)

It may not always be easy to determine just what the best distance is in a journaling assignment or to find the right balance between structure and openness but it is worth exploring. I continue to be amazed at the possibilities for inner journeying, dialogical connecting, and creativity in the journal. When journaling allows us to be open, to bring in our many selves, the results are not predictable and I am instructed by the experiences shared by learners. To be in the realm of the unpredictable is to be in the realm of imagination, and going back to Tuhiwai Smith (1999), imagination can be a way of "sharing the world" (p. 37). Hirshfield (1997) reminded us of the "the shared existence

of beings and things" (p. 99). In the end is seems whatever the risks, there is much to be gained through sharing our complexity, diversity, losses, and learning.

8.3. Epilogue—Heritage/Language

In closing, I am aware that I have, at times, wanted to create more space in this study for lyric resonance, to trust that connections would vibrate and sing in their own unique timbres. It seems apropos given the oft-stated diversity of expression in the journal that there would be room for such variety. Like learners facing a journal assignment, however, the discoursal possibilities that I have considered have at times created inner tensions, have caused me to consider risks. At one such time, I recalled a game from childhood called Chinese Jump Rope. In this form of skipping, the participant in the centre must jump over ropes that are sometimes parallel and at other times intersecting. To extend this metaphor, I have often found myself wondering if my feet (or linguistic choices) should land between, one inside and one outside, or both on the outside of sometimes criss-crossing lines (or discourses). I view this uncertainty as a result of having inherited many diverse strands of academic and literary discourses. Moreover, I have learned from this dilemma as it puts me in touch with similar tensions experienced by learners faced with a journaling assignment. Considering Jan Zwicky's commentary on the inadequacy of words to convey fully, the last words I offer here are in the form of a poem, a last reflection on language and journals.

Sing Only of Return

Pautsche (to patter noisily through puddles),
a word that slipped out of memory's pocket
more than forty years ago.
Yet, as a pebble withholds particles of earth
after water has returned to clouds,
and in late summer riverstones recall
a gurgling lullaby,
it bobbed to the surface of a spring morning.

For days I am lost between pages
or absorbed in the flickering screen
and forget to replace humming
birds' nectar.
But faithful they return even after weeks.
Small whirring verbs, they sip
then tip their heads and do not ponder
absence or presence.

Cherry tree boughs frilled with blossoms
and bees swarm in *Himmelblieu*.
Sweet red orbs will form here and who would think
of bare limbs or departures when April's birds
sing only of return.

This door that opens backwards into retrieval,
gratitude for these words,
each page a reunion,
each fading notebook line a horizon that cannot
contain everything.
The aperture of the last loop,
the dot of each embryonic endstop,
even the empty space that follows overflows
with possibility.

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Appendix 1.

Focus Group Questions

Study Title: "Supporting Diversity through Journaling: Seeing All Our Learning Selves Reflected in the Academy" Ethics No. 2012s0885

Researcher: Leanne Boschman

At the beginning of your program, you were asked to keep a journal. What was your understanding of the purpose and guidelines for this assignment?

Has your understanding of the journal assignment shifted? If yes, please explain.

What languages do you speak? If more than one, have you been able to use your other languages in your studies or in your workplace?

What do you consider to be some of your cultural resources? Have you been able to incorporate these into your studies? If yes, please explain.

What are some of the literacies, e.g. religious literacies, practice everyday literacies such as texting, making lists, workplace literacies, that you use? Have you been able to incorporate any of these into your studies?

What kinds of assignment parameters and support would enhance your journaling practice for this course?

What kinds of connections have you made between your learning in this program and your workplace? How have you recorded these connections?

What activities/assignments have enabled you to connect with your fellow learners? What forms of collaborative learning have taken place?

Have you used online discussion forums in the past? Have they been useful?

Please comment on any aspect of journaling that you haven't been able to discuss up until this point.

Appendix 2.

Survey Questions

Study Title: "Supporting Diversity through Journaling: Seeing All Our Learning Selves Reflected in the Academy" Ethics No. 2012s0885

Researcher: Leanne Boschman

Do you keep a personal journal at the present time? (Please circle one) Yes/No

If yes, for how long have you kept the journal?

If no, have you every kept a personal journal in the past? (Please circle one) Yes/No. If yes, when and for how long?

Have you ever been required to keep a learning/reflective journal in a university course? (Please circle one) Yes/No

If yes, was the purpose of the journal made clear? (Please circle one) Yes/No

If yes, was the evaluation criteria made clear? (Please circle one) Yes/No

If yes, do you think that the learning/reflective journal enhanced your learning experience? Please explain why or why not in a few sentences.

Can you identify any practices (besides journaling) that enable you to reflect on your experiences and learning, e.g., meditation, blogging, conversations with friends, arts or crafts?

Can you identify any aspects of culture, language, or religion that are important parts of your identity that you could incorporate in a learning/reflective journal?

What assignment guidelines or supports would ideally help you to make the best use of a learning/reflective journal?

Appendix 3.

Interview Guide

Study Title: Supporting Diversity through Journaling: Seeing All Our Learning Selves Reflected in the Academy, Ethics No. 2012s0885

Researcher: Leanne Boschman

Have you ever assigned a learning or reflective journal in one of your courses?

Please outline the assignment parameters in terms of the length of entries, types of entries (content), period of time the journal was to be kept, final submission format, etc.

What do you see to be the benefits of journaling assignments for the students?

What do you consider to be the benefits for you as an educator?

What do you consider to be the limitations or drawbacks of such an assignment?

What do you consider to be fair evaluation practices for assessing journaling assignments?

What kinds of questions or concerns do students typically express in response to journaling assignments?

Do you accommodate diversity e.g. linguistic, cultural, non-academic literacies, multimodal technologies etc., in your journaling assignments? Please elaborate.

Do you utilize Moodle or Dialogue Central for students to collectively reflect on their learning? What do you consider to be the benefits of this format?

Please comment on any aspects of journaling that you haven't been able to discuss up until this point.