The Storying of an Educator: The Power of Living Legacy.


Department of Graduate and Undergraduate Studies in Education

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education

Faculty of Education, Brock University

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Abstract

“I began these pages for myself, in order to think out my own particular pattern of living, my own individual balance of life, work and human relationships.” Lindbergh (1983) p.9.

In this thesis, I use self-study research as I focus on the topic of living legacy. This is a personal story, using narrative methodology and method as a means of uncovering and naming life lessons learned. I write to gain insight into my interpretation of the concept of living legacy – what living legacy means to me and why this concept is significant to me – and how living legacy impacts the person that I am in the present.

Using a narrative lens, I inquire into stories that connect me to my spirit, my gender, education and theology, through my living legacy lessons, and I seek the impact these stories hold for me in my life today. I utilize a variety of methods including personal journals, course work, and arts-based research experiences as I explore the connections to my emerging perceptions of my living legacy lessons.

This thesis represents the beginning of a continuing journey of self-discovery. I take the journey in order to uncover hidden and ongoing lessons of living legacy and the impact they have on the student and educator that I am.
Dedication

To my history: my parents, my grandparents, and my teachers

To my present: my husband Ashley, my children Michelle and Warren, and my supervisor Carmen

To my future: my hopes, my dreams, my skills
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Prologue

Frailty.

A hidden voice.

Sparks of interest,

turning point.

A student begins,

in the middle of the journey.

Furtive glimpses back,

voices discovered.

Awaken theorist within,

burst thyself into sunlight.

When I first began my studies in the M. Ed. program at Brock University, I did not realize the magnitude of change that I was about to undergo. I began with an emerging desire to understand the educator that I was becoming, and I concluded by embarking upon a journey in which I have been profoundly changed by the course work demanded of me, and the rich and meaningful dialogue with colleagues I met within those courses.

Most educators might not think about looking at the living legacies that have been gifted to them through others, but here I am using story as a means of uncovering the theorist that I am, and the changes I perceive might follow from this knowledge. So here I go ... jumping right in, face turned toward the sun.
CHAPTER ONE: SHADES OF UNDERSTANDING:

LIFE STORIES AND THE GIFTS THEY HOLD

The topic of Living Legacy is a passion for me – I have always been fascinated with how people come to be who they are, and the ways that we can learn about our journey through the use of storytelling. I do a lot of work within the art of storytelling, and I find it is related to life itself – a predictable beginning, a predictable ending, a variety of set pivot points, with everything else filler. Through the years my educational experiences, as well as my professional and personal experiences, have fortified this concept and it comes to the forefront of all that I am. For me, “Legacy” means what we pass on and “Living” implies a sense of continuity, fluidity, through abstract concepts. Together, Living Legacy is that which is passed on through the intangibles, the intergenerational teaching, as opposed to our own “moment” of existence – it is also the importance of remembering the influence of culture and religion/faith, not just our own personal living legacy path. (Winick, 2004)

I knew early on in my Master’s studies that the theory of living legacy was of great interest to me as an educator. But I also realized that there were a number of questions and issues that needed to be addressed first, both for my own focal point and for the reader to be able to identify with my research. Therefore, this chapter addresses some of these points of interest, as well as the relevance of my choice of topic.

When writing my proposal, I realized that ‘living legacy’ is a difficult concept to name. However, for the purpose of this research, I consider living legacies to be knowledge gifts received that are shared over time as lives are being lived. I feel that my
acknowledgment of the difference between legacy and living legacy is imperative to this study. While legacy is something tangible that is consciously left to another, living legacy consists of the intangibles of experience often unknowingly gifted and left to be discovered by the receiver. I see living legacy as possibly coming through the telling of a story or even the awareness of life change occurring. The theory Johari Window (Wood, Sept, Duncan, 1998), explains that each individual has four windows to their being. Each window has a shade, drawn to different understandings of being. One has the shade fully drawn, representing those things about myself that I and those around me are blind to; the next is fully pulled up and represents all that both myself and others are aware of about me; the third is halfway drawn, equalling things I know about myself but am hiding from others; and finally comes the window that is halfway up, for those things about myself that are unknown to me but that others are able to see or know. For me, this theory connects to my understanding of living legacy because I do not feel that living legacy is solely found through story; it might also be discovered through an unnamed awareness of inner self. An example of this from my life experience would be the impact of all the generations and combinations of history that were involved in raising me.

**A Wrinkle in Time**

*Her hands were all that was needed to tell her stories. To me they were the most beautiful hands. Small and compact, with nail beds to match ... each wrinkle telling another part of the journey. My Bubie’s hands were always moving, doing. Kneading dough, cleaning, laundry, dispensing food and advice all at the same time. But the love, oh the love, that oozed out of*
those hands, no matter what the concrete task was. Here were hands that knew such hardship, escaping the pogroms, escaping the horrors around her, but so gentle to me. The spark in her eyes matching the movement in her hands. Yanking my cousin away from me, from tormenting me with his tickling. Having the amazing blessing to hold 11 great-grandchildren. I wish I could have hands as beautiful as hers...perhaps I still can, if I work as hard as her, be as gentle as her, be as strong as her.

As a young child I was always told I was a “shayna maidel”, a good Jewish girl. I realized quite early on that that came about because I did things...took action while I still looked after everyone else. As I grew into an adult that nomenclature changed to a “Bulabusta”, a strong and Jewish-focused female adult. Again, to me, this implied that I nurtured others while doing what needed to be done as things arose. Perhaps that is why I focus on my grandmother’s hands so much: they represent the ‘doing what needs to be done’ in the existence of being a strong Jewish woman. This perception or realization is not a hard fact but is certainly a summation of observations that I can make, looking back at interrelated experiences. In Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, Tarule (1997), Women’s Ways of Knowing, this pulling together of approximations is part of the Constructed Knowledge stage, and reinforces my awareness that my research is my interpretation of experiences, linked through awareness and understanding, that can only produce shades of understanding.

To see that all knowledge is a construction and that truth is a matter of the context in which it is embedded is to greatly expand the possibilities of how to think about anything, even those things we consider to be the most elementary and obvious (p. 138).
Given this context, I need to look back at incidences that occurred to me, around me, beyond me, to understand how they link to who I am, today. This phenomenon is included in my methodology of inquiry, through my stories remembered.

I observed upon reading Estés (1995), Women Who Run With the Wolves, that I needed to be open to further discoveries of myself as a woman and my relationships with those around me – past, present, and future. In Judaism, the stories that we learn from, the ones from the Torah, come from our fathers, the males of the generations. It is only recently – history-wise - that the yearning to learn from our “mothers” is being explored. I am part of that continuum, of that explorer attitude. The learning is within my being, the connections with others, the understanding of the why and how I connect with others, all of it leading back to the person that I am. I feel that I cannot be aware of all of the knowledge passed down to me but, in an attempt to open my shades of awareness, I go beyond the cover stories, to the secret stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995), and if possible, to the heart and soul of the sacred stories (Crites, 1971) of my life that reflect who I am, and how I came to be the person I am today.

In this study, I explore the concept of living legacy, and how it fits into the story of myself as the educator and person that I am. I work to discover some of the things that have been passed on to me that I am unaware of up to this point in time...beyond the stories that I know about. But I also include the awareness that, even if I am metacognitive and reflective, I cannot know everything brought to me by the ‘teachers’ I have encountered thus far. It is through the deconstruction of some of my living legacy stories that I can reconstruct new meaning, creating change in myself, thus creating momentum toward an increasing spirituality and connectedness in my life. Likewise, I
cannot always know if living legacies that I am sharing are positive or negative, but I know I can find understanding in my reflection and usage of my own living legacy ‘gifts’. The gifts I focus on in this study have been given by those who surround me, even though they may not have been intentionally gifted to me. They may even become tangible by me telling a story, creating a shared experience.

For example, when I share stories about concrete items left to me by my late maternal grandmother, it is the image that the stories bring of her beautiful hands and the strength that they represent that often creates a shared experience with my listeners. In reality, it is not my own experience that creates the living legacy for others, but rather the interpretation of the image created in the sharing of a story. Likewise, I believe it is possible to receive a living legacy by way of the process of it being gifted through a specific milieu that I create. For example, when I design a new early literacy workshop, I deliberately set up the room to bring about discussion or include meditation to end the workshop, in order to facilitate a connection with the community that I am teaching. As with the remembering of my grandmother’s hands, I organize points around a dialogue in order to create a connection to the imagery that supports the construction of a shared experience and reflection, which the ‘listeners’ can then take away. Images are built, remembered, and perhaps stored away for further reflection and/or use at a later time.

I explore the living legacies left to me in order to maximize their impact on who I am as an educator, now and in the future. I have begun to adjust the shades of my understandings of self (Wood et al., 1998) in order to create balance and reconstruction of knowledge for the ever-evolving educator that I am. How did I get to be who I am and where I am? What are the gifts I received and what have I done with them? I feel that I
live in the process of my parents' and grandparents' histories, plus the histories of all my 'educators', both formal and informal. This perspective speaks to both the continuity of experience and its temporality (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) in the awareness of living legacies gifted to me.

**Temporality of Life as Experience**

It's fascinating to find the threads of connection between life events, especially extreme emotional life events. When my father died the hospital needed an official identification done, but because they were still "working" on another patient in the same emergency O.R., the person or persons had to be emotionally quiet so as to not disturb the other medical team. So it was decided that my brother and I would go, leaving my sister with my mother. The event proved to be emotionally heart wrenching for me and I fled my brother's strong arms to let out my anguished cries elsewhere. As I rushed out each set of doors, finally finding the emergency room doors, there on the reception area side, I smacked into my cousin's waiting (unknown to him) body, as though a wall of comfort stopped me from fleeing. I don't remember feeling shock that he just happened to arrive at that particular moment registering, but only relief that I could release my pain. Fourteen years later, I arrive at my aunt's apartment for a final goodbye as she lay in the final stages of the cruel death dance of cancer. As I reach for the doorknob, it is pulled open from the other side and this time, I am the wall of comfort for the same cousin who "happened" to be at the right place, right time for me, and he was able to crumple his six foot frame into my waiting arms, allowing him to stop fleeing and release his own anguished cries.
This story brings together the concept of temporality, "with life as it is experienced in the here and now...but also with life as it is experienced on a continuum..." (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p. 19), as the connection of understanding of my role with others, linking this awareness between the two interconnected death events, more than I would be aware of just through my father's death story. One story is part of my "historical narrative" (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p. 19), and it is connected and influential on the larger picture of who I am and how I react. Keeping this concept in the forefront of my mind, I also realize that it needs further examining in order to complete the picture of insight that true temporality and continuity of experience have on my level of understanding. The social expectations of grieving within a social setting, each with its own rules and boundaries, assist to create the person that I am. I needed to connect the two experiences of unleashing the emotions tied to these major deaths in my life as having the ability to explain who I am. Ultimately, I respect rules, I respect other's expectations, I do what is necessary, but I am there for others in ways I am not always aware I am going to be. This is my historical narrative journey, but I do not own it on my own. I did not create the being that I am, nor did my time in the continuum of generations create "elaine" on it's own. Each story must connect with other stories, and it is the awareness of connection that will assist me in the understanding of my narrative's influence on 'elaine' the educator.

**Embracing the Path of Resistance**

I have always looked upon my path to becoming a formal educator as my path of most resistance. I realize that being an educator was something that I tried to avoid altogether but there seemed to be so many 'things' always putting me back on the
educator track. Why? What gifts did I receive and what have I done with them? Did I just learn my lessons well? Put the pieces together in the right order? But if I was not anticipating being an educator, then how and where did I gain the lessons? I am curious to see how my living legacies have influenced who I am as an educator. Since being an educator was my path of most resistance for most of my childhood and youth, did those around me impact my choices that led me to this point, or in the end, am I my only influence? Am I the total sum of others, a compilation of my own volition, or a melding of all of these? I am a firm believer in fate but the realist part of my being also acknowledges that we do not live in isolation nor without impact from others. Therefore, living legacies seem to come from many sources, perhaps in all that we come into contact with over the course of our lives, with awareness of the gift or without awareness.

Borrowing from Dewey (1938), I agree that we are composed of all the situations, events and experiences of our lives, but I also feel that living legacies also include all of those impacts noted above from those who influenced us, too.

As I look at the educator that I see before me, I have a need to understand the journey that brought me here. In looking back, I believe I will be better able to see the path I am on. An awareness of self strengthens me as an educator, just as self-awareness can strengthen me as an individual. I feel that the concept of seeing the path behind me, in order to understand the path I am continuing on, enhances my ability to look at my inside gifts and their influences on my external being.

What I am discovering and learning is new and profound for me. To minimize my search would be the same as the trivializing that I received as a student during my undergraduate years: a strangulation of voice, a squashing of self. It is the “what” I do
with this new knowledge as a teacher-educator that is profound and transformative for me as I rethink the principles that ground my practice.

**Path of Most Resistance**

“Oh, do we have to play school? Fine, I’ll be the student but I want to sit at the back of the class...just leave me alone, I’ll be a student the way I want to be – the quiet one!”

From as far back as I can remember I have fought the seemingly natural fate of my professional self. As a young child I would even resist playing the “teacher” game. Even becoming a piano teacher at the young age of 17 did not create a sense of excitement for me, and I did not actively search out students. At the same time, career counseling was a primary concern in my own educational institution. We were all expected to take career tests and all of my test results came back with me being predominantly in the educator profile. I tried to see how this could fit in with my visions of becoming an advice columnist – I loved to hear about everyone’s problems and help them solve their crisis of the day. So I thought that perhaps I could become a Guidance Counselor, that is, until I found out that I had to become a teacher first. There went that dream. I went on to university with every intention of becoming a famous psychologist, once again with dreams of grandeur through solving other peoples’ problems. However, my experience in my first post-secondary education process was one of disillusion, one that turned me away from continuing formal learning and, most especially, from teachers. Then came the most life-altering career of all, motherhood. It is through the raising of my children that I found I was good at nurturing, helping others realize the talents that they held. I began to see ‘teaching’ as something linked to my original dreams, but in a more mature and connected manner. I was able to take a more objective
view of teacher as role model and facilitator. My earlier models of negative influence now appeared as my models of oppositional perspective. I was able to look at being the educator that I wanted to be, keeping my negative role models from my past as clear and poignant influences of how not to be. I began to volunteer more and more. The teachers that surrounded me began to gently prod me into looking at my own skills. I decided to take the plunge and apply to Teacher’s College and, as a second option, Early Childhood Education. I did not even make the first round at Teacher’s College, but the Early Childhood Education program I applied for couldn’t wait to get their hands on me. I accepted the spot in Early Childhood Education but without any enthusiasm, just as a stepping-stone to re-applying to Teacher’s College.

But the following Fall, my world shifted through a life loss – my mentor, my father, died, but as I became one again, I embraced life as a receiver of learning. And the beginning of a career in Education began, both as a student – always learning and growing - and as a teacher-educator.

... Our life stories, and those of our families and communities, are filled with weaving and reweaving of webs of connection, patterns of caring within which we find and make meaning. Bereavement strikes a blow to those webs, to our personal, family, and community integrity. The weaves of our daily life patterns are in tatters. Much of the weaving that compromises our individual and collective life histories is undone. Lines of connection with larger life contexts within which we find and make meaning are broken or damaged. (Attig, 2001, p. 36)
Connecting the Gifts Along the Path

During my time in the Early Childhood Education program, I discovered that, as an educator, I felt that there was a fine line between nurturing and mothering (Palmer, 1993). This is always at the forefront of my mind during my classes. Taking into account that my journey from resistance to acceptance has been without complete consciousness or awareness of my own underlying influences, I believe my more recent desire to recognize my shades of understanding marks another path on the ongoing road toward my evolving self. It would be so easy to simply say: “this is my style, this is who I am.” But this is one of the secrets to my success as an educator. I have a desire to understand the influences that have impacted my choices, whether positively or negatively gifted, and turn them into lessons of experience.

One epiphany of my ongoing transformation came about earlier this year. I had been presenting a number of literacy-focused workshops to community childcare workers and found myself using stories and storytelling to imbue a variety of points in my lessons. All of the evaluations were clearly positive and showed an awareness of skills developed by the participants.

From Learning Sprouts a Seedling of Nourishment

I am always exhausted after I facilitate a workshop, it takes so much energy to create the “mood” that I want the participants to walk away with. But then I am also on such a high, the energy flowing from myself to the “students” and back again. It all came back in a wonderful, nurturing way the day after one of my early literacy workshops for Early Childhood Educators. I received an e-mail from one of the participants sharing an observation that she and another participant had discussed.
They felt, along with acquiring new knowledge, as though their souls had been re-nourished and they were ready to take on the task of being the strongest educators that they could possibly be. What a high for me! Not only was it gratifying to hear this feedback, but in a field where burnout is one of the few constants, it made me sit up and take notice that we as educators also need to be nurtured. Is this something that is missing from our education? Or is it something else?

This epiphany and flow of consciousness was as profound an awareness for me as it was for them. Palmer (1993) teaches about the need to understand the concept of connecting to the community as a means of supporting the spirit of self. While connecting to the community through my work, I was also experiencing that awareness of connection through my Internship course (Summer 2003) by being attuned to the pre-recorded orchestra music that accompanied my violin pieces. These experiences honed in on my view that it is my responsibility to be aware of the community that I am working with, creating “music” with, and to craft the necessary spiritual/relationship connections to my students – my community - or I might lose myself in the process and disconnect from my students at the same time.

I also began to become aware of my mother’s descent into age. While this is not a profound or unexpected process, because she lives with me, I was able to hold a perspective that my siblings are not able to experience. Her stories began to get mixed up, to become reinvented, and even become recreated. I realized that her history, her living legacies, her narrative, was slowly becoming something unrecognizable to me. I was no longer always able to verify ‘stories’ with others, only my mother’s interpretations of the stories, and I was frightened into thinking that time was running out
with her stories, too. This awakening strengthened my awareness of my own usage of
stories to develop lessons, and the importance of gifting them to others while I still could.
By exploring my mother’s use of stories as she copes in her world, I find I am also
enhancing my own skills as a storyteller.

My personal journey of becoming an educator is allowing me to see the power
of stories, while grasping and holding the living legacy of story as the gift it is for self
and others. This process of acceptance and awareness appears to be bringing me full
circle in a journey where I embrace teaching, as opposed to finding ways to avoid the
projected prophecy of my history. And this acceptance and understanding is being pieced
together from the various shards of understanding that are coming from my explorations
of self.

“...that each affects the other and the other affects the next, and the world is full of
stories, but the stories are all one” (Albom, 2003, p. 196).

From Marginalization to Ownership

Being an educator provides the opportunity to be able to gift living legacy to others
through shared story. We have a captive audience, we have our objectives and lesson
plans, but how we teach can be enhanced with stories. It is my desire to be fully awake
to the possibility of passing on living legacy lessons to my students, and that brings me to
this additional perspective as part of my study.

A Life Lesson

I once took a course on Feminist Theory as an undergraduate student. One of the
first big assignments was to do a personal lifeline from a young child to a woman of 80.
We were to profile our accomplishments and visions. Mine came back with an “F” and
an explanation that I wasn’t feminist enough. Totally unsure of what that meant, since the professor had dismissed my accomplishments and visions as trivial and invalid, I did not know what I had done wrong. I thought that being a feminist meant having the strength to stand up for what I felt was an injustice and to have ‘equal’ rights. I was unwilling to burn my bra, even as a symbol, since I had waited so long to finally need one. I quit the course.

Fast-forward almost 30 years and I discover that I have been a feminist all along and that having positive things in my life did not negate that fact. My acknowledgement of self as a valid authority and the use of my voice as a tool against marginalization is part of being a feminist. I embrace this feeling and awareness into my own educator style. This experience as a student has stuck with me, and has influenced the educator that I currently am. I am a firm believer that failure can be a positive thing and sometimes even a gift. Adverse teaching moments have often been positive for me because I am able to step back and reflect on the learning needed to go beyond the negative experience into the lesson I wish to gift to others. For me, often it is in the increased awareness and reflection on feedback given that learning occurs. I know that I do not want to treat my students’ efforts as trivial and unworthy. I maintain that all efforts are to be acknowledged, and encourage my feedback to be used as a new starting point.

**Generation to Generation, from Beginning to Eternity**

I believe that living legacy comes in many forms and can connect across time, place, and situation. Being aware of the here and now impact of legacies learned provides me with the connecting thread. I recently found myself back in the neighbourhood that my maternal grandparents lived in during my childhood. I felt as
though I smelled Jewishness in the air. I had no idea until that moment that being Jewish
had a smell of its own, but it was in the smell that memories came flooding around me.
In that moment, I felt compelled to look back and remember the stories connected to
some of the living legacies I have inherited.

**Lessons Learned, Lessons Remembered, Lessons Expected**

*Aleph, bet, vet, gimmel, daled, hey... Sometimes that is about as far as I can
remember of the Hebrew alphabet. I remember the childhood tune that we learned the
alphabet from and the wonderful game we played in the middle of the alphabet song. The
‘Moira’ (teacher) would say a word, like Emm" (mother), and we would have to repeat it
back. Then a different word, then combinations of words, with each round going faster
and more complicated than the last. We would all be in gales of laughter and exhausted
from trying to keep up with the teacher but then we would return to the song/task at hand.
It is interesting to me now that the formal lessons seemed to be less important and the
overall emotions took precedence; things like my obligations as a Jew, and that I am part
of a huge continuum. I especially feel this during the High Holy Days now when we are
more than 500 strong singing together songs that have been sung for over 5764 years, in
the same way, with the same purpose, the same tune, while at the same time knowing that
Jews around the world are singing the same prayer at the same time. I can feel the past
generations standing beside me, joining in my own voice singing the Alveinu Malkeinu.
Their history is my history. My history will be my neighbour’s great-grandchildren’s
history. And no one at any point in time can escape that obligation, it is just one of the
essentials of being a Jew.*
As a Jew, especially a female Jew, I learned not to make waves... just keep low and part of the hidden pack. While I was sheltered as a child, I was still aware of anti-Semitism and taught about it through history lessons, and through life's simple daily lessons. Even as an adult, I still battle simple biases. I also realize that I am extremely privileged to have been born into a Canadian upper middle class family, but I have struggled with my own battles, not only as a Jew and female, but also based on my own personality, ethics, and values. As an adult, I have learned that it is okay to stand up for myself, but the when and how still has to be delicately balanced. When I combine that knowledge with being female – Jewish and secular – a whole other dimension is added to the legacy gifts that inform me in the present. For example, my childhood as a Jewish female pulls me into a subservient direction and right into one margin. Being a secular female pulls me into another margin. But all of these living legacy 'moments' have given me lessons from which to draw upon, as a Jew, as a female, as an educator.

I recently read an article in the Toronto Star (Morden & Denison, December 28, 2003), on fighting anti-Semitism, from a Catholic stance. But as a Jew, while applauding this stance, my overall response was that this is not good enough. Should all people not be afforded the same opportunity of support and solidarity? Are Jews the only ones who have experienced persecution and a holocaust? Perhaps our persecution is more visible and certainly has been sustained throughout history, but that does not negate that persecution of any kind is unacceptable and must be addressed. And that is part of the legacy that I must carry with me as a Jew; this ability to confront the wrong that is involved in persecution that was part of the nurturance that I received as a child, and that I use to nurture through my own teaching and mothering. That is how I am doing my
part against persecution, by trying to be aware that there are hidden lessons that I teach my students, and in turn make them aware that they, too, have stories of experience that they teach, sometimes without knowing it. In the book *The Sunflower* (Wiesenthal, 1998), there is one story about a Jew being summoned by a dying man. The dying man asks the Jew for forgiveness for all of the atrocities that he, as a Secret Service agent, put upon Jews in the concentration camps. The Jew, a holocaust survivor, explains that he cannot forgive the man for atrocities delivered upon others, only those he received himself from the former German soldier. He would have to ask forgiveness from each individual to achieve the absolution he looked for before death. This was a re-awakening for me, not a new lesson. It is part of being a Jew, the ability to move out of the margin that others place us in by not dwelling on the evils experienced, but that we learn from brutality and become responsible for our own behaviour. I take this into account as an educator, the realization that I am responsible for all that I do, consciously and unconsciously.
CHAPTER TWO: ELAINE AS CONSTRUCTIVIST:

CHOOSING A RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

...many constructivists are not making simply a psychological claim, they are making an epistemological claim as well. That is, they argue that knowledge does not discover a preexisting, independent, real world outside the mind of the knower, that the process of making or constructing meaning cannot be connected to an “independent world ‘out there,’ but [only] to our own constructing processes” (Steier, 1991, p. 2) Schwandt, 1994, p. 131.

“..., the narrative is not an iconic image or mirror of reality but a poetic, expressive form that is a reconstrual or reconstitution of the experience from which it originates” Schwandt, 1994, p. 129.

I have always enjoyed creating and using stories to emphasize my lesson plans. However, the introduction to narrative methodology created a feeling of coming home. The connection between my choice of methodology, methods, and an array of influential theorists to living legacy gifts are explored in the following chapter.

A Classroom Moment

I am listening to the other students and their desire to just ignore the article up for discussion...how can you think that way? But, ... Schwandt is so profound! His explanation of the difference between being a constructivist and an interpretivist is incredible. And before I knew it, it popped out of my mouth – “This article is amazing, how can you be a constructivist without being an interpretivist, but there is no way it works the other way – you can be an interpretivist without being a constructivist. I was so excited at first when I read it, because I thought for sure that I was an interpretivist,
but then I read the section on constructivists, I realized – with a bang – that I am
definitely a constructivist. It was so profound, things began to fall into place for me.”

Foreign language being spoken.

Here I was sharing my epiphany of understanding and my fellow students were looking at me as though I was crazy! Don’t you get it? An interpretivist understands relationships, but a constructivist tries to create meaning out of the understanding of the relationship, based on self-experience. “Helloooo, are you there?”

They may have been there physically but they didn’t appear to think that I was all there mentally; the tension in the classroom was palatable. I couldn’t wait for the discussion to begin, but it was over before it even could gain momentum. The rest of the group appeared so anxious to move on, with mutterings of lack of understanding and lack of desire to dwell on this ‘difficult’ article. I was an island of exuberance, surrounded by shark infested waters...move on we did. (Winick, 2002)

Despite my graduate colleagues’ apprehension of this article, I still find Schwandt’s (1994) article “Constructivist, Interpretivist Approaches to Human Inquiry”, to be a grounding force for my self-understanding of my stance in qualitative research. These two dichotomies are simply lenses with which to view research, not the outcomes...thus, the process versus the product. Schwandt’s statement that “[those with this perspective]...share the goal of understanding the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it” (p. 118), is an expression similar to Clandinin and Connelly (2000), that it is through lived experience that we, as researchers, are able to create understanding of, and connection to, others. While my research methodology/epistemology, which is narrative, can be viewed also as a method, it is vital
to my understanding of my own stance that I create a clear appreciation of narrative inquiry as my methodology first and foremost, before I think of it as a method of data gathering.

...all interpretive inquirers watch, listen, ask, record, and examine. ...

Purpose, in turn, is shaped by epistemological and methodological commitments. ... the activity of interpretation is not simply a methodological option open to the social scientist, but rather the very condition of human inquiry itself. (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 119)

Using narrative inquiry as both methodology and method is not unusual as Connelly and Clandinin (1990) note: “…narrative is both phenomenon and method. Narrative names the structured quality of experience to be studied, and it names the patterns of inquiry for its study” (p. 2), and “Stories function as arguments in which we learn something essentially human by understanding an actual life or community as lived” (p. 8). For me, narrative inquiry is more than a way to collect data. It is a process of understanding, of unearthing and deciphering the aforementioned data. It is my methodology of choice. As a constructivist researcher and educator, I do “…not simply live out [my life] in time and through language; rather [I am my] history” (Schwandt, 1994, p. 120). I feel that it takes an ever-continuous and conscious effort to understand and make sense of my world. I need to create this conscious process in order to be the strong, functioning educator that I desire to be, now and in the future.

In this self-study, I use narrative inquiry to ground the examination of my own stories of living legacy. The awareness that I must deconstruct old concepts and perspectives in order to reconstruct new meaning creates a scaffold for my forward
movement of understanding. Thus, the framework of my analysis of research data is through the process of recovery of meaning and reconstruction of meaning which, in turn, utilizes questions and interpretations (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988).

"Thus we say that people by nature lead storied lives and tell stories of those lives, whereas narrative researchers describe such lives, collect and tell stories of them, and write narratives of experience" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994, p. 416).

Further, Clandinin & Connelly (1994) have explained the process of recovery of meaning and reconstruction of meaning through a backward/forward, inward/outward process. This movement across time and place occurs as stories are told.

To summarize, methods for the study of personal experience are simultaneously focused in four directions: inward and outward, backward and forward. By inward we mean the internal conditions of feelings, hopes, aesthetic reactions, moral dispositions, and so on. By outward we mean existential conditions, that is, the environment or what E. M. Bruner (1986) calls reality. By backward and forward we are referring to temporality, past, present, and future. (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994, p. 417)

Women Nurturing Women

I am ugly, a 13-year-old ugly beast. I have long stringy hair that won't do what I want it to, I have braces, wear geeky glasses, no boobs for guys to admire, and my ears stick out like Dumbo's! I hate what I see in the mirror. MOM!!! Help me, pleeeeeease.

And my mother's response?

"Then don't look in the mirror dear."
I know it may bring an evil spirit on my being if my mother gives me a compliment, Judaism teaches that, but would it hurt if just once she praised me or told me how to make myself look better... I am in such pain, my teenager angst is tearing me down. Why don't women support other women? Why do we have to compete? My sister has the looks, I have the brains... would it hurt if I just had a little of her looks? Pretty please, just a drop?

I have often contemplated my aversion to mirrors and my low self-esteem as a young woman. Upon reflection, I think that perhaps it was for the best that I avoided the path of education as a young adult. What kind of role model could I have been? What living legacies would I have passed onto my students during this time of shattered existence? But now, using narrative methodology, I realize that (perhaps due to maturity) I do not see a person's looks or a situation's 'outer shell' as being as influential. Instead, I focus on what an individual does as the statement of their worth. Equally, I do not take my outward self so seriously, but rather consider that my physical features are a façade to play with to enhance the person/educator that I am. This living legacy of personal awareness has given me my sense of whimsy and risk-taking, as though I am able to take flight without the burden of worrying if I look like others. This is a strong example of how I can acknowledge that my life lived may not be the same as my life remembered (Gass, 1994). It is by looking back at that same life through the process of internal conditions and existential conditions, and my awareness of the concept of continuity, that I believe I will be able to make use of the process of inquiry in order to make sense of my current understanding of my living legacy gifts.
In my work as an Early Literacy Specialist, I use the concept of storytelling as a means of helping educators of young children understand connections to learning. When I facilitate a workshop I explain that sharing our life experiences involves storytelling and that each time we share a story, we offer an interpretation of events and situations from our lives. This is not a static process as our stories change and evolve across time and space (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The concepts of directionality and temporality (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988) are useful as teaching tools because they help in the understanding that interpretation is fleeting and individual.

While it is not possible to own others’ interpretations of a story once it is told, I feel that it is possible to own my own learning that can come about with an understanding of the relationship and influences between the story lived and the story told. For me, there appears to be a solid ongoing learning connection between the “…reflexive relationship between living a life story, telling a life story, retelling a life story, and reliving a life story” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994, p. 418). This relationship is interconnected, but is also affected by my interpretation of me as the listener and as the one living the story. I am cognizant that I cannot speak on anyone else’s behalf, just my own; I can only own my personal learning and growth. I am only responsible for my own actions and perspective. But I believe that my learning and subsequent growth can create a ripple effect outward, toward my students’ and others’ personal understanding of their own learning. Clandinin and Connelly (1991) acknowledge the use of storying and restorying as “…a fundamental method of personal [and social] growth” (p. 259). In my opinion, the concept of a continuum of education through the use of storying can be found on many levels of understanding.
Fate, the Interweaver of Destiny?

As a Family Educator, in the Jewish education system, I became fascinated with the concept of traditions, rites, and rituals. During that time, I developed a program that focused on heirlooms. I wanted families to discuss and understand that it wasn’t just tangible heirlooms that are passed through the generations, and that even the tangible objects were not as meaningful without the story that accompanied the physical item. Some of the families were so excited about my approach, because, as descendants of Holocaust survivors, there were no physical remnants to be passed down.

At the same time, I began teaching Early Childhood Education courses in the College system on Interpersonal and Intrapersonal Communication. As part of the small humanities courses team, we agreed to also focus on traditions, rites, and rituals as a means of looking at ones’ inherent “passed-down” qualities...a way of looking at individual biases and assumptions and where they possibly came from. The two teaching opportunities provided me with a tremendous amount of inspiration on the general idea of living legacy. These teachings proved to be fortuitous and fueled my fascination of the notion of ‘things’ being gifted unconsciously or unintentionally. The concept of how we got to be who we are – quirks, biases, and all – had me hooked. I was even able to find a definition for living legacy through my searches of Jewish educational sources. I am no longer able to find that definition, but my passion and intrigue has only grown over the years. I also realize that if I don’t understand the gifts that I have inherited, how can I expect my students to do their own self- examination – something I expect of myself, no matter the topic.
It was not too long after these two developments that two of my colleagues and I decided to embark on the Brock University Master’s program and fate began her dance of playing with my life choices. Being Seneca College professors we wanted to study at the Seneca satellite campus location, but the introductory course was not being offered the semester that we were beginning. So we enrolled in one that was being offered at that location, one in which another colleague was also enrolled. However, we were informed that we had to take the initial course first...but fate did her step-in-toe dance and that course became full – no room for us...and we were given special permission to take any other course in the interim. Thus continued my journey to this moment in time.

The first day of the course, “Narrative: Teaching, Learning & Research”, the class was told that, while this was a course usually taken well into the Master’s program, that those few “allowed” in due to enrollment issues would get the extra support needed - not to worry. The professor then asked the group to each share something about themselves and what their exit project or thesis topic was going to be – but not to worry as she knows the choice often changes along the way – and for us “newbies” to see this as an opportunity to begin thinking in this particular manner – justification for research on an exit topic.

Without hesitation, I stated emphatically that living legacy was going to be my exit topic...even my journal entries reflect my examination of different dimensions and aspects of living legacy. My perspective never wavered throughout my time as a Master’s student, my interest in understanding how I came to be the educator that I am, has never failed in its’ fascination.
For me, the appeal that a continuum of understanding could occur as an ongoing process of my own learning, which is also useful in assisting others in understanding their role as educators, or even in facilitating formal literacy learning amongst students of any age, is proving to be an epiphany of self-learning—no matter what the perspective or end-resulting professional gain. While I explore my stories of living legacy as a researcher in this thesis, I know that my exploration also impacts the educator that I am, as this powerful growth experience goes beyond one part of my being alone. The evolution of my educator being creates an awareness of becoming one (Gass, 1994) – one that includes me in my multiple roles: educator, mother, researcher, wife, and daughter. This development of my own awareness cannot occur without an impact on the person that I am, bringing me full circle to an understanding that it is through the process of recovery of meaning that I create my own grounding in future reconstructions of that meaning, as I seek new knowledge in my own life stories.

Along with the above framework and grounding for my study, I use research from Bullough and Pinnegar (2001), who introduce an interesting perspective on guidelines for self-study. This is relatively new research that outlines 14 guidelines that focus on “...establishing quality, .... point(ing) toward virtuosity in scholarship” (p.16). I am most interested in the guidelines that focus on spirituality in elucidation of learning. For example, Guideline 2 (p. 16) states that “Self-studies should promote insight and interpretation”, and Guideline 7 (p. 17) addresses the issue of character development. If self-study is also part of my grounding and my framework, then I should use my research to improve my overall functioning as an educator. How I see myself spiritually impacts the type of educator that I am. I cannot separate the internal workings of my psyche from
my formal learning as an educator. Further, Guideline 11 states that my data “...should provide argumentation and convincing evidence” (p. 19) in order to be valid and authentic. Likewise, Guidelines 13 and 14 (p. 20) focus on the temporality of new knowledge in that learning must create on-going movement of understanding.

The Power of Voice

As I knew that living legacy would be the topic of my Master’s research early in my coursework, I was able to connect with various authors and the theoretical exploration that their work represented for me. Several of these authors opened areas of further inquiry. Patterns and themes emerged, such as 'voice', recognition of voice, and usage of voice through relationships and connections to others. I began to associate these themes with living legacy discoveries. For example, in a course on Gender Issues in Education, in the winter of 2003, I read “Women’s Ways of Knowing” by Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule, which was a seminal study completed in 1986. As I read the chapters, I felt a connection to an understanding of female moral development as an acknowledgement and awareness of voice. Without knowledge of having voice, I was unable to use my voice. Consequently, my disconnection with voices used in the past by others in their lives, created a void that I needed to rectify in order to be brought to a conscious level. This first act of consciousness then created action in myself, once I was able to begin to name connections to my living legacy lessons. As my attentiveness to such knowing matured, and my voice became a tool, my strength as a woman was brought to a conscious level, coming full circle to impact my relationships and connections with others.
In that same course, I was also introduced to Estés (1995), Women Who Run with the Wolves. Through Estés’ work, I was able to take new perspectives about the place of voice and ways of knowing in living legacy to a deeper level. I felt an awakening to self and the naming of self begin through my stories of living legacy as I read connections in the myths and legends that Estés created in order to bring women ‘home’ to themselves. I was able to create a window into my relationships through this text - who I am, and why - constructing a foundation for building my strength in regard to female voice.

Once I discover new ‘truths’ about myself as educator, I then continue to develop from there. Acknowledgement that understanding is not a stagnant process or an end point, but rather is a separate starting point with new challenges and questions to explore is a key point in constructed and interpreted self study research.

Self-study as an area of research in teacher education is in its infancy. ... Like other forms of research, self-study invites the reader into the research process by asking that interpretations be checked, that themes be critically scrutinized, and that the “so what’ question be vigorously pressed. ... The aim of self-study research is to provoke, challenge, and illuminate rather than inform and settle. (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001, p. 20).

Using Narrative Inquiry as my methodology, I utilize writing as a primary means of gathering data for my research. Laurel Richardson (2000) states: “Writing is also a way of “knowing” – a method of discovery and analysis” (p. 923) and that “Qualitative research has to be read, not scanned; its meaning is in the reading” (p. 924). I often find that, by allowing the writing process to be a progression rather than dictate my direction ahead of time, I glean insight into my own stories of experience. As a student of inquiry,
I allow my own writing to take me to new levels of understanding of my self as educator as I “read” new meaning embedded in my stories of living legacy.

While I am aware that my study will be an interpretation of my own experience at a given point of time, I feel that the act of writing itself takes me beyond the imposed limitations—both personally and institutionally—that have been part of me, the educator, in the past. For me, this openness to epiphanies of interpretation materialized through my acceptance that writing takes me on paths of unknown destination. The possibility of new learning comes through unpredictable outcomes of interpretation because...

Poststructuralism, then, permits—nay, invites—no incites us to reflect upon our method and explore new ways of knowing. ... First, it directs us to understand ourselves reflexively as persons writing from particular positions at specific times; and second, it frees us from trying to write a single text in which everything is said to everyone. Nurturing our own voices releases the censorious hold of “science writing” on our consciousness, as well as the arrogance it fosters in our psyche. Writing is validated as a method of knowing. (Richardson, 2000, p. 925)

Laurel Richardson (2000) also explores the use of story, relating ‘talk’ to poetry, as rhythmic prose, with distinctive cadences. In my work, I encourage participants to do the same when reading a book or telling an oral story. I use the children’s book *Homemade love* by bell hooks (2002) as an example, having the participants ‘sigh’ after each page. By the end of the book, they realize that each sigh has reflected the content of the page and that a pattern or cadence has emerged ‘visually’ for them.
Another important concept that Richardson (2000) introduces and that I use in my study is the use of crystallization instead of triangulation (p. 522). I am drawn to this concept of “…symmetry and substance with an infinite variety of shapes, substances, transmutations, multidimensionalities, and angles of approach” (p. 522). The ability to see my research as fluctuating and evolving into something unknown, yet full of light and reflection, creating “…prisms that reflect externalities and refract within themselves, creating different colors, patterns, arrays, casting off in different directions” (p. 522) creates a feeling of rebirth and possibility through the use of metaphor. By breaking free of predetermined expectation, I am allowing myself to become the research and ultimately the lesson. To me, this prospect also brings about the realization that I myself am the main ingredient in the reflexive learning that is this study and that this acknowledgement of my role in my own learning opens doors for further learning.

I also use journals as a means of gathering data, based on the perspective that journaling is a method of keeping a historical record (Richardson, 2000). Throughout my masters’ work, I found journaling a way to sift through thoughts and experiences, ultimately finding patterns and connecting threads (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988).

In addition to journals and writing, my use of family stories provides valuable insight for my narrative inquiry work. Family stories can change with time and with each person’s interpretation of the sequencing of events. For me, this adds to the mystique of looking at the significance of temporality as part of living legacy. “The experience of family stories has existential and internal conditions…” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994, p. 420). Both this mystique and awareness of temporality connects with the awareness that “As a reader of the text, one of your purposes is to recover the meaning, as best you can,
as it is expressed by the storyteller. The significant meaning, of course, is yours, and so you need to reconstruct a meaning for yourself (Connelly & Clandinin 1988, p.198).

Another insightful source for data that I include is personal memorabilia. I find that photos and other memorabilia hold “…memory around which we construct stories” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994, p. 420). This form of field notes triggers further stories and awareness of living legacy.

I returned to course work done throughout my years at Brock University, as there is storied data within my discoveries of theory and research techniques, which I explored through my course assignments and writing. These papers and experiential opportunities have provided me with a strong grounding in the use of collection and analysis of field notes.

Music has had a profound impact on my development of self. I was able to combine my love of music with an arts-based research opportunity through my Internship course at Brock University. At the same time as I was exploring the process of learning a new task using the violin through the Internship course, I also was immersed in the Independent Study course. I found connections between my violin lessons and the messages within the Independent Study course readings. I use these newfound connections as another source for data collection and analysis here in my thesis.

Another method of interest for me that proved to be a valuable source of data is the use of metaphor. In helping others come to understand literacy concepts, I often introduce metaphor as an opportunity to create representation of experience and the awareness of perspective (Belenky et al., 1997). However, while there needs to be an awareness that the use of metaphor is an ongoing occurrence that is found everyday and
is part of everyday educator language (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988), metaphors need to be refreshing and relevant (Richardson, 2000, p. 931) in order to create the link to perspective-taking so that it is applicable in the research of understanding the storyteller’s ‘message’.

**Metaphor as Learning Experience**

*My metaphor embodies me, the ever-developing educator, the metamorphosis of being, of connecting. To exclude it from my self-understanding would be an injustice to my self-awareness. It is an ongoing ‘evolving’ of who I am, was, direction being taken. Letting my metaphor take me where it wants to go, releasing the creation of a mystical illusion of my journey is a valuable part of the process. As my journey evolves, as bits and pieces swirl about: the movement, the ebb and flow, being influenced by time and events occurring around me. My metaphor is my story, an evolving flow of consciousness. As my living legacies are brought to consciousness, their impact creating connection and understanding, my personal metaphor must move and adapt with these new understandings. In order to create a metaphor based on my personal narrative journey, I first felt a need to define and understand what a metaphor was exactly. How can I create my personal metaphor if I don’t understand the purpose, the process, the impact? And so I explored definitions, examples...asked other professionals proficient in the use of metaphors...tried to see how I could practice their words, and examples. What I really didn’t understand was that I was already proficient in the use of metaphors. I am a storyteller. I use the art of storytelling to understand phenomena and teach concepts. I am gifted in creating meaning and connection through the use of*
metaphors, on many levels. What I also needed to realize was that here is a gift that worked best with the absence of microscopic analysis.

For me, the purpose of storying of any kind, is about going back to memories of attachment and finding connections. I try to share that with my students so that I am not talking about teaching children how to read and write, or learning the ABC’s. Rather, I want them to understand the connection to feeling safe and secure that reading to a young child creates; and then, once feelings of secure attachment are in place, being able to take risks. How sad then that so many young parents and educators not only do not understand these values of singing, reading, creating, and storying with young children (aged 0 – 6), but they also do not know how to do these things. But how blessed for me that I have the task of sharing this art.

I am finding that my window shades are in constant flux with my thesis work. More of myself is being placed in the open blind window, and less in the fully covered window (Wood et al., 1998, pp. 202-203). However, this process of unearthing new self-understandings also brings with it more questions as I try to create meaning out of my linkages of awareness and understanding.

“The relationship between knowledge and reality is instrumental, not verificative: To know is “to possess ways and means of acting and thinking that allow one to attain the goals one happens to have chosen” (von Glaserfeld, 1991, p. 16 in Schwandt, 1994, p. 128).

I truly feel that fate is a part of my life, anyone’s life, but the paths that we choose to take are our domain. By exploring my path choices, and linking them together to
create meaning out of the educator that I am, I am able to create further movement in my understanding of self-purpose and attitude in the arena of my own professionalism.
CHAPTER THREE: THE UNCONSCIOUS FLOW OF INFLUENCE:

RECONSIDERING STORIES OF PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

Something is very gently, invisibly, silently,
pulling at me – a thread or net of threads
finer than cobweb and as elastic. I haven’t tried the
strength of it. No barbed hook pierced and tore me.
Was it not long ago this thread began to draw me?
Or way back? Was I born with its knot about my
neck, a bridle? Not fear but a stirring of
wonder makes me catch my breath when I
feel the tug of it when I thought it had
loosened itself and gone. (Levertov, 1988, p. 221)

Dr. Bruce Perry (2004) talks about viewing initial experiences as the primary
templates on which people will base all future comparisons. For me, I see my primary
templates as the seeds of my living legacy tree. Some of those seeds have been in
germination for over a 1000 years, (Perry, 2004) some for only seconds in time. In
Chapter Three, I explore the influences of past ‘teachers’ and their living legacy gifts
absorbed through the exchanges of time.

Memories of my late father are vast and highly influential. He had his first heart
attack when I was approximately 6 months old, and his last fatal one when I was just over
30 years old. The impacts from my times with him play large in my memory and I feel
their bearing on my being daily.
My very first memories with my father are of me waving to a bank of hospital windows, knowing confidently that my father was at one of them waving back at me. Children were not allowed to visit the patients so I had to be content with being ‘near’ him during his many hospital stays. Now, as an adult, I can only hope that he truly was at one of the windows. My last memories revolve around his decisions and requests about life after dad. However, not a day in the intervening years went by without an acknowledgement of saying goodbye and an expression of love being shared. But the memories between my first conscious memory of my father, and my last, hold the key to many parts of my being. While my father may have had the nickname of Archie Bunker because of his many overt biases and prejudices, it was other more imposing memories that created a counterbalance to his ‘flaws’.

**From Seeds Comes Patience**

*My father believed in giving everyone and everything the opportunity to survive.*

*It didn’t matter what he thought of their race, religion, colour of skin, behaviour, or even species ... everyone was to be afforded support from those around them. He did not show this in his everyday demeanor, but rather, in the subtleties of his life.*

*Together, my father and I planted fruit trees in our backyard. He taught me how to judge the size of the hole, how to place the delicate tree into the hole and how to create a well around it to hold the precious water we would put in daily. Together we would stand and watch patiently while the water seeped into the soil. Together we would tie tin foil plates onto some of the limbs so that the birds wouldn’t eat all of the fruit — but not too many limbs, as they deserved some of the bounty, too. Together we would taste of the*
season's first fruit and then run and share with whomever was home at our place or our neighbours' homes.

Together we built a room in the basement of our house. I sitting on the plank of wood while my father sawed where he had marked it. Rarely a word spoken out loud, simply knowing what each needed and when. Together we explained to my siblings why I was the only one helping him, careful not to hurt their feelings - me as a fumbling 5-year-old, my father with the patience of eternity - but my siblings appeared relieved that they didn't have to endure this 'chore' - not a chore for me. Together my father and I would smile at each other, knowing that this was our time, our special bond.

These were the times that I saw my father as a patient, giving man. These were the obvious times for a young child - not aware of the other ways he showed his compassion in what might have seemed a cruel and calculating world to an adult.

My parents were very close friends with another couple - in fact the two families were like one big family, with two mommies and two daddies. My father was always there for his best friend, whether financially, finding him a job, marital woes, and all. Even when he was deceived by my pseudo father, over and over, and then dealt a final devastating blow; my father did not desert this person. He told me that he expected me to treat both the woman and the man with complete and utter respect.

Forgiveness always given.

Certain words were not allowed in our vocabulary growing up: "stupid", "shut up" and "hate" for example. No one and nothing is considered stupid, everyone is entitled to their own opinions, and hate is such an intense feeling that severe bodily harm or wrongdoing to your total being had to be involved in order to "hate". Well, now I
understand that last one, the one I found the hardest to grasp. As I watched my father-in-law die, I no longer felt hatred for him...my father’s lesson of forgiveness, compassion and the need to shower everyone with love is all that lingers.

When this former father-figure lay dying, I realized that I am my father’s living legacy, and as such, I was able to take care of this man, and even tell him that I loved him – he deserved the last effort of dignity that I could muster. Everyone is deserving of an opportunity to survive, no matter what extent. And when the time comes, forgiveness and compassion are to be foremost. Clear conversations on this abound in my memories. “You never know when you are going to die, so be sure to say I love you often, say goodbye as though there is no tomorrow, and enjoy the today that you know you have.”

Growing up, I knew my father was a bigot. Not just bigoted but an out and out bigot. We, his children, would – most of the time – affectionately call him, Archie Bunker, after one of his ‘enlightening’ comments. He always appeared to take it as a compliment. Since his death, I have often wondered about and discussed this perspective with others – and my desire to be the opposite to my father. In this I acknowledge my need to be aware of my own prejudices – with the assumption that I realize everyone has biases and prejudices. However, I also feel that I cannot overcome or accept my own biases unless I consciously confront them and acknowledge them as such. While my father appeared to never do this himself, he did seem comfortable with just vocalizing them. By observing that, I have taken the conscious step to try and face up to my own biases and prejudices; it is the awareness, acknowledgement, and desire to change that is the growing part.
But I could not reconcile the man I knew, my strongest role model, the Holocaust liberator, the zaidee to my children, with the man who had a negative comment for all those outside of his “inner” circle. Then I remembered a pop-culture program where a WWII American vet is “confronted” by a peer Japanese vet. The two of them eye each other with contempt. I suddenly realized, by thinking about what my father lived through – pogroms, war, holocaust experiences, 30 years of heart problems – why is it so surprising that he was bigoted? Keeping in mind the impact of primary experiences and relationships, I am able to reconcile how his biases, juxtaposed with his connections and respect for others, makes sense to me.

Many a motion that is called a reflex is a sturdy trowel for the person building up his world. It is not as if a child first saw an object and then entered into some relationship with that. Rather, the longing for relation is primary, the cupped hand into which the being that confronts us nestles; and the relation to that, which is a wordless anticipation of saying You, comes second. (Kauffmann, 1996, p. 78)

Here lies my relationship to my passion, my profession, - not only in the helping of my students’ understanding of the value of clear-cut early attachment, but in their personal understanding that it continues into adulthood. Perhaps, then, that is why when faced with negative experience, I try to flip it into a learning experience – because my father was able to teach me about patience and acceptance of others despite hatred-bound experiences.
A Woman of Hidden Valour

My mother's everyday existence is an example of "do what need's to be done." A product of the Holocaust/Depression era; the second child of a woman who ran away with the ice man and was eventually raised by another woman; an adult version of a frightened 7-year-old sent to a TB farm to be "fattened" up; a woman to nurse her husband for 30 years of their 40 year marriage; a woman who feels she is the oldest sister of the remaining four sisters.

My mother.

My mother had many miscarriages, so I was always told that as the youngest child I should be 'grateful' to be here – ah, that elusive fate again.

My mother, whose version of reality has always been slightly different than those around her. My mother, perhaps, has had to create a reality that allows her to function amidst adversity. How does anyone raised during extreme strife function at a seemingly healthy level? But I always felt she was my rock, creating the illusion of a world only filled with love and acceptance from others. Even when she let me down, I still considered her my best friend, my confidante.

My mother was inconsistent in her unconditional acceptance of who I was growing up, but was always my advocate in the initial stages of a predicament. For example, assuring me that I could do something, that I was brave enough and strong enough to try and just do my best. Then, the next day, my mother would use my own expressed fears to taunt me and humiliate me.
My mother’s brand of parenting has left me vowing to be a different parent than she was. However, her style gave me the determination to be strong in times of uncertainty, to plunge in when I didn’t want to go on.

When I think of my mother, through my child-perception of her, I am both comforted and confused. I have many lessons from my mother but it is the version of a strong and determined role model that bears its initial influences. From my preconsciousness-of-self-years’ mother, I have learned to stand up for myself and those I love/care about.

I truly believe that I had a wonderful childhood. I also realize that I was placed in a bubble of love, protected from harm, as though I was floating along. In reality, I feel that I was tethered to a foundation of protection and nurturing. My parents did their best, emotional scarring was not the intention, but blips of pain mixed into the positive memories have created enduring lessons.

I grew up naively thinking that everyone cared about me and always had my best interests at heart. I used to trust everyone I met instantly, thinking that I still lived in a world where everyone would meet my personal needs innately. But I was hurt too often to continue in that manner. As well, being the quiet shayna maidel, I would also do a lot of observing of others. I became a people-reader, and developed other sense-abilities, including an intuitiveness of others. It is difficult for me even now as an adult to trust implicitly and sometimes I trust when I know I should not. Therefore, I find myself being pulled in, as I still fall at moments of unexpected friendliness or surprise examples of compassion from others. But I am able to catch myself before I get ensnared in the trap hidden in the snow. Gaining voice has ‘allowed’ me to learn to stand up to the
natural predators around me and develop radar to not allow others to push me into the margins.

And while I did not have voice as a young child, or even as a young educator, I did realize the value and power of voice. I realize now that my mother was one of the driving forces behind this awareness of voice. As a lot of people say, I often hear my mother’s “voice” coming out of my mouth, only I hope with more sensitivity and compassion. I know that I am more gentle, more caring, more nurturing in my role as an educator than my mother has been and still is. Belenky, et al (1997), state that those in the constructed knowledge stage have the “...capacity...to attend to another person and to feel related to that person...empathy is a central feature...” (p. 143). In addition to the use of empathy, for me, it is imperative that I remember to listen to those around me, a feature that my mother did/does not appear to display. “Listening to others no longer diminishes women’s capacity to hear their own voices” (Belenky et al, 1997, p. 145). I used to feel that I had to fight to have myself heard and that my opinions and perspectives were not necessarily relevant. But now I realize that listening to others, and others listening to me, are equally important in sharing information and in creating forward movement in understanding.

From an obvious point of view, I can see that I have inherited my mother’s “do what needs to be done” attitude. However, I can now see that while I have been gifted her strength of voice, I have also been gifted her talent of storytelling. This realization of connection appears to me as an epiphany. My use of voice is based on her example, while my use of storytelling appears to be more focused and professionally based. While currently I perceive my mother’s use of stories as a survival tactic, I can also see how she
used storying to create beautiful illusions for her young children. For example, maternally, she would create a song out of anything that we, as children, were doing. I find myself doing the same, and my adult children beginning to display the same ‘talent’ despite their initial teasing at this gift. Perhaps my use of stories to create understanding and connection to learning comes from her enduring need to create logic out of illogical situations, as both are based on the use of stories.

Connelly and Clandinin (1990) reflect that “Stories function as arguments in which we learn something essentially human by understanding an actual life or community as lived” (p. 8). With this perspective in mind, I see that it is not just in my mother’s role modeling of storying, it is in my reflection on her use of stories that allows me to use storying for my own purposes. I use stories to create meaning – for myself and for my students – as well as constructing value in the understanding of my own use of stories as an educator.

... to further our kinship relationship with the instinctual nature, it assists greatly if we understand stories as though we are inside them, rather than as though they are outside us. We enter into a story through the door of inner hearing. The spoken story touches the auditory nerve, which runs across the floor of the scull into the brainstem just below the pons. There, auditory impulses are relayed upward to consciousness or else, it is said, to the soul... (Estés, 1995, p. 23)

Often when I create a story, I put not only myself into the “lesson” of the story, but also the intended audience/reader of the story. For example, one story that I created came about as a request for something about bubbles or wind. My Land of the Wind (Winick, 2003) story has become so popular in my sphere, that it is often requested by
participants that have already heard it numerous times before. There are many lessons for parents, caregivers, and early childhood educators in this story, but it engages them in such a manner that, as listeners, it is difficult not to be swept up into the wind along with the tale itself. I truly feel, upon reflection of my mother’s influence, that her need to create harmony for herself, gave me a gift of creating harmony for others. I now am able to see my mother’s strength, insight, perseverance, and her ability to overcome personal battles and demons in true storytelling fashion.

My First Teaching Experience: Yiddush Translator

"Elaine, oh E-laine...wake up sleepyhead."

I hear my name being sung somewhere out there.

"Come on", more urgently this time.

"Help me get her out of her crib, come on, don’t be so lazy. You want to know what they are saying don’t you?"

I feel my 3-year-old body being pulled out of my sleep, out of my crib and plunked onto the floor.

"Come on, don’t be such a baby Elaine. We need to know what they’re saying."

Ah, my earliest recollection of my innate ability to “teach” comes alive once more. My two older siblings were already in school and I hadn’t started nursery school as of yet. My parents only spoke Yiddush to me, and only English to my siblings. Obvious to me now, I spoke both languages. However, when my parents didn’t want my siblings to hear what the adults were talking about they would switch to Yiddush—for some reason not even thinking about me. I always supposed it was because I was so little and so quiet that I wasn’t even noticed most of the time. But my siblings caught on
quickly, and would wake me up, nighttime or naptime, get me out of my crib, send me into the adult conversation, just to listen nonchalantly, and report back to them on the content being discussed. I remember, vaguely, feelings of half-awakeness and yet great importance. I took this 'job' quite seriously and was able to fulfill my part for quite a few months. Of course, it felt like an eternity of time, but upon reflection it was only until my parents caught on. But what a sight it must have been...a sleepy little girl, rubbing her eyes, dragging her blankie, while padding around in her one-piece sleeper. I have memories of cuddling up to one adult or another, and feigning sleep while keeping one ear open to the topic at hand, then eventually mumbling to myself about going back to bed, and slipping back out of the room.

"Well??? What's going on? Come on, tell us!"

Suddenly, it was decided that I no longer “needed” Yiddush, and that everyone from now on was to speak only English to me.

In my position as an Early Literacy Specialist, I explain to my students that, for a child whose mother language is not English, it is not important to switch to immersing the child in English; but instead to be sure that the child has a solid understanding of their mother language. Subsequently, the child will be able to transfer the skills learned in one language to the task of learning another in a very natural manner, and the understanding that each language has rules and definitions of its own becomes a solid brain connection for lifelong learning.

Keeping this simplified model in mind, I must have had a very solid grasp of Yiddush as my transition to English was very non-traumatic. As a constructivist, I understand that any new knowledge must be built on a foundation of prior learning. This
understanding relates to my expectations of child development as well as the adult understanding of child development. This perspective ultimately influences how I create my lesson plans, creating clear expectations on my part as the educator; as well as hands-on participation for the students – no matter what the age.

In a fairly unremarkable sense, we are all constructivists if we believe that the mind is active in the construction of knowledge. Most of us would agree that knowing is not passive – a simple imprinting of sense data on the mind – but active; mind does something with these impressions, at the very least forms abstractions or concepts. In this sense, constructivism means that human beings do not find or discover knowledge so much as construct or make it. We invent concepts, models, and schemes to make sense of experience and, further, we continually test and modify these constructions in the light of new experience.

(Schwandt, 1994, pp. 125-6)

The awareness of building on prior knowledge, rules of skill development and transfer of learning skills is something I share with my students when I relate the above story about my first language being Yiddush, and yet I am clearly proficient in the English language. This real-life example helps to strengthen the lesson of multiple languages in young children as a strong and viable tool for learning. But I feel that it is also important to share with my students that, when teaching a child a ‘mother-language’ other than English, we are also teaching that child about their history, their heritage, and their connections to their primary templates (Perry, 2004). I truly feel that, along with the disappearance of the use of storying as a valuable teaching tool, we are doing our children a disservice by not including them in their heritage roots. This is always a
difficult concept to grasp for the majority of my immigrant participants. I often hear that they want their children to assimilate quickly into Canadian society and to shrug off the memories that they – the parents – have come from. I then look forward to the ensuing discussions that take place as we explore, together, ways to fit the emerging needs of all family members into the new existence of the family unit.

1962 – Introduction to Formal Education

Kindergarten. I am 4½ yrs. old when I begin. I am a mature child. Well, that’s what I am told. I could tie my own shoe laces, help others to tie theirs, and would help with whatever anyone needed. But this teacher felt that I shouldn’t be in kindergarten. I should have been held back a year (my birthday is at the end of December, so this was definitely a possibility). She said that I could only draw stick people (I still can only draw stick people) and that I had too many “accidents”. Well, of course I would. She would make us drink two cups of apple juice at snack time, even if we weren’t thirsty and then would make me sit right near the bathroom but wouldn’t let me go to the bathroom when I asked permission to go.

The ultimate ‘fight’ came during a winter storm. It was time to go home and I was so busy helping everyone else with their snow pants, boots, hats, etc. that I was the last person left in the room. She would always just stand there, staring at us, never helping us. I didn’t seem to be bothered by being left alone with her. I had everything on except my boots. I went looking for them but they weren’t where I had left them. I began to look around and found another boy’s boots only. They looked similar to mine but had his name written on the inside. She knew. She pounced. “Those are not your boots.”
"But he must of taken mine, they’re the same, even the size." "You may NOT take another person’s boots!"

I remember sheepishly going back to my cubby and taking out my shoes.

"You may NOT wear your indoor shoes home. They will get all wet and you will not be able to wear them here again."

"Then what can I wear?" (I remember starting to feel some panic and some tears falling).

"Stop snivelling. You cannot wear your indoor shoes and you cannot wear someone else’s boots. You figure out a solution."

And then she walked out of the room.

I never, ever disobeyed an adult. Ever. And this wasn’t going to be my first attempt. Not with her.

So I walked home in my socks. The snow really was up to my knees but I slowly walked home, crying the whole time.

Apparently, some of my brother’s friends must have seen me and called out to me. But I didn’t respond. But they were able to find my brother at school and tell him that I was walking home in my socks and was crying. I don’t know if he had spoken to my teacher because he doesn’t remember that part of the story either. We both do remember the next part in the exact same way.

My brother ran and ran until he caught up to me. It was at the beginning of our street and I was just about to turn the corner when he swooped me up and put me on his shoulders for the rest of the way. I am crying even now at the memory of being rescued.
The next day of school we had a new teacher. For that, thanks mom.

This story is one that often makes me stop and think about other lessons I have learned through my life ‘educators’. I wrote this story for a class assignment in September 2001, and I did not have any difficulty in having it come up to consciousness when thinking of a negative teaching lesson. I also know that the memories of this teacher and how she treated her students come back often to remind me of how I do not want to be. I am more aware of the connections to others and how my actions impact those around me, because of my kindergarten teacher. Often, upon meeting and interacting with other educators, the primary template of my first formal teacher is the one that I use to balance comparisons. It is also the primary template that I will sometimes use an indicator of whether or not I am staying on a positive track as an educator, myself.

I am a firm believer that women need to nurture women, as a feeling of duty and of mentorship. At one time, society reflected the vision of extended family. Women were not left to figure out day-to-day issues on their own. There was always someone around to answer questions, role model, problem solve. These supports came from family and friends, and from many generations flowing into each other. I recently asked my own young relatives how many of them have ever held a newborn infant, or sung to a young child, or even asked their mother for advice. What ensued was an enlightening conversation around the lack of, but desire for, the lost art of what I would call generational mothering. I have felt this absence, as a student, during my times of formal teaching as well. I know that it is imperative for me that I incorporate mentoring – as my form of generational mothering - into my lessons on an ongoing basis. Just as young
children cannot learn basic life-lessons through osmosis, developing adults need
nurturing and secure environments to take risks in learning new material. Women,
without the availability of insight and natural voice, need opportunities to acquire
awareness, reflection, and ultimately, self-voice.

In order to avoid these snares and enticements that are tripped by a woman’s time
spent in capture and famine, we must be able to see them in advance and sidestep
them. We have to redevelop insight and caution. We have to learn to veer. To be
able to see the right turns, we have to be able to see the wrong ones. (Estés,
1995, p. 231)

I am passionate about my profession, both the role and the topics on which I
focus. I am also aware that my knowledge base is not stagnant and must be massaged
and poured over, in order to continue to be passionate. It is this passion, in my opinion,
that enhances the educator that I am. I hope never to be that ‘kindergarten’ teacher that
humiliates, degrades, and demoralizes her students. Palmer (1993), states that “... I have
come to see that knowledge contains its own morality, that it begins not in a neutrality
but in a place of passion within the human soul” (p. 7). My professional being has only a
life-span that matches my passion; once the fire is gone then I too must seek other
employment.

..., it is a failure of our knowing itself to recognize and reach for its deeper source
and passion, to allow love to inform the relations that our knowledge creates –
with ourselves, with each other, with the whole animate and inanimate world. ...
But a knowledge that springs from love will implicate us in the web of life; it will
wrap the knower and the known in compassion, in the bond of awesome
responsibility as well as transforming joy; it will call us to involvement,
mutuality, accountability. (Palmer, 1993, p. 9)

It is my own involvement in reflection, and my accountability to that reflection, that is
echoed through the compassion that I have for my students, their students, and myself as
a facilitator of learning.
CHAPTER FOUR: FROM CONSCIOUSNESS OF AWARENESS FORWARD:

STORIES WITHIN STORIES

There are stars whose light reaches the earth only
   after themselves have disintegrated and are no more.
And there are people whose shining memory lights the world
   after they themselves are no longer amongst us.
These lights which shine in the darkest night are the very ones
   which illuminate for us the path.

Hannah Szenes (1921 - 1944)

Coming into awareness. What a fascinating phrase that has come to mean for me.
Perhaps it implies a sense of drifting along until a specific jarring occurs. But that has
not been the case for me. In my reality, even in my musings about my reality, I see that I
was actually speeding in a runaway train. The changing of paths that marks my own
awareness may have appeared to have come about abruptly but, in truth, it has been more
like a subtle curve rounding a bend on the train tracks. In Chapter Four the stories reflect
some of the transformations that have come about for me as the teacher-educator-person
that I am, at a time-period of accepting who I am and the ability to embrace that role.

1988 – The Shattering of My Being

I woke to the day as any other Thursday morning. But that turned out to be the
only familiar thing that occurred that day.

My husband worked late on Thursday evenings and so my parents would come
over to “help” me with the children – at the time, 5½ and 2½ years old. They usually
arrived late in the afternoon, playing with the children while I got dinner ready. Well,
dad played – rolling around the floor, having a tea party, or giving piggyback rides –
while mom supervised and made sure that he didn’t wear himself out too much.

Oh, how the four of them would laugh. I loved to hear the sounds as I worked in
the kitchen. Every so often I would poke my head out of the kitchen and peek around the
wall to see the fun oozing out of each of the faces I adored. Then after dinner, while I
bathed the children and put them to bed, mom would wash the dishes and tidy up the
kitchen. Dad would watch one of his favourite nature programs on the television and
when I was finished I would snuggle up to my father on the couch and we would watch
television together.

Quite often, though, dad would fall asleep and his head would rest on the wall
behind the couch. It was obvious that he would always sit in the same spot on the large
sectional couch, because there was a grease stain on the wall from where his head would
rest. I loved that stain.

That particular Thursday, I got the children ready as usual, and we walked to my
daughter’s school in time for classes to begin. After, on the way back home, my son and I
talked about the plans for our day. I reminded him that Bubie and Zaidie were coming
for dinner. As if I had to remind him of that. His whole life seemed to revolve around his
grandfather. It was for Zaidie that he learned to go on the potty. It was for Zaidie that
he ate all of his meals. It was for Zaidie that he slept in his own ‘big’ bed. But, still, he
liked to hear what special treats I would plan for our meal together. This time I was
going to bake apples.

“Why?” asked my son.

“Because it is Zaidie’s favourite and Daddy likes them too.”
"Will I like it? Have I tried it before?"

"Yes, and yes," I reply with a smile.

The rest of the way, we discussed different ways we could bake them. My 2½-year-old son suggested we cook them on the barbecue and add some chocolate and potato chips to the recipe. We finally agreed that the old-fashioned recipe would be the best choice.

But this time, the day didn't unfold in its usual manner. I didn't follow through on the dinner preparations, but I did decide to do my monthly bills ahead of time. I didn't think forward to the evening's activities, but I did have a discussion with my next-door neighbour about helping each other out in times of distress.

Late in the afternoon, while outside with the children, my husband called unexpectedly. I needed to get to the hospital — it was my father.

On this day, this particular Thursday, my father died and my weekly routine was shattered forever.

The time period immediately following my father's death was one of transition for me. Even with the anticipation of his death hanging over our heads for 30 years, the vacuum that was created by his absence forced me to look at my own existence. I found myself moving away from passivity toward action, taking my self more seriously, and making some personal decisions.

Some life changes come with gentle nudging, some come about dramatically, and still others more subtly. Some come about as after-shocks of previous changes. I realize now that I needed to accept my destiny then and embrace being an educator. But whether this came about because of nudging, dramatic change or as a subtlety of life, is still to be
defined. I do know that it was from this point onward that I began to let life’s journey take me, versus me trying to force a different path, the one I thought I should be on. Embracing the educator that I always was and learning to accept my own talent in this direction appeared to begin right after my father’s death, as I began to reflect on a variety of lessons that he taught me. These lessons were subtle, and often I think unintentional…but then that idea of unintentional influence and indirect learning reflects my definition of living legacy. Perhaps the process of reflecting on the man my father was to me and others, and the legacy gifts he gave me over the years, helped me to put the pieces of the ‘elaine’ puzzle together, albeit unconsciously. I do not remember suddenly waking up one morning and saying, “Oh, right, my father, by dying, helped me realize that I should be an educator, and go to it girl!” My choice was more about making small and large decisions that fit together in a neat package, and feeling comfortable with the outcomes. It is now, as I reconstruct this story, that I see the connections, see the process of discovery, see the impact of my father’s gifts upon my professional essence.

According to Connelly and Clandinin (1990) “The sense of the whole is built from a rich data source with a focus on the concrete particularities of life that create powerful narrative tellings” (p. 4) and “Narratives are not adequately written according to a model of cause and effect but according to the explanations gleaned from the overall narrative” (p.7).

It is through the growing awareness of the gifts left to me and the emerging connections between these gifts that I am seeing the patterns of ‘becoming’ a dedicated educator surfacing in my stories.
2002 – A Candelabra as Example of Life Lived

My mind drifts back to my conversation with my mother, months earlier. I am reminded of a chandelier, a candelabra, a memory of a strong but respected woman (Personal Conversation, March 2002). We talk about the chandelier and candelabra that are brought to Canada from the old country. My great-grandparents bring these, and many other things, over to Canada during a time that must have had been full of extreme fear and panic. But once in Canada, they painstakingly ensured the restoration of each of the valuable pieces and the ultimate distribution amongst the grandchildren. .... My own memories of my great grandparents are a mixture of told stories and tiny pieces of my own story, slowly being interwoven across space and time. Often, my mother talks of her grandmother’s lack of beauty. While she appears to have passed so many living legacies to her granddaughter, my mother, the issue of beauty seems to have slipped through my mother’s concepts and connections. While the resemblance between the many generations of women is apparent to me when I view family photos, my mother fails to see the connection between grandmother and daughter, through herself. We are one face, one strength, one heart, yet only my mother is endowed with the confidence of her self-beauty. (Class Assignment, 2002).

It is fascinating to me to see how my mother focuses on tangibles as statements of who she is. I want so much to know who I am by examining who my ancestors are, what they experienced and how they lived through those experiences. However, my mother only rarely explains in concrete terms, how poverty stricken her family was when she was growing up, but rich in love and tzedakah – charitable acts as part of existence. The bulk of the time my mother focuses on her ‘things’, her possessions. She defines who she is by
what she owns. And yet here I am, a product of my mother's influence, and I define who I am by my acts and my connections to others. And yet my mother continues to show me - not tell me - that I have connections to the females of my bloodline, and that their influences course through my being – mostly in the form of physical features and personal attitude.

Two years later, we are celebrating a very special birthday for my mother. I am asked by one of my aunts to explain to another aunt what my Master's thesis is focusing on. I go full throttle into a topic close and dear to my heart, sharing details and examples as I flow along. Suddenly, I realize that there is a sly but whimsical look on both of their faces. I ask about it, and they reply that it is okay, that it is my mother's story and so it should be accepted. I had been telling them about the person I was named after and what my mother had recently told me about this namesake of mine. I have also mentioned how I have always suspected that my mother recreates stories over the years, as did their late, oldest sister.

And so they decide to tell me their version of the story. Henu Ruchal, the woman I am named after, was not a university professor as my mother had told me. In fact, Henu and my grandmother grew up so poor that they were unable to have any kind of formal education. I suspected this about my grandmother, but was somewhat surprised about Henu...as my mother's version had Henu being sent away to school and loving to read and write both personally and professionally.

My aunts then share an overwhelming amount of information with me that contradicts stories not only from my mother, but from my grandmother, too. But their stories come with understanding for the various adaptations shared through the years.
These stories created acceptance in a world in turmoil; these stories created balance in a world without stability. These stories created tangibles as the only way to hold onto memories that would otherwise be too painful to grasp.

I found a great connection to understanding my mother's need to reconstruct her stories on an ongoing basis, when I read Anna Neumann's (1988) On Experience, Memory, and Knowing: A Post-Holocaust (Auto) Biography. Neumann reminded me that it was imperative that I keep in mind that historical context must be part of the acceptance of my living legacies because time is a collective process. Each generation 'collects' grains of the previous generations' being, creating a larger and larger snowball of existence. This insight helps me grasp my mother's need to put her ever-changing stories into the context of what she endured, and yet I feel that my mother did her best as a mother and role model for me.

Perhaps everyone's stories change over time, grow over time, adapt to the current storyteller's personal rhythms. Then a story can help to make sense of the ethics, values and morals being conveyed through the story. It is often clear when someone has "grown" a story facetiously and when the story has genuinely grown them (Estés, 1995, p. 509). I have come to realize that, for my mother, personal understanding shifted with time and experiences. Her stories were, it seems, coping mechanisms for herself rather than just teaching tools for her children. I see my use of storytelling more as an outward giving, but perhaps I, too, use story to cope with what I need to teach.

This story is composed of many threads that are interwoven that I can use to reconsider my own self-perception: my namesake, the impact of my mother's stories, my understanding of my mother's versions of stories; and how they all relate to me, as person
and educator. Considering the fact that I was unaware of any connection to the person that I was named after until I was well into adulthood, I had no connection to her being, other than the teasing I endured as a young child with such an unusual Hebrew name. Once this awareness was gifted to me by my mother in the last couple of years, I felt a wondrous connection to this woman and her soul. Whether intentionally, or through the influence of time and age, my mother gave me the gift of feeling as though I was Henu, the educator and academic. I felt that spiritually and psychically we were connected, having the same professional focus and interests. But then that bubble was punctured with the realization that my mother had fabricated the connection, innocently, I believe, but nonetheless untrue. This new revelation brings me to the need to remember how personal storytelling is. I must take what I need from each story and absorb that learning into the person that I am; and likewise, in my work, I must allow each listener to do the same. I cannot make my mother only tell me stories that fit into my world, nor can I tell others only the stories that they wish to hear. I can only create meaning for myself and, in the same vein, help my students learn this same lesson. Connelly and Clandinin (1988) are very clear in this understanding of the role of stories:

As a reader of the text, one of your purposes is to recover the meaning, as best you can, as it is expressed by the storyteller. The significant meaning, of course, is yours, and so you need to reconstruct a meaning for yourself (p. 198).

Taking my awareness of my namesake, my mother’s take on stories and my understanding of her need to make them fit her reality helps me to be more sensitive with my students as they find their own connections to stories that they either tell or hear.
I was able to take away meaning from my mother’s story about Henu...she made her a real person for me, someone who existed and lived. That fact of her true existence cannot be taken away from me. As I learn more about her, whether my mother’s version or my aunts’ versions, she existed. And now that I have seen a picture of her, I see her as an even more tangible being. A physical connection to the image, strengthens that illusive connection but the fact that she was not a blood relative is also embedded into my awareness. As my grandmother was not my mother’s birth mother, thus her sister, Henu – the person I am named after – was not my biological aunt. So, without clear bloodline connections, there should not be this startling physical correlation between my grandmother’s sister and myself. It is also interesting that my mother is able to ‘see’ connections between her step-aunt and myself, but not the physical resemblance between her patriarchal grandmother, herself, and me, her daughter. Perhaps this is the next connection with which I can use to build understanding. In all probability there are more stories yet to be unearthed, while others are to be forever archived within my relatives’ memories.

2005 - elaine vs. Elaine

So what is in a name? Is it a true reflection of the being that it stands for? In Judaism a newborn is usually given a Hebrew name for someone that has died, as opposed to a name of interest or after someone living. However, also in Judaism, if someone comes close to death, they are given a new Hebrew name. A simplistic explanation for this name change is that they are renamed so that death cannot find them.
But, I ask again...is it a true reflection of the person behind the name...or is it a hope of the person to be?

In the end, does the person create the name? Or does even that get hidden behind the titles? Mr., Mrs., Miss, Ms., Dr., Sir, Madam, ...oh my, the list goes on.

Who are we? Our name? Our titles? Our reflection of those who came before us?

My name is elaine. It is not my title, not my reflection of others. Well, not just those things. elaine is who I am, all that I reflect, all that I bear historically, and all that I create for myself and those whose lives I touch. I am a process still in the discovering.

Elaine was my title. But Miss was my title at one time, too. My current titles include: student, mom, wife, sister, daughter, friend, aunt, niece, teacher, professor, and even early literacy specialist. In fact this list should be even longer. But society limits me to Mrs. Elaine Winick, B.A., E.C.E., RTI, Fam.Ed., and soon to be added, (trumpets blaring) M.Ed.

But I am so much more than that...I am a process, full of being and doing, and learning, and...to me, I am simply elaine. This is my philosophical choice and personal choice.

I was recently told to be proud of all of those letters at the end of my name. Add them to my business cards, my professional signature. This person rebuffed my reflection of snobbery coming through such self-pronouncement. “You earned those letters, show them off.” But “showing them off” doesn’t tell the stories behind the letters, the struggles, the feelings of joy after the struggles. For me, they only glorify the results. Does it make me a better person or a stronger person? No, but I have learned and
accepted that they represent some of the journeys that I have taken. Just as a name cannot convey all that that person is, hiding my journeys cannot erase other attributes and achievements. I have made peace with that part of my name.

But I am still elaine, not Elaine.

And so I still justify, still explain when asked...but most do not ask, just accept – especially if they know me on a personal level. The lower case choice is difficult to understand without knowing me. Using a lower-case 'e' doesn't tell the listener or reader my favourite colour or any of my eccentricities. But spend 5 minutes with me and you might get an answer for both of those aspects of my being. Would that help with understanding why lower-case 'e'? Does it matter?

Would it help to know that I was named after my late grandmother's sister who perished during the Holocaust era? Or would it help to know that I am confident in who I am becoming, and feel passionately about process over product? I am process, not a product...well certainly not yet, hopefully not ever.

Elaine is my title, elaine is who I am.

My reflections based on this story focus on the journey I am on currently. Even the complete awareness of why I spell my name with a lower-case beginning oozed new understandings and gifts. To begin with, the confidence with which I wrote the accompanying story seems to shout out at me...something that I do not recall being part of my previous persona. This growth of self seems, to me, to be reflective of my awareness of being a constructed knower (Belenky et al., 1997).

Once a woman has a voice, she wants to it to be heard. ... They hoped to find understanding and communicative people – people who were invested in "really
...Constructivist women need and value attentive strangers as well as understanding friends and colleagues. Learning that their ideas can be taken in and put to use – that their ideas can spark interest among unknown others – is an exhilarating and confirmatory experience. (Belenky et al., 1997, p. 146)

When I began my studies at Brock University, I was told by someone I truly respect and admire to concentrate on speaking with others who understand and will really listen...that sometimes it is a sad waste of breath to try and talk to those who are not at the same stage of understanding as I. Upon first hearing such a bold statement I was taken aback, thinking it was harsh and arrogant. But with time and retrospection, I have come to realize that this stance is a necessity in order to function in a world of imbalance and, at times, inequality in the workforce. I need to stand up for who I am and what I believe. My passions are valid and come from a perspective of theory, conviction, and connections to my lesson objectives. My ability to state my philosophical reasons for using a lower-case beginning to my name is an expression of this newfound ability to stand up for my professional convictions. If I cannot clearly elucidate who I am, then how can I satisfy my students, and coworkers for that matter, that my workshops are applicable and meaningful for their own purposes, too? I have also learned not to take other’s perspectives personally, that they may be different from my own; but nor do I have to accept and conform to those alternative perspectives. Declaring voice, and the awareness of having that voice, is slowly seeping into the presentation of self that creates the lesson plans for my students.
The complete answer is not to be found on the outside, in an outward mode of living. This is only a technique, a road to grace. The final answer, I know, is always inside. But the outside can give a clue. (Lindbergh, 1983, p. 35)

2004 - A Gift of My Own

...So much can be understood and learned about living legacy through the stories that we are told, that we share, and that continue through each generation. As well, I have discovered that what triggers beginning research can come in many forms. For me, a strong trigger is music. I have always felt a connection to music, linking stories to memories of sound. In fact, a large part of my own living legacy is intertwined with my stories, shared through my stories, and is my stories surrounding memories of music. ...

I use music to connect and interpret. But it isn't enough for me. I am ready for more. I want to discover more, to connect more. I am ready to put myself out onto a limb and stretch myself, to connect to voice through music. ... A reconnection to music will allow for more stories to surface, therefore, more connections to my living legacy.

[I used] arts-based research to form a reconnection to music and the stories that it invokes through my violin. Through lessons and reflection I will forge a deeper path of awareness as an educator. Therefore, this reconnection to the violin and a clear connection to my personal metaphor (2001) will allow for a looking inward, facilitating an awareness of becoming my own conductor. My personal metaphor focused on my connections to music and the awareness of spirituality as an integral part of who I am as an educator. I feel that, for me, the use of music sings of spirituality. Thus, I will be telling parts of my story through my music. Music is like water for my parched soul. I am ready to use this re-hydration of experience to further push my limits as an educator.
Thus, from this arts-based research experience, my goal is the enhancement of my ability, as an educator, to assist my students to draw upon their own personal storying through a wide variety of perspectives. This connection will allow for a further understanding of the living legacy that lives within. My hope is that I will be able to nurture my students in seeing the value of oral storytelling and the strong significance of storying. I often talk of attachment being the strongest bond in the creation of a literacy-focused individual. The love of reading begins at the breast, through the bonds of sensory stimulation. This can continue through the sharing of personal stories and the teaching of morals and values.

It is my proposal to combine both music and language to create new poetics. As a constructivist I am using past experience to create change in current understanding. I wish to share this with those I teach. This should allow me to have an understanding of change occurring through struggle and, in turn, should create an even stronger, more empathetic educator than I already am. This opportunity will stretch who I am, “allowing” versus forcing myself to experience something I might never attempt otherwise. Forcing me to take a risk in a world where I typically would only take the “safe” and predictable path. Ultimately, through the power of my original metaphor and this internship experience, the use of stories will continue to be a driving force in my research into living legacy as an educative process. (Winick, 2003)

I wrote this proposal (Internship Course, 2003) having done a great deal of soul-searching. I was putting myself out on a limb, waiting to either fly gracefully or fall flat to the ground. However, looking back at my journal entries and other reflections, I
realized that I had become like a hummingbird – ready to stop at anytime to hover and contemplate, drinking in the nectar bountiful and pure.

My previous exposure to music lessons was infused with strong and positive memories. The lessons often strayed beyond the instrument or notes in front of me, well into my soul and being. From feelings of self-worth and independence, to acceptance from others and society, the music teachers of my youth gave me more than the ability to read and play music. I recall feelings of self-assurance, patience, and independence. I also gained a sense of acceptance amongst others, while being a leader and role model; I felt at peace with myself. It is no wonder that these classes and lessons became strong pivotal points in my memory. They seem to hold positive memories for me as a gawky child and youth.

I had decided to go back to my violin, versus the piano, because I remembered the joy that the sounds produced from a violin created for me. While the sounds that come from a burgeoning violin student may not be ‘pretty’, eventually the sounds become resonant and meaningful, much like me as a person. As well, the violin makes me think of the continuity and timelessness of living legacy, with the opportunity for enhancement for all its components.

My family had given me a new violin a few years previous and I could not remember how to play it anymore. Here was the perfect opportunity to put myself into my students’ perspective...knowing the rules but unable to create meaning and ‘music’ out of them. But I also knew that I needed to find an instructor that I could bond with, as I knew that I regarded the significance of connecting with my own students a valuable
tool as an educator. However, finding an adult-teacher proved to be more challenging that I originally thought. But find I did, bond we did, learn I did, and blossom I did.

Through this learning experience, I discovered the joy of the ownership of learning. By restaining my violin I was able to create a stronger relationship with my topic – the actual violin. I had to take it apart, understanding its mechanics, and then become intimate with its core as I stripped its original varnish and added the new stain. With each stroke of polishing we became closer, understanding each other and our purposes for each other. The final touch was adding my signature, at my husband and children’s request. They were proud of what I was doing and what I had already accomplished and wanted a concrete sign of this journey.

While it was not a strong sounding instrument, after I had finished its transformation, I was rewarded with a deeper, more passionate sound. Neither my instructor nor I could understand this on a logical level, but certainly we did on a spiritual level. I had given of myself completely to my violin and it had done the same for me.
I also feel as though I had a deeper appreciation for the process that I was going through because of the changing of my violin’s appearance. I had decided to restain the violin almost on a whim, not realizing the amount of time and physical effort needed. But once done, I was able to look back and realize that this process was a metaphor for myself as an educator. I do what is best for my students, what will have the biggest impact, then reflect on the extensive path that I just took. But not only did this understanding transform my relationship with my violin/my students, but it also transformed my relationship with my teacher.

We forget that a person can be a person only in community. Whether we are aware of it or not, each of us is a community in microcosm. The personhood of each of us is shaped by a moving inward intersection of numerous selves – family and friends and colleagues and strangers. If we are to grow as persons and expand our knowledge of the world, we must consciously participate in the emerging community of our lives, in the claims made upon us by others as well as
our claims upon them. Only in community does the person appear in the first place, and only in community can the person continue to become. (Palmer, 1993, p. 57)

In my work, I feel that it is imperative for me to connect with my students as soon as possible, and expected the same from someone who was going to be my educator. However, the violin teacher assigned to me was timid and shy, and of a different perspective. I felt as though he had some difficulty with my need to talk and discuss things – from the weather to my struggles with that week’s lesson. However, once he saw my commitment to my violin and my own learning curve, he appeared to open up and commit to me on a level of connection that I could relate to. This made my decision to stop the lessons after a year a very difficult one, because my learning curve was quick to adapt to new knowledge then, as the need to connect was no longer at the forefront of my mind. He made it clear that he knew I would be back once I had finished my thesis, and encouraged me to continue to play for my own enjoyment and growth. Thus, I also rediscovered the value of ownership of the journey.

When I first began looking for a violin teacher I wanted someone who either came to the student’s home or gave private lessons. However, the only school that I could find that was accepting new adult violin students catered to young children and had many lessons going on at any given time. Each student and teacher went into a private lesson room that surrounded a waiting area. While the lesson rooms were soundproofed, those in the waiting area were able to hear everything in the lesson rooms. This proved to be quite a challenge for me as I do not like to perform for others – unusual considering that performing is exactly what I do when facilitating workshops. However, it took me a
couple of lessons before I forgot that others were listening to my playing. Then the inevitable began to happen. I would walk out of my room and other teachers would smile at me. “Were they laughing at me...are they wondering what this middle-aged woman is doing?” And then the owner/operator told me how proud he was of my playing and that he knew that I was going to be successful at playing the violin. Oh, how embarrassing. Is that what I do to my students? My need to be sensitive and aware of my participants’ feelings was magnified through this process. I no longer expect each person to feel comfortable speaking or sharing. I began to offer more opportunities for pairing and for talking to me after class. I needed to remember to:

make connections, between educator and student, opinion/thought and process, and between objective and learning. ... when learning can be touched, explored, even tasted, then it can be absorbed into the skin and into the bloodstream, truly transforming the student’s connection to their world. Attachment. Living legacy. Keeps coming to my mind (Winick, 2003, Journal Entry).

But relationships should not be just positive and light. I have been able to take away from this experience the reinforcement that learning is not just about making the journey comfortable. I truly enjoy what I am doing professionally but I often include disharmony as a means of creating discussion. This neutralizing of the comfort zone is respectfully done but I feel it is sometimes a necessity in order to bring about learning. I often talk about the need for educators to understand the difference between creating just enough stress to help a student over a ‘bump’ but not so much stress as to create a wall of frustration. This distinction employs an awareness of the various developmental levels, the creation of a safe and secure learning environment, and the patience to listen carefully
to the students' non-verbal reactions. The evaluations from my workshops reflect that I am respectful of all opinions and perspectives and that the students wish to come back again and again. It is also interesting to observe that the returning participants want others to know that they know me and that we have a previous connection. Being aware of this desire, when someone comes for the first time I try to spend at least a couple of minutes with them prior to beginning and then I can create the sense that we have also known each other a little before.

The internship course has become as meaningful for me as my Brock journey has been throughout. It was concrete and practical, and was relevant to both the student and educator that I am. By gifting this experiential process to myself, I have been able to take this understanding of new learning to my own workshops and seminars. I have never spoon fed my students, feeling that learning must be discovered and mastered by each individual. However, I now offer a more concrete and hands-on experience of the topic at hand, discovering the base skill being discussed, but at the participants' own developmental levels. This way, individuals can understand the baseline skill — creating ownership of understanding — and why it is valuable, and then they can transfer that new knowledge into developmentally appropriate curriculum for their classrooms and individual children's needs. The attendance for my workshops is going through the roof, and the evaluations are also reflecting this positive change. Here is an amazing living legacy gift that I have given to myself and, like some of the gifts I have written about here received from others, the ripples from my gift to myself move outward, extending an offering to the students I teach who will translate what I share in their lives, in their own way.
Ultimately, the stories reconstructed in this chapter have given me even more living legacies to explore, new connections to other stories in my memories, and a desire to create even further understandings with myself as a professional.
CHAPTER FIVE: PARTS OF A WHOLE:

THE EDUCATOR EMERGES LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

"Have you ever dreamed of the perfect moment for something? Have you ever experienced the perfect moment? I say let’s imagine it together” (Winick, 2005)

As I look back on the stories written about living legacy in the previous chapters, I am able to see the tremendous growth that has occurred through both the research for, and the writing process of, this thesis. In this chapter, I focus on my own emerging understanding of legacies given and how I connected my past gifts to my future need to nurture new changes. The stories reflect connections to previous lessons, while bridging the way to new paths of exploration.

My Hands, My Grandmother’s Hands

Images. Images of hands fluttering along the neck of a violin. Images of hands sending the pen across a piece of paper. Both producing dulcet music to the ears.

Images. Images of hands kneading dough. Images of hands stirring the ingredients for the next meal. Both producing satisfaction for the body.

Across time, two women creating images of busy-ness. Across time, both women connected through the act of doing, doing, doing. Across time, both women understanding the need to take care of others, through their individual work.

The physical connection between the women is an intermediary generation. But the spiritual connection between the women is so much more – it is a state of being, of giving, of always doing.
Initially, my connections to my maternal grandmother appear to be superficial, at best. She was my mother’s stepmother but, nonetheless, a driving force behind my image of grandparents. But she is still there...here, only deeper, more meaningful, with introspection. Quite a few of my most significant memories of my grandmother revolve around her hands and the strength that they represented. It is only as I complete the writing of this thesis that I see the connection with this significant woman in my life today, to my own way of doing. When I am at my busiest I often take on other projects – I used to think as a means of distraction. But being always busy is where I am most comfortable. As a young adult, it was with baking; as a young parent it was in creating sellable crafts; at one point I had five part-time jobs when I was fresh out of college, while still raising a young family. My son recently pointed out that his earliest recollections of me as his mother included a sense of responsibility to the community and being involved in as much as possible. Giving to others included my family, too. Never neglecting the home, but always doing, doing, doing. I suppose I hadn’t thought about the lessons I might be teaching my own children through my actions.

While close to the end of my journey as a M.Ed student, I am already contemplating next steps and, given my history, it is not surprising that I have seeds of my next moves already germinating in my soul. I am in the process of creating new stories, new living legacies to share. I have also set in place my desire to have a Bat Mitzvah – a formal celebration of all the pieces that are elaine. And all the pieces that elaine can still be. Here is another step to understanding my own importance, gifting this understanding to myself. Other paths are waiting for me, other stories are waiting to be written...I just need to look around to see the buds pushing up from the ground around my feet.
Looking back at the exploration of my grandmother’s gifts, I realize how similar I am to her, and how much she gave me. For example, she gifted me the ability to give unconditionally, when and where needed. I see how I learned to focus on the here and now, still keeping one eye out for what comes next. Life is not just a string of positive times and events; bad things happen, too. But put into perspective, I can see that each event is an integral component of living, creating an interdependence that survives across the thread of time. It is up to me then to decide my attitude with which to continue on, and I see that being involved and active came initially from my grandmother. It did not end there as my mother has been influenced by my grandmother, too. But initially, it does appear that I gain the legacy of doing from my grandmother, it is the foundation which I continue to build upon.

The social constructionist approach is predicated on the assumption that “the terms by which the world is understood are social artifacts, products of historically situated interchanges among people [Gergen, 1985, p. 267]. Knowledge is one of the many coordinated activities of individuals and as such is subject to the same processes that characterize any human interaction…

(Schwandt, 1994, p. 127)

My realization that I am a constructivist has helped me to understand myself as an educator. Historically, as an educator I have kept busy and then have taken on more work. I have had a tendency to overbook my classroom time, leaving little left over for research development and practical matters, such as administrative details. Then I have often booked my time even further. Why has this been necessary? Has it been a part of
being successful? Eventually, I have found that I am so swamped with needing to fit all of the pieces into my workload that I end up putting in too much overtime.

I think now, in some ways, this process is part of why I am where I am professionally, successful and well regarded within the education field. However, I am now able to look at my need to take on more tasks than I have time for, and see that my success does not depend on doing that. I feel that I am well respected in my field of early childhood education, and I need to accept and acknowledge that for myself. Being busy is part of my persona but not necessarily a part of what I have to offer the education field. Now I see that it is my responsibility to take this new epiphany and create changes in my old patterns. Dedicating time and reflection to re-thinking my goals and the way in which I want to achieve them will be very important in the upcoming phase of my career.

I also must acknowledge that the writing of this thesis does not negate the need for me to continue to critically reflect on my learning as an educator as I move forward into the future. Such sustained reflection will be an ongoing process, continuing to generate positive movement in my career. Cole and Knowles (2001) write that, “In research as in life as in art, there is no possibility of completeness, certainty, or closure” (p. 211), reminding me how important it is to have an appreciation of my own successes, failures, and epiphanies in order to learn from each of them. Feeling passionate about the act of critical reflection is something that I wish to share with other educators, those I teach and those I touch in other ways. It is clear to me through the writing of this thesis that, by connecting past influences with current ideals, I can influence who I want to be and what directions I might take and why. While critical reflection and acting upon new
understandings may create ripples in an existing comfort zone, the eventual results of grappling with set perceptions can bring about a more focused educator.

One cannot live in the pure present: it would consume us if care were not taken that it is overcome quickly and thoroughly. But in pure past one can live; in fact, only there can a life be arranged. One only has to fill every moment with experiencing and us, and it ceases to burn. (Kaufmann on Buber, 1996, p. 85)

**Mothering, Clear As Mud**

_I always knew that I had made a conscious decision to mother differently from my mother – but is that so surprising? Perhaps I do mother with a different twist but I am a different person from my mother, from any other mother. Mother...teacher...each going through its own evolution and transformations based on introspection of self._

_I have made conscious decisions about how I want to be as an educator. I am my own person, not needing to compare myself to others, to compete with others. I am comfortable with who I am and how I present myself. My mother gave me that gift, she is that gift. Originally, I thought she was face value, with no skeletons in the closet, but in reality she had so much from her own history calling to her. It is for this reason that I feel that she is a woman of hidden valour...it is only with retrospection that I am able to acknowledge all that she has had to deal with in her life._

_So it is in my mother's gifts that I see my skill to turn adversity into a story. It is in my mother's gifts that I see my ability to move forward in spite of obstacles. It is in my mother's gifts that I see my ability to give when I no longer feel I can give anymore. It is in my mother's gifts that I found my voice, my capacity to articulate my displeasures, my joys, my own stance._
In this story, I see a clear connection to being a constructed knower. Is it just timing? Or is it the coming together of the relevant pieces? Have I reached a particular point in time in my work, plus my age, and the process of completing my Master’s in Education through Brock University, or the combination of all of these components coming together? Is there any influence from the ability to look inward, creating new understandings of self?

“Self-studies should promote insight and interpretation. … Biographical and autobiographical self-studies in teacher education are about the problems and issues that make someone an educator” (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001, pp. 16-17).

As I have touched upon throughout this thesis, I believe that it is valid to appreciate where I have come from in order to understand where I stand today, and where I might go tomorrow. Without some interpretation of myself as an educator, considering my original reluctance to embrace being an educator, I feel that I might drown in a blind acceptance of who I am. By forcing myself to look inward and understand the journey I have taken, I feel that I am accepting myself as an educator and accepting that at mid-life this passage still needs attention. I am forced to look at options for future development, such as continuing my own education, taking new risks as an educator, and remembering to put myself in my students’ place when asking them to take risks of their own.

I see that my passion as an educator has grown over the last couple of years through the sustained engagement and inquiry that graduate work has provided me. The way I present myself and my lessons is with a heightened vigor, taking my students along with the tidal wave I often create. The ability to keep this vigor up can only come about with concentrated effort – not the kind that forces passion to occur, but with an effort
toward keeping the awareness of who I am as an educator alive and consistently brought to the forefront of my awareness. Where this wakefulness will lead me is not the most relevant point... it is the actual awareness of my passion that helps to drive the point of my existence as an educator home to me. I am quite willing to continue to allow the journey to offer me surprises, but now I know the lessons learned will serve me well, no matter which path I choose next.

But I have come to see that knowledge contains its own morality, that it begins not in a neutrality but in a place of that passion within the human soul. Depending on the nature of that passion, our knowledge will follow certain courses and head toward certain ends. From the point where it originates in the soul, knowledge assumes a certain trajectory and target – and it will not easily be deflected by ethics once it takes off from that source. ... If we are worried about the path on which our knowledge flies and about its ultimate destination, we had better go back to its launching pad and deal with the passions that fuel and guide its course. (Palmer, 1993, p. 7)

Creating New Momentum, Moving Forward

I see that by looking deep into who I am I have found more than I could possibly have anticipated. I thought that I might find some insight into how I was ‘created’ by those before me, but I could not have imagined the gifts I have given myself through the cathartic process this writing has been. I have a new desire to believe in myself and what I have to offer the education community. I see that I have been sitting on the fence of indecision long enough, and have now chosen the side that says believe in yourself, have faith in yourself, and be willing to take risks!
An Invitation: New Vision Unfolds

Confidence may be blooming but the petals are not completely open as of yet. I still doubt myself, I still question my ability to contribute fairly, I still yearn for acceptance. As I learn new ways of being, as I discover new understandings, I realize that I still have so far to go.

You’re inviting me? Are you sure that I’m of the other participants’ caliber? I am honoured and in awe of being in such company. Being invited to an upcoming Writing Workshop with published narrativists is a bit intimidating...can I keep up? Will I have valuable work to contribute? Will they see my compositions as worthy of their focus? But all of this doubt is overturned by the realization that I am blessed to be included and counted as strong enough as a reflective writer. This is simply another challenge to be focused on until I get it right, or at least within my comfort zone...my ability to persist until I get a concept is a part of who I am; by acknowledging that I am a constructivist and knowing where I am I can accept new challenges; by being able to focus my reconstruction and say what I mean allows me to be in the company of those I admire.

The petals are opening, new awareness blooms...the attention to new details awaits discovery.

As I continue my development as an educator, the blinds on my Johari Window (Wood et al., 1998) appear to be going up and down as new understandings arrive. New awareness, new skills, the sloughing off of old perspectives abound. I am able to see changes coming about, with me pecking into the shifting of the blinds. In this particular segment of my journey-story, the changes have come about by choice. Laurel Richardson (2000) states that: “..., writing is a process of discovery” (p. 523). The
University of California, Berkeley

The UC Berkeley campus is a unique and vibrant environment for learning and discovery. With a diverse and talented student body, world-class faculty, and state-of-the-art facilities, the campus is a hub of intellectual activity and innovation. The campus is located in the heart of the city of Berkeley, which offers a rich cultural and intellectual landscape for students and faculty alike. The campus is known for its commitment to excellence in teaching and research, as well as its dedication to social responsibility and global engagement. The campus is home to many world-renowned researchers and scholars, who contribute to a wide range of fields, including science, engineering, humanities, and social sciences. The campus also offers a variety of extracurricular activities, including sports, music, theater, and community service, which provide students with opportunities to develop their skills and interests outside of the classroom.

The UC Berkeley campus is committed to providing a safe and inclusive environment for all students, faculty, and staff. The campus is equipped with modern and well-maintained facilities, including academic buildings, dormitories, dining halls, and recreational areas. The campus also offers a range of services and resources to support the needs of its community, including counseling, health services, and career development.

The UC Berkeley campus is an inspiring and exciting place to learn and grow. With its rich history, diverse community, and innovative spirit, the campus continues to be a leader in education and research, and a beacon of excellence in the world of higher education.
reflection that I have incurred through the writing of this thesis has allowed me to
discover living legacies of which I was not aware. I began each section with one purpose
at the forefront of my thinking, only to find myself meandering onto unknown paths of
discovery. Through examining my own living legacy gifts, I believe that I am stronger
than I realized and that perhaps that strength is being exuded through my teaching. Even
my ability to articulate my choices, and my reasoning around those choices is something
that I would never have imagined myself doing even a couple of years ago. Has all that
has happened to me culminated in creating this moment or, just like fluttering wings, am
I resting for a moment in time before moving onto another leg of my life’s journey? As I
end my thesis, I find that I am confronted with the original questions which I began this
self-study. What are my living legacy gifts and how did they impact the educator that I
am today? How does the process of reflection impact the educator within? Perhaps this
naming is an awareness that will continue beyond my thesis, or perhaps will eventually
find its comfort zone in acceptance as is, without the yearning to have further insight.

What I find fascinating though is the impact that this particular writing experience
is having on my perspective as an educator. When I first began to reflect on my living
legacies it was with the intention of understanding a process that I feel all educators
should experience, that it is healthy and beneficial to understand how and why we chose
to be educators. I often put myself through a process before expecting my students to go
through one, as I find it helps me to support them from an internal perspective. I believe
in doing what I recommend. I want to model support and empathy for students
experiencing the introspection I demand of them. But this particular focus has ‘allowed’
me to grow profoundly myself as a person and educator, while learning at the same time
what metamorphosis might occur for my students. I see that it is not just the bringing of awareness to consciousness that this process allows, but also the embracing of the new knowledge, too. Cole and Knowles (2001) write: "When writing is inquiry and inquiry is writing we write for meaning rather than to record meaning" (p. 213). For me, what began with the collection of raw data – my stories – has transformed into meaning and growth beyond any of my expectations.

**Impact on the Educator**

I find my interactions with my students evolving as I reflect on my living legacy gifts. I can feel myself adapting and remolding myself. I am becoming even more passionate about my topics, and feel a stronger connection to my self as educator.

... reality is not merely "out there," apart from us – and this includes the realities of educational institutions. Reality is "in here" as well, and therefore between us; ... So the transformations of teaching must begin in the transformed heart of the teacher. (Palmer, 1993, p. 107)

I found myself realizing why I have been enjoying my workshops so much more in recent months: it is as though these workshops are a venue for me to get together with a group of friends (both old and new) to explore new concepts together. This acknowledgement is something of a relief to state ‘out-loud’, ultimately something I am quite proud to share. I enjoy being an educator, I am good at it, and I intend on continuing to be a strong, valuable educator while still growing and developing more of my talents.
Moving Into Myself Through the World of Theory

I have found a number of theorists have had a strong influence on the direction that I took with this thesis. Belenky et al. (1997) helped to narrow my focus on myself as a constructed knower. The actual acknowledgement of the process of stages in female moral development has been profoundly enlightening to me. Having had these stages of development clearly laid out, I find myself going back to re-read the related text on a regular basis to solidify my position as a constructed knower.

Adding the work of Estés (1995) to this awareness of self, I am able to place myself, the storyteller, firmly within the constructed knower stage. I find myself drawn to specific stories and interpretations that support my understanding based on strength of voice and awareness of self.

Estés’ (1995) work has also influenced my own style of story writing. The manner in which she presents a story, then helps to deconstruct the pieces in order to reconstruct the meaning calls to me and helps me to focus my own way of presenting both my stories and my lessons to my students. When presenting oral stories to children I do not see the need to point out the lessons, as I feel that children learn through doing and they have not yet built up the barriers to learning new ideas and concepts the way adults have. However, the adults that I teach often need some ‘connectors’ to the lessons within the storytelling...and it is through a means of deconstruction and reconstruction that I find the largest percentage of positive feedback from the students. They seem to go away with a renewed passion and a strong desire to incorporate their newfound learning into their own lesson plans. I am realistic enough to know that passion wanes, but if adults are able to utilize even one point from a workshop – even the awareness of community -
then I feel that they have 'won' the battle of burnout or lack of enthusiasm for one more day.

Another theorist that had a profound impact on me during this process is Parker J. Palmer (1993). While a Christian theologian, his work is often recommended to any number of educators of any kind of religious faith. I feel that his work can be interpreted by any view, and I found myself immediately drawn into his understanding of the educator's role within the concept of community. Even that particular concept -- that we are part of a community, that we teach more than just those in front of us, with a singular purpose or objective -- is an example of a model that takes my breath away, even now, when reflecting on his book To Know as we are Known (1993). His theories make me stop and want to reflect, not only on what I am teaching but how I am teaching, and the ripples of impact beyond the particular lesson. I was able to look back on the living legacy gifts that helped to form the educator that I am while utilizing Palmer's work as a grounding force, but also acknowledging that his work is now part of that chain of living legacy gifts and impacts on the educator that I am and will be in the future.

It is also important that I acknowledge the enormous influence that Clandinin and Connelly (1994, 1995, 2000) have had on my work. These two theorists are the epitome of Narrative Inquiry, and as such, their concepts are always at the forefront of my thinking when writing a story and then reflecting on the lessons embedded there. I reminded myself to look to the future based on the past, in order to understand the impact of internal influences on external changes. I used quite a few of their books and articles in my research, and in each piece I was able to find connections to new understanding and begin to develop new ways of being.
I cannot end without mentioning the influence of Schwandt (1994), whose writing has been important in helping me to come to the epiphany that I am a constructivist. I naively thought that all followers of Dewey’s philosophy would think the same way, and only after reading *Constructivist, Interpretivist Approaches to Human Inquiry* (1994), was I confronted with my own ability to distinguish between these two positions.

Ultimately, though, I realize that I need to include myself within the influential writers and theorists of this transformation that I now own. The stories included are my stories, written by me, for me. I know I have gifted the educator that I am with living legacies and have influenced the paths that I will take through this work. As I mention earlier, I believe that I am a culmination of the generations before me…but I am unique and in charge of deciding my own journey’s choices. Without this new awareness of strength, voice, choices, and abilities, I would not be able to create change within the educator that I am. Without that particular set of skills, I do not feel that I would be the educator that I am, the one who believes in understanding the lessons I teach intimately and empathetically. I am now able to take my new wakefulness about these skills a step further and name myself a theorist. I have been able to name my paths of discovery, and explain their relationship to new perceptions of being an educator.

...in postmodernist mixed-genre texts, we do not triangulate; *we crystallize*. We recognize that there are far more than “three sides’ from which to approach the world. ...Crystals grow, change, alter, but are not amorphous. ...; and crystallization provides us with a deepened, complex, thoroughly partial,
understanding of the topic. Paradoxically, we know more and doubt what we know. (Richardson, 2000, p. 929)

In bridging my understanding of self with my awareness of my living legacy gifts, I am able to infuse this new learning into my teaching. I found that my thesis work has found subtle ways to impact upon my lessons, but also more observable ways, too. The following story is an example of how I am able to take theory and put it into a more palatable lesson plan that my students can then relate to on an individual basis.

Land of the Wind

A long time ago, in a far away place, there was a land that had no wind. There wasn't anything to cool us off on a hot summer's day, or to help the leaves come off the trees in the fall.

Now, the elders had heard of another land, not too far away, that did have wind. The elders decided to send someone to bring back some wind. So they called for the bear, prowling around, to go and bring some back.

The bear, proud and strong, agreed and set out on his journey. He went over the mountains and through the lakes. But soon he grew weary. And, despite being too far north of the land of the wind, he stopped to rest and sent back word that he could go no further.

The elders met again and decided to ask the panther to try next. So off went the panther... over the mountains, and through the lakes, past the bear in the north. But soon the panther found herself too far to the west and could go no further. And just as the bear did, she sent word back that she was too far and would go no further.
Now the elders were getting worried. Who would they get to try next? They had already lost two of their best animals but decided to try one more time and send the moose. So off the moose went. He went...over the mountains, through the lakes, past the bear in the north, met up with the ...panther in the west, and knew he had to go in the opposite direction. But...he went too far and ended up way in the east. And like the others, he was too tired to continue.

When word came back that the moose had also found the trip too difficult, the elders decided that perhaps they shouldn't expect to get some wind for their land. They held a special council meeting and a young fawn approached them. “Please, may I try?” the deer asked softly. “You are much too young, spending all of your time wandering. You will only need to find your way back to your mother, and will surely get lost.” But the young deer pleaded, as young children will: “Pleeeeeease!?!?!?!?!?!?” And as is typical when adults are faced with this kind of request, they responded with a quick: “Fine, fine.” – not thinking that she would actually try. But before they could change their minds, the fawn quickly set off toward the land of the wind.

So off she went...over the mountains, through the lakes, stopping with the bear in the north for a rest. Continuing on and finding herself too much to the west, she stopped for something to eat with the panther. But then she went too far to the east, so the young fawn had another rest with the moose. But then the young deer knew to go to somewhere in the middle, between the panther and the moose, and found the road that led her right to the land of the wind.

And as is typical in most magical places there were two taalll guards standing outside. They looked down at the young fawn and one said, “Haw, she is just a young
deer, probably lost and will just go looking for her mother. Let's ignore her." And the other guard replied: "Yeah!" And so they did (whistling while looking all around).

So the fawn quickly wandered past the guards and went right up to the wind. It was so beautiful to see, dancing all around with the leaves. The young deer came even closer and took a deep breath (do). Then she realized that she missed her mommy and daddy, so she turned around and wandered back out the way she came, slipping past the guards.

She eventually met up with the moose in the ... east, and realized she had too much of the wind in her cheeks to carry and gave some to the moose (blow). Together they continued on, finding themselves too far west, with the panther. But the deer still had too much to carry and asked the panther to help (blow). But now they knew where the middle of the road home was and continued on. They came upon the bear, and being the generous animal that deer usually are, the fawn shared some of her burden with the bear (blow). Then the four of them started to head home, with the fawn leading the way back to her mother. But first they had to go ...through the lake, and over the mountain.

When they arrived home, everyone was so surprised to see them, but also quite pleased. But before the four of them could kiss their mothers hello, they puffed up their cheeks and gave us this gift (puff up cheeks and then blow bubbles).

Based on Iroquois mythology: Ga-oh, the wind giant's home is protected by four animals: the bear prowling is in charge of the north wind; the panther whining brings the westerly wind; the moose's breathing brings the wet east wind; and the fawn, when returning to its mother brings the gentle south wind.
Storyteller's Message: I have told this story many times, each time adapting to the audience, the season, the daily events, but overall I have found my rhythm, my personal pattern of telling this story. This is the story in its latest format. After I finish, I point out to the adults how they have already begun to take the story as their own – I have them tell me the animal/direction throughout the story – through recall forward and backward. I know it will be easier for them to remember the story I created because they were involved – just like children being engaged in learning through play! I also point out that all stories have a predictable beginning, a predictable ending and pivot points in-between and these are the areas I focused on for them to repeat back to me. Then I point out that they all began to engage their children once I blew the bubbles: that talking and having fun with your children doesn’t take expensive toys but simple ideas and time together. I have also taught the children a new word simply by interchanging deer and fawn (versus formally defining it); introduced the four directions of east/west/south/north; and finally by creating my own story I have taught them some Native/Iroquois mythology (and explain briefly).

Since this is intended to be an oral story, it will adapt with the storyteller’s mood and experience. Be sure to make it yours. Make it fit the times you are living, as this story is a living, breathing representation of life as you know it. Oral stories are to be shared but Make it your own, and remember to Enjoy!

**Connecting Living Legacy Awareness to the Theorist that I Have Become**

Pagano (1991) states: “To act is to theorize” (p. 194). For me, this means that in creating action through practice, we model the praxis that we believe to be foundational to our lives and teaching. Through the writing of this thesis, I have changed the way I
facilitate learning for others, but it was not until I reflected on those changes that I was aware that they had even occurred. Furthermore, without knowing what experiences lie ahead, I cannot predict the impact on who I am unless I continue to contemplate and learn from my reflections on the past. I acknowledge that in narrative research there are often more questions than answers, but I know I cannot initiate change in practice unless I imagine it first. Perhaps then, as my own theorist, I can change Pagano’s (1991) words and make them my own: to imagine different action can lead to change in action, which in turn can support a re-theorizing of daily life and practice. I feel that it is through the process of looking at my living legacy gifts that I have been able to decide what changes I now need to focus on – further education and the awareness that it is time for me to find a new position within the field of education. But in the interim, all of this should be accompanied by making a purposeful change in the way that I create and implement my lessons.

At the end of this thesis I can confidently say that I have defined what living legacy is for me and have been able to name a few of the most prominent gifts passed down through my teachers. I have also engaged in discourse, in terms of relevant theory – based on narrative inquiry, constructivism, education, spiritual connections, and gender theory. Ultimately, I have found the value of critical reflection to be instrumental for me in becoming a stronger educator.
Epilogue

I end with a poem that I wrote in my first course at Brock University. At the time, I experienced an awakening as I produced something so relevant, not only to my state of mind then, but also to my budding awareness of self. Today, as I reflect upon this work, I see that it is still relevant to the educator and theorist that emerges from the cocoon of growth. The process that writing this thesis has afforded me provides new insight into the swirling changes occurring around me as well as the music that accompanies me on my journeys. I am still grounded in many of the same things as four years ago, but I find my background knowledge has grown and my purpose is more focused.

Me as a Metaphor

I

am a

swirling mass of

changing energy, dancing to

the orchestra of life that is

crescendo-ing around me. The

violin is sweet as it leads my

movements, the cello and oboe

creating a blanket around me. See

my guardian angel as the conductor,
nurturing the remolding of my being,

overseeing my very own concerto production.

I am creating movement from within myself,
within my soul. Not just ... not professionally, but
the whole being that I am. My entity. Always able to
set and work on short term goals. This one appears
much larger ... a combination of professional development,
self discovery and a soul renewal.

Being cognizant, as much as possible, making that conscious effort of, being
cognizant of what is grounding me ... my priorities = my worth, my partner, my
children, my family, my friends, my faith, my strength in being.

I may use plastecine or playdough as a professional tool, but
personally I am just as pliable, dancing in bursts of energy.

This swirling to the sounds being emanated by the orchestra of
my life is stretching me in ways I had only dreamed of, imagined
doing. I feel that there are subtle changes and dramatic changes,
each one creating even more changes within the vortex. A
growing sense of self worth, confidence, acceptance,
adaptability ... am I even aware of all of the possibilities?

I am in a flux of losing myself in the process, then finding
new parts, much like a tornado that has picked up the parts
of a life's existence and dropping them one by one in
unknown territory. And yet, I stay recognizable, all at the same time.

Drawing upon the excitement of rejuvenation, I am out in the open air,
held in suspension by change and metamorphosis. I am beginning to recognize and embrace these bursts of change as the music climbs to its many crescendos. At moments of inspiration I request specific music to play for me. I listen to Barbara Streisand’s CD: “Higher Ground.”

Each piece, in both words and sounds, holds a key to the questions in my thoughts, an insight into possible rationalizations. In Circle, “... we are all connected and part of a universal plan...”; Lessons To Be Learned, “... why do right roads lead to wrong turns... there are no mistakes, only lessons to be learned.”; and Everything Must Change, “... and music, and music, and music makes me cry.” My spiritual conductor is now taking its lead from my energies, requesting more from the string section and less from the percussion instruments. In the years just prior to this particular section of my concerto, I was so caught up in doing, doing, doing, that I felt as though the “me” was getting lost in the swirling mass of my existence. My spiritual consciousness is reawakening. Tenderly and tentatively reaching out from the vortex to touch the music, the enjoyment of sound, of exploring, of accepting of things I cannot change. No longer resisting the buoyancy that is holding me up, no longer questioning the validity of my existence within the orchestra. Even the ability to allow myself the sweet pleasure, of giving myself permission to feel, truly feel, the tears flowing down my cheeks, is becoming significant to me. I find a connection to my students when I read the passage about sensitive caregiving and feeding applesauce, allowing the child to truly enjoy the whole sensation of tasting, dripping, swallowing. I seek
out positive energies, creating them, trying to create them, when I do not find them naturally. I have more ground to cover, more movements to write ... more cliffs to jump off. I still hold onto that part of my learning about Native culture. We are constantly jumping off of cliffs, some small, some larger. We always have someone to hold onto when we jump. Some of those that we are connected to are still there as we climb to the next cliff, some aren’t, some new connections are there, sometimes we are the new connections. I am still trying to discover if I am in the midst of jumping or climbing ... perhaps it doesn’t matter. I am flying in a swirl of energy, swaying to the music of my life.

(Winick, 2001)
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