NARRATING EDUCATION:
DIALOGICAL TOOLS FOR INTERPRETING ADULT LITERACY LEARNERS' ACCOUNTS OF SCHOOL

by

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Abstract

The literature of emancipatory education frequently invokes dialogic co-operation. In this theorized pedagogy, personal narratives are often regarded as a "natural" tool for linking education with learners' lives. Feminist and post-structuralist critiques have exposed difficulties with critical pedagogy's "dialogical" imperative to speak out of personal experience, warning against narratives that cater to the desire to see learners as tragic or heroic victims in need of educational rescue. My own analysis suggests that claims about the educational value of learners' personal narratives may often be based on impressionistic interpretations that need reassessing. In this thesis, I develop more nuanced and systematic methods for such reassessment grounded in Mikhail Bakhtin's work. A range of data was collected at a suburban adult learning centre; here, I focus on interviews with five learners, all of whom were schooled in Canada and enrolled as adults in a high-school completion program. Analysis is informed by Bakhtin's concept of dialogism, an interconnected set of concerns expressing the notion that discourse is always riddled with and responsive to what has already been and has yet to be spoken. The most obvious embodiment of this notion is a conversation, and the analysis begins by examining the genre of the "conversational" interview. Bakhtin argues that discourse is also double-voiced, dialogized by echoes of utterances made in other places and at other times, and the analysis moves on to examine, through the tracing of reported speech, how the learners' accounts orient themselves to the already-spoken-about. Next, I examine the idea of the chronotope. Chronotopes are a useful tool for looking at how learners' relationships to schooling and literacy are accounted for in terms of tacit conceptions of place and (especially) time, and also for examining what their narratives suggest about how things might have been or might yet be different. The analytical tools drawn from dialogism have proven richly insightful and have allowed me to trace subtleties in the dynamics that produce narrative. The questions and insights about narration generated here can be taken up in practice and extended in further research using "naturally occurring" data.

Keywords: adult education; Bakthin, M. M.; dialogism; narrative

Acknowledgements

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"Emancipatory" Uses of Personal Narrative in Education

When I began teaching in adult basic education, I was familiar with the idea of literacy as contextually embedded and multiple, but I still had a lingering faith in the universal value of the school-based literacy I had acquired over the years. I taught more or less as I had been taught, and all I could think at the time was that I was supposed to be dispensing the wealth of my own literate education in some more gently paced and sensitively attentive way. It didn't go badly, but, as I stood at the front of the class, the sense persisted that this approach—essentially, offering learners much the same thing only more "nicely"—wasn't especially well-grounded. Obviously something more or other than a history of impatient or indifferent teachers now led these people to make their way to the program where I taught. I knew their experiences of formal education and of reading and writing were very different from my own (as were their backgrounds and circumstances more generally). Most of the learners in my classroom had come back to school both because and in spite of negative past experiences. How, in light of this, would they explain the value in their lives of schooling and of the kinds of reading and writing taught there? Given that they had not met with much success at school and that school-based literacy did not appear to be a source of success for them, what did they think we were all doing or supposed to be doing in this room together? I began to toy with the idea of asking the learners such questions. These people, with their histories of struggle, probably had interesting insights about the purposes of education and literacy, and I imagined congenial, critical conversations with the class in which their stories might be articulated and used to shape the curriculum or even used as curricular content.

1.1   Curriculum Based on Learners' Experiences

I found support for the idea of using learners' narratives in the tradition of liberatory education (notably, in the work of Freire [1973; 1993], Freire and Macedo

[1987], and others writing on political curriculum, including Giroux [1983], McLaren [1989], and Shor [1987]). Critical pedagogy and related theories of teaching and learning resonated with my interest in consulting with learners on the basis of their educational experiences and in incorporating their accounts into classroom activities. The democratic philosophy underpinning this literature also spoke appealingly to the more abstract need for grounding I had felt in the classroom. Education, it argues, should not be in the control and service of a powerful few, merely maintaining the status quo. We should strive for a representative—diverse and inclusive—as well as responsive education system. Engaging learners in the process of shaping their education, which means creating opportunities for input as well as for questioning what they are being taught, is a key means for effecting this democratization. Critical pedagogy's critique of traditional schooling (and especially of the "top-down" reading and writing practices that take place there) and its emancipatory aims lead it to advocate for including the voices of learners from marginalized groups in shaping more equitable and engaged curricula, curricula that acknowledge learners' experiences by seeking to be "learner-centred" and "relevant."

Consulting with learners can be justified on the basis that they are adults, and that the normative concept of adulthood entitles people to frame their lives, including their educational lives, as they see fit (Lawson, 1991; Paterson, 1979). But enlisting learners' life experiences and their participation in the development and carrying out of curricula is also, and more fundamentally, tied to a particular politics and epistemology. Liberatory education often traces philosophical connections with the progressivist writings of John Dewey (1916; 1938), who approached human thought as practical problem-solving, the testing of rival hypotheses against experience. His is an epistemology in which knowledge is tentative, open to continuous revision. The best structure for supporting this process of knowledge-making, and thus for education, is democracy, according to Dewey. More than a form of government, democracy is a social structure allowing for a freeing of intelligence in order that it might grow. Democratic education, in Dewey's (1938) view, thus encourages participation and cooperation:

> There is, I think, no point in the philosophy of progressive education
> which is sounder than its emphasis upon the importance of the
> participation of the learner in the formation of the purposes which direct

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his activities in the learning process, just as there is no defect in traditional education greater than its failure to secure the active cooperation of the pupil in construction of the purposes involved in his studying. (p. 67)

We might, of course, challenge such a "bottom-up" stance by pointing out that consultation assumes that educational needs and wants are all there in embryonic form. The notion that people already know and it just needs to be drawn out of them is problematic. Education may be about freeing our minds, but we must learn what is possible and desirable educationally before we can make curricular choices of our own— and perhaps also before we can critically employ our own experiences as curricular content. Such problematizing of learner consultation is more immediately persuasive in the case of children than of adults, who have had greater life experience. (Indeed, an important tenet of practice in progressive adult education is to connect with and encourage learners by acknowledging "prior knowledge," skills and understandings that they bring from outside the classroom.) Nevertheless, it's a legitimate critique of so-called "self-determined" purposes. But can this difficulty be adequately met though a "top-down" approach? Perhaps school should be "a place apart," as Oakshott (1972) suggests, where students, as newcomers to the human condition, learn to inhabit, through a rich legacy of understanding, "a world composed, not of 'things' but of meanings" (p. 21). In such a view, students' experiences and choices are more or less moot since the particularities of their lives and their needs and wants as they imagine these are subjugated to topics of more surpassing value. The logic and cumulative demands of the subject matter drive learning; the subject matter itself determines what knowledge is relevant, what is possible and desirable. This subject matter is the possession of the teacher, whose authority derives from his or her mastery of it rather than from being a good pedagogue, attentive and skillfully responsive to students (which is not to suggest, of course, that he or she is necessarily a poor and/or indifferent teacher).

The problem with this "top-down" approach is that it refuses to acknowledge that the "legacy" of higher truths it makes available, while it may indeed be rich, is also partial—both incomplete and biased (generally in favour of the status quo). Only a select few can determine and disseminate legitimate knowledge, and they are appointed by this same closed system to do so. This objection to a "top-down" approach is not mitigated by

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attempts to use it for "bottom up" ends. "Great books"-education proponent Robert Maynard Hutchins' claim that "the best education for the best is the best education for us all" is less egalitarian than it may sound to those who champion it. Offering the mainstream and especially those who are on the social, economic, and/or political margins a curriculum designed by and for the elite on emancipatory grounds is a problematic project. Again, this is not because the content of such a curriculum—which often takes the form of a course in Western liberal arts—is without merit, and it may, in fact, be especially appealing when it also affords contemplative space and time, a measure of silence and distance from the "everyday," to people whose circumstances often make such resources scarce. But learners might nevertheless be forgiven if they are (or eventually come to be) suspicious of its accompanying promises.

Shor (1987) argues that high-track students tend to submit more or less willingly to authority because they are being trained as the designated elite. Lower down on the scale of academic achievement (a scale that frequently correlates with present and projected low social, political, and economic status), students withdraw into passivity and cynicism, acting out, silently getting by, or dropping out altogether. This amounts to a negative form of agency that Shor terms a "performance strike, an unorganized mass refusal to perform well, an informal and unacknowledged strike" (p. 20) that has authoritarian teaching as a provocation. I read Shor to be arguing that these "underachieving" learners are not necessarily rebelling against authority per se but are grappling in various ways with the false promise that if they submit themselves to this authority they will benefit in the same way more privileged students do. They sense that this education is not really "for them."[1] In this they are backed up by Bourdieu and Passeron's (1990) sociological deconstruction of the "equality" of the education system. Bourdieu and Passeron point out that not everyone starts out on an equal footing, and they suggest that the aim is not finally to have everyone participate equally successfully. In this line of critique is a justification for engaging students in the shape and content of

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[1] Moss (2000) comes to a similar conclusion in her study of in- and out-of-school literacies. She suggests that, unlike middle-class students, working-class students do not in their talk about texts take up "schooling's sequential and hierarchical knowledge structures because such structures are quite literally taking them nowhere" (p. 62).

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their education. The potential "relevance" of the top-down curriculum is limited not just in that often excludes many aspects of these learners' present lives, but also in that it does not address the futures to which they seem destined. While the "best education for the best" may help the odd student improve her or his circumstances, it isn't likely to produce democratic outcomes systemically. As Foucault (1990) argues,

> Although education may well be, by right, the instrument thanks to which any individual in a society like ours can have access to any kind of discourse whatever, this does not prevent it from following, as is well known, in its distribution, in what it allows and what it prevents, the lines marked out by social distances, oppositions, and struggles. (p. 1163)

And so the insistence on the active participation of learners in education rings true.

We might posit that democratic education is about learning to ask ourselves what is in our interests—to "free" ourselves enough to be able to discern what we need and want beyond *both* immediate gratification *and* the dictates of others. Clearly, choice framed as "self-determination" is awkward. Goals for education (and literacy) aren't "just there" within us; what we need and want is the product of what surrounds us, of what we've been "told" directly and indirectly, and we must somehow cultivate capacities for choosing well. But to abdicate choice in the process of learning to choose well makes no sense. We must always be able to ask questions about how and for whom a given curriculum is put in place. We can ask at the institutional level, of course, as do Bourdieu and Passeron. But finally, learners and educators also have to negotiate the uneasy tension at the heart of the pedagogical relationship, the irony expressed in Rousseau's (1979) oft-cited edict about his pupil in the *Emile*: "Doubtless he ought to do only what he wants; but he ought to want only what you want him to do" (p. 120). Learners need to submit themselves to the authority of a educator, but cautiously, temporarily. Anyone who asks them to submit wholly negates the possibility of pedagogy. She or he cannot educate others to "do what [they] want" discerningly, only teach them "to want to do what [she or he] wants [them] to do." For this reason, consultation and choice must remain in the educational picture, and learners' lives outside the formal curriculum must be acknowledged as part of the curriculum.

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However, matters are more complex than this. Democratic "dialogue" between educators and learners has been widely celebrated in radical and feminist pedagogy, but it has also been questioned. Amirault (1995) offers a particularly useful re-reading of Freire's foundational ideas in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* about the dialogic transformation of the positions of "teacher" and "student." In a reflection on his interactions with a woman he considered a "good student," he concludes,

> ... in any pedagogy, 'good students' are those who are able to locate themselves in the pedagogical position articulated by the teacher's pedagogy. For example, within Freire's model of empowering pedagogy, the good student would be an active learner striving toward a critical conception of the world—but as any teacher who has tried out experimental pedagogies knows, for most students this radical pedagogical position is just as much an imposition as any other. [...] That teachers desire students who will locate themselves in these positions is not a cynical observation; it is an acknowledgement of the narcissistic desire at the heart of most teaching ... (p. 71)

Attempts at democratic pedagogy, Amirault argues, are just as vulnerable to Bourdieu and Passeron's critique of education as is the top-down "banking model" of education that Freire rejects.

As a common component of democratic pedagogy, educators' requests for accounts of learners' lives (including stories about their past experiences at school and articulations of their present needs and wants) and learners' responses to such requests are similarly far from straightforward. Uncritically employed, the discursive practices involved may even work against the democratic goals they are intended to further, coaxing out personal narratives that are shaped more by educators' desires than by learners' choices. I am somewhat relieved, in retrospect, that I never actually embarked in my adult education course on those congenial, critical conversations I naively envisioned. The complexities that are involved in asking for, answering with, and listening to personal accounts of education are the focus of this research. They are complexities that I would consider in any future attempt at narrative-based conversation.

1.2   Rescuing Learners with Dialogue-Through-Narrative

As I have indicated, the literature of emancipatory education invokes a kind of dialogic co-operation in which personal narrative is often (particularly in adult basic education) an important tool for linking education more meaningfully with marginalized learners' lives. Personal narrative appears as an obvious vehicle for tapping into what they already know, a natural mode for speaking and writing, and a more approachable starting point than the expository styles typically valued at school; everyone can tell a story, it is thought, even if not all narrators are equally gifted. This ostensibly accessible quality of narrative is part of what makes it valuable, in more politicized terms, as a central means for articulating suppressed knowledge, for expressing understandings not admitted by dominant paradigms. Feminist and post-structuralist critiques (Gore, 1993; Jones, 2004; Lather, 1991; Luke & Gore, 1992) have, however, exposed contradictions and tensions in liberatory education's imperative to speak out of personal experiences of oppression. At the heart of their arguments is the assertion that power inherent in the very processes of "dialoguing" about oppression cannot be ignored. Dialogic pedagogy is supposed to lead to the expression of a greater diversity of ways of knowing and to dialectic engagement with the ideological forces that oppress. But if we fail to recognize and address the discursive politics that inevitably inhere in teacher-learner dialogue, such dialogue is not likely to culminate in fair and engaged hearing, let alone productive change, as these critics point out. Dialogue as imagined by liberatory theories of education may generate only a polite but superficial accommodation of difference, lead to silencing, or generate the kind of confrontation described by Ellsworth (1992) as "a condition of survival" for those who have historically been marginalized or oppressed.

The elicitation of personal narrative is an oft-used but potentially problematic strategy in this dialogic approach. Razack (1993) and Fuss (1989), among others, have argued that inviting someone from a marginalized group to tell their story is not a straightforwardly emancipatory gesture. The motives, expectations, and understandings underlying such an invitation are often complicated. Razack, for example, describes voyeuristic impulses of listeners to "feed off the tears of" others' stories. She also notes the contradictory positioning of instructors in critical pedagogy—responsible for

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educating in a context where only self-education is finally acknowledged—that leads to their need to be "on the right side" with the learners and, in turn, to an alliance with popular knowledge, "a warm embrace of emotions, stories, narratives, nature, spontaneity" (p. 105). Fuss shows that the use of personal accounts to encourage student discussion of oppression can have silencing effects when experience is equated with truth; paradoxically, even as it enables participation, this "commonsense" fiction around the authoritativeness of experience breeds narrowness and exclusivity as identities are essentialized and ranked in terms of various kinds of difference (race, gender, etc.) and those without the requisite experience are shut out of the conversation in the classroom. [2] Moreover, our invitation to personal narrative may place learners in awkward discursive positions (I will speak to this point at greater length below) and even encourage a decidedly un-emancipatory portrayal of self. In Willis' *Learning to Labour* (1977), for instance, we see learners who have in effect learned to tell "successful" stories of academic failure. Such narratives may become a surrogate competency for learners who lack other forms of what Bourdieu terms "social capital"—they can at least trade a good story around their struggles with and/or resistance to school and (schooled) literacy.[3] Observations like these should lead us to ask about the kinds of stories that educators

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[2] A parallel and more general discussion of the problematics of "inviting" marginalized groups to speak is offered by DeCastell (2005) in response to the proposal that affirmative action be practiced in classrooms. She asks,

> Does this pedagogy [of affirmative action] accord rights to speak on the basis of what is said or on the basis of who says it, on the basis, that is, of identity? Because of course identities are more often hybrid than pure. More important, identities that are ascribed rather than asserted work, again, to position the subject under the sign of passivity—the teacher, but not I myself, knows who and what I am. (p. 53)

[3] There are plenty of anecdotes from all corners of the adult literacy field that suggest the "sale-ability" of personal narratives and the sometimes dubious results this has for learners. One colleague told me, for example, of a learner whose story was published and circulated throughout the province as curricular material. Now, several years later, however, she reports feeling "trapped" by this printed account of her self and her life. A friend related yet another example, this one of a man who was part of her advocacy organization's learner-of-the-year campaign ten years ago and toured around the country to tell his tragic and inspiring story. He continues to insist that he can help learners this way despite the fact that the awareness- (and fund-) raising campaign is long over and no-one is really listening anymore. In yet another instance, a co-researcher described an electronic discussion group on practitioner-based research in which a learner was celebrated by the moderating academic for "bravely" joining the discussion with her personal story. Thus welcomed, however, she began posting long, inappropriate messages to which the rest of the conference participants clearly had difficulty responding.

(and others working in the field of adult literacy) are encouraged by liberatory pedagogy to elicit. We need to raise questions about the desires and presumptions and politics that generate them if we are to develop a clearer sense of the opportunities that such narratives present for developing more democratic curricula. And we should leave open the possibility that they may even work against such a goal.

In the dialogic cooperation-through-narrative that is invoked in the tradition of liberatory education, certain assumptions are made about the identities of and relationships between interlocutors as well as about language more generally. These assumptions are in some sense similar to those Bourdieu's (1977) linguist makes:

> ... the linguist regards the conditions for the establishment of communication as already secured, whereas, in real situations, that is the essential question. He takes for granted the crucial point, namely that people talk and talk to each other, are 'on speaking terms', that those who speak regard those who listen as worthy to listen and those who listen regard those who speak as worthy to speak. (p. 648)

The taken-for-granted mutual "worthiness" of the interlocutors (which amounts, in effect to ignoring their identities and relationships) goes hand-in-hand with a view of language as transparent. When we reflect on the real situations in which we speak, it is probably easy enough to reject the pure neutrality of the sender → message → receiver model of linguistic communication that Bourdieu is referring to. However, there are other ways of seeing the dialogue-through-narrative situation in which the problematic notion of linguistic transparency is preserved. Thus, for instance, the learners' narratives might be viewed as moving testimony. The learners, once silenced victims, have now become heroic speakers able to offer authentic accounts of their subjective experiences thanks to the educator, who has recognized their "worthiness" as speakers and encouraged their stories. Language remains essentially transparent despite its strong emotive power (or perhaps because of this power, the idea being that we are moved so deeply as to "see with the heart"). In contrast, language might also be seen as a coercive force in the service of oppressive ideology. The learners as narrators are the uncritical dupes of dominant discourses, and the educator is there to reveal this blindness and supply a better, more

"worthy" story for them to tell. In and through the process of teaching, then, language clears (and is cleared of) ideological impurity. The learner is thus freed, given a "truer" (i.e., more transparent) language.

These "rescue" scenarios are sketched here in an exaggeratedly simple way, but they speak to the assumptions that exist, generally in more subtle ways, at the heart of many well-meaning educational theories that advocate dialogue through and around personal narrative. (Indeed, these forms of discursive rescue often coexist.) This somewhat reductionist summation of these philosophies is not meant to dismiss the importance of supporting people's right to be heard or of fostering a critical stance in people. Many learners in adult education have indeed been silenced, and not just on struggles with schooling and literacy but on other subjects, as well, including violence, poverty, illness, and discrimination, all of which cannot be separated from their educational histories. To seek ways of including their perspectives and experiences is not merely admirable but necessary if we want more democratic forms of education. Additionally, in this process, we also need to acknowledge that we are all subject to ideologies (including those around schooling and literacy) that can work oppressively. While reproduction theories of education with their accompanying views of curriculum as ideological mystification (Bowles & Gintis, 1976) have given way to more nuanced views, the observation that the education system in many ways caters to status quo patterns of social dominance still stands. Even when we move beyond seeing school solely as an agent of false consciousness, cultivating a questioning stance remains important to democratic education. Nevertheless, the allure of these theoretical rescue scenarios can blind us to the difficulties they potentially pose. On the one hand, honouring "voices" on the basis of the belief that they speak authentically and from a position of moral rightness because they belong to the oppressed can place us in a position in which it is difficult to critically engage with learners. Our responses to their narratives will be limited if we automatically valorize their words as suppressed knowledge. On the other hand, placing people in a position of dupes is clearly problematic, too. An invitation to tell one's story only to have it be subject to surveillance and critique from less duped teachers and peers is not likely to be all that appealing, and it hardly constitutes a pedagogically liberatory or educationally inclusive move.

Bourdieu's linguist may not bother with the question of "worthiness" at all, taking it as given. But the point in highlighting these "rescue" scenarios is that we can be very much bothered with the question of "worthiness" and still end up in the same place as the linguist, failing to consider what Bourdieu argues is the "essential question": who may speak, to whom, and how? We can recognize that adult literacy learners have not generally been deemed "worthy" to speak and seek to redress that situation, but if we are seduced by the teacherly benevolence painted in theories of liberatory education we risk making little progress. It is not enough to say that we believe learners are "worthy" to speak (or to assume that learners think we're "worthy" listeners, for that matter). What we consider "worthy" in what they say is far more complicated than we may be aware of, and our apparently straightforward invitations to learners to tell their stories belie a tacit tangle of terms and conditions upon which we are prepared to listen. Bourdieu (1977) argues that "[a]mong the most radical, surest, and the best hidden censorships are those which exclude certain individuals from communication" (p. 648). Exclusion (if not so much of "certain individuals," then of certain narrativized identities) can be unwittingly effected by not acknowledging the discursive impossibility of saying, and being heard on, exactly and only what one wants. Exclusion can be very subtle, perhaps subtlest precisely in those instances where we imagine we are working only to include the voices of marginalized others. I want to emphasize that it is not my intention here to make adult literacy educators out to be a naïve group—many will be all too familiar with the disparities that riddle the educational settings in which they work—but to suggest that the theoretical constructs that may be especially appealing to those in the field of adult education tend to overlook important linguistic aspects of pedagogy. In extending the aforementioned feminist/post-structuralist critiques of theories of liberatory education with a *rhetorical* focus on *narrative*, I hope educators will take away a more nuanced attentiveness to these aspects in their own practice.

1.3   A Rhetorical Approach

A rhetorical approach can help rearticulate and shift the problematic assumptions about language and about the identities and relationships of interlocutors discussed above; specifically, it refutes the notion of language as transparent and allows us to look

for greater nuance in the identities of and relations among interlocutors as these are actually enacted. Contemporary rhetorical theory encourages us to study discourse as a socially situated and purposeful action. Language is studied not in the abstract as a neutral medium for carrying messages back and forth, but in use as a persuasive tool. As Bourdieu points out, we don't speak or write just to send out a clear, unambiguous message; we intend for our words to do more. Rhetoric is concerned with this more, with what people are able to accomplish through language, and not just in calculatedly strategic ways (so, not just in instances where we consciously ask ourselves, "What's the best way to say this so I get the response I want?") but in socially habitual ways. It is interested in the kinds of tacit understandings we share about what is and isn't "appropriate" or "effective" in a given situation, and in how people are able to work with and within such conventions to "move" their audience in various ways (to coax, provoke, put them off, reassure, please, undermine, etc.).

Burke (1989) employs drama as a metaphor for rhetorical study, so that we might think of discursive action as a performance meant to persuade—including persuading the audience that one is a particular kind of person. Framing the dialogic use of personal narrative in education using the idea of rhetorical performance can help to clarify further what is problematic about the assumptions in the abovementioned "rescue" scenarios. The emphasis on authenticity, for instance, assumes that we can, through dialogue, get to the "real" learner. There is "collusion" (Fuller & Lee, 1997) between interlocutors that the relationship of the spoken- (or written-) about self to the speaking (or writing) self will be unquestioned, that they will be treated as one-and-the-same self. The "authenticity" produced by conflating the performed self with a "real" self, however, cuts off the possibility of asking questions about hierarchical relations that might compel learners to perform in terms of culturally pervasive, commonplace narratives of education. The stance in which language is viewed as an oppressive force from which learners need to be delivered similarly (and ironically) ignores questions about the hierarchical relations of pedagogy to which feminist and post-structuralist critique have drawn attention. But learners who are asked for personal narrative may themselves be more sensitive to power imbalances. As Morgan (1997) points out, "students are not so easily fooled into articulating their identity and experiences in terms which are to be

publicly critiqued as 'disempowering'" (p. 16). A rhetorical approach suggests that they might, in fact, take up dominant narratives, not quite naively, but in performances that are purposefully and skillfully oriented to the elicitation of their narratives. The task ("not wholly deliberate yet not unconscious" as Burke describes it) for learners in both scenarios is not, as it might appear to be, "self-expression." It is a communicative task: to communicate the uncovering and fuller articulation of an apparently "real" self. In identifying and responding to educators' expectations for an "emancipated" self (and such a self would conform to particular features) or, conversely, a self that is materially and/or ideologically oppressed and in need of rescue, a learner becomes identifiable.

From a rhetorical perspective we might revisit the dialogic use of narrative in educational settings by framing the elicitation as an act of what Althusser (1971) terms interpellation and by framing the response as an act of social sense-making. Most simply put, the words of others "hail" us as certain kinds of people, as "ideological subjects"; someone addresses us (in Althusser's example, a policeman across the street calls out "Hey, you there!"), and as we turn toward the voice we are drawn into particular identities and relations. In this sense, we might say that educators' (or researchers') requests for personal narrative act to "position" learners in particular ways. And learners, in turn, respond by performing the kinds of stories and the kinds of selves that will be recognizable, that will allow them to "make sense" to their interpellators. In doing so, learners may comply with what they imagine is expected; they may also try to secure recognition of a different kind. As I've suggested, the "rescue" scenarios above position learners in potentially problematic ways. They interpellate them either as "honest" and "courageous" or as uncritical dupes. More recently, liberatory education has theorized resistance on the part of learners in their interactions with educators. (The concept was introduced in Willis [1977] and later expanded by scholars like Giroux [1983] and Apple [1982].) Generally this resistance is framed as legitimately motivated, if not always beneficial (see, for example, Gutierrez, Rymes, & Larson, 1995). While such work unquestionably offers more sophisticated insight into pedagogical exchanges, this scenario, like the "rescue" scenarios, similarly risks conjuring up romanticized of ideas of learners as narrators. This time, the learners have our number, and sullenly or cleverly refuse to cooperate; they get interpellated as savvy and subversive heroes.

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These positions—brave, naïve, defiant—may not only be limiting for learners as narrators but also for us as listeners and interpreters. I have already alluded to some of the ways in which our response can be shortcircuited. The desire to see ourselves as allies of the marginalized over and against those who would suppress the knowledge in their stories makes it difficult for us to question or challenge these stories.[4] We may end up using their stories in deeply conservative ways, as entertainment or as reassurance that the teller is other. In this way, stories can end up perpetuating domination rather than confronting it. Trinh suggests that the speaker may even comply with the listeners' desires for a kind of safe exoticism: "Eager not to disappoint, I try my best to offer my benefactors and benefactresses what they most anxiously yearn for: the possibility of a difference, yet a difference or otherness that will not go so far as to question the foundations of their beings and makings" (qtd. in Razack, 1993, p. 117). Spivak (1988) argues even more forcefully that we are easily blinded by "our desire to have our cake and eat it too: that we can continue to be as we are, and yet be in touch with the speaking subaltern" (p. 292). The desire to lift learners out of ideological subjection may lead us to overlook the ways in which learners negotiate contradictions between dominant discourses and their own circumstances. Moreover, it is also possible that some of the "oppressive" ideologies to which they subscribe may be functional for them in some way and that the challenging task of deconstructing these ideologies will not necessarily leave them better off. And, while framing learners as justifiably resistant can help address oversimplified notions of ideological reproduction and curb the zeal to "fix" learners' ways of looking at the world, we might yet be leery of settling on the idea that learners are an understandably and even admirably angry, bored, and tough lot (the line between a sensitive and sophisticated appreciation of learners' positions and a dishonest identification with them can be thin) with whom we simply must work harder to communicate (once again, we come to the discursive rescue).

It's not implausible, of course, that there is something naïve or heroic in learners' narratives, but there is a problem with listening to (or reading) them in one light only, in deciding ahead of time that they are naïve and that therefore our role as listeners is to

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[4] Razack (1993) adds that this kind of valorizing can also seduce learners into simply "making moral claims" through narrative rather than becoming more proactive in other ways.

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disabuse learners, or that they are heroic and that therefore our role as listeners is to be moved to tears or awed into silence. As to resistance in learners' narratives, we need to be careful in how we respond. For example, Gutierrez et al. (1995) propose a "third space" in which the teacher's "script" and students' "counterscript" intersect and create potential for "authentic" interaction. The way in which their work unpacks the complexity of the students' use of irony as a form of resistance is valuable, but the attempt to theorize a way of resolving and redeeming the discursive situation, while commendable in intent, is tricky. We need to be cautious in positing spaces for "real" communication that are somehow free of inequities or in implying that an educational space can be wholly "safe." Moreover, refusal to participate in a given pedagogical strategy may not be rooted in anything that more or better discursive sharing can address. When power imbalances inhere in the communicative situation—as they do in classrooms—we should not be too quick to chalk up a failed attempt at getting learners to cooperate to "miscommunication" caused by innocent differences. Rather, we need to allow for the legitimacy of resistance by recalling that miscommunication, while certainly a conceivable source of problems, is also often, as Giltrow (personal communication, April 2000) puts it, "the standby and longstanding explanation for so many discrepancies which spoil perfect hegemony."[5] Finally, people are not exclusively brave or naïve or defiant in discourse, and such positioning doesn't uncover enough of what might be going on when we ask for and get a personal narrative from a learner, of what we need to be aware of as listeners and interpreters of and responders to these accounts. The good intentions that lead us to frame narrators thus—the desire to make room for people to speak, to critically problematize their ideas, or to learn to communicate productively—again risk blinding us to the fact that, just as learners don't speak simply to be understood, we don't listen simply to understand.

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[5] Uchida (1998) reminds us to consider the power dynamics so often involved in the invocation of miscommunication. Taking up Tannen's work on female-male interaction, she challenges the assumption that miscommunication produces equally negative results for both parties involved:

> If miscommunication is no one's 'fault' and is something that can be analyzed as mutual misunderstanding of well meant behaviour, why is it that casualties are most often heavier on women than on men? ... An analysis of miscommunication must take into consideration who gets what they want, who is punished, who is forgiven, and in what ways—both on the individual level and on the societal level—after miscommunication. (p. 289)

Perhaps as listeners and interpreters of these narratives we don't have to settle on any of these positions for our interlocutors or ourselves right from the outset. Rhetoric proposes a different way to position learners as narrators, one which treats them in a more prosaic way as speakers who are as discursively proficient as the rest of us and, in the specific circumstances this research is concerned with, a little more skilled. (It seems reasonable to posit that they have some special experience not just with schooling but with telling stories around school-related struggles, gaps, and failures.) A rhetorical approach also stresses, however, that discursive competence is not about ability in the abstract but in practice—it depends on conditions for speaking (and/or writing). Bourdieu (1977) writes that "the anticipated conditions of reception are part of the conditions of production" (p. 649). Learners need to interpret the conditions of reception and produce accordingly. In the latter, they will be constrained and enabled in various ways by the linguistic resources that are available to them and what they are "authorized" by their audience to use. Not everyone who "masters" a given way of speaking or writing will be accorded legitimacy; hence Bourdieu's "full definition of competence as the right to speech ... the power to impose reception" (p. 649). (For an apt illustration of this point, see Trowse's [2000] analysis of the trial of Margery Kempe.) In their narrative accounts, learners may not be able to "be" exactly as they might like or say exactly what they wish because of their position relative to their audience, but they will also finds ways to "adjust." Whether accomplished through smooth or clumsy compliance, through overt or subtle defiance, and/or through more intricate compromises between the two, such adjustment leaves its marks. This project looks for "construction scars" (Pinar & Pautz, 1998), for ways in which the narratives show themselves as constructed by their conditions of reception, both immediate (the context of the interview and, insofar as we can posit a degree of homology, pedagogic exchange involving personal narrative) and more diffuse (broader socio-cultural contexts that are brought to bear on interview exchange). In this way we can begin to unpack the layers of complexity and (im)possibilities of the dialogue-through-narrative approach in adult education and thereby also develop a more sophisticated awareness of our positions as listeners in such an approach.

1.4 Interpretive Methods Grounded in Bakhtin's Dialogism

Without suggesting that more talk will sort out deeply entrenched educational inequity, and remaining mindful of warnings that certain discursive practices demanding "more talk" often only reinforce oppression, we might, nevertheless, posit that the ideological landscape of language education can benefit from a greater plurality of "voices". The purposes of literacy and schooling, the forms these might take, and the substance they offer up need to be discussed by a greater diversity of people. If narrative is to be put forward as a vehicle for such discussion—and particularly for involving those, like adult literacy learners, who have historically been left out but who have often suffered the most marked consequences of schooling's hierarchies, exclusions, and false promises—we must, however, consider more critically the kinds of stories that get told. And to do that, we need better methods for their interpretation. This project's analysis of learners' personal narratives of education and literacy draws on Russian literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin's (1981; 1986) theory of dialogism to develop a set of methods for looking at what is involved in their construction. Dialogism is an interconnected set of concepts expressing the idea that our words always reverberate with echoes of past uses and anticipate a listening other. It treats narrative as a social co-production and thereby checks the impulse simply to take stories literally or to romanticize them as an individual's "authentic" voice. In heightening our awareness of the elements that enable and constrain particular narratives, it also affords a view of other possible selves within education.

Chapter 2 offers a review of the literature on narrative theory generally and on narrative research in particular. Research struggles with the interpretive requirements for and the fuzzy parameters of narrative. Even among methodology texts that seek to set out more or less procedural guidelines and workable definitions, there often remains a subtle sense that narrative research is finally "more art than research." I argue for less impressionistic approaches to narrative in social science research, but more methodical approaches must not sacrifice the very richness and complexity of narrative that the literature reflects. In Chapter 3, I propose a set of methods that meet the need for more systematic and critical interpretation of narrative in research. The methods are rooted in

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key aspects of Bakhtin's dialogic theory: genre, double-voicing, and the chronotope. The genre of the "conversational" interview, with its interlocutors' constant shifts in positioning, highlights the expectations and negotiations shaping interview accounts. Double-voicing—traced here through reported speech—allows us to consider how speakers orient themselves to the already-spoken-about themes of schooling and literacy. And chronotopes, the tacit conceptions of time and place that ground narratives, are a useful tool for examining ways in which paths through and possibilities for education are constructed. These three methods are, in effect, devices for opening up the views of literacy and schooling constructed and contested in these various accounts. They are applied, in Chapter 4, to a set of interviews with five literacy learners who offer accounts of their educational experiences. In Chapter 5, I return to the issues raised in this introduction about the pedagogical use of personal narrative, discussing what the application of these methods tells us about schooling and literacy and what insights and issues it generates about narration itself.

A dialogic approach to interpretation may offer clues for transforming problematic "rescue" attempts that employ personal narrative into more productive pedagogical exchange. We might be in a better position to support learners in shaping narratives about schooling and reading and writing that are more "catalytic," that "reorient, focus and energize participants toward knowing [educational] reality in order to transform it" (Lather, 1991). But it is also possible that a dialogic approach may suggest that narrative is not (or not always) the ideal means for expanding the conversation about the purposes and shape and content of literacy education. We need to ask why personal narrative is so deeply valued in general and in adult education settings in particular, and why it is so often elicited from those in less powerful positions. We need to consider that pedagogic requests for narrative may not "free" learners but simply teach them to perform selves and parrot substance in highly conventionalized ways prized by others. And we need to acknowledge that some aspects of life cannot be cast in story form and that thus incessant requests for narrative on the assumption that it is "natural" are in fact demands for discursive contortions of dubious benefit.

2

Narrative and Narrative Research

Within the seemingly inexhaustible body of literature on narrative, the amount of material that offers guidelines specifically on analyzing narrative data, investigating the act of narration, and/or using narrative as a form of inquiry is relatively contained. But this hardly makes writing about narrative research in social science straightforward. Interest in narrative research has been growing, its multidisciplinary breadth a reflection of narrative's scope. Cortazzi's (1993) examination of approaches to narrative analysis in literary studies, education, and social sciences points to narrative as "a major semiotic mode" that offers access to narrators' minds and cultures. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) speculate that narrative is used in so many different areas of enquiry "because it is a fundamental structure of human experience" (p. 2). And Polkinghorne (1988), whose book surveys investigations into narrative in literary criticism, history, and philosophy, argues for the wider use of narratively organized data in the human sciences on the basis that narrative is "the primary scheme by means of which human existence is rendered meaningful" (p. 11).

In addition to this sweeping range—from minds and cultures to human experience and existence—there are numerous substantive debates in the literature, generally unaccompanied by any concrete how-to advice, that make a synthetic overview of narrative research difficult. Lieblich et al. (1998) observe that "the use and application of this research method seems to have preceded the formalization of a philosophy and methodology" (p. 1). If a unified approach hasn't yet emerged, it is perhaps because much of what is written around narrative research draws us again into often complex and apparently unresolvable theoretical concerns about narrative itself. Boundaries and features are not only defined in different ways but also problematized in light of differences across cultures that suggest narrative cannot be essentialized. While much contemporary work on narrative research takes a more or less constructivist stance,

narrative's relationship to experience and "truth" continues to be wrestled with, as does its connection to self and identity. Attention to contexts in which narratives are elicited, told, interpreted and responded to is crucial in some research texts but more of an add-on in many others. And narrative research's potential to explore and intervene in socio-cultural inequities by taking up "unheard voices" is complicated and contentious, and important questions remain about political uses of and ethical responses to "marginalized" narratives. Finally, what narrative research should yield in terms of "products" is ambiguous, and there is much theoretical interest in (if less actual experimentation with) conducting research through and representing it in the form of narrative. All these areas of theoretical debate suggest that a single formalized philosophy or methodology is unlikely to emerge.

As to the slender amount of direct methodical guidance, it might be attributed not only to a lack of theoretical unity but to the protean quality generally attributed to the narrative research process. Narrative research's basic tenets, Lieblich et al. (1998) write, are that "there is neither a single, absolute truth in human reality nor one correct reading or interpretation of text. ... The narrative approach advocates pluralism, relativism, and subjectivity" (pp. 1-2). The elucidation of working rules, then, would seem to contradict such tenets, and, indeed, Lieblich et al. describe a process deeply informed by intuition and reflexivity:

> [T]he listener or reader of a life story enters an interactive process with the narrative and becomes sensitive to its narrator's voice and meanings. Hypotheses and theories are thus generated while reading and analyzing the narratives, and—in a circular motion as proposed by Glaser and Strauss's concept of 'grounded theory'—can enrich further reading, which refines theoretical statements and so on in an ever growing circle of understanding. (p. 10)

A similar unanchored character is conveyed by Riessman (1993), who emphasizes the profoundly interpretive nature of narrative research: from its origins in the narrator's attention to experience to the eliciting, transcription, and treatment of the narrative by the

researcher to the uptake by the researcher's audience, narrative research involves interpretation at every turn. Each level in this process is partial, incomplete, selective; each level involves decisions that shape what finally emerges; each level is both an expansion and a reduction. Riessman concludes,

> Ultimately, the features of an informant's narrative account an investigator chooses to write about are linked to the evolving research question, theoretical/epistemological positions the investigator values, and more often than not, her personal biography. If this circularity makes some readers uncomfortable, I can only offer the comfort of a long tradition of interpretive and hermeneutic inquiry. (p. 61)

While these are in many ways compelling characterizations, I am concerned in this project with claims for the educational value of personal narrative that appear often to be based on impressionistic interpretations, and I, therefore, seek to develop more nuanced and systematic methods for doing so. In this chapter, I review the aforementioned theoretical concerns as they relate to discussions of narrative in social science research with the goal of offering background to the more methodical approach to analysis this project proposes.

2.1   Recognizing Narrative: Time and Evaluation

While everyone may recognize a story when they hear or read one, the defining characteristics of narrative are difficult to pin down. Although interest in narrative can be traced, in Western culture, as far back as Aristotle, the study of narrative proper is relatively recent. Most frequently referenced are the general statements developed by structuralist narratology, a "science" of narrative associated with the work of Levi-Strauss (1958), Todorov (1969), Bremond (1973), Barthes (1970), Greimas (1970), and Genette (1973). Levi-Strauss' model for studying myths, which involved breaking myths down into basic units (much like language is broken down into phonemes in linguistics) and tracing the rules (or grammar) for their combination, was applied to other kinds of

story and yielded parameters for identifying, dissecting, and categorizing narrative. According to Eagleton (1983), it also led to a demystification of literature:

> Loosely subjective talk was chastised by a criticism which recognized that the literary work, like any other product of language, is a construct, whose mechanisms could be classified and analyzed like the objects of any other science. The Romantic prejudice that the poem, like a person, harboured a vital essence, a soul which it was discourteous to tamper with, was rudely unmasked as a bit of disguised theology, a superstitious fear of reasoned enquiry which made a fetish of literature and reinforced the authority of a 'naturally' sensitive critical elite. (pp. 106-7)

While this emphasis on the constructedness of meaning and accompanying analytic tools was significant, structuralism's strictly disciplined approach to narrative (in literary as well as non-literary forms) is, as I have suggested, not often reflected in the methodological literature on narrative-based social research.

To be sure, Labov's (1972) model is widely referred to in this literature and remains influential[6] despite criticism. His argument that a fully formed story has six elements—abstract, orientation, complicating action, evaluation, result/resolution, and coda—is described by Riessman (1993) as "paradigmatic" and a useful starting point for analysis. Other structural models have also been advanced (see, for example, Gee [1991]). But the idea that research employing narrative concerns a very specific, distinct structure with formal, identifiable properties has also been problematized in light of observed differences among narratives people tell (often cited as evidence are studies by Micheals [1986] and Heath [1984]). Indeed, the laws that structural narratologists claimed underpin literary works were supposed to transcend any given culture, but they have more recently been critiqued as essentialist (Gibson, 1996) and ahistorical, cutting off examination of concrete variation and change. Of course, disputing the existence of

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[6] See the special issue of *Journal of Narrative and Life History* (Bamberg, 1997) that features a reprint of Labov's 1967 paper with Waletzky and a range of articles showing how his work has been taken up, adapted, and critiqued.

narrative universals leaves unanswered the question of what exactly constitutes the object (or means) of study in narrative research.

Often, a common-sense notion of narrative seems to be assumed, and clinging to it faintly is something of the reverence Eagleton condemns, as researchers are admonished to preserve narrative's integrity and to be mindful of its potency. Just how to identify and place boundaries around narrative as an object of study is not typically specified with a great deal of precision in the methodological literature, even when researchers are advised to begin analysis by separating and even resequencing narrative elements from other kinds of discourse in their transcripts (see, for example, Cresswell [2002]). Nevertheless, regardless of whether they advocate sorting out "non-narrative" material or take the position that narrative is a global effect to which all parts of the data—including descriptions and digressions and even phatic interpolations from a listener—contribute, most methodological discussions do share the general notion that a narrative deals with time in some way and that it offers an evaluation. A useful synthesis of these discussions might be that narrative involves a set of temporal events that are organized around a "point," that is to say, that are ordered by a message (content) and/or a reason for relating it (social purpose) and/or a particular point of view (perspective).

Time

Labov (1972) offers as a minimal definition of narrative "a sequence of two clauses which are temporally ordered" (p. 361). A fixed temporal sequence is central here; reordering clauses creates a different story. Thus, Labov would argue, "She became discouraged, and she failed the course" means something different than "She failed the course, and she became discouraged." Narrative, in his definition, always answers the question, "And then what happened?" Many how-to guides on narrative research do not meditate much further on the matter of time, simply assuming chronology and causality. Riessman (1993) does comment, however, that Labov's model is limited by the Western notion of time marching forward, and she points out that there are other forms of sequencing, such as the thematic stitching together of episodes (see also Riessman [1987]). There are also a handful of discussions that allude to broader conceptions of time

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in narrative. For example, Polanyi (1989), although she deals in her study with "story," which "describes events which take place in one specific past time world," also includes under the term "narrative" plans and simultaneous narrations (which describe "events in non-past worlds") and generic narratives (which detail "what usually or always occurs in worlds of a certain sort") (p. 16). Ochs (1997) posits a similarly broad understanding of narrative time, arguing that it may concern the past (as in stories and histories), the present (as in play-by-play sports commentary), the future (as in prescriptions, advice, or threats), or even hypothetical time ("if … then …" formulas).

A more detailed and sophisticated discussion of time is offered by Ochs and Capps (2001) in their book-length study of conversational narrative. They begin with the following statement about narrative:

> Linear, coherent narratives generally have a plot structure that depicts a sequence of temporally and causally ordered events organized around a point, with a beginning that situates a significant, i.e., unexpected and hence tellable, incident and moves logically towards an ending that provides a sense of psychological closure. (p. 4)

They cite Morson's (1994) contention that such narratives "which often turn earlier presents into mere pasts, tend to create a single line of development out of a multiplicity. Alternatives once visible disappear from view and an anachronistic sense of the past surreptitiously infects our understanding" (p. 6). This conservative unity, this filtering out of alternatives and multiplicity is achieved through foreshadowing (in which the present is a harbinger of an already determined future; characters and events are cast in terms of this known future) or backshadowing (in which knowledge of the outcome of events is used to judge participants in those events as though they too should have known what was to come). But not all narratives, Ochs and Capps observe, are orderly series of clearly connected events with a tidy ending, and here Morson's concept of sideshadowing plays an important role. Sideshadowing, as he describes it, "restore[s] the presentness of the past and cultivate[s] a sense that something else might have happened" (p. 7). It produces narratives in which events are ambiguous, conflictual, unstable, even

unknowable; it rejects "synthetic master themes" and stresses heterogeneity, polyphony, irregularity, change, unpredictability.

The model Ochs and Capps eventually develop frames narrative as a highly protean form of discourse, one that might indeed be linear and tightly coherent but that may stray into less orderly shapes and meanings, as well, depending on the particular telling. They argue for examining narrative as a genre and activity in terms of a set of dimensions or continua that particular narratives display to varying degrees and in different ways. Among these dimensions are linearity, moral stance, and tellership (the latter two are described further below). Linearity refers to "the extent to which narratives of personal experience depict events as transpiring in a single, closed temporal and causal path, or, alternatively, in diverse, open, uncertain paths" (Ochs & Capps, 2001, p. 41). In relatively non-linear narratives, the way in which one event relates to another temporally and causally is open ended. Confusion, disagreement, and memory lapses may cause the relationship between events to blur. Or narrators may lose track of the links they posited between events, abandoning the logic of one tack in favour of another in the course of narration. Or, again, tellers may entertain hypothetical alternatives, suggesting that if X had been the case, then Y would have happened instead. All these are examples of sideshadowing, and they make room for multiple truths and perspectives. (The idea that "reality includes what might have happened" [Morson, 1994, p. 123] is discussed more fully in the section on the chronotope in Chapter 3.) They also point to the inadequacy of conveying temporal experience only in terms of chronology and causality.

Evaluation

Squire (Andrews, Day Sclater, Squire, & Tamboukou, 2004) argues that for people living in difficult social or political circumstances, developmental or teleological frames are inadequate. But discontent with chronology and causality is not limited to the case of marginalized accounts. It extends to broader theorizing on narrative, as well. Ricoeur (1980) posits that "the ordinary representation of time as a linear series of 'nows' hides the true constitution of time" (p. 166). He takes up the argument that sequence is an

illusion by pointing out, as Morson (1994) does, that implicit in the very notion of chronological causality is the imagination of myriad alternative outcomes:

> ... a narrative conclusion can be neither deduced nor predicted. There is no story if our attention is not moved along by a thousand contingencies. This is why a story has to be followed to its conclusion. So rather than being predictable, a conclusion must be acceptable. Looking back from the conclusion to the episodes leading up to it, we have to be able to say that this ending required these sorts of events and this chain of actions. But this backward look is made possible by the teleological movement directed by our expectations when we follow the story. (p. 170)

Lawler (2002), taking up Ricoeur's discussion, glosses "acceptable" as meaningful and draws in his concept of emplotment: "a narrative must have a point ... [a]nd for narratives to have a point, they must incorporate this important element of bringing together disparate elements into a single plot" (p. 246). Ricoeur (1980) describes plot as "the intelligible whole that governs a succession of events" (p. 167); in dictating answers to the question "And then what?" it answers the question "So what?" In short, narratives offer evaluations.

White (1980) argues that the "so what" of narrative is always moral, that narratives offer moralizing judgments. Narrative's rhetorical quality of inevitability, he suggests, might lead us to characterize narrative not so much as a form but as a way of speaking; narrativizing discourse makes chronological cause-and-effect appear natural. It "feigns to make the world speak itself and speak itself as a story" (p. 3), and it does this through a specifically moral ordering of time. Narrative, according to White, meets our desire for real events to display coherence that culminates in a conclusion:

> ... [W]hat other 'ending' could a given sequence of [real] events have than a 'moralizing' ending? What else could narrative closure consist of than the passage from one moral order to another? I confess that I cannot think of any other way of 'concluding' an account of real events; for we cannot say, surely, that any sequence of real events actually comes to an end, that

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reality itself disappears, that events of the order of the real have ceased to happen. (p. 22)

In Ochs and Capps' (2001) work on conversational narrative, moral stance is one of the "dimensions" of narrative. Everyday conversational narratives, they state, "elaborately encode and perpetuate moral worldviews. Personal narratives generally concern life incidents in which a protagonist has violated social expectations. Recounting the violation and taking a moral stance towards it provide a discursive forum for human beings to clarify, reinforce, or revise what they believe and value" (p. 46). They note that, while some narratives have a relatively certain and constant moral stance, others are more fluid and uncertain, indeterminate, unstable. Tellers who appear certain initially may find their moral stance unravels as telling proceeds through self-doubt or questioning by interlocutor. This flexibility in the evaluative aspect of narrative is important in that it allows for tensions and shifts to be detected. These can be the product of uncertainty, as Ochs and Capps suggest, but also of resistance. A "moral" conclusion to narrative insists on the meaningfulness of experience, and this has the potential to become oppressive. In situations where injustice and suffering is acute, people may push back against demands for narrative redemption.[7]

Polanyi's (1979; 1989) research on narrative evaluation does not emphasize particularly the morality of accounts but rather their rootedness in the social more generally. What stories can be about, she argues, is culturally constrained: "stories ... can have as their point only culturally salient material generally agreed upon by members of the producer's culture to be self-evidently important and true" (1979, p. 207). She proposes that stories contain three kinds of structure, each of which contextualizes the other two. The narrative/event structure provides temporal context. In the descriptive structure one finds environmental and character-centred information. The evaluative

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[7] A particularly vivid illustration of this point is offered by Carroll's (2001) meditation on the conflict surrounding the cross at Auschwitz, erected following Jewish protests over the establishment of a Roman Catholic place of prayer at the site of the death camp. He contrasts the views of the Christian community there with those of Jews who reject the idea that the Holocaust can be meaningful and comments, "When suffering is seen to serve a universal plan of salvation, its particular character as tragic and evil is always diminished. The meaningless can be made to shimmer with an eschatological hope, and at Auschwitz this can seem like blasphemy."

structure tells the audience what the narrator feels is important information in the story: "Without evaluation by the narrator, the audience has only a mass of detail—temporal, situational, and characterological—and no way of understanding what the story is really about—why the narrator took up so much conversational room in reciting a collection of details" (p. 209). The evaluative structure is composed of devices such as repetition of key words, use of reported speech, increased use of modifiers, and even direct statements, all of which indicate that a certain part of the story contains information crucial to the point, to understanding why the story was told.

Note that the idea that narrators make special efforts to highlight narrative points does not necessarily carry over to other cultures. Cortazzi (1993) indicates that in Chinese culture, for example, narrators tend to mention points only briefly and focus largely on common experiences; it may be, here, that listeners are credited with the ability to grasp the point themselves or that stressing group solidarity is more important than making points. He also cites a study of Athabascan narrative performances in which narrators do not steer the interpretations of their audience; in this culture, "narrative is a prime means to acquire knowledge by maximizing the relevance for those who learn, whilst minimizing the threat to their autonomy" (p. 112). Note, as well, that there can be multiple evaluative points to a story that are not necessarily engaged conversationally by narrators and their listeners, as Maybin's (1997) study of children's narrative exchanges points out. In one of her examples, a girl's reporting of her sister's words in mimicked baby talk could be interpreted to mean her sister is annoying or cute; the fact that her friend says "How cute!" at the end of the story doesn't mean, Maybin points out, that the other interpretation isn't there or that the girls aren't aware of it. Polanyi does acknowledge that narrative points are variable, both within particular instances of telling—where evaluation can shift, especially in concert with others who are listening— and, in terms of content, across cultures. Stories must be of interest to their audience, but "[i]nterest does not necessarily imply 'new', 'creative', informative', although for us novelty is an important quality of the 'interesting'; it implies, rather, a matter of deep-going concern and importance to the members of a culture" (1979, pp. 226-7).

2.2 Making Experience Meaningful: The (Un)Usual, (In)Sanity, and (Un)Truth

It can be argued, then, that experience is not a tidy sequence of logically linked events that comes to a close; it's a profusion, a flux without beginning or end that we narrativize by selecting and ordering events on the basis of a conclusion that renders that selection and ordering meaningful. This frames narrative as a meaning-making tool, an idea commonly expressed, if not always elaborated on, in claims about what narrative research can tell us:

> By studying oral accounts of personal experience we can examine the tellers' representations and explanations of experience. (Cortazzi, 1993, pp. 1-2)

> [T]he storied qualities of qualitative textual data, both 'naturally' given or research driven, enable the analyst to consider both how social actors order and tell their experiences and why they remember and retell what they do. (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996, p. 57)

> The purpose is to see how respondents in interviews impose order on the flow of experience to make sense of events and actions in their lives. (Riessman, 1993, p. 2)

The experiences that narrative renders meaningful tend to be about what is perceived as unusual, as veering from "normal." Ochs (1997) writes that "[s]tories are cultural tools par excellence for understanding unusual or unexpected conduct ... Because stories recount events that depart from the ordinary, they also serve to articulate and sustain common understanding of what the culture deems ordinary" (p. 193). Bruner (1990) notes that a query as to what is going on when one encounters something out of the ordinary will generally elicit a story, and that story "will almost invariably be an account of a possible world in which the encountered exception is somehow made to make sense or to have 'meaning'. ... The function of the story is to find an intentional state that mitigates or at least makes comprehensible a deviation from a canonical cultural pattern" (pp. 49-50).

While meaning making is as much a social act as the act of particular persons (thus, texts on narrative research point out that narrative can inform us about both individuals and cultures), it is frequently conceived of in psychological terms. Psychologically oriented discussions of narrative often feature participants encountering emotional challenges for which they are seeking therapy or subjects whose mental states have been outrightly pathologized. This range of psychologized "problems" can be usefully framed for the present discussion as a kind of underside to the meaning-making function of narrative—in other words, these problems might be thought of as difficulties with making meaning out of experience. Thus, there are people who seek support in making sense of unusual things that are happening to them, in finding some reasonable explanation for disruptions in their lives, in reestablishing coherence in some measure. And there are people who have been judged incapable of sense, reason, coherence.

Most practitioners in psychology, as Polkinghorne (1988) points out, employ narrative to understand why the people they work with behave as they do. Narrative is also itself theorized and practiced as a particular form of therapy. Its strategy of externalizing a problem narratively for contemplation and seeking alternate narratives to live by is described in White and Epston's (1990) foundational text *Narrative Means to Therapeutic Ends*. Their premise is as follows:

> [P]ersons experience problems, for which they seek therapy, when the narratives in which they are storying their experience, and/or in which they are having their experience storied by others, do not sufficiently represent their lived experience ... an acceptable outcome [of therapy] would be the identification or generation of alternative stories. (pp. 14-15)

The therapeutic strategy they outline is persuasive, particularly because it seeks to develop alternative narratives that are based on a person's own memories rather than imposed from outside. Nevertheless, something that remains under-examined in their book is the origin of the problem for which someone seeks therapy. A problem, the authors suggest, is sustained discursively by holding to life-organizing meanings (i.e., narratives) that are in some way deficient. This deficiency is detected as some tension or

sense of ill fit between the life narrative subscribed to and "lived experience." But how exactly "lived experience" is understood here is unclear. Is this an appeal to objective perception, or to other competing narratives, perhaps of lesser explicitness and strength, that people also carry with them, or to something else again? The question is not to suggest people's sense that something isn't right in their lives is somehow specious. Rather, it is to draw attention to the point that, just as their life narrative is imbued by problems, "problem" is pre-narrated, imbued by what Smith (1990) terms ideological narratives. In ideological narrative, the referent for interpretation is not a listener or reader's experience but his or her grasp of formal generic conventions (such as those shaping a psychiatric evaluation, for example) promoted by some institutional power. Someone who comes for therapy has already been constructed as "a person with a problem" and they narrate their experience in a "problem saturated" (M. White & Epston, 1990, p. 16) narrative to the therapist, who is professionally constructed as a person who deals with problems.

"Problem" narratives can be framed as flawed but adjustable illusions by which we live; thus, as in White and Epston' account of narrative therapy, narrative becomes a device for restoring mental well-being. "Problem" narratives can also be framed as delusions to which we cannot lend any credence save as evidence of madness; in such cases, narrative becomes a device for making someone (out to be) crazy and thereby for excluding them from social discourse altogether. Gee (1991) demonstrates the latter when he shows how he is able to make coherent sense, on what he claims are the narrative's own terms, of a transcript that to doctors was merely proof of communicative disorders connected with schizophrenia. The ideological narrative of mental illness becomes a tool for denying what Gee argues is the inherent meaningfulness of the transcribed narrative, in effect excluding the narrator from the social. The mental patient is left to talk to him/herself (in Gee's piece quite literally, as the transcript was generated in a testing situation where the narrator was told to speak freely and given no feedback cues). Smith (1978) illustrates a similar point about exclusion using a narrative drawn up by one of her students about "K," someone who is ostensibly "unwell" but whose narrated behaviour could just as easily have lent to the view that there was nothing wrong. All of the people

mentioned in the account she focuses on are enlisted in an additive formula of witnesses who recognize the ineluctable "fact" of K's mental illness; they all follow the directions supplied by the normative concept "mental illness" in interpreting K's behaviour to the narrator. K herself, however, is excluded from the list of those authorized to interpret her behaviour by the rhetorically a priori "fact" of her mental illness. We needn't look to her for an account that would make out the meaning of her actions.

Juxtaposed with narrative therapy, Smith's and Gee's pieces suggest that narratives as meaning-making tools are of a dual nature, then—they "render the exceptional comprehensible," as Bruner (1990, p. 52) puts it, and thereby keep us "sane," but they do so only if the teller and the told are regarded as "sane," that is, if they are legitimized by the broader social narratives that pronounce on normalcy. Stories keep us from "going off the edge" psychologically only if they can keep us within the bounds of the social. Insanity is, of course, an extreme, but there are plenty of other conditions that are aberrations from the "normal" or the "usual." Being "under-schooled" and, in consequence, "low-literate" are socially narrativized as deviating from what should be, and it is partly in this light that I examine the particular stories of adult learners in this project. How do they make meaning of their educational experience narratively in light of the way in which their attendance in an adult education program prenarrates that experience as abnormal or unusual? (And how might a better understanding of their narratives, in turn, allow them to be included in pedagogical [and even policy-related] conversations about literacy curricula?)

There is an array of synonyms used to describe narrative's meaning-making function: structuring, ordering, clarifying, explaining, accounting for, bringing coherence to, rendering intelligible, making comprehensible, justifying, etc. Corresponding qualities like coherence, clarity, order, intelligibility, consistency, etc. tend to be prized in Western narrative in part because they ostensibly render experience transparent; in other words, we often feel that such qualities signal a "true(r)" account of what happened. When we judge a story to be disorderly or contradictory, we might view it as evidence of some abnormal, even pathological disconnect from "real" events, as I suggested above. Or we might view it as a sign of uncertainty on the part of the narrator. Indeed, Day Sclater

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(Andrews et al., 2004) suggests we might treat narrative as a "working space" for meaning making, where we don't yet make assertions, where we modalize. Ochs and Capps (2001) work this tentativeness into their central assumption about narrative:

> All narrative exhibits tension between the desire to construct an over-arching storyline that ties events together in a seamless explanatory framework and the desire to capture the complexities of events experiences, including haphazard details, uncertainties, and conflicting sensibilities among protagonists. (p. 4)

We need to be careful, however, not to suggest that narrators are always and only concerned with a rather earnest notion of 'truth.' The motives driving the construction of narrative are not limited to getting the story to be cohesive and comprehensive. There are many reasons for altering, embellishing, or holding back in our stories; irony, duplicity, and imaginative creativity all come into play. Bauman's (1986) study of "lying" at a Texas dog-trading fair highlights how—amidst the layered expectations that narratives are not only to convince the listener of the teller's integrity, but are also to be entertaining and not necessarily trustworthy—both artistic and persuasive intentions play with the "truthfulness" of narrative. As he points out, narrative, while it is a tool for tidying and elucidating and defining, "may also be an instrument for obscuring, hedging, confusing, exploring, or questioning what went on, that is for keeping the coherence and comprehensibility of narrated events open to question" (p. 6). Trinh (1989) observes that our "civilized" culture is careful to maintain a clear distinction between make-believe and real (and, she writes, we will continue to draw lines between fact and fiction "as long as the transformation, manipulations, or redistributions inherent in the collecting of events are overlooked" [p. 120]). Yet we continue to tell stories. Her emphasis on the figurative aspects of narrative and on literary concerns with dark shadows and confusions and laughter suggests it's misleading to think we tell stories solely or even mainly on the

basis of a need for coherent and unvarnished completeness.[8]

Trinh also draws attention to how desire trumps conventional notions of truth in narrative. She recounts a documentary project in which one woman wanted to be filmed at a fishpond, an "unrealistic" setting in Trinh's initial judgment, given the woman's working-class life. The pond is symbolic in Asian cultures, Trinh explains, of space for meditation and retreat, and the woman's choice of setting was, in fact, meaningful in that it contrasted with the tiny apartment she shared with a large family. Trinh comments that "the truest representation of oneself always involves elements of fiction and imagination, otherwise there is no representation, or else, only a dead, hence 'false,' representation" (1992, p. 168). Desires motivating narrative can be retrospective; Cruikshank (1990), in her oral history work with Aboriginal elders, notes how narrative is used by one woman to work out contradictions between what she wishes had been and what was in her life. Desire can also be for the acknowledgement that narrative affords; in his book about Vancouver's impoverished downtown eastside, Campbell (2001) tells the story of attending a funeral for a prostitute that no one present, including the priest, had actually known. He had been silently critical of the priest's "fictitious" eulogy until he heard the other mourners, also prostitutes, congratulating the priest and affirming that they too would like such a eulogy when they died.

More strongly politicized considerations regarding narrative truth are drawn out in Beverley's (2000) discussion of the book *I, Rigoberta Menchu* as an example of testimonio. Beverley characterizes testimonio as an "emergency narrative" the aim of which is to bring a dire situation to the attention of an audience to which the narrator and

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[8] White (1978) similarly points to the anxiety over keeping the task of the historian separate from that of the novelist, even though writing a history is, in effect, a literary endeavour: "Histories ought never to be read as unambiguous signs of the events they report, but rather as symbolic structures, extended metaphors, that 'liken' the events reported in them to some form with which we have already become familiar in our literary culture" (p. 91). This should not suggest to us that historiography is therefore not legitimate knowledge, for "we experience the 'fictionalization' of history as an 'explanation' for the same reason that we experience great fiction as an illumination of a world that we inhabit along with the author. In both we recognize the forms by which consciousness both constitutes and colonizes the world it seeks to inhabit comfortably" (p. 99).

the narrated would "normally not have access because of the very conditions of subalternity to which the testimonio bears witness" (p. 556). He suggests that the testimonio challenges traditional Western notions about the relationship between narrator and audience. It asks for solidarity from its audience in changing oppressive structures, but its narrator refuses to construct him- or herself according to the rules, wishes, or purposes of the audience. According to Tierney (2000), this is key; in testimonio, concerns regarding the narrator's agency and the story's ability to effect change are central and override any positivistic expectations around truth the audience might have. Menchu's book raised a great deal of controversy when it was discovered the author had described a number of events that did not actually take place, but Tierney offers a gloss on such "lies" when he argues that truth must be seen in relation to the positions occupied by those involved in its construction. The conditions that prevent certain people from speaking and being heard can be created through violent repression, as was undoubtedly the case with Menchu's people, but in the absence of this they also exist more subtly in normative cultural metanarratives, in official interpretive devices that shut certain groups out. According to Tierney, in the face of this, one task of researchers using forms of narrative enquiry like life history is to challenge these metanarratives and interpretive devices and thereby help in the decolonization of those who have been silenced.

Such a task is challenging, for one of these colonizing devices is, paradoxically, the kind of privileging of knowledge derived from "being there" that allows accounts like Menchu's to be attended to. Despite the work of theorists like Althusser (1971) who have argued persuasively that it is a product of ideology, experience continues to be equated with truth. Having seen, heard, and felt for oneself is generally held to be authoritative. Fuss (1989) and Scott (1998) both note that this epistemological stance allows the narratives of many marginalized people to be heard, but they also draw attention to the problems it creates—essentialism, exclusivity, and an unsophisticated understanding of difference, all of which risk perpetuating such marginalization. Scott writes that experience is persuasive as evidence,

> providing both a starting point and a conclusive kind of explanation, beyond which few questions need to or can be asked. And yet it is

precisely the questions precluded—questions about discourse, difference, and subjectivity, as well as about what counts as experience and who gets to make that determination—that would enable us to historicize experience, to reflect critically on the history we write about, rather than to premise our history upon it. (p. 65)

Many guides to narrative-based social research accept this postpositivist understanding of experience as socially and politically constructed; however, it is often articulated in terms of a kind of middle-ground on the question of truth in personal narratives. Thus, Lawler (2002) takes the stance that an account is not to be conceived of as either "unproblematic reflection" or as "distorting screen that always projects experience out of its own categories": "Rather, facts (or experience) and interpretations of those facts (or that experience) are envisaged as necessarily entwined" (p. 243). Lieblich et al. (1998) "believe stories are usually constructed around a core of facts or life events, yet allow a wide periphery for the freedom of individuality and creativity in selection, addition to, emphasis on, and interpretation of these 'remembered facts'" (p. 8). And Riessman (1993), citing Michael White, also argues that personal narratives are "rarely, if ever 'radically constructed'—it is not a matter of them being made up"; however, they are "not meant to be read as an exact record of what happened" (qtd. p. 65).

This partly-subjective-partly-objective approach is, for analytic purposes, perhaps not the most useful way of grappling with questions of narrative truth. More productive is for analysis to include questions about the shaping and consequences of particular narratives. Bauman (1986) suggests that what is finally of most interest in contemporary narrative theory is not so much the nature and extent of isomorphism between narratives and the events they recount as the means by which the relationship between narratives and events is achieved. These means are best studied in the *act* of narration; knowing how and why a story is "true" requires an examination not just of the story itself and of the events to which it refers but of its production and, also, its uptake—in short, of its context.

2.3 Narrative in Context: Rhetorical Performance, Co-narration, Socio-cultural Resources, and Power

Discursive context has been reconceptualized over the last two decades, such that context and language are regarded as interactively achieved. (Duranti and Goodwin's [1992] *Rethinking Context* presents a range of social scientific studies demonstrating this way of thinking about context.) This rhetorical approach to context not only focuses on a speaker's efforts at persuading an audience but recognizes the mutual interdependence of the speaker's utterances and the audience's response. Indeed, so inextricable are utterance and response that the audience is considered a co-author of the utterance. Duranti (1986) argues that

> ... to give the audience co-authorship is more than an ideological stand. It represents the awareness of a partnership that is necessary for an interaction to be sustained, but is often denied by analysts and participants alike. Speaker and audience are equals not simply because their roles are interchangeable—in fact, they may not be in some situations—but rather because every act of speaking is directed and must be ratified by an audience. (p. 243)

There are situations in which co-authorship is readily apparent. Ochs, Smith, and Taylor's (1989) study of dinner conversation in Caucasian American families, for example, shows that the family member who initiates the narrative contributes only about 60 per cent of it while others contribute the rest, drawing on their background knowledge of the narrator (who is generally also a protagonist) and on their right as familiars to intervene. But audience co-authorship does not depend on direct verbal engagement with the speaker; Duranti adds that "[t]alk, in fact, does not need to be *exchanged* between parties for us to say that communication was cooperatively achieved. The mere presence of an audience socially constitutes and ratifies the nature of the speech event" (p. 243).

Anthropological research like Bauman's (1986) on oral narrative and studies like Ochs and Capps' (2001) of everyday conversational narrative make key contributions to a more sophisticated understanding of narrative context as rhetorical, extending a theory of

interpretation traced by Duranti to such authors as Gadamer, Wittgenstein, and, of course, Bakhtin, upon whose writings about dialogism the present study draws extensively. Bauman argues for a focus on the *performance* of narrative, which implies a consideration of audience.[9] For him the narrative performance event is a fundamental unit of description and analysis, forming an "indissoluble unity" with the events the narrative recounts and narrative text itself. Ochs and Capps focus on narrative as a tool for everyday, collaborative reflection among familiars. Among their narrative "dimensions" (see above) they include tellership, "the extent and kind of involvement of conversational partners in the actual recounting of a narrative" (p. 24). Tellership can range from relative passivity on the part of the audience to active participants who supply and elicit information. While Ochs and Capps tend to deal largely with immediate conversational contexts, they do suggest that tellership may include voices of absent others that find their way into the narrative through language reports and other, less obvious forms of multi-voicing: "Taking the logic of revoicing to the extreme, every word, expression, and genre we employ in a narrative has been coauthored in the sense that they have been developed and used by others before us" (p. 25).

This intertextuality is a key aspect of Bakhtin's theory of dialogism—thus, a narrative cannot be understood as the wholly personal product of a speaker. It relies on audience, of course, but also on extant socio-cultural resources, namely generic aspects of the narrative event and available prior story lines. Other speakers in other times and places have been busy in the shaping of these resources and, in this sense, their voices echo in current narration. Genres, as Bakhtin (1986) describes them, are "typical form[s] of utterance" that "correspond to typical situations of speech communication" (p. 87). Genres play a central role in producing and comprehending speech, including narrative

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[9] The metaphor of rhetorical performance can hint at deliberate, chameleon-like adaptability, but it's important to remember that people do not necessarily morph easily into whatever the audience and narrative context calls for. Day Sclater (Andrews et al., 2004) describes how in her work as a family lawyer she discovered that it was sometimes difficult to get clients to buy into the rhetorically persuasive story lines she wanted them to perform in court. She notes that people were often deeply attached to their own personal narratives, even when the judge had made it clear such narratives were of no interest. Her reflection on their struggles is useful in checking against an overemphasis on narrative as an endlessly flexible and calculated performance.

speech: "We learn to cast our speech in generic forms and, when hearing others' speech, we guess its genre from the very first words; we predict a certain length ... and a certain compositional structure; we foresee the end; that is, from the very beginning we have a sense of the speech whole ..." (pp. 78-9). Just as genre is a resource for narration, so, too, are socio-culturally extant narratives.[10] Researchers working with narrative have noted that narrators make use of stories they have heard elsewhere and at other times. Passerini (1987), for example, in her study of accounts of Italy's Fascist period by members of Turin's working class, notes that people's memories are articulated through a common stock of narratives, that they always draw on pre-existing story-lines and ways of telling. As Heilbrun says, "We can only retell and live by the stories we have read or heard" (qtd. in Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 2).[11] But, of course, we can only retell and live by them in our own ways. In any particular narration, we can trace aspects that are inherited—generic forms of speech and common narrative plots, themes, and characterizations—but we also always reaccentuate, to use Bakhtin's term. Thus, narrative can be viewed as a practice in which relatively stable resources and particular, unique agencies are played out dialogically.

The focus on performance, co-narration, and socio-cultural resources in narrative also implies a focus on power relationships. Contexts in which narratives are told are never neutral, and the right to speak (which must also include the right to be heard) is inequitably distributed in any given situation. The testimonio, introduced above, radically engages this point, not only by refusing to be shaped in accordance with its audience's expectations and desires, but by invoking a paradoxically subaltern position for the narrator, who both identifies with those (and as one) who cannot speak and yet speaks on their (and her/his own) behalf. (Note that, as Spivak [1988] defines it, there is "something

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[10] Note that, although we might refer to these extant narratives as typical (as in the "classic immigrant success story" or the "archetypal fall-and-redemption tale," for example), they are not genres per se in Bakhtin's sense of the word, since genre is bound to narrative context. Thus, a fall-and-redemption story told in drug rehabilitation therapy performs a different social action than one told to a court in a child custody hearing.

[11] This is a point interestingly brought home in Nilsson's (2002) study of people's stories of their own birth, an event that could be narrated only through reliance on others' narratives and on cultural models such as genealogical charts.

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of a not-speakingness in the very notion of subalternity" [p. 289], hence, we are never listening to a pure subaltern.) The point about unequal narrative rights is also made by Ochs (1997) about less extreme discursive situations. She notes that what kinds of stories can be challenged and who can challenge them varies, depending on socio-cultural context. For instance, she cites Heath, who observes that written narratives are less likely to be challenged by the white working-class families in *Ways with Words*. And in her own studies of Caucasian American families' dinner conversations, Ochs found that fathers generally challenge stories more frequently than mothers do, and that children rarely do so at all (Ochs & Taylor, 1994). She writes,

> Narrative activity allows members of communities to represent and reflect upon events, thoughts and emotions, but this opportunity may be asymmetrically allocated, granting reflective rights to some more than to others. ... [C]o-narration crafts biographies and histories; yet the meaning of experience and existence—what is possible, actual, reasonable, desirable—tends to be defined by some more than others. (1997, p. 203)

The prior scripts that narrators use as resources are also not neutral. The idea that narrators from marginalized groups often unquestioningly appropriate dominant narratives that are contrary to their interests and that serve to maintain an unjust status quo is a key idea in critical pedagogy. Goodson (1993; 1998) identifies this uncritical reliance by narrators on dominant narratives as a problem in narrative-based inquiry, too. He proposes a method of triangulation—the life history—to deal with the limits of life stories, arguing that to "'valorize the subjectivity of the powerless' in the name of telling 'their story' ... would be to merely record constrained consciousness—a profoundly conservative posture" (1993, p. 11). Life story, according to Goodson, focuses too much on the local, personal, and idiosyncratic; life history, by adding other people's accounts and other documentary and historical data, can help address this by highlighting the constructedness of life stories.

While Goodson's approach is compelling, it fails to address the involvement of the researcher as audience (and participant) in narration. (Chapters 3 and 4 deal more

specifically with the role of the research interviewer in the co-construction of narrative.) Goodson also doesn't address the complexity of narrators' appropriation of socio-culturally extant narrative resources. An especially good discussion of narrative appropriation is offered by Wertsch (1998), who focuses on narrative as a cultural tool that mediates discursive action. Wertsch draws extensively on Bakhtin's theories about the processes by which the speech of others comes to be taken up with varying degrees of "our-own-ness." He notes a number of striking parallels between the work of Bakhtin and that of de Certeau, who frames discursive appropriation as an act of consumption. For de Certeau (1984), consumption is not a passive act. Through their use of cultural products, which include linguistic discourse, people alter them, to such an extent, in fact, that he posits that their consumption is itself a form of production. Like Bakhtin, de Certeau does not view discursive appropriation as an act of "swallowing it whole," but his theory is more overtly political about the process than Bakhtin's. When the consumers in question are not members of a culturally powerful group, he writes, their production is typically out of material not their own but "rented" or "poached" from those groups, and then reformed by what he terms *bricolage,* a kind of creative tinkering. The relative power of consumers is key in tracing the ways in which they use products. De Certeau thus distinguishes between a strategy of consumption, which "assumes a place that can be circumscribed as *proper (propre)* and thus serve as the basis for generating relations with an exterior distinct from it" (p. xix), and a tactic. Tactics are used by the less powerful, those who do not have their own base of operation: thus, a tactic must always seize or manipulate "opportunities" in the others' place.

What Wertsch's discussion of Bakhtin and de Certeau highlights is that appropriation involves degrees of selectivity and artfulness. Appropriation means trying on dominant discourses, adapting them, combining them. It may also mean rejecting them. As Ibanez (1997) argues in his study of AIDS/HIV prevention among non-mainstream social groups, it is important to pay attention to the "gap between the formal discourse of 'what we ought to do' and the street talk with jokes, anecdotes, stories, whispers, and sarcasm that bluntly says 'We do what we do,' 'I am what I am' and 'Shit happens anyway'" (p. 126). The work of the Personal Narratives Group (1989), a

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research group affiliated with the Centre for Advanced Feminist Studies at the University of Minnesota, documents the resourceful appropriations that women have made in narrating their stories. It works on the belief that narratives by socially marginalized groups are often good sources of "counter-hegemonic insight," and the group's idea of the "counter-narrative" is one of recurrent interest in the literature. But interest in the counter-narrative can take potentially problematic turns, too. Richardson (1995), for example, calls for social science research to support what she calls "collective" narratives, "stories that deviate from the standard cultural plots" (p. 213). She believes that the sociologist's task is "giving voice to silenced people, presenting them as historical actors by telling their collective stories ... using our skills and privileges to advance the case of the nonprivileged" (p. 215). Goodson (1998), in his argument for life history over life story, points out one problem with this notion of "giving voice to silenced people": "Sole reliance on narrative becomes a convenient form of political quietism—we can continue telling our stories and our searchlight never shines on the social and political construction of lives and life circumstances" (p. 10).

But the depoliticization of narrative is only one problem that arises in the uncritical valorization of the narratives of marginalized groups. For one thing, Wertsch (1998) points out that narrators can consciously reject dominant narratives but still be affected by them. Even when we're critically aware of their impact, we may not escape their effects subconsciously and we may yet be forced to use them in certain contexts anyway, to protect ourselves or to get what we want from more powerful people. Fay (1987) identifies this excessive reliance on rationalism as a central problem in critical social science. Other problems arise, too. Fuss (1989) argues that the privileging of marginalized voices can promote various forms of essentialism that end up working against the interests of marginalized groups. Among these forms of essentialism, identities are treated as fixed, accessible and determinative, a stance that transforms personal narrative into a less than empowering tool. Squire (Andrews et al., 2004) suggests that to be liberating, a narrative must remain open, not claiming to say everything about a person or to take the same path for every speaker. Similarly, Razack (1993) notes that the multiple nature of people's subjectivity is often unrecognized, that

one story is often taken to represent all that a person "is." She also raises the problem of a kind of collective essentialism when she warns against demanding that the oppressed speak with a unified voice.[12] In the end, we have to be more critical of our requests for stories from marginalized groups (as Johnson [1995] also argues, relying on them to inform and educate us rapidly becomes problematic). And when we do ask, we have to stop assuming that we can just listen and know. For Razack, the answer lies in "[giving] up the quest for knowledge, that is to definitely know, either through the heart or the mind" (p. 118). Instead we must always remember that "on pense la ou on a les pieds"; we need to cultivate an awareness of the concerns narrators have about how they are placed in relation to us and we need to ask questions about our own placement, too.

I want to suggest in this project that a dialogic approach to narrative can offer narrative research important strategies for engaging with narrative in just this way and can moreover extend the notion of placement beyond the immediate narrative context. In the following chapter, I offer theoretical grounding for and concrete descriptions of three different analytic tools for approaching narrative interview data: genre, intertextuality, and chronotope. These tools, different facets of Bakhtin's theory of dialogism, are applied in the subsequent chapter to transcripts of interviews with five adult learners.

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[12] Bringhurst (1999) points to a variant of this problem in ethnography, where entire cultures have sometimes been read off the narratives of particular tellers and summed up with statements along the lines of "Group X believes that ..."

3

Data Collection and Tools for Analysis

This project responds to the claims made in the literature on personal narrative in adult literacy education, as well as to the educational practices incorporating learners' stories that I have observed informally and even used in my own teaching. To date, we haven't applied very sophisticated tools to research learners' personal accounts; instead, we have made broad claims about their educationally emancipatory value on a relatively impressionistic basis. As suggested in the preceding chapter, there is relatively little concrete guidance in the methodological literature for addressing this, and so I seek here to contribute more critical and systematic approaches to the interpretation of learners' narratives. This chapter begins with an overview of how I collected my data and then moves on to outline three sets of analytical tools for examining learners' narratives. Each tool—genre, double-voicing, and chronotope—is grounded in Bakhtin's (1981; 1986) theory of dialogism, an interconnected set of concerns expressing the idea that discourse is always riddled with and responsive to what has already been and has yet to be spoken.

3.1 Data Collection

The core data for this study, collected at a suburban adult learning centre, consists of conversational interviews. In addition, small-group discussions with the interviewees were conducted, and a set of magazines of learner writing issued by the centre were collected. I describe the criteria and processes for gathering all this data here. Note, however, that the analysis in the present project focuses on a particular subset (see below) of the larger, more heterogeneous group of adult literacy learners I interviewed, and that the group discussions and learner writing will be referred to only cursorily.

A note about "representative" participants and "formal" education sites

We may imagine the adult literacy learner as someone who left school young and who enrolls in a program later in life primarily to get a high school diploma or, more vaguely, to "learn to read and write." In practice, however, it is difficult to say what counts as representative among literacy learners in terms of their educational histories and goals or even to describe the typical program they would attend. At the outset of my study, I visited several adult education programs that might potentially have served as study sites—two housed by urban nonprofit organizations, one administered by a suburban school board, and two affiliated with a college in a rural small town. Talking with educators in these different programs about the population of learners who attended and curricula that were offered made it clear that common conceptions of "representative" learners and "typical" programs need adjusting.

There were, indeed, learners who had "dropped out" of the Canadian school system and now wanted to graduate from high school. Some were close to getting a diploma, others would probably never get one, and there were many in between. But there were also people, most of them immigrants to Canada, who had barely been to school or, at the other end of the educational spectrum, who held college or university degrees. Many of these learners wanted to improve their English; others sought Canadian educational credentials. There were people, both immigrant and Canadian-born, who needed better grades in one or two courses or a particular course on their transcripts. And there were, doubtless, many for whom "unofficial" reasons for attending programs were as compelling as the aforementioned ones; people may also have sought out social contact or intellectual stimulation they didn't get in their everyday lives, for example. Capturing this broader heterogeneity is important in countering unitary portraits of learning. The selection criteria for the study aimed to capture a diverse range of learners in one setting; the study was to be suggestive of who one might encounter in adult education contexts, rather than a portrait of "average" learners. Hence, I conceived of the study participants (somewhat cumbersomely but as inclusively as possible) as "people

who had not satisfactorily completed a formal education in Canada and who were enrolled in a program that offered access to such formal education."

The term "formal" requires some elaboration here, since its use is imprecise in practice, where it is usually invoked commonsensically, and unsettled in the literature. In the latter, discussions of "formal" appear primarily in the field of non- and/or informal education.[13] Dewey's (1916; 1938) emphasis on the role of experience in learning and on education as that which enables people to share in a common life are influential in this field. He associates formal learning with "advanced" societies (as opposed to "undeveloped social groups," in which children learn through apprenticeship and vicarious play). In such societies, "[a]bility to share effectively in adult activities ... depends upon a prior training given with this end in view. Intentional agencies— schools—and explicit material—studies—are devised. The task of teaching certain things is delegated to a special group of persons" (p. 8).[14] Dewey's description fits with much contemporary work, which similarly focus on institutions and planning (Coombs & Ahmed, 1974; Eraut, 2000; McGiveney, 1999). Thus, Eraut (2000), for example, argues that formal learning takes place in a situation where there is a prescribed framework, an organized learning event, a designated teacher, assessment, and the awarding of credit. Jeffs and Smith (1990, see also Smith, 1994) suggest, however, that such a definition focuses too strongly on context when what characterizes the continuum of formal to non-formal to informal education are the processes involved. Informal education is driven largely by conversation and not organized beforehand; in non-formal education

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[13] The terms "non-formal" and "informal" are sometimes used interchangeably. In other instances they are distinguished. Thus, commonly, non-formal education is offered by organizations outside of schools (such as community groups) while the term "informal" applies to daily interactions with family and friends. Livingstone (1998), who uses only the term "informal," argues that what separates informal learning from everyday activity is "having gained a new significant form of knowledge, understanding or skill on your own initiative that you retain long enough to recognize it retrospectively."

[14] The need for this "formalization" stems, according to Dewey, from the fact that much of what has to be learned is stored in symbols; that is to say, in artifacts of literacy. Interestingly, while formal learning is indeed commonly associated with the type of abstract "book learning" done at school, literacy does not figure as a characterizing feature in most contemporary considerations of non- and/ or informal learning. Smith's (1994) work on youth- and community-workers, with its emphasis on "dialogue" in informal education, is one exception.

curriculum is negotiated with learners and thus retains some of this "dialogical" quality; and in formal education, the curriculum is pre-planned. However, this is not to say that informal education will never involve pre-planned elements or that in formal education, certain aspects of curriculum cannot be negotiated.

The point that all educational contexts involve elements of formal, non-formal and/or informal processes such as Jeffs and Smith describe is well-taken. However, in this project, I am actually interested in educational contexts not just where the pre-planned predominates but where the planning is done by "official" agencies. Thus, a working definition like Livingstone's (1998) is better suited to my purposes. He proposes, on the website of the Toronto-based Network on New Approaches to Lifelong Learning, that formal schooling "is an age-graded, hierarchically organized, formally constituted system; requires compulsory attendance until at least mid-adolesence; and provides the major credentialing of our knowledge competencies to start out our adult lives." Potential research sites, as well as the subgroup of learners I eventually worked with in this project, were considered in relation to the "official" school system Livingstone is describing, that is to say, the system governed by provincial regulations concerning mandatory school age, and, more importantly, high school graduation requirements, organizational roles, structures and practices, and curricular content. These regulations are, as Apple (1993) argues in *Official Knowledge*, "the results of struggles by powerful groups and social movements to make their knowledge legitimate, to defend or increase their patterns of social mobility, and to increase their power in the larger social arena" (p. 9). It is mainly in connection with this notion of "official" that I use the term "formal." More helpful than defining "formal" as a category, perhaps, is to think of it as a kind of core. If the core of formality I identify has to do with national (or more precisely, in Canada's case, provincial) forms of governance (and all the "politics of official knowledge" that inhere), then the concern is to consider the resemblance the research site bears to this core and also the relationship the research participants have to it. All of adult literacy education is in some degree attenuated in its connection to the formal (largely because the regulations about having to be at school no longer apply), but

it still participates in a system of inheritance and transformation of the formal as it devolves from the core government-sanctioned school system.

While I originally interviewed some 20 learners who together reflected the diversity at my research site (see section on participant recruitment, below), the analysis here focuses on conversations with only five of them. As my project progressed, I became increasingly concerned with the need for a more critically systematic set of methods for analyzing narrative. This became a central focus of the project, and in order to develop and refine such methods in greater depth I selected a smaller subset of interviews to work with. The five learners all attended elementary school in Canada and had, as adults, expressly enrolled in a high school completion program. Of all the interviewees, therefore, this group perhaps most clearly and closely seeks out the "formal" schooling and literacy I am interested in researching. (A brief biography of each of the five learners is provided in the following chapter.) The smaller size of the group enables me to conduct more detailed analysis and thereby test more meticulously the methods I have developed. The commonalities among the five interviewees also allows me to begin making observations about the particularities of this group's accounts that can later be compared and contrasted with other interviewees' accounts.

The research site

I chose to conduct my research at a school board-administered adult learning centre in a suburb of Vancouver. Administrators and instructors readily supported my work there, and the site was easily accessible for repeated visits. In addition to these practical considerations, Inwood offered a number of other significant advantages for the study. Inwood is among the most socioculturally and even economically diverse of the sites I visited, and this diversity is reflected in the range of learners' educational backgrounds and goals. Inwood also offered the opportunity to include learners studying schooled forms of literacy at different levels. Many of the participants in my research were enrolled in the Adult Secondary School Completion (ASSC) program, designed for adults to obtain academic credits (i.e., at the grade 11 and 12 level) toward high school

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completion[15]. The ASSC program also caters to students who already have a diploma but need stronger grades and/or additional courses for admission to post-secondary institutions. As at a traditional high school, learners can register for courses in math and English (including literature, communications, and writing), as well as in various other subjects, and the very name of the program makes it obvious that it is oriented towards schooled literacy. However, I was also able to enroll a number of students from Inwood's Level 3 Adult Basic Education (ABE) program, which, while not explicitly focused on high school completion, is nevertheless part of the academic continuum, offering grade 10- and "pre-grade 10"-level courses in math and English. Learners in this program are occasionally enrolled in ASSC-level courses, as well (they may, for example, take ABE English but grade 11 math or accounting). The learners work in the same physical space as the ASSC learners, and the same self-paced model is employed. Working with learners at these two differently "formal" levels added a further source of contrast in my data.

Inwood also offered another important advantage in that it has a long history of publishing student writing, writing that is frequently autobiographical in nature. I discovered on my visits to various sites that contextually generated samples of learners' personal narratives—in other words, narratives elicited not specifically for research purposes but as part of a program's instructional, administrative, evaluative or other regularized practices—were difficult to come by since I was not part of the daily life of the program. On occasion, brief accounts relayed during admission assessments might be found in learners' files (for example, in the form of an in-take essay), but none of the programs collected them with any consistency. At one program, an instructor indicated that she sometimes organized a class around the topic of schooling, asking students to reflect, on the basis of their own experiences, about what is required for educational success. However, this was not a consistent part of every year's curriculum. At another site, an administrator showed me copies of several valedictory addresses by students that contained illustrative details from speakers' own lives, but there were not enough of such transcripts to make a data set. Inwood's student publication *Voices* constituted an

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[15] Learners can obtain a regular "Dogwood" diploma, which additionally requires passing provincial exams, or an Adult Graduation Diploma, for which the exams are optional.

opportunity to triangulate my interview and group discussion data with narrative data that originated in educational practice. Moreover, these accounts, which, in contrast to the interviews and discussions, are in written form, would allow me to investigate the features of a particular form of writing (and reading) that is highly valued in the tradition of adult education. Again, while I do not focus on the published pieces in the present study, they will be valuable in further, more expansive work.

Recruiting participants

Having obtained formal approval from both the principal of the school and the university ethics board, I began recruiting learners for interviews and group discussions. Participation was voluntary, confidential, and not tied to remuneration or other incentives such as extra school credit. In consultation with two of the instructors, I posted notices introducing my research project (see Appendix 1) in the large common area where ABE and ASSC students work and then followed up with a series of visits. The ABE and day-time ASSC curricula at Inwood are self-paced, and, rather than attending classes, students commit to coming in on (at least) two set days every week in either the morning or afternoon to work independently or with others and to consult with instructors. Hence, I visited the school on several different days at different times so that I would be able to meet with as many of the students as possible. Addressing the entire room on these visits would not have been practical given its size and the (calm but steady) flow of comings and goings. I, therefore, arranged with the instructors that one of them would introduce me to small groups of students at a time. Thereupon, I would briefly detail my research. I would explain that I was curious about the different ways in which our society talks about education, the different stories people tell, and also that I had noticed that learners like them, who came back to school as adults, were not often included in such talk. In my research, I told them, I was interested in hearing about their experiences with and goals for schooling and reading and writing, and I was also interested in the ways in which they told the stories of their experiences and goals. I invited learners to ask questions, and distributed information and contact sheets. If they were interested in participating, they filled out a contact sheet so I could schedule an interview with them. Information and

contact sheets were also left at the front entrance of the common area for people to pick up.

I spoke very briefly with each learner before setting a date and time for a first interview, asking them to tell me a bit about their educational background and which program they were enrolled in. I used this quick information to check that I had a relatively diverse group of participants. I wanted to include learners from both the ABE and ASSC programs. I also wanted to make sure I didn't interview only people who had been educated in Canada and only people who had not completed high school. I filled in the initial group of volunteers more selectively with the help of the instructors, who were able to identify particular learners for me. In the end, 20 learners were interviewed: 7 in ABE and 13 in ASSC; 11 had gone to school primarily in Canada when they were younger and 9, abroad; and exactly half had completed their secondary schooling. These were the most obvious and easily assessed categories for ensuring a range of participants.

Interviews

Interview sessions were tape recorded, as I required verbatim records of the interviews, and they generally took a little over an hour, some longer and some shorter depending on the particular interviewee. Questions were open-ended and designed largely to facilitate the learners talking at length about literacy and schooling in their lives (see Appendix 2). While the learners were not given a set of questions in advance, the notice I posted and the information sheet I distributed did give them a general sense of the topics to be discussed. When each interview was completed I would listen to the tape again, usually the same evening or the following day. If I had further questions, wanted clarification, or felt that I might be able draw out more elaboration on certain points, or if the interviewee indicated that they had more to say, I scheduled a second interview. Of the 20 people I interviewed, 12 were interviewed twice.

Group discussions

When all the interviews were completed, I divided the participants into three groups according to the categories I used to ensure a diverse enough range of participants

(see above). However, my concern in organizing the discussions was not so much to allow me to study differences and similarities among these groups, but to create an alternate discursive situation where the learners in my study might speak about schooling and literacy. In the interviews, they spoke with me one-on-one and responded to questions about their own educational goals and experiences. In the group discussions, by contrast, I launched the conversation by asking them to respond to a set of fictional responses written by adult learners on the same themes, and my role was mainly to ease the conversation that evolved among the learners. The groups needed to be relatively small and constituted in such a way that learners might all feel equally encouraged to speak. I reasoned that bringing together people with at least some similarities in their educational backgrounds might be more likely to generate talk, and so I first grouped participants according to the aforementioned criteria. I then made adjustments on a more subjective basis as if I were a dinner-party host making up a guest list. Of the 20 interviewees, 13 ended up participating in group discussions; the remainder were not available at the time scheduled and two did not show up.

Voices magazine

Between 1988 and 1996, Inwood produced a magazine of student writing entitled *Voices: New Writers for New Readers*. A relatively polished-looking publication illustrated with professionally taken photographs of contributors, it contains pieces by learners from the school and also from other programs across Canada and the United States. *Voices* features largely personal writing and so furnishes a third source of narrative data in addition to the interviews and group discussions. While in the interviews and group discussions, I as a researcher elicited narratives, the narratives in these publications were generated as part of educational practice. Moreover, these accounts were written rather than spoken and would allow me to investigate the features of a type of writing that is highly valued in the tradition of adult education. After collecting all 17 issues, I generated a comprehensive overview of the publication. I then copied those pieces of learner writing that were all or partly about school and/or reading and writing.

These would be the subject of closer analyses. Interviews with the person primarily responsible for the publication offered background on production processes.

3.2   Tools for Analysis

This project proposes a set of critically systematic tools, grounded in Bakhtin's theory of dialogism, for approaching learner narratives. The subsections below discuss these interpretive tools as they are informed by three aspects of dialogism, respectively: genre, double voicing, and chronotope. First, a study of the generic conventions for speaking allows the context in which narration occurs—in this case, the conversational research interview—to be taken into consideration. Second, learners incorporate, and thereby express particular attitudes toward, what was uttered in other places and at other times; an exploration of this double-voicing, traced through reported speech in the learners' accounts, shifts the focus from the voices of the interviewer and interviewee to the other "voices" that populate the interview narratives. And, third, an investigation into the temporal and spatial groundings, or chronotopes, that inform the learners' accounts reveals how mechanisms for change are conceived and, in turn, what alternate outcomes are possible. Together, these analytic tools can provide us with a clearer and more nuanced understanding of the goals, resources, skills, and constraints that shape learners' personal narratives.

Conversational shifts in the genre of the research interview

The interviews that comprise the core data of this study were conducted in a school setting with participants presenting and interpellated as adult learners. Still, the interviews emerge from a research context rather than educational context, and the implications of using interviews to gather personal accounts need to be addressed in a study that posits language as *situated* social action. As Mason (2002) suggests,

> Asking, listening and interpretation are theoretical projects in the sense that how we ask questions, what we assume is possible from asking questions and from listening to answers, and what kind of knowledge we

hear answers to be, are all ways in which we express, pursue and satisfy

our theoretical orientations in our research. (p. 225)

The main method I have used to collect data in this study is closely bound up with the project's theoretical orientation, namely a dialogic approach toward narrative and narration. In this section, then, I want to work toward articulating a more complexly dialogized concept of the interview as a context for the learners' accounts. There are uptakes of the interview method, of course, that seek to block contextual influences through rigid standardization. In highly structured interviews, language is treated as if it were purely referential. Questions are formulated ahead of time and the wording or sequence of this schedule isn't meant to be deviated from. The interviewer is not supposed to offer interpretations of questions, or to suggest or comment on answers. The interviewee, too, is framed as a "type" and, as Silverman (2001) points out, implicitly supplied with "standard" mental structures that match the researcher's reasoning and linguistic habits. The aim is to generate data that is independent of the research context— of the particularities of place and time of the interview and the purposes and idiosyncracies of the interview(er).

Still, most contemporary research acknowledges the relationship between text and context. Emphasis has shifted from critiques of research on texts separate from their uses, to a focus on how text and context are mutually constitutive (Kratz, 2001). More recently, there has been interest in what makes text separable from context (Bauman & Briggs, 1990); placed in tension with forces that anchor discourse in its setting, the processes of detachment serve to refine our understanding of the relationship between text and context. But while many studies have demonstrated that linguistic form, function, and meaning cannot be grasped apart from context, the conceptualization of context remains a difficult one. This may be why narrative often continues to be treated as separable from the circumstances of its telling (especially, it seems, when the narratives are collected in research interviews). But acknowledging the narrative event only to then selectively bound and bracket it as background leads to a shallow and problematic uptake of its relationship to narrative itself.

The complexity of the interview as narrative event

Context can refer simply to the particular time and place of a narrative event, but it can also be conceived much more broadly. Using Burke's (1969) dramatistic pentad as a heuristic, an event in all its "circumstantial fullness" would involve not only act and scene but also agent, motive, and agency. A rounded consideration of a situated "act" of narration in Burkean terms would ask, Where and when is it taking place? And it would also ask, Who is involved? Why is this narration taking place? and What means, what material (e.g., tape recorder, pen and paper, etc.) and symbolic (i.e., genres and other forms of discursive convention) forms of mediation, are being used to tell the narrative? The questions quickly move us beyond the immediate and/or concrete aspects of the five elements; the answers balloon beyond single words and phrases.

Consider the element of scene in the interview as narrative event. I move beyond the immediate context of the room in which the interviews took place, for example, when I note it is off the central classroom area in the main building on the grounds of Inwood learning centre, which is located in the neighborhood of W_____ in suburban Vancouver. And I move beyond the concrete aspects, too, when I begin to reflect on details of the scene: for example, there are posters on the wall in the room (which leads me think about the vague irony of carrying out my interviews within view of one in particular that quotes Edison: "Education is as necessary as light. It should be as common"), and one day it smells of curries brought in for the Inwood graduation pot-luck dinner (which leads me to consider the happily "multicultural" ethos of the place, reinforced by other, government of Canada-sponsored posters in the hallways denouncing racism and celebrating the country's diversity). Others' comments also register in my impressions of the school and its surroundings: an acquaintance from an affluent part of Vancouver remarks that I'm doing research in a "pretty seedy neighborhood," while a colleague asks if I had noticed the number of Mercedes parked in the lot. Concrete things—posters, curry, the neighborhood of W_____, Mercedes—have connotations attached to them by observers of and participants in any given context and these, too, must be considered part of "scene."

Burke (1969) writes about scene as a series of concentric circles:

> One has a great variety of circumferences to select as characterizations of a given agent's scene. For a man is not only the situation peculiar to his era or to his particular place in that era (even if we could agree on the traits that characterize his era). He is also in a situation extending through centuries; he is in a "generically human" situation; and he is in a "universal" situation. Who is to say, once and for all, which of these circumferences is to be selected as the motivation of his act, insofar as the act is to be defined in scenic terms? (p. 84)

Not only do we confront seemingly countless aspects of the concrete and immediate scene, but we take our analytic gaze well beyond circumstance understood in terms of the here and now. And, of course, we also have to take into account the other interdependent elements of the pentad, which, as Burke indicates with the mention of agent and motivation, shift accordingly, and which can similarly be spun out through a consideration of the dense and multiple relationships and roles, histories and conventions, desires and pre-conceptions they bring into play.

In short order, the pentad can come to seem a rather messy device for thinking about the narrative interview, and we might ask whether it is profitable to take such a broad view of context. I want to suggest that it *is* profitable and that such complexity is essential in a dialogic perspective on the interview. It's important to note that the pentad is not a formula for generating a description of context, only a means for exploring it, for becoming aware of just how much might actually be at play in the production (and uptake) of personal accounts. The frustration about where to draw the line emerges from a problematic conceptualization of context as an objective description of all that surrounds that which is being studied. Bauman and Briggs (1990) argue that, in such conceptualizations, there is indeed no way of knowing when an adequate range of factors has been taken into account; describing context becomes "an infinite regress" (p. 68). Because it is impossible to include everything, the researcher ends up deciding what gets included, and often the result is a description that renders context as a pre-existing set of

conditions independent from the text. It becomes difficult for the researcher to see how participants (in this case, interviewer and interviewee) determine what is relevant and how their utterances influence context. To maintain the kind of complexity Burke's pentad draws out but to avoid generating a static summary of background factors that is shaped only by our own sense of what is relevant, the interview context needs to be approached differently.

Interview as mutually constructed text and context

Fontana and Frey (2000) suggest that there is increasing recognition of interviews as "active interactions leading to contextually based results" (p. 647). This dynamic view is articulated by Mishler (1986), for example, who rejects the "traditional" structured interview model of stimulus-response and advocates for a more conversational view. He describes the interview as "a circular process through which [a question's] meaning and that of its answer are created in the discourse between interviewer and respondent as they try to make continuing sense of what they are saying to each other" (pp. 53-4). Thus, everything that is spoken has to do not only with the "who, what, where, how, and why" of the event but also with what else is spoken as part of the event—text becomes context for further text. Or, as Gubrium and Holstein (2000) put it, "talk is simultaneously productive of and reflects the circumstances of its production" (p. 492).

This brings us to Bakhtin's (1986) dialogic theory, in which utterances are characterized by their responsiveness:

> The fact is that when the listener perceives and understands the meaning (the language meaning) of speech, he simultaneously takes an active, responsive attitude toward it ... Any understanding is imbued with response and necessarily elicits it in one form or another: the listener becomes the speaker ... Sooner or later what is heard and actively understood will find its response in the subsequent speech or behaviour of the listener. ... [The speaker, on his part] does not expect passive understanding that, so to speak, only duplicates his own idea in someone

else's mind. Rather he expects response, agreement, sympathy, objection, execution, and so forth ... (pp. 68-9)

Bakhtin suggests that, since the boundaries of an utterance are marked by a change of speaking subjects, conversations are a classic form of speech communication. We need to be careful in framing an interview as conversational, however. Participants in narrative events are often referred to as "collaboratively making" or "jointly constructing" or "together negotiating" meaning, and it is easy to pick up on the harmonious connotations of such phrases. While the turns in a "conversational" interview are certainly responsive to one another (and they are in structured interviews, too, of course), Bakhtin's notion of dialogism does not insist that participants be happily cooperating toward synthesis. As Scheurich (1997) writes, "Human interactions and meaning are neither unitary nor teleological ... [they are] a moving feast of differences interrupting differences" (p. 67). Heterogeneity is a central aspect of Bakhtinian dialogism, and it is important to be aware of difference in interview contexts. The research project may be explained and the interview agreed to, but interviewer and interviewee do not necessarily share goals or understandings at the outset. They may work toward increased commonality over the course of the interview, but differences can also remain unresolved and might even be amplified.

Complicating these differences are power dynamics. Much that is written about interviews as conversational is in reaction to "traditional" interviews, in which interviewees are pressed to disclose information along lines imposed by interviewers, who are discouraged from sharing their own views and are expected to stick closely to pre-set questions and to keep the exchange "on topic." In this hierarchical relationship, interviewees are treated as vessels to be emptied of meaning rather than as social meaning makers, and their experiences are regarded as terrain to be excavated. Not only do researchers thus fail to see interviewees' accounts as constructed in the course of discursive exchange and to acknowledge their own role in the shaping of interviewees' accounts of experience, but they also limit the range of sense-making discursive forms available to interviewees. This is of particular concern to those who recognize narrative as a key form for representing and reflecting on events, thoughts, and feelings. Thus,

Mishler (1986) argues that interviewees' opportunities to use narrative are suppressed in traditional interviewing practices, and this concern leads him to explore ways to "empower respondents so that they have more control of the processes through which their words are given meaning" (p. 118). But while the power disparities in interview settings are clearly of concern and while the "conversational" approach would seem more respectful of and open to interviewees and their perspectives, there are two important points to keep in mind here. First, the assumption that the interview relationship is necessarily and radically asymetrical and that the researcher always has the upper hand can be questioned; power is much more variously and subtly distributed in discourse than we often realize, and interviewees are not without agency. Secondly, attempts to redress the balance need to be critically weighed. Projects that seek to discursively "empower" participants often end up simply sublimating the power and investments of the researcher, and that, of course, is problematic.

With regard to the first point about power imbalances, it is often assumed the interviewee works to figure out what the interviewer wants—and interviewers steer them: "respondents learn from how interviewers respond to their answers—restating or rephrasing the original question, accepting the answer and going on to the next question, probing for further information—what particular meanings are intended by questions and wanted in their answers in a particular interview context" (Mishler, 1986, p. 54). But interviewees don't always cooperate. The interviewees in my study that were in some way "recalcitrant" might not have been able to figure out what I wanted, but they may also not have wanted to participate on my terms alone. Several of them went on at great length about subjects that didn't appear to be about schooling or literacy, and I had a hard time directing them towards the kind of answers I was looking for. Another interviewee obligingly replied to all my questions, but I found myself constantly prompting for details and elaboration; the prompts were answered equally obligingly but generally failed to launch longer, more "narrative" segments of talk. Yet another interviewee offered up a string of apparently pointless and faintly impolite anecdotes; he had "lots of stories" he asserted. But as I tried to gather more biographical cohesion and to steer clear of the oddest bits (like his story about copulating dogs in the schoolyard), my discomfort grew

and I didn't ask him for a second interview. (The methodological literature does suggest ways to encourage talk in interviews, but it offers nothing to prepare one for this type of awkward disorientation.)

Of course, in the end, the researcher has power over what gets done with the interview data. The temptation can be strong to ignore segments of data and even entire interviews. Mishler notes that this is done in traditional interviews, where narratives can be difficult to code and categorize, but it is done equally in unstructured interviews, where narratives are actively sought out. It is easy in reducing and processing data to gravitate toward what seems intuitively interesting and to leave out that which doesn't fit with one's own sense of narrative structure and relevance. Differences between interlocutors get smoothed over, and where they are not, conflicting expectations may get attributed to some sort of deficit on the part of the interviewee. It is important, then, that within the interview itself, attention be paid to divergent goals and understandings of interlocutors, and that in the analysis they also be examined further as such. We cannot completely divest ourselves of assumptions about desirable or even adequate responses—this, too, is part of the tension in dialogism. Bakhtin points out that speakers need to have some confidence that their words will be met by a listener working to understand, otherwise they cannot "speak" in a meaningful sense. Without a listening other, they cannot get a reading on their own words and end up making noises into the void. By the same token, though, the listener only listens meaningfully because he or she listens in an anticipatory way, oriented by expectations. Our anticipations, our expectations can be critically examined in such a way that they do not prematurely shut down or block out interviewees' responses, but they cannot be eliminated.

All this brings us to the second point about attempts to address power imbalances. Mishler suggests that traditional research practices are "alienating" in their effects, and there are certainly grounds for such a claim. The lack of human give-and-take that characterizes formal interviewing (or, at least, idealized guidelines for it) is indeed strange, if not offensive, particularly in situations where people are asked to talk about personal subjects. Fontana and Frey (2000) cite Fine, who goes even further, arguing that the pleasant demeanour of the interviewer coupled with an absence of emotional

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reciprocity amounts to an unethical ruse to gain trust and confidence. However, we might examine more closely just what kinds of reciprocity are possible in research. Fontana and Frey claim that "the emphasis is shifting to allow the development of a closer relation between interviewer and respondent; researchers are attempting to minimize status differences and are doing away with the traditional hierarchical situation in interviewing. Interviewers can show their human side and answer questions and express feelings" (p. 658). This would seem an improvement over the "one-way pseudo-conversation" that Fine rejects, except that the interview still remains a tool primarily for conducting research and not for cultivating intimacy. Interviews that, in their ostensible non-hierarchicalness, resemble friendly conversation might thus arguably constitute an even deeper ruse. Ochs (1997) is correct to point out that entitlement to co-tell a narrative is a powerful right—even as we seek to support others' rights to speak and be heard, we do so not as innocent listeners but as complicit co-tellers.

If the researcher's interests and position need to be acknowledged rather than made to disappear under the guise of discursive mutuality, it is also true that we need to tend to the participants in research. What do interviewees seek in taking part in an interview? Hiller and DiLuzio (2004) cite a number of sources suggesting why people agree to participate in research. They themselves contend that interviews appeal because they provide opportunity to share matters of personal experience through a process of "event validation"; the project confirms the significance of the interviewee's experience, relates it to the wider field of persons with similar experiences, and allows the interviewee to talk about that experience. While certainly this seems plausible, further enquiry into what motivates people to participate or what they get out of participating in an interview would be useful as part of a broader investigation into public perceptions and uptakes of research as a form of meaning making. Such an investigation might also offer a gloss on interviewees' responses in research settings.

A final point needs to be made with regard to interviews as mutual sense-making, namely that this sense-making should not be confused with the pursuit of "truth." This preoccupation with truth is reflected, for example, in Mishler's suggestion that we stop interfering with genuine expression in the way traditional interviewing practices do. It

can be traced in Hiller and DiLuzio's contention that interviewees use the interview to develop greater self-understanding; an oft-repeated idea in the literature they cite is that the evolving dialogue—especially when it is allowed to take the form of conversational narrative—shows us the interviewee coming to terms with perceptions, emotions, and evaluations around the topic at hand (in other words, unearthing and countenancing how they "really" see, feel about, make sense of past experiences). The connection between "sense-making" and truth is also implied in the Bakhtinian-inspired model that Ochs and Capps (2001) devise to study narrative in everyday encounters. The authors suggest narrators are subject to a dual proclivity: there is the desire to "construct an over-arching storyline that ties events together in a seamless explanatory framework and the desire to capture the complexities of events and experiences" (p. 4). What's missing in this otherwise convincing theorization of tension in the act of narration is a sense of the rhetorical. Conservative, centripetal forces that organize identities and experiences are met by centrifugal forces that hint unceasingly that "this isn't quite the way it was and the way I am" ... but perhaps they are met also by forces that hint that "this isn't the way I want you to think it was or the way I want you to think I am." The point in telling a story isn't always to tell the "truth." Irony, duplicity, imaginative projection, and metaphoric sensibility are also a part of "sense-making" in narrative performance. Such elements risk being left out of analyses of personal narrative when concerns for "genuine expression" or "greater self-understanding" predominate or when we see only a dualistic tension between cohesion and accuracy.

A more deeply dialogized understanding of the interview genre

In spite of (or, rather, together with) all the caveats reviewed above, the idea of the interview as a mutually constructed, evolving conversation brings us much closer to an articulation of interview as dialogic context. But a study limited to how the interviewee and interviewer are, turn by turn, negotiating, constructing, and sustaining narrative meaning would not take up adequately Bakhtin's theory of dialogism. To restrict analysis to the sequence of turns and allow nothing outside this to be brought in (as conversation analysis dictates) places too much emphasis on the localized and

momentary and on the agency of the interlocutors. The interviewees in this study have likely given accounts of their educational lives, in part or in whole, elsewhere and at other times. Moreover, the interviewees and I bring expectations to the interviews based on past encounters in other places—expectations about relevant content, acceptable form, and appropriate uptake of the roles of interviewer and interviewee, even about what will happen to our words when the interview is done.[16] These expectations, as well as the presumed iterability of accounts, mean that the interview as a context for narrative needs to be conceived of not just as emerging in and out of the here and now but also as permeable and historically responsive. To be sure, the utterances that comprise any given personal account are highly contextualized and thus, in one sense, unrepeatable, but they are also marked by trans/intercontextuality. And while responsiveness is indeed animated in the particular sequence of turns taken by the interviewer and interviewee, utterances are also responsive in a more far-reaching sense, "furrowed with distant and barely audible echoes of changes of speech subjects" (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 93). Speakers use words that have been used before and that "taste" of other contexts in which they have lived their "socially charged" lives. When we adapt words for our own purposes in a given conversation, we are not just responding to what the person facing us has just said but also to all the earlier utterances that "populate" these words. (And we are not just anticipating what our interlocutor will say back to us, but also the effects our words will have beyond the conversation.)

One way in which this history of trans/intercontextual travel and transformation manifests itself in discourse is through genre, which Bakhtin defines as "relatively stable types of utterance" (1986, p. 60). Genres are, as Morson and Emerson (1990) put it, "the residue of past behaviour, an accretion that shapes, guides, and constrains future behaviour" (p. 290). The personal interview narrative as a genre is shaped by a host of conventions relating to discursive behaviour that have been developed and adapted over time. These conventions can be traced, for example, in the reactions against and

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[16] An account is not only oriented to its immediate context of production but also to contexts beyond it. Bauman and Briggs' concern with entextualization is echoed by Kratz (2001), who also argues for an approach that raises questions about "processes that simultaneously anchor discourse in its setting and make it extractable" (p. 129).

transformation of rules for structured interviewing discussed above. We may, in seeking narrative, go with a freer and more flexible format, but there is still a degree of stability in an "unstructured" interview. Indeed, there are documented techniques for unstructured interviewing (Kvale, 1996; Rubin & Rubin, 1995; Seidman, 1991). Basics may include maintaining a friendly conversational manner while staying close to the research topic, starting with general questions and gradually moving to more specific ones, and inconspicuously verifying interviewee's statements. The generic conventions that enable and constrain interview interactions are communicated in the very materials and practices used to initiate them. My recruitment poster (see Appendix 1) spells out the themes for the interviews and addresses the interviewees specifically as adult literacy learners who have something to tell me, a researcher, in narrative form, about their educational experiences. The poster also tacitly suggest the conventions that will be in play during the interview: the floor will be ceded for long stretches to the interviewee but not to the interviewer; the interviewer will ask questions but the interviewee will not; the interviewer won't argue or offer advice in response to what the interviewee says, etc.

While the poster only hints at such conventions, the interviewees filled these in with what they themselves knew of research and of interviews from other contexts. Several of the interviewees, for instance, expressed the hope that my work would "help people like them." This echoes the idea communicated in popular culture, where scientific expertise is frequently invoked (particularly in news, documentary, and self-help formats), that research is instrumental in addressing extant social problems. Some followed up by framing their participation as contributing to this helping effort—one interviewee even wanted a letter attesting to her participation so that she could present this, together with her other volunteer work, as evidence of community involvement. The people participating in my study would similarly have had some sense of the how and why of interviews given their ubiquity in our culture. Atkinson and Silverman (1997) argue that interviews have been so popularized that we might be said to live in an "interview society" where interviews seem central to making sense of our lives. The extent to which the traditional research interview per se has, as Mishler (1986) suggests, become "a routine technical practice and a pervasive, taken-for-granted activity in our

culture" (p. 23) is debatable. But, certainly, I would not, as a relative stranger, have been able to approach the people in my study and to ask the questions I did had the concepts of research and interviews not been already widely established. And I would probably not have gotten the types of extended personal answers I did from many (though not all) the participants, had the interview not been broadly recognized in our culture as a means of contemporary storytelling (J. Gubrium & Holstein, 1998).

Pointing out the generic qualities of the research interview comes with caveats, as well. Genres are associated with stability and iterability but such qualities must not be overemphasized; genres are less fixed and more fragile than is often assumed. Moreover, genres are often hybrids and there are generally multiple genres at work in a given discursive situation. The generic resources available to the learners and to me in an interview do not derive solely from what we know about research and about interviews; we also draw on other conversational forms. In addition, "research" and "interview" are not uniform concepts—a talk-show interview, for example, is not the same as a research interview, and an interview for a marketing survey is not the same as an interview for a linguistic study of narrative. The request for stories is not necessarily straightforward either. As pointed out in Chapter 2, narrative cannot be treated as a "natural," universally shared form. Neither can personal narrative be limited to an account of a single, unified self passing through chronologically linear time. So even as the learners and I agree to the task as described in introductory conversations and consent form, there is still plenty of flux and uncertainty about what it means to tell one's educational story/stories to a researcher in an interview. And this flux and uncertainty draws in again the processes of negotiation that take place in conversation.

Kratz (2001), writing about oral history in anthropology, states that "defining what makes a life history/story is more a matter of exploring how life histories/stories are made" (p. 134). A little further on, she adds,

> There is no obvious, naturally occurring model for how life accounts should be told or what they should include. Each of us [*Kratz and her interviewee*] brought to the encounter notions of relevant topics, narrative

forms, appropriate presentations, and our ongoing relationships, all
shaping the conversation in specific ways in a mutual attempt to figure out
what these particular life accounts would be. (p. 149)

Making a story is a complex social action, one that can be explored from numerous
perspectives, among them genre studies and ethnomethodological approaches like
conversation analysis. This study doesn't focus on systematically elucidating recurring
features of the research interview narrative, nor does it seek to describe interviewer-
interviewee methods for producing and sustaining narrative meaning through sequenced
interaction. However, like Kratz, I want to avoid removing the learners' accounts in this
study from the moments of their production. These particular accounts originated,
materialized, in research interviews. Those genre-ed conversations are dialogically
complex and not merely a preliminary to this study of resources and means. How, then,
might I weave into subsequent analyses an awareness of the generic expectations that
were brought to and interactive negotiations that took place over the course of the
interviews?

I found a useful strategy in Goffman's (1981) concept of footing as discussed in
Forms of Talk. While Goffman's book doesn't deal specifically with interviewing or
narrative, his approach shares Kratz's key idea that what defines a given form is not its
content but the social processes (the "interactional encasement") that generate it.
Goffman works with a distinction between what he colourfully terms the box and the
cake. In his analysis of the lecture, he pays attention to "the partition between the inside
and outside of words, the realm of being sustained through the meaning of a discourse
and the mechanics of discoursing" (p. 173). Goffman locates the interfaces between
inside and outside by tracing what he terms footings: "A change in footing implies a
change in the alignment we take up to ourselves and the others present as expressed in the
way we manage the production or reception of an utterance" (p. 128). During most of the
interview, the learners and I are conversing as interviewee and interviewer; in the main, I
ask questions and the interviewee responds. There are also parts of the interview where
we step out of this interview talk, where we "realign" as our "real" selves and tend to the
interview itself; we facilitate the conversation with laughter, explanations, corrections,

bracketing rituals, and so on. In Chapter 4, I take a closer look at some examples of shifts in footing that mark the interfaces between inside and outside, between meaning and mechanics. In these liminal spaces we can find a measure of the dialogical complexity of the narrative interview as a form of, and thus also a context for, talk.

Reported speech as a form of double-voicing

While conversational interviews are a usefully concrete way to begin exploring Bakhtin's theory of dialogism in relation to narrative in this project, a script in which one speaking turn follows another is not an adequate model for the theory. The quality of responsiveness alluded to earlier, while animated by the relationship between the interlocutors in a particular conversation, also pertains to the utterances themselves. All utterances, writes Bakhtin, are *internally* dialogic. Speakers use words that have been used before and that "taste" of other contexts in which they have lived their "socially charged" lives. When we adapt words for our own purposes in a given conversation, we are not just responding to what the person facing us has said but also to all the earlier utterances that "populate" these words. Every time we speak, we respond to something spoken before, we take a stand in relation to earlier utterances. Our word enters

> a dialogically agitated and tension-filled environment of alien words,
> value judgments and accents, weaves in and out of complex
> interrelationships, merges with some, recoils from others, intersects with
> yet a third group; and all of this may crucially shape discourse, may leave
> a trace in all its semantic layers, may complicate its expression. (Bakhtin,
> 1981, p. 276)

In this part of the analysis, then, I wish to look not so much at words uttered in turn between the interviewees and me, but at words uttered in other times and places that resonate in the learners' speech. What other utterances—utterances from beyond the interview that populate it in the dialogical way theorized by Bakhtin—are present in the narratives, and how do learners' uptake of these utterances (rather than simply their responses to my utterances as interviewer) contribute to narrative construction?

It may be helpful at this point to sketch out a bit further how Bakhtin uses the term "dialogism." It refers, first, to an inevitable characteristic of all speech (as already discussed, all utterances are historically responsive). But "dialogism" also refers to an element discernible in discourse when a speaker wants his/her words heard as though they were spoken with quotation marks. This second, narrower sense of "dialogism," also referred to as double-voicing, has to do with our deliberate attitude toward the words of others in our own speech. When it is not our intention to have listeners consider the source of our words, when we are simply oblivious to those sources, we speak in a direct, unmediated way as if there was only one voice—our own—speaking. Our words are thus "monologic" in the second sense (though still dialogic in the first). However, we may sometimes want listeners (or readers) to take notice of other voices in our speech (or text) and so we place quotation marks around our words, making them double-voiced, dialogic in both senses.

Bakhtin maps out various nuances among double-voiced words. If the speaker or writer uses others' words for his/her own purposes, the words are "passively" double-voiced. Passive double-voiced words may further be uni-directional (where the speaker or writer is more or less in agreement with the other voice; a speaker may, for example, allow her voice to ring with deep feeling as she incorporates the stirring words of another into her speech) or vari-directional (in opposition to it; parody is Bakhtin's prime example, the discourse of the other treated in a hostile or critical way). In both cases, the words of the other remain the speaker or writer's passive tools. By contrast, in active double-voicing they escape authorial control. The actively dialogized utterance is thus unsettled and unsure, for the speaker or writer no longer dominates and his/her discursive purposes are disputed by the other's voice. Among the examples of active double-voicing Bakhtin writes about is language that constantly takes "sideward glances," anticipating and trying to forestall undesired response (a kind of "I know what you're going to say, but let me stop you by pointing out that ..."). This typology of the second sense in which Bakhtin uses "dialogism" allows us to identify gradations, to characterize utterances along a spectrum from complexly dialogized to monological.

Reported speech (and thought)

Reported speech is perhaps the most obvious variant of Bakhtin's double-voiced discourse. Indeed, in *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, Bakhtin's contemporary Voloshinov (1973) stresses its inherent dialogicality—"reported speech is speech within speech, utterance within utterance, and at the same time also speech about speech, utterance about utterance" (p. 115)—and he maps out a classification of possibilities in reported speech that echoes the issues of engagement and influence between voices in Bakhtin's typology. [17] Voloshinov contends that "the true object of inquiry ought to be precisely the dynamic interrelationship of ... the speech being reported (the other person's speech) and the speech doing the reporting (the author's speech)" (p. 119). This dynamic relationship can, broadly speaking, run in one of two ways, he suggests. Reported speech can be presented in such a way that its boundaries are clearly and firmly demarcated and "[it is screened] from penetration by the author's intonations" (p. 119). In this "linear style" the reported speech tends toward homogeneity. Alternately, reported speech can be "[infiltrated] with authorial retort and commentary in deft and subtle ways" (p.120). In this "pictoral style," the "tendency is to obliterate the precise, external contours of reported speech" (p. 121).

It is tempting to equate Voloshinov's two styles with the distinction commonly made between direct and indirect forms of reported speech. In direct speech, a reporter gives an (ostensibly) verbatim report of what was originally spoken. The original voice might be said to be "screened" from the influence of the reporter's voice through orthographic conventions (such as quotation marks or dashes) but also, more importantly, through "deictic shifts" in language. In the reporting clause, pronouns, verb tenses, and temporal and spatial references are construed from the reporting speaker's deictic centre, whereas in the reported clause, these are rendered appropriate to the original speaker's perspective and context (Vandelanotte, 2004). Note the shifts between reported and reporting clause in the following passage, for example:

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[17] Morson and Emerson (1990) suggest that his study can be used to supplement Bakhtin's theory so long as we remain cautiously mindful of Voloshinov's Marxism.

"There's nobody that cares about this place more than I do," he said in a recent interview here.

In indirect speech, there is no such shift; the deictic centre remains that of the paraphrasing reporter, who might be said to "infiltrate" the original with his or her own interpretations and intentions. The above passage in indirect form might remain relatively intact: *In a recent interview here, he said that there was nobody that cared about the place more than he did.* It may also be cast in ways that evidence far more obviously the reporter's "infiltration": *When I spoke with him last week at the press club about plans for the gleaming office tower, he insisted rather testily that he was deeply committed to preserving the historical character of the neighborhood.* Note that in both these hypothetical examples, however, all verb tenses, pronouns and deictic adjectives fit the reporter rather than the reportee. There is obviously a connection between forms of reported speech and the relationship between reported and reporting speech; however, Voloshinov makes clear that "linear style" and "pictoral style" should not be used interchangeably with "direct speech" and "indirect speech." Morson and Emerson (1990) summarize his argument succinctly: "We must think … in terms of verbal interaction, of utterances responding to utterances dialogically, and of interlocutors orienting themselves, with greater or lesser ease, among the possibilities a given language offers for their adaptive use" (p. 167).

Framing the relationship between reporting and reported speech as dynamic and flexible is a useful approach. Recent work has suggested that to mechanically correlate the form used for reporting with the degree of control the reporter has is a mistake. Toolan (2001), who deals only with literary examples in his discussion, notes the effect the forms create: "[Direct discourse] is an environment where characters appear to be in control and speak for themselves, while in [indirect discourse] the narrator is more overtly still in control, and reports on behalf of the characters." But, he adds, "the appearance or illusion of character control should not be overstated: behind all the fictional individuals, however reported, stands the controlling teller" (p. 129-30). In non-literary contexts, too, it would seem that people whose speech is being "reported" have little control. Reporters are capable of "reporting" things reportees never said (and

omitting things they did say). In fact, studies have demonstrated that reporters are unlikely to report the exact words of reportees. As Chafe (1994) points out, direct speech "pretends more than ordinary consciousness is capable of" in terms of recall (p. 212). Moreover, direct speech, in pretending to replicate features of the original utterance, like verb tense, pronoun use and even prosody (see Buttny & Williams, 2000), occludes the fact that what is "quoted" is selected and often purposefully altered by the reporting voice. Rather than a report of what was said in the past, direct speech is more accurately viewed as a creative adaptation suited to the reporter's present discursive situation. Tannen (1989) has even argued that the phrase "constructed dialogue" should replace "reported speech" since "the words have ceased to be those of the speaker to whom they are attributed, having been appropriated by the speaker who is repeating them" (p. 101).

Influence of context

But the issue of the reporter's control is somewhat more subtle, and a few caveats might be added here. It needs to be remembered that the what and how of appropriating others' speech is not simply a function of the individual reporter's choice but is determined in important ways by context. Thus, first of all, generic considerations enter into play, as institutional and social norms frame possibilities for and influence choices in reporting the language of others (or even one's own past utterances). "Sayings are transformed," writes Caldas-Coulthard (1994), "through the perspective of a teller, *who is an agent in a discursive practice*" (p. 307; emphasis mine). Her study of who gets quoted in newspapers, for example, makes clear that what finally appears in newspapers is filtered through the generic processes of news-making, where sources are accepted in a hierarchical order; people linked to power—in the main, men—tend to be regarded as more reliable and are consequently more frequently quoted than women are. Waugh (1995) also traces conventions for reporting of speech in journalistic discourse, noting how they are linked to journalism's heightened concern for attesting to "reality"; thus, in contrast to conversational discourse, "journalistic discourse does not use reported speech … to render the thoughts of others, to speak for someone who hasn't spoken, or to make guesses or predictions as to what a person would say, and so forth" (p. 136). There are

studies of reported speech in other contexts, too. Philips (1986), for instance, observes that direct speech in legal trials in the United States is given a special degree of fixedness and credibility, "as if a witness is more certain of what was said if he is willing to claim exact wording" (p. 168). Wooffitt's (2001) study of reported speech in medium-sitter interactions is yet another, more off-beat example of generic conventions being used to constitute and legitimize a social enterprise. She demonstrates recurring patterns of exchange in which the dead are quoted so as to encourage a favourable assessment of the medium's powers from the sitter. We also need to pay attention to the effect of transcontextual travels on double-voicing. Particularly striking evidence of the context-based variability of reported speech is provided in Berkenkotter and Ravotas' (2002) study of the transformation of information from one genre—psychotherapists' notes—to another, related one—initial assessment reports. They cite Linell, who comments that "recontextualization is never a pure transfer of fixed meaning. It involves transformations of meaning and meaning potentials in ways that are usually quite complex and so far not very well understood" (qtd. p.233).

Linell's observation leads to a second point about the importance of studying the dialogical characteristics of reported speech in context. Thompson (1996) speculates that because non-literary genres, in contrast to literary fiction, are supposed to report on "original" language events, questions about faithfulness to what was said and, therefore, about how and why a reporter chooses to alter what was said, seem more relevant. I suspect that compounding the apparent importance of these questions in interview-based personal narrative is the tendency to conflate the narrator and teller (the "I" in the narrative is taken to be continuous with the "I" talking to us); readers of literary fiction are less likely to confuse a book's narrator with its author. Thompson adds that in studies of journalistic discourse, a focus on the "manipulative" aspects of reporting leads to concerns about what the reporter's attitude is toward who and what is being reported. Indeed, there seems to be a moral tone in the scholarly analysis of reported language and other forms of intertextuality in the mass media that is absent in literary analysis. The emphasis in such analysis is finally not so much with "faithfulness" as correspondence— the worry isn't about the "pure transfer of fixed meaning"—but with whose voices are

included and whose shut out and with the ways in which particular voices are framed. Fairclough's (2003) list of five "orientations to difference," for example, is a useful heuristic for assessing relative degrees of dialogicality in a text, but his discussion implies that texts reflecting an openness to other voices are "good," while texts that reduce difference by attempting to resolve, ignore, or, worst of all, suppress it are somehow "bad." It is difficult to argue in the abstract with Bakhtin's ideas about the ethical implications of dialogism, and Fairclough's illustrations using political speeches and news reports are convincing. Yet the question as to whether more "dialogical" is always and in all contexts better is, I think, an interesting one to examine more closely, and particularly so in light of the feminist and poststructuralist critiques of emancipatory pedagogy. It may be useful to suspend moral commentary until we have a clearer sense of how dialogical relationships between reporting and reported voices play out in a given set of circumstances.[18]

Finally, it's important to remember the influence of the immediate conversational context on a reporter's uptake of others' (and his or her own) speech. Holt (1996; 2000) points out that there has been relatively little attention paid to the functions reported speech serves in sequential interaction. Her own study and a handful of others demonstrate the value of doing so. Wooffitt's (2001) paper, for instance, shows how mediums' powers are ratified in a pattern of exchange that allows the medium to conclude by attributing knowledge of the sitter to someone in the spirit world. The knowledge and collaboration of the sitter in producing the various roles—sitter, medium,

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[18] Dialogism can be a feature that manifests itself over time, as opposed to being only a characteristic traced within a single written text or discursive event. For example, Maybin (1997) in her study of reported speech in talk among children suggests that the narratives about personal experiences that they tell each other are vehicles for testing out different interpretations of an event, for exploring roles and relationships. Thus the voices the children in her research create for characters in their narratives are central to the evaluative functions of the narratives, and these voices have been and are likely to be created in different ways in other tellings. Commenting on one girl's account to her friend about an angry conflict between her parents, Maybin writes, "Rather than providing a definitive evaluative comment on an event, ... Karen's story is just one of many conversational narratives through which she visits and revisits the puzzle of her parents' relationship" (p. 41). This kind of experimentation over time with varying performances of others' voices sounds to me like a richly interesting kind of dialogical "orientation to difference" in a narrative that might, on the basis of one telling alone, have been judged "undialogical."

spirit—is key to the success of the exchange. Mathis and Yule (1994) use conversational analysis to focus on the range of ways in which interlocutors establish alignment through reported speech. Their study of zero quotatives ("where direct speech is reported with neither a reporting verb nor an attributed speaker" [p. 63]) includes numerous interesting samples, for instance, in which participants use hypothetical reported speech to put words into each other's mouths:

> Sara: ... and she's like: "Yeah right"
>
> And I'm like: "Don't start it—don't—honey don't=""
>
> Maya: ="Don't throw attitude:
>
> Sara: "Don't throw attitude and don't start and don't call me up and say: 'Yeah right' at me" (qtd. p. 70).

Maya indicates that she understands Sara so completely that she can speak in her voice, and, as Mathis and Yule point out, Sara seems to accept Maya's speaking for her by repeating Maya's hypothetical construction in the next turn.

Language reports in learners' accounts

In the analysis in Chapter 4, I focus on the skills involved in and the constraints placed upon the learners' appropriation of others' voices (and also on the reporting of their own past voices) for narrational purposes. I began this portion of the analysis by going through the transcripts of the interviews and marking off all instances of reported language, including direct and indirect reported speech, and reported speech acts. I also noted all instances of direct reported thought; indirect forms of reported thought, however, posed complications. Chafe (1994) notes that what appears superficially to be indirect thought, parallel to indirect speech, does not in fact report an experience of "inner language" but beliefs or opinions. Thus, for example, the phrase "I think" in "I think it's horrible" means something like "my opinion is" and not "At this moment, the words going through my head are 'It's horrible'." I discovered that in tracing indirect reported thought, it became difficult to separate what interviewees reported having thought and what they merely averred, and consequently I decided to leave these forms

out of the analysis unless they presented something potentially relevant.[19] Typical attitudes presented as hypothetical direct discourse but without an introducing verb or directly ascribed speaker, as well as commonplaces and other vaguely- or non- attributed voices that are recognizable as not wholly "original," also presented interesting quandaries—again, I did not trace these systematically, but made note of these when they presented something potentially relevant to the analysis. Having excerpted all instances of reported language with enough surrounding discursive context, I proceeded to make notes using the following set of questions as heuristic:

- Whose speech (and thought) gets reported?;

- What kinds of themes are taken up (and what content seems to get left out) through language reports?;

- How are the words reported? Through direct or indirect discourse? Using what kinds of reporting verbs, adverbs, and other signaling devices (if any)? What other features, such as repetition or particularities in diction, might offer clues as to how events and roles and relations are being evaluated through the reporting of speech (or thought)?; and,

- Why is reported language being used here? What function(s) does it serve?

An underlying tenet of dialogical approaches is that language must be studied in use, and so I am particularly interested in foregrounding rhetorical function in this analysis. Drawing on Myers' (1999; 2004) taxonomy of functions for direct reports of speech, which is based on his studies with focus groups and which treats quotations as frame shifts, I have devised a simplified set of categories for the learners' interview-based personal accounts. The reported speech and thought in the interviews can be grouped under at least one and often several of the following functions:

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[19] The case of free indirect thought is even more complex. A device used frequently in literary texts to represent stream of consciousness, free indirect thought is in effect unsayable in everyday conversation. For a discussion, see Banfield (1993) on non-communicative written narrative.

Narrate: Myers points to the use of reported speech to "intensify," or render more vivid, accounts of particular events so that the listener gets drawn in and transported, as it were, to a different time and place. In the interviews, language reports also often constitute the heart of a story when the event recounted is largely discursive in nature. And language reports, including direct reported thought (usually expressing an important insight or resolution), can propel the plot of the broader life narrative forward.

Typify: Interviewees also often make use of language reports to typify a thought or utterance as recurrent. The expectation is that the listener will grasp that one instance stands for a repeated kind of utterance or is emblematic of a common attitude, and that the listener will readily recognize the "type."

Enact hypothetical discourse: An especially interesting way several of the interviewees use reported language involves imagined utterances, "utterances that have not been made but could be made or should be made or could not have been made: they are in the future, or potential or conditional, or impossible" (Myers, 1999, p. 387).

Represent thought: Myers deals only with speech in his taxonomy but, in the interviews, thought is frequently represented. As Chafe (1994) points out, speakers can only pretend to have access to language that passed through their mind. (Generally, reports involve the reporting speaker's own inner speech rather than other people's, though instances of the latter do occur in the interviews.) The use of the form for reporting direct speech to dramatize thought is thus an interesting device in the narrative construction of identity. It can serve functions already named above, but it also works to give the listener the sense of having immediate and vivid access to a private, psychologically complex, and critically reflexive self. Such a self tends to be highly valued in Western culture but has also been problematized.

Draw attention to wording: Myers terms this function, in which speakers want to draw attention to a word or phrase itself, "mentioning," and he notes that it involves detaching oneself from the word or phrase.

Offer evidence: As Myers notes, almost all reported speech functions to provide evidence insofar as it claims direct experience. More narrowly, however, this function

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has to do with offering a basis outside the speaker's own opinion for the claim(s) he or she puts forth. In the focus groups he studies, speakers may present a quotation to support a potentially controversial position with the intention either of shoring up a claim or of mediating a disagreement. Perhaps because overt challenges are not generally part of personal interviews, the learners don't tend to use evidence quite so directly for these purposes. Nevertheless, "experts" are occasionally cited, and reports of their words often seem to serve subtly legitimizing and/or justificatory purposes.

In looking more closely at the rhetorical work that language reports do in these interview accounts, we can trace what kinds of positions the learners take up in relation to others' voices (and their own, past voices) as a means of constructing selves and lives in their narratives. We can also begin to observe what enablements and constraints come with the learners' appropriation of these voices.

Heuristics for examining chronotopes

In the third part of the analysis I want to take up another Bakhtinian concept, the chronotope. His essay "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel" introduces the chronotope as "the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 84). It goes on to review a range of Western literary genres, from Greek romance to the novel, to illustrate how their varying conceptualizations of space and especially time ("the dominant principle in the chronotope") constitute particular types of "form shaping ideology." In simpler terms, the essay argues that time and space can be conceived of in different ways and that this generates different possibilities for understanding and representing self and experience in narrative. "[T]he chronotope," Bakhtin (1981) writes, "makes narrative events concrete, makes them take on flesh, causes blood to flow in their veins ... It is precisely the chronotope that provides the ground essential for the showing forth, the representability of events" (p. 250). Together with genre and double-voicing, the chronotope characterizes Bakhtin's understanding of the relationship of discourse to space and time. Among the rules and resources of the genre of the interview-based narrative are (shared but also uncertain and conflicting) assumptions about the operations of time and space in

interviews. Double-voicing is also concerned with time and space insofar as it posits that all discourse is located. The echoes and anticipation that riddle discourse speak to its location in time, of course. Moreover, as Schryer (1999), citing Holquist, notes, meaningful discourse involves two bodies occupying a simultaneous but different space. These can be physical bodies, such as those of interviewer and interviewee, but also institutional bodies, such as schools, or bodies of ideas, such as those expressed about education and literacy in popular commonplaces or academic literature.

Time (and space) in education

Time is frequently invoked to explain particular educational and literacy goals and practices, funding measures, and curricula. Thus, for example, changes to policy might be justified in the name of keeping up with our "fast-paced" world, with the "new" knowledge society, and with "growing" economic demand. Within the education system, time (as well as space) is also a powerful regulative force, of course, and here "modernist" notions of time prompt the most direct criticism in the academic literature. In modernism, time is cumulative, sequenced, linear; change is orderly and incremental, every effect traceable to an a priori cause. Slattery (1995) notes that this conception governs educational studies of time. It works on the assumption that

> isolated parts of complex systems can be divided into coherent and cohesive segments and measured quantitatively without contamination. The hermetically sealed results can then be studied, generalized, and applied to any other context for the purpose of insuring steady progress and sequential development over time throughout the entire system. (p. 612)

The result, he argues, is an exaggerated emphasis on the manipulation of time and an inattentiveness to the here and now.

Critics of the modernist approach to time in education suggest that it impoverishes teaching and learning and diminishes the control of teachers and learners over their educational experiences. Children, undeniably, have little or no say in the where and

when of school activity, though there is not a great deal of critical investigation into the particularities of their experiences of space and time in formal education. An exception is Jackson's (1990) classic study, *Life in Classrooms*, which shows that children in elementary schools spend great amounts of time waiting—waiting to be called on to answer a question, waiting until others have finished before moving on to the next assignment, waiting in line until everyone is quiet before going outdoors, etc. Children also frequently have their time interrupted—by additional instructions from the teacher, messages over the PA system, fire drills, and so on, and also by inflexible schedules, which mean that they are often instructed to stop and move on just when they have become engrossed in a task. And he notes that children are, contradictorily, expected to behave as if they were alone in the classroom when they are surrounded by twenty or thirty others. Desks lined up in rows to face the front of the room discourage them from talking to each other and keep them under the teacher's watchful eye, but, even when seated in such a way that they face others in the class, a spatial arrangement that in theory invites more social engagement, children are often expected to remain quiet and work on their own.

While it may appear that teachers have a good deal of control, critics argue that the tightly controlled scheduling of the school is in fact devised a-contextually by researchers and imposed by administrators. Shapiro et al. (1999) write that "the time table is a form of managing predetermined rituals, implying that teachers and students know little about its proper or wise use and that our time of learning together must be programmed for us" (p. 10). This not only amounts to a deprofessionalizing of teachers (Leaton Gray, 2004), but also renders teaching and learning shallow and thin. Complex and rich interactions become one-dimensional as educators are driven by time constraints rather than concern for depth and quality, according to Slattery (1995); moreover, he suggests, segmented time can discourage "deep understandings" in favour of the acquisition of bits and pieces. Shaprio et al. echo his argument in pointing out that divergence and intellectual meandering are not valued, and that time needed for "deep experience" in learning is ignored. They add, similarly, that fragmenting the day into

separate subject areas is "a meaning-making practice that stresses the differences rather than the links and points of interest between subject disciplines" (p. 9).

The modernist ideology of time has a strong impact on assessment, as well. Slattery (1995) argues that the minute quantification of time means that outcomes become more important than the experience of education. This gets reinforced, according to Shapiro et al. (1999), in the amount of time devoted to preparing for and taking tests, which "speaks a message about the importance of doing well on competitive examinations as opposed to spending time understanding subject matter" (p. 9). But time is even more deeply implicated than this: it is itself a key criterion for evaluating and labeling learners. Bloome and Katz (1997) sketch out how the modernist ideology of time is woven into judgments of the value not only of school activities but of learners themselves:

> We expect children to begin and finish school at a particular time in life, to arrive at and leave school at given times of the day, to engage in designated activities only at particular times, to complete tasks in a given amount of time, and to reach academic benchmarks at specified times. When children do not adhere to the time guidelines we have established, we may view them as "slow," "disruptive," "lazy," "inconsiderate," etc. Children who stay within the time guidelines or surpass them are viewed as "fast," "bright," "hardworking," "reliable," etc. (p. 208)

Time thus not only measures intellectual ability—when and how fast children learn to read and write determines how they are viewed as learners—but also moral character. Time indeed becomes, as Leaton Gray (2004) points out, deeply normative, "used to differentiate between the normal and abnormal child" (p. 328).

The chronotope and critical views of agency and power

Critics like Slattery (1995) and Shapiro et al. (1999) argue that the negative consequences of modernist conceptions of time call for a change in the way time is viewed in education. Shapiro et al., who endorse Slattery's advocacy of "postmodern"

conceptions of time, suggest that a more varied range needs to be acknowledged; in addition to highly structured time there is need for down time, for time to do nothing, for "a sanctuary from the mechanical marking of time" (p. 13). Slattery wants to see a more fundamental altering of modernist assumptions about linear and segmentable time. The failure of modernity, he argues, "is due to the contingency, irony, and complexity of historical (and educational) events that escape the clutches of reason, rationality, segmentation and linear progress. ... postmodern scholars remind us that the notion of segmentation and linear progress over time is no longer tenable" (p. 615). School life is too complex for attempts at control through precisely scheduled goals. Such goal-setting, Slattery, citing Huebner, suggests, draws educators away from particularized, lived experiences of teaching and learning. He advocates instead for what he calls a "proleptic" understanding of time in which "the past and the future [are integrated] into the existential present" and in which "time is understood as internal experience, becoming and process" (p. 616). The postmodern curriculum, he continues, "encourages chaos, non-rationality, and zones of uncertainty because the complex order existing in classrooms and in human persons is the place where critical thinking, reflective intuition, and global problem solving will flourish" (p. 620).

Arguably, Slattery's proposal for a reconceptualization of time borrows more from phenomenology than postmodernism. His description of "proleptic" time, above, seems closer to the work of Heidegger than to that of Derrida or Foucault. It echoes Heubner (1975), who, in relating Heidegger's concept of *dasein* to curriculum, offers this gloss on phenomenological temporality: "The person does not simply await a future and look back upon a past. The very notion of time arises out of man's existence, which is emergent" (p. 244). While postmodernity does indeed reject grand narratives of inexorable, linear, controlled progress, most articulations of postmodernity do not suggest that removing such modernist encumbrances will afford what Slattery calls "deep understanding." Moreover, while modernistic conceptions of time may constrain human influence over the course of future events, agency and power dynamics in postmodernist conceptions of time don't warrant the optimism that Slattery accords them; chaos, non-rationality, and uncertainty do not necessarily generate freedom and equality. It is

perhaps useful, therefore, to take a more nuanced look at postmodern notions of time (and space) and the extent to which they might address what indeed appear to be unsatisfactory ways of organizing time (and space) in education at present. To that end, I briefly review two literary chronotopic studies of time and space that, in different ways, consider what Falconer (1998) describes as "diminished, even failing, historicity" (p. 707). These studies, one of the postmodern short story and the other of prison autobiography, are of interest in critically considering alternatives to modernist temporal and spatial underpinnings of schooling.

Agency and chronotopes in the postmodern short story

Falconer (1998), in her literary study of agency in the short story, explores depictions of time that are more subtle and dangerous than Slattery's dichotomous contrast between linear modernist time (negatively portrayed) and chaotic postmodernist time (characterized as productive and empowering). While she does find scope for agency in the various portrayals of time (and space) she surveys, Falconer takes up an interpretation of postmodernism in which "time and space are condemned entities" (p. 707). She engages seriously the charge that postmodernism is too concerned with the present and lacks a sense of the future, which, in turn, robs it of a foundation for political action. Her analyses of two short story collections are especially interesting for the range of postmodern conceptions of time they present and for the possibilities for agency she locates within them. One of the collections, for example, uses the concept of time reversal. Thus, in one story, set after a nuclear fallout, the characters suffer from a time disease that reverses the aging process. Falconer argues that it is the brevity of the short story that creates the possibility for agency in this chronotope. The novel gives scope to the lengthy duration of process, so that time reversal means events can only be grimly played out forward or backward along a single track. In contrast, the short story conveys the impression of time as an explosion, "an opening out, a release from future-blind crisis time ... time reversal is felt as a sudden potential rather than a redetermined sequence" (p. 712).

Another postmodern conceptualization of time is demonstrated in a story in which time-space coordinates are meticulously mentioned but remain unconnected. In this "empty" chronotope, there is no meaningful understanding of time and space. (It is reminiscent of White's [1980] annals, which are simply dated records of events that have no apparent connection.) The narrator distances himself from this chronotope and suggests alternatives to it through abrupt disruptions. Thus, at the point where one of the characters is approached by a rapist, the narrator switches to report the police's official reaction to the "event." This leaves the "event" unfinalized, which in Bakhtin's terms is requisite for agency. It allows the reader to sense the possibility of different outcomes. A third possibility examined by Falconer conceives of time as vertical. The characters in the story in question drive off the road and off the "forward-driven axis of experience." Their car lands in a tree in such a way that going forward would pitch them into an abyss. Falconer glosses their situation with Bakthin's description of Dante's characters, whose suspension in the vertical fills them with a desire "to set out along the historically productive horizontal" (qtd. p. 724). The characters in the short story express no such desires, though, and even seem to enjoy their situation; however, as the narrative progresses and the car threatens to move downward, time acquires greater "weight" for them, and one of the characters regrets that he is unable to take time seriously. This weightedness and regret is not in any real sense epiphanic for the characters. But the weightedness and regret do, Falconer suggests, "gesture toward the issue of fiction's ability to represent 'the image of man' (as Bakhtin puts it) in 'real' time" (p. 725).

Falconer's piece offers a decidedly less optimistic view than Slattery's of postmodern conceptions of time and the agency they afford. If we critique modernist conceptions of time in education as oppressive, we would do well to proceed cautiously with alternatives and not simply valorize the absence of linear sequence, cause-and-effect, and forward progress as creative and unfettered. Still, the stories Falconer examines are not cause for pessimism. As she points out, all narrative expresses meaning through time, no matter the extent to which time appears condemned in a given narrative. An absence of agency within narrative, then, is not so much a function of eschatological

circumstances[20] but of characters' lack of a sense of personal addressivity in time (as is the case for the characters trapped in the upside-down car). It is when they cannot locate themselves in time and place, when they have no sense of their own "eventness," to use Bakhtin's term, that they cannot act. Nor can they tell stories of themselves. Here we have further cause to believe in the emancipatory potential of narrative, it seems. And yet, as the study of prison autobiographies discussed below reveals, telling one's story, once again, is a fraught business.

Power and positioning in the chrontopes of prison autobiography

The challenge of placing oneself in time and place, of conveying existence in endless, eventless time and totally constrained, empty space is addressed by Schalkwyk (2001) in his study of autobiographies of women political prisoners in South Africa. "Prison narratives," he writes, "more than any other bear the representation of time and space ... as a special burden, since the passage of time and the restrictions of space are themselves the very substance of the story" (p. 1). Because they also involve relationships between jailer and prisoner, they also illuminate important issues of power in connection with chronotopes. Schalkwyck points out that the chronotopes in the various accounts are themselves shaped by such factors as gender, race, level of education, and the eras in which the women were jailed. One of the most interesting observations he makes, however, is that the autobiographies differ in their degree of "interiority": at one end of the spectrum, the passage of time is marked by reporting purely external events, and at the other, by stream of consciousness and self-conscious reflection on the difficulty of passing time. Thus, one narrator, Ruth First, a highly educated white woman whose narrative is deeply self-reflective, notes that "it seemed I had to push time on for it to move at all" (qtd. p. 12). She engages in all sorts of small acts—folding and refolding her clothes, plucking her leg hairs one at a time—to create

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[20] Slattery, like Falconer, is concerned with eschatology. However, his concept of "proleptic eschatology" (1992), which rejects the splitting of time and space into the here and hereafter, suggests that in postmodernism "the future enters the present as a persuasive and directive force" and thereby frees us from the constraints of modernistic time. Such a claim might be questioned in the same way Falconer challenges the notion that eschatological time necessarily robs us of freedom to act.

the sense of time passing. To sustain herself, First turns to inventing a novel with the idea that the fictional chronotopes will at least temporarily alleviate the pressing weight of prison time and space, but she finds that she cannot escape. Her novel is about political protestors who end up in jail: "'then we were locked in prison cells and here I was again grappling with life in a cell'" (qtd. p. 10). The freeing power of narrative is in this instance thrown into question.

Another white prisoner, Jean Middleton, reflects on her imprisonment from a point 35 years later. She frames the prison chronotope as a "false" chronotope; she "insists that prison existence is essentially abnormal, distorting, and damaging, and that the 'real self' is what one is 'outside, in the real world'" (p. 22). The idea of personal authenticity is, of course, a modernist one, but it's interesting how this narrator's notion of the "real self" in the "real world" is reminiscent also of some of the criticisms cited above of modernist notions of time in education. Consider, for example, Shapiro et al.'s (1999) point that "when teachers and students refer to the value of spending time in the 'real' world outside of school or on field studies, they could be speaking ... more about the benefits of breaking the routine and pattern of rigid school timetables" (p. 10). Schalkwyck draws attention to the fact that the "real" world is being idealized here; Middleton, he notes, overlooks the fact that "outside" has many features of a jail for black women in apartheid South Africa. Similarly, however problematic the rigidity of school is, time and space in the world outside of school may, for some learners, be no more free.

The final autobiography Schalkwyck discusses is often critiqued for the fact that an interior self is virtually absent. Caesarina Kona Makhoere, a black woman incarcerated for over five years, does not reflect in her account on struggles with time and space in prison and offers relatively unsophisticated representations of self-consciousness. One commentator suggests that her self-presentation as combative and wholly given to resistance signals a continued metaphorical imprisonment: "her exclusion of any space for an inquiry into the constructions of the self in her writing means that 'she remains in prison under apartheid ... even when she is apparently free'" (qtd. p. 32). But Schalkwyck argues we might also make an alternative interpretation. Makhoere's

response to the problem of time and space in the prison, so different from that of the other authors he discusses, can be accounted for in a number of ways, but may also be usefully viewed in light of Foucault's (1995) work on the complicity of self-reflective, "interior" accounts with the nature of incarceration:

> It may be that the narratively more sophisticated accounts of incarceration such as First's do not represent a superior and more commandingly distanced and self-reflexive grasp of the processes of detention, but rather reflect in very determined ways an economy whose purpose is precisely to render docile a body (and mind) that may be 'subjected, used, transformed, and improved' (p. 34).

Foucault's arguments about the technologies and apparatuses of social regulation have been applied to the school as well, of course (see, for example, Hunter [1988] and Walkerdine [1992]). The encouragement of personal narrative for pedagogic purposes can be regarded as one of the ways in which the school exercises surveillance and subtly regulates learners into conforming to norms. Schalkwyck's piece allows us to connect such a line of critique more specifically to the narrator's problem of how to locate him/herself in time and space. He is careful, however, not to argue against interiority or in favour of resistance to self-reflection in such efforts at temporal and spatial location in narrative: "Each 'I'," he writes, "brings different rewards, explores different terrains, is able to withstand different pressures … and is liable to be complicit with very different structures" (p. 35-36).

Falconer and Schalkwyck's studies not only help to render the conceptualization of time and space in education more complex, but they are good examples of how the chronotope can be a powerful tool for investigating agency and power dynamics. As such, the chronotope is also useful in examining what is and is not possible within a given narrative. Below, I sketch out how Bakhtin theorizes scope for change and alternative outcomes in narrative.

While Bakhtin focuses on the chronotope in literature, it clearly has broader applications. For instance, De Castell and Walker (1991), in their critique of Heath's *Ways with Words*, use the chronotope to examine the ethnographic research narrative. They suggest that approaching text through this literary lens—"formally and figuratively, rather than substantively and literally" (p. 3), as social science traditionally does—offers a means for examining what a given narrative form makes possible and constrains. Thus, they trace affinities between ethnographic narrative and Bakhtin's discussion of time and space in the adventure novel of everyday life to explain how it is that in Heath's epilogue the bottom drops out of her happy conclusion to the main story. (In the end, it appears, the ethnographic methods of instruction Heath describes so promisingly are not sustainable.) De Castell and Walker argue that the ethnographic genre, like the everyday adventure novel, cannot resolve social contradictions but only portray individual change; hence, Heath is able only to suggest lamely that the individual changes she documents in teachers and students could be the beginning of larger changes. Reading the narrative in this way, as a conceptual stance mediated by a particular approach to time and space, rather than as a "true" story, allows us to question Heath's rendering of the situation as unalterable—we don't need to concur resignedly with her ironic summation that proclaiming the need for systemic change is more easily said than done. It is in the same vein as De Castell and Walker's analysis that I propose to read the learners' interview accounts. The central question I wish to ask is how the chronotope(s) in which a given story is lodged enable(s) and constrain(s) the events, perspectives, identities, and/or actions of the narrative.

As the "organizing centre" for a narrative's events, the chronotope specifies what can plausibly happen and what drives change: "The chronotope is the place where the knots of narrative are tied and untied" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 250). Not only does familiarity with a variety of genre-linked chronotopes—Morson (1994) describes them collectively as "an encyclopedia of temporalities"—offer choices for conceptualizing experience, but some genres, the novel in particular, offer greater scope than others for representing

human existence. A rich sense of biography and history is important to Bakhtin; to exist in a present that lacks biographical and historical continuity, where the past matters only insofar as it drives the present, is to belie our nature as historical beings. It is thus that Bakhtin chooses the novelistic chronotope, which yields the closest approximation of "real historical time," as "the one that [gives] freedom and responsibility their most profound meaning" (Morson, 1994, p. 107). In the novel we find an orientation to the present that is checked by the past and open to various futures; above all, writes Morson, the novelistic present is marked by "its incompleteness, the possibility of diverse outcomes that will in turn contain still more diverse options" (p. 110). The hero of the novel is similarly "incomplete." He or she is not summed up by the plot as is the epic or tragic hero but rather exceeds it; the sense is always that the hero could have been different. Time is indeterminate or, in Bakhtin's term, unfinalizable, and it is in this sense of time that we must ground a parallel sense of the person as having what he calls a "surplus of humanness":

> There is no mere form that would be able to incarnate once and forever all of [the hero's] human possibilities and needs, no form in which he could exhaust himself down to the last word ... no form that he could fill to the very brim, and yet at the same time not splash over the brim. There always remains an unrealized surplus of humanness; there always remain a need for the future and a place for this future must be found. (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 37)

Ultimately, Bakhtin encourages us to look for openness in narrative—a dialogic openness, as described in the section above, that fosters awareness of and engagement with other voices, but also a chronotopic openness that foregrounds unfinalizability and surplus. Such openness points to rich understandings of freedom within and through narrative, according to Morson. More specifically, in this project, I hope it will afford a view of alternative ways of being "successfully educated" and "literate." But I also hope, lest we get too carried away by this celebration of openness, that a consideration of chronotope in its darker aspects will support, as well, a more critical understanding of the dangers of and limits to emancipatory uses of narrative in literacy education.

I began the analysis by scanning the interview narratives for "time" words. Language is, of course, time-saturated. This is most obvious in the inflection of verbs to indicate the time of an event, action, or condition. But references to abstract things like regret, satisfaction, and hope also imply time, as do references to concrete things like decayed leaves, fast cars, and fattening desserts. In this analysis, however, I have limited myself largely to what I call "time" words: adjectives like *slow, sudden, frequent*; adverbs like *always, then, eventually, later*; nouns like *the future*, and noun phrases like *the rest of my life, a succession of jobs*; prepositions like *until, before, since*, and prepositional phrases like *for a few years, by that point*; and phrases starting with the conjunction *when*, as in, for example, *when I was eight years old*. On the basis of these words and the relevant passages surrounding them, I sketched out a brief summary of each narrative. The summaries helped draw out key chronotopic themes, as well as similarities with genres and motifs in Bakhtin's chronotope essay and in the foregoing discussions of time (and) space in educational contexts and of agency and power relations. In addition, I also examined the summaries and the narrative excerpts on which they were based using the following set of heuristics, adapted in part from Morson's (1994) discussion of Bakhtin's favoured genre, the 19th century realist novel.

1. *By what means and in what ways does change happen?* The chronotope essay begins with a discussion of the Greek romance, in which all remains the same regardless of what chance throws in the way. In one sense, time is without consequence here. Unlike in realist novels, where the order and duration of events have significant impact, the string of events that comprise the Greek romance can be limitlessly expanded or rearranged since the protagonists and their world stay unchanged. In another sense, time does matter here, as "adventuristic 'chance time'" interrupts the normal course of events with "a veritable downpour of 'suddenlys' and 'just at that moments'." Still, nothing changes. Bakhtin (1981) explains that "these points [of interruption] provide an opening for the intrusion of non-human forces—fate, gods, villains—and it is precisely these forces, and not the heroes, who in adventure-time take all the initiative" (p. 95). The

protagonists are passive, their life a trial of endurance from which they emerge affirmed. As Bakhtin sums up, "The hammer of events shatters nothing and forges nothing—it merely tries the durability of an already finished product. And the product passes the test" (p. 107). In the "adventure novel of everyday life," by contrast, the chance logic of adventure time is subordinated to an overall logic of metamorphosis. The protagonist's life is made up of long series of adventures—spans of time ruled by fate—punctuated by critical turning points—moments in time when a choice is made and transformation ensues. Change is real so that the hero's character isn't fixed as it is in Greek romance, and it is irreversible, meaning that events can't just be reordered or added to indiscriminately. This introduces a measure of the agency and responsibility that mark the19th century novel (albeit as intermittent and negative, for the protagonist's choice tends to be wrong, to reflect moral weakness). However, in the adventure novel of everday life, change unfolds "spasmodically," the course of development "a line with 'knots' in it" (p. 113), while in the realist novel, change is gradual and prosaic. This is a function of its particular temporal grounding, as Morson points out:

> In realist novels, indeterminacy characterizes all moments. We always have some measure of freedom, however small, and large changes are as a rule made cumulatively, by the steady exercise of small chances and choices. It follows that every moment of our lives, not just occasional moments of crisis, has ethical value. (p. 108)

2. *What forms of agency does this model of change permit?* As we have seen, the protagonists in Greek romance are static. In a time and space ruled by fate alone, their adventures can "leave no trace," can produce no maturation of character. Bakhtin also discusses ancient biography and autobiography, where development is traced across a life but identity is simply given. That is to say, "there is almost no quality of 'becoming'" (p. 136). In the Greek encomium, for example, the qualities and virtues of the person being eulogized are plotted onto an "idealized image of a definite life type" (p. 136) so that we end up with a narrative of someone already formed. Similarly, the biographical forms of the Roman-Hellenistic period are ruled by entelechy, so that identity, like the acorn that will grow into an oak, is determined from the outset. "Character itself does not grow,

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does not change," writes Bakhtin, "it is merely filled in" (p. 141). The realist novel, of course, *is* a narrative of becoming. Here, the protagonist's identity is being shaped, and this process is on-going, never finished. The decisions a person makes both in the course of pedestrian engagements and at more critical junctures take him or her along paths of development that are never predetermined—again, the protagonist could always have been different—and never fulfilled. We are back here at the idea of unfinalizability, which Morson points out, is for Bakhtin "coterminous with life" (p. 108).

3. How might things have been or how might they yet be different? The realist novel might further be contrasted with the utopian novel, which, Bakhtin argues, renders real historical time and, thus, genuine becoming impossible. A real sense of becoming requires a future that is open to change, while the utopian chronotope in fact "empties out the future" by either positing a past "golden age" that renders the future unreal or an eschatology that ignores the immediate future as it looks to an absolute end. A sense of becoming also requires an awareness of the ways in which the past impinges on choice. Perhaps paradoxically, as Morson points out, the utopian novel, which insists that timeless formulas can be applied at anytime, refuses to acknowledge that not all options are open at every moment. In contrast, the realist novel, tied to actual historical process, suggests that the past limits the choices that can be made in the present, although it does not eliminate them. In fact, Morson writes, "one effect of historical contingency is to create ever-new possibilities ... History is a sequence not only of unrepeatable events but also of unprecedented options" (p. 109).

Morson offers a rich discussion of narrative possibility through the concept of sideshadowing:

> Whereas foreshadowing works by revealing apparent alternatives to be
> mere illusions, sideshadowing conveys the sense that actual events might
> just as well not have happened. In an open universe, the illusion is
> inevitability itself. ... Instead of casting a foreshadow from the future, it
> casts a shadow 'from the side,' that is from the other possibilities. ... This
> is a simultaneity not *in* time but *of* times; we do not see contradictory

actualities, but one possibility that was actualized, and, at the same moment, another that could have been but was not. (p. 118)

I trace this sideshadowing in the learners' accounts by looking for plans for the future, hypothetical scenarios, contrasts between how things are now and memories of when things were different, expressions of hope or uncertainty or fear, suggestions about what remains unfulfilled, incomplete, etc.

In the following chapter, I take up the three tools described here and apply them to interviews I conducted with five learners, all of whom are enrolled in Inwood's ASSC program. My aim is to draw out nuance and diversity in the co-narrational negotiation, the management of other "voices," and the mapping of change and possibility that shapes these learners' narrations.

4

Analysis and Application: Genre, Double-voicing, and Chronotopes in Learners' Narratives

In applying the set of interpretive tools described in Chapter 3 to the interview-based accounts of learners, I aim to find out more about what kind of a tool narrative itself is for learners' performances of educational lives and selves and what narrative alternatives might exist for them. I should emphasize that this study doesn't seek to answer directly questions about particular, concrete pedagogical and curricular uses of personal narrative in adult literacy programs. But my methods and analysis promise to generate questions that people working in actual educational settings might ask themselves about narrative in curriculum and pedagogy and that further research using "naturally occurring" data might take up more extensively. The chapter begins with introductions to the five learners on whose accounts I focus in this project. I then move on to examine excerpts from their interviews in more detail, looking, first, at the ways in which the accounts are shaped by the expectations of and negotiations around the interview genre; secondly, at how, through language reports, the accounts incorporate and orient themselves to voices from other times and places; and, finally, at what constraints and possibilities are entailed by the notions of time and space in which the accounts are grounded.

4.1   Brief biographical sketches of the interviewees

The following summaries are based on the accounts offered by the five interviewees on whom I focused in this project. All of them attended elementary school in Canada and enrolled in the high-school completion program at Inwood.

Donna

Donna (38) doesn't recall childhood as a happy time. Her mother was killed in a car accident, whereupon her father began drinking. He remarried, but, according to Donna, her stepmother was "mean." She and her siblings weren't fed or dressed properly—"we were really teased in school ... everything was just pitiful, you know." Despite this, she got good grades. When she was 15, Donna became pregnant, dropped out of school (without finishing grade 10), and left home. She lived with her boyfriend's family for a time but then applied for welfare and moved out on her own. She married her boyfriend and the relationship lasted almost ten years. During that time she had two more children and two miscarriages (one of them the result of her husband's abuse). She worked off and on and also took a few classes in an unsuccessful attempt to get her grade 10 diploma. After her divorce, she married a second time. This relationship gradually declined and came to an end when her ten-year-old daughter was abducted and murdered, apparently by a relative of her daughter's best friend. The event also had a profound impact on her two other children; her daughter developed an eating disorder and her son began taking drugs. Donna worked hard to "bring them back" and hold her family together. When her daughter became pregnant at 15 and decided she didn't want the child, Donna adopted him. She was married last year to a man she met at Inwood, and they are raising the boy together. "It's perfect," she says. Donna completed grade 12 at Inwood in a year and a half. She actually graduated the year before I interviewed her, and she began working again. However, she found she missed school and felt disappointed to be waitressing ("I thought, 'I got grade 12 for this? To wait tables?'"), so she quit her job and returned to Inwood part-time, taking creative writing courses. She plans to go to a local college in the fall to study psychology.

Gene

In his late 30s, Gene is single and has no children. He was physically and also sexually abused at home as a child, and, although the abuse is never described, it is, from the start and repeatedly woven into various themes in the interview. His overall memory of school is that he was ignored and passed on from grade to grade despite his poor

performance. He doesn't remember much about high school—"I was high through most of it"—but says he spent a lot of time "goofing around ... making smart comments, or just making jokes, bugging people, getting in trouble." Classroom activities like reading aloud, group discussion, and going to the chalkboard made him deeply uneasy. He was told he had attention-deficit disorder but it was never addressed. In 1984, Gene left school when he was in grade 11 and joined the army for six months. There were numerous run-ins with authority, and he was eventually kicked out. Currently, he works nearby for a company that manufactures pallets. He has been there for almost ten years and makes a relatively good living, but he dreams of joining the RCMP. In his spare time he practices martial arts. Eight years ago, he started at Inwood with the aim of obtaining his grade 12 diploma. However, he hasn't made a great deal of progress (he is still working away at grade 10 math) and admits to feeling frustrated. He says he doesn't really know where he sees himself after he finishes the program.

Gloria

Gloria is in her early 50s. She was born in Portugal into a large family. When she was still young Gloria's family moved to Africa, where her father worked as a fisherman; they left her behind to be raised by her grandparents. When she was about 11 years old, they returned to collect her and emmigrated to Canada. Never successful academically and having gotten only as far as grade 5, she was taken out of school at the age of 14 by her father and sent to work in a factory. When she was 16, her parents announced she was to marry her mother's godson, a man some 15 years older than Gloria who had come to Montreal from Portugal on the family's promise that she would be his wife. Gloria, repelled by the idea, continued to see her boyfriend and received a particularly serious beating from her mother upon being discovered with him. (Beatings were common throughout her upbringing, though her father did not hit the girls in the family.) She continued to be mistreated at home until, several months later, she ran away to Toronto. She became pregnant and was married by the age of 17. Her husband was an alcoholic and violent, but she stayed with him, working in factories as a seamstress, and had two more children. When he died, she moved to British Columbia with her two youngest,

who were then 11 and 13. There, she began taking courses to finish high school (I calculate she must have been either 39 or 41 at this point) but, at the same time, retrained as a nurse's aide. She got a job immediately after completing her certificate and did not continue with the high school courses. Five years later, she was injured at work and the "disability pension" offered her three years to obtain her diploma. She enrolled at Inwood and has gotten good grades and enjoys school enormously. However, partly because her English is not strong, she is not sure she will graduate in the time allotted to her by her "disability pension." This doesn't bother her, however; she aims to get her GED in the fall in any case and remains highly positive.

Meredith

Meredith (61) was born in a small town in British Columbia and suffered staggering parental abuse, verbal, physical, and sexual, until the age of 15, when she left home (and school, as well). She had three children with her first husband, who was violent and unfaithful. She also had a son with her second (common-law) husband, another abusive man, and shortly after, she was hospitalized with a nervous breakdown. While in the process of leaving this relationship a couple of years later, she obtained her grade 10. She spent a decade and a half supporting herself and her children (and two of her friends' children, as well) through various jobs—restaurant cook, waitress, home-care worker—and even took a course to train as a clerk/typist, which she was one month short of completing. In 1986, she suffered another breakdown and this time began confronting her repressed childhood experiences. In 1993, her eldest son committed suicide. In 1996, she made a final visit to her dying mother, a story which she tells in some detail. At some point after her break down (I can't quite pin a date), she took a course aimed at people wanting to reenter the workforce, but she was told by her social worker and later by a psychological testing firm that she wouldn't be able to take on full-time work again. She did, however, insist that she wanted to pursue her education, and in 1999 she came to Inwood, where she has since been trying to complete grade 11 English and math. She still deals with mental illness (she takes medications and sees a psychiatrist) and also with physical ailments (she permanently injured her knee and she has a bad back). When I

spoke with her she said she was feeling tired and discouraged about her schooling and was unsure whether she would return to Inwood in the fall.

Natalie

Natalie (29) is originally from Nova Scotia. Her mother was 16 when she had Natalie and the family moved around a lot. She describes her childhood as lacking stability. At school, she was always getting into trouble and didn't do particularly well, except on a handful of rare occasions when a particular teacher or assignment captured her interest. In grade 7, she started skipping school and barely passed the next few grades. She failed grade 10, though she managed to get a few credits, and eventually dropped out altogether when her parents gave her an ultimatum at age 16: either leave school and get a job, or stay and take it seriously. Natalie offers few details from her life after that, only that between the ages of 23 and 28 she had "lots of bad experiences." She worked mostly at low-paying jobs to cover the rent. At some point she wrote her GED, so she has been able to say on her resume that she has grade 12. She says she always wanted to go to university, but she had no high school credentials and was employed at minimum wage, which made it difficult. She enrolled at Inwood three years ago, but going to school and holding down two jobs proved too much. After her first year, she had made up her mind to go back North to work in the oil patch, where pay was better, but she was approached by a family that offered her room and board if she would stay and help look after their two children. "That was two years ago. I've done what I needed to do and in two days I'll be graduating," she says. She has realized, however, that university is still out of her reach. Her plans for a science degree and an English major were "downsized" to a certificate in practical nursing, and she was accepted into the programme at a college in the interior of the province. She figures she will still have to work for a year before she can afford to attend, however.

4.2 Genre: The Research Interview as Context for Learners' Narratives

I: At one point you said something about the ADHD theory [N: Yeah. *(laughs)*] which I thought was really interesting [*unclear*] [*both laugh*]. As an interviewer I'm not supposed to say that. Very neutral, right.

N: Oh oh, you're caught on tape. [*both laugh*]

I: Good thing the tape is only for me. But you said [*reading*], I think it's pretty naive if we think that everyone is the same and that we need to sit in a classroom. And basically what we're doing is drugging certain types of kids, ... (II, 3/23)[21]

By the time interviewees' accounts of themselves are presented in research publications, they have generally been scrubbed of the most obvious traces of their contexts of production. In the excerpt above, I'm "caught" on tape violating the convention of interviewer neutrality (which is central to traditional, positivist models of interviewing but which tacitly remains part of many characterizations of interviews as co-constructed, too). I can get away with my less than impartial comments about ADHD, however, because of the convention that interviewer generally remains absent in public discussions of the data; the tape is "only for me." Except perhaps in some token way, I am not expected to address my own presence in the interview; it will simply be assumed by readers of my research that I was there and behaved "appropriately." Yet my presence and conduct, so minimally and vaguely acknowledged, are key to the particular dialogical account that emerges about the interviewee's experiences. What forms of "appropriate" (or "inappropriate," for that matter) interaction shape the interview-based narrative? In exploring this question, I seek to problematize the research interview—specifically, the "conversational" research interview—as a context for personal accounts. I want to draw

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[21] It is not possible to include full transcripts of the interviews in this document; however, it may be helpful for readers to have a sense of the place in the interview from which a given excerpt is drawn. I have indicated in parentheses, first, which of the two interviews with the learner the material comes from and, second, the page number at which the material appears in the transcript and the total number of pages in the transcript. For example, the excerpt above comes from the second interview with Natalie, and it can be found on page 3 of the 23-page transcript.

attention to some of the ways in which the learners' accounts in this study were made so that I can take an awareness of the most concrete manifestation of the accounts' "dialogicality" into further analysis. In Chapter 3, I describe the borrowings I make from Goffman's (1981) work in order to examine more closely the research interview as a dialogical context for the learners' narratives. Goffman argues that what makes particular forms of talk identifiable is not content but the social processes involved. In this section, I describe some of these processes as they manifest themselves in the research interviews. I begin, however, with a brief overview of each of the interviews I conducted.

Introductory impressions of the interviews

Gloria

Gloria speaks volubly and enthusiastically with little prompting from me. Her talk is made up largely of a mix of biographical narrative and what I call "pep talks," various forms of evaluative commentary, encouraging exhortations, and/or statements about what is important in life. These lend the narrative interview talk its highly positive tone. They also make me feel somewhat restless, especially when I feel they are going on for too long, yet it proves difficult to cut in. Still, there is nothing in our conversation to generate palpable strain, nothing that seems especially uncomfortable.

The theme of learning opportunities embraced appears to drive the account as a whole. Gloria hardly talks at all about her early schooling, despite my repeated efforts to get her to do so, but she does frequently talk about her life outside of school in terms of learning. The learning theme shows up not only in her diction but in the structure of the interview account, where forward movement is generally connected to learning. Getting her grade 12 comes to seem almost incidental in an account where life is filled with learning opportunities writ large, and yet it clearly matters, too. The tension interests me, and I eventually give up on the early schooling, instead pushing her repeatedly to articulate what is different between the learning she does at school (including Inwood, which she does talk about) and the learning she does in the rest of her life. I don't find it a

particularly fruitful tack either, but it does toward the end get her to articulate an interesting nebulous expectance and I leave it at that.

Gl: ... So each step gets me closer to that goal. I don't know what that goal is yet but I'm not afraid because I've learned all this to get to where I am now with my life. And the doors start opening, I'm ready. I'm not afraid to learn and I'm not dumb. That's what school is giving me, the ability to find out the strong part of my being, that I'm able to grasp things, slowly, but I'm preparing for the biggest goal ever. And I'm waiting. (II, 10/10)

Donna

Donna is a confident and clear speaker. She doesn't go on unprompted for long stretches like Gloria or Meredith, but it's not difficult to draw out responses either. I seem to spend less energy steering than in some of the other interviews—it's as if she tends to "get" what I'm after more readily and I'm more readily satisfied with her responses. She doesn't go off-topic, she easily engages with the more "abstract" questions I ask (e.g., "What do you mean by 'knowledge is power'?" "What does it look like to be educated?"; often her answers contain thinking pauses which lend a deliberative feel), and I rarely reiterate a question in an attempt to push for a "better" answer.

While I don't have to work hard to get Donna to speak, she tells relatively few anecdotes and rarely centres for any significant stretch on particular episodes in her life. I am able to piece together a relatively complete biographical chronology from the first interview, which I proceed to verify in the second with a long catechism requesting confirmation of events and their sequence. Interestingly, my concern seems to be primarily with this order and accuracy, since I don't then follow up with many attempts to get a more "story-like" version of events. For her own part, Donna volunteers relatively little in the way of dramatic detail. Rather she extends the events with musings about their meaning, and I follow suit with questions of a more speculative bent relating to her ideas and impressions.

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Natalie

Like Donna and Gene, Natalie seems to answer questions rather than use the interview as an occasion to speak at length. However, her interviews are quite different from those of the others in a number of ways. One of the things that strikes me is how much of it is taken up by a kind of "abstract" discussion of ideas about education. I have far less of a sense that the focus is on Natalie's life experiences, less of a sense that the goal is to draw out/tell a "story," than in Meredith's, Gloria's, or even Donna's interviews. I note the sophistication of her responses compared to those of the others (that is to say, what I consider "sophisticated": systemic critique that resonates with me), to which I then respond with more comments and questions that tend to emphasize the theoretical. In retrospect, though, it is evident that her critique actually supplies the framework for the events in her personal account. Thus, for example, she points out that kids need support from home to do well in school, support that was lacking in her own childhood; that school needs to engage students meaningfully, and that she can recall very few moments in grade- or high-school when she was genuinely interested; and that schooling, and particularly certain types of study, cost a great deal of money, which explains why she very nearly didn't attend Inwood and why she has had to whittle back her expectations for post-secondary education from a bachelor's degree at university to a college-based programme in practical nursing.

In spite of our apparently sympathetic outlooks, it is, interestingly enough, Natalie's interview that causes me to be somewhat uncomfortable when I reread the transcript. I sometimes seem to push for particular types of answers, answers that take up certain ideological stances, and I occasionally slide into a more "participatory" mode, sharing my own thoughts and experiences. All of this makes me wonder about what is "legitimate" in terms of interviewer participation. I draw this subject out further in the following chapter.

Meredith

My first interview with Meredith is the longest of all the interviews I conducted and also the one that feels the most "narrative." She speaks at great length with very little prompting from me, and I find it difficult to cut in with any of my scheduled interview questions. The questions about school and reading and writing don't seem to fit into the harrowing account of parental abuse and psychiatric illness that she launches into straightaway and that is, in parts, told in a highly dramatic way. Although the project was framed as one about education and literacy, Meredith hardly mentions school or reading and writing in the first interview. At a certain point, I decide that I will save the questions for the second interview.

In contrast to the interview with Natalie, most of my questions and responses are relatively "concrete" (rather than abstract or philosophical)—mainly requests for details and clarification or prompts for new topics or themes, either to redirect, or more often, to suggest another tack and help her start anew when she winds down. Meredith tells her story with a great deal of assurance—substantial segments of it are carefully organized and embellished with all sorts of detail—which gives the impression that she has told it (or at least, those segments of it) before. Clearly, she has rehearsed her life story in the context of the psychiatric care she receives, and it may well be that it is from this context that she draws the central theme of her account: the importance of loving oneself. She returns to this theme often even in the second interview, where I feel more able to direct the exchange in line with my questions on education and literacy. There her answer to my question about an ideal education eventually drifts to the following:

M: ... I don't know how to love myself. But I'm hoping that kids nowadays will learn how to do that, especially if they have abusive parents.

I: How would school teach you to love yourself?

M: Teachers could maybe take an hour a day and just write- little kids are like sponges. If they're learning in kindergarten and in grade 1 about loving yourself,

I think that it could carry on with an hour a day through school. You just learn how to love. (II, 18/18)

Gene

Gene's interview doesn't feel particularly "narrative." There is a small handful of biographical "facts" that I can cull from the interview and arrange into a chronology of his life, but he does not launch into an extended account of his life. Nor does he offer many anecdotes or embedded stories. Mainly, he answers the questions that I ask more or less directly. If I posit, I think reasonably enough, that Gene would share my sense of narrative, then I doubt he would say he was telling a story in this interview. I suspect that he would simply say he was answering questions. (Indeed, when I ask, at the end of the interview, if he has anything he'd like to add, he says, "I find it easier to answer asked questions than to think about things to say.")

Gene's answers tend to consist of generalized descriptions of what he believes or how he feels or felt about something. The interview is certainly not devoid of tense— there is talk of past, present, and future—but I think it is in these generalized descriptions, and not in a chronological drama, that the strongest sense of some kind of stable whole is found. It tends to be oft-repeated themes that anchor things in his account (being ignored; wanting attention; being made fun of; being abused; feeling stupid; having "real" experience; etc.). In contrast, Meredith and Gloria, who, of the five interviewees, tell the most complete chronological dramas, demonstrate a great ability to manipulate tense. Gene's account doesn't really have any pivotal movements. Turning points are central to the idea that narratives have a beginning, middle, and end, but Gene doesn't really offer this type of account.

Conversational shifts in the interviews

Below, I examine four places where interviewer and interviewee typically shift "in" and "out" of narrative interview talk, where there is a transition between the concern with meanings "inside" of the discourse and the mechanics "outside": at moments where laughter occurs; at the opening and closing of the interview; at instances where there is a

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physical disturbance; and at points where parenthetical remarks—explanations, reassurances, etc.—are made.

Laughter

Generally laughter functions at least in part to generate rapport between interviewer and interviewee, but there are interesting differences, too, in the way it is used. Probably the clearest examples of what Goffman (1981) has in mind in discussing irony as a way of effecting some sort of "self-removal from the literal content of what one says" (p. 175) come from the interviews with Natalie and Donna:

N: ... Most people have not been through the things I've been through. And it's been horrible but I have a perception that a lot of people don't have. **And I think I'm special.** [*laughs*]

I: Good, and so you should. [*laughs*] (II, 18/23)

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D: That's one thing, I was good at school. So I would bury myself in that. If I kept my head down, even when I was younger, if I kept my head down and I looked at my books, I was good at it. So, I knew I felt good about that, you know. So maybe that's why **I'm gonna stay a student forever.** [*laughs*] I don't know. But, so yeah, I felt good learning. (II, 11/18)

In these excerpts the literal meaning of the words expresses something that is not quite acceptable (asserting about yourself that you are special, being a student forever), and the laughter that follows conveys to the listener that the speaker is aware of this. As a signal to the listener about how to interpret the speaker's attitude toward the content, laughter draws attention to my presence and to the narrative event of the interview. The irony here also invites me to share in the laughter, to follow the speakers in stepping out from behind the earnest roles of interviewer and interviewee. In the excerpt from the interview with Natalie, my own laughter allows me to acknowledge that she is joking,

while the literal meaning of my response allows me to laugh without suggesting that she is not special.

Not all instances of irony invite shared laughter, however. The following examples are from interviews with Meredith and Natalie, respectively:

M: And L____ [*her instructor*] said to me the other day, Well, what would you find interesting? I said, I don't know. **Probably nothing.** [*laughs*] That's where I'm at right now. I'm just feeling at odds. (II, 10/18)

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N: We- my mom was only 16 when she had me and she was uneducated and just trying to feed us and put clothes on our backs for a long time. And then we got **a dad that stayed** [*laughs*] when I was eight and he gave us a better life and some sort of stability. (I, 7/17)

The literal content is similarly "inappropriate" here—telling your instructor you aren't interested in anything is sullen and rude, and referring to "dad" with an indefinite article and specifying that he stayed undermines the "normative" notion of father—and again the laughter communicates the speaker's awareness of this. However, the alignment sought out with the laugh in these two examples is qualitatively different from the preceding set. The subjects referenced here (psychiatric illness and neglect in childhood, respectively) are unhappy and the laughter is rueful in tone. The laughter does not propose that I might share these experiences in the way that the previous examples suggest I might occasionally also secretly believe I am special or identify with a love of school that makes me want to be a student "forever." I thus remain silent (though I imagine I may have responded with a sympathetic half-smile; as Goffman points out, not only sound but sight is very significant in talk).

There are many places where the laughter marks content that is not strictly speaking ironic (if we take irony to have an "edge," to reference subjects that are inappropriate or unhappy). Gloria and Natalie, for instance, tell anecdotes that are themselves intentionally humourous. In these examples, the footing change is subtle; the

laughter marks a mutuality within the interview more than a shift "outside" it. Gloria recounts an incident from her days as a nursing aide, which is embedded as an example in a broader comment about how much she has learned from the elderly:

GI: … One day I asked one lady- I was taking care of this lady and she was about 92 and her husband was about 97. And they'd been together all those years. And I was going there to give a bath to the lady. And she says, Honey, we've got something here that you're gonna do what I'm telling you and you don't have to go and tell your boss that you did this, but this is what it's going to be. You're gonna fill up my bathtub, you're gonna help me in, and then you close the door behind you and leave me there. My husband will come and wash my back. [*laughing*] Ninety-seven years old! And I look at this guy and he's sitting in the chair and he's shaking all up [*interviewer laughs*], you know. Like, Okay E____. I will do that. But I'm like [*tone of mock anxiety*], What if these two old folks drown themselves? And he did, just washed in there, brushed her back and then after she calls for me to go and help her out. And that poor old guy, after just washing her, trembling coming out, he conked right out on the chair because that took all his energy I guess. You know, sat there and he just- And then we made a little lunch, a little soup for both of them. I went to get E____ out of the bathtub and it was just amazing to see these two people, how they held together. And before I left I said, E____, what is your secret that you kept together for so long? And she says, Never go to bed angry, she said, and forgive one another … (I, 15-16/16)

Although the subject of the interview as a whole is Gloria herself, in this anecdote she is more of an observer and her participation is somewhat peripheral; her role as a narrator, as much as (if not more than) her narrated character, gets foregrounded. The story shows her responding sensitively to the couple's predicament, but, in the context of the interview, the fact that she tells this story, and that she tells it as a gently humorous story, also serves to demonstrate what kind of person she is—someone warm and open-minded enough to appreciate this small, intimate scene. And she is skilled at telling it, playing up various juxtapositions: the aging couple's infirmity and their still physical relationship; the worry this causes her when she is asked to collude with them even though she is

responsible for their care; the commanding tone of the elderly woman as she enlists Gloria's help, and the trembling and (we imagine) satisfied exhaustion of her husband, who remains silent in the story. All this allows me to appreciate her as a teller, and, as Bauman (1986) points out, being a good story teller can be part of one's identity. Of course, "good," as Bauman also indicates, is context-dependent, and so there is some tension here, too. I find the anecdote entertaining, and that seems to be the point in telling it. But while the shared laughter helps generate a rapport condusive to talk, the anecdote has little direct bearing on the core story of Gloria's educational experience, which is the focus of the interview. Its length causes me to worry that we are drifting off topic, and that isn't "supposed to" happen in an interview. It appears that an interviewer's anxiety is not limited to his or her own appropriateness but also extends to the interviewee's behaviour.

Natalie tells the following story in response to my question about what she learned at school:

N: Educationally? I don't think I retained much of what I learned, no. I learned that I was bad. [*laughs*] That's what I learned. I didn't do good from the start. I was getting in trouble from the start. And grade primary- we had show and tell and I got a new bathing suit—I remember this—and I wanted to show my new bathing suit for show and tell. It didn't seem that weird to me, but the teacher said no. But I had my bathing suit on anyways. [*laughs*] So, we're sitting around and having show and tell or reading time or whatever. I went to the bathroom and I came out with my bathing suit and I went, Tah dah! [*laughing*] and began with [seeking] attention. Like that's how it started. ... (I, 8/17)

Like Gloria's story, this, too, is something of a touchingly humorous account. It relies on a shared sense that there is something endearing in the way in which children's eagerness can override adult strictures and social norms. At least, that is what I initially think. Natalie, while she laughs at the story, doesn't exactly frame her younger self with approval. This anecdote is told in part to entertain, but I had expected it to be taking us in the direction of a somewhat romantic critique of a system that quashes innocent enthusiasm, and I test this interpretation subsequently:

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I: When you look back on that as an adult, how does that strike you?

N: Well, it's not normal behaviour probably for a child. But it's the child needing attention, it's not- you know what I mean? I think the problem was that I needed attention, not that I was bad. It's just doing things to get attention.

I: And it wouldn't have anything to do with the teacher or system that says- Children get, you know, get their passions and their excitement and their spirit [N: Hmmm] [*unclear*] in life kind of narrowed [*unclear*] or-? (I, 9/17)

In the second interview I try again, this time more directly:

I: I'm thinking also about the story about the bathing suit which, to me- it's such a charming story [*laughs*] to me. I just sort of think, Now here's a really interesting story that could be taken a number of different ways, [N: Yeah] one of which would be that you were, like all children, you were excited about something. [N: Mmm, Mmm] And the school kind of put a kibosh on it. (II, 2/23)

Natalie doesn't reject this uptake (indeed other parts of her account are strongly informed by systemic critique), but she sticks with a view that fits better with the broader account conveyed in her interview of herself as a child gone "bad" because she wasn't given the necessary structure and support. The alignment suggested by the laughter in the amusing anecdote falls off rather quickly when it becomes clear that the narrator and I finally want different things from the story.

Usually, though, the signals are clearer. Laughter constitutes present commentary on past events and selves, a guide to the listener as to how the teller means for the story to be interpreted. Here is an example from Meredith's account:

M: I lied my way into my first job saying I could cook in a high end restaurant in- a hotel restaurant in T____. And I said, Oh yeah I can cook. Because it was for morning cook, and I thought, Well, I can cook eggs and sausages and pancakes and stuff. And my first order of eggs that went out was the saddest looking thing you've ever seen. [*laughs*] The head cook says to me—she was Italian—and she said, What is that abortion on that plate? And I said to her, What? I said, You can

eat them still, they just don't look good. And she said, You don't send it off like that. You don't know how to cook any more than- than anything. And she says, Well, you're gonna know how to cook when you leave this place, I'll tell you that, cause I'm gonna teach you how. And you don't know how many times she had me in tears and then she'd send me down to the staff room to cry and I'd come back and at the end of the day she'd say, Where do you think you're going? You spent 45 minutes crying today, you put in 45 minutes for the company now. [*laughs*] She was tough on me, but I learned enough to support my four children on cook's wages. (II, 5/18)

The laughter in the story suggests that however unpleasant the experience may have been for Meredith at the time, she has a different perspective on it now, and the appropriate response from me is sympathetic laughter for both the exacting cook, who had to straighten out an incompetent staff member, and the helpless Meredith, who, thanks to her, did finally learn to prepare breakfast properly. The laughter draws attention to her narrating persona, whom the listener equates with Meredith as she "really" is. It is her stance over and against this past self and, as with Gloria's story about the elderly couple, in alignment with the listener that conveys her present self.

Note that in almost all of these examples above, the boundaries between meaning and mechanics are not as sharply delineated as Goffman's terms might suggest. In places where I introduce laughter in my interruptions and/or questioning the shifts in footing tend to be clearer. Often, openings and closings, and references to the tape recorder or other interruptions (a noisy heating vent or a ringing telephone)—places where there is a clear orientation to the interview situation itself and where my role as interviewer is not folded into the flow of the narrative interview talk but is rather more explicit —are punctuated with a laugh. This excerpt from the interview with Meredith is also a good example of the breaks I introduce, and it illustrates nicely how easily we step in and out of roles and also how we are oriented simultaneously to more than one role:

M.   ... I had a nervous break down and I was taken into the T____ hospital, into the psychiatric ward. And they gave me 15 shock treatments and my memory of my childhood and of my children's childhood up till then is gone.

I.   How old were you then?

M: I would have been- I was born in '42. [*pause*]

I.:   [*laugh*] I don't do math in my head either.

M: [*laugh*] No, but you got it on tape.

I: I got it on tape. I'll figure it out.

M: I wasn't very old. I was in my twenties and I had the four kids. R____ was just
        tiny then 'cause he was born in June '67. ... (II, 14/18)

My question about her age is oriented to but also cuts into the narrative events Meredith is relating. It brings the narrative to a standstill as she begins to make the calculation. When she pauses, I cut in again with a laugh, this time stepping out of my interviewer role to sympathize as the "real," mathematically challenged me. Of course, the laughter accompanying my self-deprecating comment is meant to put her at ease, apologize for causing her to stumble, encourage her to continue the narrative—tasks that are still part of my role as interviewer. With her echoing laugh, she steps out of her interviewee role briefly, but making sure I'll have an answer to my question is still part of her interviewee "task." I assert that we needn't worry about this point now, and she resumes.

I also use laughter to qualify questions, as in this example from Donna's interview, where she responds to my question about what she learned in school:

D: Yeah. Um, – [*pause*]

I: Maybe most of it isn't- [*laugh*] most of it wasn't actually useful or –

D: Well I learned, not academically, I learned that kids can be cruel but that's not a
        bad thing I think. It's just- it's life. ... (I, 15/19)

When Donna pauses and appears to be stuck for an answer, I offer an alternative that the wording of my original question (as well as tacit "rules" of what is acceptable to say about school) doesn't appear to allow. This seeks to alleviate some awkwardness and to

correct a question that, it suddenly occurs to me, may not have been open-ended enough, the laughter acknowledging the ostensible "unacceptability" of saying school teaches nothing useful. Later on in the interview, Donna herself comments laughingly on the same theme:

D: Did school really teach me anything? [*pause*] [*laughs*] Oh my goodness. It must have. I learned lessons along the way but I can't recall anything sticking out in my head. ... (I, 19/19)

Openings and closings

Goffman draws attention to openings and closings as places in talk where shifts occur. Because turning on and off the tape recorder often marks the beginning and end of the interview, I actually have a relatively limited amount of "bracketing" talk recorded. (I will know in future to pay closer attention to and make notes about what is said before I press the record button and after I press the stop button.) Still, there is enough in the transcripts to make a few observations about opening and closing "rituals."

I begin many interviews by letting the interviewee know that I will occasionally check the tape recorder while they are talking so that I won't appear rude or uninterested when I break eye contact. Often I refer to some previous taping mishap by way of illustrating why I do so. This is the opening to the interview with Donna, for example:

I: [TAPE STARTS] ... with L____ and I realized at the end of the interview that I hadn't pressed the record button in far enough. [D: Oh my gosh.] But it was playing, right, so I thought it was fine. I just kept looking over every now and then but it wasn't recording, it was just playing [D: Oh no.] the tape. [*laughs*]

D: And you still remembered it?

I: Yeah, pretty well. Actually we managed to kind of reconstruct the interview [D: Oh my God.] in 15 or 20 minutes. I just said to her, Okay, this is what I remember and she just filled in, but yeah, it always has to happen at least once, hopefully no more. [*laughs*] My first question is a really broad one and it's just, tell me how you got here ... (I, 1/19)

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The tale also, of course, adds a small humanizing gloss to my uptake of the role of interviewer. Like Goffman's (1981) lecturer showing his audience his "ordinary side," I want to let my interviewee know that the interviewer "self that is about to emerge is not the only one [I] want to be known by," that I am "a person just like [them]" (p. 175). Donna's phatic expressions accommodate this effort on my part.

The interview proper gets underway with the first question, which is always "Tell me how you got here." My question is intended to draw out narrative, to cast out into places in the past—the starting point is open—and end up "here." In a certain sense, "here" is open, too, though most of the interviewees not surprisingly take it to be Inwood. The response is usually fairly concise, but it affords enough material out of which to formulate more specific questions that will keep us "inside" the narrative interview talk and moving smoothly into a more expansive account. The opening to Donna's interview is interesting in this regard, however:

D: Oh, I dropped out of school when I was very young, got pregnant, the whole story. And through, like just a chain of events, like a divorce, my daughter was murdered- a whole bunch of stuff and I really wanted to do something better. I ended up raising a grandson from birth. I started raising him, and I thought, We need better. So that's how I got here.

I: Wow.

D: So [pause] that's it.

I: [pause] That's a lot of – [pause] [both laugh] Wow. Um, so how long have you been coming to Inwood? (I, 1/19)

Especially at the outset, Donna tends to take up my questions as questions, not as invitations to talk at length. (This may reflect in part her assumptions about what is expected in research interviews.) She answers here with a highly condensed account that emphasizes causality, not with a long account of the chronological process whereby she got here. I have little background knowledge about her, so all she can assume is that I know the "typical" story of the teen who drops out and gets pregnant ("the whole story")

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and that I understand the larger story pattern here, as well—that each of these events, referenced in a highly cursory way ("a divorce, my daughter was murdered"), has a complex story of its own, but that their cumulative effect ("a chain of events," "a whole bunch of stuff") is to push her to a decisive moment ("I thought, We need better. So that's how I got here"). However, it is not just the conciseness of her answer but also the shock of the revelation that her daughter was murdered, inserted in a series of other, only somewhat less dramatic events, that causes me to momentarily stumble "outside" again and delays our shift into narrative interview talk. Her laughter allows me to move "inside" again more easily—it lets me know that the pause and the "wow" in my response have served their function in acknowledging the enormity of the events before taking up my interviewer task again.

Closing rituals usually involve negotiating a second interview, expressing thanks (interestingly, some of the interviewees also thank me), and, of course, turning off the tape recorder. It is generally a reference to time that brings us back outside again, into the "real" world where we are "ourselves" instead of engrossed in our roles as interviewer and interviewee:

I: I [unclear] [N: Oh okay, sorry] cause I know I promised you an hour [laughs] so
        I want to turn off the tape. But I'm wondering if we could continue this
        conversation.

N: Am I being helpful at all?

I: Yes, absolutely. [TAPE STOPS] (I, 17/17)

———

I: Again, I've taken up so much of your time, but I really thank you very much –

N: Oh thank you. It's – [TAPE STOPS] (II, 23/23)

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I: I overlooked the time. I have another interview scheduled. [Gl: Okay.] I'm wondering if we could continue this conversation –

Gl: Sure, sure, sure. Thank you. [TAPE STOPS] (I, 16/16)

But there is a shift (at least potentially) in our roles and thus our footing even before I draw attention to the time. As per "good" interviewing practice, my last question is whether the interviewees have anything they would like to add. Here are the exchanges from the second interview with Gene,

I: I was wondering, just as a last question, whether there were things that you wanted to add or that you- that I didn't ask or that, when you walked away from the last interview, you know, you might have thought [*unclear*] or differently or– ?

G: No, actually I find it easier to answer questions than, you know, ask- I find it easier to answer asked questions than to think about things [*unclear*]. I don't- I'm not really a good person at volunteering information. You know, if somebody asked me something I won't lie to them about it. It's just no sense, no use. But to volunteer information, I can't, I just don't. (II, 9/9)

with Natalie,

I: ... Is there stuff that I didn't raise, other stuff that occurred to you that I didn't ask?

N: I did make a couple of notes.

I: Oh great. I should have started with that really. It's very bad manners of me. [*laughs*]

N: [*Pulls out notes and reads from them*] If kids come to school they need attention, we talked about that. Parenting and support. ... (II, 21/23)

and with Donna,

I: That was my last question.

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D: Okay.

I: Did you have more that you –?

D: No. [*laughs*] God, you picked my brain. [*both laugh*] I'm gonna go back to the
       class now and I'm just- [*tone of mock exhaustion*] Oh my God. [TAPE STOPS]
       (II, 18/18)

What is interesting here are the differing responses to the invitation to change our roles, if
not exactly to exchange them with one another. (I don't invite Meredith or Gloria to say
more, perhaps because they are both voluble speakers who have tended not simply to
answer my questions directly so much as take them up as prompts for long stretches of
talk.) Natalie demonstrates in a very concrete way that she has engaged the interview
thoughtfully by returning to the second interview with a set of notes on the first. Gene
and Donna say "no," but they offer explanations. Donna's explanation dramatizes the
effort she has put into the interview with exclamations of mock exhaustion. Like Natalie,
she has *worked* at this, put in extra mental effort. Gene's explanation, in contrast,
indicates simply that he has fulfilled what he sees as the "requirements": he has answered
every question asked of him truthfully. He has taken his task seriously, just like the other
two, but more as an informant in a "traditional" interview might.

Disturbances

        Comments relating to disturbances—a category Goffman refers to as
"performance contingencies"—also mark shifts from content to mechanics. There are
interruptions (a phone rings, several times there's a knock at the door, and in one room
there is a very loud air vent that turns on and off), but while they sometimes prompt us to
step "outside" momentarily, they don't occasion a great deal of commentary or derail the
narrative interview talk:

G: … I have trouble with learning things still today, even martial arts, even the
       simplest things sometimes elude me. I just don't get- [*vent stops blowing in
       background*] That is noisy.

I.   Hmmm. Is that something you do in your spare time, the martial arts? (I, 4/19)

The tape recorder, however, is the subject of somewhat longer exchanges, not only at the beginning of the interviews (see above) but also during. Indeed, my worries with the tape recorder become the subject of sympathetic commentary in the interviews with Natalie and Donna. In both excerpts it is clear that the visual is also important, since the interviewees see me looking at and reaching for the recorder:

N: But still it was a 'B,' and I'm an 'A' in everything else so it's- but I totally panic [*unclear*] the exam room.

I: Yeah. I'm just gonna double check and make sure this [TAPE STOPS] –

N: [TAPE STARTS] [*unclear*] closer or do you need to hear your questions?

I: I don't need to hear my questions but –.

N: It seems like there's a reverberation.

I: Yeah, it's the way in which the microphone is set. I know that if I set it to low, it won't pick up very well because of the background noise from that side. [N: Oh.] I think it'll be clearer now. [N: Okay.] I will- Yeah. I'm wondering if you could tell me a little bit about why you left school? (I, 2/17)

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D.   ... I hated it when summer came, when summer holidays came along, I cried. I didn't want to be out of school. For a place that's so horrible, I'd rather be there. So – [I: Right.] Who knows?

I: I just –

D: You better check – [*laughs*]

I: I'm worried that- You know, I think I'm gonna replace the batteries because I'm worried they're gonna [TAPE STOPS] ... [TAPE STARTS] I feel better now.

[*laughs*] So you said school was bad and at the same time it was a place you would rather be than home. (I, 5/19)

What is interesting about these two excerpts is that with the shift, the interviewee takes up a more proactive stance as we both orient ourselves to the tape recorder. Donna laughingly gives me permission to check the machine and Natalie makes suggestions about fixing the problem. Then, just as suddenly, we are both right back into the narrative interview talk where I am once again in charge and the interviewee's talk is strictly in response to my questions.

Parenthetical remarks

Text parenthetical remarks are the broadest category of markers of footing shifts that Goffman identifies. Here he includes qualifying, elaborating, digressing, apologizing, hedging, editorializing, etc. Goffman (1981) writes, "Text parenthetical remarks are of great interactional interest. On the one hand, they are oriented to the text; on the other, they immediately fit the mood of the occasion and the special interest and identity of the audience ... It is as if the speaker functioned as a broker of his own statements, a mediator between text and audience" (p. 177).

Perhaps the most ready examples in this category involve interviewees' direct commentary on their performances. Such commentary conveys ideas about what should be done in an interview. Natalie's words, for example, frequently reflect a concern with her task as interviewee; she communicates an awareness that her answers should be making "a point," should be focused on the question, and should satisfy me.

N: ... I want to know the history, I want to know these things. And I'm doing this because I want to but- **What's my point?** I'm no more employable now than I was two years ago. I've been struggling, sacrificing, bla bla bla, to get this done and it's hooped. You know what I mean? So I feel like- and education- **my thoughts aren't gathered, collected here,** but being in the work environment for 12 years without a high school education, I haven't really made that much

money and I haven't had a lot of opportunities. But that is not really gonna change much now that I have sacrificed these years to get my grade 12. (I, 12/17)

———

N: I think very early on I got the message that I wasn't very smart. And it was only perpetuated by the system itself. The- I don't know, **is that a good answer?** (II, 1/23)

———

N: **This is not a direct answer to the question but I just felt I need to say this.** Here people want to see you succeed. They want to see you pass. They want to help, they want to do whatever it's gonna take to help you reach your goals. I don't remember feeling that in school. In school I remembered feeling that we weren't working as a team but that I had to prove myself or- it was more divided. I didn't feel that the teachers were there to help me and coach me and help me reach my goals but that they were obstacles and tools to weed out the good students from the bad students, and the people who'd make it and the people who wouldn't or something like that. So that attitude here that everybody wants to see you succeed, that's something very different from what I experienced in school. And, **okay, so now back to your original question.** (II, 14/23)

Meredith's turns in the narrative interview talk are far longer than Natalie's, whose talk tends more to the answer-and-wait-for-the-next-question style. She doesn't refer as much to interview conventions per se in the same way, but her talk is not devoid metacommentary on talk more generally. The excerpt below is an interesting example:

M: He would grab the pig and just slice its throat open and he'd be smiling and, you know, proud of himself. And I thought, Oh! If you can do that to, you know, a five- or six-hundred-pound pig, it wouldn't take much for him to do that to me or to my grandma. I mean, she's only five feet tall and maybe 110 pounds. So, well, it's funny things that go through kids' heads, because kids start to see things and you start to take stuff around you very, very seriously. And you make stuff up in your head too. I mean you- **Well, I shouldn't be talking in the third person**

here. I would think, Well, yeah, he could kill me, he could kill my grandma if I told anybody. (I, 5-6/19)

I'm not exactly sure what to make of her self-editing comment about not talking in the third (and second?) person, except that it seems to hearken to discursive strictures from some other realm beyond the interview. Did someone tell her to avoid generalizing? Perhaps a teacher drove home that this is a "rule" of good style (your story is more vivid if you particularize). Or perhaps this is a form of self-counselling learned from a psychiatrist (take responsibility for your own actions/thoughts). The comment seems, in any case, to suggest a sense on her part that her talk has momentarily come off the interview rails.

Explanatory asides are another feature Goffman identifies as signalling responsiveness to the circumstances of talk, to the knowledge and interests of and the relations among those present. There are a number of instances, for example, where Meredith stops to explain something about mental illness. The explanations are in lay terms but take the form of more official-sounding general statements about sufferers as a group ("people that are sexually violated when they're young," "people that have manic depression") which she then applies to herself.

M: ... And I mean, all of these things I did not realize. But, see, this is what happens to people that are sexually violated when they're young. They have a drive and you- like, I didn't even remember that all these sexual things had happened to me. I had- like, I don't know if you ever heard that, but a lot of people say, Well, you knew it happened, so how could you forget? It's the most traumatic thing that happened! But you do because it's so traumatic. You stick it to the back of your mind and you don't remember. (I, 14/19)

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M: ... I really enjoy things about how the brain works and what causes the brain to close down and people to commit serious crimes because their brain isn't working correctly, it's not firing right. Like with me, with the bipolar affective disorder, my neurons don't fire right, so that when somebody is giving me

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instructions- That's why I didn't learn anything in school, but I didn't know about that. It's like a record that skips so you only get part of the information. And people that have manic depression, that is what's happening, the neurons aren't firing so they're only getting part of the information. Well, I didn't realize anything was wrong with me so I'd make up what I thought the teacher was talking about. 'Course it didn't turn out 'cause I was getting 'D's and 'E's, but I had no idea that I had a learning problem. (I, 7/18)

However, I found it was often difficult to separate what interviewees explained specifically for my benefit from details that might allow the account to be understood by an audience in some more broadly generic sense. Notable exceptions are explanations about "the past" from Gloria and Meredith, the two interviewees who are significantly older than me:

Gl: ... of course, I was only 14 years old, so with this factory- man that ran this factory and he used to take these young women in- and in those days there was no laws of- you know. ... (II, 2/10)

———

M: ... and they made a homemade incubator with those wooden apple boxes that- apples used to come in a wooden box- and they wrapped wool- those army wool blankets around them. And in between the box and the blankets was hot bricks that they warmed up in the oven to keep me warm. That's what they called a homemade incubator, and I lived in that for my first month. (I, 1/19)

On the whole, though, there are not many explanations that signal an anticipated lack of understanding on my part about particular historical events or geographical locations or cultural practices. Even Gloria, whose early background differs perhaps most markedly from the broader backdrop against which the interviews take place, doesn't offer an account strongly marked by explanation of that background. The story of her arranged marriage, for example, is told with only the following bit of detail:

Gl: ... Mom's pride was hurt. I mean that was the guy that was supposed to marry
        me- She was- she was a godmother to this guy, like a mother. Promised that- He
        didn't have a father. He left his mother in Portugal, came here to get married, and
        all of a sudden my mother's name is ashamed that I'm going out with a guy ... (I,
        5/10)

Note that none of this is marked as being culturally foreign; it's not prefaced with an
explanation that "back in Portugal" or "back in those days" it was common for girls to
marry older men chosen by their parents and that to refuse was to bring dishonour. The
dissonance in connection with the marriage is located within the story, between the young
Gloria and her mother in the narrated events, rather than outside it, between me and the
narrating Gloria in the interview.

A good deal of text- parenthetical material also comes from me. My questions,
particularly those that are not part of the scheduled set, exhibit, of course, the sort of dual
orientation to text and situation that Goffman has in mind. They both prompt and steer
the interviewee's account and are part of the flow of narrative interview talk. Sometimes,
however, my question-and-listen mode takes on a slightly different tone. In the following
excerpt, for instance, I seize on Natalie's own rhetorical question to "challenge" her in
what seems an almost Socratic way:

N.   ... I still think it's important to learn those things just for the process of learning.
        Like, why should I decide what's important to learn or not?

I: Why should somebody else decide?

N: Good question. I don't know. Yeah.

I: So if there is somebody else, who should that somebody be? Who would be a
        good person to decide? (II, 11/23)

Phatic noises and words are also oriented both to the content of the interviewee's words
and to the situation in which I am trying to keep the talk going. In responding with
laughter, sympathetic murmurs, and words like "wow" or "okay," I am aiming to

encourage and direct the talk. Sometimes my commentary is more expansive, as in these excerpts from Natalie's interviews:

I: I'm thinking also about the story about the bathing suit which, to me- **it's such a charming story** [*laughs*] **to me.** I just sort of think, **Now here's a really interesting story that could be taken a number of different ways,** [N: Yeah] one of which would be that you were, like all children, you were excited about something [N: Mmm, Mmm] and the school kind of put the kibosh on it. (II, 2/23)

———

I: I was gonna ask you that. Do you think then, given your experience and your insights about school, there also seems to be a tension between—**and I find this really, really interesting**—between school as partly a vehicle for, you know, doing these- for living passionately ... (II, 5/23)

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I: ... you said that for your mother, education was a way of raising her sense of value [N: Mmm, Mmm] and I'm wondering- And **I don't think that that's unusual for a lot of people to think of their education in those terms....** a connection is often made between one's worth and one's level of school in our culture. (II, 18/23)

When I look back at instances like those above where my questioning and commentary seem noticeable to the point of being obtrusive, I begin to wonder whether I'm interviewing the "right" way. I notice, too, that in the course of the interviews themselves there are moments of hesitation around what is "appropriate." For example, there are places where I am trying to keep from seeming prying or aggressive. In the first excerpt below, Natalie hasn't volunteered much about the "bad experiences" she has alluded to, but I'm trying to make clear that I don't want to force her in anyway to disclose:

I: You said in your answer that you have learned a lot through experience and that that would account for a lot of maturity. Can you say more about that? You know- **and again you don't have to answer this** – (II, 17/23)

In the interview with Donna, I raise a point that I hasten to qualify so as not to appear to be challenging her.

I: ... when you talked about self-esteem you said school gave you self-esteem when you were dealing with an abusive husband. [D: Mmm, Mmm] You also said something- that you need self-esteem in order to succeed at school. So I was interested in the kind of- **it's not a contrast or a contradiction** – (II, 10/18)

Later on in the interview I respond to her claim that it's easier for most people to write than to read, and I find myself back-pedaling for fear that I have suggested to her she is wrong:

I: That's interesting because a lot of people would claim the reverse, like I –

D: Is that right?

I: **Well, I think so but maybe not. I don't know. I would –**

D: Well, you would figure because when you're writing something, even if you've got spelling mistakes and whatnot and you know your punctuation and all that's horrible, if you take all that aside and you're just writing, most people have something to say. (II, 4/18)

Below, Donna comments directly on the difficulty of my questions (I have just asked her what makes someone "educated"), and again I attempt to soften the potentially too-insistent feel my questions might have:

D: He comes across as educated. I suppose he's not. Like, I think I'm pretty educated, but I'm nowhere near where I need to be when it comes to that. So. [*pause*] You ask hard questions.

I: These are questions that- I mean **there's no- obviously there's no right answers**

[D: Yeah]. I'm interested in – (II, 13/18)

All of the examples above speak to the existence of (often tacit) conventions around research interviewing but also to a sense of uncertainty. There is plenty of methodological advice to be found in handbooks, of course, but it doesn't address the many moments of hesitation that arise for the interviewer over what is "appropriate."

In the next chapter I offer further reflections on co-narration in interviews, focusing specifically on the role of the interviewer.

4.3   Double-voicing: Reported Speech in Learner Narratives

In this section of the analysis, I look at language reports as one form of double-voicing, focusing particularly on the relationship between reported and reporting voices in the learners' accounts. This relationship, as I suggested in Chapter 3, can be traced in the 'who,' 'what,' 'how,' and, particularly, the 'why' of the reporting. Patterns of reporting vary among the interviewees. Meredith's and Gloria's interviews, which I discuss first, both contain a large number of reports; perhaps unsurprisingly, given the well-attested use of language reporting in narrative, these interviews have a strongly "narrative" quality (albeit in different ways; Meredith's is plot-driven, while Gloria's focuses on character). Gene, Donna, and Natalie, in contrast, use relatively few language reports, and their interviews (especially Gene's and Natalie's) tend to have a more abstract feel to them, more of an orientation to emotions and ideas than to events from the past or characterizations. Different interviewees focus on different themes, but there are commonalities, too; almost all the interviewees use language reports to describe unhappy childhoods, not feeling "smart," and current experiences with school (good and bad). Who is cited varies. In the main, interviews include the voices of family members, teachers, psychologists, social services workers, employers, co-workers, and "people" in general. All five interviewees report their own speech and thought most frequently, however. And while the interviewees all use a range of signaling devices and forms (from direct speech and thought to indirect reports of speech to reports of speech acts), different

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interviewees favour different forms and use different means to indicate they are quoting or paraphrasing. They also make different rhetorical uses of language reports. These I have organized in several categories based on Myers' (1999) taxonomy of functions for direct speech reports in focus groups: narrate; typify; enact hypothetical discourse; represent thought; draw attention to wording; and offer evidence.

Meredith

Meredith's interviews include an enormous number of language reports, some two-thirds of these in the form of direct speech and used most often to intensify her account of childhood abuse and her ensuing struggles with mental illness as an adult. It is possible to string together a fairly complete chronology of her life using the episodes that these language reports are embedded in. There is a remarkable sharpness of detail in her stories, and the fact that she often reports segments of conversation more than two turns long adds to this. The stories tend to be well-ordered and told with little hesitation, and especially those about her birth and childhood sound like they have been oft-rehearsed.

Skilled use of reported speech in narration

Meredith launches straight away into a highly dramatic tale of her birth. After three attempts to abort the fetus, her mother gives birth prematurely at her parents' home. She rejects the baby and disappears for two years. Then, upon her mother's return, Meredith is seized from her grandparents and for the rest of her young life subjected to devastating abuse from her mother and the man who claims to be her father. She tells of her first evening with them, and while it is difficult to know just how much detail she actually remembers (she was only two-and-a-half at the time) and how much is supplied by her imagination, her skill at narrating the event is evident:

M: Well, I got back to this house and I can't explain how devastated I was with these two strange people. The man was **yelling at me** and **telling me to shut up**. The woman slapped me across the face and told me, **Go into that room. That's your room and you just shut your mouth now. You won't get anything to eat today until you smarten up**. Well, I had been treated the opposite of that with

my grandparents. I mean they were very patient with me and gentle and loving, and these two were not loving. But my mother was never loving to me my whole life. She used to say to me- Like, I have three other- well, actually four other siblings because I have a- well, I had- he died now, -but adopted brother. And my mother always used to say to me- She'd bring out four cookies, and I'd say, **Well, where is mine?** And she'd say, **You don't deserve cookies. You're a rotten kid. You don't deserve love.** She wouldn't love me. I mean I- my whole life I was- she just didn't pay any attention to me. And when my father was around it was a little bit better, but then he was always molesting me. And the first night that I came home with them, he **offered to give me a bath at bedtime** and he was fondling me in the bathtub. And I just screamed, **Nooo, you don't do that.** And my mom came running in and she says, **What's the matter with her?** And he says, **Oh, I don't know. She's been like this all day.** And [*unclear*] she had come in, he says, **You tell her, I'm going to drown you.** And I had **threats like that** my whole life, that **if I told he would slit my throat or he would slit my grandparents'.** (I, 4/19)

The arrival at the house is told as if from the child's perspective at the time: the people whose speech she reports are labelled as strangers ("the man" and "the woman," not "my father" and "my mother"). She doesn't describe her own behaviour directly but it is made clear in their words; the speech reports thus do double duty. Meredith segues briefly out of the "arrival" frame to place this episode in the broader context of her life and to report a typical exchange with her mother meant to illustrate her mother's unrelenting malice (the reporting verb "would say" signals a representative example of repeated abuse). The scene shifts back to the night of her arrival, and here the reported speech artfully dramatizes her utter powerlessness. More effective even than the reported threat that concludes the scene are her father's sly "offer" to give her a bath, which initiates it, and the inclusion of the exchange between her mother and father in the scene, in which they refer to the screaming child between them in the third person (Meredith is not asked what is wrong and her father's explanation is accepted without question). Meredith might have left these details out (she might simply have said something like "that night my father

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molested me and threatened me to keep quiet about it"), but they are precisely what begin to convey the abuse's sickening dimensions.

Meredith escapes home at the age of 16. Many years later, after leaving an abusive husband and raising her children on her own, she suffers a severe breakdown that lands her in hospital. Eventually, she comes to the story of how she found out her own daughter L_____ had been abused:

M: ... L_____ told me that when I was in the hospital. When I was in the mental hospital, I had two primary nurses, that's how sick I was. That's all they did was look after me. Well, they had two patients actually each. And L_____ came in one day and she- I guess she'd been thinking about it and she thought, you know, **Well, this is the time for me to tell Mom now.** My kids told me **the reason they didn't tell me about it is because I had enough problems when I was raising them and everything, and they just didn't want to burden me with one more problem.** And so L_____ went to my primary nurse. She said to C_____ [*Meredith's grandson*] - that's when C_____ and I were walking around the unit and I was showing him, **Oh, we've got a beauty parlor in here and we've got a laundromat in here and this is my bed.** And I was in a private -semi-private, I was in a private room the first month I was in there. Then they put me into a semi-private. So I had to share with another Japanese girl. And C_____ would go and sit on my bed and then he just thought he was, you know, the cat's meow. We'd put the sides up and everything. And L_____ had gone to talk to the nurse. She said **she had to talk to Ch___,** one of my nurses. And she went and told her, you know, **How do I tell my mom? I want my mom to know because it's eating at me.** And she said, **Well, just tell her.** And she says, **Well, it's gonna break her heart.** And she said, **So? She'll get over it. She's had lots of trauma in her life. She'll get over it.** And L_____ said, **Well, I don't want to regress her.** Ch___ said, you know, **There's no better place to tell your mom that than right here. If she flips out she's in a good place and we can help her deal with the fact that, you know, you have been molested. And your grandpa has-** My dad- I guess you'd call it raped L___- he didn't fully penetrate her but he put his penis on the edge, you know, of her vagina and apparently that's considered rape. I didn't know that. When she told me I was ready to go

and get a gun and shoot him. They had to restrain me for days. Yeah, I did flip out again while I was in there. But that's okay because I had to deal with it then.

(I, 14-15/19)

Here, again, is a highly skilled use of language reporting for narrative purposes. Note how this is an elaborate direct report of a conversation that Meredith wasn't a part of and didn't overhear; it is likely based on what her daughter L____ told her, embellished by Meredith's imagination. It's interesting that she chooses to dramatize the scene between the nurse and L____ in which the decision is made to tell her of the abuse, rather than the scene in which she is actually told. Meredith is off wandering the hospital with her grandson (again dramatized through reported speech) while L____ consults the nurse. One possible reason is that the actual scene in which L____ tells her would be difficult for Meredith to dramatize—as she says, she "flipped out" and they had to restrain her. It's likely that it would not only be emotionally painful to re-enact but would simply be too intense, too personal to perform in an interview context. Goffman remarks in his essay on the lecture that there are instances where the markers of a direct speech report do not afford enough separation between reported and reporting events. Quotation marks (and their oral equivalents) do not always offer enough "insulation,"[22] and that may be what is going on here; an adequately dramatic performance of her "flipping out" would threaten the sense that it is an interview that she and I are engaged in. In fact, the conversation Meredith resourcefully constructs between L____ and the nurse contains all the necessary details. The dramatizing of the preparations, in which the main action is explicitly anticipated, means that the main action itself can remain more or less implied; all Meredith has to do is to confirm that she was indeed extremely upset, as L____ and the nurse predicted in their conversation that she would be.

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[22] "[I]f an impropriety is enacted as an illustration of an impropriety, the enactment being, as it were, in quotes, how much extra insulation does that provide? In lectures on torture, speakers understandably hesitate to play tapes of actual occurrences; with how much less risk could I play such a tape as an illustration of what can't be played? ... given that the situation about which a lecture deals is insulated in various ways from the situation in which the lecturing occurs, and is obliged to be insulated in this way, can an illustrated discussion of this disjunctive condition be carried on without breaching the very line that is under scrutiny?" (Goffman, 1981, p. 164-5)

While Meredith's skill produces a narrative that is upon first hearing almost paralyzingly horrific, it also, upon later reflection, raises questions. The direct reported speech that she uses so extensively makes the telling powerful, but its dramatic ornateness sometimes has an unsettling effect, too. This is especially the case in her portrayal of her mother, which, although it is forcefully and uncompromisingly negative, is paradoxically a locus for ambiguity. In the opening scenes of the interview, we see a hard, bitter woman devoid of "motherly" feeling and unyielding even to her own physical pain and exhaustion.

M: ... [Mrs. W____] was called up in the middle of the night and Dr. G____, the doctor, he came over and they delivered me. And then my mom got up off her bed and just said, **I don't want the creep,** you know, or whatever. (I, 3/19)

Her malicious refusal to allow Meredith to be adopted compounds the picture.

M: ... My mom was sitting there with a pen in her hand and about to sign the adoption papers, and all of a sudden she threw the pen across the room and **swore.** And my mother never swore a day in her life but she did there and she just said, **No, I'm going to keep this little brat and she is going to pay. She is going to pay dearly for not letting me abort her. She really shouldn't have fought so hard 'cause now she's gonna have the fight of her life.** And she refused to adopt me out. She walked out of that lawyer's office and my mom- and my grandpa had no idea where she even went. ... (I, 3/19)

There is little, if any, room in this portrayal for understanding of or sympathy for a young woman who is apparently abandoned by the father, whose pregnancy is a source of shame to her family, and who desperately does not want the baby yet is forced to have it. I'm not suggesting that Meredith "ought" to offer up a different account or that her mother "deserves" one, just pointing out that nothing is introduced to soften the portrait of her mother, let alone to explain the relationship between them. In these scenes her

mother is simply a hate-filled person. Yet the sheer extravagance of her hate as reported by Meredith introduces a curious note.

Meredith's account of her mother culminates in a lengthy account of the last time she sees the dying woman. Below are a few excerpts from the conversation she reports:

M: ... She went to bed and I just said to her, Mom, I have tried to be the best daughter and person that I know how to be and I'm sorry that you're so disappointed in me but it's not my fault that you had me from wedlock. -It is. I tried aborting you three times, she says, and I don't know why you fought me. [...] And she just said, I'm sorry I could never love you, but, she says, you're just not a loveable person. And I said, Well, do you want to elaborate what you mean by that? And she says, You're just a nasty little bitch. [...] I said, For some reason, and they're your reasons, you are not willing to let down your anger and love me. -I don't want to love you, I've never loved you and I'm never gonna love you and I'm gonna go to my grave telling you that you're not a loveable person. (I, 8-9/19)

In this high-drama of final words, there is again little to mitigate her mother's hateful character—except perhaps, again, its very excess as depicted through reported speech. Listening to Meredith's various and vivid performances of her mother's words, I begin to wonder why the woman was like this. Meredith doesn't raise this question herself in the account. At one point, I ask casually whether Meredith has any ideas. She muses briefly that her father cheated on and perhaps raped her mother, but finally she says she doesn't know. I press no further. Her mother's hatred remains a mystery, and the only possible "explanation" her account seems able to entertain directly is that there is no reason for it. Strictly speaking, there is no narrative necessity for an explanation, of course; we have all heard, without questioning, stories in which characters just "are" drunks, abusers, pranksters, rogues, etc. My expectation that Meredith's account include some reason for her mother's treatment of her is partly a product of the "psychologized" culture I live in, of my familiarity with a range of contemporary autobiographical genres in which an account of behaviour also entails a psychological accounting for it. Still, Meredith shares in that culture, is no doubt familiar with the genres, and must surely wonder about her

mother. If telling is dialogical partly in that it anticipates uptake, what does this account of almost baroque malice suggest about why Meredith tells this particular story of her mother and, thus, about what she hopes for in response? Does she seek confirmation? Challenge? Alternative possibilities? Questioning?

The same question about Meredith's motives and expectations arises in the following examples in which Meredith repeatedly reports voices from her childhood that ask about or refer to her father's abuse. This time the question is not prompted by the outrageousness of the reported speech, but by an obvious and repeated yet unacknowledged ambiguity in the exchanges she reports:

M: ... I wanted to [tell] cause my grandma would ask me lots of times, she'd say, you know, **Are your mom and dad treating you good?** -Yes. **-Well, where did you get those bruises on your back?** -I fell off my bike. **-Are you sure?** - **Yeah.** And I always had to be one step- very hyper-vigilant and I still am to this day. (I, 6/19)

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M: ... And that summer my guide- my guide leader asked me **if I would like a babysitting job in Alberta.** [...] But at first- I **hardly even had the request out of my mouth** and my dad said, **No, you're not going anywhere.** And of course I was in tears because I wanted to get out of that home so badly... [...] ... I went back **to tell** Mrs. W____ and I was crying cause I was just so disheartened about it all. And she just said to me, **You don't worry about it, dear,** she says. **Your father will let you go. I can peg him on a few things and this is,** you know- **I'll have a chat with your dad.**

I: Did she [_unclear_]?

M: Well, I don't know. I mean, I was 15 then and very naive, like very naive. I believed everything people told me. So she phoned my dad and told him **to come over, she wanted to talk to him.** And when he came back, he said, **Well, I guess you're going to Alberta to babysit.** And I thought, **Mmm, that's funny. What did Mrs. W____ have to say to him?** But now I'm older and I can see both

sides. I'm sure she knew he was molesting me and she was holding that over his head. (I, 7-8/19)

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M: Well, I had a school teacher, too, a Miss Q____, and she- I'm sure she knew what was going on in our home, too. She just couldn't- I mean in those days when I went to school, sexual abuse and stuff like that wasn't brought out in the open. It's only been brought out in the last 25 years I would say. So Mrs. Q____ would ask me, **Is everything okay in your home? Like do your mom and dad slap you around a lot?** And I would always, you know, **answer in the- on the positive side** because I knew that if I gave her the proper answers, my dad would punish me severely. So I had to **give her the right answers** in order so that I- I mean they weren't the right answers, they were the wrong answers but I had to **make it sound good.** (I, 11/19)

I'm not sure that I am really intended to believe that Meredith was so good at hiding the abuse. The way in which she reports her grandmother's voice and those of Mrs. W____ and Miss Q____ rather suggests there was little doubt in their minds that Meredith was being mistreated. Her grandmother "would ask me lots of times" and is clearly not convinced when Meredith tells her she fell off her bike ("'Are you sure?'" is not a request for an estimate of certitude here, but for honesty). Miss Q____ similarly "would ask me," the tense suggesting this was a regular occurrence. Note the specificity of her second question and the phrase "a lot," which make the question border on assumption. Mrs. W____'s voice comes across as serenely confident when Meredith arrives in despair; she can "'peg him on a few things'," and it's clear to Meredith now that she knew. Yet nothing was done to protect Meredith all those long years of her childhood—why? Why did her family and the school not intervene? And what of Mrs. W____? Did she find out about the abuse and at once devise the clever babysitting plan to save Meredith? Or did she use her bit of dark knowledge only when her sister in Alberta needed someone to mind her nine children? The question of "why" seems lodged in Meredith's account even if it is not voiced, even though she explains it away by insisting on her vigilance and

quick thinking, and on past social mores that meant abuse wasn't spoken about openly. Does she want me to voice it, to articulate the righteous anger the stories provoke?

What do we make of the questions the foregoing excerpts raise, of their unsettling effect? I want to suggest that the excerpts might be taken up usefully in relation to the argument that direct reported speech is not an exact replication, or even a close imitation, of what the reportee said (see Chafe [1994] and Tannen [1989]). Rather, direct reported speech is an interpretation by the reporter and a performance that meets the circumstances of the reporting. The reported words are, in Bakhtin's term, reaccentuated. The excerpts from Meredith's interview (particularly the mother's words) may be extreme examples of this, radical reaccentuations. Indeed, it is even possible the words were never actually uttered by the reportees themselves. That would be difficult to determine—I cannot ask Meredith whether her mother *really* said "I'm gonna go to my grave telling you that you're not a loveable person" or even whether her mother told her she was impossible to love—and, in any case, it is not my task as an interviewer in this project to "verify the facts." My task is rather to think about the dialogical uses Meredith makes of language reports as a narrative resource. It's difficult to say, finally, what she hopes for in terms of a response from me—why she chooses to horrify me with reports of her mother's brutal words or to perturb me with the reports of words from no less than three responsible adults who knew about her suffering and did nothing. But we might at least say that the direct reported speech functions to show the various people in Meredith's narrative, including herself, in their respective roles.

Common(place) themes: Being smart and the importance of education

The traumatic events involving abuse and mental illness overshadow Meredith's educational experiences, particularly in the first interview. The second interview differs markedly from the first, though. I ask more directly about Meredith's experiences with schooling and literacy, and her talk about her education has a less "narrative" quality. Language reports used in the second interview still have narrative functions but also more frequently serve to typify attitudes and actions, represent thought, or offer evidence. Often, these functions overlap as in the following excerpt, which demonstrates all three:

M: I was good in English and like L____ [*her instructor at Inwood*] said, she said, **You're good at writing, you're real good at it.** She says, **You're very expressive.** And I put a lot of detail into my writing and somebody reading my pieces can get pictures in their head of what's going on. It's just that there's a voice in me that says, **I can't do this, I can't do this.** And that's an old voice and I've had so many people- take workshops and stuff on positive thinking and not let those thoughts get in but they do. It's old programming and it's hard to drop old programming and when I'm feeling frustrated and cornered like I do right now that's the message that [*unclear*] Then I turn out something and L____'s **telling me how good I did.** I think, **Well- Oh, I didn't know I was doing that that good.** I'm a critic and I'm a critic of myself. I rewrite things so often. Like I'll start off with- I'll pick a subject- I'll start writing and I'll say, **Oh, I can't write about that. I'll write about something else.** And after three or four selections, she'll say to me, **Stick to this one. Don't change.** And then I- you know, I procrastinate for a while and say to her, **I don't know if I can write about this.** And she'll say, **You can write about it.** But I keep rewriting them. I write and then I think, **Well, that's not good enough.** So I do it again and again and again. And she said **I do my- all my work is- I put much more work into the work that I do than is necessary for the course.** But that's just how I am. Like my parents both were perfectionists. The message that I got all the time was, **If you can't do it right then don't do it at all,** and that message is in there in my subconscious someplace because I'm still doing it. Has to be my best, I have to be able to feel that this is the best that I can do and unfortunately I never feel that way so I'm doing it over and over till finally L____ catches on. She says, **Hand it in. There's nothing wrong with it.** But I feel like it's incomplete and I've got all kinds of criticisms. The psychiatrist told me the same thing. He says, **You know, you're your own enemy. You're your biggest critic. You're harder on yourself than you'd be on any other human being in the world.** And I am. (II, 11-12/18)

Meredith dramatizes an ongoing (typical) conflict between the inner voices (thoughts) that tell her she's not good enough, and expert external voices of her psychiatrist and her

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teacher (evidence), who counter them by pointing out both her high expectations and her ability.

The process of internalizing the belief that one is stupid or not smart enough or incapable is frequently typified by the interviewees. Indeed it is virtually a commonplace, and Meredith dramatizes the process several times, not just in the particularlized version above but also as a generalized truism:

M: I have a sister that's a brain wave and of course she **got praised** and I was always told **how stupid I am and how-** And when- after a few years you're told **you're stupid** you start to believe it and then I didn't try anymore to learn because **I'm stupid**. (II, 4/18)

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M: When your parent says to you, you know, **You're a dumb idiot, you're a dumb ass,** parents don't realize that kids take that literally and sooner or later it becomes, **Well, I'm just a dumb ass so why should I learn? Dumb asses don't learn anything anyway.** And that's not the right way to treat a child. (II, 17/18)

Another common theme that is frequently taken up in typified reported speech is the inherent goodness of education. In the example below, the assumption that schooling is of value is universalized by being placed in the mouths of "anybody [she] talk[s] to." Her doubtful response to this typified collective voice challenges only its application to her at this point in time, however, not the validity of the general belief that underpins it:

M: ... Going to school is- I'm a student and at least that identifies a part of me, that I'm learning something. And anybody I talk to, they say, **That's great you're going back to school and learning and everything.** But I don't know if it's so great right now. I don't feel good about- I just feel like giving up. (II, 10/18)

But commonplaces are not always marked as reported speech, and this affords an interesting point for discussion. Consider the following excerpt, for instance:

M: … The mind really fascinates me. I wanted to be a psychiatrist, a psychiatrist or a psychologist, and my dad used to always say- or my mom, **Oh, you're too stupid. You couldn't be a psychiatrist or a psychologist. Don't even think about it.** But when I settled to be a hairdresser, they still said, **Well, you won't make any money there because there's no money in hairdressing**. My mom's best friend's a hairdresser and she never makes any money. So they wouldn't send me to hairdressing school.

I.   Did they think there was something that would be good for you to do?

M: No. **All,** my dad says, **that you're good for,** he says, **is to marry somebody and have their kids and look after your home and your husband and your kids.** And that didn't appeal to me at all, but I went out and met somebody and I had three kids by him. And I ended up on my own with those three kids and I had to work to support them. That was really hard because I didn't have any skills. (II, 5/18)

The direct reported speech here vividly dramatizes her parents' abuse and the reporting clause renders it typical. Again we hear the origin of her negative inner voices, but what is especially striking is that part of her response to her parents' speech incorporates another set of voices—quite unconsciously and thus wholly unmarked as reported speech. The conclusion that supporting her children was difficult "because I didn't have any skills," while it appears to be an argument against her parents' refusal to send her to school, also echoes "neoliberal" discourses about education in which an apparently perpetual literacy crisis is problematically linked to economic hardship. This discourse has been invoked in a good deal of policy that has further marginalized people who, like Meredith, are already struggling to make ends meet. Her unconscious appropriation of the "skills" discourse means it appears monologically, in Bakhtin's terms—she "owns" it completely, expresses it as a matter of commonsense even while it undermines her.

Yet in the surrounding text, there is plenty that raises questions about it. It may well be that some further formal education might have made things easier for Meredith financially, but it is difficult to attribute her struggles primarily to a lack of training in the

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face of the extreme abuse she suffered at the hands of her parents, abuse that is attested to yet again in the denigration woven into their very refusal to send her to school. Meredith's statement that supporting her children on her own was hard "because [she] didn't have any skills" is immediately followed by the anecdote excerpted earlier about how she lied her way into her first job as a breakfast cook and was caught out by a no-nonsense supervisor. The anecdote suggests something about the importance of having a bit of moxie and toughing it out in the work world; these, as much as if not more than "skills," kept her afloat, it would seem. As if to underscore this, she reiterates the "skills" theme again a little later:

M: B____ [*her sister*] and I, we were the ones that were molested and raped. And
       that also- we were the only two- we never got- we never learnt anything in school
       and to this day B____ doesn't work because she doesn't have any working skills.
       (II, 8/18)

Meredith tells the story of how B____ was unjustly dismissed from her job because of an unscrupulous co-worker and concludes,

M: … But she's not a very strong person. But her and I we never had any education,
       how to do anything. I mean I'm self educated in anything that I do, and I've done
       a lot of jobs in my life just to keep food on the table and the rent paid. (II, 8/18)

There are two story lines competing here: one about a lack of education (and, by extension, skills) and one about being a self-educated person (and, by extension, a strong person). The latter seems more compelling in Meredith's account; "self-education" is actually what got Meredith her jobs, including the one as breakfast cook, and not being a "strong person" is the reason B____ lost hers. Yet the education/skills story line is tenacious, unconsciously unsettling the narrative.

Gloria

Gloria, too, uses a great deal of language reporting, the most notable aspect of which is the fact that she represents direct thought almost as frequently as speech. Often

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this reported thought is part of the "pep talks" she gives herself. Virtually all of the reported speech in her interview is direct; there are relatively few paraphrases. She most frequently cites exchanges with social assistance program workers, and with her family (her siblings and her son, in particular). Many of the language reports involve expressions of her eagerness to learn and of the pride and optimism she invests in learning. Gloria's account is character-focused. The language reports in the interview all contribute in different ways to a portrait of Gloria.

Dramatizing who she "is"

Conversational exchanges often dramatize what kind of person she is. In the following excerpts, the language reports all serve to demonstrate (rather than to tell); from the way she responds to others, we infer things about who she is. The reports serve to intensify not so much the event as her character.

Her first encounter with social services is narrated twice in the interview.

Gl: Ended up on social assistance, and so on social assistance they said, **What can you do? So I** told them, **I do sewing and that's all I know, that's all my trade.** And they said- they asked me a question and says, **Now that your children are 13 and 11 years old- the second, two children- what would you like to do?** I said, **I don't know but I sure would like to finish my school, my high school. I never got my diploma.** And they put me through school. So through school I tried to take my grade 12, but I didn't succeed because at the same time as I'm going to school they also paid me to go and take my nurse's degree- nurse's aid, and they thought, examining me, and they thought, **Oh, you're good with people, and how would you like to learn to be a nurse's aid?** I said, **How much school do you need?** (I, 3/16)

Gl: And when I turned to social assistance I had no choice but to accept it because I had to feed my children. But at the same time, when they came to me and said, **Well, your son is 13, your daughter is 11. What else can you do? You don't**

need to babysit them and stay home, I said, What else can I do? Did you finish your school? I said, **Oh no. Would you like to? Oh yes.** [*laughs*] I said, **Yeah, I would like to do that. Oh, that would be really neat to have a diploma that say Grade 12.** And so they said, **Yeah, there's an opportunity if you want to you can do it.** And I said, **Okay, what can I do?** And so they started from scratch and this is where I end up over here. (I, 7/16)

The main purpose here isn't really to bring a particular time and place to life but, rather, self-presentation. Her responses show her to be open and positive (even if the excerpts appear somewhat contradictory in terms of her proactiveness—in the first she seems to be the one suggesting high school completion, whereas in the second it is suggested to her).

These exchanges also dramatize the kind of relationship she has with formal institutions like social services, which, in turn, further reveals who she is. Having such institutions as part of one's biography requires management of some sort, partly because they are powerful and partly because contact with them carries moral overtones in our culture. How we are positioned vis a vis such institutions makes a difference in how we are perceived. In the excerpts above, Gloria suggests that her relationship with social services is, if not one between two equal parties, not one of subordinacy either. They speak consultatively and offer options ("What (else) can you do?" "What would you like to do?" "How would you like to learn to be a nurse's aide?" "… there's an opportunity if you want to you can do it"). Their words address Gloria as a legitimate recipient of assistance; she is, in these exchanges, neither a freeloader with an undue sense of entitlement to the public purse, nor a charity case who is unwilling or unable to help herself. (The emphasis on "doing" in the above excerpts is likely connected with this; social services expects her to "do" and she is interested in "doing.")

Gloria reports an exchange she has with her son that similarly reveals her character through dramatization of who she is and what kind of relationship she has with others.

Gl: And now I just love coming to school, you know. My son- not too long ago was-
       I had an exam and I got that 59%, that was the toughest of percentage which I've

never- never knew how to work a calculator or computer or anything. And I said, **Son, Mom can't seem to pass the 59 bracket percent.** He said, **Percent- Mom, you got 59 percent?** I said, **I did, but I don't like it. Mom, you got 59 percent in something you never knew?** I said, **Don't- don't say that. If I can get 59, I can get 80.** So I tried and tried and I finally got 82 percent. But I understand it. That's just a mark. Understanding that you can open the page now and look at these numbers and they don't become anymore Chinese or Japanese- [*laughs*] It's a language you understand and it makes me feel really good cause then I go home and I tell my son, **Guess what? Mom passed it.** He says, **What- what number, Mom, now?** I said, **82. Way to go. Way to go.** And then he goes around and he tells all his friends, you know, **My mom's at school and she's getting- I couldn't even do that.** Because it was one equation I asked him and he forgot. So then it's, **Okay, Mom's gonna learn and then you want Mom to show? Yeah, Mom, because I forgot how to do that.** So I came back and I showed him. [*laughs*] So he was really surprised. He says, **That's really good, Mom.** I can even see my children even stronger. They don't let themselves feel that they can't accomplish something. They became self dependent. And anytime I'm doing something they always want to know what it- **What are you doing now, Mom? How did you accomplish that?** (I, 7-8/16)

Gloria is here not only determined but also a role model, a good mother, and, even, a teacher; her children support and admire her, are interested in her accomplishments.

The exchanges above are also a discursive preamble to action in Gloria's account; she doesn't just say that she gets good grades or that she has gone back to school but introduces the actions first with an exchange in which her situation is summed up and she is presented with a challenge. In the excerpts above, social services lays out her situation and asks her what she can and would like to do. Her son's more passive encouragement (she should be pleased with the 59%) and interest are a foil for her assessment of and challenge to herself ("I don't like it ... If I can get 59, I can get 80 ... Mom's gonna learn ..."). These discursive preambles contain directions on how to frame what she "does": as decisive, determined, consciously reasoned, positive responses, not actions born out of duty or coercion or resignation or indecision or blind reaction to happenstance.

What others say about her

Gloria's interview also contains a number of reports of what other people say *about* her, embedded in various ways (she is part of or overhears a conversation or has comments reported to her second-hand). These reports allow her to offer a basis for her self portrait outside her own claims, and they allow her to preserve polite modesty, too, to make claims that might sound inappropriate coming directly from her. I've already suggested how her encounters with social services help demonstrate the kind of person she is, but the people at social services also confirm her character directly. She is assessed as being "good with people," for example, and, in the excerpt below, she is told she is an inspiration.

Gl: ... The lady- I showed her my graduating paper from computers, which I told you I couldn't even know what the numbers are, and now in the meantime I'm 32 words per minute and I need 50. So I still have a little bit more, which this summer is gonna be keyboarding. And she goes, like, **Gloria, I'd like to see you from- give two more years from now. Look what you've done in two years.** I said, **Yeah, yeah.** She says, **I like to see- don't forget to come and talk to me cause you're an inspiration.** And I'm like, **Wow!** You know. I don't want to brag but I mean [I: No] I need that, I need that – [I: Sure, everybody does.] Cause you walk and you be like, **Wow! 'She's an inspiration' Wow!** But it's scary. Inside I'm scared because the unknown. I'm not *scared* scared. But it's hard. It's not easy work. (II, 10/10)

Even though the statement is someone else's, she seems to feel the need to further mitigate the impression she is full of herself (perhaps because this is the second time she reports the comment that she is an inspiration). Thus, she reports brushing off the compliment ("I said, 'Yeah, yeah'.") and then assures me explicitly "I don't want to brag, but I mean I need that." When I've reassured her, she repeats the claim one more time, this time reporting it as subsequent self-talk and bracketing it between two "wows," her pleased amazement underlining her humility.

One particularly interesting example of reported speech about Gloria involves a report of hypothetical language, rare in her interviews.

Gl: And by November I should be getting my GED. That's okay because even though a GED- because I really need the job first of all. There's got to be someone out there that's gonna say, **Yes, I will take this lady because look what's she's come from, look what she's- she's made of herself.** Give me an opportunity. But I would still like to come back at night to finish my grade 12. (I, 8/16)

Myers (1999) suggests hypothetical speech is often used to dramatize tensions between an institutional voice and that of the reporting speaker, though here the relationship isn't adversarial—rather than being at odds with power she's backed up by it. She's not going to finish her grade 12 by November and will have to settle for a GED at this point—her use of the hypothetical employer's voice is part of a strategy to convince (herself, I think, as well as others) that this does not constitute failure, that it's okay. Out of the mouth of this other she speaks her own belief (or the belief that she wants/needs to convince herself of) that she has done well even if she hasn't (yet) completed her grade 12. Again, it's not just her saying it; there must be others out there who will see it this way, too. The legitimizing voice of an employer backs her up here—a hypothetical employer, but one who likely exists and who will take her because he or she is impressed not by credentials like a high school diploma, but by something more important and essential, by the fact that she has overcome unpromising odds and made something of herself.

Gloria also reports on comments about her from her family. These are generally in the form of encouragement and praise. Her son is an unqualified supporter, as the previously cited excerpt about getting 59% on her test demonstrates. Her sisters' words about her are bound up with a longer history, however; they know her in the glowing present she describes, but they are also part of a past in which her intellect was repeatedly challenged. Her father, for example, pronounced her to be hopeless at school:

Gl: I came here about 11 years old and then I finished until grade- almost finishing grade 5. So I had about three and a half years here of school. So that's- they did

that over here, too, with the boards outside.[23] So my father says, **I don't know why I have to keep that girl in school. She's not going anywhere. I never see her name.** To him I have to have my name outside like my other sisters. No other students had their names. So my sisters were so smart they always had their names on the boards, you know. But then after that I just finished school, my parents took me out of school at 14 going on 15, putting me in a factory to work. (I, 11/16)

Today, her sisters recognize that she is "smart":

Gl: My sisters- I had- we had three sisters. The oldest did not take school and there was me and my two other sisters, A_____ and F____. They're very smart. They thought so. [*laughs*] But now they say, **See, Gloria, you're smart, too.** But I had to find out myself. (I, 10/16)

Gl: ... So today my sister that had her name outside on the board all the time, she can't even type the computer now. [*laughs*] She has to come to me to tell her, to show her some things that she needed in the Internet how to get the information, an application for something. So I went into the computer and got the information, photocopied something and gave it to her and sent it back, faxed it to her. And she's like, **Oh-** She didn't tell me, she told my sister, **Did you know that Gloria can do all those things now?** Not bad from being- not being an A student. (I, 12/16)

Their words, especially the amazed exclamations behind her back, lend something of a Cinderella-like quality to Gloria's account of educational transformation. Belatedly, they've had to acknowledge that she is not slow or incapable.

There are a small number of excerpts in which voices other than those of official institutions or her family say things about her. One is interesting for the almost

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[23] Earlier Gloria tells of how the school in Portugal always posted the names of "A" students on a board outside the classrooms. Parents whose children's names were not on the board were to go inside to talk to the teacher.

metaphorical way in which she shifts from the rather banal comment about her "put together" books to her life, which "only I can put ... together".

G1:   And I like to finish- I'm very well organized. I don't like to be disorganized. I've learned that, too, because I thought I didn't- I couldn't do that. And that's what everybody says, **You're very well organized. Your books are all put together.** And that taught me training, disciplining myself because my life was all disorganized and because of that I said, **Only I can put it together.** So putting things together is very good. (I, 9/16)

That an organized notebook leads to an organized life seems like an extravagant transfer, but is it all that dissimilar from popular claims made for the power of literacy? (And I do think it's significant that the connection is with a school notebook; it's unlikely she would claim that organizing her linen cupboard would have had the same effect.)

Ways of demonstrating herself as wise

The portrait that Gloria aims to convey through language reports in the interview is of a positive, enthusiastic "can-do" kind of person. She also aims to show herself as a sensitive and sympathetic knower of the human condition. Framing herself this way is an important alternate way of talking about herself as a learner; it complements the framing of herself as energetic and determined about school. One good example of this is the story about the woman who instructs the anxious Gloria to leave her alone in the bathroom with her husband so he can bathe her. It is clearly meant to entertain, and the reported speech intensifies an event in the sense that Myers means. But the story is also told to convey the sense of Gloria as sensitive and generous observer of this small and moving and gently amusing human spectacle. The particular bit of wisdom from the elderly woman ("Forgive one another ... never go to bed angry") is clichéd and it's doubtful Gloria hasn't heard it before. Moreover, it's difficult to see how the event itself is about forgiveness; what keeps the couple going is evidently more than just never going to bed angry. But the point is not so much to relate the advice itself as to demonstrate that Gloria is the kind of person who learns because she is able to identify and appreciate

moments in which there is wisdom to be gained. Thus, the elderly woman's words are repeated as if they are of great portent.

Another demonstration of wisdom through reported speech presents her as a good listener. In the excerpt below, the reported bit of wisdom itself plays a more central role than in the anecdote about the bathing couple:

Gl: ... And so it's [*high school*] something that I would like to finish it, no matter how long. I met this man in school. He was 74 years old, [*in 19-*] 96, and he walked to school. He didn't live very far from there. And so I asked him **why did he come, why does he come?** He says, **If you don't feed your brain, your brain dies and I'm not ready to die yet,** he said. And so he says, **School, education is so important.** If people just did that more there would be less places in the hospital to be filled. (I, 9/16)

To be sure, the point of telling the story is also, in part, to demonstrate that Gloria appreciates its truth; again, she is someone able to appreciate the wisdom communicated to her by the elderly man. However, the story, in the context of her narrative, also serves to encourage her by offering a gloss on her circumstances: education is a life-sustaining force, so vital that it that makes time irrelevant (it doesn't matter how long, and this is demonstrated by the inspirational words of a man who, at the age of 74, is still walking to school). This is a pep talk in the face of the fact that she has tried twice before to get her diploma and that now, on her third try, she is behind schedule. It is an example of how others' words elide with her own words—it is as if she is speaking through his mouth, and it's not clear whether the last sentence is her coda on the story or still part of the man's words to her.

In the final example, below, we have been talking about struggles with reading. She demonstrates her wisdom by creating an opportunity, through reported speech, to elaborate on what it means to "get the point":

Gl: I've learned of the beautiful qualities that I can have and see others when they're saying, **Oh, you've- didn't you get the point?** But I get even more of a point because I understand the meaning of it, the sympathetic parts of it. Or the part

that- they're so quick in doing this and getting over with the answer, but I look between the lines. I'm more depth into emotion and I feel more for those that are in need. I don't even ask. You don't even have to ask me, I'm there. (I, 14-15/16)

Gloria is typifying an encounter but we don't know what she usually answers; here, in a context removed from, but recalling, the encounters, she replies what she would really like to say. She can shift to a more metaphorical uptake of reading and contrast the "deeper," more meaningful abilities she has learned wisely to appreciate in herself with the more pedestrian "getting it" that others set such store by. Her defence—that she may not be fast at grasping "the point" but that she is the kind of reader who can understand the meaning of a text, the sympathetic parts, that she looks between the lines—slides smoothly into a broader claim about the kind of person she is. She is a sensitive reader of others' emotions, who doesn't even need language ("you don't even have to ask me").

Reported thought

Instances of reported thought tend, like many of the instances of reported speech, to be demonstrations of her enthusiastic persona. The following excerpt is a fairly straightforward example:

I: What was it you were doing before [*you were injured and came to Inwood*]?

Gl: Nurses' Aid. Nurse Care Aid. And then I figured three years doesn't give us very much time to learn another trade, but I thought, **There's an opportunity for me to go back to school and work on getting my grade 12 and perhaps then I would be able to find a different door. So many other doors to open, my ideas to what else can I do. And so if they gave me those three years with paid disability,** I thought, **hmmm, this is a wonderful opportunity, a chance in a lifetime where I will never get another chance.** So I put myself into school here and here I am. (I, 1/16)

A more richly dialogical example that evidences the elisions and echoes that riddle Gloria's speech is the following:

Gl: ... so we see that we really need to have graduating a grade 12, we need that nowadays.

I: So for jobs but you also said for personal reasons.

Gl: For my personal reason, I felt that raised in a very difficult situation- with my husband being an alcoholic and then ending up dying very early in age- I was left alone. I had no school, I only had my trade as a- as a factory worker and I felt, **What else am I gonna do? I mean, this man is gone, I'm alone, I have a 13 and 11 year old children. What am I gonna do? Sewing in B.C.- the factories are all back in Montreal.** And I thought, **I can do something more.** But because of the- raised in a family of alcoholics with my husband, your self-esteem is so low. You feel like you're- you're nothing. You know, they take everything from you, you know. You're like putting you down and **you can't do this and you can't do that.** But deep down inside of me I knew **that can't be true. There's got to be something more that I can do to help myself and I don't want to go and-** there's nothing wrong with being on social assistance and getting financial support. You know, we work all our lives for that, but there's only a limit that they're there. They're ready to help you, to get you out of whatever you are, any situation. They help you. So they help me. And when I turned to social assistance I had no choice but to accept it because I had to feed my children. (I, 7/16)

Aside from yet again demonstrating her can-do persona (she confronts her difficult circumstances and does "something more") and her wise persona (she knows the negative voices can't be true), the above excerpt contains interesting elisions. There are echoes of the conversation with social services, and it becomes hard to tell who asked the question about what she can and will do first. (She herself asks, What are you gonna do?, which can be heard as a cry of desperation but also as a challenge, which is certainly how she answers that question here. Social services asks, What can you do? and, What would you like to do?, which can be heard as consultative but also as challenge, since she cannot do nothing.) Then there are the voices of her family and her drunken husband, which get blurred with her own inner voice and the typified inner voices of others who suffer

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similar circumstances; in this dramatization of the processes of internalization, it's unclear who says "you can't do this and you can't do that."

Self-talk and advice to others

The two excerpts below are interesting examples of hypothetical thought that, in effect, do the same things as the preceding excerpts: they demonstrate her can-do attitude and her sympathetic wisdom, respectively. They also do something else, however: offer advice. The language reports aren't directly marked as hers but are imagined thought marked by imperatives addressed to some unspecified general audience (which may or may not include me). Nevertheless, as advice from her about what to say to oneself, they are at the same time necessarily enthusiasms and bits of wisdom that have passed through her mind, too:

Gl: ... I think there's an opportunity for everyone out there if they really have enough confidence in themselves and say, **What else can I do?** you know. And so an opportunity comes, don't say, **Oh, I can't do that**. You can if you just believe enough that you can accomplish. So I'm not very far from gaining for what I want to get right now. (I, 4/16)

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Gl: ... Life is a positive thing in my book. And I always keep thinking that when things really hard hit you, don't let that self, that person, that child in you lose out the joys of looking at simple things of a child. Or as an old person, when you get old- put yourself in that person's place and think, you know, **One day I'm gonna be there**. Reach out and help these other ones, you know. Feel for them before they even speak or ask for help. If you can, help. And reach out and you would be surprised what the things you learn. (I, 15/16)

Below, the two questions (echoing her conversation with social services)—"What are you gonna do? What else can you make of yourself?"—carry no markers.

Gl: It [*school*] got my self esteem, seeing my marks, seeing what I've learned, how
        quickly I grasp things. And you begin to see a different person altogether coming
        out of this little shell of, you know, that you're not gonna accomplish anything.
        What are you gonna do? What else can you make of yourself? And now I just
        love coming to school, you know. (I, 7/16)

She may simply be reporting them as things she told herself as encouragement/pep talk,
but it is possible that she means them partly as an exhortation to others. Indeed, I suspect
that much of the counsel she reports giving herself carries the flavour of advice, the
intimation that this is what others ought to tell themselves, too.

Foregrounding the importance of learning through self-counsel

I have indicated before that Gloria's life account might be interpreted as one of
learning writ large—all sorts of experiences are embraced as opportunities to learn. She
not only portrays herself as her own teacher but is also the one who, in her reported
thought, encourages herself to learn. Her advice to others, too, places her in the position
of instructor. Gloria makes frequent reference to learning as an answer to the difficult
circumstances she finds herself in. The following is a good example:

Gl: Working on my own, making my own decisions and being very strong
        emotionally, very emotionally strong. And that- it's nothing bad to do that, you
        know, but there in my life I felt like I couldn't blame mom or my dad or my
        husband. He was an alcoholic. My parents were not there for me when I needed
        them. It was my life. I couldn't change that. The things I could change is some
        things that I could do myself. **That's yesterday. Today is what counts, is
        what's Gloria's situation right now. This is what you got, Gloria. What are
        you gonna do? Are you gonna blame your husband? Are you gonna blame
        your mom, their not teaching you school, not being there for you?** I said, No,
        it's my life. I can do something with my life. And so what is there to learn?
        Teach yourself, train yourself. And now I can do anything. I just bought a
        house. I repair a lot of my house. I do my own plumbing, my own electricity, fix
        my own car, you know. And I, you know, there's nothing that I can't do. And all
        that was part of education. Teaching yourself, seeing beyond what anybody else

sees and what circumstances in your life. You look at yourself and say, **Well, I
end up like this because so and so, that and that, mom and dad were- society
itself-** They blame anything. (I, 13/16)

There is a fervently energetic quality to her exhortation: "Teach yourself, train yourself."
Problems in Gloria's account don't generally require fighting with a bureaucratic system
or intervention by psychology experts or stoical, philosophical acceptance of fate, as in
other interviewees' accounts; they can be met by learning. There is a kind of pull-oneself-
up-by-one's-bootstraps appeal to learning here. The excerpt includes an interesting elide
in the last bit of reported speech, which initially seems to be attributed to a typified
"you," as if to suggest this is a natural and common thing to say, and which echoes the
impulses she herself entertained and then rejected ("Are you gonna blame ...? No."). At
the other end, though, it gets attributed to a "they" who blame anything, who do exactly
what she refused to do. The statement that "Well, I end up like this because so and so,
that and that, mom and dad were- society itself-" begins as a sympathetic-sounding
typification of something we all say, but, in the course of utterance, transforms into the
mimicked whining of those who refuse to take responsibility, who refuse to take up
learning.

There is often a kind of vagueness to the idea of learning in many of these
interviews and this is especially prominent in Gloria's interviews. Education is, of course,
a means toward earning a living—her training as seamstress and as nursing aide give her
skills and papers that allow her to find work. But learning is also framed as much broader
than this. Again, all her accomplishments in life (from doing her own plumbing to finding
out who she is) are, in effect, accomplishments in learning, too, even if they are not all
schooled educational accomplishments. And again in addressing problems, "learning" is
the answer. Gloria wants to "do something with [her] life" and the remedy is not first to
ask what that something is but to "teach [her]self, train [her]self" without specifying what
she is to learn. Such generalized, broad conceptions of learning obscure the distinction
between what one learns at school in terms of curricular content and what one learns
from experience, including the experience of schooling. The two are bound up with each
other since school is an enormously powerful symbol of learning and not having

successful experiences at school remains painful for some of the interviewees. That life teaches many things, including painful lessons is a truism cited by many of them. Learning is often invoked (not just in these interviews) as a kind of fail-safe consolation—if one gains nothing else from an experience, if one has an unpleasant or unsuccessful experience, well, at least one always learns something from it. Still, not being successful at school (which remains a possibility for Gloria, Gene, and Meredith) is not going to be addressed with the commonplace that one learns from every experience, even from failure.

Gene

Most of Gene's language reports are reported speech acts (or "referred-to speech," as Chafe calls it), and he employs relatively few instances of direct or indirect speech or direct reported thought. Among his use of these latter three forms, however, are a number of highly interesting examples of "hypothetical" reported speech, speech never actually uttered but only imagined and "reported" by Gene. As is the case in all the other interviews, Gene reports most frequently on what he himself said and thought. The voices of general others he interacts with (i.e., unspecified "people") and those in psychology-based professions (school counselors and therapists) are also occasionally reported, as are those of co-workers. His parents are the only family voice represented and then only once and without any reporting markers ("Parents didn't care. Teachers didn't care. Just get him out."). Most often, the language reports concern themes of being put down and of being made to feel that he is slow or stupid.

Reported speech and thought

There is very little use of direct reported speech or thought for narrative purposes. The sole example of an anecdote concerns his meeting with a school counselor in the sixth grade.

G. I had dreams of being a lawyer once. And I was talking to a counselor at school
  and she said **I wasn't smart enough to be a lawyer** and I just gave up. [...]

I.   Is this a conversation you sort of went and had with her or did she- was this like routine-

G.   Yeah. Well, no. I had some- I was having problems at home and- with my brother and just the family situation. You know, I was talking to her about some of my goals and what I wanted to do and she just out and out said **I wasn't smart enough.**

I.   Did she say what you should do?

G.   No. She said, **You aren't smart enough to do it. Okay, whatever.** (I, 2/19)

The counselor's blunt callousness is emphasized by the marker "just out and out said," by the repetition of her words, and by the fact that Gene does not contextualize them in anything else she might have said. It is likely that she said quite a bit more in their conversation and possibly she used different words, which Gene interpreted, correctly or not, as "you're not smart enough." But he insists that *this* is what she said. That insistence is emphasized by the shift to direct reported speech, which dramatizes her "actual" words and thus intensifies the account and attests to his confidence. I suspect that he may have interpreted my attempts to get him to elaborate the story as expressions of doubt, and so the direct speech signals firmly that this is exactly how nasty she was. Note the "Okay, whatever" at the end, which creates a hypothetical (pseudo) exchange, the reported thought underscoring the way the school silences him.

The excerpts below include two other instances in which Gene narrates his past using direct[24] reporting. They deal with the larger story of his failed school career.

I.   Do you remember the day when you said, I'm not going back?

G.   Yeah. I was living out in C____ actually, going to L____. It's a high school. I just said **I had enough.** Mind you, like I said, back then I was doing a lot of

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[24] It must be acknowledged that the examples here are not entirely clear cut: "I had enough" is in the simple past but in direct form would be cast in the present perfect tense (in indirect form, though, it would be in the past perfect); tense is not a problem in "why should I ..." but a reporting clause would have made for a clearer example; and "that's not an honest way ..." has a reporting verb in the present tense so that it could simply be taken as averral.

drugs but that didn't hel-, that didn't help me make up my mind. I just- I was just
tired of the people. I was tired of, like I say, immature students. (I, 5/19)

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G.   I never put too much more trust in counselors and teachers. It's not that I didn't
trust them, it's just that I wasn't going to open up to them anymore. The
unfortunate fact is I- **why should I when I know they're gonna pass me
anyways?** You know, unfortunately I kick myself now for not staying in school
so I would have at least had my grade 12. Whether I technically would have been
able to do the work or not, I would have been passed my grade 12. But then
again, I look at that and think **that's not an honest way of doing school**, you
know. (I, 4/19)

The first example above is "narrative" largely in that it involves a turning point, which he
describes (if only briefly) at my prodding. I even model the event for him in the form of a
direct reported thought. The second excerpt does not describe a particular event but is
part of the school narrative insofar as it evaluates his past actions. There is an interesting
tension at work here. He expresses regret at not having taken advantage of what he
suggests is the school's habit of passing people from grade to grade regardless of whether
they have learned. Of course, this stance, which he presents as entirely sensible ("why
should I when ..." is a rhetorical appeal to reason, and the metaphorically colourful
reported speech [or, rather, thought] act "I kick myself" is a response to the realization
you've done something stupid), makes him complicit in an essentially dishonest practice,
and he hastens to amend this by realigning himself with the more official meritocratic
face of school.

Hypothetical speech

More commonly, Gene uses direct language reports in dramatizing hypothetical
speech events, which either typify attitudes or re-imagine past encounters. The following
examples illustrate typification. The phrases do not have reporting clauses, and the only
marker is a pronoun shift in which he refers to himself in the third person. The listener is

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meant to understand that these phrases signal attitude rather than actual words spoken; this is what the school and his parents might have said if such an attitude were acceptable from those responsible for educating children.

G: … My earliest recollection of school at all is just being ignored. **Pass him and get him outta here.** I was very disillusioned with school. (I, 2/19)

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G: … my parents wouldn't help me with school work. I think a lot of it has to do with- because I was abused in many different ways and it just carried on through school. Parents didn't care, teachers didn't care. **Just get him out.** (I, 2/19)

This next example is slightly different. Gene mentions that he plays drums and that this makes him feel better about himself. The hypothetical responses he cites demonstrate what encouragement typically sounds like, and he expands with a few broader examples. This is the kind of thing he wishes he had heard when he was younger, though he doesn't need to hear it anymore. Now the effect of such words is merely pleasant, whereas in the past they would have been formative. Note the relatively humble quality of the compliments and expressions of appreciation, through which he emphasizes that he is not looking for lavish praise but merely a modicum of acknowledgement.

G: And if somebody says, **That sounded good** or, you know, **You're getting better** or something like that, it makes me feel a little bit better about myself, yeah.

I: And the reading would be the same thing [*unclear*]

G: Yeah. But I don't really think I'm looking for somebody's gratification or, you know, to say, **Oh, you're doing good** or **happy-** or **good luck** or do whatever, you know. I guess the time for that kind of stuff was way past, you know. It was part of the reinforcement, that kind of thing that should have been happening when I was younger. I don't need it now. No, it's nice to hear once in awhile but it- it's like any situation, whether it be at work- you want, you want your boss to recognize that you're doing a good job or, or a spouse or significant other, a

friend to say, you know, **Thank you very much, you did a good job** or **I appreciate it.** And sometimes you get it and sometimes you don't. (II, 3/9)

In other examples of hypothetical speech reports, Gene acts out an imagined conversation, often with more powerful others, giving himself a voice that he didn't have in the actual situation. He says what he ought to have said or what he wishes he could have said. The following two excerpts are good illustrations of what Myers (1999) describes as the use of hypothetical talk to dramatize "highly mediated and diffuse relations to authority" by converting them into an ordinary encounter of individuals. In the first example, the authority—dominant social opinion that "it's important to have a good education"—is personified as an interlocutor with a rather high opinion of his/her own level of education.

I: When society says it's important to have a good education, what do you think that means?

G: It sounds like you have to have an education to impress people. **I don't think because you go to university that you can do my job any better or you can do my job any better than you or whatever.** I think a lot of it has to do with bragging rights. You know, **I graduated high school, I graduated college, I graduated university, I have a bachelors degree in whatever.** I think a lot of it's just bragging rights. You know, I've seen and heard lots of stories of people who spend twenty years going to university to get their bachelors and their masters and their bla bla bla and can't find any work. **So, it's fine. You're smarter than I am technically. You can read but you're unemployed, and I make fifty grand a year. So, you know, who's having the last laugh now,** you know. But I do put value in education now just because of the way I feel about me and because of the way other people make me feel. You know, I didn't choose not to be able to read, I didn't choose to feel stupid or to be stupid or to be undisciplined in school. It just happened, you know. (pause) I grew up in a time when you didn't talk about stuff, anything. I- you know, when I went to school I guess teachers didn't care about the people who couldn't get it because they were just wasting their time. If I'm, you know- six students out of twenty-five that get

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it, well, okay, they're gonna spend all their time on the people that do get it and that was very discouraging to me. But back to the question. I think education is just bragging rights, and, yeah, I do want to be able to **brag** that I got my grade 12 or my GED or whatever. (I, 11-12/19)

There are no reporting clauses here (the markers are mainly pronoun shifts), but the syntactic repetition of "I graduated high school, I graduated college, I graduated university" uttered in a mocking sing-song tone and the somewhat spiteful retort that he makes more money are clear enough indicators of Gene's response to social opinion. And yet, he is aware of its power; he, too, would like to be able to brag about his education. It is interesting that he mocks the highly educated here when he knows that I am interviewing him as part of my doctoral research. Indeed, I'm not sure whether the sentence "I don't think because you go to university that you can do my job any better" is addressed to me or to a hypothetical addressee. He hasn't given me any indication elsewhere in the interview that he is inclined to use irony or to bait or insult me, but the doubleness is there, whether he is aware of it or not.

In the second example, we are talking about the difference between "street knowledge" and "book knowledge," and his explanation drifts into a hypothetical address to the psychological counseling profession:

G: ... Now, I really don't like listening to a bunch of counselors that got their information out of a book. So books can make a person smart in one way and that's great. **You got that nice degree on your wall saying that you're a counselor or a psychologist or psychiatrist. That's fine, my hat off to you because you stayed in school and read those books and you got your information, you wrote it down on piece of paper, handed it in to a teacher and you got your grade. That's fine, but does that give you the right to tell me how to feel or that person or that little girl over there or that family that lost a child? I don't think so.** Everybody has the right to their opinion but unless you've actually lived it, I don't see- You know, they may have a good answer or a good solution but living it in a book and living it in real life are two different things. (I, 14/19)

The address enacts a desire for a powerful voice, to be listened to and taken seriously by people who have all this schooled/literate authority on their side but who have not suffered as he has. Here again, the slighting of formal education is interesting in that the person he is actually addressing is, like the hypothetical addressees, also someone who stayed in school and read books and got her grade. To take up Goffman's framing theory, the boundaries afforded by speech reports appear to be quite robust here since, again, I don't believe Gene (who comes across in the interviews as earnest and, as he repeatedly describes himself, straightforward) means for me to take this personally. So long as he remains unconscious of the fact that his criticisms also apply to me (or—which is possible though, I think, unlikely—so long as he feigns not to notice) the device of hypothetical reported speech allows him to utter them in the interview without appearing to be rude to the interviewer.

Reported speech acts and commonplaces

Most common in Gene's interviews are reported speech acts. Many of these have to do with getting laughed at:

G: ... I- we have work meetings at work, and to read the first aid log, I can't **read out loud** in front of people lot of the times cause I **get made fun of**.

I: Even at work, still? [*unclear*]

G: I just get all red and angry and sweaty and **stutter** and I feel like I'm not as important as most people. I feel less than because I don't- because I do **get teased** about not being able to read, so I just as soon not. (I, 16/19)

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G: ... I've had people **mock** me and **make fun** of me, stuff like that. So that doesn't make me want to read either. (pause) Ah, they're always **making fun** of me, people at work, people at martial arts class. I try not to let it bother me too much. (I, 16/19)

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I: So like it [*reading well*] has for you to do a lot with the kind of fluency that you –

G: Fluency, yeah, sure. Just the confidence level, you know. I've tried to **read out loud** before and I **got laughed at** and just- you know. Or I get the words mixed up and I just don't do it. (II, 1/9)

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G.   ... I get **put down** a lot and a lot of time, like, I'm- I **joke** about a lot of different things, but I **get put down** a lot and it's hard to learn that way. (I, 1/19)

Another common reported speech act in the interviews is making jokes:

G.   The experience [*of school*]? Well it was a good place to sit and **socialize** and you know be the class clown and stuff like that. I always tried to **use humour** to hide the pain. So I was constant- you know, a lot of it, it was my fault cause I goofed around a lot of times in school, you know, just- I don't know why.

I.   Like what would you call goofing around?

G.   **Making smart comments or just making jokes**, just bugging people, getting in trouble, looking for some kind of attention. ... When I was afraid to do something or afraid to speak or try something, I would, you know, try to **make another joke** out of it or try to put some kind of humour into it just to [*unclear*] hide the pain. (I, 6/19)

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G.   ... A lot of it [*his nervousness at school*] just had to do with a lack of confidence, as well, and not too many people ever took me serious because I was constantly **making jokes** about stuff (pause) It's unfortunate. I kind of wish I could do it over again though. (I, 7/19)

Gene also invokes a number of commonplaces, all of which are related to the theme of getting ignored. Note, for instance, in the excerpt above about "goofing around," the idea that misbehaving is an attempt to "get attention." Wanting attention is also linked, in the

excerpt below, to being a middle child (a commonplace marked by the words "type thing"). The middle-child theory is used to explain the kinds of behaviour that Gene says got him kicked out of the army in fairly short order. Yet, as a victim of family sexual abuse, he was not exactly "ignored" as a child and he clearly was not able to "do what [he] wanted to do."

I.   When you say you had to feel something …

G.   Just getting the attention or feeling that somebody's paying attention to me. I was- I came out of a middle- I was the **middle child** type thing and you know **middle child's always ignored** anyways. So I did what I wanted to do. (I, 9/19)

In the example below, he draws attention to the notion of the "problem child":

G.   High school? To be honest with you, I was high through most of it. (pause) Again, you know, ignored. The teachers, in my opinion, always seemed to know which students could do it and which **weren't having problems** or which **weren't problem child or children** or however you want to phrase it and the rest were just, well, just left behind. (I, 3/19)

It's not entirely clear whether he is stumbling over his words here or whether he is drawing attention to them. The addition of "however you want to phrase it" seems to suggest this is what Myers calls a mention, though, and it does seem that he is playing with the conflation of intelligence (having problems) and behaviour (being a problem).

I want to suggest that the three themes just highlighted—getting laughed at, making jokes, and being ignored—are connected to each other and to the dichotomies earlier in the discussion about book and street knowledge, and schooling and experience. Gene's argument is that books and schooling don't give you knowledge so much as social capital. That capital is useful in certain realms:

G: I believe there's lots of value in being book smart. Obviously you see these people on game shows who- these, you know, like Jeopardy[25] and stuff like that. You've got to be smart to play that game. Those- those kind of intelligent game shows, you don't- you don't get that kind of knowledge from being out in the real world.

I: Is there any more that you can do with book knowledge, besides show up on Jeopardy?

G: Well, of course. You can- I think you can better your career opportunities and I think that you can be able to be in an intelligent conversation with people about other things, other than, you know, how to build a desk or how to do car mechanics, you know. Just to be in an intellectual conversation with somebody and actually know what you're talking about or have your opinion to what you're talking about. (II, 7/9)

Having social capital like this would mean he wouldn't get made fun of or ignored, wouldn't have to joke to cover up or get attention. But this social capital cannot address the pain and damage of abuse; in the raw realms beyond television game shows and intellectual conversation, his experience goes deeper than and gives him authority over the schooled knowledge of counsellors and other experts. This is an argument I pick at in the interview because it taps into certain popular and romantic notions of education and literacy—to the earnest idea, on the one hand, that a liberal education and reading can elevate the underprivileged and, at the same time, to the longstanding trope that street knowledge, the astuteness of the underclass, can deflate educated pomposity.

Donna

Donna uses fewer language reports than Gene. Most are in the form of direct speech and thought. Apart from representations of her own discourse, her interview includes a small number of reports from family (her father, daughter, and husband) and

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[25] Jeopardy is an American television trivia quiz show. Gene's observation here is quite astute given that so many of the questions on the show appear to be pulled straight from school textbooks.

from school settings (including the principal at Inwood and her grade school teachers). Like Gloria, she is enthusiastic about education, but where Gloria sees learning opportunities everywhere (for example, at work in the clothing factories, and at home, when her car breaks down), Donna focuses on school. A good number of her language reports are embedded in accounts of her decision to return to school and of her experiences at Inwood.

What stands out most in the language reports in Donna's interview is the way in which they depict her as a firm, decisive, determined character. Often, this character is conveyed through represented thought, and, interestingly, almost all of the examples of reported thought concern her resolve to return to school. Her opening response to my question "How did you get here?" includes a moment of decision, a turning point that informs much of the subsequent interview talk:

D: Oh. I dropped out of school when I was very young, got pregnant, the whole

        story. And through- like just a chain of events, like a divorce, my daughter was

        murdered, a whole bunch of stuff and I really wanted to do something better. I

        ended up raising a grandson from birth. Like I started raising him, and I thought,

        We need better. So that's how I got here. (I, 1/19)

In describing the aftermath of her daughter's murder, she also reports decisions in direct form. Her moment of resolve to 'bring these people back' is followed by a summary of her strategy—make everything positive—which she illustrates with the sustaining mantras and rituals she used.

D: And over the course of two years I saw- my son got into drugs and my daughter

        stopped eating. So they both were affected in very different ways, and we were

        unable- we were just not functioning. And I kind of looked at them- my son

        OD'd by accident, and when I saw him there I thought, **We can't do this. I've**

        got to- I've got to bring these people back. Like, **They've got a whole life.**

        And so then I just kind of made that step. Like everything I did- it killed me. Like

        everything I did was- I had to make it positive. We- it wasn't a religious kind of

        faith, it was a spiritual- We kind of- I said, **You know what, there's always a**

reason- there's this, there's- I don't know how we did it. And I just had to get them strong to live and keep looking for happiness, keep looking, keep looking, keep looking. So we'd play a game at the end of the day and say, **Okay, three things to be grateful for today.** And we would pick little things, you know. It didn't rain, it didn't- you know, something, right. So we did that. And finally I thought, **I got to go to school.** I wanted to be- I either wanted to get into law or I loved the human mind, so- even more so after all this happened, you know. (I, 8/19)

The connection between her strategy to make things positive and the final bit of direct reported thought ('I got to go to school') is not entirely clear here, but in the second interview, where she reiterates this account, it gets elaborated upon:

D: ... I looked at my family and we were just- we were falling apart. And I knew that I had to kind of- for my kids to survive I needed to survive. I had to show them how to be happy again, how to like look at the world like **Wow, it's great** instead of what they were doing. So to me the first step- and also by this point C____ [*her daughter*] had become pregnant with what would be my first grandchild- well, would end up being my son. So I thought, **What am I gonna do? What am I gonna do?** So I did work for two-and-a-half, three years at home. I did babysitting and whatnot. And then I thought, **I have to go to school** and what made me think that was, like I said, S____ [*her son*] and C____- they had to see me move forward. I couldn't do it just by waiting tables or being something like a cashier or something. I knew there was something I wanted to do. And I would say to them that **knowledge is power**, right, my thing. So at that point- and I also now had this little child, this little baby, right. And I thought, **I have to do something for him and I. We have to have a future.** And school was all I could see. I could- I had to have my grade 12 to get where we needed to go and that's all- that's what I thought. I really believed that. (II, 11/18)

School, then, is part of the strategy of making things positive, but more than that it is a way to "move forward," to "get where we needed to go." This nebulous future is common in adult learners' discourse about schooling—indeed, the connection made between school and "going places" is common in broader social discourses, too. Donna

expresses an additional rationale; school offers not only an answer to her desperate question, "What am I gonna do?" but also agency to make her way out of the stalled place the question dramatizes. She refers to the statement that "knowledge is power" as 'my thing,' a reference to the explanation in the first interview of how she came to appropriate this commonplace for herself:

D: ... Oh my goodness, what's the best thing I learned? Reading. I just always-reading is like, **knowledge is power**. I have one teacher in grade 6 who used to say that. He said it once and I kind of was like, **Well, that's kind of stupid**, you know. And, I say it now, too. Like, on so many things, **knowledge is power**. (I, 15/19)

Curiously, the truism is cited to validate school and yet the examples she offers when I ask her to elaborate (having her husband tell her about his past relationships and finding out that her daughter didn't want her baby) have nothing to do with school or even with especially instrumentalist notions of power. Rather, the examples seem to be about countenancing knowledge that is painful to her but that makes her psychologically stronger.

Upon graduation, Donna realizes that school has not yet taken her to where she needs or wants to be, and so she decides to return a second time to take courses that interest her as she waits for the college term to start:

D: First I was waitressing and then I went to part-time after I graduated. And that probably ate at me, too, because it was like **I just graduated and all I'm doing is waitressing**. And I really like thinking things, I don't like just flipping burgers or- and I'm not saying that's bad but for me it is. [I: Yeah] So I was kind of getting more and more kind of, almost depressed and then when I came back here, I switched jobs to look after my grandchildren ... But I was still able to come to school part-time, so that was good. And then when she [*her daughter*] didn't need me to day care, then I just decided, **School. That's it**. (I, 12/19)

In the second interview, she reiterates this decision:

D: My husband and I both have decided this is where I needed to be. I'm a thinker. I'm a thinker, I love school. That's why I wanted- I went and I waited tables for a couple months, maybe six months, and I always- I was seriously getting depressed, you know. I needed to be in school, and the whole time I was doing that- cause I was gonna work for a year and then go to college and I couldn't do it. It's not the work, because I'm a hard worker. But I thought, **I went to- I got grade 12 for this, to wait tables?** you know. And I knew I wanted to keep writing and keep, just keep my mind going. (II, 12/18)

Donna also manifests her character through reported speech in the narration of a small handful of events. In the first example below, she describes needing to move out of her boyfriend's parents' home.

D: ... I went to see Social Services. Somebody told me **there was a place called welfare** and I didn't have a clue. And we weren't exposed to that kind of life. And I didn't have a clue and they said, **Go to welfare. They'll help you,** you know. And, **What's that?** And so I was kind of like, **Okay, I'll go. A place that gives you money?** So I went and they said, **You're too young. We can't do anything.** And I said, **Then you put me in a home for unwed mothers. I'm not giving up my baby but I'm not staying there.** So I was one of- they said afterwards **I was one of the first people that they tried out on their own when they were young.** So it was really- and it worked out well, you know. So and then I stayed on welfare for a little bit and then went to work and that's it. (I, 6/19)

The prelude to the actual encounter with social services is, I think, significant. Such encounters require framing because of the stigma with which welfare is associated. Donna initially disassociates herself from welfare—she "didn't have a clue," wasn't "exposed to that kind of life." It seems odd that she wouldn't know at the age of 15 what welfare was, even if she had no idea about how to go about obtaining it, but that is the impression she gives through the language reports: the unidentified speaker ("somebody") has to explain, and the interpretation Donna walks away with is almost child-like ("'a place that gives you money?'"). This, then, sets her up as someone who

didn't seek welfare in any premeditated way—the idea wasn't hers, she hadn't even heard about welfare (the question, "'What's that?'" isn't prefaced by a reporting verb or speaking subject, which seems to heighten the impression of bafflement by blurring whether this is reported speech or thought), and when she agrees (the reporting clause "I was kind of like" conveys neither resistance nor eagerness) it is to an overly simple uptake of the idea. When she arrives at the offices, however, she responds resolutely to their bureaucratic helplessness with an imperatively worded solution followed by a firm declarative statement about what she will not do. We're sped right through to the aftermath in which we hear welfare report on her success (while the indirect report of what "they" said afterwards doesn't contain any direct evaluation, it does suggest praise).

The second narrative example contains the longest stretch of reported speech in the two interviews.

D: Yeah, it's [*the environment at Inwood*] really nice. So, there was one time, almost like elementary school, everybody was talking all the time and what have you. The principal would come out and he'd get, you know, kind of stirred and then I kind of got angry because he was kind of focusing on our table, which- He was right. [I: This is L____?] Yeah. He was right. I mean, we were kind of a bit-obnoxiously loud. And I wrote him a letter, and I said, **How dare you, like, be like that, like just assume that we're just all being obnoxious and uncontrollable and what have you?** I said, **Don't forget that when we come to this kind of a school, many of us are single moms or we've come from adverse backgrounds, what have you. We come here- we don't [*unclear*] get an education academically. We get to learn to live again. And- don't forget that,** you know. And I said to him, you know, **I'm gonna graduate and you're not gonna know anything about me. You're not gonna know that my daughter was killed. You're not gonna know that I'm raising my grandson. You're not gonna know that I'm an A student. You're not gonna know anything about me. You're just gonna see me out there getting my diploma and you're gonna kind of look at me and say, 'Oh, there's the trouble maker,' but you didn't even take the time to get to know me.** So I wrote it in this letter and said, **Maybe you should think about knowing your students,**

you know, and what not. So then I was talking to S____ [*her teacher*], my back was away from the- like to the office, and, our little group, they knew I was writing this letter, eh, [*unclear*] So, he had gotten the letter- put it on his desk, and I was talking to S____ shortly after. And we're just having a conversation and I guess he came up behind me and he had the letter in his hand. My little group there and they're like **Mmm**, you know, just like in elementary school. And he kind of, **Excuse me, excuse me** and I looked. I turned and looked at him and he had the letter in his hand and I thought, **Oh God** [*laughs*], **I'm in trouble.** But he wanted to speak to me and what not. But I thought- I never, I never had gone to the principal's office, ever. And so- did that here too. But what he had said was that **I humbled him and that he's definitely** [*unclear*] **see, you know, the students differently** because it is very true. So [*unclear*]. You see a lot of handicapped people here. And I think they especially just learn to have friends and, you know, to live. This feeds many people's lives. This is it. (I, 10-11/19)

It's interesting that the point of the story, which is about how nice, special, and different Inwood is, appears, at first, to get somewhat lost in the epistolary diatribe. The central content of the reported writing does actually fit ("we come to this kind of school … we get to learn to live again") but the emotive quality of the rest ("how dare you … you're not gonna know anything about me … you didn't even take the time to get to know me … maybe you should think about knowing your students") seems to contradict her point insofar as L____, being principal and thus responsible for and representative of the school, gets angrily criticized. Yet the story does work. It is heavily dependent on an understanding of traditional school culture, which here suffers a reversal. The speech acts at the beginning of the excerpt ("everybody was talking all the time"; "he'd get … kind of stirred"; "he was kind of focusing on our table"; "we were kind of a bit obnoxiously loud") set the "elementary-school" scene, and long-established institutional roles and hierarchies and codes of conduct are further alluded to in the dramatizing of her fellow students' "Mmm" and her own "Oh God, I'm in trouble." It is all reversed, however, when L____ tells her he is "humbled" and will henceforth change the way he sees his students. The story also dramatizes just how strongly she believes in her claim about

Inwood. She dares to make provocative accusations, to act on what she feels passionate about (another illustration of her determined character).

Examples of language reporting like the previous two that involve long utterances or multiple turns are relatively rare in Donna's interviews. However, there are narrative uses of reported speech that are of interest for their concision. In the excerpt below, for instance, she describes the reaction to her first marriage, which ended in divorce:

D: Everybody said, **Don't do it, don't do it.** So I was kind of like, **I can do it,** you know, so I did it. (I, 6/19)

Interesting here is the mini-narrative created and bounded by the repetition of the verb "to do": Don't do it, don't do it. I can do it. I did it. The direct speech attributed to "everybody" typifies the reactions she received. The attribution of the same set of words to "everybody" is, of course, not plausible and it is unlikely that even one particular person said exactly this. The direct speech is used here to convey affect as much as content, the repetition suggesting a pleading urgency. Her response, which might be either direct thought or speech, is similarly typified, the obstinacy another facet of the determined personality she narrates.

The following instance of indirect speech is a really interesting example of the skilled but subtle use of language reporting in storytelling (I don't know that she does it consciously) and the (dialogical) reliance on the audience's interpretive resources.

D: ... Yeah, I met him [*her husband*] here. So it's kind of nice. Didn't expect to meet anybody here. So they said- we talked after and for the first year I was here, he said **I'd come in and I would just keep my head down and I would just like do my work and then leave,** right. And that was really true. Like, I didn't look at anybody. I was here for a purpose and, you know, I didn't want to make friends and I just wanted to do my work and do for my family and that was it. I wanted to look after my family. And that was all I wanted to do and somewhere along the way, you know, I couldn't help it. (I, 10/19)

Her husband's description tells us of her attitude during her first year at Inwood. Strictly speaking, it conveys no evaluative component and there is no need for her to attribute this straightforward bit of information about herself to him. But it is nonetheless coloured by affect since it makes clear that he noticed her during that year. (Her subsequent confirmation "And that was really true" suggests that what matters here is the fact that he noticed her, and that what he noticed about her is secondary.) Moreover, since his description is couched in Donna's story of their meeting and marriage (and related during what we assume, from the reported speech act "we talked after," is a fond act of remembering the start of their relationship from the perspective of their now-established intimacy), we might speculate that he didn't simply notice her but in fact admired her from afar. (Or maybe, seeing her single-minded focus, he dismissed her ... until she began "noticing" him.) We are not told anything about their meeting except that it took place at Inwood, or about the evolution of their relationship save that it ended in marriage, and so it is largely our knowledge of archetypal love stories that supplies the gloss on the report of his speech.

Aside from mainly narrative uses, Donna also uses hypothetical/typical (these functions frequently overlap) language reports to comment on what school is or should be like. The first excerpt is a negative exemplum; what they didn't say is by implication what they should have said.

D: They're [*teachers when she was young*] caring and kind and what have you, but
       they definitely don't say, **Well, there's- something's happening there**, you
       know. Like, **Let's send them to a counsellor** or- I didn't find any of that. (I,
       4/19)

Donna makes the same point in the following excerpt. It is similarly clear that no counsellor said what he or she ought to have said, but the speech report is here framed as a hypothetical 'what if.'

D.   ... But maybe there wouldn't be so many people here [*at Inwood*] if there was a
       lot more help in the beginning steps, you know. Where like what if the counsellor
       would have come in—I think they probably have more of that now—but what if

a counsellor would have come in and helped me or said, **Well, something's wrong in the home life**, you know. If something like that would have happened, maybe it would have changed how my- how my story went. Who knows. I don't know. (I, 14/19)

At Inwood, things are different.

D: ... It's very easy going. Very self paced. It's not so **you pass, you fail**. If you're not doing very well, then the teachers, they do sit with you and they'll, **Okay, well, let's start here and-** you know. They realize this is a bit difficult and pull back a few steps. It's a little bit more reassuring, I think. (I, 12/19)

She typifies attitudes using reported speech, contrasting school's usual quickness to judge students with the more relaxed approach of the teachers at Inwood.

Natalie

Of all the interviewees, Natalie uses the fewest number of language reports. Mostly she cites herself in describing decisions she has made; her teachers in conveying a tension played out in her earlier education between her intellectual ability and the "moral" codes of the school; and her parents in dramatizing the theme of her lack of a "stable" upbringing.

Like the other interviewees, Natalie uses direct reported thought to convey her inner states. Generally, these instances occur at points where she describes insights or decision-making processes:

N: ... She [*her mother*] was, you know- She had the same kind of parenting that I had so we don't get that fire about **What can I do?** running through your blood. You get, **Damn, do I have to get up today?** [*laughs*] Unfortunately. And so I think that she probably started- like I didn't start having thoughts about **Hey, this is my life. What can I do? Hey, maybe I can accomplish something.** I didn't start having those thoughts until after I'd been through major horrible experiences including divorce and near bankruptcy and all kinds of things after I was 23. And between the ages of 23 and like 28 I started thinking, **Hey, maybe I**

can pull it off somehow. Maybe I don't have to spend the rest of my life working minimum wage jobs. Maybe there's a way. So I'm sure that she didn't start thinking that way about herself until maybe- but that's an all-consuming process. (I, 17/17)

In the example below, she recounts how she is forced to become progressively more pragmatic about her education. The reported thought dramatizes the whittling away of an educational ideal, the luxury of studying in depth what interests her.

I: How did you settle on that program?

N: Oh, it seems like the most practical thing to do. It's only a one-year program. I could come out making a decent wage. I was thinking about when I first started school. I was thinking idealistically and I wanted to get a science degree and major in English or something, just pure interest. I'm not that great at chemistry so that's not- I got an 82 but I don't know if I could do it again cause it was hard. But- And I don't know- What's my point? Oh yeah, when I first started out doing- I was thinking idealistically. **Oh, I can go to university and I can take whatever I want and just learn all kinds of stuff** and then in my second year I started thinking, **Okay, I'm gonna need a job. I'm gonna go to university and I'm gonna have to come out and make it worthwhile and I'm gonna have to have a job.** So then I started thinking nursing cause it sort of followed my interest in the health biology thing. And then at the end of my second year I'm thinking, **Okay, nursing. That's four years. I don't know how much- at least $10,000 dollars a year, probably more. How am I gonna eat? How am I gonna pay for it? Where am I gonna live? Maybe I should downsize again.** So then I started thinking **practical nursing. Okay, that makes sense. Still in the same field. It makes sense. It's only a one-year program. I can get a student loan to cover 60 percent. Oh yeah, you're only a nanny and I only make this much money. Now how can I possibly save the $5,000 I need by September? Oh no. Okay, well, I'll have to work for a year.** That's how I came to – (I, 14/17)

One of the most interesting themes in Natalie's account—a tension between being "bad" and being "smart" at school—is relayed through a series of typifications of teachers' attitudes. In some instances, these attitudes are presented as if they were actually voiced, while in others they are hypothetical representations of attitudes that were (presumably) conveyed in indirect and/or non-verbal ways. Below is an example of the former:

I: I'm wondering if you could tell me a little bit about why you left school?

N: Family situation wasn't going too well. I was failing. I'd been failing for a long time. I started skipping school. I never considered myself a good student and I was the one my teachers always said, **Oh, Natalie has potential if only.** And I never knew what the "**if only**" was and I never really had the support and the environment or whatever to support the "**if only.**" So I just- I wasn't a good student. I didn't feel that I could succeed or whatever. I started skipping when I was in grade 7 and I got carried. I was passed with 50 percent until grade 10 and then I just started failing out miserably. (I, 2/17)

The unfinished statement suggests a kind of institutional hollowness in the teachers' words—they never helped her to figure out the "if only" and thereby to recognize and realize her potential. Note, too, that she isn't addressed directly: this is a formal evaluation of her addressed to her parents perhaps or stored in school records. It turns out, however, that the teachers did follow up on the "if only," but simply in the form of well-worn standard phrases that place the onus solely on Natalie in moral terms (she is lazy, not committed):

I: Did they ever say specifically what the problem was? Did they give it words at least?

N: **If only I would try harder or apply myself.** [I: Right.] But I –

I: What did that mean to you when they said that?

N:	I don't know. I don't know if it boils down to maybe being lazy or not committed or what. (I, 3/17)

While the reported speech here is about Natalie (she was the one of whom teachers always said ...), it is, in fact, the teachers who are being characterized as flawed here through their unhelpful standard phrases.

The teacher in the following excerpt stands in contrast with the teachers cited above. Natalie can't remember his actual words but has him uttering a breezy hypothetical statement that underscores the extent of his confidence in students' ability (they don't need to prove it first). Also, he is made to address her directly and to include himself in addressing the class.

N:	Yeah, the teacher was- I had the feeling that, well, you know how every once in awhile you get a teacher that I guess they believe in you or whatever, he was one of those.

I:	Now how did that show itself? Like what made you –?

N:	I can't remember the words he used or anything, but it's an attitude that, **Oh, don't be silly. Of course you're smart**. It's that kind of thing, you know.

I:	It's just taken for granted –.

N:	Yeah. Like they're not saying, if you- I can't even describe it. I'm sure you've experienced it. There's just some teachers who- it's not about their technique or the way they do their lessons or- It's just they have the belief in the goodness of the human thing and that **this isn't hard and we can all pass and do well**. You know what I mean? [*laughs*] I don't know if that makes sense. By my experience, I've had a few of those, a couple of those. (I, 4/17)

His attitude is further dramatized below in the contrast between the way in which he assigned detentions (again, they appear to be words she invents as representative) and the way in which they might have been assigned ("Oh, Natalie, you're a bad person" isn't directly attributed; in the context of her account, though, it can easily be recognized as

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the voice of the flawed teachers). His attitude isn't simply a superficial belief in her ability easily undermined, and this is demonstrated in the fact that the punishment is in response to bad behaviour (you did it again), not to who she "is" (you're a bad person).

N: ... Anyways, so yeah, he encouraged us and I had a lot of teachers that- I was always getting in trouble. I was one of those kids who would come to school and be in trouble and sent to the office all the time. So that's what- how I was treated a lot from the teachers is I was never measuring up or I never did well or I was being disciplined or being sent off or- you know what I mean? But it wasn't that way with him. It was, **Let's see what you can do** or something. You know what I mean? I'm not saying I didn't get detentions but it wasn't, **Oh, Natalie, you're a bad person**. It's, [*resigned tone*] **You did it again. Gotta be done**, you know, like that kind of thing. It makes a big difference. (I, 5/17)

This ideal attitude in an educator is echoed again in the excerpt below, when she contrasts Inwood (confidence) with her early schooling (doubt, uncertainty).

N: Well, the underlying attitude [*at Inwood*] is **I can do it**, where in school that didn't exist for me. It was, **Can I do it?** But here, **Yes, you can do it**. (II, 15/23)

Later on in the interview the contrasting attitudes are given voice yet again:

N: ... That's why I remember my favourite teachers. They were the ones who didn't expect me to- or who didn't assume that I was guilty until proven, or who didn't assume that I was stupid until I proved myself smart. They just assumed that there was something worthwhile in me and it wasn't- that was the assumption. The assumption wasn't that, **Oh- that, She's a case. She's gonna cause problems. Here we go again** kind of thing. The assumption was, **Okay, you're smart. Get on with it**, you know. (II, 16/23)

In the all the foregoing excerpts, there exists an interesting juxtaposition of morality and intelligence. It comes to the fore more clearly in the immediately preceding excerpt, however: in the negative assumption, she is morally condemned (she is assumed to be a problem-causing "case"), but in the positive assumption, the concern is with

intellectual capability (she is assumed to be smart). The contrast between morality and intelligence parallels the contrast between the attitude of the majority of the teachers in her past, and that of the two teachers (and Inwood) that represent the ideal. The flawed teachers, more concerned with orderly and compliant behaviour (morality of a kind) than with intellectual activity, seem to stall their student, to leave her doubting ("It was, Can I do it?") and inert (she "has potential if only" with the "if only" inadequately explained). This is different from the forward momentum contained in the attitude of the model teachers (and school), who do not appear at all concerned with her behaviour: "Yes, you can do it", "Get on with it."

This theme of intellect and morality seems highly significant in Natalie's account of schooling: her account often focuses on creative expression (which might be regarded as a form of intellectual ability/potential) constrained/negated by schooling's "moral" codes of behaviour. The anecdote about the bathing suit might be taken that way (though she glosses it as an example of inappropriate attention-getting behaviour, the source of which was parental neglect). It is paralleled by another example of her headstrong, free-spirited character clashing with the "rules" at school. (Of interest in this example is the way in which the written test instructions are engaged conversationally by her reported thought):

N: I would frequently lose marks because I didn't follow instructions on tests. If it says, Okay, read this paragraph and then write a summary about this or write a response answering this question, I would say, Well, you know what, that question really doesn't appeal to me so I'm just gonna change it to this question. And I'd do that and it probably wouldn't be bad work but I'd lose marks because I took the liberty of changing the detail or not following instructions and that's something that frequently got me into trouble. And not even just taking the liberty of changing it but doing it my way or not totally even- maybe paying attention to the instructions, just – (II, 12/23)

An even stronger example is the following anecdote in which her teacher's assumption about Natalie's want of intellectual ability leads the teacher to assume dishonesty. The verbs Natalie chooses to report the speech acts characterize the event as dramatic (e.g.,

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she wasn't "asked" whether the poem was hers but "accused" of plagiarism; her parents didn't just get involved but were compelled to):

N: See in grade 9 we had a poetry writing assignment. I was always getting in trouble. Mrs. M_____ in grade 9, she was very strict about etiquette and manners and stuff and I'm not. So I was constantly getting detention in her class for like chewing gum or talking or whatever. And I was a bad apple in her class. But we had an assignment, we had to write poetry. I liked to write poetry in my spare time, so I wrote her this beautiful poem and I handed it in and I **got accused** of plagiarism because it was so damned good. It actually went to the principal and my parents **had to get involved** and it was a big kerfuffle because it was- she was so surprised that I produced that. But in all honesty, it was completely an original thing and to this day I don't know if she- I was believed in the end because I **had to explain** like where I got my ideas from and my inspiration and nobody else had written the poem before ever so I'm- I think, I know I was believed in the end but that was the situation. But see, there weren't a lot of opportunities for me to show what I had and when they came up I did well but obviously [*laughs*] [I: Yeah] it was very shocking. (II, 9/23)

Natalie also uses reported speech a number of times to construct her parents' characters and thereby demonstrate an upbringing that was lacking in what she terms "stability," by which she appears to mean, at least in part, proper attention and encouragement. In the excerpt below, she is presented with an ultimatum from them (note how the report moves from indirect toward direct speech as the tense shifts, subtly intensifying the dramatic effect). She does not report any previous attempts by her parents to keep her in school--no cajoling, warning, or discussion. It is as if they have taken only peripheral notice of her education until one day when they simply state that she has to decide to stay or go. Uninterestedness is followed by a sharp sudden impatience.

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I: Were your parents concerned about this [*skipping*] at all?

N: I don't think so, [*laughs*] unfortunately. They didn't know for the most part. They didn't know that I was missing as much school as I was. I don't think they expected much from me in the way of marks, so that that didn't surprise them a lot and they weren't really involved in the whole, homework, school thing and there wasn't really talk of much in the future in that general direction so I was- When I was 16, I was told that I- **it was time for me to decide what- Am I gonna quit school and get a job or keep going to school?** (I, 5/17)

There is a sense throughout the interview that her parents, and especially her mother, were neglectful, and in the excerpt below it is as if her mother responds to this unspoken (or, in this interview anyway, indirectly presented) charge. The phrase "to talk to her this day" and the subsequent shift to the past tense are a bit confusing, but they suggest a continued insistence, an unyielding protest against the charge that she led her daughter to believe she was not smart or was in some way responsible for her lack of educational success. This is an argument, we imagine, that has arisen several times over the years between Natalie and her mother. Her words echo those of the flawed teachers above about Natalie's potential and her failure to apply herself.

N: My mother, to talk to her this day, she said that there was- that **she felt that I was smart, that it was just me, I didn't apply myself, I didn't apply myself.** But I- now that I see that I can do things, that I've lived my life believing, **Oh, it's me. I'm just lazy or dumb** kind of stuff **or stupid** or whatever. But it's not that- it's- you need something before you go to school. You know what I mean? The stability. Yeah. (I, 8/17)

It's interesting to contrast her depiction of her parents with what follows when I ask her to expand on what she means by stability—all the reported speech acts here indicate emphatic involvement :

N: You need purpose. Give me a purpose to go to school. I'm a nanny. I have two kids, an eight and a ten year old and **we stress** the importance of education in the home now and **we are constantly involved** with what they are learning. **We**

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make sure that they do their homework. **We make sure** they're understanding their math. They know that they're getting educated so that they can function as better adults in society. They know that they are good people, and they will function as good adults in society **if they're told** that they are smart, that they can succeed and progress. I didn't have that. I didn't have purpose for going to school. I didn't have a reason. I automatically assumed that it wouldn't work out for me so why try kind of thing. (I, 8/17)

Her mother, in contrast, continues to distance herself. At one point, Natalie suggests that had she been in school today she would have been put on Ritalin and she recalls a telephone call with her mother:

N: ... I think I was 22 when my mother called me and she said [*tone of mock revelation*], **I know what your problem is. You're ADHD and we never knew.** And she forwarded me a copy of a book and –

I: And it was [*unclear*]?

N: I think the whole thing is crap. [*laughs*] I think that there's just personality types and I think that it's pretty naive if we think that everybody's the same and we all need to sit in a classroom. And basically what we're doing is drugging certain types of kids or- I'm missing the right word but- putting them in a docile state so that they'll fit into the environment that we have created. ... (I, 9/17)

Her mother now ascribes her inaction to ignorance of a way of seeing the problem that Natalie thinks is "crap," a shirking of responsibility. (Elsewhere in the interview she suggests that the diagnosis of ADHD has replaced the labelling of certain children as 'bad': "when you're just calling somebody bad you still have to give them detention and you still have to deal with the distractions and the annoyance. But if you tell somebody ADHD and put them on Ritalin, the problem goes away, does it not?") Natalie's tone of voice in reporting what her mother says conveys that here is a woman who still refuses to accept the real issues behind her daughter's troubles at school and who buys into silly, facile ideas.

A final example:

I: Did your parents- Like would they say to you, **You're not very bright?**

N: Yeah. Not that but, **You're stupid** or things like that were said.

I: [*unclear*] in particular, like when you did particular things or –?

N: Yeah. I don't really- like when I think back to childhood it's so hard to pinpoint particular things, but I had a young reactive mother who didn't choose her words so carefully. She would be sorry and **apologize** later but I would hear, **You're stupid** or **You're never gonna amount up to anything** or- you know, those kinds of things. And I think that had an effect on- I think parents have a large effect on it. (II, 3/23)

Note how Natalie corrects the characterization in my question: they didn't use an indirect, euphemistic form but spoke harshly and directly, "reactively," as Natalie describes it. Her mother speaks irresponsibly, only to retract it later, after the damage on the young and impressionable Natalie had already been done.

This section demonstrates the varied and skilful ways in which reported speech is taken up by the interviewees in constructing their accounts. In Chapter 5, I focus my discussion on the limitations of double-voicing, focusing particularly on the common (but problematic) expectation that language reporting be "truthful" and "fair."

4.4   Chronotopes: Learners' Narratives Grounded in Time and Space

Chronotopes are conceptualizations of time and space that tacitly underpin narrative. Bakhtin (1981) argues that the different chronotopes informing narrative genres enable certain identities, actions, and outcomes while constraining others. A study of chronotopes can, thus, tell us a good deal about what a given way of telling makes possible and impossible narratively. This section traces the notions of space and especially of time (which, Bakhtin suggests, is the dominant aspect of the chronotope) in which the learners' accounts of their educational lives are grounded. The data was

reduced by scanning the interview transcripts for "time" words and then sketching out summaries of each learner's narrative on the basis of these words and the relevant passages surrounding them. In these summaries, I searched for time-related themes. I looked at what notions of time predominated (referring back to Bakhtin's catalogue in his essay on the chronotope and to various more contemporary analyses of the chronotope) and examined them using the heuristics discussed in Chapter 3: How does change happen in the learners' accounts? What forms of agency operate in such change? How might things have been or how might they yet be different? Exploring the answers to these questions can offer subtler insights into the emancipatory (and limiting) qualities of narrative.

Natalie

Among the central themes in Natalie's account of her childhood is that of instability, which is characterized by frequent moves from place to place but also manifests itself in disordered time. The temporal topsy-turvyness of her childhood is the result of parental inattention, specifically of her parents' lack of concern over her schooling and her future, and of her mother's delayed growing up. Thus, whereas the children she presently nannies are over and over again impressed with the importance of education, Natalie "just went to school" without having been given any sense of its central role in her future:

N: I went to school because my mom had to work and I didn't go to school cause I

felt like it was important for me to learn and grow and to carry myself in the big

world when I grew up. I just went to school. (I, 7/17)

Her parent's apathy over her schooling thus gets connected to an indifference over her future, and this sense of negligence gets amplified by the fact that Natalie's mother appears, nonetheless, to have been keenly interested in her own schooling:

N: [*My mother*] dropped out of school when she was in grade 9 and she got pregnant

with me. And she wanted to be educated so she unsuccessfully struggled

throughout her life to get more education. Well, I shouldn't say unsuccessfully

'cause she did- she got more education. She was continually trying to take courses and trying to get it done and trying to upgrade herself. She didn't complete one specific degree but she has some university education. So I did get that [*ideas about value of education*] from her. [...] She was caught up in her own little world. When I was eight, she was 24. She got married at 24. I was already eight. When I was 13, 14, she started going to university. I was already failing out of school. I don't know. She's- it's her particular style. She was cultivating herself instead of us 'cause she never had the opportunity to do that when she was younger because she got pregnant and bla bla bla. So a lot of that was lost on us. Unfortunately. (I, 16/17)

The inattention to Natalie's education is thus not attributable to ignorance or philosophical differences on her parents' part with respect to the generally accepted importance of school. Rather, it is anchored in what might be called a chronotopic "instability," a kind of asynchronicity that has its origins in a chronological disruption. Her mother, who had Natalie when she was herself little more than a child, attempts to make up for lost time, but her educational trajectory forward comes at the expense of her child's; as she starts going to university, her daughter (to whom, the account makes clear, she should be paying attention) is failing out of school.

Natalie's educational career didn't start well—she repeatedly asserts that she was "always" getting into trouble, the story of the show-and-tell bathing suit serving as an emblematic starting point. She never excelled academically, and by grade 7, she began skipping classes:

N: They *[her parents]* didn't know that I was missing as much school as I was. I don't think they expected much from me in the way of marks so that that didn't surprise them a lot and they weren't really involved in the whole homework, school thing and there wasn't really talk of much in the future in that general direction so I was- when I was 16 I was told that I- it was time for me to decide what- Am I gonna quit school and get a job or keep going to school?

I: This is by your parents? [N: Yeah.] Mmm-hmm.

N: 'Cause I got- I got kicked out regularly at that point. Like, going into grade- after grade 10 it was a problem. I was getting kicked out because of my absenteeism.

I: And they [*unclear*] that? [N: Mmm-hmm.] And that sort of kind of pushed it to, to this point of you decide?

N: Mmm-hmm. Well, I dragged it out for a couple of years. 'Cause I wanted to be better. [*laughs*] [I: Yeah.] But just couldn't seem to get ahead of the game. And, yeah. I just eventually gave up.

I: Do you remember the day where you said- like, was there a day when you said, This is it. I'm just not going back?

N: No, I don't think there was a day. I think it was a succession of failed attempts and then I just stopped trying.

I: What did you tell yourself in that whole process of those failed attempts?

N: I'm not quite sure. I just felt like I couldn't do it and it didn't really seem important, you know. And, in fact, when I did drop out it was a matter of economics. Like, I was trying to work two jobs and go to school and I had an apartment by that point and it wasn't a priority anymore. (I, 5-6/17)

Interestingly, while Natalie assigns at least some of the responsibility for her gradual educational decline and eventual dropping out to her parents, she is not unsympathetic to her mother. She doesn't say much about the years after she left school, except that she worked at numerous minimum-wage jobs. She alludes at one point to serious difficulties in her 20s but doesn't elaborate except that they appear to have constituted a kind of turning point. She speculates that her own "growing up" was similar to her mother's:

N: I didn't start having thoughts about, Hey, this is my life! What can I do? Hey, maybe I can accomplish something. I didn't start having those thoughts until after I'd been through major horrible experiences including divorce and near bankruptcy and all kinds of things. After I was 23- And between the ages of 23 and like 28, I started thinking, Hey, maybe I can pull it off somehow. Maybe I

don't have to spend the rest of my life working minimum wage jobs. Maybe there's a way. So I'm sure that she didn't start thinking that way about herself until maybe- but that's an all-consuming process. [I: What is? The -] This self discovery, yeah. In the five years that I did my growing up myself, I didn't have time for anybody else. I was very consumed, you know, with myself and so I think that's probably why we were overlooked, 'cause she was going through that process at that time. (I, 17/17)

The "process of self discovery" appears to have generated some measure of confidence and hope that led her to enroll at Inwood three years ago. But just "growing up" was not enough:

N: I've always wanted to go to university, but, obviously, without an education and working at a minimum wage job, it's a really hard place to get to. So I tried- I was working two jobs, you know, paying rent, whatever, and then trying to come here. It just- it's impossible. You need- I needed a break. So anyway, I decided to give up and I gave my notice at all my jobs and pulled out of school. [...] And I was gonna head back up north where you can work in the oil patch kind of thing and make decent wages. And when I did that, one of the people that I'm presently working for—I was babysitting for her—she offered me an opportunity that I couldn't refuse. She offered me free room and board if I'd stay with her and help her with her kids so that- and I would be able to come here and go to school. That's how it's working for me. And that's how I ended up here and that was two years ago and I've done what I needed to do. I'll be graduating in two days. (I, 1/17)

The offer from her current employer came just at the right time, just in time. But Natalie doesn't frame it as entirely fortuitous, in either sense of the word. In the second interview, she makes a comment about the value of being well-read that ties in with the offer and suggests it wasn't simply chance that kept her from abandoning her schooling and heading north:

N: What it [*reading a lot*] has given me is other people see that I have potential or hope. Or they think- For example, I didn't get- I'm only a nanny [*laughs*] but

they offered me free room and board because they realized that- or they saw that I had- what's that word, it's not momentum but desire, ambition to do something for myself, but I didn't have the opportunity. So I think that that's the value. If you read on your own and you teach yourself on your own, it shows that you have a desire to be educated even though you can't afford to go to school and get that kind of an education. (II, 19/23)

And while the job was certainly an unexpected good insofar as it allowed her to finish her high school in the employ of a family that appears to have been reasonably supportive of her goal, Natalie doesn't wax lyrical on it:

N: I always wanted to [*come back to school*] and I've tried different times over the years. But circumstances have not permitted it to be successful. Now I'm in a situation- I'm a live-in nanny. My kids are in school during the day so I can come here during the day. I don't have to worry about my room and board. When you're- when you're working two jobs just to pay your rent, it's- it's really hard to pull this off. Really hard. [...] Yeah, so I said, Hell yeah. I didn't want to be a nanny. I don't want to be a live-in nanny. I'm not happy living in somebody else's house. I'm 30- I'm 29 years old and I'm living in somebody's basement. So I've given up all my independence to do this. But I have something now that I didn't have when I was 16, and that's a stable environment. And I believed in myself and that I can come to school and I can get it done. (I, 15/17)

Natalie doesn't come across as ungrateful or unhappy, but her enthusiasm about her present "stable" situation is comparatively muted. (Contrast her words with Gloria's [below], who expresses the contrast between her past and present with much greater fervour, despite the fact that she is unlikely to graduate anytime soon.) Although she is enthusiastic about Inwood and pleased that she has done well, Natalie comments that economically things have not changed much for her:

N: ... I'm no more employable now than I was two years ago. I've been struggling, sacrificing, bla bla bla, to get this done and it's hooped. You know what I mean? So I feel like- and education- my thoughts aren't gathered, collected here, but being in the work environment for 12 years without a high school education, I

haven't really made that much money and I haven't had a lot of opportunities and- But that is not really gonna change much now that I have sacrificed these years to get my grade 12. I went into it thinking that it would, that I needed the education in order to get a better life, to succeed or whatever. But I'm no more employable now than I was before and I still don't have the money to go to university. You know what I mean? Like there's still- I'm still grinding my heels. I wish that I would have had- I wish that I would have just graduated when I was 18 and had opportunities. I don't know, I just- maybe it's a negative outlook but I just- I fell through the cracks and there's no reason why I should have. [*laughs*] You know. (I, 12/17)

Education remains a means to move forward, though. She believes that attending university will allow her to find work that is more rewarding, personally and financially. (Note that the personally rewarding aspect is expressed in temporal terms: a move from a daily job focused on keeping body and soul together in the present, to more meaningful, forward-looking "life's work"):

N: I'd love to have a career and be a productive, contributing member of society. Not just going in for the pay check everyday, but to have some sort of passion or purpose. I don't know if that exists or if it's just a dream. But that's what a university education means to me. But I've got- I don't have a place to live. I have to work minimum wage jobs. You know, you can't- This might be my attitude and this might not be the problem, but I can't see how I can pull it off. It just seems too, too far away. (I, 13-17)

———

N: See, I'm looking down from this little minimum wage life that I've been struggling just to feed myself and find some sort of happiness. And then I'm looking at all the other people who have education and they have cars and, you know, they don't have to worry about whether they can eat Mr. Noodle or chicken. They just- they have money and they have the higher quality of life. So for me, I look up at that and I see that had I had an education I could be there now or I could have been there years ago but I'm still where I am because that's

what I'm missing. That's how I see it. I don't know if that's the truth or the reality, but that's what I feel that I've missed out on. (II, 17/23)

While she regrets the lost time, her account doesn't suggest there is anything in her past—no haunting trauma or persistent emotional baggage—that makes it impossible for her to move forward educationally; she simply has no money. Her diploma in hand, she is now in much the same place she was before she completed her high school:

N: Now that I'm at the end of the rope and it's time to apply- And for student loans or whatever, it doesn't look good. So I don't- I won't have that opportunity, maybe not right away. I'm gonna have to go back into the work force and work and try and save and continue those- spinning my wheels, battle to get ahead, you know. (I, 13/17)

She speaks of making efforts—trying to save, battling to get ahead—but also of spinning her wheels, of wasted effort and stasis. Time isn't unrolling properly. To get out of these circumstances would appear to require another serendipitous offer like the nannying job and yet more dispiriting sacrifice and delay—at least, this is all the narrative so far suggests as a way out.

Still, completing high school has allowed her to move on, even if she has gradually had to whittle her dreams of a four-year university career down to a one-year college program in practical nursing. And her experience at Inwood has been of value in other ways. For one thing, she has overcome her parents' lack of interest in her schooling, which had conveyed to her a sense that she wasn't "smart":

N: My mother, to talk to her this day, she said that there was- that she felt that I was smart, that it was just me. I didn't apply myself, I didn't apply myself. But I- now that I see that I can do things, that- I've lived my life believing, Oh it's me, I'm just lazy or dumb kind of stuff or stupid or whatever. (I, 8/17)

And she feels she has come to a more sophisticated understanding of schooling, though it is difficult, she says, for her to articulate:

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N: ... I know from my friends and the people that I'm involved with, most of us are not satisfied. Most of us were- or most of them were just going through to get the approval, to get their degrees, to get this or this so they could get a job and, and that's the purpose of everything. So I do have a kind of a negative view on the whole educational system, especially because I didn't succeed in it. I was a drop out. So as an outsider looking on it, I developed an attitude that, Well, it was kind of inferior anyway cause nobody's experiencing real life or using their brains or their own dreams or whatever. You just get tied into the system and following somebody else's curriculum for- you know what I mean? Like that seems- I did step back and develop that attitude for a while about the slavery of conventional society or something. That's how I saw it. And still do to a certain extent. However, now I've realized that, Well, hello! We all live in society and instead of being a blind consumer or just a producer or whatever, I want to contribute to it in a positive way. And hopefully somewhere along the line I'll be able to do something, will use the system to my advantage. ... (II, 5-6/23)

N: It gets so complicated to express because I have felt- or now that I'm getting more educated, I feel I was a slave to the system because I was uneducated. I wonder [*unclear*] I had limited opportunities because I wasn't educated. [...] I didn't have a choice about whether I wanted to be part of the system or society or the institution of education before. It was something inflicted on me, education when I was younger and in the lifestyle that followed because I was a drop out. But now that I'm going back into school, it's- I felt like I had to. It's required in a way. At the same time, I'm also- I like learning but now that I'm in here and I'm growing within- this is hard to express, I feel like I have more personal freedom. I'm not anymore employable now than I was before probably but- 'cause high school doesn't mean much, but I feel like I have more personal opportunities. It has changed my value or my confidence level and that will make a difference in what's available to me. So in the end it's not really about the piece of paper. It's about- I did get a sense of higher value or something from accomplishing it. I don't know if that makes sense. That's hard to explain. (II, 20/23)

Natalie's assessment is a complex mix of blunt sobriety, ironic insight, and optimism. She states clearly that, in many ways, formal education actually fails to make change and delivers little in the way of agency. School has not been freeing economically, as she expected it would be, nor has it become more of a free choice (it was "inflicted" on her as a child, but even as an adult making her own decision to return, she feels like she "had to", like it was "required"). She has also not parted entirely with the view of school as a mindlessly conservative institution that is more about herding people than "real life" or "using their brains" or "their dreams." At the same time, however, she says that she feels education has allowed her to gain more "personal freedom" and that there is scope for "contributing in a positive way" through school. These phrases remain somewhat nebulous, and whether and how things might be different in the future is thus difficult to tell. Still, the optimism at least appears to give her account a way out of the irony of her slavery metaphor—within our socio-economic system, a schooled life and an unschooled life appear to be equally unfree, albeit in different ways.

Gene

Gene's account, like Natalie's, includes as a key element the indifference of those who were supposed to care about his early education. He extends the theme of being ignored with the claim that he was simply passed from grade to grade:

G: My earliest recollection of school at all is just being ignored. Pass him and get him outta here. (I, 2/19)

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G: Parents didn't care, teachers didn't care, just get him out. (I, 2/19)

An impersonal system automatically propels him forward. At the same time, being ignored means he gets stalled academically:

G: [*In high school*] again, you know, ignored. The teachers, in my opinion, always seemed to know which students could do it and which weren't having problems

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or which weren't problem child or children or however you want to phrase it. And the rest were just, well, just left behind. (I, 3/19)

The passage of time marked by passing on to the next grade is supposed to be connected to learning, of course; the education system expects children to reach academic benchmarks at specific times. But Gene gets passed on even though his learning gets "left behind." These two contradictory results of being ignored culminate in an interesting tension that Gene characterizes in moral terms:

G: Unfortunately, I kick myself now for not staying in school so I would have at least had my grade 12. Whether I technically would have been able to do the work or not, I would have been- passed my grade 12. But then again, I look at that and think that's not an honest way of doing school, you know. I'm happy now that I'm getting good grades when I get a chance to come to school, but I wish I could have done that years ago. (I, 4/19)

That he is getting good grades now is a sign that he is "doing school honestly." But it is taking him a long time, and he is still, as he constantly reiterates, a "slow" learner:

G: I'm not a stupid person, I know that, but it's just some things don't stick in, you know. Some people can go to a class and learn it right away whether it be a math question or a martial arts move or something. And I just don't- you know, sometimes it takes a long time to learn one simple thing and that bothers me. It brings me down quite a bit. (I, 9/19)

Interestingly, the regret he expresses over the fact that he "could have done that years ago" is not just about doing it honestly but also doing it chronologically:

G: I kind of wish I could do it over again though. ... I would just try harder. I can't- I can never change the past I had but if I- now I would like to be able to go right through grades one through whatever just to be able to learn. [*pause*] That'd be kind of different. (I, 7/19)

In this imagined but impossible return, the idea of "proper" sequence, of going "right through grades one through whatever", suggests that the systemic chronology of

education expressed through grade-levels carries weight with Gene, even though the system itself betrays the meaningfulness of that chronology by passing people on from grade to grade whether they have learned anything or not.

Gene's decision to quit school is not conveyed as a particularly dramatic turning-point story (even though I press for such a version when I ask, Do you remember the day when you said, I'm not going back anymore?):

G: I was always two years older than the oldest student there, you know, cause I moved around a lot, failed a lot, that kind of stuff. ... I was living on my own. I was just tired of immature students. [*pause*] I was just tired, I was tired of it. ... I was living out in C_____ actually, going to L_____. It's a high school. I just said, I had enough. Mind you, like I said, back then I was doing a lot of drugs but that didn't help me make up my mind. I just, I was just tired of the people, I was tired of, like I say, immature students. You know, I had to grow up fast and I didn't have the time or the patience for, you know ... (I, 5/19)

His description of his decision to leave school is riddled with time references, however. His main reason for leaving—"I was tired of it"—suggests his school experience was one of time endured. But what he suffers through and can tolerate only for so long seems to be related not just to the difficulty of putting in time, but to the discomfort of being out of time. He is an anachronism at school, never in the right "place" (i.e., grade level) at the right time, never in accordance with official rhythms. "I was always two years older than the oldest student there," he says, and we might deduce from this that he was kept back a grade at least once (indeed, in apparent contrast to his earlier claim that he was always mechanically passed on without being ready academically, he indicates here that he "failed a lot"). Once again, as in the passages in which he gets perversely and paradoxically passed on to the next grade and left behind academically, we see him out of synch with the chronology of the school system, for grade-level is linked not just to academic ability but also to age. He is also out of synch with his fellow students, though in this case he is not behind but, rather, ahead: "I was tired of ... immature students. ... I had to grow up fast and I didn't have the time or the patience for, you know ..." It's somewhat ironic that it's the immature students who are wasting his time, not a system in

which he is compelled to hang around while the teachers ignore him; perhaps, though, this allows him to frame his decision to leave as a "mature" one.

When I ask what is valuable about school, he replies with a commonplace:

G: You have to get an education to do anything nowadays. It's not like forty or fifty years ago when people got grade eight education and went and worked all their lives. (I, 10/19)

When I ask whether the circumstances forty or fifty years ago would have been better, his reply is somewhat feeble: "I'm not really sure. I think that would have been boring. I tried to stick it out as much as I could." He adds some unconvincing statements about camaraderie and learning to interact with different people at school. He might, instead, have answered in the affirmative by following up on an earlier statement in which he asserts "I was just there … I wouldn't say I got a lot of knowledge out of school" and by pointing out that, as his own circumstances attest, he didn't need all twelve years to get a good job. He seems perfectly aware of the contradiction when I ask him again about the importance of having a good education:

G: You know I've seen and heard lots of stories of people who spend 20 years going to university to get their bachelors and their masters and their bla bla bla and can't find any work. So, it's fine. You're smarter than I am technically. You can read but you're unemployed and I make fifty grand a year. So, you know, who's having the last laugh now? (I, 11/19)

Immediately, though, he relents: "But I do put value in education now just because of the way I feel about me and because of the way other people make me feel." Even though he is able to take the stance that "education is just about bragging rights," something seems to proscribe an unqualified assertion that spending the prescribed (or longer) amounts of time at school might in some way be of questionable worth. Perhaps the chronotope of school exerts such power as to give people the sense that if they step out of its official duration and sequencing of time that they'll never get the "right" education, a "real" education.

At Inwood, Gene is still not free of the official school chronotope, of its duration and of its order.

G: All I wanted to do was just get my GED, but they said I had to do this first. I had to do introductory math and then I had to do this book and had to get my grade 10 English and if I want to I can go from there. But after grade 10 introductory English there's more grade 10 English I got to do. (I, 18/19)

He has been back at school for eight years now and is still working on grade 10 math.

G: I want to be able to do it full time, but I just can't. Life doesn't permit me to do it full time. Like I said earlier, I do have a goal of- I really want to be a police officer and if I can, you know, I'll try to work hard for it but I don't think that goal is too unreachable, I don't see why not. But it's the same- like, I have trouble with learning things still today, even martial arts, even the simplest things sometimes elude me. (I, 4/19)

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G: ... But I'll stick with the job and if I don't ever become a cop or an ambulance attendant, I'm happy with the work I do. One thing I've learned in life is not to be disappointed if you don't- don't set your goals up so high to disappoint yourself when you don't get it. You know, a little goal at a time. If you reach it, you reach it; if you don't, well, you know, just don't do too much. (I, 18/19)

It's difficult to know what to make of the wavering in this talk of the future in these two passages, of the assertion and drawing back. Is his expression of hopefulness for the future enabling in some way? Realistically, there is little chance that he will become a police officer or a paramedic—it does appear to be rather too high goal to set given his slow progress at Inwood—yet he still entertains the possibility here (albeit in a curiously modalized way, already consoling himself in anticipation of disappointment, already warning himself not to expect too much). He says he intends to work hard for it (and our culture promises us that hard work will pay off), but he has been working for eight years with little to show for it. He isn't moving forward, and this stasis must make his

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frustration over and lack of confidence in his intellectual ability ever more palpable and thus ever more incapacitating, as all the "smart" people move along. So what hope does Gene's account allow him to entertain? At least part of the answer to such a question lies in what the account suggests about how things might have been different and how they might yet be different, but this particular telling doesn't appear to offer all that many alternative outcomes.

Gene states at one point that the abuse he suffered at home was connected to his lack of success at school, but he doesn't ever elaborate in the interviews. Occasionally, there are allusions to the abuse, but he returns always to the indifference of the teachers:

G: You know, I didn't choose not to be able to read, I didn't choose to feel stupid or

       to be stupid or to be undisciplined in school. It just happened, you know. (pause)

       I grew up in a time when you didn't talk about stuff, anything. I- You know,

       when I went to school I guess teachers didn't care about the people who couldn't

       get it because they were just wasting their time. If I'm- You know, six students

       out of twenty-five that get it, well, okay, they're gonna spend all their time on the

       people that do get it and that was very discouraging to me. (I, 11/19)

Gene adds another layer here to schooling's contradictions when he suggests that progress is made by those who aren't having (or being) problems and, therefore, receive teacher attention; those who don't "get it" are considered a poor time investment and thus don't get the help they need to progress. Note that Gene places this indifference on the part of teachers in the historical context of "when I went to school," with the implication that things are (at least possibly) different now. He is a victim of being at the "wrong time" with respect to "talk[ing] about stuff," too, and I imagine that by "stuff" he means abuse, though it remains vague. Equally vague is the referent of "it" in "It just happened." Syntactically, of course, "it" refers to the string of things in the previous sentence that he didn't choose, but the sense is that he is hinting at what lay at the root of all these troubles—that is, presumably, at the abuse at home. I draw attention to these points in order to grasp something of how Gene accounts for his educational struggles, since, apart from the anecdote about the counselor who told him he wasn't smart enough to become a

lawyer, he offers little in the way of narrative cause-and-effect explanation. Was it just bad luck ("It just happened") or bad timing ("When I went to school ... teachers didn't care")? Was it others—the callous counselor, the indifferent teachers? Was it the barely spoken but obviously painful abuse at home? Was it an inherent lack of intellectual ability? The answer(s) might contain seeds of possibility, answers to the questions, How could it have been different? and, perhaps, How might it yet be different?

There are different ways in which the answers might manifest themselves in an account. They may take a hypothetical form. At one point in the interview I ask him what an ideal education would look like, what kind of education he would want for his own children if he had any:

G: I would want the teachers to pay attention to the kids that are having problems because they're the ones that need the help, they're the ones that go out using drugs, they're the ones that go out committing crimes. The people that are not getting it at school, they're not getting it for a reason. I would like to see the teachers get the reason why. If maybe if the teacher would have asked me why I was having a problem in school, there might have been a way to communicate the problem but nobody cared, they didn't care. [I. So nobody actually knew what was going on at home?] Oh no, not at all. [I. Nobody asked and you never told anybody.] But no my ideal teacher would be because you're going to get your handful of students that know it. Fine, let them go, let them do their own pace, let them do their stuff. But the people who need the help, give them the help you know make the whole class one. (I, 17/19)

Again, his answer deals with teacher indifference and again there seems to be some vague reference to the abuse ("the problem" he might have found a way to communicate). But having more caring teachers seems to me an unsatisfying answer on its own. And so I try another way, asking for memories of teachers who might have actually tried to help, even if they hadn't been successful.[26]

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[26] In retrospect, I realize I might also have asked him if his current teachers at Inwood were different or better.

G: There was one teacher in particular that if I ever saw again I'd really like to thank because he caught me cheating on a test once—it was the one and only time I ever cheated on a test—and he didn't take me down to the principal's office, he didn't send me home to my parents with this letter but- No, he was really good about it. He gave me a zero and it was the last time I ever cheated on a test. Yeah.

I. What made you bring him up as an example of somebody who tried?

G. Well, because it stuck with me for years. Like this was way back in the late 70s.

I. What specifically stuck with you?

G. I guess the fact that he didn't embarrass me in front of the students [*pause*]. Yeah, that was good. But other than that I'm sure there are teachers that—no actually, no I was ignored. I did what I did in class and that was it. (I, 17-18/19)

The anecdote about a teacher who spared him punishment and humiliation but still gave him a zero (and not much else apart from a moral lesson Gene presumably already knew), hardly supplies a more satisfying answer, however. This one small mercy is all he remembers. If another means by which an account might suggest alternative possibilities is by recalling exceptions to a generally unhappy state of affairs, then, Gene's account once again doesn't appear to contain many answers to the question, How might things have been, or yet be, different?

Gloria

Gloria's account of her childhood emphasizes place more than time. Newly arrived in Canada with a family she hadn't seen between the ages of one and ten, she felt out of place:

Gl: I didn't know Mom and Dad that well and so their relationship with their other children was a lot more than for me. I was like an outsider. They took me in, but I always thought I wasn't loved. Like, you know, I shouldn't have even been there. (II, 3/10)

She describes a home that is insular, authoritarian, and violent:

Gl: We couldn't have any friends. Mom didn't let us have outside friends besides the family people, family friends. On weekends we did things together as a family, always at home. (I, 12/16)

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Gl: ... Mom and Dad, they fought, they beat each other up. My father was arrested. And then if anything we did- anything with Mom and Dad – [I: He was arrested because of –?] Beating up on my mom. [I: Your mom.] And so then when that kind of a life- an atmosphere of life- that's how I was raised. Then my grandmother and my grandfather beat me up. So I was always like, I was beaten up. You know, like, to me it was a way of life. You disobey, you get beaten up. So you always respected– (II, 3/10)

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Gl: ... I tried not to do anything crazy 'cause I didn't want to get beaten up. So when I used to go to this lady to babysit her children, it was like getting away from the crazy house. (II, 4/10)

Agency is thus relatively limited at this stage, and she can't do much but acquiesce, even when her father takes her out of school against her own wishes and sends her to work in the factories at 14. The turning point comes when her mother tries to force her into an arranged marriage; Gloria rebels by secretly continuing to see her boyfriend, until she is caught and severely beaten.

Gl: And so she [her mother] started making life really miserable for me. Man, I'm telling you. Then she went to work and she came home one day and she beat me up just, just to think of what I did. It was three, four months down the road. I couldn't talk to this guy anymore and I was like- I was really sad. [...] And I had to run away. I couldn't stay anymore. Four months- It took me another four months of abuse to be able to really- And finally I ran away and I just, just couldn't take it anymore. (II, 5/10)

While this is a change brought about by desperation, Gloria narrates the central change in this account as one brought about by optimism, determination, enterprise, and an openness to opportunity. There is a taste of this in her description of working in the factories after her marriage:

Gl: ... [B]eing young and determined, and so I thought, Oh, this is interesting. I'm- I didn't want to work always on one machine, so I thought, The girls [who] changed from different variety of machines, they get more pay. Having a baby, being young, I thought maybe I could learn different machinery. So then I did. The bosses used to let us work at our lunch hours. At lunch hours I put myself doing clothing for my son. Saved me some money, and there, you know- So the bosses knew that I was fast learner. [laughs] So they upgraded me in my trade and [I] became to be an assistant in- I was about what, 24 then, helping the girls, new girls that comes in to learn the machinery. [...] So I continued upgrading myself and moving from factory to factory and learning different trades again, working with men's clothing and then I moved on and on and on until I am who I am today. And so I'm a qualified seamstress. (I, 2/16)

But her energetic upward/forward progress through challenges and adversity is best highlighted in her account of returning to school. When her abusive husband dies, she is left to support herself and her children on her own. She tells several versions, but all have her responding with positive resolve to the question of what she will do:

Gl: I was left alone. I had no school. I only had my trade as a factory worker and I felt, What else am I gonna do? I mean this man is gone. I'm alone. I have a 13- and 11-year old children. What am I gonna do? Sewing in B.C.? The factories are all back in Montreal. And I thought, I can do something more. (I, 7/16)

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Gl: So I came back to Vancouver and the doors opened for different direction. Ended up on social assistance and so on social assistance they said, What can you do? (I, 3/16)

Her framing of social assistance as a door of opportunity is unusual but in keeping with the "silver lining" interpretation that so often informs her retrospection; there is always some good to come out of misfortune. Thus, even her mother's beatings and the ostracism she suffered from her family after she ran away, got pregnant, and married her boyfriend have, in the larger perspective, an up-side when she compares herself to her siblings. She has authored her own life and grown strong in the process:

Gl: ... [T]hat really wrecked my life. That really, really- And I had to really, really struggle to make a name for myself and to be strong and to forgive [*her parents*] in a large way. But deep down inside I feel that pain. But at the same time, I can see myself so different from all my sisters. I made a name for myself. I made something out of my life and I'm not gonna let all these other things hold me back from succeeding from who I am, who I am not. (II, 6/10)

When, after five years of working as a nursing aide, she is injured on the job and given three years by the "disability pension" to return to school and get a new trade, she invokes the door of opportunity metaphor once more:

Gl: And then I figured three years doesn't give us very much time to learn another trade but I thought there's an opportunity for me to go back to school and work on getting my grade 12 and perhaps then I would be able to find a different door, so many other doors to open like ideas to what else can I do. And so if they gave me those three years with paid disability, I thought, hmmm, this is a wonderful opportunity, a chance in a lifetime where I will never get another chance. So I put myself into school here and here I am. (I, 1/16)

The transformation from past to present is attributed largely to learning, which is in turn acquired both through attending school and through the experience of doing and thus discovering how much she is capable of on her own. There are numerous passages in her account juxtaposing before and after:

Gl: And now it's great because now with all that looks so dark and gray two years ago, light colors now. And I thank the government. Whatever, whatever it is, don't be afraid to change your lifestyle. It's changeable and it's workable if you

just want to do it yourself. And I believe that I will maybe one year from now, I have high hopes in myself that I don't know what I'm gonna end up but I'm not afraid of any doors that's closed cause now I can open with confidence and say what is in there? What is there for Gloria to learn? And if nothing there to learn, we move on, maybe that's not for me but that's okay too. I've learned to accept that. (I, 8/16)

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Gl: ... feed your brain and you live for a long, long time. And I think for myself that's what's happening. I feel so put together now in my own life. Before it was like a big huge mess and it's so nice to know that I can depend on myself and yet being able to expand what I've learned to others. And I don't want to stop there. (I, 9/16)

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Gl: Now I've got my own computer room in my house. [*laughs*] I couldn't even spell, I couldn't find the words. Now I'm just typing away a year later and it's beautiful. It's beautiful for yourself. (I, 8/16)

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Gl: My sisters- I had- we had three sisters. The oldest did not take school and there was me and my two other sisters, Angela and Fatima. They're very smart. They thought so. [*laughs*] But now they say, See, Gloria, you're smart, too. But I had to find out myself. (I, 10/16)

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Gl: They always thought that I had a learning disability because I don't learn as quick as my sisters. So I thought, Hmm, maybe I do, I don't know. Then my parents, of course, took me out of school but my other two sisters, they didn't even have to study. They came home, television on. Hey man! They could do their homework, look at television and do their homework. Me, I was locked up in a room trying to concentrate 'cause even the noise through the doors, I

couldn't concentrate. [...] But I realized, being in this school that I'm visual. [...] And now I know that I don't have a learning disability. I just have to watch people and I'll learn very quickly like that. (I, 11/16)

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Gl: And school has brought me even deeper an understanding of my accomplishments because I never thought I could ever accomplish this much in my life. [...] He [*her husband*] was so smart and he kept, You're so dumb. And I'm saying, Yeah, he's right, cause he's so smart. And that to me- this school is telling me that I'm not dumb, I'm not stupid. (II, 8/10)

Regret about her past doesn't bleed into or weigh down her account of the present or future. The past is not forgotten but it is definitively in the past and serves juxtapositionally to emphasize how different the present is and how different the future will be. Thus, free of an oppressive past in which she was abused and given to understand that she wasn't smart, Gloria conveys in her account a strongly agented sense of the future:

Gl: I'm learning on my own terms that I am a really smart lady. I can accomplish anything, anything that anybody says, Gloria, would you like to learn this?, I'm not gonna say, Oh I can't do that. There's no such vocabulary in my book anymore, "can't do it." (II, 8/10)

Time is full of possibility—there is no struggle to fill it and it doesn't weigh on her; it isn't dragging her along, running out, or threatening her with misfortunes. She expresses optimism about the future, though it is a nebulous one, again invoking the metaphor of the doors, which are opened by learning. I press her to specify what is different about what she learns at school (since she has also indicated that she has taught herself many things), asking what, for example, is different about learning to do math at school and learning to fix her car by herself at home:

Gl: This math accomplishes me- prepares me for something more what's coming in my future. I'm not afraid.

I: So the car is something very immediate?

Gl: Immediate, now. But this is for- I don't know what my- doors are gonna open, those doors- I'm getting ready. So each step of the way as I go to solve a mathematical question and once I get it, I'll go, I got it, I got it. And that just –

I: And that goal –

Gl: The further goal, further ahead. So each step gets me close to that goal. I don't know what that goal is yet but I'm not afraid because I've learned all this to get to where I am now with my life and the doors start opening, I'm ready. I'm not afraid to learn and I'm not dumb. That's what school is giving me, the ability to find out the strong part of my being, that I'm able to grasp things, slowly, but I'm preparing for the biggest goal ever. And I'm waiting. (II, 9-10/10)

If the momentum of her account somewhat outruns reality (after three years she has still not completed her diploma and may have to settle for a GED certificate), it is not something that appears to bother her. Her account makes clear that she has gotten what is, for her, most important from school, the knowledge that she is capable: "I'm not afraid to learn and I'm not dumb."

Donna

Of all the interviewees, Donna most closely echoes Gloria's agented, don't-look-back approach to the future:

D: I don't know how I'm gonna be- I'm hoping to be just- I don't like saying powerful. For someone that was so weak- 'cause like that's how I saw myself for so many years, all the situations I'd gone through –

I: You saw yourself as weak or in a weak position?

D: In a weak position. Well, I guess in weak positions where the abuse in the marriage, the first marriage, what happened with my daughter, what happened with- just life experiences, my mother- And I mean, don't get me wrong. I mean, it hasn't been all horrible. It's been a really good life, it has so far. But- And in

those positions where mentally I was just like, I was weak. I was weak and if I didn't get out of that relationship or- Just different things. So- Now I'm on the opposite end kind of, so- And it won't happen again. [...] Each step of knowledge that I'm getting at school is helping me get to where I want to be, so- [I: In the way –?] Further away from where I was [I: Right]. I think that's- Going further away. That's what I say to people, I never look back. I don't look back. (I, 16-17/19)

However, in Donna's account the approach to the future is underpinned more by a desire for personal and financial betterment than by an eager and optimistic curiosity about what life will bring next. In this, the tone of Donna's account is more reminiscent of Natalie's, and, as in Natalie's case, Donna's early schooling wasn't bound up with any thoughts of a future:

D: We were sent to school because that's where we had to be. I think that's it. But it wasn't a positive tool in our life. It wasn't, Go to school and go out and do this. [...] I think even in high school- I didn't even expect to graduate, I think. [...] I just remember about- People were going to dances and getting ready for, like, the senior years of school and grad and this and that. At each point, I would be, like- I couldn't even entertain the thought. I don't know why. I just- The thought- Never even entertained that I would be graduating or I would go to grade 11 or- It just was never, it was never there. And I was good at it. There was no reason. I just didn't see it. (II, 15/18)

Nevertheless, she says, she did "know" that she would "go somewhere":

D: I guess I just- I just didn't see the end, so- But it's funny, for as much as I didn't see that, I knew that I would go somewhere. I always knew, I'm getting away from him [*presumably her boyfriend or her father*] and I'm still gonna do this or I'm gonna- One day I'm gonna have a nice car and I'm gonna have a nice home and I'm gonna have- I knew it took- I knew it took for me to be smart. I didn't know what I was doing, but I knew it took for me to be smart. And I would have to go to school or I'd have to do something, but it would be different. It would be on my terms, so. And I guess that's what I'm doing now. (II, 15/18)

Change is sparked in Donna's account of her education as the result of unhappiness, but the decisions she makes in response to this unhappiness appear to become more controlled as she gets older. Thus, when she first leaves school, the protracted abuse at the hands of her parents drives her to rebellion and escape—she "just ran away":

D: I think, too, when you come from a bad home sometimes maybe your self-esteem is probably so low that you probably don't have a lot of thoughts for yourself, you know. When you're shot down and you're shot down and you're shot down at home and then it follows over to school, well would you dream? Like, I don't think a child then would dream very much and you would lower your expectations. And subsequently a lot of kids I think are like us, like me, run away and drop out of school and then can turn to drugs or alcohol or even not those things- Just- You're just running away, you know. Because there's nothing good. School's not good and home's not good so anything else is good, you know. I didn't go to drugs or alcohol. I just ran away, and it did seem better. And I did go from one abuse to another, being with the father of my children, but I suppose I thought even then that that was what was expected. (II, 16/18)

A brief return to school marked a turning point, bolstering her confidence:

D: I stayed [*with her boyfriend*] right until- I don't know when I just kind of said, That's it. But I do think that it is really true that people kind of go, Well just get out of it. But you- Because it's not just physical, it's psychological too, you know. So you feel you can't do anything until- I don't know what happened. I guess I just started taking some classes. I actually went to Inwood before it was here [*i.e., in its current location*]. In 1986. And took a few classes and I started getting a little bit more self-esteem and self-confidence – (I, 3/19)

How she comes to leave her abusive boyfriend is a little less clear in the account, but it appears to involve a somewhat more considered process—a desire for "something better," an ability to "see what was happening." The impetus to complete her high school didn't come until later, after her youngest daughter was murdered, her son overdosed on drugs, and her teenaged daughter asked Donna to

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adopt her baby. Here the succession of events following the tragic loss of her daughter leads to a narration of more reflective, planned change, as she reports her reasoning directly:

D: ...[S]o I thought, What am I gonna do? What am I gonna do? So I did work for two-and-a-half, three years at home. I did babysitting and whatnot. And then I thought, I have to go to school. And what made me think that was, like I said, S_____ and C_____ [*her son and daughter*], they had to see me move forward. I couldn't do it just by waiting tables or being something like a cashier or something. I knew there was something I wanted to do. And I would say to them that knowledge is power, right, my thing. So at that point- And I also now had this little child, this little baby, right. And I thought, I have to do something for him and I. We have to have a future. And school was all I could see. I could- I had to have my grade 12 to get where we needed to go so- And that's all, that's what I thought. I really believed that, so – (II, 11/18)

School is the primary means through which change actually happens in Donna's account ("... school was all I could see"). She describes Inwood glowingly, her key descriptions contained in the account of the letter that she writes to the principal upon being reprimanded for being too noisy:

D: I said, Don't forget that when we come to this kind of a school, many of us are single moms or we've come from adverse backgrounds, what have you. We come here- we don't even get an education academically. We get to learn to live again. [...] I was afraid of failing because I think for a lot of people, too, this is like a last chance, big break [*unclear*]. This is your chance, this is your last chance. This is big step for some people. [...] Just know that it's not just in the books, that there's so many people here that are just- they're almost reborn, so to speak and they're going through some pretty big changes, you know, so- I guess that's what I wanted him to know. (I, 10/19)

Change happens on a significant scale at the school: "we get to learn to live again"; "so many people here ... are ... almost reborn"; and "this is like a last chance." Time is bifurcated in this redemptive frame work, divided into clearly defined before and after

with school as the pivotal mechanism. In particular, the claim that Inwood is a "last chance" suggests that not succeeding means being consigned to the continuation of an inferior "before," to a life lacking in hope. Natalie, who has been successful, also at one point divides her account into a before and after, but she is less impressed by the school's transformative abilities; while she maintains the belief that university would offer the rewards she seeks, her more critically pragmatic account sees a present that doesn't open up (at least not in the foreseeable future) into a happy "after" but that, in fact, doesn't look markedly different from "before." It's interesting to note that grounding an account in this dualistic notion of time would function to the disadvantage of learners like Gene and Meredith, who continue to struggle with schoolwork at Inwood. In Gloria's account, however, her limited academic accomplishments don't leave her stranded in an unhappily continuing "before"; while she does make strong distinctions between past and present, school is important but not quite pivotal in the way the much more academically successful Donna makes it out to be. Hence, Gloria's optimistic sense of possibility can carry her account into a future in which she, like Donna, anticipates further happiness.

But Donna is not "waiting" like Gloria for the future to surprise her (though she does acknowledge that "plans change" and that "sometimes we can't map it out"). She locates agency in her sense of drive and she doesn't anticipate any particular obstacles:

D: I definitely look at my life and think, in five years from now, I'm definitely gonna be on a different- Well, I [hate to] say this, social- on a social ladder. I'm way different than them [her siblings]. I'm going to be- I am now, but – [...] I always drive for more, for better, for- I don't see how people can settle. It's just- It baffles me how somebody could settle and do the same thing, the same thing, the same thing, just forever. Whereas like I already have it planned. I'm gonna finish. I mean, plans change, I know that, but in my mind how my plans are gonna go is finish my four years and then I'll do it. I'll be working in what I've been educated in and then I'll keep climbing, you know, and I'll specialize and I'll keep learning, you know, new things. So – [...] And I look at my- As opposed to my first set of children, now I have this other little guy and I look at him and I think, Oh yeah, you're going to college. I can't see anything- I mean

again, I know sometimes we can't map it out, but years ago, when for my kids to finish high school would have been great and go out and get a job and go into the world. But now it's almost like when I look at J_____, it's not acceptable to just have high school. I won't let it just- I'm not gonna let him settle and even now I find I'm teaching him, School's so important. Keep going, keep going, keep going. (II, 14-15/18)

Meredith

Meredith's story largely involves her struggles in dealing with the effects of her harrowing past, which she seems unable to escape. Escape is a theme that comes up early on in her account as she describes her strategies for surviving her parents' abuse:

M: ... I've had manic depression- I've had three psychiatrists tell me that I've had manic depression since I was small just from the treatment I got, and ADHD and traumatic stress disorder. And they all, you know, right- Well, the stress disorder would start right from the molesting because to be sexually touched when you're so young, your mind can't handle that. That's too much for a young mind. And the more it happens, the more detached you get, and this is what happened when my father would be fondling or raping. I would go in my head. I wouldn't be aware of where I was because I'd go in my head to this happy place where people were laughing and having a good time and I just totally removed myself from the situation. And I'm still very good at it. If I'm in an uncomfortable situation, I can remove myself from that and I don't even know what people say to me or what I've done or anything. But that's my escape and I will have that till the day I die because it's just something that I learned how to do at a very early age. (I, 10/19)

At the age of 15 Meredith left home to take a babysitting job in Alberta, this time making a literal, physical escape. She worked at various jobs after this: taxi dispatcher, cook, waitress, home care provider. She also married and had three children, and she had a fourth child, at the age of 25, with a common-law partner. The following year she had a nervous breakdown and received shock treatments that wiped out her memory. She believes that the shock treatments did, however, bring up all the painful emotions related to the sexual abuse that she had not escaped but suppressed:

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M: ... [I]n the course of two weeks I had 15 treatments. I walked out of there a blank

        sheet. I'd no memory of much of anything. I couldn't even remember my kids'

        names, you know. Called L____, S____ and S____, L____ and they'd say

        [*mock weeping voice*], Mum, my name's L____. They'd feel bad. [*mock

        weeping voice*] Don't you know who we are? I just felt like saying, No I don't.

        And that's one good reason I have problems with my memory even now. It's-

        shock treatments kind of burn your brain or something. [I. But it has come back

        because you do have memories of the abuse, for example.] I- Yeah, but I didn't

        remember that up till then. That did bring that back but- [I. You mean all of that

        had been suppressed?] Well, I think a lot of that maybe had to do with my rage

        and hurting people and, you know, suppressed- and I hadn't remembered it and

        the shock treatments were bringing it to the surface. And I still couldn't identify

        what it was and even when I went out of that hospital I didn't know what it was.

        (II, 14/18)

It wasn't until 1986, when she suffered another breakdown and attempted to commit suicide that the memories of the abuse actually came back clearly. She began receiving psychiatric care, which she credits with having helped her to a certain degree:

M: ... I have had some real good care and it has paid off. I mean still I have lots of

        problems, but slowly I have changed my lifestyle, I have changed my thought

        process, how I process thoughts. (I, 9/19)

        But she still struggles. In the second interview, in which we focus more directly on schooling, she says she feels tired and discouraged and attributes this to health issues, and especially mental health problems. In the first interview, however, her struggle seems to manifest itself more in extensive articulations of metaphysical beliefs about why things happened the way they did in her life and what she needs to do to fix it. These beliefs, which appear to be not altogether satisfactory to her, mingle with myriad psychological explanations she has presumably gathered in therapy.

M: I keep telling her [*sister*], I'm not a counsellor, like get yourself a good

        psychiatrist and stop being a victim. You'll be a victim as long as you want to be

        one and when you're tired of being a victim, maybe then you'll, you know, take

your therapy serious and fix yourself. You're the only one that can fix yourself. She says, Yeah, well, maybe if I die I'll fix myself. I said, No, you'll just have to reincarnate and come back and face the same garbage again, so why don't you get it over with and come back to a good lifetime so not have to come back again. –Oh, you've probably got a point there, you know. 'Cause I read a lot about- I just don't believe that you live in this lifetime- you struggle, you live, you hurt, everything and then that's it? There's got to be a purpose for that where what you learn from these things you can carry on and teach others. So I strongly believe in reincarnation, that you bring your knowledge from one lifetime to the other until you've done all the- I mean, this is- the earth is a classroom and that's where we're learning and, you know, our life- getting our life skills. (I, 16/19)

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M: And I've always thought, you know, get rid of this resentment. I have to get rid of the hatred for my dad and what he's done to me and he's done to my life and, you know, I used to blame him how I treated my kids. Well I have since changed my ways. I mean my life is my life and I have to, you know, correct things. But I'm sure- because I had cancer in the two parts here and then there's another big one here, ... I just think, you know, that's right, when you carry guilt and all these things, all these negative feelings, they do develop into something and mine developed into cancer. So now I'm very careful. I see life much different. I have forgiven my mother, which I couldn't do. I have forgiven my father which is- To me, forgiven is like saying, Well, it's okay what you did, you know, I'm all growed up now, I can handle it. I thought many, many times my psychiatrist just said, Stop right there. That's not what you're saying. But see that's my old belief system, how I was brought up. To forgive somebody is saying, Oh, that's okay what you did to me, I'm over it. That's not at all what forgiveness is and I still this very minute struggle with forgiveness. And I've had to find it in the last few months cause I don't want to lose my breasts and I don't want to be, you know, maybe even dead or whatever. (I, 17/19)

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M: You have to be positive in order for your life- I mean, if your life is rotten, you've got a lot of bad luck in your life, you created it. I mean, when I, you know, when I was first told that I said, Well, I sure as hell didn't ask my father to do what he did to me. The woman that was counselling me at the church, she says, You consciously didn't but, she said, when you came to this world you already knew because you had something to learn. You probably spent other lifetimes with your father and you didn't work it out so this time make sure you work it out and do the forgiveness. That way then you'll never have anymore encounters with him. (I, 17/19)

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M: And she [*her friend, who is an astrologist*] said to me, You and your mom have had conflict this whole life time. Actually, she said, You have spent three- this is your third lifetime together trying to see eye to eye on things. She said, Your mother has hated you for the last two lifetimes. I said, How do you know that? And she says, Well, just by doing your chart. And she said, You and your mom are this close right now, your plans or your- whatever she called it, and she said, If you've got anything to say to your mother- That's why I travelled from K_____ to N_____ which is a 12 ½ hour bus ride to spend 15 minutes with my mom. Cause she said, If you've got anything to say to your mom you'd better say it to her within the next two weeks because your mom is gonna die. And if you don't say the things you want to say to her, then you're gonna spend another lifetime with her. So I thought, Oh my God, I don't want to do that. (I, 18/19)

Notions about destiny, reincarnation, and the effects in this life of "choices" made in some transcendent realm coexist with clinical terms like manic depression, ADHD, and traumatic stress disorder, and with the concept that one can decide to stop being a victim and that one has control over negative thoughts. Woven in are ideas about forgiveness, about addressing and working through and learning from hurt, and about connections between emotional (and, perhaps also, moral) and physical states. This existential tangle contains numerous references to time and place suggesting that placing oneself chronotopically is a key part of making meaning of one's life. The struggle for some

ultimate grounding may be particularly urgent (and perhaps thus also somewhat scattered) in Meredith's account because her past was so horrific and because her suffering continues. Understanding the larger "why" behind it may help her find mechanisms for changing this, for escaping out from under this burden.

Meredith doesn't describe her motivations for returning to school in the same goal-oriented ways the other interviewees do. She spends little time regretting her earlier schooling. When I ask her about it, she makes clear that it was not a particularly happy place for her, but the abuse she suffered at home dominates her account. It perhaps also overwhelmed her school experience such that she describes the latter as a vacuum:

M: ... [I]t was a waste of time. It really was. I'm- There's such a vacuum there when
        I think about it. What *did* I do when I went to school? What *did* I learn when I
        went to school? I learned my times tables 'cause when I started doing the math
        here I was the only one that knew the times tables. I know them backwards and
        inside out [*unclear*] but that's about all I learned was the times tables. The rest of
        it is just a vacuum. I didn't learn anything. I can't believe that I'd go to school for
        10 years and not learn anything. (II, 6/18)

Now, however, there is a sense that school fills a vacuum. Her school work is progressing slowly and her psychiatrist has advised her to take some time off, but she is hesitant:

M: He said, Just take a year off and do nothing. He said, I know you don't like that
        idea of doing nothing, because then I really feel useless when I'm doing nothing.
        But he said, Catch up on your sleep, catch up on all those books- I buy books and
        never have time to read them- So he said, you know, Just read your books and
        hang out with your cat-. So I don't know what I'm going to do. (II, 4/18)

Taking time to "do nothing" seems to make Meredith uncomfortable, and this discomfort may have been part of her motivation to attend school:

M: The decision was I've got to do more than just sit around and watch tv all day or
        you know just hang around, so I made the conscious thing that I will come here

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and learn what I can learn. It takes up my time as well as it's not a waste of time. I'm slowly learning things. (II, 2/18)

This idea that school makes for time well spent is repeated later, when I ask her what she tells her son, who is considering going back to school, about why it is worthwhile:

M: I just tell him it makes you feel good about yourself. I said, It makes me feel good about myself when I get a good mark on something that I really struggled to do and it just makes me feel good everyday that I have something to do and I'm making good time of my spare time. I could be doing lots of things with my spare time that are absolutely valueless. And I just tell him education is a good thing. (II, 6/18)

And again, she asserts that her time at Inwood is valuable:

M: ... now I'm doing this so when I finish my grade 11—all the subjects I have to take—then I'll do my 12. I mean I'll get certificates for each one that I've finished here which means that it's not a waste of time and I'm learning stuff this time because I'm interested. (II, 7/18)

And yet, running counter to the idea of time at school as valuable is her slow progress, which appears to have sapped her energy (she says she feels disappointed in herself, discouraged) as much as her lack of energy accounts for her slow progress. Her account presents an interesting tension in that, while Meredith seems to worry about empty time (she feels worthless, identity-less without work or school to fill her time, she says), school is a context in which time presses on her not because it is empty but because it is (too) full of activity (her past history of breakdowns and burnouts and the medications she takes mean she is easily overwhelmed).

It occurs to me that here is also another example demonstrating the importance of chronotopic grounding as an element of meaning making. School (and work), as Meredith points out, give her an identity. Identity can be viewed as social positioning (Toohey, 2000); thus, telling one's story is a means of being socially recognizable. But we might also think of identity in terms of chronotopic positioning; telling one's story is

a means of locating oneself in time and place. Being in a classroom and spending time learning offers Meredith an identity, and, since she has been told she can no longer work, this way of framing school is better suited to her situation than framing school as a means to future employment (as Natalie and Gene do). Still, being a learner is for most people a temporary identity; if it is to be a prolonged one (like in Donna's account), it needs to involve steady progress and that is not something Meredith stresses. Nor does Meredith frame learning particularly forcefully as a project of self-cultivation (in the way Gloria does). But for Meredith, schooling is at this point a day-by-day project; anything more intensely future-oriented is difficult for her, it seems, because of the severe damage the past has wreaked.

In the next chapter, I focus my concluding discussion of chronotopes on expressions of hope in the learners' accounts, and I suggest that the critical consideration of chronotopic possibility may be a potentially useful point in learners' narrations for pedagogic intervention and support.

5

Happy Endings and Other Questions

The accounts told to me by Gloria, Meredith, Donna, Gene, and Natalie have allowed me to learn much about narrative as a tool and as a social act, but in closing I want first to make a brief comment on what they have taught me about schooling and schooled literacy. Indelible in my mind is the intensely oppressive experience formal education has been for all of them. In their childhoods, school was an institution where they suffered humiliation and physical beatings and where confidence in their own abilities was eroded. And while it exerted control in all kinds of ways over their behaviour, it was indifferent to the abuse and neglect they suffered at home. Anecdotal evidence collected by Horsman (1999) suggests that histories of violence at home are common among adult literacy learners, and especially women learners, in Canada. Such violence sometimes continues to be ignored and even mirrored back to them in adult education programs. Horsman's study of violence and literacy education documents the ways in which legacies of abuse from childhood interfere with attempts to learn as an adult, but also how adult education programs can appear intimidating to returning learners.[27] Apart from derogatory putdowns and physical bullying that learners might still encounter, Horsman cites descriptions of parental and spousal harassment—constant questioning and surveillance, dictatorial commands, etc.—that suggest how even ordinary classroom practices can echo for some learners. Many instructors report being at a loss in addressing the violence in learners' lives and there is little institutional support for them to rely on. Indeed, in programs where regular attendance is required or where students are funded, learners who are making slow progress or needing a break because they are living (or have lived) with violence may get judged as "unmotivated" or "a waste of taxpayers' money" and threatened with being dropped.

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[27] See also Rockhill's (1990) exploration of the complex tension between threat and desire that is often connected to women's pursuit of literacy education.

It is interesting that in the interview narratives in this project, the contrast between the learners' early schooling and later experiences of school as adults is stark. All of the learners—even Gene, who has a well-paying job despite his lack of academic success and who recognizes the "bragging rights" school accords, and Natalie, who readily points out that her high school diploma hasn't given her any greater economic security—insist in various ways, in their narratives, that the school is of value despite their earlier experiences. Inwood itself is repeatedly framed as a place of caring and encouragement; if elementary- and high-school forsook and condemned them, Inwood redeems them. But perhaps it is more apt to say that Inwood, with its kinder aspect, merely appears to redeem formal education in their accounts. Stuckey's (1991) *The Violence of Literacy* attacks any notion that adult literacy programming such as that offered by Inwood can offer reparation. The material relationships of people are marked by oppression, which literacy does not fix but, rather, reproduces, she argues. When children go to school, class- and race-based criteria determine whose home language skills are most acceptable and whose chances of acquiring acceptable language skills are strongest. Then, those who fall victim to continued exploitation and discrimination as adults are told that it is their language skills that are at fault, and remediation is offered well-meaningly through literacy and basic education courses. Schooling thus perpetrates violence not once, in sorting out who will be socio-economically dominated and who will be in positions of control, but twice, in attributing inequity to illiteracy and thereby obscuring the need for more urgent socio-economic reform. If Stuckey's arguments are right[28], we might yet ask whether any of the interviewees' educational narratives can truly be said to have happily redemptive endings. This ambiguity may be why these narratives remain so powerfully with me.

If Gene never gets to join the RCMP; if Donna ends up waitressing again; if Natalie has to keep spinning her wheels in low-end jobs; if Meredith's psychological

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[28] While the aggressiveness of her attack stands out, Stuckey is not the only one making such arguments. Her writing echoes Bourdieu's extensive theorizing on social reproduction and symbolic violence, and there is further, empirical study (see, for example, Anyon [1980]) documenting connections between students' social class, the type of schooling they receive, and the type of work that they are readied for.

exhaustion means she can't attend school, where she finds the worthwhile identity denied to her because she can no longer work; if Gloria never finds the employer who exclaims "Yes, I will take this lady"—do their claims for the value of school evaporate? If we turn to the less concrete things these narratives suggest make school valuable—the discovery of and confidence in one's intellectual abilities, the satiation of intellectual hunger, a legitimate identity as learner, and various escapes and freedoms of the mind gained through access to sources of meaning that would otherwise remain closed off—will we begin suspecting these as merely part of a legitimizing mythology that keeps entrenched inequities in place? I can't say, finally, what the narratives mean, but certainly, this interpretation is where Stuckey's condemnation of literacy education would lead. That may be too drastic for those working in the field, myself included, to accept. But, at the very least an awareness of this threat to our work and our belief in its value, an openness to the possibility that school doesn't solve the problem but that it is a problem in these learners' lives, should inform our narrative "dialogues" with them.

This project's central focus is not, of course, with school and literacy but *narratives* about school and literacy and, more specifically even, the process of *narration*. What is involved for learners—what skills, resources, constraints, and possibilities—in telling a personal story of education? What is involved for educational researchers (and, by extension, I argue, for others working in the adult literacy education field) in asking for, and in listening and responding to one? The point is not to translate the meaning of these narratives into statements like "School is X and it should do Y" nor even "Adult literacy learners think X about school and many of them believe it should do Y." Using tools of dialogic linguistic analysis based in Bakthin's theory, I hope I have managed instead to maintain and highlight the complexity of these narrations.

Bakhtin's theory of dialogism has its critics (though they are few in number in the literature). Fogel (1989) draws on Joseph Conrad's work to suggest that "communication itself is by nature more coercive and disproportionate than we think when we sentimentalize terms like dialogue" (p. 194). And Bernstein (1989) similarly points out that "[i]nstead of the generous mutual attentiveness that a dialogue is supposed to foster, what we find just as often are speakers stalking one another with the edgy wariness of

fighters ready to erupt into lethal violence the moment one of them senses an opening" (p. 199). I wonder, however, if these aren't criticisms (apt, to be sure) of the commonly celebratory uptake of Bakhtin's work, which is, Bernstein notes, "curiously monological," rather than of the possibilities that the metaphor of dialogue offers for studying the workings of language. For indeed, I have found dialogism richly insightful in this project. The analytical tools drawn from dialogism—genre, double-voicing, and chronotope—have allowed me to trace in the narrations dynamics more nuanced than mere idealism and friendly intimacy, and relationships often more complicated than straightforward dominance and linguistic disparity. In the following sections I offer some further reflections on narrative practices and products these tools illuminate.

5.1   Genre: The "dialogical" involvement of the interviewer

A study of the genre of the narrative interview using Goffman's (1981) concept of footing has highlighted not only its stable-for-now features but also the negotiation that takes place around them in the process of co-narration. It has also helped articulate certain quandaries about the interviewer as co-narrator. Much of the literature on qualitative interviewing critiques positivist traditions and argues that studying the complexity and in-process nature of meanings requires active involvement from the interviewer. But the advice about what that involvement should look like sometimes echoes the spirit of the positivist tradition being rejected. In particular, the advice to the interviewer to practice restraint in order that the interviewee feel free to talk on personal matters often also hints at a concern over bias. Thus, for example, Marshall and Rossman (1999) warn that "the participant's perspective on the phenomenon of interest should unfold as the participant views it, not as the researcher views it" (p. 108). Glesne and Peshkin (1992) admonish the interviewer, "you do not have license to manifest your anger and irritation at the 'disagreeable' views you are hearing" and should "mask any feelings that express this disappointment and look for positive means to improve the

quality of your respondent's answer"[29] (p. 78). When the interviewer shares views and feelings, the suggestion is, it leads not only to silencing but to distortion of the data. Yet it's difficult to tell whether my occasionally less restrained contributions did, in fact, lead to silence and distortion. And, anyway, what exactly is being distorted or silenced? The "authentic" voice of the interviewee?

The ethics of remaining silent—of keeping one's views and feelings to oneself— aren't always clear-cut, either. For instance, toward the end of the first interview, Meredith articulates an idea that I find alarming:

M: ... I'm told that, you know, you choose your life before you come here, and you

        choose your parents ... And maybe I did choose my parents to get the experiences

        that I have.

I may not "have licence" to manifest my alarm, but part of me wonders whether it would be remiss to stay silent and thus appear to concur with, or at least entertain as plausible, such a potentially harmful thought. Of course, Meredith may not care what I think anyway, but the issue would not arise at all if it was clear that the discursive "contract" was such that I respond to nothing and that she not "read" anything from my stony-faced silence between questions. The style we have so far engaged in, however, involves shared laughter, phatic murmurs and comments, probing questions, encouragement—all sorts of responses that are meant to be interpreted. And so silence might be misinterpreted.

Concerns that the interviewer's involvement might lead to unwarranted redirection or suppression of the interviewee's talk stand in interesting tension with the championing of "dialogical" interviews. Liamputtong and Ezzy (2005) approvingly cite Chambron, who argues that situations in which "interviewer and interviewee are 'given a

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[29] It is interesting that while "disagreeable" is in quotation marks here, "improve the quality" is not. I have become less confident in my ability to recognize a "quality" response right away. Answers that I do not like in the midst of conducting the interview—because they seem off-topic and long-winded, perhaps, or because they are short and seemingly simplistic and thus don't uphold the bargain I thought we were striking for an deeply engaged, friendly, revealing conversation—can prove very interesting in retrospect.

space of interpretation' tend to achieve a narrative of greater complexity and 'polyphonic authoring'" (qtd. p. 59). But this valuing of complexity and polyphony gets undermined when they also commend as honest the approach to interviewees advocated in Douglas: "'You are [the] expert and I meekly beseech your help in gaining a more complete— never complete—understanding of [the world]'" (qtd. p. 62). To protest our ignorance as if we are blank slates and will take all the interviewee says at face value is hardly honest and fails to convey a dialogical understanding of talk. We should not imagine that this attitude of humble enabling renders the interview a safe, impartial, discursively egalitarian space for interviewees to say what they "really" think. To be fair, none of the guides cited above argue that the interview is neutral, but if the influence of the interviewer's involvement on what gets said needs to be acknowledged, this suggestion is not anywhere backed up by guidelines for tracing such influence, let alone for incorporating it in the analysis of the data.

This project demonstrates ways in which we might begin to attend to the research interview as a "dialogical" context for personal narrative. In retrospect, I wish I had concluded the interviews with a few questions about the interview itself. Gene was the only one who signed up to participate in the research without my speaking to him beforehand, and for that reason I specifically asked him why.

G. Because I feel that I have some valuable input towards the way the school system is run nowadays or how it was when I was young. I don't know what it's like now, but I can imagine it's not too much different than what I was doing. ... I still believe that there's still those students that aren't getting it and are just being passed off and I was hoping that some of my information would help you out in your studies and that I could become a valuable member of something.

Gene's response suggests that asking directly about participation in the research project and about the interview experience (e.g., Was the interview what you expected? How would you have done the interview differently?) can generate interesting and important data on the ways in which interviewees construct the context for their accounts.

5.2 Double-voicing: Agency, truth, and fairness in language reporting

The diversity of ways in which the learners in this project use language reporting suggests it is a flexible resource for narration and one taken up readily and quite skillfully. But the foregoing analysis also demonstrates that reported voices are not limitlessly adaptable by reporting voices. While the reporter infiltrates the reported voice with interpretations and evaluations, it does not follow that the reporter has unfettered agency in recreating—and language reports are always recreations, not duplications—what was or might be said by another (or by him- or herself in the past or at some future time, for that matter). The excerpts evidence a range of "curiosities" in the relationship between the reported and reporting voices. Thus, for example, there are elisions in which it is no longer clear whose voice is being reported (as when Gloria dramatizes her internalization of the voices of her husband and her family, who tell her "you can't do this and you can't do that") and commonplaces that unwittingly undermine the learners' insights into their experiences (as in Meredith's uptake of the notion that unemployment is due to a lack of "skills") and hypothetical addresses in which the addressee is ambiguous (as in Gene's angry statements to highly schooled people, which includes me, though I suspect unintentionally). These are instances in which the reported voice has slipped away from the control of the reporting voice. Context also plays a constraining role, the best example of which is perhaps Meredith's account of "flipping out" when she finds out her daughter was molested. The intensity, inappropriate to the interview, is managed by reporting only talk that anticipates her reaction.

Listener's (or reader's) expectations also generate potentially restrictive tensions around the language reports. The analysis has, in particular, made me more keenly aware of the readiness with which my rhetorical focus gets sidelined by my concern that the narratives be "truthful" and "fair." Thus, others' voices must be credibly reported—reports of outlandish expressions of insensitivity or cruelty or naivete, for instance, make me uncomfortable. (Good examples include Gene's reported exchange with the school counselor who told him he wasn't smart enough to be a lawyer; Meredith's portrayal of her mother's verbal abuse; and Donna's framing of her ingenuous response—"What's

that? ... A place that gives you money?"—to the suggestion that she go to welfare.) They lead me to suspect the learners' account is exaggerated and perhaps lacking in evenhandedness. However, as I indicated in an earlier chapter, we need to be careful not to make moral judgments too quickly on the basis of whether learners' accounts treat other voices "dialogically" in this sense. Fairclough's (2003) five "orientations to difference"—a heuristic by which he evaluates the acknowledgement of and attitudes toward other voices within texts and discursive interactions—appear less useful in this project than in the media analyses he conducts. It is too easy to jump to value-laden conclusions about reliability and openness and more fruitful, I think, to cultivate some distance (at least at first) by interrogating what rhetorical functions various "orientations to difference" serve in learners' narratives. This approach is all the more preferable in the case of learners' narratives, since we are dealing here with reporting voices that, unlike Fairclough's journalists and politicians, often have ambivalent and complicated relationships with reported voices that are frequently more powerful.

5.3   Chronotope: What might yet be possible?

A chronotopic analysis of the learners' accounts draws to the fore questions not only about how change happens and who or what effects it, but also about what else might yet be possible. In Bakhtin's ideal literary genre, the novel, there is always the sense that the hero has, in potential at least, more lives than one. This is an effect of the novelistic chronotope in which time is full of possibility; every present moment is shaped by a past (which itself might have taken myriad other trajectories) but nevertheless opens out to an undetermined and undeterminable future. In studying the learners' narratives, I looked for various ways in which they alluded to what might yet be. Expressions of hope about the future are perhaps the most obvious reference to possibility, and so I focus on these in the present discussion. In Gene and Meredith's accounts such expressions are somewhat difficult to find; discouragement is more evident. Gene's future goals are shaky and improbable. Almost to the point of perversity, given that he has been at Inwood for eight years and barely made progress, he states that he doesn't think his goal of becoming a police officer is "too unreachable. I don't see why not." But it's somewhat

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doubtful that this constitutes genuine hopefulness since he then retreats by saying that it will also be okay if he doesn't reach his goal and that life has taught him not to expect too much. (His most optimistic articulation, finally, is his response to my asking him why he participated in the project.) In Meredith's account, the juxtaposition of her struggle for existential grounding, on the one hand, and her daily struggle for mental well-being, on the other, appears to have exhausted her. School plays more of a sustaining role—it allows her to be in a specific place at a specific time and thereby offers her a sense of identity and worth—than a forward-looking one. Arguably, this might still be a form of hopefulness except that she is burned out and contemplates not coming back.

Gloria, Donna, and Natalie do express hope, albeit anchored in different concepts of future time. Thus, Gloria presents the future as a wide vista of possibility. The transformation that school has wrought, showing her that she is "smart," has set her up for the rest of her life, has expanded the future almost limitlessly—she can do anything. She doesn't yet know what "doors" are going to open, what her "future goal" is, but she is eagerly and confidently awaiting it. Donna's optimism is largely tacit but strongly implied in her drive for "more." The future is a steady line of progress as she urges, "School is so important. Keep going, keep going, keep going." Whereto is, for all her planning, still somewhat unclear, however; she just aims to go "further away from where I was." Natalie's experiences with school have led her to render a future of narrowed possibility—school hasn't delivered on its promise of economic betterment and this has meant that the educational options she once imagined have contracted (she has had to plan for a college diploma instead of a university degree) and her progress is stalled (she can't yet afford even the college tuition). The hope that her critical, pragmatic account will still allow her to express—that school has given her "personal freedom" and a better chance of "contributing in a positive way"—is nebulous.

The notion of hope is connected to notions of time as open. Things might be different in the future because change is prescribed in advance, but such prescription closes time. As Bakhtin (1981) argues, utopic (and dystopic) chronotopes, in satisfying a hunger for certainty, "empty out" time: "Eschatology always sees the segment of a future separating the present from the end as lacking value ... [this separating segment] is

merely an unnecessary continuation of an indefinitely prolonged present" (p. 148). The quality of hope captured in the learners' accounts (particularly in Donna's, Gloria's, and Natalie's vague phrases) might thus be viewed as a form of temporal openness to possibility. This does not, of course, automatically mean that the accounts are exemplary models of liberatory educational change or that they can necessarily serve emancipatorily as "catalysts" (Lather, 1991) for change. I want to suggest that, at this point, Bakhtin's theorizing of the future as it grounds the *Bildungsroman*, the narrative of education, may be helpful in connecting narrative to liberatory or emancipatory pedagogy.

In "The *Bildungsroman* and Its Significance in the History of Realism," Bakhtin (1986) argues that the narrative form that best allows for a genuine sense of becoming is "the novel of emergence." Here, he writes, "the organizing force held by the future is ... extremely great" (p. 23). The future is understood by Bakhtin as creative and continuous; people aren't just revealed but grow; their lives don't simply unfold but develop; and people's worlds aren't distantly predetermined but shape people and are shaped by them. As Morson and Emerson (1990) sum up, the future in the novel of emergence lies before the hero, immediate and concrete; the novel of emergence "understands the future—the realm in which real, individual decisions are made—as the 'zone of proximal development'" (p. 411). This allusion to Vygotsky's (1978) concept, defined by him as the distance between the "actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving" and the level of "potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (p. 86), points, I think, to the narrative "place" at which educators might work most fruitfully with learners in the act of narration.

I suggested in the first chapter that liberatory education is not so much about self-determination as about "freeing" learners enough to be able to determine what is in their own interests, beyond immediate gratification and the decrees of others. Cultivating a capacity for choosing well also involves figuring out what is possible in the first place. Thus, guiding or collaborating with learners in questioning and/or developing the immediate and concrete future that their narratives live toward might constitute a good pedagogical response. Donna's determined plans to "keep going," Gloria's expansive

anticipation of what lies behind the metaphorical "doors," and Natalie's tempering of her disillusioned pragmatism with the ideas of "personal freedom" and of "contributing in a positive way"—these might be expanded upon, tinkered with, examined, retraced imaginatively along various potential routes. So, even, might Gene's improbable goals and the tension between the struggles for meaning on the prosaic and the existential scales in Meredith's account. Pedagogically supportive co-narration might include practical help with tangible plans and resources, but would focus, more importantly, on further articulating and critiquing what a learner's narrative suggests is possible. The aim would not be to find some correct solution and a fixed strategy for realizing it, but to become more aware of the role temporality plays in the conceptualization of our identities, lives, and world and to broaden the array of chronicities at our disposal. Not to tell "the right story" but to be able to choose well from among possible stories.

At the risk of undermining the positive drift of this conclusion, I hasten to acknowledge that the potential for problems arising from educators' institutional powers and pedagogical desires is not obviated by these suggestions for educator-learner co-narration; such problems must be the responsibility of educators themselves, at least insofar as critical self-reflection on power and desire can take them. Moreover, Bernstein's (1989) critique of the eulogizing of plurality in dialogism constitutes an especially pertinent warning here:

> How can we be so certain … of our capacity to endure so many other stories … if our hold on the world is already too fugitive for it to be stretched any further? Or what if, in a still darker vision, the dialogues do not open onto a universe of stimulating, vibrant exchanges, but rather deliver us to a vast madhouse whose loudest curse is our own at being thus abandoned? (p. 201)

Still, one single narrative, one single voice is just as likely to lead to violent and oppressive madness, if not more so.

5.4 Further research

Adult literacy learners are a diverse group. The tools developed in this project have been applied to a small number of learners who share early education in Canada and enrolment in a programme leading to a high school diploma. I also interviewed others at Inwood whose different educational backgrounds and goals (see Chapter 3) offer an important source of contrast. Applying the analytical tools to these learners' interviews promises to yield a picture of the narration of educational experiences that has even sharper resolution. The group discussions I conducted will also add dimension to this picture, and the alternate setting for narration offers a means to triangulate the findings in the interviews and magazine pieces, which I also collected. The magazine, entitled *Voices*, offers a good starting point for applying the dialogic approach to narrative proposed here to narration in actual educational settings. As I indicated earlier, contextually "real" narratives proved difficult to come by without being part of teaching and learning environments on a daily basis, but they are essential in gaining a more contextually accurate sense of how narration is practiced in education. It's difficult to say exactly what one might find in terms of narrative in adult education settings. Written accounts can be found in a range of formats, from class assignments to administrative intake forms to photocopied and stapled end-of-year collections of learner writing that many programs put together to printed and bound books with glossy covers that are rarer but not difficult to find. While these are relatively easy to collect, other narrative occasions, especially oral ones such as class discussion, are more difficult to predict and thus difficult to capture. It will be useful to begin studies of narration in education by surveying the range of possible events in which narration takes place.

Finally, since this project is largely about methodologies for taking up narratives, I want to end on a methodological note. The term "narrative research" is applied not only to research about narration or research using narrative as data, but also to research that employs narrative as itself a method of inquiry. Useful introductions to narrative as research include Clandinin & Connelly (2000), Connelly & Clandinin (1990), Ellis & Bochner (2000), and Reason & Hawkins (1988). It has certainly occurred to me that a

reflexive investigation into my own formal education might be of value, and the distinction Ellis and Bochner make between thinking *about* a narrative and thinking *with* a narrative is interesting to consider. In my research, my own narrative might be one way to become more aware of the tacit "lenses" through which I look at adult literacy learners' accounts (as opposed to the more systematic strategies I lay out in the methodology chapter for tracing my influence on the narratives). Insofar as it offers a contrast to the data set in this research, studying my narrative of educational "success" against those of "unsuccessful" learners could conceivably enhance the picture I'm developing. And yet another compelling reason to include my own educational story in the research is that my "presence" in the learners' accounts is by no means exhaustively tapped in this project, and there are other means of conceiving of and investigating it. Frank (1979), in writing about the life history as a form of research, writes:

> The life history may be thought of as a process that blends together the consciousness of the investigator and the subject perhaps to the point where it is not possible to disentangle them. ... If the investigator relies in a primary way on personal resources in understanding the subject of the life history as another person, then in some sense the life history may represent a personal portrait of the investigator as well. This portrait would take the form of a shadow biography, a negative image ... (p. 85)

Behar's (1993) well-known anthropological study *Translated Woman: Crossing the Border with Esperanza's Story* takes on the task of revealing this "shadow biography," this "negative image" by engaging in a phenomenological process of self-comparison with her research subject through self-conscious autobiography.

In the end though, generating one's own story for research purposes *is* an entirely different project than the one I've undertaken here. Seeking phenomenological richness appears incompatible with investigating rhetorical complexity: What kind of performance would "my story to myself" be in contrast to those of the learners speaking to me in an interview (or to each other in a group discussion, or writing for a student publication)? Researching learners' stories and my own story are finally projects best dealt with

separately, though it is possible that eventually they might be brought together in some fruitful way. But I would argue firmly that a rhetorical approach needs to take precedence because of the very concern this research tries to attend to more critically, namely, that the conditions for telling a life, be it through spoken or written words, are unequal in manifold subtle ways.

Appendix 1: Recruitment Poster

Research Project on School Stories

* What is your most vivid memory of grade school?
* Who was the best teacher you had? (How about the not so good ones?)
* What was the best thing you remember reading or writing in high school?
* What kind of education would you want for your child(ren)?
* Where do you see yourself after finishing this program?

These are some of the questions I would like to ask students in ABE and ASSC English classes at Inwood as part of my research.

I am a student at Simon Fraser University, and I am currently working on my doctoral research project. My project focuses on stories about educational experiences and goals as told by students who have come back to school as adults.

Would you like to take part in this project?

Participants would take part in a one-on-one interview. This would take anywhere from half-an-hour to an hour. (A possible follow-up interview might also be scheduled.) Participants would be asked to take part, as well, in a small-group discussion (again, lasting no more than one hour).

I will be visiting Inwood at the following times to talk more about my research and to answer questions: Thursday, April 3, between 10 and 11 am; Monday, April 7, and Wednesday, April 9, between noon and 1 pm.

In the meantime, <u>if you would like to find out more or would like to be contacted about participating, pick up an information letter and contact form at the sign-in desk by the office</u> or see L_____ or S_____ for a copy.

I look forward to meeting you,
Anneke van Enk

Appendix 2: Interview Prompts

- Tell me about how you got here.

- What is your most vivid memory from your early school years? from your high school years?

- Tell me about the teachers who were the most and least successful in helping you learn.

- What would you say were the most and least important things you learned at school?

- Tell me about memories you have of reading and writing when you were younger. (*If the interviewee only brings up school memories in response*: Was school the only place you read and/or wrote?)

- What was the best thing you read at school? What was the best thing you wrote?

- Who do you know that is a good reader? A good writer? Tell me about them.

- What interfered with success at school?

- Describe the kind of education you would want for your child.

- What do you hope to gain from this program? Where do you see yourself after finishing?

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