2000

Discovering self-knowledge as a transformative learning process

Stephanie Chiv Quach
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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31979/etd.zh35-qbh9>
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**DISCOVERING SELF-KNOWLEDGE AS A TRANSFORMATIVE
LEARNING PROCESS**

A Thesis

Presented To

The Faculty of the Division of Teacher Education

San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

By

Stephanie Chiv Quach

August 2000

UMI Number: 1400675

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ABSTRACT

DISCOVERING SELF-KNOWLEDGE AS A TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING PROCESS

By Stephanie Chiv Quach

California's unexpected teacher shortage in 1996 was initiated by the class-size reduction in grades K-3. In response districts issued emergency permits to anyone with a bachelor's degree, a passing California Basic Education Test score, and a passing fingerprint check. This thesis provides insight into emergency permit teachers who bring with them a myriad of life experiences that hold potential to provide a rich learning environment in the classroom. It also looks at this group as they simultaneously face the demands of teaching their students and learning from others (and themselves). Through the Accelerated Professional Education for eXcellence (APEX) Program at San José State University, this group of candidates learns how to maximize their potential through the teaching credential coursework. As a researcher, I am seeking a deeper awareness of the group's understanding of the "self" as they grapple with being uncredentialed teachers while attending classes in the APEX learning community.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This thesis would not have been completed without the loving support and encouragement of the many special people in my life whom I will be forever grateful.

First, I want to thank my advisors, Dr. Carolyn Nelson, Dr. Victoria Harper, Dr. Kristeen Pemberton, and Dr. Cynthia Sammet whose joint enthusiasm helped me accomplish so much during my own transformational learning process.

Second, I want to thank my sister, Karen (who was always by my side and reminded me the importance of accomplishing this goal), my high school teacher, Mrs. Carole Hersom (who always believed in me), and my UCLA college professor Dr. Susan Mach (who always offered me words of wisdom when I felt discouraged).

Third, I wish to thank my husband, Vincent (Hung), for his love, patience, and endless support.

Fourth, I wish to thank my sponsors Kathy and Paul Hoekenga, and Jen Khau (my father's niece) for bringing my family and I to America. Their hard work and determination has enabled me to appreciate the true meaning of freedom and a better life.

Ultimately, I am grateful for my parents, David and Huoy Chiv, who have always encouraged me to continue in my educational path and reach for the highest goal possible. I can never fully express my gratitude to them for sacrificing everything they had when they escaped from Cambodia, thus allowing me the gift of a better life in America. When my dad passed away in February 1997, I made a promise that I would continue to live up to his high expectations. I hope that I've made him proud.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page Number
CHAPTER	
I REFLECTIONS OF A RESEACRHER.....	1
A First Day in First Grade: A Patient Hand Extended.....	1
The Circle Comes Around.....	3
II CRITICAL RESEARCH PROBLEM.....	12
Introduction.....	12
Historical Frame of Emergency Permits.....	13
The Accelerated Professional Education for eXcellence Program.....	16
Emergency Permit Workers.....	16
III REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE.....	19
Introduction.....	19
Self-Knowledge.....	20
Community of Learners.....	24
Personal Narratives.....	28
IV CRITICAL RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....	34
General Research Perspective.....	34
Research Questions.....	35
Research Participants.....	36
Qualitative Research.....	37
Dialogic Retrospection.....	39
Data Collection.....	41
Field notes.....	41
Interviews.....	42
First Interview.....	42
Second and Third Interview.....	44

	Data Analysis and Interpretation.....	44
V	PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA.....	46
	Introduction.....	46
	Narratives of Emergency Permit Teachers.....	46
	Tracy Tucker.....	46
	Robert Manor.....	49
	Karen Fisher.....	54
	Brenda Diaz.....	56
	Chris Taylor.....	61
	Janet Mars.....	64
	Sara Tran.....	68
	Lynn Conners.....	72
	Reaching an Understanding.....	75
	Discovering Themes of Understanding.....	77
	Self-Knowledge and Identity.....	77
	Community of Learners.....	83
	Transformational Learning Through Examining Personal Narratives.....	89
VI	CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	95
	Conclusion.....	95
	Recommendations for Reflection and Renewal.....	99
	Transformation of a Researcher.....	102
	EPILOGUE.....	104
	REFERENCES	105

CHAPTER ONE

REFLECTIONS OF A RESEARCHER

I realize the circularity of my case – but that is precisely how the spiritual life moves, in circles that have no beginning or end, where, as Eliot writes, we “arrive where we started/And know the place for the first time.” The only question is whether we choose to stand outside of the circle or within (Palmer 1998, 58).

A First Day in First Grade: A Patient Hand Extended

My family and I have endured a difficult journey to finally escape “the killing fields” of Cambodia. The opportunity to have a free and public education has brought me to this point in my life where my parents’ sacrifices have truly led to my success and provided me with the courage and persistence to always do my best. As an adult, I am able to reflect on my immigration to the United States and recall my parents’ difficult struggle for freedom and their determination to seek out a better life – one that would include education for my sister and me and the generations that would follow.

I was six years old, turning seven. I could barely speak a word of English as I entered my first American educational experience with my first grade teacher. I had been taught how to say, “Hello my name is Chak Nay (my given name); How are you?” (spoken with a thick Chinese accent, of course). These few words had been taught to me by my American teacher in the Philippines and it brought me a bit closer to my new classmates and teacher. Although I did not verbally communicate my thoughts well, I

was able to understand that everyone was putting out a great deal of effort to help me learn to speak English.

My first grade teacher, Mrs. Smith will always remain in the back of my mind because of her patience, pleasant smile and warm hugs. When I first arrived in the class, I felt terribly afraid of Mrs. Smith and the other students but she gently held out her hand and took me to a table at the front of the room where a few other children sat. She introduced me to the children and motioned toward a tiny chair. I looked around for more clarification. She saw my eyes begin to tear and offered me a warm hug of comfort. I still cried.

I remember her encouraging words and gestures. She complemented me for every little effort I made to speak or understand English. Then she said something to the class. A few hands raised. I scanned the room and saw many smiling faces looking at me. All of a sudden, I felt the desire to raise my hand as well. When I did, Mrs. Smith wrote something on the board. She did this again several times. I did what my classmates did. Mrs. Smith smiled at me and patted my back for being able to join the classroom “discussion” and I smiled back filled with pride. In my head I thought, “My teacher has noticed me and is happy for me.” Raising my hand was something I did well, whether I understood the purpose for raising my hand or not. I found it something that was fun. Mrs. Smith always smiled and praised me when she saw that my hand was raised. It was not until a few days later that I realized what I had done when I raised my hand for the very first time.

Early in December, my sponsor, Kristen, came to pick me up to take me to her house for extra tutoring, a routine that continued for a couple of months because she

wanted to help my sister and me improve our English language skills. The extra tutoring was very helpful for both of us. Mrs. Smith explained to Kristen that my birthday was coming up and she was wondering if Kristen would like to bring birthday treats for the class. Kristen was surprised. Thinking she had overlooked my birthday she told Mrs. Smith that she would talk to my mom. What had happened was Mrs. Smith was asking students who had a birthday in December. Not understanding, I had raised my hand to share with my class. My birthday was not until February! I'm sure Mrs. Smith found the entire misunderstanding amusing, as I do now when I recall the incident. She did not however, lower my self-esteem by telling the class that I had misunderstood, but played the game with me and celebrated my "birthday." By the end of that school year, I was willing and eager to share in class, help others, and try to communicate in many ways with Mrs. Smith and my classmates. Sometimes, a little encouragement can go a long way!

The Circle Comes Around

When I began working with children at the local YMCA's preschool, I realized how much I enjoyed working with children. I especially enjoyed the daily hugs and affection that I received. But most of all, I enjoyed observing their development as the years progressed. Some wanted attention, while others wanted to be alone. I remember Jessica when she first entered preschool. She was very outgoing and got into everything! She insisted on having things done her way or no way at all. The other teachers did not want to work with her because they labeled her the "child from hell." I extended my hand to her as I allowed her to come closer to me. Although she often insisted on having things her way, I was able to negotiate my ideas with hers. Jessica used to sing a song

her mom had taught her, while everyone was napping. It was particularly difficult to get Jessica to take naps. No matter how hard I tried she insisted that she was not tired and would rather sing a song. While everyone else was napping or resting she would sing quietly to herself, “Qué será será, whatever will be will be. The future’s not ours to see. Qué será será...” She was only three years old and she sang this song beautifully; some words were accurate and others were made-up. It was *her* song and we all loved listening to her until she, too, finally fell asleep on her mat.

My enthusiasm to work with young children grew with this experience as I became more aware of each child’s unique personalities. I wanted to be able to provide each individual the personal attention they needed as Mrs. Smith had done for me. I wanted to somehow make a difference in their lives. I continued my work with children through an internship program at De Anza College and later at UCLA. Children were enjoying my company just as much as I was enjoying theirs. I was clearly doing something right. I was learning from them as they learned from me. For instance, as my students learned how to read from an easy reader, I learned what I could do to help them learn to read. As they learned how to tie their shoe laces, I learned the many tricks their parents had taught them. It is amazing how many different ways children tie shoelaces!

My decision to become a teacher was built on my memories of Mrs. Smith and my experience working with children. I wanted to be able to help children by giving them the confidence to learn. I wanted to be able to provide for my students what Mrs. Smith had provided for me. I wanted to be able to foster their eagerness to learn.

After graduating from UCLA, I was offered a teaching position in Exploration School a private school in San Jose. I jumped at the opportunity! At a new teacher

workshop I was handed a thick manual describing what I was required to teach each month. When I first looked through the manual, I was relieved to see how much of the school year was already planned for me. I was confident that I was going to have a successful year. How could I not have a successful year when I had so much information already provided for me? I thought, “that’s great!” I now had a manual to follow and could check off accordingly each month. I used that manual as if it was my Bible.

Not only did I have a handy manual to follow; my teaching partner was an experienced second grade teacher who I was told, “knew all the tricks of the trade.” For the first month, she insisted that I observe her teaching methods, rather than do any teaching myself. She felt that observing was the best way for me to learn. My responsibilities were limited to observing her and taking notes. She decided after some time to “give up” a few subject areas for me to teach. She watched me closely as I began to teach. Every Thursday she handed me a copy of “her” lesson plans and I was allowed to add what I was going to teach. She said not a word to me, unless she found that I had made a mistake. Throughout those first few months, she did little to encourage me. She assumed I was doing fine because I was following my curriculum guide and using the books provided by the school. As far as she was concerned, I had all the materials and guidance I needed. Halfway through the year, however, a first grade teacher left the school; I was “offered” her classroom.

The first grade classroom was quite a challenge for me. I had to learn a whole new set of curriculum guides and teach students who were identified as the “wild class.” Apparently, I was offered the job because no one else wanted it. Another teacher told me that a substitute teacher left after one day with the students and warned the principal

never to call her again for “that class.” It shocked me at first to hear anyone say such a thing about a group of children. At this school the administrators and most of the teachers did not tolerate children who were too energetic and I have to admit that these students were very active and had a great deal of energy. Thus, I had been sent into the classroom to “control” them and make them “behave.”

Being a new teacher, I wasn’t sure what was expected of me. I stayed up late each evening trying to figure out how I could make it through the school year. My mom helped me grade papers while I stared at my lesson plan book. So many lessons needed to be taught in such a short a time. I cried for days for fear of getting fired. I felt incompetent and unable to meet my principal’s expectations. When I had first entered the first grade classroom, I thought I could take care of business on my own. Now I found myself quite dazed and confused. I was aware that I had to follow the manuals and take control of my class, but was unsure how I would actually *do* it. Eventually, I sought advice from my colleagues who were very sympathetic and offered suggestions on how to get my students to focus. My mentor teacher suggested that I write a long poem on the board and ask students who finished first to copy the poem down in their best printing. Where would the poem go? What exactly was I to do with the poems afterwards? They told me to be forceful with the students and show them who was “in charge.” I tried to become “tough” with them. I told myself I needed to be “tough” in order to help them re-focus their attention. By the end of the year I had earned the title of the “tamer,” who tamed this first grade class. I was not sure how I felt about this title, but accepted the “honor” and was given a bonus the following year. After a second year of teaching in this context, I felt I needed to re-focus my sights on my own goals.

I had walked into my classroom thinking that I would “deposit” knowledge into my students (Freire 1970, 53). I never once stopped to think about what they wanted to do. Soon my students knew exactly what they were to do like machines in the classroom. Reflecting on my first year of teaching, I realize that I “taught” without actually “teaching.” Not once did I ask them what they wanted to do, because everything was already planned for me and for them. Why should I ask students what they wanted to learn or how to complete a task? I felt that I was the one in charge and that I could not lower myself to ask them for help. I never engaged in personal conversations with my students.

I walked in my class believing I could win my students over with my sincerity. I told them I wanted to help them learn. I rewarded many with stickers and pencils for completing work on time. A few students made it difficult for me to remain patient. Jeremy kept me on my toes. Rewards did not encourage him to focus on his work. He enjoyed talking to others and was unflapped if he turned in incomplete paperwork. I continued to praise whatever work he accomplished on time. Nevertheless, he would rather distract others from completing their work and others were amused with his actions and joined him in whatever activity he was engaged in. For example, one day he decided to stop work and fold paper airplanes and the class joined him. I asked Jeremy to get back to work and encouraged all the children to complete their work so that they would be able to leave for recess on time. I tried to be patient. I approached the situation with a calm demeanor. That did not work so I yelled until they could no longer ignore me. Because this method worked, I thought this was what I was expected to do in a classroom. I continued to believe that my colleagues’ advice to be forceful was correct

and warranted because of my active class. Little did I know that I was oppressing my students who were only asking for time to express themselves. I did not stop to think that hours of sitting at a desk could be quite frustrating for children (even adults)!

It was at this point that I entered the Critical Research Academy at San José State to begin my credential and masters work. As I joined the group I was perplexed by other Academy students discussing how they were worried about oppressing students. They wanted to know what they could do to provide their students with democratic classrooms. Their theoretical discussions perplexed me. I constantly reassured myself that I had not oppressed my students. After all, I had to do what I had to do.

The Academy classes however, challenged me to think critically and consciously about education and my own role as a teacher. When I was asked to engage in reading and conversation that questioned my assumptions, I wondered how I would reconcile these new ideas with what I had seen and actually done while teaching at Exploration School. At times I felt ashamed that I had not thought critically about the students I was hired to teach and about *their* overall impact on *my* learning process. I had never stopped to consider how I had influenced my students through my own unquestioned assumptions. Over the course of my program I slowly came to recognize what we had learned was a “paradigm shift” where I was beginning to comprehend the complexities of education and my role as an educator.

As I began student teaching I had new opportunities to work with children of all ages and ethnic backgrounds and to see that the children who walked into the classroom had rich and unique stories to tell. I began to focus on them as individuals and became vitally intrigued by a few. Chris was a shy and quiet first grader. He liked to sit in the

back of the room, even during group carpet time. Coming from a large family and living with his extended family, he seemed to like being by himself when he was at school. He did enjoy working with others but only when *he* saw fit. Unfortunately, my supervising teacher did not seem to know Chris or notice his unique ways of being. She would become annoyed with him because he would not speak up in class. One day she stopped the class and said, “I will wait for you to give me an answer that is loud and clear.” She waited and waited. He sat quietly staring at her and the children sitting around him. In a quiet voice, he muttered something to her. She shrugged her shoulders, gave up and moved on to the next item on her agenda. There were times when his eyes began to fill with tears as he was barraged with her harsh remarks. She did not seem to notice. Perhaps she did not know how to handle the situation. Maybe she didn’t care. Chris was very neat and particular with his schoolwork, but his teacher would tell him to “hurry up or you will miss recess.” He would become frustrated and write quickly. Then, realizing how messy his paperwork was he would erase and start all over again. During erasing and rushing, he inevitably would rip his paper. Then he would quietly cry at his desk. I mentioned to the teacher that Chris was particular with his letter formations. It was only then that she seemed to realize that she was often too harsh with him. Observing Chris closely allowed me the opportunity to reflect on my own role as a teacher and gave me the opportunity to do what I should have done when I taught at the private school – think about how my identity as a teacher affected my professional practice. This insight brought to mind Freire’s (1970) contention that education should not be accomplished through the “banking system” where teachers see their students as ignorant souls waiting for knowledge to be poured into them.

How can self-knowledge such as I had experienced through examining my own narrative affect the lives of teachers? Later as a graduate research assistant I was able to work with emergency permit teachers who were in a similar position to my private school experience. After linking my own narrative to my experience in the classroom, I was particularly interested in their stories and how their personal narratives were reflected in their teaching. I felt connected to the participants of the Accelerated Professional Education for eXcellence Program (APEX). I began to realize how similar our stories were.

I had felt that my teaching experiences at Exploration School had given me the right to claim that I already knew how to teach when I first entered into a credentialing program. I felt that I had the recipe knowledge to “tame” Room 11 and thus, would not have difficulties teaching anywhere else. I did not believe that I would gain much from a credential program; it was merely a bureaucratic hurdle placed between me and my right to teach. After all, I was already a teacher! APEX students, too, considered themselves teachers, not “emergency permit workers.”

Although emergency permit teachers provoked discussions in the literature, articles were rarely written to inform the public about this particular group. What were their strengths? What were their needs? Were they different from a conventional pre-service population?

Over the year, after having worked with the APEX students I have come to see this group differently from the negative publicity they have received in the press. For example, in writing about teachers Bazeley in the San José Mercury News (1999) states, “the most troubling issue... was the link between low performing schools and

inexperienced teachers, those with an ‘emergency’ permit”(1A). For this reason, he states, emergency permits should be “phased out.” My conversations with the APEX students, however, have opened the door to a whole new understanding of the emergency credential teacher for me. I hope that this thesis research will shed light on the challenges and potential of emergency permit teachers. It is my hope that these participants can inform the field of teacher education and school administrators about the rich resources these courageous individuals bring into their classrooms.

CHAPTER TWO

CRITICAL RESEARCH PROBLEM

The courage to teach is the courage to keep one's heart open in those very moments when the heart is asked to hold more than it is able so that teacher and students and subject can be woven into the fabric of community that learning, and living, require (Palmer 1998, 11).

Introduction

This study investigates the experiences of emergency permit teachers by examining their personal narratives in an effort to uncover their self identity and how their understanding of the self is reflected in their classroom practice. This investigation employs qualitative methods including informal conversations, formal interviews, and examination of documents and artifacts to gain insight into the experiences of these participants in an effort to inform and guide the APEX Program.

As I became involved with the Accelerated Professional Education for eXcellence Program (APEX) at San José State University, I thought most of the candidates were teaching because they could not find other jobs. As a graduate research assistant I was impatient with their complaining about their teaching positions, their coursework, and their personal lives.

Many elected to participate in the APEX credential program because they felt there were no other choices. As emergency permits holders they were required to engage in at least six units of credential coursework during the year. Rather than enrolling in the

conventional credential program, many opted for the APEX Program because they heard it was an accelerated alternative. My first interactions with the group led me to believe they did not care what they would learn from the program, as long as they were able to walk away with a credential in less time than other candidates at San José State. Many felt they were already qualified to teach, did not think they needed additional coursework, and believed they should be waived from as many classes as possible. They often viewed the credentialing program as an obstacle rather than a support to their success.

Historical Frame of Emergency Permits

In the summer of 1996, the state of California legislature mandated class sizes to be reduced to a student-to-teacher ratio of 20 to 1 in grades K-3 (Turley and Nakai 1998, 40). This mandate, led by the hopes and concerns of parents, teachers, and community leaders interested in lessening the detrimental effects of large class size on learning for young children, created a major dilemma for school district administrators. With the passage of the mandate to reduce class size, districts encountered an immediate shortage of “qualified” credentialed teachers (Turley and Nakai 1998, 40). Steve Turley and Karen Nakai define a qualified teacher as one who has completed all necessary coursework through an accredited credentialing program, be it private or public, and has also applied for a credential through the state. As Anne Lewis (1999) states,

... a qualified elementary teacher must demonstrate knowledge and teaching skills in reading, writing, math, science, and any other areas of the elementary school curriculum. Secondary teachers must be highly competent in all subjects they teach, either holding a college major in the subject or passing a rigorous test. These requirements are in addition to being fully licensed (6).

Turley and Nakai (1999) state,

When class-size reduction hit California schools in the summer of 1996, there was an immediate teacher shortage that presented preservice teacher education with a

set of dilemmas carrying short and long-term implications. In their haste to hire teachers to reduce class sizes in the primary grades to a 20 to 1 ratio for the opening of the school year, school districts tapped several sources of potential teachers (1).

The pool of potential hires many school districts sought to recruit included any, according to Turley and Nakai, “warm body” interested in working with children (1998, 179).

School districts, responding to the pressure to hire sufficient numbers of teachers, began requesting temporary or emergency permits from the state for anyone willing to accept a full-time teaching position. For example, a principal,

desperate to find replacements for half of her staff... approached a group at a shopping mall (all of whom, she said, looked like teachers) [and] pleaded for [them to complete] applications on the spot (Lewis 1999, 5).

Although many of those hired did not hold teaching credentials, the incentive to work in their own classroom and earn a paycheck while they learned “on-the-job” was a strong selling point. As a full-time teacher they would have all the rights, benefits and responsibilities that veteran teachers had without first meeting educational preparation requirements. Many were also under the mostly false impression that they would have a support group to turn to in times of need.

In California and across the nation as demands for teachers continue to grow, so do the number of students. According to Chris Phipo (1998), “U.S. Census Bureau projections (from 1990 to 2005) show a 12% population increase among the elementary school population (ages 5-13)” (182).

According to Jeff Taylor (1999), “The Department of Education estimates there are about 50,000 teachers nationwide with emergency certification” (12). In California alone, the Department of Education estimates that there are 35,000 individuals teaching with emergency permits, of which 25,000 are first year teachers (California Department

of Education, 1999). However alarming these statistics may be, the issuing of emergency permits appear to be the most practical option for districts to take at this point, as schools cannot start the year without teachers in the classroom. Further, the issuing of emergency permits is not a temporary condition as evidenced in an article in *PR Newswire*, which states that,

California will need as many as 300,000 credentialed teachers over the next decade because of teacher retirements, class size reduction, and increased student enrollment (8360).

This study includes comments made by emergency permit workers that explore the gap between the needs of school districts to staff classrooms with uncredentialed workers and the desire of these uncredentialed candidates to seek a high quality preparation program that will accommodate their special needs and concerns.

Through personal narratives told by emergency permit workers we can better comprehend the numerous roles that emergency permit workers must play. Thus, this study will mainly focus on the personal narratives told by emergency permit workers as a way to help them better comprehend their experiences as first year teachers.

In Chapter Three, Review of the Literature, I focus on Parker Palmer's view of self-knowledge, which can help teachers redefine themselves as teachers and as learners. I then introduce the concept of community as presented by Thomas Sergiovanni, to explain the unique circumstances that bond the members of the APEX community and allow them to strive for a common goal. Last, I review Jerome Bruner's work, which discusses the concept of narratives as a way to better connect the lives of teachers and students. The fourth chapter describes the methodology I used to gather, record and analyze the narratives as told by emergency permit workers, and discuss why a

qualitative research approach was needed to uncover the complex ideas presented by the APEX students/emergency permit workers. The fifth chapter provides a critical analysis of the data. The sixth and final chapter allow me to provide recommendations.

The Accelerated Professional Education for eXcellence Program (APEX)

The Accelerated Professional Education for eXcellence Program (APEX Program) at San José State University is a credentialing program designed to offer emergency permit workers an opportunity to earn a California Preliminary Multiple Subject Teaching Credential through intensive coursework concurrent with teaching in their own classrooms. For most of the candidates, working with emergency permits was their first experience teaching. Some have had full-time positions as substitutes and were subsequently hired in full-year positions. Others had less preparation. All however, were hired on the condition that they enroll in an approved teacher-credentialing program. Because most teacher credential programs are designed for traditional pre-service candidates a new program configuration was needed to meet the scheduling requirements presented by these emergency permit workers. In response to this need, the APEX Program was designed by Dr. Carolyn Nelson in collaboration with university colleagues, school district representatives and community members to provide emergency permit workers opportunity to learn the necessary methods, theories, and foundations of teaching while working in their own classrooms.

Emergency Permit Workers

One cannot truly call a person a doctor if she has not fully earned the title. A doctor must successfully complete an accredited program and serve as an intern under the supervision of experienced personnel which then renders her the right and the privilege to

practice medicine. However, without completing the entire program, a person is still practicing as an intern under the supervision of experienced personnel. In contrast to this internship model of education for doctors, emergency permit workers in education are placed in the same roles and responsibilities as fully credentialed teachers.

Emergency permit workers are, however, expected to work toward completing a credential while engaged in a classroom. Unfortunately they are often given relatively little supervision or oversight. This creates frustration for them as they struggle to juggle both their roles, as a “teacher” and also as a university student seeking a credential. For example, Robert, a university student and emergency permit workers states,

As a new teacher you just kind of walk around in a daze and there’s a lot that gets forgotten. [Y]ou really don’t know what you’re doing the first three months of school. You kind of find out as you walk into it.

While some schools offer emergency permit workers mentors as support, others do not. In these contexts emergency permit workers are left to “fend for themselves” and often find themselves frustrated, at times giving up any hopes of completing their first year of teaching successfully.

Robert anticipated working for a “poverty stricken area” because he was hired close to the beginning of the school year with an emergency permit. He knew that he would have to prepare himself to teach in a low socioeconomic community because of this emergency permit status, and feared working as he put it, with “aggressive, violent students.” When he was hired to teach, he assumed that he would get support and everything that he needed in light of his first year status. To his surprise and disappointment, he walked into an empty classroom. He was shocked that he was not

informed of meetings and was not told where to go to get necessary supplies for his classroom. Such events are very discouraging and disheartening for new teachers.

From my study, I have learned that emergency permit workers pursue a career in teaching for many reasons. Those involved with the APEX Program include emergency permit workers who are seeking a change in their career path. Some decided that teaching America's children is a way to escape the fast paced world of other occupations. Some entered the field of education to seek more gratification from their job, while others felt that teaching is a temporary stepping stone in their career path. And yet another group of candidates viewed teaching as a transition from college to the real working world. The numerous characteristics that can be used to describe these candidates will be found in chapters four and five, where I discuss in greater detail the participants who are involved in this study.

CHAPTER THREE

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

When I was young and did not know who I was, I needed someone to *model* (emphasis added) the intellectual gift that might be mine. But now, in midlife, knowing myself better, my identity demands that I use my gift in interaction and interdependence with others (Palmer 1998, 24).

Introduction

Teachers are asked to do a great deal, yet some believe teaching is an easy job and do not consider teaching to be a profession. They may even view teaching as a last resort for a career, rather than a choice to be carefully made. As Linda Darling-Hammond, Arthur E. Wise, and Stephen P. Klein (1995) point out,

The view of teaching as semiskilled work requiring little more than basic literacy skills and the ability to follow guidelines encapsulated in the text and curriculum materials is a time-honored one. From popular cartoons illustrating teaching as a simplistic and mind-numbing activity to teacher-proof materials that assume teachers' activities can be easily programmed by directives about what to do when, the image of teaching as requiring little knowledge or skill is widespread (16).

Darling-Hammond, Wise, and Klein (1995), countering this simplistic view claim,

Teaching is an intense activity. Teachers must simultaneously juggle subject matter; the lesson's underlying cognitive, social, and affective goals; the management of time, materials, and equipment; and the needs and responses of individual students. They must be aware of how students are working and be alert to signs of misunderstanding or confusion while seizing the "teachable moment" for pursuing a key point when students are ready to grasp it. They must skillfully manage transitions among activities so as not to lose students' attention and momentum. They must attend to health and safety concerns as well as cognitive

ones, understanding home and family circumstances to create appropriate classroom conditions for learning (18).

First year teachers may question how they can successfully teach their students without a formal educational background knowledge on teaching. Ironically, they do not stop to think that what they have (their personal understanding of the self) is worth contributing to their classrooms. Many think that what they personally bring to their classroom is not pertinent to daily lessons, believing that techniques and specific lessons practiced during university coursework are what they will need the most. However, exclusive dependence on techniques and styles of teaching can sometimes hinder teachers in their classrooms. To fully understand techniques, teachers according to Palmer (1998) should also know themselves.

Through discovering more about themselves, teachers may be able to view their unique lives as being just as pertinent in the classroom, as their students' individual lives. There are useful ideas, which can assist in encouraging teachers to share with their students and each other their personal narratives.

Self-Knowledge

My identity is the first and crucial step in finding new ways to teach: nothing I do differently as a teacher will make any difference to anyone if it is not rooted in my nature (Palmer 1998, 71).

Palmer (1998) provides an inspirational view of how teachers can look beyond the unexamined socialization process of teaching and seize the opportunity to discover a sense of self that already exists within every one of us, but that many fear to explore or uncover. Palmer (1998/99) suggests that teachers “explore the spiritual dimensions of teaching, learning, and living” (8) and seek a deeper view of learning and teaching that

goes beyond what many think is good teaching. By introducing the notion of spirituality into education, Palmer believes teachers might become more aware of themselves as learners and educators of the future. Palmer (1998) states,

By “spiritual” I do not mean the creedal formulations of any faithful tradition, as much as I respect those traditions and as helpful as their insights can be. I mean the ancient and abiding human quest for connectedness with something larger and more trustworthy than our egos - with our own souls, with one another, with the worlds of history and nature, with the invisible winds of the spirit, with the mystery of being alive (6).

Palmer insists that the concept of God does not necessarily have to enter the classroom. He is neither advocating the teaching of religion, nor stating that religion is not an important part of education. Rather, the purpose of spirituality is to help teachers assist their students in connecting with the “largeness of life” (Palmer 1998, 6). Spirituality helps individuals to look deeper within their souls to uncover why they do what they do and why they are who they are. Palmer (1998) recommends that teachers focus more on themselves as teachers and how their thinking can influence their students.

Many teachers tend to define good teaching as being well-prepared and having the proper materials, rather than recognizing that good teaching might come from within themselves. Instead Palmer (1998) claims teachers should focus on why they chose teaching as a career in order to understand how they can help their students learn. They must first understand the dynamics behind their career choice, before they can explore the qualities of good teaching. Palmer (1998) implies that,

many of us become teachers for reasons of the heart, animated by a passion for some subject and for helping people learn. But many of us lose heart as the years of teaching go by (17).

Thus, teachers should define and understand their desire to teach so that they can further focus on what they can bring to their students in the learning process. By reflecting on

their own understandings of their motives for being teachers they can project a self that is more “human” than the mechanistic personality that teaches from a text or a well organized lesson plan.

In finding out more about themselves, teachers can uncover ways to connect their lives with their teaching. Rather than looking for the perfect method or technique to teach, Palmer (1998) believes teachers should focus on what they can bring that is unique and engaging to a lesson. Palmer (1998) states “good teaching cannot be reduced to techniques; good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher.” (10) When teachers rely on techniques, their teaching becomes distant from their identity, the very reason they chose to teach in the first place. Palmer (1998) claims that when teachers focus too much on techniques, their words “become the balloon speech in cartoons” (Palmer 1998, 17). The desire they bring to teaching is then overshadowed by another’s technique that has to be mastered. Identity, as defined by Palmer (1998), is the genetic make-up of a person and all that comes with being who a person is. Integrity is the ability to discern between what is important and what is not. By looking more into identity and integrity, teachers are better able to go through the process of self-discovery.

As teachers moving beyond craft knowledge they help their students see who they are as human beings. Palmer (1998) also affirmed that the connections teachers make with their students “are held not in their methods but in their hearts.” (11) Palmer (1998) declares,

Teaching, like any truly human activity, emerges from one’s inwardness, for better or worse. As I teach, I project the condition of my soul onto my students, my subject, and our way of being together. The entanglements I experience in the classroom are often no more or less than the convolutions of my inner life. Viewed from this angle, teaching holds a mirror to the soul. If I am willing to look in that mirror and not run from

what I see, I have a chance to gain self-knowledge – and knowing myself is as crucial to good teaching as knowing my students and my subject (2).

Teachers who rely on recipes distance themselves from their teaching and are fearful of their profession. They often hide behind their manuals, follow the status quo, and teach students without passion. In this way they lose sight of their students, and their practice becomes a mere job that must be complete to reach the end of the day. Palmer (1998) claims,

When we reject that with which we cannot become intimate, our lives are diminished. We need a standard more encompassing than intimacy by which to affirm that a relationship- with people, nature, or ideas- has meaning (91).

In distancing themselves from students and the subject being taught, many teachers feel that they are minimizing the danger of exposing their own views and opinions thus avoiding potential embarrassment or ridicule.

By distancing themselves from their students, subjects, and selves, teachers fail to gain self-knowledge. Self-knowledge enables teachers to look beyond the status quo, the often negative socialization that they have learned, and to take on a more powerful stance toward teaching. Palmer (1998) pronounces,

As important as methods may be, the most practical thing we can achieve in any kind of work is happening inside us as we do it. The more familiar we are with our inner terrain, the more surefooted our teaching – and living – becomes (5).

Palmer (1998) further claims that good methods will only be helpful to those who understand the reasons behind the “technique.” When teachers maintain the status quo, they also teach their students to uncritically accept the status quo. Palmer (1998) charges,

When we distance ourselves from something, it becomes an object; when it becomes an object, it no longer has life; when it is lifeless it cannot touch or transform us... (51-52).

When teachers fail to examine their taken-for-granted assumptions they do not allow themselves to look beyond what has already been set forth for them. They continue therefore, to unconsciously or perhaps even consciously, encourage their students and other teachers to accept the norms without protest. In accepting the notion that opinions do not matter, teachers disempower students from further success in a world that throws out numerous ideas and assumptions that should not always be accepted.

In recognizing and discussing their own learning processes teachers can better grasp what they can do to help themselves and their students. Through self-reflection teachers can come to better understand themselves, their desire to teach, and their plans to move beyond “teaching to techniques.”

Palmer (1998) states,

Whatever self-knowledge we attain as teachers will serve our students and our scholarship well. Good teaching requires self-knowledge: it is a secret hidden in plain sight (3).

Thus, within all teachers is the ability to discover their own inner self, take their “new found” knowledge (that has always been there) and offer students the opportunity to also discover the subject being taught in a unique way.

Community of Learners

Relationships within a community of mind are based not on contracts but on understandings about what is shared and on the emerging web of obligations to embody that which is shared (Sergiovanni, 1994, 7).

Today, many are torn by the ideas of individualism and community involvement. In order to get something done, many feel they must do it themselves; others feel they must ask for the assistance of others. Rather than choosing between these two ideas

Sergiovanni (1994) suggests there should be a balance between the two. Sergiovanni (1994) suggests that often what “I” cannot do on my own, “we” can easily accomplish as a “community.” Sergiovanni (1994) describes a community as

The connection of people to purpose and the connection among people [which] are not based on contracts but commitments. Communities are socially organized around relationships and the felt interdependencies that nurture them. ... Communities are defined by the centers of values, sentiments, and beliefs that provide the needed conditions for creating a sense of “we” from “I” (4).

In a community, participants share a common goal and are committed to accomplish that goal together. Taking part in such a community requires that participants be committed to the group, rather than the self. Sergiovanni (1994) introduces the German phrases *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft* to juxtapose these views of community, stating,

Gemeinschaft, according to Tonnes, comes from the unity of being. ... [It] is the sharing of a common habitat or locale. As a result of the common membership and this sense of belonging, my being is enlarged from “I” to “we.” [It is also] the bonding together of people that results from their mutual binding to a common goal. [It] further strengthens the “we” identity (6).

While *Gesellschaft* refers to the focus on the community as a “contractual relationship.”

Sergiovanni (1994) explains that in *gesellschaft*,

Society becomes less sacred. ... Life becomes more impersonal. Connections among people and between them and their institutions become more contrived. Meaning and significance in life become more difficult to find (8-9).

In education, a *gemeinschaft* community can be lost when first year teachers feel isolated from their colleagues because of their low status. Veteran teachers may be unwilling to share ideas and work with novices fearing ridicule or believing their ideas are personal property. Fear of sharing ideas with others in the learning community can quickly result in isolation and a feeling of loneliness. For this very reason, in order to

create learning communities teachers must transition from a *gesellschaft* to a *gemeinschaft* community. Bellah et al. (1985) describes this process stating,

Many people feel empty and don't know why they feel empty. The reason is [that] we are all social animals and we must live and interact and work together in community to become fulfilled. ...Loneliness is a national feeling (158).

The conflict of individualism and community involvement often leads individuals to choose to pursue loneliness, because it involves less participation and potential criticism from others.

Sergiovanni (1994) goes on to present Emile Durkheim's *Theory of Needs* as

...[H]umans have a basic need to belong, to be connected to each other, and to identify with a set of norms that gives direction and meaning to our lives.
...[W]hen we are without mores, values, goals, and norms, we become alienated from ourselves, from others, and ultimately from society, with all of the imaginable negative consequences (63).

Durkheim's three elements - duty, attachment, and self-determination, when not met, contribute to "anomie" (63). Drawing on Albert Schweitzer's (1985) summary of Durkheim's work, Sergiovanni (1994) summarizes these three elements as:

1. Discipline [duty], implying a sense of self-constraint through duty on the collectivity
2. Attachment, involving a sense of membership, commitment and identity with the collectivity
3. Personal autonomy or self-determination, involving knowledge, understanding, and a rational sense of awareness regarding the reasons for discipline [duty] and attachment to the collectivity (63).

Durkheim asserts that community is a basic human need, and without it individuals are left "search[ing] for substitutes" (64).

Involvement with a community enables people to put their own lives in perspective and thereby gives them meaning. Without a sense of community, a person can lose sight of his or her own goals. Sergiovanni (1994) adds,

[W]e yearn for the kinds of connections with others that give our lives direction, sense, and meaning. We need to strike out alone. But for our lives to have meaning, we need others (149).

In order to understand how people can accomplish both – being an individual in a community – they must go through a “traumatic transformation” (Bellah et al. 1985, 159). This often means taking part in a community of learners who can share the same goals, values, ideals, norms, and commitment, where isolation will not be an issue.

Teachers share lesson plans, ideas, and materials allowing them to work closely with one another in the same setting. Building a community of learners seems logical. As members of a learning community teachers take part in three different aspects of communities. As a learning community teachers are “committed to thinking, growing, and inquiring [and believing that] ... learning is for everyone” (Sergiovanni 1994, 71). As a collegial community teachers “are tied together for mutual benefit and to pursue common goals by a sense of felt interdependence and mutual obligation” (Sergiovanni 1994, 71). As an inquiring community teachers “commit themselves to a spirit of collective inquiry as they reflect on their practice and search for solutions to the problems they face” (Sergiovanni 1994, 71).

Although it may seem simple to gather with other participants and share thoughts about teaching and learning, it takes more effort than simple talk. One cannot expect to join a community without sharing ideas or listening to others’ thoughts. It is expected that all members participate in the development of the group. Rather than relying on others to assist in their growth, each participant must take an active role in the community in order to make meaning out of the time spent together. Individual involvement is vital to the cohesiveness of the community. Sergiovanni (1994) asserts that,

Becoming a community of learners... is an adventure not only in learning but an adventure in shared leadership and authentic relationship. It requires a certain equality and a certain willingness to know thyself better, to be open to new ideas, and to strive to become. It is an adventure in personal development. ...[B]ecoming a community is becoming a community of kinship, of place, or mind, and of memory (155).

Personal Narratives

Getting to know something is an adventure in how to account for a great many things that you encounter in as simple and elegant a way as possible. There are lots of different ways of getting to that point, and you don't really ever get there unless you do it, as a learner, on your own terms (Bruner 1996, 115).

Bruner (1996) offers ways of uncovering the self through the telling of stories or “personal narratives.” Personal narratives are stories that we tell, that dig deep within our souls and reveal who we truly are. These are stories that affect our lives and transform our way of thinking, and allow us to reflect and question who we are. They can often provoke us to change our lifestyle or encourage us to take a path that we might not have considered.

Bruner (1996) discusses the importance of making meaning and empowering learners through the use of lived stories. In introducing narratives, Bruner (1996) states that in understanding our own learning process, we must spend time reflecting on our personal thoughts and stories. It is only then that we can become more conscious of ourselves as learners, as well as others around us. In order to understand ourselves better, we must be willing to tell stories about ourselves. It is by far the most obvious form by which we talk about our experiences and knowledge. We tend to feel more comfortable discussing what we already know and feel. In confiding to others what we already know,

they may better understand our point of view and help to clarify our views. Through the telling of a personal narrative, we are able to open ourselves up to others.

Narratives provide ways of telling stories, and give us the opportunity to be heard, without requiring justification from others, nor requiring us to feel defensive about our views. The narratives we tell come from the heart because they are stories about ourselves that need to be heard by others but are often most difficult to tell. What we often do not know is that in hearing or telling a narrative we are bringing up a point that we want others to hear. In doing so, it also becomes clear to us what our thoughts are.

Bruner (1996) states,

A narrative involves a sequence of events.... Narrative is a discourse, and the prime rule of discourse is that there be a reason for it that distinguishes it from silence. Narrative is justified or warranted by virtue of the sequence of events it recounts being a violation of canonicity: it tells about something unexpected, or something that one's auditor has reason to doubt. The "point" of the narrative is to resolve the unexpected, to settle the auditor's doubt, or in some manner to redress or explicate the "imbalance" that prompted the telling of the story in the first place. A story, then, has two sides to it: a sequence of events, and an implied evaluation of the events recounted (121).

Narratives, therefore, tell stories that explain who we truly are.

The stories we tell often take place during conversation with one another in hopes that some form of understanding can take place. Through these conversations we hope to uncover what we truly feel but are unable to pinpoint for ourselves through a mere statement because narratives are told from our hearts. Drake and Ryan (1994) state,

A narrative format ... provides a medium through which young and old can make sense of their unique and often different life situations. [We] choose to tell stories which give significance to [our] lives. [T]he story is the organising principle through which we think, perceive, imagine and make moral choices (49).

Through our narratives we are able to better interpret our real emotions and actions allowing us to better understand ourselves and connect with others. In a conversation, the

telling of a narrative comes quite naturally providing us the ability to openly discuss our feelings about any given topic without feeling pressured to disclose more than we wish to disclose. Bruner (1996) explains,

Stories, notably, are about human agents rather than the world of nature – unless the world of nature is conceived “animistically” as human-like. What marks human agents is that their acts are not produced by such physical “forces” as gravity, but by intentional states: desires, beliefs, knowledge, intentions, commitments. It is intrinsically difficult to “explain” exactly why it is that human agents, impelled by intentional states, do as they do or react to each other as they do- particularly in the unexpected or non-canonical situations that constitute stories. This reinforces the requirement of interpretation in understanding stories. As does one other thing: stories are the product of narratives and narratives have points of view, even if a narrative claims to be an “eyewitness of the events” (122-123).

Drake and Ryan (1994) reinforce the view of Bruner when they state,

[Stories] can open new ways of looking at the world which affirms the experiences of the storyteller and creates an openness to hearing other stories. ...No longer are [we] required to blindly accept a form of knowledge from so-called experts that either ignores, contradicts and trivialises what [we] know to be true. Instead [our] experiences, beliefs, and common and unique interpretations of life become the foundation around which legitimate knowledge is constructed (49).

In telling a story we become an active participant in the world. We are taking a stance by stating how we truly feel rather than merely accepting what others offer. How we act and feel are based on our inner beliefs, intentions, and knowledge. Rather than promoting the status quo, we bring to others what we truly feel identifies who we are when we offer a story. In taking a firm stance on our beliefs we can find out who we are and how we can bring our unique experiences to help others better understand us.

In the classroom, narratives can help to connect teacher and students. Smith, in Lyons (1990), tells teachers that “in doing [your] job there is a sense of living up to who you are: of yourself, your professionalism, your expertise” (164). This allows both

parties to discuss openly what matters most to them. The curriculum guide then becomes second to the agenda of learning about and understanding one another. Drake and Ryan (1994) suggests,

By using a narrative approach in the classroom educators can provide a vehicle for [everyone] to make their positions and experiences heard, to have them accepted as legitimate, and to help them in their quest for social change and justice (45).

The ability to share a narrative effectively requires a great deal of practice. In order to genuinely understand we must be willing to listen carefully to ourselves and others to sustain a meaningful dialogue. “Authentic listening” (Tierney 1993, in Drake and Ryan 1994) requires taking a risk that many do not care to take. Many people feel that in listening, they must help to find a solution while others listen but often do not hear the inner message.

The ability to effectively converse with one another and tell one’s story can be a difficult task, especially in the classroom. Drake and Ryan (1994) state,

Many schools ...have traditionally passed on a form of knowledge that fails to acknowledge the experiences of all students. ...The context of learning in many of these institutions frequently revolves around the transmission of what Lyotard refers to as a meta-narrative (48).

A meta-narrative tends to take away students’ individual thoughts and feelings. Rather than using student knowledge to scaffold learning, many schools tend to follow what Friere (1970) referred to as the “banking system,” where teachers become “depositors” of knowledge and students are the “depositories” (53). In silencing students and teachers, the diversity of experience and learning is lost. Thus, Drake and Ryan (1994) add,

We believe that the best way to account for this diversity of experience is to provide all students with opportunities to tell their stories. A narrative format allows students to present views of the world that are not necessarily filtered through a perspective that assumes a uniformity of experience (49).

In teaching students the importance of learning about one another, teachers will help students understand that in learning, there is no final truth. Questioning and discovering is a process of learning that many children do not encounter. For most children, knowledge is a page in a book. However, knowledge is something that can be created through discourse.

Often, curriculum guides dictate classroom activities. Narratives presented to students can avoid such a dilemma. Teachers can use narratives in teaching any subject content matter and allow students a way to form connections to the topic taught. Science is an example of a subject many feel is objective. Students are taught to view scientific discoveries as having one answer that cannot be refuted. Bruner (1996) proposes that we avoid such a situation in the classroom. He states,

We characteristically convert our efforts at scientific understanding into the form of narratives or say, “narrative heuristics.” “We” includes both scientists and the pupils who inhabit the classrooms in which we teach. This would consist of turning the events we are exploring into narrative form, better to highlight what is canonical and expected in our way of looking at them, so that we could more easily discern what is “fishy” and off-base and what, therefore needs to be explicated (125).

In taking a narrative form, science then becomes a story for everyone involved. Such stories presented to very young children, enable them to put science into terms that they can understand. Thus, “the process of science making is narrative” (126). In trying to better understand science, we turn an activity into a narrative form where we are able to try out different hypotheses, test them, correct them, and then try to figure out what could be changed (the teaching, the learning, the wording, etc.) to better understand the concept. For example, in explaining the life cycle of a plant, teachers can first focus on their students. By asking students to tell their own life cycle, they may better connect the

concept to their students. It is this process of discovering science that science really comes to life. Through such experiences students can understand that science is not necessarily a black and white, clear-cut subject. Bruner (1996) emphasizes,

What I *am* proposing, ... is that our instruction in science from the start to the finish should be mindful of the lively processes of science represented in the textbook, in the handbook, and in the standard and often deadly “demonstration experiment” (127).

In an effort to bring science to life, teachers must be willing to make a personal connection with their students and find what is most representative, most important to students, then present the idea, and see where it will take them. It is during the interaction between students and teacher that knowledge is created and science comes to life. In this manner, science is discovered; it is not seen as “finished science” (127).

Personal narratives can help to bring the subject to life for students as well as teachers. When we are able to first understand our own life story, almost any subject will come straight from the heart. Teaching therefore, is the ability to understand how to effectively teach from the heart. A sure method to teach from the heart is to know what we bring into the subject.

This chapter has detailed the literary foundations of Palmer’s view of self-knowledge, Sergiovanni’s concept of community, and Bruner’s use of personal narratives as themes for critical research. Chapter four builds upon these themes and elaborates on the methodology by which data was collected and analyzed.

CHAPTER FOUR

CRITICAL RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

I believe one of the most important tasks of becoming a decent teacher is to free oneself of the notion that one must teach a set curriculum, and to adopt the idea that growth of the mind and the development of thought, imagination, and sensibility are the main responsibilities of teachers in all grades and subject areas (Kohl 1984, 140).

In this chapter I will describe the methodological approach in three layers. First I provide an overview for the general research perspective of this methodology. Second I describe the significance of using dialogic retrospection for this particular study as the core of a transformative approach. Exploring the personal narratives through dialogic retrospection will inform emergency permit workers of their way of thinking and may open the door for transformative learning. Third I describe the data collection process.

General Research Perspective

In order to gain a better understanding of how emergency permit workers think and feel about their teaching I used a method that included dialogue on a one-to-one basis. The time I spent with participants allowed them the opportunity to discuss issues and concerns relevant to their particular needs. As Hubbard and Power (1993) suggest, my presence over time at the different schools and APEX classes allowed me to bring “a depth of awareness” to the data that other research approaches may not have.

Research Questions

The purpose of this research was to take a deeper look at APEX students and their views of education. By examining their personal narratives and understanding of themselves as learners, I gained a better understanding of these individuals and how they viewed their role as educators. I wanted to help them understand how they could examine their beliefs through their cultural lenses so that they could become aware of how they might be unconsciously socializing their students in the classroom. In order for these teachers to learn how to help their students, they had to first learn how they could help themselves. The following questions supported this study as I explored the role of self-knowledge in the lives of APEX participants:

1. How do APEX candidates differ from students in the conventional two-year credentialing programs as far as needs and expectations?
2. How can the comprehension of self-knowledge help these candidates view their life experiences as vital to the growth of their classroom interaction?
3. What ideas do teachers walk in with as they begin the APEX program and how do they compare to the goals of the APEX faculty?
4. How can understanding their personal narratives, as a way to connect with their students, bring APEX participants to a higher level of consciousness when it comes to their role as “teachers” or “experts?”
5. In what ways can the gaining of self-knowledge by APEX participants help them to reflect on their professional development?

Research Participants

I began speaking to a few students in the APEX Program during the summer of 1999 as part of a pilot study. Their comments and views of education intrigued me. Although unique in their situations, as emergency permit workers they had similar reasons for taking part in the APEX Program. Many felt the program would provide an opportunity to work on their teaching credential while they were teaching in their own classrooms. Economically, they believed, this was the best option for them to pursue.

After these interactions, I realized that their frustrations as emergency permit workers were similar to mine when I began teaching for the first time at Exploration School. Without support, (I was not attending classes in an accredited program) I was lost in the field of teaching. I found myself dependent on others and teaching manuals. I was frustrated and often did not know how to resolve the daily problems that occurred.

The participants for this research study include 40 students. The APEX students are working with emergency permits in different school districts in San Jose, California ranging from elementary to middle schools. Eight students began the APEX Program as a first cohort in spring of 1999. Seven students began the program in summer of 1999. The other twenty-five students began the APEX Program in fall of 1999. Out of the eight students who began the program in spring 1999, five were able to complete the program by the following spring. The other students will complete the program by summer 2000. Thus, the students were able to follow their program planning guide and complete the preliminary credential requirements within a year.

Pilot interviews began in the summer of 1999; the subjects included nine teachers. Two taught in middle schools, while the other seven taught in elementary schools. The

following semester (fall, 1999) ten more students were interviewed. After initial interviews, eight students were followed as they went through the APEX Program. These eight represent typical candidates in the program.

Qualitative Research

It can be difficult to gain access into one's sense of identity without asking questions that require probing into one's inner self. To look at our inner self, we must be willing to question our actions and the motivation that has pushed us forward.

Using a critical qualitative research model, I asked emergency permit workers the question Parker Palmer (1998) claims is a question seldom asked teachers. He states,

Seldom, if ever, do we ask the "who" question - who is the self that teaches? How does the quality of my selfhood form - or deform - the way I relate to my students, my subjects, my colleagues, my world? How can educational instructions sustain and deepen the selfhood for which good teaching come? (4).

These questions are not pursued, because society tends to focus on teachers' instructional content. Society tends to distance teachers from their "self," as they are required to follow manuals and seek "techniques." Not only are these questions seldom asked, they are most often completely ignored. Many teachers are not asked to look within themselves to uncover what they may have to offer their students. Without asking these questions, teachers will not reflect on their teaching in order to improve and move beyond merely teaching as an act. These questions will help promote the concept of self-knowledge and personal transformation.

This qualitative research may help educators to understand the dynamics behind emergency permit candidates and their learning processes. As it takes time to uncover what self-knowledge is for these participants, it was important to seek a methodology that allowed the time necessary to continue to dig deeper into the thinking of emergency

permit candidates. As each participant allowed me access to their classroom, I began to gain more access to their views of education and the roles these views played in educating their students.

Using a qualitative research methodology allowed me to conduct interviews as the need arose, to visit classrooms of the participants so that I was better able to see them in action, and to observe the participants' interactions with their students. This allowed me a glimpse of how their personal narratives were reflected in their daily actions. As Glesne (1999) states,

Qualitative methods are generally supported by the interpretivist or constructivist paradigm, which portrays a world in which reality is socially constructed, complex, and ever changing. The ontological belief for interpretivist therefore, is that social realities are constructed by the participants in those social settings. To understand the nature of constructed realities, qualitative researchers interact and talk with participants about their perceptions (5).

During the interviews I was able to gain further insights into the participants' views of teaching in general.

Glesne (1999) further adds that by using the interpretivist paradigm, researchers,

... deal with multiple, socially constructed realities or "qualities" that are complex and indivisible into discrete variables, they regard their research task as coming to understand and interpret how the various participants in a social setting construct the world around them. To make their interpretations, the researchers must gain access to the multiple perspectives of the participants. Their qualitative study designs, therefore, generally focus on in-depth, long-term interaction with relevant people in one or several sites. The researcher becomes the main instrument as he or she observes, asks questions, and interacts with research participants. The concern with researcher objectivity is replaced by a focus on the role of subjectivity in the research process (6).

The openness of this method allowed me to focus on the participants and gave me the opportunity to probe into what ideas were unclear to me. It gave participants the opportunity to tell me their stories. As an interpretivist researcher, I did not walk into the

study with a set of rules to follow. I left the approach open to allow changes to take place and respect the inherent complexities of social interactions to take place.

A qualitative research also helped me to understand the participants' points of view without having them feel threatened by my presence or my questions. It allowed participants to "experience in [their] own language... unhampered by the experimenters' prejudice" (Kieffer 1981, 14). As I asked them to reflect on their experiences, it was my intent to listen with an open mind.

Dialogic Retrospection

Moving beyond from the "traditional" research method, Kieffer (1981) describes dialogic retrospection as one that "extends the traditional boundaries of phenomenological inquiry" (12). Kieffer (1981) suggests that in aiming towards a research that promotes dialogue and discourse, the researcher can

... play a more active role in conversation with the participant, ... [providing] a greater degree of both honesty about and control over the inevitability of subjective bias. ... [T]he cooperative dialogue of investigator and interviewee insures more rigorous fidelity to the phenomenon explored (13).

In asking APEX students to take part in this study I also asked them to take an active role in the research process. As active participants, they reviewed the transcriptions from our taped interviews and provided feedback. Taking an active role allowed these participants to help in the study from beginning to end, where they were able to see a final outcome. It was important for the participants to become fully engaged in the process in order for it to be more meaningful to them. Kieffer (1981) suggests,

The dialogic mode functions as an approach more consistent with the philosophic commitments and values reflected through this undertaking [where participants "give" and the investigator "takes"]. Through consciously interactive procedures

of research design, data collection, and analysis, “dialogic retrospection” avoids dichotomization and moves beyond the obstruction of investigator “one-upmanship.” In the same vein, it restores mutuality to the give and take of the interview process and moves inside the experience of life-events described. More importantly, it establishes the participant as subject of his/her own history and encourages shared control of the generation of knowledge (16).

Through meaningful participation, participants came to understand that their personal development and growth were positive experiences worth sharing. When the participants became active in the research process, both the participants and I were able to assist in the entire process of data collection. Where participants usually play a small role in most traditional research, participatory research methods provide participants the opportunity to take on an important task and become an “empowered” participant. Becoming empowered allowed participants to examine their input, enabling them to become conscious of their thoughts. Kiefer (1981) describes the three primary dimensions of empowerment as allowing,

a) development of a more positive and potent sense of self, b) construction of more critical comprehension of the web of social and political relations which compromise one’s experienced environment, and c) cultivation of resources and strategies, or functional competence, for efficacious attainment of personal and collective sociopolitical goals (7).

Empowerment was key to this study in that the intent was to provide participants the opportunity to grow and learn in the process of self-discovery. Kiefer (1981) comments,

Individuals are “empowered” as they become able to participate in the dynamics of social relations with a personal sense of potency, critical political awareness, and practical strategic skills. Empowerment is, then, the process of developing “participatory competence” (7).

My hope was that the emergency permit workers would become involved and empowered through the explication of their narratives and engagement in our conversations.

Data Collection

When I selected the research topic I had no idea how difficult it would be to obtain general information about emergency permit workers. Although the topic of emergency permit teachers was discussed often in newspapers and in educational settings, the number of literature resources was very limited. I was unable, for example, to find data showing the number of emergency permit workers being hired in California. When articles were found on new teachers, very few actually mentioned emergency permit workers. If the word emergency permit appeared in the article, only a few sentences actually discussed the group. Often, the discussion of emergency permit workers was quite negative. The first stage of library research was discouraging. Although the issue of emergency permits was highly debated, it seemed odd that little supporting evidence was available revealing the “dangers” of hiring emergency permit workers or any information discussing them. Thus, I discovered that the participants in the APEX Program provided me with an unusual amount of support and information regarding the topic of emergency permits workers.

Monitoring the participants through the APEX Program I followed specific participants through the program, took part in conversations with them, and observed them go through various changes in the program and in their classrooms.

Field notes

Field notes were collected during classroom visitations, either at the APEX students’ classrooms or at the San José State University coursework classes. Field notes were also taken during one-on-one conversations with participants, and served as helpful reminders of the events and conversations that took place during visitations to the

classrooms. This process of memo writing helped, as Glesne suggest, to “free your mind for new thoughts and perspectives” (1999).

Interviews

Before scheduling conversations with the participants, the purpose of the research was described and confidentiality assured.

First, I asked each participant to sign a consent form that stated their rights as students and participants of this study. Second, I explained that although interviews would be tape recorded, no one else would have access to the cassettes. Third, I explained they would receive a copy of the interview in transcription format and that their names would not be used in the actual thesis. I explained that changes in their original words could be made on their copies and that transcriptions would be reviewed and discussed in the second interview. Lastly, each participant was given the opportunity to ask any questions before the actual interview began to ensure that all questions had been answered and all bases were covered.

Data collection included tape-recorded interviews. Participants were assured that interviews would be kept confidential. After transcription, participants were given the typed copies to read, enabling them to understanding and agree upon the interpretations. By clarifying their thoughts, participants engaged in a process of self-reflection. Through this self-reflection they were able to better understand their assumptions and how these affected their teaching and learning.

First Interview

The initial interview questions were broad and allowed for varying interpretations. During the conversation, the questions often changed and focused more

on what the participants were interested in revealing. This type of interview allowed room for new discoveries. Although I had a few set questions I left room for “birdwalking” and stories that might lead to deeper insights and discoveries. The following were opening questions:

1. Tell me about your education experience.
2. What has brought you to this point (to teach)?
3. What compelled you to go through the untraditional route as compared to the conventional programs offered here at SJSU?
4. As the 1st day of school approaches and you begin your 1st year of teaching,
 - What are your hopes?
 - What are your fears?
5. Since you’ve had some teaching experience before,
 - Can you think of a time when you were teaching where everything was going so well that you felt, “yes, this is the reason why I wanted to teach!”?
 - Can you think of a time when things just were not going the way you had planned and you asked yourself, “why am I teaching?”
6. What are some highs and lows you’ve experienced since you’ve been teaching?
7. What do you feel you need in order to be a good teacher? Why?
8. Complete these thoughts:
 - When I am teaching at my best, I am like a _____.
 - When I am teaching at my “worst.” I am like a _____.
9. How can the APEX program help to meet your expectations of becoming a good teacher?

10. What have you gained from the program?
11. Have any of your views on education changed since taking part in the program? If so, how?
12. What suggestions do you have for the APEX program to better facilitate your needs?

Second and Third Interview

Once transcriptions of first interviews were sent to the participants for review and comment I scheduled a second interview to clarify ideas expressed in the transcribed interviews. The second interview focused on the comments made during the first interview. Questions varied according to the students' comments, and I allowed time for the participants to elaborate on what they had learned since the last interview. During this second phase, I took the opportunity to observe the participants in the classroom settings working with students.

A third interview was also left open in case a third conversation was needed to clarify or expand on the data collected from the second interview or observations.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Glesne states, "Data analysis involves organizing what you have seen, heard, and read so that you can make sense of what you have learned"(1999,130). In order to analyze data, I needed to find ways to organize and categorize what I had seen, heard, and read. For me, data analysis and interpretation involved reading and re-reading the typed transcriptions of interviews. This included a review of notes I took during classroom instructions involving the participants. During the numerous readings of the transcriptions and field notes, common themes were labeled and coded. Glesne (1999) suggests that,

Coding is a progressive process of sorting and defining and defining and sorting those scraps of collected data that are applicable to your research purpose. By putting like-minded pieces together into data clumps, you create an organizational framework (135).

Coding was helpful in identifying common themes. These themes further assisted me in closely analyzing more common themes within the broad themes.

The data collected from interviews and observations allowed me the ability to identify themes that emerged when analyzing the transcriptions. In Chapter five I will closely examine emergency permit workers in the APEX program through three themes – self-knowledge and identity, the APEX community, and transformational learning through the use of personal narratives.

CHAPTER FIVE

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

The place where paradoxes are held together is in the teacher's heart, and our inability to hold them is less a failure of technique than a gap in our inner lives. If we want to teach and learn in the power of paradox, we must reeducate our hearts. In particular, we must teach our hearts a new way to understand the tension we feel when we are torn between the poles (Palmer 1998, 83).

Introduction

This research was designed to provide a better understanding of emergency permit workers as they went through the APEX Program at San José State University, while simultaneously teaching in their own classrooms.

Palmer (1998) suggests that we teach who we are. When we genuinely open up our hearts and share our stories, we bring the subjects we teach to life. Only when asked to play a vital role in my research study did most emergency permit workers recognize the importance of their own personal narratives in their classroom environments. When given the opportunity to reflect on their teaching they were able to view their classroom and teaching in a whole new light.

Narratives of Emergency Permit Teachers

Tracy Tucker

Tracy Tucker, a female in her early forties, is a single mother of two teenage daughters, one is in her first year of college, and the other is a junior in high school. Less

than ten years ago, after a “bitter divorce,” she “picked up [her] broken heart” and pursued a career in teaching. She had always known that she wanted to become a teacher but never had the opportunity to pursue her “dream.” She remembered that as a young mother her weekly routine was to take her children to Gymboree to interact with other children and recalled,

I attended Gymboree classes with my daughters and when they saw how much fun I was having playing with my children, they offered me a job. I was very successful in this program due to my compatibility with the children and my ability to model to other parents how to play with their children.

Using her experiences as a mother, school committee volunteer, and Gymboree teacher as the base for her teaching career, she set out on a journey of self-discovery. She knew that once “[she] found the right place to start in education, this was where [she] would remain.”

Searching for the right blocks to build upon her dream, she began taking coursework through the Leavesburg School District’s Climax Program. The internship program provided her with “college units, classrooms to practice [her] skills, mentor teachers, and a full scholarship.” Ecstatic with the opportunity, she jumped at the chance to start a new “career.” In the years that she was an “instructional associate” she learned a great deal about teaching and how to “effectively work with children of all ages.” She proudly declared,

When I started working as an instructional associate, ...I worked with kids and I related with them. I was working with them, they were learning, and they were responding to me. Although I wasn’t officially teaching, I knew that I was teaching. And when I think back as a parent, I was always teaching. But when I look at it from the view that this was going to be my job and my career, I knew that I liked it. I knew that I could do it. I guess that’s when I knew teaching was for me. I just liked working with the children and seeing them learn.

In her application essay to San José State University, Tracy clearly stated her “passion” in working with children. Having experienced a “difficult childhood,” growing up raising her siblings, and enduring “an abusive father,” she always felt a close connection to her students. Consequently, her philosophy of education focused on relationship and respect. As an educator she felt that she could relate well with her students without working at it because she “genuinely enjoyed being with them.” Her past experiences had taught her to be a very reflective person and her reflections from childhood allowed her to focus on her students. She states,

I think they learn better that way. They need to be heard and respected. ... As a child I don't think I was given that chance. I was not heard and was not respected. It made me a negative person for awhile.

Growing up in a large family, Tracy was one of eleven children. Her mother, who “gave [her] attention and love,” died when she was twelve. After her mother’s death she felt she had to “earn love from [her] father” who believed in “strict rules and discipline.” As a female, “[her] father did not value [her] opinions.” His theory was that “children were seen and not heard.” Feeling “sheltered and stifled” Tracy’s goal, as an educator, was to “avoid the feelings [her] father placed upon [her].” She added,

He would easily humiliate us without a care and would do that out in public. Our opinions were not important to him, especially our *female* (her emphasis) opinions. He just didn't encourage me to be myself. I hated that feeling.”

As a result of her reflecting on her own “stifled childhood experiences,” she changed her methods in her own classroom to reflect the “individual needs” of her students. She encouraged all her students to “think for themselves and to be themselves.” She also encouraged them to “respect themselves and one another.”

Grounded in her self-knowledge, Tracy focused her attention on her students and the classroom through the subjects she taught. Her perspective as an educator was that she is “a student of life.” She hoped that in her classroom, there would not be a “hierarchy.” She stated,

We are all equal and we all have our roles. We all can learn from each other. They teach me things everyday. I think that’s why I like it so much because I’ve learned so much from them. They are open. They are honest.

The story of school as remembered and lived by Tracy was contrasted to a traditional story of relationship between students and teacher. Her story, as asserted by Clandinin and Connelly (1999),

[W]as one in which the preferred relationship was one of mutual respect, cooperation, and friendship. It was a relationship in which there was no hierarchy, no difference in status between teacher and student, and in which there was an absence of control over students by virtue of the power of that traditional difference in status (61).

Looking ahead, she would want her students to remember her as a person who made a “difference in their lives.” That would be her “ultimate accomplishment.” A good lesson, in her opinion, would mean nothing if her students were unable to grasp the concept or use it to further their learning. She admitted,

I think even more important is that they remember me as being a good person. It doesn’t matter as much to me that they say, “Boy her English classes were great.” I want them to think of me as someone who made a difference in their lives. Not necessarily their English class life but their life in general.

Robert Manor

The first time I was introduced to Robert Manor, he had called the APEX Program office explaining his interest in becoming a teacher. He had never pursued the idea before and wanted to know what he should do to get started. Working in Sales for most of his life, he and his family were “ready for a change.” Although he had

considered education years earlier, he stated that he had wanted to “ensure that [his] family was financially stable before [he] made a change.” When he felt that he and his family were ready for a change, he and his wife requested a year’s leave from their current jobs. They traveled to New Zealand and spent time educating their children through various adventures. Upon their return, he realized how much he enjoyed being with his children and educating them in various subject areas. This trip affirmed his desire to pursue a career in education.

A month before leaving for New Zealand for the second time, he made that transition into his second career. After discussing his next steps, he went off to New Zealand only to return with a job offer from Angel River School District waiting for him. Fearful that he “would not receive another offer from other districts,” as it was very close to the start of the school year, he immediately accepted the position to teach seventh grade math. He later revealed, “... [G]etting a first year job without a credential. . . I knew that I would end up in a poverty stricken area. My fears were aggressive [and] violent students.” Although he feared working with “aggressive [and] violent students” he was determined to teach and “find his passion.”

Robert’s desire to teach stems from his positive experiences as a student. He admitted that “[school] kept life structured and it prevented [him] from growing up too soon and going out to work from eight to five.” Not only did school help to occupy his time, he also enjoyed

[T]he life-style, the people, the atmosphere. You know learning is a good thing. It’s a stimulating kind of thing. You’re productive and there’s a lot of satisfaction as a student taking a test. There’s a satisfaction when it’s completed, turning in a term paper. Regardless of the grade, actually the grade brings on a whole new level of excitement or gratification or whatever you get at that point. And I hope to get some of that out of teaching.

While Robert wished that he could have been a better student, he “enjoyed [his educational] experiences and hoped to influence [his] students to work hard.” For this reason, he stated that he put a great deal of “pressure upon [himself]” to teach his students. Although his expectations of them were high he also “cut them some slack...[since he knows] what it’s like to be a smart alec kid in the class.” However his “easy attitude” created some rough times in his classroom. Students reported to him that he was “too nice,” and that he had to be “meaner.” His first few months of teaching were very difficult because of his conflicting expectations. Although he wanted his students to succeed, he also allowed them “to get away with things like talking while I was talking.” He had not realized that he would have to deal with classroom management, he recalled,

I could be screaming at the top of my lungs [to get their attention]. You know coming down really hard on them. But that is the atmosphere around here. It’s more intense than I thought it would be. ... And a majority of them [said], “Kick these kids out of here that are distracting the class ...be meaner. Be like Ms. Donner.” [She] has quite a reputation of being a bear. And really, “Scream louder and be mean.”

Aware that he would not “operate in that manner, [his] internal conflict kicked in.” Although he believed he understood where the students were coming from, because he had been there once, he also knew that he had to find a way to get his students to try to “understand him.” Once he was able to get through to a few students, he was able to gain their attention, although the journey there was also difficult.

He discovered early that teaching was more difficult than he had anticipated and he was disappointed. Remembering who he was as a student, he vowed that he would not make the same mistakes his teachers made. He did not want to yell and scream. Through talking to his students he learned that,

Unfortunately, I wanted to be their friends. I wanted to cut them a little slack. I was once a pretty obnoxious student myself and I you know was one of those kids who brought a note home everyday. I got As all the time but yet I had to bring home a note everyday stating that I talked too much in class or how I acted in class. I tried to cut some of those kids some slack and unfortunately some of these kids are 10 of what I was as far as discipline goes.

Discovering that being their friends was not the key to teaching them, Robert used other methods. At the beginning he had difficulty bonding with his students. He recalled a basketball game incident at the beginning of the school year that he was hoping would allow him to gain further insights into his students' lives. However, the event was met with even "more disappointment." Sadly he recalled,

I went out and tried to play basketball with the kids and nobody has even been out there and done that. So, about 200 students gathered around like it was a gang fight. "Mr. Manor, the white guy, is playing basketball." Which was great and it was good. I went down to the kids who were smarter and kids who were shy and played and got the game going. And it ended up with some kid practically spitting in my face as he walked by yelling insults. So I could either let him do it or address it with him. And so when I addressed it with him, it pretty much turned ugly. It was really – so I had to either stand down or stand up. I'm familiar with kids from this side of town that you can't back down. So it got to having the parents coming in and then the whole scene and not getting any support from the administration. He didn't even get suspended for cursing and spraying in my face. So basically it told me that I could be a hero or maybe I should get back on my horse and get back out there on the playground. Then I thought, "Wait, I've got too much on my plate to go out there and be a hero." I wanted to come out and play ball with the kids and learn about what they got going on at home and to have great thing going. I knew that there would be ups and downs. That was a down.

He sadly discovered that going out and playing a basketball game with the students was a bit of a "long shot for a first year teacher." Instead of responding positively to his approach, as he had hoped, a student reacted negatively, which shaped his attitude for the rest of the school year. Rather than bonding with his students, he felt that they were seeing him as wanting to be a "hero," when he entered their world out on the playground. He asserted that it was for moments (the shooting hoops and bonding moments) like these

that he wanted to teach. He stated, "I wanted to shoot the ball around at lunch. I dream[t] of recess [where I just say], 'Hey guys! How's it goin'!'" Not getting guys threatening me out here during yard duty."

Karen Fisher

Karen Fisher, is enthusiastic, energetic, and positive. After completing college her goal was to help in the community in which she grew up - East San Jose. She focused on non-profit organizations as she felt "[she] could benefit and learn how to become an involved member of society." She had been working for the San Jose Discovery Museum for a few years before deciding that she was unhappy because,

... [A]lthough I was working for children I was not working one on one with children in a community that needed people such as myself to motivate them. I spent most of her day working behind the computer or speaking to school administrators, but not children.

Ironically, Karen had never considered pursuing a career in teaching. Others around her encouraged her to consider becoming a teacher. Not wanting to change her career immediately, she "made excuses." It was not until years later while working for the museum that she met "the real Mr. Rodgers," from the PBS Network, Mr. Rodgers' Neighborhood, who "gave a compelling speech about children being our greatest assets," that she heard her "calling to teach children." However, the unexpected career change was a shock to her friends, family, husband, and especially herself.

Not realizing the commitment involved with teaching she found herself "frustrated, angry, and scared." Overwhelmed with the demands and responsibilities placed upon her Karen became "disillusioned" when she began teaching. She admitted, "I lost my sense of self. It's what others kept telling me. I was changing but I didn't know it." What she thought would be fun was "actually a lot of work that kept [her] late

at school and up at night.” The interaction with the children “changed [her] priorities in life.” She recalled that at her previous job she was able to leave her work for the following day to resume, however with her classroom she could not because, “someone’s education was at stake.” For this reason, her transition to education was difficult. Karen recalled,

I would go home every night and I would start to think of all the things that I needed to do. I’d think about what I would do, how I would present the lesson, whose parent did I have to call? My mind was full of all these things. And I couldn’t shed it off, on top of it all was completing my homework. I couldn’t sleep at night. I would go to sleep late. Realistically, I couldn’t do it. My body wouldn’t let me do it.

Having had the opportunity to work for other organizations before transitioning to teaching, made her better appreciate her responsibilities as an educator. Working with lower socioeconomic communities in her previous jobs provided different lenses with which she could view her educational world. She was aware that the “students in this specific district needed [her] most, not Fremont.” The museum where she worked, “those who had money and time came to visit the museum. [She] knew that other kids needed to know this part of the world too.” Their views of education may not be as memorable as hers; thus she was determined to provide them with what she could. To accomplish this task she worked hard each day to prepare a lesson that would “capture their excitement and interest.” After many months of working on “pure adrenaline” she realized that,

There is no tomorrow in the classroom. There’s just today. Today you have to seize the day. Gosh – and even though I knew that I accomplished so much, I still felt that I was putting myself down for not going beyond one step further.

At the end of each day, Karen’s goal for her students was that they become “better citizens.” While the basic subjects were important to Karen, she felt that each student needed to be “taught to become better citizens.” She stated,

My goal is not to be this great teacher. I just want them to understand that there's more to life than the classroom. I want them to know that they can be good people. I guess I don't have to be a good teacher in order to teach them that. ... I want them to be good citizens. I want them to look at the larger picture. It's not just looking at a book and being able to read it and extract meaning from it. I want them to be able to look out at the real world and see what is happening out there and the beauty of it all. What's the big picture? That's what I want them to get out of it.

Karen further explained that some students were just "too dependent on [her] to dictate their actions. They asked [her] what to color and what color to use!" Although she felt that being "book smart" was necessary, she also wanted them to look at the world from different perspectives. Being able to become independent and self-reliant was vital to her classroom environment. In wanting her students to flourish and grow, she fostered creativity, questioning the unknown, and striving for independence.

Karen's expectations were a result of her early educational experiences as a child. She revealed that her fifth grade teacher had given her the skills she needed to be a better person. She recalled,

I had a teacher in the fifth grade that was influential. Every once in awhile I still run into him. I felt that I learned so much from him that year about – not just the basic skills that I needed, but more, like life in general and being a good citizen. All these things that some people do not acquire until after they get out of high school. He showed us so much. He showed us another world. He showed us to view the world in a different way and ever since then the arts has been an important part of my life.

Karen's fifth grade teacher had shown her a sense of "responsibility and compassion for others, and fostered a focus on helping one another. His interest was on 'hands-on activities'" that encouraged group work and class interaction. Memories of her fifth grade classroom helped Karen work toward a better classroom environment for her students. She strongly felt that it is "never too early" to teach children the basic

essentials of life such as compassion, understanding, caring, and respect, amongst other qualities that make “a good citizen.”

Once Karen joined the APEX Program her classmates began to assist her in the transition to becoming a teacher and learner. Although she wanted to learn how to become an “effective teacher,” she still maintained the idea that this was *her* calling and *she* “should be able to get through this phase in [her] life.” At times, she felt that she should try to help herself rather than to ask for others’ advice. She began the school year feeling “isolated because everything was new to [her].” Then she began to gradually understand her role as a teacher. Nevertheless, this only left her feeling “more isolated” because she felt that she was “not doing it right.” Perplexed with this realization, she sought help from her APEX peers. Some classmates were negative, while others were a “welcoming resource,” to her. They provided an “outlet” at the end of her workday and allowed her to share her thoughts. The camaraderie of the program enabled her to examine her actions more carefully, try not to take anything for granted, and to focus on one day at a time. This helped her progress from one lesson to another. While it was difficult at the start, Karen also learned to share her views without feeling “stupid and new because [they] were all in the same boat.”

Brenda Diaz

As a child, Brenda’s family moved around the Bay Area many times, for “no other reasons than that [her] parents were nomadic people.” Teachers themselves, Brenda’s parents had high expectations of her in school. However, they enjoyed moving around from town to town. As a result, she had difficulty adjusting to the moves that

took place and always felt that she had to prove herself to friends and teachers.

Consequently, Brenda felt,

angry about moving and not having friends and always having to make new friends. And knowing that [she] was a good student but never being able to prove that or as soon as [she] did prove it, [she] had to do it again.

This experience in Brenda's childhood was frustrating for her because she felt isolated from others. She felt that she always had to try harder than anyone around her so that she was recognized. Unfortunately her efforts went unnoticed. She realized that her teachers "never took the time to get to know [her]." After this realization she tried less and less in school.

Having creative arts classes in elementary through high school helped Brenda enjoy being in school. She enjoyed drawing, painting, and anything that allowed her to be creative. She excelled in this area without any difficulties because she was self-motivated. Unfortunately, she did not have teachers who encouraged her to enjoy other subject areas. She went through the educational system by doing the minimal work and "getting by." At times she felt that she was treated differently because of her race. She was "allowed" to pass classes that she knew she should have failed because she did not work very hard in completing her assignments. Other minority students in her graduating class, on the other hand, were not as fortunate as they were held back for one reason or another.

Her view of education, consequently changed in high school when she realized that it did not really matter how hard she tried, she would eventually get through the system. She also realized the inequality of the education system, but did not know what she could do to help her friends. Ironically, a negative conference with her high school

math teacher and parents revealed to her that she would someday become a teacher. She eagerly stated,

I am going to be one (a teacher) that is better in tune to my students. This teacher did not care about me and I knew that. It showed in the way she spoke to me and treated me. She didn't think I would get very far in life – so she ignored me. So my self-esteem was low and I knew that I would never be a teacher like that. Mrs. Wanda told my parents that if I did not shape up, I would end up homeless. This was in high school – I didn't think I would go to college because of that comment. But I didn't listen to her and now I will listen to my students.

This teacher was the “driving force” for Brenda. She “remember[s] always sitting in her class, through high school, and then thinking, God [she] could be – even today that [she] could be a better teacher than [Mrs. Wanda].” This was a teacher that assumed that if her students could work independently, they were doing well. Brenda was on her own most of her high school years because of this math teacher and consequently, felt that she could have done a better job in educating her students. This experience led her to believe that she could make a difference. Thus, she began to think more seriously about her career path.

When Brenda called to inquire about the APEX Program, I was drawn toward her positive attitude and enthusiasm for teaching. Having recently graduated from college with a degree in Arts, Brenda was excited about her first teaching job at Dorris Elementary School, a low socio-economic community in South San Jose. Familiar with the community, as she had lived in the area also as a child, her intentions were to make an impression on her students. She stated,

I want to be able to show them that while they are learning they can also have fun. Children from other communities have other advantages and motivation. I want to show these students that they have choices in life also. Someone has to offer them a slice of the other world or they will never experience it.

In observing her teach I immediately noticed that Brenda was a very conscientious teacher. She got down to her students' level when she spoke to them so that she could look them in the eyes. She did not "hover" over them when speaking to them. They were comfortable asking her questions during the lesson being taught and they did not hesitate in raising their hands to volunteer answers. When asked how her experiences as a younger student affects her teaching today, she responded,

I think that I am very into the mood of my class, the mood of every child. If I see that a child looking sad or different, I will ask him or her what had happened to him or her. I think that it's very important to ask and to know right away. You know, if everyone is feeling kind of tired, and or a specific student is feeling kind of tired or is feeling unhappy, it really needs to be addressed. It doesn't need to be ignored. Sometimes there are times when you have to stop what you are doing and question the students. Most of the time I feel that they do not need to be ignored. I don't think any students' emotions should be ignored. Mine were and I never want my own students to feel that they are ignored.

She added,

if we teach them to address their feelings now, it will not be as big an issue later. Some high school students are having difficulty now because they were ignored in elementary school.

In carefully observing her students and their emotions, Brenda is better able to connect with them. Her goal, as a first year teacher, was to "establish a good relationship with the kids." She knew she was able to accomplish this goal when a very shy student in her class began to open up to her during recess. With her entire class, she accomplished this goal through their discussions. She explained,

We sit down here on the floor and we talk about it. We all have a group hug and work it out. I really feel good about it. I then talk to the parents. For example, one time I talked to both of these boys' moms. This is kind of rare for both moms to come to school and have the chance to talk to me. But we had a nice talk. It was a success and I think sometimes that I could've sent them to the principal's office and had that end. But I don't think it would have been as effective than talking with everyone. I can see that getting them to sit and listen to people's feelings can be difficult but we practice it everyday.

Her commitment to her students is quite evident. Although she did not have much confidence as a student in high school, her experiences have allowed her to have more confidence in herself today. As a result, she focused a great deal on raising her students' self-esteem. She enthusiastically stated,

I found that I have... (pause) I personally feel that I have the potential to be a great teacher. I'm beginning to feel very confident that I will be able to do this, which is something that I did not have from the beginning. ... I had confidence to go into the class and take over someone's room. But I wasn't confident that I could actually come in and help these kids learn how to read. And now today, I can – I see kids in this class that could barely understand what letters were now are forming sentences, which to me I feel yes, most of it is them but some of it is me. I feel that it gives me confidence. But I had a big fear that I wouldn't be able to teach them anything. Then I would just be a babysitter and that was such a big fear.

Once she took part in the APEX cohort, Brenda began to feel more confident about her competence as an educator. She revealed,

I think it is because of the classes that I've been taking and helping me feel more confident and giving me information that would help me the next day. ... I feel that APEX has been important to me in gaining confidence. ... I love my classmates. Having a bunch of people going to school two nights, with a bunch of people who are in the exact same position that I am in. New teachers, mostly- it's very good. You can complain, which people do, and it feels good.

The APEX cohort provided her with a support group and gave her confidence to become a competent teacher. As a person who is in tuned with her self and her students' needs, Brenda felt that she has the potential to become a better teacher each year. She further added,

Because I get so much from my peers at the APEX courses, I actually look forward to going to classes. So when I'm going to school (APEX classes), I say to myself, "Well, I'm going for Emily and I'm going for Gabriel." Okay, I have to think about that and when I do, I get happy and then I go.

Because her students are important to her, she used them as her motivation and constant reminders that she needed to continue to learn – for their sake.

Chris Taylor

I was in the credential office working one day when our department advisor walked into the office with a tall gentleman. The department advisor then asked that we consider Chris for the APEX program, even though he was two weeks late into the semester, because of his experience as a substitute teacher.

This gentleman did not say a word. He stood in front of us very quietly. When the advisor left and we showed him into Dr. Nelson's office, he began to open up. Explaining that he had just been hired as a full-time teacher at a local school, he needed to be in a program that would help him expedite the process quickly. He explained, "I want to be a teacher and not be a student at the same time. So I need to be in the APEX Program so that I can go out there and teach these kids who really need me." He had already taken a few courses in the department and wanted to continue to pursue his credential as quickly as possible.

Looking at his file we were concerned with his grade point average, a mere 2.0 average. Fearful that Graduate Studies would not accept him because his grade was well below our acceptable minimal average, we advised him of our concerns. He then began to explain that going through school he was not very motivated. However, he enjoyed sports and did well in that subject. He was never really encouraged to do well, so he only pursued what he felt was most important to him – sports. In spite of his low grade point average, he graduated and began substitute teaching. Although he enjoyed substitute teaching, he realized that it would be a financial burden on him and his new wife. Doing

what he felt was most feasible for his new wife, he went into a software business with his cousin. Investing a great deal of their money into this business, Chris did what he could to keep the business running – even if it meant firing himself when the company began to fail. In our interview he revealed,

It was a software business, and my cousin was a programmer and I was the operations manager. We decided that I would make the decisions about the company about the finance and things. And one of the things I found out was that we needed to program more and do less operations. We weren't ready to sell our products and it needed to be finished. And at that point I fired myself. And I went in and said I would substitute teach. I went into that before when I graduated in '81. I decided I was going to substitute for awhile until I decide what my next career will be. They immediately offered me a long term job –

This job offer opened new doors of opportunity for him. Unfortunately, his wife was not enthusiastic about his decision to teach, so she left him. nevertheless, his desire to teach was strong and helped him during this difficult break-up.

Chris explained that growing up and becoming a teacher was the last job he thought that he would ever pursue. He explained,

My father laughs at my brother and I now because we both said that we did not want to teach and here we both are – teaching! My father has been a teacher most of his life and figured we would follow his footsteps but we refused to do it and look at me now. My brother and I wanted to make money and so we did that. Now we are doing something more.

Looking back now, he realizes that education can be very rewarding. Through the different careers that Chris has pursued, he felt that education was the one career where he would be able to make a difference and contribute to society in a positive manner.

Rather than focusing on what he was unsuccessful with as a student, he focused on his accomplishments. He knew that he was motivated to attend school because he enjoyed sports. He was not interested in what was taught at school, but sports and his father, who was a teacher at the same high school he attended, kept him in school “just

long enough to graduate.” In teaching, he has discovered that he needs to help his students find that one personal motivation to get them to through the school year. He explained,

I tell you, we have to keep them another way. It may mean that I have to be the father figure. I do as much as I can. In teaching all subjects, the kids are with us all day and we get a stronger bond. I do what I can to get them to come to school each day. I can't pick them up and drop them off, but I look for reasons for them to come and see me each day.

As a result of his experiences as a student who didn't care too much for academics he never connected well with “regular” students. As a matter of fact he sought a teaching position that would allow him to work with students who needed more attention. The students that he teaches now need his personal attention, the rigid schedules, and his stern yet caring demeanor. He noticed that while working with students in traditional schools, he “did not get much out of it (teaching).” He explained,

I'm not made for the regular classroom. I'm made for the harder kids. The kid that doesn't fit into the regular classroom. I didn't fit in there either, I fit into this classroom where things are going to be different. Where you have to be ready to go off the cuff. So it's more of an impromptu teacher. They are going to ask you questions that has nothing to do with the academics that you are on. But it may be relevant to the kid's life. Sometimes they really need an answer.

Chris explained that his connection to his students is much stronger because he understands where they are coming from. He explained,

I feel that I know what's going on inside their heads, what they'll respect, and what they need as far as an explanation goes. It's not good enough to say, “Okay this is how you convert a fraction.” You first got to tell them why the hell you want to convert a fraction. And if they can get that then they'll see a logical reason why they want to do this. Then they'll start to follow you a little bit. Otherwise, you're going to say, “Okay this is a geometric shape. And we want to know the area,” well they've already turned you off. You have a geometric shape up there, terrific but that doesn't fly to me.

When I observed Chris in his classroom I could see that his sense of connection to his students is revealed during his interaction with them. Although he is direct with them, they can see that he cares for them. Although many “act up” in the classroom when their friends are around, they come visit with him after school so that he can help advise them in their personal lives.

You’ve got to listen to them so that they’ll listen to you. That’s one of the reasons it works because we can adapt to each other. And I try to treat them as if they were adults. I never talk down to them, even though some of them don’t understand a thing that I’m saying. But they ask me a lot of things. ... They sometimes ask me things that have nothing to do with the subject that we are studying. But I will not ignore them. If I won’t tell them they will find out other ways. So, I’d rather find a better way of telling them than to have them think I don’t care and go off somewhere else to find the answers.

Remembering the challenges he faced as a student, Chris is better able to connect with his students. He focuses on their needs and what he can do to help them view themselves in a positive light.

Janet Mars

As a child, Janet enjoyed attending school. She explained, “I would never wake up early in the morning and dread going to school like my sisters did.” Growing up her parents instilled in her the value of an education. They never really explained the value of obtaining an education and she never questioned their encouraging words. After high school Janet attended a junior college to save money to transfer to a state university. After graduating from the state university, she became pregnant. Although she was not quite prepared to care for a baby, she knew that she had to do what was right for her. She had the baby and moved out on her own.

After having Darren, Janet began working at a preschool. She taught preschool for awhile but realized the difficulty in teaching toddlers all day and then returning home

to one at the end of the day. She was completely exhausted and knew that she had to find alternatives to her work schedule. When she decided to work with older children, it became easier for her to teach and return home to her son. Teaching then, became less of a struggle for her and more of a challenge. She enjoyed the challenges that came with the daily activities. Working with older children only reinforced her joy for education and teaching.

Teaching children came easy to Janet because being the oldest of three girls, Janet was “always kind of teaching [her sisters] on what to do and was the role model for [them]. It’s a role [she’s] always been in.” Although she enjoyed teaching, she had many obstacles to overcome as a first year teacher. In our first interview Janet explained her concerns about being a first year teacher.

Stephanie: Can we go back to what you just said about your first days of school? What was it like?

Janet: Oh gosh! It was like getting up at the crack of dawn and going to sleep at midnight. It was really draining. But it has made this year a whole lot easier. Um, I felt that I was scared. I was wondering if I was doing the right thing. It’s hard when you don’t have the support system set up where, you know – in don’t believe in SFA or any of that stuff where it’s all scripted for you. I literally did not get the standards until the middle of the year. And so it was hard. I was just kind of clinging onto an experienced teacher who would come and help us do a lot of it.

Stephanie: Was it helpful or –

Janet: Yah, it was helpful but it was hard on her too because she had a lot of stuff to do. So you know, there was a point when Mandi and I – Actually it was Mandi, Sara, Elizabeth, ...and I and we did – we were all brand new teachers but we all kind of pulled together what we did have and we worked together. We didn’t have an experienced teacher – until this year. They partnered everybody up into houses so you’re working with four other teachers. And two of the teachers that we work with have been here for a very long time.

Experiencing her first year as a first/second grade combo teacher at Appleblossom School opened her eyes to so many things that she was unaware of as a preschool and daycare teacher. After her first month of teaching, Janet was sure she would quit her job. She did not feel that she had any support from other veteran teachers. The principal came to visit her classroom every now and then but did not provide much feedback that was useful. Frustrated and tired from asking for help, she began to ask other first year teachers for help. She explained that during these discussions with her colleagues she was able to feel better about her career decision.

[W]e get to brainstorm ideas about how to deal with maybe behavioral problems, classroom management, whatever was needed. It's standard based. So it's like here you're working on this standard. We just developed a new report card last week. It's, it's something that we didn't even have at all last year. We didn't have any prep time. This (speaking of the time we have for me to interview her) right now is my planning time but since Mandi is sick, they said we could use it for prep. And I knew I would be interviewing with you. But she it's – last year was hard because we didn't have any free time except for PE and art. And that was only once a week so it's good so that once a day you could get together with coworkers and talk about what concerns us. We break up into groups –yah.

Having the time to discuss their concerns helped Janet become a stronger teacher. The support that was provided by Mandi, Elizabeth, and Sara reinforced her decision to continue to teach the following year. In addition to her support group at her school, Janet was motivated to continue with her education when she began taking courses through the APEX program. When asked what she had gained from the program, Janet eagerly responded,

Um, support I think and a lot of uh confidence– even the teachers who were teaching would tell you that everything would not go exactly the way you think (Laughs) it's going go. And then they would tell you stories and they would, they were like your peers some of them. I can't say that every one of them have been wonderful. But some of them – they have been doing this; especially the ones that have been in the classrooms during the day and then came afterwards to teach. They knew exactly what you were doing. If you had a problem you could

talk to them or even call them at home. It wasn't like, you could never ever get a hold of them. And I – when I was at the state university, you could never have done that. (Laughs) You couldn't just call up a professor and say, "I was wondering what you were talking about it in class the other night." (Laughs) There was just no way you could do that. Here it's okay. The instructors encourage us to call them at home if we are unclear of our assignments – I, of course, have never tried that because I've been able to call my classmates first.

Interacting with instructors who treated her like a peer was very comforting to Janet. She particularly enjoyed instructors who provided hands-on work that allowed her to use the ideas the following day in her own classroom. She stated,

[S]ome of the teachers were really good and they could give you stuff that you could use in class. Any of the observations you had were in your class and you could take your students and work with them. Like Ted Hammer, I can't say enough good things about that guy. He's awesome you know. He'd give us ideas and he would test them with us – well, he obviously has done them in his classroom before. But he would do the lesson with the entire classroom and then you would do the actual things so we knew, "Oh, so this is what we need to do in order to have it work." You know if you come across this problem do this. There's a lot of hands-on, it was really involved. He was great. He was a good teacher. And my students loved it when I showed them something new that I had just learned in my classroom.

In addition, Janet felt that the APEX faculty helped her feel more comfortable about her career and has taught her to become more reflective in the process. As a first year teacher, she did not have time to reflect on her teaching process. She was concerned with teaching her class and ensuring that they passed all required tests.

I feel that my ideas and views of education are always changing. You know – you think that, you think back on teachers, you know friends and families who are teachers – I always like them because they would never – they would listen to you and if you could – not that you could change their minds about anything but that they were always willing to listen to what you had to say. And you know, say, "Okay maybe you are right." So that's you know when Dr. Nelson talked about always reflecting on things- I think that that is a practice that all the teachers do use in the program. I didn't really see it when I started the program. You know teachers do things and they don't really think about it. Is it a good idea? Is that helping the kids? What are we really teaching this for? Sometimes you think about the STAT9 and all the testings, a lot of teachers really are teaching to the

test. I kind of feel a sense of support from the APEX. We shouldn't pretty much be teaching our students to the test but we don't have to be teaching like that.

After having completed her first school year, Janet is a more confident teacher. The APEX courses allowed her to share her views with peers in the same dilemma. The support she found in this cohort has given her new hopes for her future career as an educator.

Sara Tran

If I could ask anyone to represent the APEX Program, it would be Sara. Sara Tran, upon graduating from college intended to work on the curriculum committee for adult education. However, her plans were interrupted when she decided that she needed to find a fulltime job that would pay her accumulating bills. After subbing for awhile, she was hired to teach a first/second grade combo classroom at Appleblossom School. Unprepared to teach a class, she decided she would take some education courses to assist in her new career. She reasoned,

Well, if this is something that I'm going to do I want to become good at it.
...[T]eaching is tough and there's a lot that you need to do. But I really wanted to know how to do it better.

Sara was introduced to the APEX Program when Dr. Nelson presented the credential option at her school. She became interested in the accelerated program and immediately signed up. When she began taking courses, her mentality was quite different than when she walked out. She walked into the APEX Program course with a great deal of confidence because she was already teaching. She remembered,

Oh! When I started I thought I knew all that I needed to know and that was all I needed to know. I'll get some – I'll definitely get some ideas but I already know everything I need to know about where I stood with my philosophy. So actually ever since I work my philosophy on education in February, I've changed it three times.

Her ability to reflect on her teaching and learning makes her very unique to the APEX Program. While most emergency permit workers entered the program looking for techniques and quick fixes to teaching, Sara wanted more from the program. For this reason, she was also able to walk away transformed. This is not to say that Sara had a successful first year.

Sara's first year was difficult for her. However, coming from a family where she was expected to excel in all activities and be independent, she always tried her best. Consequently, her high expectations for herself and her students gave her the motivation to try even harder to make it better for the classroom. For example, she began to take classes more seriously because she realized that she was ill equipped to teach a classroom. She stated,

I was very unorganized, very ill prepared, like I was doing an injustice to the students. Um, I felt like during conference, back to school night, and parent conferences that it was all a lie – kind of like a façade? I had to act like I really knew what I was doing when I really didn't. I felt really lonely. Her confidence level was low because she did not know how to approach her students' parents. She wanted to assure them that she was knowledgeable and prepared to educate their children. For this reason, she walked into the APEX Program with the view that because she was already teaching, she would be able to get through the coursework quickly without having to "actually work hard at it."

At the end of the APEX coursework, Sara's views changed because of the courses she took through APEX and the field of education. Suddenly, she was no longer confident about teaching because she realized that there was so much more for her to learn and to continue to learn. This realization helped her transform to a new way of thinking which allowed her to feel less isolated from others and helped her reflect more

on herself as a person and a teacher. She admitted that the courses, especially the foundation courses,

taught [her] how to question – query and question in a way where [she has] to look at it from a different angle to get the answer and then come up with [her own] questions and reflect on [her] actions. ... I feel that all the classes I took have really prepared me well for whatever it is that I'm doing. And I'm only – even now, I feel that I'm at the beginning of where I should be. But I feel like I have enough to do something really important in my classroom. Um, I'm still interested in knowing.

Not only were the courses transforming Sara's views on education, they also changed her views on the idea of community. The APEX cohort has helped her to reshape her understanding of working together to have a common goal. In our first interview I was intrigued by the community that Sara had created at her school with a few other APEX members.

Stephanie: You also talk here about your cohort and their support. Can you elaborate on this idea?

Sara: That's very interesting. There's me and three other teachers. We have developed a curriculum calendar where we do everything the same. Um, I feel like we've pioneered cohesion in our primary group. We have ten first and second grade teachers here. And I feel like we, by ourselves have made a difference. We've done so much work together. But it took APEX to get us together. The other two and I have gone through the program together. The third teacher is going to San Jose State also now, but she didn't choose APEX. Because we've carpooled to class and have studied together, we've become closer and we decided to take advantage of our cohort. We like working together and sharing our ideas. We've managed to get a filing system started by the copying machine where we add things to the file so that we can all use it. We single-handedly started primary meetings again, which we hadn't done in a long time. Now every two weeks we get together and talk about what we are doing. I think we've modeled for the school how to use each other's knowledge.

Stephanie: What was the motivation behind that?

Sara: Well, we all took classes together so we did a lot of things together. We shared lessons, ideas, and just helping. Then we noticed that others were starting to like our ideas. Some would come to me or to Mandi or to Janet.

And it just – it didn't really work. So then I noticed that after the activity or the holiday was over someone would say, "Oh I wish I knew about that." And then it was too late because it was a holiday thing. But it worked better when we got together.

As she exited the credentialing program, she reflected,

A lot of the things that I thought I believed, I don't know anymore. I question them a lot. A lot of it has to do with what I was taught when I was teaching the English Development courses. And I really felt that I knew where I stood. But now I just don't know. You know? And that's a result of taking some of the CLAD courses and um the courses [in APEX].

The courses have helped her in relating her work to her students' and have allowed her to implement various lessons the following school day. The courses were meaningful to her because she made a point of creating lessons that were also meaningful to her students. Her desire to continue to learn to become a good teacher is still a constant goal. She realizes that it cannot happen over night and that she must constantly try new ideas in order to implement her own. She stated,

I think that a good teacher is one who is not only informed about what to teach but also informed about where he or she needs to keep going. Because as a teacher you just can't stop. And I didn't always feel this way. You can't stop because every time I finish a set of classes, I feel like, "Now I know." And you take more classes and then you figure, "Okay now I know a little bit more." And there's always more that you can – that you need to know. Um, so that you can understand who you are as a teacher and who your students are because you are responsible for their learning.

Her feelings of responsibility for her students' future are quite strong. She feels a sense of pride in affecting their future, but also a sense of reservation – one that questions her ability to take on such a huge role in their lives. As a person who is constantly seeking to gain more knowledge about herself and others around her, Sara will surely serve her students well.

Lynn Conner

Lynn Conner reflects a great deal on her positive educational experiences as a guiding light for her to pursue a career in teaching. Her positive attitude about education was evident in our first meeting. She explained during our first interview that education has been a positive experience for her. She was given the opportunity to “explore different avenues and encouraged to seek new experiences.” This is one of the philosophies that she lived by.

Lynn: So because of the positive influences of education that I had had, it seemed a natural thing to be in - to get back into that on the other side of the desk. And with the growth of our own family, being in my children's classrooms, volunteering, being there to see what could be done, and maybe seeing sometimes the things that might not have been correct or that I had felt maybe could have been done differently. It was very encouraging too. That can be a positive um (pause). I enjoyed it more than I expected. Even substitute teaching which I did, I just loved.

Stephanie: Why is that?

Lynn: There is a great variety. You need to be ready to uh, behaviorally, sometimes there is a lesson plan, sometimes there isn't. Um, it can be anything at all when you walk in. You really need to be flexible and think on your feet. You need to have the mental equipment to be ready to walk in and still leave that class, I think, better than you found it. I know my own children have had substitute experiences (Laughs) maybe not worth discussing. And then the emergency credential is a two-edge sword. Um but for me it has been very positive. And my sister has been a classroom teacher for many years and she says Laurie, you don't know how fortunate you are that you get to see other teaching styles, that you get to see other classrooms. You don't go to one place in September and stay till June. I just liked it more and more. It's more rewarding to see my Title One students. Their exit assessments, (sighs) it's such a gift, such a blessing to say that they came uh not being able to read a word of English and then leaving knowing 75 sight words in eleven weeks. And that's - there are stories that are more glowing, and uh, more successful than that. Uh, it's very gratifying, very gratifying.

Lynn's interest in helping children read and her excitement "about the increased focus on the quality of teachers in California" prompted her to enter a credentialing program to pursue her career. She explained,

I've seen my own children go through, they've had wonderful teachers. ...[T]hey have had in one or two cases have had poor teachers. So to be able to have a new measure, a different requirement, that includes me as well that I can continue to teach on an emergency permit. But I need more and I want more. So, in that respect I believe that the APEX program can give me what I need.

Her expectations of the APEX Program were clear from our first interview, the summer before she was accepted into the program. She wanted a program that would provide her with a clear focus on lesson planning, curriculum, and a better understanding of different learning styles and methods of getting information to all children of different needs. Her interest in teaching students with challenges stems from her philosophy that she can be "more valuable and need to be" because "students deserve more and it's not acceptable for them to have less." In addition, when she discovered that her son was ADD, she wanted to learn as much as she could on the disorder. Observing her son accomplish as much as he had was very encouraging to her. "He is an ADD success story." She adds, "He's got academic honors at school." Because of her son's challenges, she has learned to be flexible, "not by choice but because that's what happened." Experiencing teaching and learning from different angles, Lynn has learned valuable lessons along the way.

Lynn described teaching as a thrill, such as when one is boarding a train. She described,

More students are coming on the train and you're all going on for a ride. This is a group and we're all riding together... and it can be a wonderful ride. There are so many stops and different sites to see. Changes take place and we need to be prepared for them.

In viewing teaching as a train ride full of unexpected stops and challenges, Lynn is preparing herself for whatever may take place in her classroom when the time comes.

This year as she begins the APEX Program, she will be fortunate enough to work with a mentor teacher in a fifth grade classroom while also teaching her Title One students to read. This experience is invaluable to Lynn who has been substitute teaching for numerous years and has years of experience under her belt. She is confident in her decision to teach. Lynn stated because she knows that she wanted to teach and that this was her career goal, she works harder at accomplishing the goal. "It is critical," she stated, "that I know that I have chosen this career and want to be here in this position." She is also aware that her first year will be difficult but expects that she will have patience, reasonable expectations of herself and her students, and energy to be tolerant of herself and her students.

She reasoned that teaching is full of challenges and she will present lessons in a manner that will allow her students to see that there are numerous ways to accomplish a task. She wants to also provide them with a comfortable environment so that they may learn. In knowing who she is, she will be able to provide for her students' needs. She stated,

[Y]ou need to know who you are and what your strengths are. You need to value yourself because there will be days when you walk out and I've seen many teachers in tears. And it's a very challenging job. I've seen a teacher walk out of her classroom and say, it's out of control. (Laughs) And you know, the same teacher nodded knowingly. Um, that happens too, hopefully not very often. Um, if I'm organized, I'm better prepared to deliver to my students. And they get that much more of my time. If I'm going to spend that much of my time um with a cluttered mind or a cluttered plan or maybe not 100% or 150 of what I should be giving, that is taking from them what they deserve. What they should expect, so - there is a selfishness there because you should go in prepared - any other professional would say the same thing that you need to have the integrity and

dignity to say that I am a professional person and this is how I deliver what I do. So you really need to measure yourself against a very very big ruler or yard stick. You need to have high expectations for yourself.

Her only dilemma lies in her view that she may not be able to “give enough” to her students. For this reason, she has strong expectations for the APEX Program.

Now, towards the end of her credential coursework, Lynn is very pleased with what she has gained from the program. She is confident that she will continue to learn, reflect, and provide for her students. Lynn continued to clarify that the program has provided her with “the academic foundation that [she] will need to continually question [her] lesson plans and help [her] in engaging [her] students in daily discussions.”

Reaching an Understanding

At the beginning of this study, I held numerous assumptions about the APEX students/emergency permit workers. I saw them as a group who were “angry with the world” and wanted to be viewed “differently because of their unique situations.”

The data collected from the pilot interviews had revealed a number of interconnected ideas. One idea that emerged from conversations with these emergency permit workers was that many already viewed themselves as “teachers” because they were teaching in their own classrooms. Since they were already hired on a full-time basis and working in classrooms, they felt they should be treated differently by the university and the district. Some felt they should be issued credentials based on their field experience(s). Others felt that they should be waived from taking some credential courses, such as student teaching/field experience. They viewed their professional education as an “obstacle” and viewed the teaching field quite negatively. They felt overworked, unprepared, and unsupported by their colleagues and their district. When

they think of teaching, they often view that it is necessary to distance themselves from their students in order to teach effectively. Many felt that teaching is a task that needs to be completed, rather than a journey of personal and professional development that can be gained through self-knowledge.

When I first met them I had the feeling that they came into the program expecting special treatment because they were “already teaching.” They seemed to think that they did not have to take credential coursework and should be waived from various requirements, such as student teaching units “because they were already teaching in their own classroom.” In my position as the assistant coordinator to the APEX Program, I was constantly bombarded with their complaints. They complained about their coursework, administrators, schools, instructors, and more. For example, one APEX student stated that her expectations of the program were quite simple, she wanted to be taught all the techniques that would make her a better teacher. She did not want to hear about theory or how to put the theory into practice unless it dealt directly with her class at the time. She simply wanted to know what someone else had already tried successfully. After hearing all these complaints, I wondered how this group of first year uncredentialed emergency permit workers would succeed (or survive the school year) as teachers and students in the APEX Program. I had reservations on their completion of the program. I thought that as a group they were too engrossed in their own circumstances and refused to look at the whole picture, such as the benefits of the program and the accommodations that had already been made for them “because they were already teaching.” I constantly asked myself, why couldn’t they view teaching and learning from a different view? Why were they viewing everything in such a negative notion?

My ideas changed rapidly as the semesters progressed and the students began taking more classes. Many were still feeling frustrated about their jobs, while others were beginning to “adjust” to the demands of teaching and attending classes at night. Most of the students proved me wrong by the end of the first semester. After they had taken over 18 units and were beginning their second semester, they had released much of their tension. They began to make meaning of their coursework and reflected on their own learning. They were no longer “complaining” that classes were too difficult or useless. In general, they stopped complaining. They began to adjust to the schedules at their schools and began to understand the necessary steps they needed to take to ensure that their university assignments were completed on time. Thus, they were able to articulate their concerns from a different perspective by the end of the second semester.

Discovering Themes of Understanding

Looking closer at three themes that define emergency permit workers, I will first examine their self-knowledge and identity in their role as teacher and learner. The second theme describes their development of a community of learners in the APEX Program. The third theme explores how their personal narratives helped transform their learning process.

Self-Knowledge and Identity

This study allowed each participant to discuss his or her individuality to become better informed of who the participants are on an individual basis. The ability to become more informed about oneself is a process of empowerment, as introduced by Ira Shor. Shor (1992) states that empowerment allows for everyone to

Relate personal growth to public life, by developing strong skills, academic knowledge, habits of inquiry, and critical curiosity about society, power, inequality, and change (15).

In empowerment participants are provided opportunities to share their stories during a one-on-one conversation and dialogue.

Brenda stated that the reason she wanted to teach was because she had teachers in school whom she felt “could not teach.” She felt that she had been “short changed in school because no one cared,” thus she stopped caring. Her high school teacher had one conference with her parents during the entire school year. She sat them down and told them Brenda would end up being homeless if she did not get her act together. This conference only provoked Brenda to look the other way. However, as an adult Brenda understood that she needed to do something to help students who have similar experiences. In choosing to teach, her goal was to focus more on her students. She stated,

I am very into the mood of my class, the mood of every child. I think that it's very important. You know, if everyone is feeling kind of tired or a student is feeling kind of tired or is feeling unhappy, it really needs to be addressed. I feel that they do not need to be ignored. I don't think any students' emotions should be ignored. ... You see if you teach them to address their feelings now, it will not be – I feel- as big an issue later.

Sensing this need to address her students' emotions, Brenda revealed that her childhood experience played a vital role in her attitude as a teacher. The connections made by [Brenda] revealed that “good teachers are held not in the method but in their hearts. ... [A]s the place where intellect and emotion and spirit will converge in the human self” (Palmer 1998, 11). She believed that it was important to discuss feelings and emotions and get down to the bottom of every situation. Rather than ignoring her students, she faced each situation head on. She stated that this sharing time has been effective, as they

were becoming more aware of each other's feelings, as well as their own. "I get to see who they are and how they feel. It's important for me to know how they are doing," she added. Sharing time was an important part of the day for Brenda because she stated as a child, "No teacher ever took the time [to get to know me]." In giving back to her community she taught her students to become aware of who they are and to know that she really cared about how they are doing.

Robert also mentioned that although he and his class do not have time to talk during class time, many would return after school so that they could "discuss issues of the day that bothered them." Chris, on the other hand, admitted that class time was all they had and he would talk to his students and answer their questions anytime they needed because "They let me know what is important to them. They are more worried about the facts of life – not about geometric shapes." He further added,

I'm not made for the regular classroom. I'm made for the harder kids. The kid that doesn't fit into the regular classroom. I didn't fit in there either, I fit into this classroom where things are going to be different. Where you have to be ready to go off the cuff. So it's more of an impromptu teacher. They are going to ask you questions that has nothing to do with the academics that you are on. But it may be relevant to the kid's life. Sometimes they really need an answer. It happened today. They asked questions that were loosely related but not totally. We were talking about reproduction and if it's an important question, even though it's not part of that moment's lesson, I try to answer it. Especially when we are talking about a health issue.

Relating to his students is easy because Chris was the same way when he was a child. Not much kept him in school except that his father was a teacher at the high school he attended and the fact that he was involved with sports. Chris portrayed a teacher that taught who he is.

Another student, Lynn, who had numerous educational opportunities in life was motivated and enjoyed school. When she taught, she "offer[ed] [them] the gift that had

been given to [her] when she was young” (Palmer 1998, 25). Similarly, Georgia “concealed her heart” when she began teaching. As a student in the APEX Program, her expectations revealed “an art of self alienation” (Palmer 1998, 38). At the start she hid behind “the pretense of objectivity” when she stated, “Don’t ask me to think about this stuff – just give me the facts” (Palmer 1998, 38). For Georgia, relating to her students was difficult. Many feared her demeanor and it was obvious during my observations.

Relating to students can often be helpful to make a connection. By thinking of her past childhood experiences, Tracy was able to help reclaim her voice and her students’ voice. Tracy spoke of the importance of connecting and relating to her students.

Tracy: ...I would have been amazing if I had worked. But I didn’t because part of it was family. I was raising younger brothers and sisters. But part of it was because it (school) was boring. There wasn’t enough to keep me stimulated.

Stephanie: Then going back to that – when you felt that your education was boring, do you think that affects your teaching?

Tracy: Oh definitely. So much! I just don’t want to be boring. I think about it all the time about how – I try to interpret what’s going on in the room through the students’ eyes. And I think that’s why I’m good with kids because I relate to them. I don’t know if I remember back or what – but I’m able to look at them from their point of view. I’ll say something and then I’ll be able to say, “Ooh, coming from a teenage point of view that’s ridiculous.” And I’ll even tell the kids, “You know, I didn’t think that out real good. What do you think?” Or they’ll know. I’ll tell them from the start that if something is way off to tell me and they do. Like I was doing this vocabulary thing with them today and they said, “Could you do it this way instead?” And it was definitely a smart suggestion so I’m going to re-do their idea tomorrow.

I observed that she was able to “weave a complex web of connections among [herself], [her] subject, and [her] students so that the students can learn to weave a world for themselves” (Palmer 1998, 11). As a younger student Tracy was given the idea that she

did not have a viewpoint. She stated that being socialized to believe that she did not have a viewpoint deterred her educational goals. Tracy added,

I always listen to their viewpoint. And I think that makes a big difference. I mean I was raised or I was taught, mainly by nuns that you didn't cross. You didn't have viewpoints. ... And I felt that my education really stifled me. It stifled me creatively, my thinking skills, and my desire to go on. There was no point, no excitement to do it.

By remembering her views of education and understanding that students needed to have some state of empowerment, Tracy taught differently from the way she was taught. In understanding her self and her desires as a student, she was able to focus her attention on her students' needs. She commented,

I understand what it is like to be a student because I am a student. And I will sit in class and say, "I will never do this to my kids if I really don't like it." Just as I would do what I've seen and heard with my students from an APEX class or many other classes from San Jose State. And I think it's invaluable for me to be in the student situation. I think my kids get a lot from it. I understand.

The ability to think about herself as a student enabled her to view her students differently. Her knowledge of herself and her goal allowed her to respect her students' viewpoints, while also bringing forth her own views. Tracy continued to share more and more of her life with them so that they could understand her better. Like Robert and Chris she wanted to find a way to connect with her students and allow them the opportunity to view her as a human being. Tracy stated,

They seem think that I do not make mistakes, so I tell them about my mistakes. I tell them that, yah I made a mistake. I didn't go to college when I should have. And I fixed it. It was very very hard. So you're at a point where you can avoid that hurdle. Even though it's going to be tough.

Janet also recalls her love for children which drew her toward teaching as a profession. She remembered teachers whom she respected and as a teacher, she tried to emulate.

Janet: I really like kids. And I'm the oldest in my family. So I was always kind of teaching them (her sisters) on what to do and was the role model. It's a role I've always been in. So teaching is natural to me. I had teachers that I respected and that has helped me.

Stephanie: What teachers did you remember most?

Janet: The ones that were always – never power tripping. I always felt that they were always on the same level as me. They respected what I had to say and listened to what I had to say. And I try as hard as I can to do that with my kids and let them know that I have voice and that they do too. 'Cause a lot of times they don't (have a voice) in their situation.

Many of these emergency permit teachers “became teachers for reasons of the heart, animated by a passion for some subject and for helping people learn” (Palmer 1998, 17). This passion brought many emergency permit teachers into the APEX Program and to have a common ground to start.

Many emergency permit teachers grappled with the notion of teaching without much academic background. Feeling thrown into their own classrooms and expected to fulfill the same responsibilities as veteran teachers, emergency permit teachers often found themselves in a state of shock. Many wanted to focus on their students and on how to successfully assist them in the classroom. As a result, they tended to rely on manuals to teach. They wondered how they could bring a subject to life if they did not know how to present it from their heart? But most importantly, how could they present a subject from their heart if they do not know who they are?

In an effort to understand how to teach their students, emergency permit teachers must first discover ways in which they can learn more about themselves through what they have experienced. “Dewey held that one criterion of experience is *continuity*, namely, the notion that experiences grow out of experiences, and experiences lead to further experiences” (Clandinin and Connelly 2000, 2). Perhaps by looking closer at the

lived experiences that emergency permit workers bring, they may find the usefulness behind sharing their personal lives past, present, and future with their students in order to find a common theme to connect with their lives.

Community of Learners

During casual conversations in their APEX classes I discovered that the cohort found refuge in one another. As students and emergency permit workers, this group looked to one another for support, guidance, and ideas to take back to their classrooms because of their commonalties. As emergency permit workers they shared a unique bond. They were all teaching in their own classrooms and had to juggle the different demands and responsibilities placed on them. They understood that as a community, they shared the same goals – completing their credential and the school year successfully. In order to accomplish these two goals, they knew that they needed to support one another through the yearlong program. Thus, as a cohort they viewed themselves as a community. The APEX students have what German Sociologist Ferdinand Tonnies in Sergiovanni (1994) called a “*gemeinschaft* of mind” or a “community of mind” (4).

The APEX students felt that as a community of learners, they shared a special bond and were working toward the same goal in similar contexts. They later realized that their personal narratives brought them together. They have had other jobs before teaching and chose this profession as their career. They are immersed in the classroom for the first time. And they are all bound by the rigor of their classroom responsibilities and their similar goal to obtain their teaching credential. As suggested by Sergiovanni (1994) their values and beliefs “provided the needed conditions for creating a sense of

‘we’ from ‘I’” (4). Their sense of “I” changed into “we” once they began to work together as evident in Janet’s statement,

It was nice to have a bunch of people who were just in the classroom like me come into the same room and know exactly how my day was. We all understand each other because we share that title. We are emergency permit teachers and we don’t get much support from other colleagues at our school because they don’t understand. Then I go into class and I feel so relieved.

Needing a motivation to get through the day, Sara made a similar comment about being a part of a community of learners.

I always look forward to going to class and getting together with everyone to talk about what I did during the day and see what they think. It’s great to have people who actually are in the same situation with me. We help each other in so many ways.

Karen also saw the value of the program cohort explained,

The program gives me an outlet. I’m able to talk about my situation with other teachers. ...But it’s nice to be able to talk to everyone and know that they are going through the same thing. Even when talking to Lisa she says that she feels like crying. And I think, you know what? I’m really not alone. Other people are going through it too. I don’t feel isolated anymore. No one wants to admit that they are feeling stressed. But once I started talking to them, I realized that they too were stressed.

As stated in her narrative above, Karen felt that as an individual she was isolated, but as a cohort she felt more confident in her feelings. She knew that she was not alone when she discovered that other students were also stressed and overwhelmed. This gave her comfort in knowing that she had a support group to turn to.

Sara stated that when she first started teaching, she had not had much support from people in the profession. The other teachers in her school had not provided her with the support that she felt she needed. She felt that she was left to discover what she needed on her own. For Sara, teaching a first-second grade combo was stressful. A “low” in her career was not having enough support. She stated,

Some of the lows (of teaching) would be... maybe at the beginning of the year when you're kind of frustrated and there's nobody there. You know... if we didn't have each other (APEX classmates) I would've quit by now. I would've just said, "forget this." But we had each other.

Finding help from others was difficult and often frustrating for this group. Karen also complained that when she was hired, it was difficult for her to know what was expected of her. She did not know what to do and no information was "freely offered." She complained, "Unless I knew the right questions to ask, I would not get an answer." When Karen became involved with the APEX Program, she met a colleague who was also new but was more aggressive than her. Together they discovered what was needed to get through the year without missing an assignment from the school district or principal.

Sara, fortunately, began the APEX Program with four other emergency permit teachers from her school. As new teachers, they all "banded together" and helped one another. They "set up grade level meetings and worked together on big projects." If they had any concerns they had each other to discuss the problems with and "bounce ideas off one another." They practiced what Sergiovanni (1994) called a "collegial community," where the work they created benefited the entire group. Sara recalled her first months of teaching,

It was like getting up at the crack of dawn and going to sleep at midnight. It was really draining. But it has made this year a whole lot easier. Um, I felt that I was scared. I was wondering if I was doing the right thing. It's hard when you don't have the support system set up ... I literally did not get the standards until the middle of the year. And so it was hard. I was just kind of clinging onto any experienced teacher who would help.

Working closely together at school was beneficial to Sara and her group because they were also able to help one another with coursework projects and presentations. The

culture of this community arose “from a network of shared ideologies, coherent set of beliefs that [tied] the people together and that [explained] their work to them in terms of cause and effect relationships” (Trice and Beyer 1984 in Sergiovanni 1994, 71). Sara who worked with Janet also added,

We’ve certainly bonded with – like Paula and Francis – and all of us have just been there for each other. And we all understand what we are all going through. It’s just nice to have somebody else to be in the same place and understand. They did not always have the answers, but they were there to listen. Sometimes, that’s all I needed!

The relationship they built with one another also enabled many of the students to view their jobs in a different light. Robert stated,

I think the best stuff I’ve got from APEX has been from the other teachers. So when we go to class and get into groups and the instructor says, “Discuss the sociological impact of free lunches or whatever...” Well, we’ll get into that and talk about it for two or three minutes. But then we start to talk about, “Oh what’s going on at your place? Oh man, I just had the same thing happen. Oh yah, my principal did this and that. Well, my principal didn’t do anything.” So those times have been helpful.

Robert further explained that the times he spent discussing his “real life school situations” helped him to better deal with the problems that took place in his classroom.

Although classroom instructions helped in other areas, he felt that his small group discussions dealing with everyday events were most beneficial to him. He further added,

I think we should have more time for one-on-one discussions. So if someone sits and says, “Look.” It’s always nice to have someone to confirm or not confirm pro and con and say, “You know, that’s the way it is. It’s never going to go away. You may as well grin and bear it. Spin a positive on it and expect it from now on.” Or, they might say something else. “You’re right, that’s not right. You can do something and that will change.” It confirms and disproves some things. I think that is very important and you get some feedback. [When you talk with others] you can put some validity into your claims and put yourself at peace. When I talk with other professionals, which I feel we all are, it helps me.

Their sense of community assisted them through numerous rough days at work. Many state the importance of having one another to discuss their hopes and fears. Sometimes it was beneficial just to be able to bounce ideas off of one another during small group discussions. As suggested by Sergiovanni (1994) their “network of shared ideologies represent a community of mind upon which to build a community of kinship, place, and memory” (71). Working in a cohort proved to be a positive point in the program option, according to Robert.

Having the connection of being emergency permit workers helped to unite these participants. They were able to view their jobs in a different perspective because of the support they provided one another. Janet suggested that without their cohort, most of the students would view their job as being quite negative. She recalled,

[My first year] was hard. It was a big wake up call for me when I first started working here. ...Lots of time when we (friends from APEX classes) get together and talk, we talk about our first months going into the teacher's lounge. And it's a shock for us. It's like, “Oh my gosh, are they sitting in there talking about their students like that?” You know they're just saying such negative things. It was hard. I almost – my first month I almost quit and the principal came into my room because I wouldn't go into the staff room anymore.

They found that conversations with one another helped them to re-evaluate their roles and prioritize their responsibilities. The support allowed them to focus more on their students and less on the districts' expectations of completing journal entries and attending BTSA meetings on a regular basis. Tracy stated,

Oh, you wouldn't believe the stuff we have to do (for BTSA). You know, there's a meeting for this and a meeting for that. It was this deadline and that deadline. [I]t is just a pain. I mean they don't (pause) they don't try to support you. Instead they just give you more work. That's not support. It's all paperwork. The APEX class gave us the chance to talk with one another in class. That was helpful and supportive for me.

Although she found the meetings important, she decided that her students often took precedence when it came to choosing which was more important. For Brenda, although her time was limited, she was focused on her students and her classroom. Her priority allowed her to work hard as a student so that she could give her students what they deserved – an education. Through conversations their community contributed to the strengthening of their relationship and professional growth and practice (Sergiovanni 1994, 146). The extra support from one another gave them the strength and courage which they needed to continue. Janet stated,

I do not think I would do it any differently. I think the APEX cohort has helped me bond in a different way. I've taken classes at the university, it's just not the same. Whatever help or support I do not get at my school, I get from my classmates. I couldn't imagine stopping this and going through the conventional program at State. My friends are going through the regular program and they are frustrated because sometimes the work does not relate to their classroom activities and they don't spend time in small groups the way we do in APEX.

When push came to shove at their working environment, they felt that they could rely on one another for added guidance.

With limited time, support was a necessary component for the APEX students to become successful teachers and learners. Without support, they felt alone and must, as Sara stated, “fight a losing battle.” She explained, “If I do not get the help I need from my principal or colleague, I have to fight on my own. I refuse to lose because I'm new.” With emergency permit workers who were teaching for the first time, it was almost a war of the wills. They had to be willing to fight in order to remain strong in the classroom. For this reason, the support from others becomes a vital part of their budding career.

Many agreed that the APEX Program would provide them with what they needed most, a support system. At the beginning of their career, that was all they were looking

for from others. Once they were more comfortable with the district and program expectations, they began to question their own expectations and re-evaluate their goals.

Transformational Learning Through Examining Personal Narratives

The APEX students revealed their unique identities as learners seeking to become more competent educators by taking part in the APEX Program. As they unveiled their lived experiences through personal narratives they discovered their “inner soul” through each story. Doing so helped them better understand what being teachers and learners entailed. In grappling with the demands and challenges of juggling two roles, they discovered that they had gained new knowledge and uncovered ways to better help them help their students. Thus, empowering education began with these emergency permit teachers as they observed their own transformations.

Although they did not have the language to identify their new experiences as a transformational learning process, they were aware that they were “different” in some way. They knew that they had changed somehow but did not truly examine the stories they were living. Until the opportunity arrived, they never questioned their narratives. Sara, who completed the program in spring 2000 realized a “transition” had taken place now that she was given the opportunity to discuss her APEX experience. She was shocked by what she had learned.

Sara: When I started I thought I knew all that I needed to know and that was all I needed to know. I’ll get some – I’ll definitely get some ideas but I already know everything I need to know about where I stood with my philosophy. So actually ever since I wrote my philosophy on education in February [1999], I’ve changed it three times.

Stephanie: Wow.

- Sara: Yah- so it's different. I've cut some things out and I've added some things. Every time we go through a new set of courses, it's a little bit different.
- Stephanie: What you said just struck me. That when you first walked in you said, "I know all these things" and now –
- Sara: I don't.
- Stephanie: Isn't that interesting?
- Sara: Yah it is. It's interesting but it's kind of scary. And the thing I see is that the newer APEX folks coming in they just think that they know everything that they need to know. ... They don't realize that this is just the beginning of their learning adventure. I understand where they are coming from because I was there. I have changed a lot since I began the program. I hope that they have also. Like I said last time, the classes have taught me to question what I'm doing and why I'm doing it. At first I just did it and didn't ask questions. Then after the 102 and 103 classes, I learned to query. I've learned to look at things from a different perspective now.

Similarly, when Karen was asked to recall her experiences, she too found that she had changed. Although at first she did not realize it, she recognized later that she had changed for the worse. Suddenly, she knew that something had to be done to rid her of the negativity that others were instilling in her. She worried that the negativity from veteran teachers had spread to her classroom and her actions toward her students. At one point in her career, she allowed negative views of teaching to take over her daily thoughts. "I questioned if I should be teaching because I know that somehow I'm doing something wrong." However, she quickly determined that she needed to change. She was fearful that she could not control her own thoughts and emotions.

- Karen: ... I think that I should be able to be in control of my own feelings. But I think that it's so hard when I feel so isolated. If I go into the lunchroom the other teachers start talking about their students in such a negative way. But if I don't go, I'm isolating myself from others and I don't want that either. But how can I find that balance? It's not a positive environment. That's when the APEX comes in. The program gives me an outlet. I'm able to talk about my situation with other teachers. But sometimes it

becomes too negative and I'd rather not talk about it. It gets carried away sometimes and goes in the wrong direction. But it's nice to be able to talk to everyone and know that they are going through the same thing. Even when talking to Carla she says that she feels like crying. And I finally realized it, you know what? I'm really not alone! Other people are going through it too. I then don't feel isolated anymore. No one wants to admit that they are feeling stressed. But once I started talking to them, I realized that they too were stressed. And then it was better. I learned that I needed to put less pressure on myself because I'm learning as I go along. It's been difficult this year being new and all but I know next year will be better because of what APEX had provided and what my classmates have given me.

Stephanie: How are you doing now?

Karen: I've learned to let go of some things.

Karen understood herself better when she found herself focused on her colleagues' negativity. She rationalized that although they were negative toward teaching, her view of teaching did not have to reflect their negativity. As she re-examined her decision to teach, it helped her put her teaching career in perspective. This was a transformational learning process for her because she realized that she had changed and that she needed to do something soon. She was surprised that her family, friends, and husband had informed her of her "change." But because she was "so self-absorbed" she "had no idea" what others noticed.

Karen: [A]t first I felt so overwhelmed when I began this. I felt that I was losing myself. People would tell me that I had changed and even my husband said that I was a different person. I felt and still do sometimes that I'm losing my sense of who I am. I'm not sure who I am anymore. I think I've lost myself and won't be able to find it again until I've learned to juggle my private life, my school life, and my classroom life. I felt awful when people would come up to me and tell me that I'd changed. It was because I really didn't know who I was when I was teaching. I knew that I had so much to do that I didn't have time really to think about it. I mean I'd go to class and everyone would become so negative – and then I'd find myself becoming negative also. I didn't want to be that way but I was turning into somebody else when I was surrounded by such negativity.

Stephanie: Tell me more about the negative attitude.

Karen: Well, it seems that some of the people don't even want to be there. I mean, it was their choice, no one made it for them. When I went into teaching I looked at all my options and I made the choice to teach. I mean, why are they complaining when it was what they chose. I can understand that they want to complain but get over it. I've done my fair share of complaining and now I know that I must move on. This was what I was going to do and I knew that.

Karen learned to look at teaching from a different perspective. She viewed education highly when she began teaching but when others around were negative about their jobs, she too felt "burdened" by her career choice. However, reflecting on her choice and why she unexpectedly left her other job, she concluded that this was where she wanted to be. Although others around her made her feel negative she picked up on the fact that she was transforming into a negative person. Consequently, she took the necessary actions to change her views because she learned that in education, "there is no tomorrow. You must seize the day."

Similarly, Brenda felt that she had transitioned from feeling uncomfortable with "being the new teacher" to being a "new teacher who knew what [she] was doing." Her pride in taking such a step in her career was revealed in the fact that she realized that she learned to become a better learner and thus on the way to becoming an effective teacher. She stated that she has learned to grow and encourage her students to become learners also. Brenda was not discouraged when she began the APEX Program, she was worried that she would not be able to learn enough to help her students because of the busy schedule. Now she has learned to become more involved with her thoughts and concerns and continues to "go to school for [her] students."

Robert's first step in his transformational learning was when he discovered that he could not change the world. He walked into his classroom wanting to make a difference and was determined to do what it took. Concerned that he would have to fend himself from "aggressive [and] violent students," he did not consider other options that would deter his teaching and their learning. He was shocked to discover that his students were below grade level and were uninterested in education. Through his APEX community Robert has learned to put less pressure on himself and his students. Now disappointed and frustrated, he is at a stage in his life where he is better informed about where he needs to go from here to accomplish his goal.

When the APEX students began teaching students in their classrooms and engaging in evening classes at the district office twice a week, I followed up on their interviews and observed them in their classroom environment. As they went about the "routine" that they were socialized to accept and follow, the literature review allowed me to become more open to what I heard and saw. When I heard a specific key word or witnessed an action by the students, I was able to give that key word or action a specific name. Sergiovanni, Palmer, and Bruner were very helpful in identifying ways of helping me grapple with the notion of emergency permit "teachers" working together, reflecting together, and then revealing their personal narratives and their understanding of education to me. By reading the literature I was given the proper language and the confidence to go about conducting this research. Grounded in theory, I was able to continue the research in a manner that allowed me to uncover how to better improve the APEX program curriculum.

The conversations and interviews we had together enabled the APEX students saw a transformation take place. When we discussed the importance of their narratives and its connection to their teaching, they understood it and began to relate why they enjoyed their job more than other teachers. Knowing who they were and what they stood for in the field of education, the emergency permit teachers understood the importance of this transformational learning. Although they did not have the language to name their learning process, I gave them an idea where they were headed. The transformative experience brought them closer to the notion of why they wanted to teach in the first place and how they will continue to remain confident in their teaching.

Many of the APEX students began the credentialing program thinking that they had all the information they needed to succeed as teachers. Once coursework began, many learned that, unfortunately, there was much more that they did not know to become effective teachers. Their learning was transformed when they discovered that, although rich in resource, they too had so much *more* to learn and offer their students.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

So we come full circle, to the place where this book began: to the power within each of us that in communion with powers beyond ourselves co-creates the world, for better or worse. ...When we are unfaithful to the inward teacher and to the community of truth, we do lamentable damage to ourselves, to our students, and to the greater things of the world that our knowledge holds in trust (Palmer 1999, 41).

Conclusion

I have learned that APEX students and emergency permit workers are intelligent, hardworking people who felt that their situation was very unique and required more attention and support. Many did not realize the importance of their input and the notion of self-discovery. Through the APEX Program many were able to grasp the idea of hope while standing in the state of liminality.

In probing their life experiences, both educational and social, I was given the opportunity to learn more about this particular group of teachers. In conducting this research, a strong theme emerged. I noticed a distinct sense of community between the APEX students in the program. Having a cohort allowed many to feel less isolated and more competent as a group. In addition, their sense of self helped them connect their personal narratives to their classrooms, although they were not able to name their actions. Through listening to their narratives and observing their classrooms, I saw how the two were strongly connected. The transformative learning of a few emergency permit

teachers only became clear when I walked them through their interview response and shared my observations with them.

As members of the APEX community involved themselves in a transformational process of learning through their conversations, we realized the importance of using personal narratives in creating a deeper connection between students and teachers. We also saw the relevance in their concerns. Although they seemed a somewhat difficult group to work with, they proved to be a highly intelligent group of people whose goal was to become effective teachers. Their main focus throughout participation in the program was their students. Already situated in the classroom, they needed methods and techniques to deal with daily events taking place. They wanted to know what would be applicable to their students, rather than learning theories that were too far from what was occurring in their classrooms. As a cohort they wanted a high quality program that would provide them with the necessary tools to work in their classrooms. They wanted coursework to connect with their classroom activities. They wanted to use lessons taught from the APEX coursework in their own classrooms the following day. When they felt that their needs were ignored, they became defensive about their learning process. However, as the program changed to meet their needs the students began to appreciate the coursework and the learning process more. When faculty members joined forces to ensure that class instruction and course materials were applicable they applauded the changes.

After working with the APEX community of learners, I have come to conclude that this group teaches because they want to teach from the heart. Palmer (1998) suggested that when teachers lose heart, it is because they have not been advised to look

within themselves for the answer. As many emergency permit workers were “thrown” into their classrooms and expected to “fend for themselves,” many were fearful that they had chosen the wrong career for the wrong reasons at the wrong time. The students in the APEX Program were truly unique because of where they came from, what they brought to the classroom and where they intended to take what they had learned from the program to help themselves and their students. Where could one find a community of people who have chosen teaching as a career after so many changes have taken place in their lives? It is for them that,

We must find an approach to teaching that respects the diversity of teachers and subjects... ...If identity and integrity are more fundamental to good teaching than techniques – and if we want to grow as teachers – we must do something alien to academic culture: we must talk to each other about our inner lives – risky stuff in a profession that fears the personal and seeks safety in the technical, the distant, the abstract (Palmer 1998, 12).

The emergency permit teachers who lost heart were the ones who were seeking validation from others or their manuals. Other emergency permit teachers were grounded in their personal stories and did not necessarily seek validation from others, nor did they fear criticism from others. Through understanding of the self and examining the practical implications of reflection emergency permit teachers can better understand how to teach without relying on scripted manuals. As most first year teachers rely on manuals without looking at their lived experiences and personal stories, they are unable to connect their lives to that of their students. In taking that step to examine a connection between their lived experiences and their students, they are implying that their students are important individuals and deserve a teacher who will look beyond manuals.

Although these few emergency permit teachers came to a surface understanding of transformational learning they admitted that they still have much to learn. In admitting this, they agreed with Kohl (1984) when he stated,

Understanding the complex relationships between self-growth and nurturing growth is essential to becoming a good teacher. Further, the love of nurturing and observing growth in others is essential to sustaining a life of teaching. This implies that no matter what you teach or how you present yourself to your students, you have to be on the learner's side and to believe that you can and will grow during the time you are together (5).

Re-examining their "self" allowed for growth in their career as educators. They comprehended that their personal stories helped to connect them to their students but did not know the impact of it. Knowing that their lived experiences affected the lives of their students and the environment that they created at school allowed these emergency permit teachers to feel more confident about their teaching. They had realized that in sharing their personal stories, they opened a different world to their students. Many of their students have been socialized to accept that learning is unilateral and revolves around the transmission of objective knowledge. The understanding of the self almost seem a threatening subject to bring into the classroom because of its subjectivity. However, when provided with the chance to convey their own thoughts and stories, most students were better able to also relate to their teachers and ultimately the subjects being taught. Using the real world to make a solid connection for students was more beneficial to their lives, just as the emergency permit teachers requested that all coursework apply to their classrooms.

The APEX community will continue to grow because of the uniqueness of the cohort and members' desire to learn from one another. The support that they gained from one another will continue to foster their ability to work with other teachers in their

own schools. However uncomfortable it may be to share their stories with one another, these students did this on a nightly basis during their classes without thinking twice about their actions. In learning the importance of telling lived stories in a community, these emergency permit teachers realized the true reason they have chosen to teach – because it was their dream to make a difference.

Recommendations for Reflection and Renewal

Throughout Palmer's (1998) theories of self-knowledge and reflection, he emphasizes the need for teachers to look within their inner self. In doing so, teachers must challenge their hearts and dig deep within themselves. Moving beyond techniques and quick fixes, understanding of the self gives all teachers the opportunity to explore what others have not considered. In transforming learning experiences, they must first be willing to open their heart. I recommend an understanding and examination of the following concepts:

1. Educate APEX faculty and administrators about the uniqueness of the group so that coursework materials will be created to fit the needs of the cohort, rather than expecting them to follow the same requirements as students in the conventional program.
2. Educate all APEX students about the expectations of the APEX Program before they are accepted into the program. This will help prepare them for the rigor of the coursework and they do not “unexpectedly” become overwhelmed with the demands of the program once the semester has begun.
3. Hold an orientation to the APEX Program so that students may have time to understand and reflect on their self-knowledge. Create smaller cohorts during the

orientation to allow students to share their philosophy of teaching and learning.

Provide an arena where students tell why they have chosen teaching as a career.

Allow time for exploration of the inner life where students explore what they feel are their strengths and weaknesses. Give students the opportunity to confront their comfort levels and their fears. Without understanding why we desire teach and where we want to go from this point, we may never understand how to help our students.

4. Continue to rearrange coursework to keep up with the concerns of the specific cohort. Arrange theory and foundation courses to reflect the needs of the APEX community. Some may want theory at the start of the cohort, while others may want both at the end. Continue to monitor the input of students' concerns.
5. Mark various points in the program where APEX students are evaluated to ensure that the program is allowing them to progress, learn and grow. At this mark point, students should either be encouraged to continue with the program or introduced to another program that will better fit their current needs.
6. Arrange at the end of the first semester in the program where students transition from an "emergency permit" to an "intern credential" thus alleviating the negative labeling of "uncredentialed teachers."
7. The structure of the program should be changed to encourage more faculty meetings that allow for dialogue. Currently the faculty meets infrequently to discuss the APEX students and their coursework. These meetings will help to ensure that assignments do not overlap.
8. Allow students time during APEX classes to discuss their immediate concerns even though some issues discussed may be controversial or have nothing to do with the

- subjects. Encourage students to voice their opinions in a non-threatening environment so that they can continue with the class work without being distracted.
9. Consider having students write journal entries at the end of each evening for five minutes so that they can provide immediate input on the evening's class.
 10. Hold monthly meetings with APEX students and administrators during the beginning of their class time to discuss current issues and concerns so that we are always in touch with the students' needs.
 11. Model for students what personal narratives entail, how transformational learning processes can occur and what they need to be aware of as emergency permit workers. Choose reading that can stimulate their thinking in addition to making the readings applicable to their classroom concerns.
 12. Create coursework in a fashion that will encourage students to attend ALL classes so that they may benefit from them. Currently, this group has difficulty attending classes on a regular basis.
 13. Encourage district involvement in the APEX Program. Schedule monthly meetings to allow district personnel to provide input and suggestions, as they also observe the APEX students in the classroom. Arranging these meetings will encourage district and university personnel to work together to support these first year emergency permit teachers.

As more and more emergency permit teachers are being hired to relieve the shortage of credentialed teachers, the credential program and individual school districts must learn to foster the unique lived experiences of the individuals being hired. Rather than throwing them into a classroom and expecting them to succeed on their own, both

the school district and university must contemplate how to support them in their endeavors. These people have chosen a career in teaching because of a childhood memory of a teacher who taught from the heart and allowed them room to explore and discover for themselves what is at the heart of their learning. As adults, their desire to give back what they were provided should be encouraged. They walk in with a gift to offer their students but are sadly turned away by programs that do not support their needs and do not encourage the unique gifts that they bring with them. Others may consider the fact that because they are uncredentialed, they should not be placed in the classrooms. Although it is important to have teaching and academic experience in education, one should also look at the lived experiences that this group brings. As they simultaneously teach in the classroom, they are discovering ways in which to improve. Encouraging teachers to reflect on their experiences can help them to better understand that their lived experiences is truly a gift that needs to be shared.

Transformation of a Researcher

As a result of this research study I have gained tremendous insight into the lives of emergency permit *teachers*. Yes, I have come to realize that they are indeed *teachers*. They teach from their heart and they understand the worth of personal and professional development. However, many continue to need the support and encouragement from others to realize the importance of their job. For this reason, I think that we need to begin to validate their concerns in some manner. Rather than ignoring their needs, we should make an effort to address their concerns in a larger forum so that others are aware of them.

As I continue on my path in higher education, my concern is that emergency permit teachers will continue to be portrayed negatively. For this reason, I would like to continue to learn more about them. As a start, I would like to begin dialoguing with colleagues and principals who work with this group to become more aware of other perspectives. Eventually I would like to interview district personnel to ensure that this group will not be discriminated against as they attend job interviews. It is my hope that in dialoguing with others, they can become more aware of this particular group of people and provide them with more support. As they begin their first days of teaching, my ultimate goal is for the public to understand that this group should no longer be stereotyped as “uncredentialed/unqualified” teachers. The purpose of this study was to help others view this group differently. They have high expectations of their students and the APEX Credential Program; the public too should have the same high expectations of them as educators.

EPILOGUE

After researching the experiences of emergency permit workers, I have come to a better understanding of education and the high expectations we have for those who hold the title of “educators.” In light of this study, I have been able to think more critically about the field of education. I no longer take for granted the assumptions that I have placed upon emergency permit teachers. I value their career choice and as an assistant to the APEX Program, I continue to encourage as many as possible to pursue their dreams of “making a difference.”

Through the coursework I have taken with the Critical Research Academy cohort at San Jose State University, I am now better able to comprehend the challenges that teachers face inside and outside the classroom. I have a deeper appreciation for teachers and the career path that they have chosen. It is without a doubt that the rich experience with my Academy cohort has enabled me to remain passionate about my decision to teach and maintain the value of education that my parents instilled within me when we first arrived in the United States. I, too, have transformed in my learning process. As a future teacher, I will continue to learn, question, grapple, and reflect on what I have gained from the various readings from Freire, Bowers, Shor, and Palmer – just to name a few. Learning is a never ending process and a challenge that I am eager to take.

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