‘Love in Action’: The Transformative Role of Emotion in Writing and Learning Contexts

By

Anna Floch Arcello

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The dissertation is approved by the following members of the Final Oral Committee:

Morris Young, Professor, English
Christa Olson, Associate Professor, English
Kate Vieira, Associate Professor, English
Mary Louise Gomez, Professor, Curriculum and Instruction
Paula Mathieu, Professor, English, Boston College

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the transformative role that emotion plays in learning to write, communicate, and become educated. The basis for this project is derived from nine in-depth life history interviews with diverse students, woven into theories of emotion, writing studies, literacy, rhetorical theory, cultural studies and philosophy, to explore what the presence of emotion does to shape an individual's connection to literacy, writing and educational identity (Nussbaum; Ahmed; Micciche; Brown; Wetherell). By weaving together life history narratives with interdisciplinary theories of emotion, this project challenges the proposition that emotion stands in contrast to reason, and instead encourages a reformulation of emotion's possibility in knowledge making, identity, and writing. These narratives reveal that emotion in our students' journeys through school (and literacy), are not weak byproducts of their memories or lives, but are an intertwined core to how they see, feel, and experience the world.

Chapter 1 introduces the dissertation argument, setting up the methodology, study design, and current cultural, social and political conversations occurring around emotion. Chapter 2 examines how emotion facilitates an individual's connection to the sponsors of their literacy (Brandt, *Literacy*). Chapter 3 reflects on how race and marginalization impacts student vulnerability and a sense of belonging in school, examining the role 'emotional labor' plays in personal advocacy (Hochschild). Chapter 4 elaborates on the relationship between personal conflict, identity, and emotion. And Chapter 5 concludes the dissertation drawing upon a pedagogical and humanistic lens to frame how teachers, students, and researchers can productively understand emotion in our work moving forward.

Ultimately, this project argues that emotion is integral to understanding how individuals connect to sponsors of literacy, to being educated, and to being made vulnerable in the process of

becoming writers. By engaging in this work I argue for a reorientation of emotion in the field, moving our understanding of emotion from theory to embodied practice – calling upon teachers and students alike to reframe the role of emotion in making meaning and writing, and asking us to rethink what it means to *feel* one's way through a writing class or through the process of becoming literate and educated

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This dissertation is a deeply personal work and this note of thanks reflects that – my work would not have been possible without an incredible village of people that has supported me from day one of my educational journey. My most profound debt of gratitude goes to the students in this project who willingly shared their lives and stories with me so that I could learn from them. Each one of the people profiled in this dissertation selflessly offered their time and energy to me, sometimes sitting down for multiple 3-4 hour-long interview sessions. They made themselves vulnerable to me, sharing with me their humor, laughter, struggles, and tears as they reflected on the journey of their lives and education and writing. I think back on that time of data collection fondly, as I crisscrossed the university, flew across the country, sat with students in quiet rooms in libraries, during busy times in their own lives and listened, shared, and absorbed. I will forever be indebted to these students for helping make me a better researcher and person, and I hope in some small way this work is a reflection of the respect and admiration I have for them. It was always with my participants in mind that I worked to finish this project and it is my sincere hope that they would be proud of the stories and conclusions that I have crafted here.

I also owe a special debt of gratitude to the students and teachers that I worked with in New York City (including John Scott and other teachers) while I completed my masters. The small group of funny, talented, bright, caring students (who nicknamed themselves the "Famous Nameless") that we worked with in our after school program are in a way wholly responsible for my pursuit of this PhD. It was connecting with them, and wanting to know more about the contexts and experiences of students like them that motivated me to pursue a degree in Composition and Rhetoric. I was lucky enough to revisit with one of them, Brian, for this project, and I owe him an additional debt of gratitude for taking the time to share his process as a

writer with me – I know he will go on to do incredible things in film making and I care very much about his voice and vision as an artist. I care about each of these students deeply, and they hold a special place in my heart. My students back in New York, and all students that I taught at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, have been my biggest teachers, my biggest motivation, and my biggest source of inspiration.

The Composition and Rhetoric faculty at the University of Wisconsin-Madison have offered me indispensible support and encouragement during the course of this project and in my education as a whole. I have taken much from each one of these faculty members including Michael Bernard-Donals, Kate Vieira, Christa Olson, Jim Brown, Brad Hughes, and Mary Fiorenza. Each one of these individuals is responsible for pushing my scholarship and my teaching to new directions and locations, they have mentored and supported me without ego and with complete dedication to my own goals and pursuits, always respecting the individual journey I was on as a student. Thank you to Kate Vieira and Christa Olson for sitting on my dissertation committee and to reading drafts and encouraging me in my pursuits to complete this project, your intelligence and care in relation to this project has been immensely helpful. Additional thanks goes to Mary Louise Gomez (who taught me almost everything I know about life history interviews) and to Paula Mathieu (for your generous comments and emotional support) for taking part on my committee and offering their insight and enthusiasm to this project. Each one of the faculty members in the Composition and Rhetoric department are wonderful teachers and readers, and most centrally they are fantastic human beings that I feel thankful to have worked with. I also want to note I would not be here without the encouragement of Glynda Hull, my mentor at NYU, who introduced me to the field of Composition and Rhetoric, and was the first person that encouraged me I was worthy and smart enough to pursue a PhD.

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and I began this program together, we met before either of us decided to attend UW, and without her I would not have completed this program or this project. Annika has always been my favorite and best reader, she has generously given her time to read draft after draft of this work – we took almost every class together, passed prelims on the same day, laughed and cried over cheese curds and beers and chocolate peanut butter ice cream from the union. We have seen each other grow up, and encouraged each other in our pursuits in life, and she is one of the most fantastic friends a person could have. I cannot wait to see all of the fires she is going to light in this field and in this world with her fierce intellectualism and caring heart. Thank you my dear friend for always being there and for encouraging me through those inevitably dark times. I also want to write a note of thanks to the other admirable and fierce mothers from this program that have come before me, that paved the way and made it seem possible to finish a dissertation and be a mom, thank you for providing a model of what it means to be a scholar, a teacher, and a mother. It begs noting that this dissertation was completed in the "in-between" of my own life as I worked to raise our son. It was completed in two hour stretches of babysitting where I could sneak away to a coffee shop, as my child was watched by family members and friends, on full days of daycare as he grew with the wonderful staff at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Learning Center. I am thankful for this network of support and I hope to encourage other student mothers and fathers that this too is possible.

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Chapter 1: Introduction:

Reimagining the Possibilities of Emotion and 'Love in Action'

"Ms. Tippet: And I keep wanting — I want to push you a little bit because the word 'love,' as you said, it's romantic. Love, as you are talking about it, as you have aspired to live it, is not a way you feel. It's a way of being, right?

Mr. Lewis: It's a way of being, yes. It's a way of action. It's not necessarily passive. It has the capacity, it has the ability to bring peace out of conflict. It has the capacity to stir up things in order to make things right. When we were sitting in, it was love in action…. When we went on the freedom ride, it was love in action. The march from Selma to Montgomery was love in action. We do it not simply because it's the right thing to do, but it's love in action. That we love a country, we love a democratic society, and so we have to move our feet."

-Conversation between Krista Tippet and Representative John Lewis

"When education is the practice of freedom, students are not the only ones who are asked to share, to confess. Engaged pedagogy does not seek simply to empower students. Any classroom that employs a holistic model of learning will also be a place where teachers grow, and are empowered by the process. That empowerment cannot happen if we refuse to be vulnerable while encouraging students to take risks…most professors must practice being vulnerable in the classroom, being wholly present in mind, body, and spirit" (21).

-bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*

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Personal Exigency: Social, Cultural, and Political Relationships to Emotion

A number of very emotional and life altering events occurred during the course of completing this project. These events occurred while I was interviewing, coding, writing, rewriting, revising, and writing some more, about why emotion matters to our students, to writers, to the lives within the academy. I became pregnant and had a miscarriage setting off a chain of complex health issues that persisted for months. I became pregnant again and had a son in January 2016. I took a long break from the project for six months as I worked to raise a very, very discontented and crabby child. My mother was diagnosed with breast cancer in the fall of 2016. I became pregnant once more with my second child, due in July 2017. And Donald Trump was elected president. Most of these lines are ones that I never imagined writing, yet here we are.

And I write them because they matter, and they matter because they are circulating in the background of this work, because each of these events in their own way informs the thoughts, lines, sensitivity and importance of my journey as a writer, researcher, and teacher. I write these moments because stories matter, and because I have always known that emotions matter in our composing process, in our classrooms, but I found out how they mattered in new ways as I wrote and grappled with my own experiences alongside of the students profiled in this dissertation.

Each journey to arrive here has been an object lesson in patience, reflection, and putting one foot in front of the other, in discovering how our research often becomes us and we often become our research in the process of embarking on these journeys. In essence I began to connect to a new experience with emotion, to discover what the feminist slogan "the personal is political" really meant, to understand that, "the emphasis on women's experiences, including her feelings, as political and not merely personal" is a key part of my work as a scholar, and that I indeed connect fully to this lineage of feminist thinking and thought (Boler 113). And yet, this dissertation is not really about me. It is about, as Boler alludes to in the epigraph above, reimagining the personal, social and cultural forces surrounding our students that drive their personal development, their writing, their sense of identity, and intellectual growth. It is instead about what happens when we sift through the noise, to the quiet, to the interior lives of the students we teach and the people we research. In the field of Composition and Rhetoric we have long been aware that emotion informs our writing in personal contexts – we see it in writing a letter to a loved one and sending it across great distances, crafting a poem, writing down the milestones in a child's life, composing memories of our youth – but in this dissertation I focus on how emotion matters in the writing our students do in our classrooms, in school, in their intellectual development more broadly. And yes the personal is a part of that, but there is

something more, something deeper that comes out when we pay attention to the complex relationship between emotion and writing and learning, about what it means to feel within a space that has taught us again and again to rely only on critical thinking and logical reasoning. This work explores a critical question about what role emotion plays in the lives of students, in our lives as researches and teachers, and examines what we do with this awareness once we have it. If education is an opening up, a radical transformation in the service of change and freedom, how do we reconcile the vulnerability implicit in that process? I have always wanted this project to be about the lives of others, about what happens when we reside in the emotion of narrative, yet somehow we find ourselves becoming intertwined with our work and research in new and textured ways that we cannot always predict and expect.

The personal most definitely became the political in new ways for many educators over the course of the last few months, as we consider what role our emotional anger, pain, fear, and rage plays in our classrooms within this current political and cultural moment. The election of Donald Trump has (for me) brought about the significance of emotion, of feeling as it leads to action, to the forefront of my thinking in new ways and so I felt it necessary to begin the dissertation within this very present political and social reality. It has reminded me once again about what is at stake in this new political and cultural moment. I have always imagined emotion to be a kind of bridge to difference, to antipathy, to ethical response, and yet I believe we saw the limits of what emotion and empathy can do in the face of narcissism and cynicism in this election cycle and in the aftermath. This current political and social moment shapes us intimately, shapes our responses as educators, citizens, and researchers. And it should have that effect. As social justice activist and intellectual Shaun King shared at a recent talk I attended at Marquette University in February of 2017, it is “hard to know a moment of history when you are

in it" and yet we all have a sense we are living in a moment of shifting. We no longer need to wonder how we would have responded during the most troubling moments in human history because we have a moment, the possibility of action right now, and yes a part of that requires emotional attunement, 'radical love,' vulnerability, reflection and philosophical grappling with troublesome ideas and viewpoints (King).

The events in the days and weeks that followed Trump's win were the nexus of the personal and political for me. For days after the election, I cried every time I put my child to sleep and I cried every time that I sat down to write. I cried for the people you will read about here, for their lives and families, for their vulnerabilities and struggles, because I know, as this dissertation hopes to make clear, just how very vulnerable our students and writers and research subjects can feel. And these concerns and fears of powerful institutions bearing down on our students are not especially new feelings for those most vulnerable among us – in the process of engaging in this writing, we learned of highly publicized cases of police brutality against young black men and women; we saw increases in sexual assault on public campuses and universities; we experienced the rise of hate crimes against people of color and immigrants ("Hate in America"). Yet, Trump's election brought out the fear in a more acute, painful, pronounced, triumphant manner. It might be awkward or uncomfortable to read these lines, the personal, the confessional, and though this is not really the tone of the chapters that come, I needed to write them here. I needed to write them because they need to be said in this space, in this context, at this time. Even at the risk of being the stereotypical academic naval gazer, or the emotional female academic (more on that to come). Part of our job is to remain attuned to the emotional layers of our lives in the contexts of the research we conduct and students that we teach, to humanize our work and the lives of students so that we can better understand what is at stake.

More than ever it is essential that we stay attuned to what it feels to be a vulnerable body, a vulnerable subject and these questions will be ringing out in our field, in the academic community, and in our classrooms for the next four years and I believe, many, many years to come. There is so much at stake for our students, our research subjects, for us as committed teachers and intellectuals and activists. This moment has put in stark relief the essential nature of emotion, the grounding, unifying, the democratizing effects of emotion (even if there are some emotions that we still cannot pay attention to, or some emotions that we like to ignore) we all feel it, even if we struggle to know what to do with this emotion. In the days and weeks that followed the election, as I gathered myself, turned toward my research with a renewed sense of purpose, as I worked to understand my own personal responsibility as a citizen activist, to take part and organize events in my community, as I marched on Washington with the women in my family to protest our own vulnerability and the vulnerability of so many others in our communities, I began to understand and relate to emotion and its purpose in a new way. I hope this dissertation and the narratives contained within it help readers to see this shift in their own lives and journeys. I began to understand both the possibility and the limitations of what emotional attunement, connection, and inspiration can do for us. I began to reconsider what is now at stake for our students from new angles.

And we can often not talk about the emotional without acknowledging the personal for researchers, and for our students. As Gesa Kirsch and Joy Ritchie acknowledge in their feminist theory of location in composition, this attunement to emotion requires "the learning about self to be as reciprocal as possible—with the researcher also gaining knowledge about her own life or at least reexamining her cultural and gender biases" (15). This process is as emotional as it is reflective, as personal as it is public and social. There are many current conversations about the

role personal identity, and personal investigation should play in school and in politics, too many to account for here. As I mention above, this dissertation was largely written in the (as I see it now) pre-Trump universe, that is I think a lot of the conversations, debates, and arguments about education, the work of liberalism, identity politics, emotions of hate and horror brought on by his election, have reframed my purpose and the possibility of this work. The arguments explored here take on a new importance, a new tone and tenor in the political age we find ourselves living in. I find it essential to start here because my work follows a long history in literacy and education of examining the personal and the intimate in the identities of diverse learners and individuals. We cannot ignore that this social moment has asked us to reprioritize our understanding of the individual, of identity.

One of the most popular debates that circulated after Hillary Clinton's loss, had to do with the need to end our 'obsession' in academia and amongst liberals with identity politics. This of course is not a new argument, but has long been a criticism of the white western canon and narrow often empty or stalled promises to embrace multiculturalism and diversity (Ladson-Billings and Tate 62). This post-election argument centers around the idea that a focus on identity splits society, doing the direct opposite of its intended purpose, that instead of bringing us together toward a sense of common connection, it splinters us and alienates us. As one common critique put it in the days following the election, educated liberals have "slipped into a kind of moral panic about racial, gender and sexual identity that has distorted liberalism's message and prevented it from becoming a unifying force capable of governing" (Lilla 1). I disagree with Lilla's sweeping rhetoric as being especially dismissive of the important work that anti-racist and anti-sexist movements have made in shifting the debate around identity as significant in school, but we must pay attention to his language because it suggests how identity

politics often becomes stereotyped and marginalized, and how we might ultimately have a messaging problem around its possibilities and significance in our work. This argument, coming from Mark Lilla, a humanities professor from Columbia and published in *The New York Times* continued:

> But the fixation on diversity in our schools and in the press has produced a generation of liberals and progressives narcissistically unaware of conditions outside their self-defined groups, and indifferent to the task of reaching out to Americans in every walk of life. At a very young age our children are being encouraged to talk about their individual identities, even before they have them. By the time they reach college many assume that diversity discourse exhausts political discourse, and have shockingly little to say about such perennial questions as class, war, the economy and the common good (2).

In the midst of this critique is the assumption that simply calling for diversity is not enough (which I agree with) that we must reframe how we discuss identity within the space of school to more effectively address the needs of student learners. Scholars before Lilla, such as Katherine Cramer who analyzed the rise of Scott Walker and inequality in the state of Wisconsin have focused on similar divisions of elitism in our political culture, namely the urban/rural split of voters with different attachments to issues of class, economics and race. There is ultimately a disconnect in the personal identity, the reality of the other person on the other side of the divide, but that does not mean we need to abandon it fully. I presume that many of the people who made those arguments and critiques in the days following the election would take umbrage (to put it politely) with the focus of this dissertation, and would criticize my call to understand the emotionally situated experiences of our students, but ultimately I am not only writing for them, instead I am asking us all to reframe what it means to see and feel identity as a means not to divide us but to understand the true texture of experience. The question becomes, how can we attune ourselves to identity and vulnerability without further marginalizing students of all backgrounds?

We do of course enter treacherous water when we wade into discussions of identity in an ad-hoc manner. In the process of engaging in identity work we risk leaving people out and watering down our calls for diversity with very little actionable solutions, but staying away from discussions of identity completely does not make it go away. Ignoring this discussion erases the long history of critiquing dominant power structures and the status quo in education to more deeply understand who is and is not included in the process of schooling (Ladson-Billings and Tate). In fact I believe it is not enough to simply ask hard questions and tacitly accept diverse identities in our schools, but rather to listen and hear those from all backgrounds, to do the very thing that Lilla asks for, to unite as citizens. I see this as connected to Krista Ratcliffe's definition of 'rhetorical listening' when she suggests that we not only seek common ground and commonality within our cross-cultural conversations but rather that we locate the sticky parts in our conversations, that we reside where we both agree and disagree. She writes, "when practicing rhetorical listening, we are invited to consciously locate our identifications in places of commonalities *and* differences" and in doing so we move beyond only embracing the places where we 'identify' and agree (32). In order to engage in this work however we must come with a stance of emotional awareness and empathy, this I believe improves our ability to listen and hear effectively. Indeed a part of engaging in this process as citizens is better understanding how our shared struggles and oppression intersect with one another, to consider how embracing emotion might bring us closer together. It is an essential goal of education and truth seeking to reflect on solutions for equitability without subjugating others along the way (Davis; Collins; Micciche, "Staying with Emotion"). But first we must have an antidote or some alternative path forward in successfully navigating these discussions. And I believe one antidote to some of what Lilla critiques can be found here in my research, through empathy and emotion, something he

might be wise to embrace. Education has always been about cracking open the ego, about shaking the ground upon which we stand, and yet to achieve that our students need to feel strong, supported, emotionally understood, and not wholly disconnected and vulnerable (Nussbaum, *Cultivating Humanity)*.

In many of our current political and social machinations, empathy and emotion is viewed as a kind of antidote to the political divide, to narcissism, to the echo chambers we live in – it is seen as the way to reach across the divide. Now more than ever it seems, we need to understand what it means to be emotional, how to conjure empathy and emotion, how to use these tools to build bridges. The problem becomes, taking a kind of retrofit approach to emotion without understanding how it operates. That we all of a sudden find ourselves on this precipice, does not suggest emotion was not there all along, but perhaps that we marginalized it, or at the very least did not understand its usefulness in negotiating our worlds, our identity, our connections to others. For example in *Strangers in Their Own Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right* Arlie Russell Hochschild tells the story of conservative Tea Party voters from rural Louisiana. Throughout her book Hochschild attempts to bridge what she terms an "empathy wall" between the political sides, exploring story and narrative as a means to help readers engage in this work. This is significant for a number of reasons. First it suggests the power and significance of story telling and narrative to ground experience and help that bridge span difference, this work becomes especially important when we talk about emotion. Secondly, it suggests empathy as both a problem and solution to the political divide and to our sense of isolation. Hochschild explains:

> An empathy wall is an obstacle to deep understanding of another person, on that can make us feel indifferent or even hostile to those who hold different beliefs or whose childhood is rooted in different circumstances. In a period of political tumult, we grasp for quick certainties. We shoehorn new information into ways we already think. We settle

> for knowing our opposite numbers from the outside. But is it possible, without changing our beliefs, to know others from the inside, to see reality through their eyes, to understand the links between life, feeling, and politics; that is, to cross the empathy wall (5)?

Here Hochschild embraces the language of the boundary, of working to cross over to the other side of where you live, to understand the inhabitants in that space, and finding at times you are successful and at times you fail. Part of what this metaphor suggests is that emotion is key to accessing hearts and minds on the other side of the divide, that it can be a tool for intimacy and connection.

This work of reaching across boundary and distance is akin to the revolutionary and radical 'love in action' discussed by John Lewis in the epigraph to this chapter (and included in the title to this work), one where a connection to emotion leads us to action and understanding, where we reach out and across as a means to better understand, to push forward change, to move toward the possibility of evolution and growth. Embracing this 'love' (both its possibilities and deficits) emerges when we begin to draw emotion into literate contexts, into the experiences of students, in our awareness of language. I believe part of our teaching and our attunement to social intersections of communication and language must embrace this very 'love in action,' in essence we must embrace the 'other' in our emotional reckoning, to use our love and empathy to move toward change and evolution with our students, in our writing and research, in reimaging the possibilities of what argument and critique can do. By sharing the narratives in this dissertation I am not calling for emotion for emotion's sake or for readers to emotionally consume stories of challenge, but rather I call for seeing emotion as a means toward action, connection, and deeper understanding. I have always deeply believed in the power of love to transform us, and I do not mean love in the romantic sense but in the philosophical, to emerge as a form of connection, of personal reflection, of possibility, of reaching out – and this is

especially important for us as educators, as those connected to the written word (Cronon). It is critical to imagine emotion, empathy, and love not as an end in itself, but as the origin point for action (as Lewis suggests) as the mediator and motivator for learning, for speaking, for acting powerfully, for intervening in moments of injustice.

This desire for action and awareness is as important for our students as it is for us as educators. As Ann Cvetkovich clarifies in her own "Public Feelings" project, part of the goal of the turn toward affect and feeling is to "generate the affective foundation of hope that is necessary for political action," to imagine that love and connection is possible to incite change (2). And while I agree, it is not always that easy, and it is not always a project that teachers or students want to take on. There is of course a sense of vulnerability in crossing any boundary, and the students profiled in this dissertation express that sense of the duality of emotion (hooks). This work offers an opening up and freedom, a sense of productivity and a shaping of identity, along with a sense of exposure and defenselessness in moving to uncharted territory as we help students navigate their own complexities. This change is facilitated by critical emotional attunement and reflection as teachers to our students to our contexts, to see how love and emotion both opens us and makes us vulnerable.

I want to conclude this section by drawing this discussion of emotion back into the realm of the classroom and school. I believe if we are being honest with ourselves here within the academy, using emotion draws us to the full spectrum of individuals we serve as teachers, not those in the mainstream, not those on the margins, but all of us. If I am asking that we stay attuned to the students who are marginalized, I am saying that we must take this same stance toward those that hold different political ideologies from us. Through empathy and emotion we begin to understand how all of us live, and that is as true for the students I interview here, as it is

for those who are made vulnerable in other ways, and those on the political right. And being empathetic does not mean being silent, but rather it can be about embracing the rage, anger, and pain we feel on both sides, about seeking to better understand its origins and working to put those feelings into productive, unifying action. Our students feel marginalized in a multiplicity of ways, they grapple with inner conflicts that spill out onto the page, and into the choices they make as researchers and thinkers, whether conscious or not. Students carry their lives and burdens into the classroom. As one student profiled in this dissertation, a young Hmong man who was born here and whose father fought in the Vietnam War on behalf of American fighters stated: "Even though I was born here, people still see me as a foreigner. And since young Hmong American teens are sort of seen as gangster[s] in my town, so a lot of negative connotation was toward Hmong people. I just felt really mad at that time…I felt like they saw us as uncivilized or something, I don't know I just felt like they didn't see us as true Americans or something." And that was before Trump's populist wave of supporters swept him into office. Doesn't this student deserve our empathy and understanding of his experience growing up and not fitting in at school, is it playing identity politics to acknowledge the truth and vulnerability of his anger? When you are made to feel excluded in school should we not consider what impact that has? This underlines just some of the currents within this research, and underscores our deeper need to explore the possibilities of emotion in connection to identity and school.

And because education is ultimately about crossing into new places of understanding, about accessing new parts of our brain and awareness it is essential to keep the work of emotion and empathy in mind within these spaces and to consider how emotion matters to forging connections with students and establishing classroom community. Widely circulated articles on education in popular mainstream outlets like *The New York Times* and *The New Republic* reflect

an ongoing national conversation around the values, promises, and the "return on investment" of a liberal education. In op-eds reflecting on the role of education, David Brooks wonders whether college really does make you a 'real person' (1). This conversation is in response to an article written by William Deresiewicz for *The New Republic*, adapted from his book *Excellent Sheep*, where he encourages students not to attend elite universities, proposing that these colleges really make students dutiful sheep instead of independent thinkers. In making his case for his argument Deresiewicz points to significant research purporting that college students are at an all time low for unhappiness and emotional well being, and that they are lacking in the creative and independent thinking necessary to sustain their advancement in the twenty-first century. In this sense, it appears that something is lacking in the educational experiences that our students are engaging in, that we might be missing something significant in how we are educating and connecting with our students.

One antidote to this sense of unhappiness within educational settings, Deresiewicz concludes, is that students must foster meaningful mentorship with their teachers, underscoring the inherently emotional context that education exists within—he suggests that it is only through forging this sense of connection and relationship building that true learning can take place. He writes, that what students "really want is that their teachers challenge them and that they care about them…Learning is an emotional experience, and mentorship is rooted in the intimacy of intellectual exchange. Something important passes between you, something almost sacred" (177). Similarly, qualitative research around emotion in the field of social work from Brené Brown suggests that vulnerability is the essence of this connection and potential action, that it is essential to how we strive to grow and push ourselves, to the development of knowledge and identity, because as Brown writes, "vulnerability is the core, the heart, the center, of meaningful

human experiences" (12). Part of my project in this dissertation is to understand how these elements (vulnerability and emotion) are inculcated in the process of learning, knowing, and practicing education and writing. That is, I question how a student's past experiences with literacy and communication shape and mold them as writers and thinkers in the long term. What exactly is the role that emotion plays in helping us to write and how do our past experiences with literacy shape our present and future experiences? These might seem like simple questions but I believe that they are profoundly essential for teachers of writing and educators more broadly. If we are to evolve and expand our thinking about how writing and rhetoric functions in the embodied experiences of students, we have to know how people *feel* about these issues and it is my goal to explore this process – simply put we have to know why learning and literacy is emotional in order to understand how to teach and learn more effectively.

Brooks suggests that this shift away from the emotional and moral focus of education, occurred as academic spaces moved to focus more on research and teaching. He proposes the humanities, moralism, and the transcendental power of the arts as possible strategies to reorient the work of education, in addition to inspiring love within students. He writes that, "To lead a full future life, meanwhile, students have to find new things to love: a field of interest, an activity, a spouse, community, philosophy or faith. College is about exposing students to many things and creating an aphrodisiac atmosphere so that they might fall in lifelong love with a few" ("The Big University" 4). This is a lofty and dreamy articulation of education but I have to say I am partial to its ambition, though we cannot talk about morality without thinking about the role emotion and vulnerability plays in this process of becoming educated. This echoes William Cronon's references to 'agape' in school that "Liberal education nurtures human freedom in the service of human community which is to say that in the end it celebrates love," and hooks'

notion of educational freedom, (Cronon 6). Either way, broadly conceived education is an opening up, writing is an opening up, and we need to understand the role emotion can play as a tool of connection, of exposure and vulnerability, and engage in the deep and important work of attunement and reflection as teachers and educators. This dissertation joins the calls from popular writers and theorists alike who are searching for that sense of connection and meaning in their work with students, it traces emotion as a key element in the work of knowing, understanding, and connecting. My research is guided by the following questions:

1. **What is the role of emotion in learning how to write, make meaning, and in the process of communicating?**
2. **What are the implications of examining emotion in communicative and educational contexts, and what can we learn from it as educators and researchers?**
3. **How does emotion connect us to the sponsors of our literacy and why is that significant in our communicative and writing development?**
4. **How (and in what ways) does writing and education make us vulnerable?**

These questions have persisted even as the cultural and social forces bearing down on us have shifted, and these forces ultimately inform how I read and understand the data, narratives, and conclusions in this dissertation, shifting the meaning and purpose and exigencies along the way. It is at once a social and cultural opportunity to think through emotion and an equally powerful moment to consider its effect in the lives of our students in our classrooms. In the rest of this introduction I take a step back. I explain the trajectory of my project, how the questions arose, the students I spoke to, my hopes and motivations, and I place these right next to contemporary questions, both the political questions of the day and those that matter to our field specifically. I

hope to lay the groundwork for the questions that I will explore throughout the rest of this dissertation, underscoring what to do with these and where to go, how to read what is to come.

Study Origins: What Emotion Means to the Field of Composition and Rhetoric

Feeling Power: Emotions and Education a work by educational theorist Megan Boler has been of great importance to the evolution of my own thinking around emotion and echoes my personal interest and educational journey in considering how emotion matters to our field. Boler, who examines emotion in a full range from violence, to the pedagogical, to the ethical, underscores how emotion can be used as a tool for connection and as a form of social control, and of course the negative consequences of studying emotion. She explains her own journey to emotion in the following way:

> I first became interested in emotion's absent-presence as a student of philosophy. Theories of subjectivity (accounts of our identities, our sense of relation to others and to the world) and epistemology (the study of knowledge, how we know and perceive) were undergoing radical change as philosophies of science had begun to question the relationship of the scientist to his production of knowledge…Yet even these challenges rarely explored emotion…I discovered that the exclusion was part of an ancient historical tradition. The boundary—the division between 'truth' and reason on the one side, and 'subjective bias' and emotion on the other—was not a neutral division. The two sides of this binary pair were not equal: Emotion had been positioned on the 'negative side of the binary division…When I raised the question of emotion with my predominantly male colleagues I discovered that not only was emotion not considered a worthy topic for their agenda, but also my mention of emotion was a faux pas…As a woman, I was already marginalized as a philosopher; I did not qualify as a man of reasons, perhaps most particularly in the philosophy of science…And I fulfilled the common cultural stereotype of it being only the 'unreasonable' woman who speaks, inappropriately about emotion in the hallowed halls of academe…As soon as I began teaching in 1985, I discovered these explorations of emotion made sense in my own teaching work. I care deeply about my students, and I consider teaching a profoundly ethical undertaking with aims and effects that require ongoing scrutiny (xii –xiv).

I recall Boler's personal recollections here because they so intimately resonate with my own interest in emotion as a graduate student, and because the themes of exclusion, skepticism, and

marginalization that she expresses in relation to studying emotion, remains consistent throughout the body of literature. In beginning my own graduate work and teaching, I too became aware of emotion's 'absent presence' and the ways in which it often mediates theories of literacy, rhetoric, and pedagogy without ever being called to the forefront of our conversations directly. In many ways my interest in emotion began well before I pursued graduate work, though it deepened through the work I did as a teacher and a student during the course of my masters and doctoral work. I have always been a kind of 'super feeler'. This is to say I remember at a very young age of being aware of the fact that I could sense feelings and emotions in deeper ways than some of my friends or classmates. It took a while before I began to see this as an asset instead of a liability. And so it is not a surprise that when I began teaching emotion became central to how I related to students and how I began to see both their challenges and successes. And like Boler there was a certain amount of skepticism involved in that from colleagues. It was not just that I believed emotion should shape how or what students write, but how we come to understand our students. I saw emotion playing out again and again in student's relationship to the classroom, to one another, to their desire to learn, in many different waves and currents in my classroom teaching. This awareness paired with a dive into theories of rhetoric, composition, literacy and education, and realizing emotion was often present but not discussed in our theoretical and classroom experiences.

In recent years emotion has made a resurgence in its theoretical discussions in the field, in how we talk about rhetoric and literacy, though little qualitative research has been done to address the issue of emotion specifically. For example I recall reading texts like Richard Marback's exploration of rhetorical space on Robben Island, the notorious South African prison that was home to the political prisoners of apartheid like Nelson Mendela, and thinking, there is

emotion there in this rhetorical space, it is more than a "physical place" it carries with it the "'residue of history,'" the stories and emotion and feelings of oppression and pain and possibility of those that lived within it and the lessons learned (Mountford qtd. in Marback 7). As I began to learn more about the theories of emotion both in and out of the field of Composition and Rhetoric I found that emotion had indeed been a long marginalized topic of study in the field, even if it has been present since the outset. In John Cooper's analysis of Aristotle's theories of emotions, he proposes that though these theories richly contribute to the history of philosophy and moral psychology, the same ones are often isolated from deeper analysis within the field of Composition and Rhetoric. Part of this lack of connection to emotion is because, "Aristotle provides no general, analytical account of emotions anywhere in any of the ethical writings" and part of this is because we often easily understand pathos on the surface and do not move beyond it as a means to understand its inaction (Cooper 238). This is not to suggest that his detailed descriptions of emotions in the *Rhetoric* are not significant, but rather this makes clear that Aristotle's project was not only to propose a theory of emotions, but rather to suggest how emotions facilitated the relationship between orator and audience. As such, we often do not take up Aristotle's detailed descriptions of emotions in the rhetoric, often glossing them as a means to consider how emotions are important to orators in dialectical and rhetorical contexts (Cooper 239). Most succinctly put, Aristotle says the following in book two for the *Rhetoric* about emotion before continuing on with an analysis of the role emotions play for orators: "The Emotions are all those feelings that so change men as to affect their judgments, and that are also attended by pain or pleasure. Such are anger, pity, fear and the like, with their opposites" (Aristotle *Rhetoric* II.1. 20-23). Ultimately here emotion is a tool for persuasion, it is a way for speakers to manipulate and change those who are listening, emotions should, in Aristotle's

reasoning be understood precisely so they can be used most productively and lead to action. But still I believe this is quite a limiting view of emotion, that there is more that can be understood about it when applied to social and cultural context.

Ellen Quandahl reads Aristotle's arguments as a way to more fully understand composition's turn to writing and education as a "deeply ethical project, concerned with the schooling of conduct as one strand of social flourishing or dysfunction" (12). For my purposes, the most significant connection Quandahl makes between ethics and emotions, is her proposition that emotions are a motivator for action, decision-making, and knowledge formation and as richly tied to a "social capacity" (14-17). Quandahl writes that, "the survey of emotions in the *Rhetoric* could be said to examine *already developed* ways in which people are moved in social situations" (15). In short the early views of emotion were about feeling happening to passive observers, as something done *to* the speaker or listener, as opposed to tied to wider social cultural frames (Zembylas). The more recent social and cultural dimensions of emotions suggests that emotions are not only important in establishing connections between the orator and audience, but that they help individuals to create knowledge and make sense of the world at large.

The belief that emotions are indeed essential to human intelligence corresponds with the cognitivist view of emotion, which proposes that "emotions are not just the fuel that powers the psychological mechanism of a reasoning creature, they are parts, highly complex and messy parts, of this creator's reasoning itself" (Nussbaum, *Intelligence of Emotions* 3). By positing how emotions "shape the landscape of our mental and social lives" and by advancing the concept that emotions are deeply intertwined with reasoning itself, Martha Nussbaum suggests we move away from the binary split between logic and emotion and that we shift from viewing emotion as a merely "individual" function. Further, Nussbaum offers a striking portrait of how emotions are

"*eudaimonistic*" in Aristotle's work, writing that they are intimately connected to an individual's experience of "human flourishing" (Nussbaum 31). If a central question of philosophy (and education) asks how a 'human being should live' then emotions help to offer a richer sense of a "complete human life" within this space (Nussbaum 32). Because emotions impact knowledge formation, judgment, action, and ethical responses, they are "closely tied with language" and thus inherently present in writing contexts and classrooms (Quandhal17). Consequently emotion is intimately intertwined with how we understand, live, and connect to our personal and social identities. Emotion does not happen to us, we are not mere vessels; rather it happens in concert with the wider social experiences and contexts where we live. These texts and theories lay the foundation in the field for how emotion is discussed in connection to language and educational contexts, and they open up space for how to consider its presence in writing classrooms.

In spite of the evidently rich contributions that emotions offer to the process of knowledge formation, they are often taken for granted in our scholarship. One central reason for this neglect is the division placed between emotion and logic, and the common belief that emotions are only personally and individually felt. Logic has often been the primary way that we demonstrate knowledge and mastery of ideas and discourse. Ratcliffe reminds us that in a more "inclusive *logos*" there lies a "potential for personal and social justice" that can be found through listening, engaging, hearing differences, and I would add *feeling* the experience of the other (25). In this sense we see emotion and logic intertwined in the experience of knowledge formation and meaning making. The effort to move away from this binary system, echoes the social turn in literacy studies, Composition and Rhetoric, and the humanities more broadly, and the move toward a more socially constructed view of reality and literacy (Gee; Street). Lila Abu-Lughod and Catherine Lutz suggest emotion is neglected as a category of analysis because it is often,

"Tied to tropes of interiority," and viewed "as the aspect of human experience least subject to control, least constructed or learned (hence most universal), least public, and therefore least amenable to sociocultural analysis" (1). That emotions are essentialized, taken as universal to all people, and not viewed as intrinsic to social and cultural experiences or identity, denies the social causes of emotions, making it more invisible which "allows us more easily to take emotion for granted" (Lutz and Abu-Lughod 3). And though the personal is important in how we talk about emotion and feelings, we make productive use of emotion when we are able to draw it into social and cultural frames and examine the wider pathways that influence it. An enduring legacy of New Literacy Studies (NLS) has been to empower the field to consider the multiple forces around literacy development, to view literacy as more than a detached skill and more of a 'social practice' connected to wider frames such as race, class, gender, and yes (in my estimation) emotion (Street). In a similar way, more recent theories of emotion have emerged which move away from asking what emotions *are* and instead focused on what emotions *do*, how they function and are socially constructed. Cultural theorist Sara Ahmed suggests emotions as a category of analysis for understanding cultural and social relations, finding that emotion draws our attention to how bodies and individuals relate to one another, to objects, and to the world at large. These themes will be discussed most acutely in the first two chapters of the dissertation.

Ultimately what each of these brief connections highlight are the multifaceted realities of emotion, the long arch of understanding emotion as a tool only for persuasion, to one that gives us a deeper sense of ourselves, our world, and our connection to language. This is why we must call emotion into the frame of the qualitative, to investigate its purpose in our student's lives, to see it as a resource contributing not only to the personal, but to the ethical, the political, the public. Though emotion's presence in the field is undeniable, its focus of our research is often

rife with stereotype and this overwhelming sense that we do not know how to adequately study or pay attention to it – this is where the exigency is found. Part of the challenge of talking about emotion in the field has also been a kind of definitional issue. This is kind of a chicken or egg problem – is emotion not discussed because it is hard to define, or is it hard to define because it is not discussed? I suspect it is likely a combination of the two. One of the aims of this dissertation is to use narrative to help work toward a deeper, more embodied, and 'real' definition of emotion, as a means to better develop a more attuned pedagogy of emotion for writing teachers. It is not about re-defining emotion, but drawing out its complexities and uses in our work. That being said I take my own understanding of emotion from theorists such as Megan Boler, Catherine Lutz, Laura Micciche, and Sarah Ahmed. Megan Boler highlights the embodied nature of emotion and its connection to social frames:

> Because I am interested to understand emotions as they are embedded in culture and ideology, as 'embodied and situated' an inclusive definition is useful as a launching point. Emotions are in part sensational, physiological: consisting of the actual feeling—increased heartbeat, adrenaline, etc. Emotions are also 'cognitive,' or 'conceptual': shaped by our beliefs and perceptions. There is, as well, a powerful linguistic dimension to our emotional awareness, attributions of meanings, and interpretations (xvi).

I am also interested in the embodied and situated nature of emotion in the lives of students, thus I utilize the term emotion throughout this dissertation as opposed to "affect." I understand affect as the "preverbal, visceral condition" and refers "more to a sense and an atmosphere than it does to a specific intentioned act of making or unmaking…" (Micciche *Doing Emotion*, 15). Affect comes prior to emotion, it is tied up in the body, often viewed as subconscious, or happening outside of our own consciousness (Deleuze & Guattari). There is often a slippage between these terms but the goal of this dissertation to further our understanding of emotion as it matters to student identity and experience even amidst its definitional challenges, and I hope the texture of the narratives will help readers to arrive at a more holistic understanding of emotion overall.

My interest in emotion came from noticing its presence lurking in my classroom and in student's lives, this awareness, coupled with a deeper understanding of how emotion was and was not talked about in the field, lead me to develop a research project that attempts to tell more layered and complex stories of feeling. I saw students become emotional in their writing, in class, in their research projects, in how they felt included and excluded, in how they told the stories of themselves explicitly and implicitly, and I wanted to know more about why emotion seemed so central to their experiences. Thus I have viewed emotion not only as "private or universal" as something that happens passively, but rather as social, as "constituted through language and refer to a wider social life" (Zembylas 110). As I began to share with other colleagues about my interest in emotion, there was a sense of excitement and discomfort; emotion in writing studies (most often occurring in the realm of 'expressivism') has a complicated relationship in the field. It is often looked down upon as the soft and squishy counterpart to the work of criticism and rhetorical analysis. Part of my project is to propose that in moving emotion away from these stereotypes and marginalization, and by embracing emotion we can embrace the diversity and complexity of our students and their experiences. I hope we can move beyond simply paying lip service to discussions of inclusivity and to consider on a bodily and emotional level what vulnerability and opening up truly means for a diverse set of learners. My hope is that drawing real student narratives of emotion into our discussion of emotion will offer a more textured and layered understanding of its role, that it brings out a deeper awareness in readers, and that it can be utilized for research and teaching purposes.

Research Process: Study Design, Methodology, Data Collection, & Data Analysis

This dissertation examines how emotion and vulnerability circulates in sites where writing occurs and where writing is taught. At the center of concepts I explore in this dissertation is a simple central question: **what is the role of emotion in learning to write, to make meaning, and to communicating, and how does writing make us vulnerable?** The ultimate goal I have for this work is to reconsider how we can teach writing based upon these findings and contribute an embodied view of emotion to the fields of education and composition studies[1]. On a larger level my project makes claims about the role that emotion, vulnerability, connection, conflict, and yes love, can bring into our students' identities, and our own identities as teachers, researchers, and global citizens. I use narratives from students in order to show the complexity and complications of emotion, to reveal its possibilities and limitations in forming connections, in exploring identity, and in the experience of being made vulnerable in school.

In order to pursue these questions I engaged in semi-structured life history interviews with nine participants from diverse backgrounds, interviewing them about their life histories and narratives of literacy and education[2] (Connelly and Clandinin). In recruiting participants I turned to former students that I had taught in writing classes, and asked colleagues to suggest writing students in the later stage of their educational journeys that might be interested in talking about their lives and emotional experiences as students and writers. I was most interested in speaking to a diverse group of students, hoping to avoid the qualitative research trap of interviewing a

[1] I owe much of my own understanding of 'embodiment' in literacy and language contexts from the work of my former colleague Elisabeth Miller who draws attention to the way in which bodies mediate the language and communicative contexts that they operate within. In her qualitative study of people with aphasia she argues that disability studies reveals that in literacy "the body is material" that it carries upon it the scenes of literacy and its effects and judgments (11, 12). This framing of embodiment is especially useful when thinking about how emotion is expressed and tied to the body and individual, and thus how the emotional body, emotional identity is inculcated in writing contexts.

[2] Please note that the IRB approved interview questions can be found in the appendix to this dissertation.

narrow group of students, and instead focused on selecting those students that are often not heard from, students of color and those with vastly different backgrounds from one another. I wanted students who had unique lives, who could highlight emotion from various viewpoints, histories, and experiences in order to draw out a greater texture to emotion. Ultimately, I was able to recruit a relatively diverse group of students based upon those that I had met in various teaching contexts, and those recommended to me as possible participants from other colleagues. In the case of my research, this previous relationship helped to foster a deeper connection with each student, enabling him or her to more freely open up to me during the course of our interview. Below is a chart, which clarifies my relationship to each student interviewed in this piece, and a very brief bit of demographic information. Each integrated narrative offers more depth and insight into these descriptions; but this is just for reference purposes.

Participant Name	**Age at Time of Interview**	**Relationship to Interviewer**	**Race/Ethnicity**
Brian	21	Taught Brian in high school after school program in New York City.	African American
Lucy	23	Taught Lucy in intermediate writing class.	Latina
Claire	23	Met Claire through another teacher colleague.	White
James	22	Taught James in intermediate writing class.	African American
Lisette	22	Taught Lisette in intermediate writing class.	African American
Matema	25	Taught Matema in intermediate writing class.	African (Congolese)
Lee	26	Taught Lee in intermediate writing class.	Hmong
Derrick	20	Met Derrick as a student leader for a liberal studies course.	White
Karina	25	Taught Karina in intermediate writing class.	White (Russian)

Because I was doing a smaller study focused on life history and narrative inquiry it offered me the opportunity to be selective with participants and specifically those that I knew were interested in sharing, being open and reflective about their lives. I knew that I would go deep with these participants and as such I kept the project manageable in its recruitment and development. It was relatively easy to find students interested in speaking to me – in reaching

out to them I explained the goal of the study in connection to emotion, shared abstracts, preliminary questions and articulated what their participation would involve.

The emphasis in life history as a qualitative data-gathering methodology is "to understand the relationships between patterns of daily life as described in the stories of ordinary people and the larger patterns of social relations that govern cultures, states, and societies" I felt this methodology served my aims, and matched the role that emotion plays in people's lives most specifically (Duffy, *Writing from These Roots* 10; Bertaux). With this methodology the individual becomes a part of the process of building and understanding a better sense of social experience, and the goal is to achieve saturation (overlap) between stories and narratives as opposed to obtaining sheer numbers or volumes of interviews (Duffy, *Writing from These Roots* 11). In this process I was able to draw more attention to the individual narratives and people I was working with, while establishing clearer connections between them in order to arrive at a more complete understanding of how emotion worked across social groups. This holistic approach to collecting and gathering the data with attention to the individual within the wider social context, also carried through to the construction of the narratives in the body chapters of the dissertation more broadly.

From the outset of my project I had the sense that life history and narrative inquiry would be the best approach to collecting data and interviews and to exploring my questions, and I designed my questions and participants accordingly. One key reason I relied on interviews to explore my questions is that emotion is traditionally viewed as an internal, mental, personal response. Interviews allowed me to get closer to that internal experience, and thus to broaden its purpose and show how the personal and intimate deeply connects to wider social, cultural and political frames. In essence I wanted to work from the participant's inward lives to the outside,

drawing upon their interior lives to make larger claims about the relationship between emotion and social experiences with writing and schooling. Thus, I needed the intimacy forged through the one-on-one relationship between interviewer and subject versus a larger ethnographic study focusing primary on interpretative social interactions with emotion – this approach also offered me the chance to build on our previous relationships because I had previously taught a majority of the students that I interviewed. John Duffy acknowledges that interviews and oral testimony in literacy research enables us to more intimately connect to our participants offering more texture and insight into their narratives ("Recalling the Letter" 98). By beginning with the personal and then moving to connections between narratives and social frames, I wanted my methodological choices to make a wider argument about the importance of paying attention to emotion in research contexts, placing emotion at the center of an investigation as opposed to seeing it as the byproduct of research contexts.

After recruiting participants, and collecting the data through interviews for this dissertation I utilized a combination of grounded theory and life history data analysis to develop themes, relying on the data analysis platform Dedoose to help me in this process. Once I completed the transcription of interviews I uploaded the transcripts to Dedoose and worked to do line-by-line coding and analysis of these transcripts. In this line-by-line coding I worked to code for the moments of emotion, personal turmoil, growth, relationships to others, and educational experiences in each participant's life (Charmaz). From these line-by-line codes I developed larger umbrella themes to group and better understand the overlap between themes and participants, some of these connected to codes about emotion, identity, cultural myths, and personal narrative development as action. In doing this work I began to identify the wider social and cultural themes that the individual narratives connect to.

As previously stated, one of the aims of this dissertation is to use narrative to help work toward a deeper, more embodied, and lived definition of emotion, as a means to better develop a pedagogy of attunement, empathy, and emotion for writing teachers. At the same time, I recognize that defining emotion in the lives of participants is challenging, because when recounting their lives and experiences, people are not necessarily talking about emotion directly or specifically, rather they are speaking about emotion in referential terms, in less direct ways. That being said, even if participants are not defining specific emotions, they are always serving rhetorical, persuasive or impactful purposes in their lives (Jacobs and Micciche 3). This of course made analyzing and finding emotion challenging at times. To eliminate some of this ambiguity around emotion, part of my methodological process of analysis involved creating categories of various emotions to try and understand what themes and ideas emerged through these interviews. My goal was not to come up with some sort of ultimate definition of emotion, readers will find that emotion shifts and changes based upon person and concept, instead I am interested in creating connections and overlap between experiences with emotion so that we can see how emotion is at once deeply personal and also deeply social. This shift of course follows the shift in emotion studies more generally to highlight that emotion is a complex and layered social process (Boler; Lutz; Micciche; Damasio; Deluze). Paul Eckman is one of the most notable psychologists to have articulated that what he termed the "universality" of emotions (48). He proposed that most emotions fall into six (or seven) core categories: joy, surprise, sadness, anger, disgust, fear, and (sometimes) contempt. In trying to understand these emotional states based upon the facial expressions of his research participants, Eckman writes that "specific emotions regulate the way in which we think, and that this will be evident in memories, imagery and expectations" (55). And while Ekman is concerned with the physiology and biology of emotional expression, he

touches briefly on the social context of emotion which subsequent scholars in the field have built upon, is what I am most interested in.

With that background in my mind, I created common categories during the process of data analysis that I began to see emerging in the narratives and line-by-line coding. The table below includes some of the categories of emotion that I identified, using Eckman's more basic outline of emotion as an inspiration. Given that I am engaging in qualitative work, I based my categories less on biology and more on the expression and narratives that emerged before me from both the transcript and the experience in the interview itself. I began with line-by-line coding of each narrative using active words and phrases (gerunds) to articulate the expression of emotion I identified in that section of the interview. This represented perhaps the more personal, individual expression of emotion. Once I had completed this task for each interview, I grouped the codes under broader umbrella codes that helped to articulate for me the overall more "socially situated" nature of emotion created from the more personal, forms of expression noted in the interview itself. Note that these were not the only umbrella codes that I used, rather I had a number of umbrella codes, of which these emotion codes were one subsection (other umbrella codes included: identity codes, cultural/social codes, personal narrative codes). The code at the top of the chart denotes the umbrella emotion code, and the codes below are the line-by-line codes or sub codes, I used when coding each narrative.

	Emotion Code		
	Anger, Sadness, Fear, Depression, Guilt Shame	**Love, Joy, Contentment, Relief**	**Empathy, Judgment, Interview Subtext, the Unspoken**
Sub Code	Feeling fear	Feeling freedom	Learning to communicate feelings and emotions
	Experiencing negative reinforcement	Experiencing positive reinforcement	Experiencing judgment
	Experiencing chaos and trauma in life (emotional/verbal abuse)	Expressing humor to make sense	Expressing outwardly deep emotion (in interview)
	Experiencing lack of support from parents	Feeling extreme happiness/joy	Feeling uncertain about the future

	Feeling anger towards others	Experiencing nostalgia for the past	Managing other's discomfort
	Feeling excluded	Feeling included	Navigating unspoken social rules and conventions
	Experiencing violence and aggression	Feeling proud	Selecting silence
	Feeling guilt	Finding meaning in life	Empathizing/rationalizing with others and self
	Feeling let down	Feeling positive	Avoiding or evading questions
	Feeling subordinate		Feeling responsibility for others
	Feeling unprepared		
	Feeling vulnerable		

These broader emotional codes (Anger, Love, Judgment etc.) offered me a chance to see where possible overlap and connection between interviews occurred and also enabled me to see how each individual used emotion in unique and personal ways. It was from these codes that I then began to understand how emotion most operated in the lives of the student I was interviewing. After this process, I then began to memo and reflect on the dominant core themes, emotions, feelings that emerged for each person, writing a profile of each participant in the study and analyzing the dominant emotion that I felt played in their personal and educational development. After this reflection I wrote a thick, detailed "biography" of the participant, which I then edited and adapted, based upon the narratives you will read in this project. The grouping in each chapter suggests a connection and overlap between the participants often motivated by these initial codes, and these codes help to clarify how I was seeing emotion move, motivate, and impact students in their lives and educational journeys. Ultimately there is a sense of deeply personal expression of emotion, while at the same time this process leads me to understand emotion in relation to other students, social, and cultural experiences.

It is from these larger themes and selective memoing that I came to understand the connections or saturation points between narratives and began grouping participants accordingly in order to achieve overlap, and a move toward narrative saturation and clear connecting themes (Bertaux). In this process of grouping I worked to understand the overlap between how each

person navigated emotion and what emotion yielded in their lives, always returning to that central concept: *what is emotion doing here* (Ahmed; Micciche). I wanted an active sense of how emotion was formulated in the lives of participants even if on the surface they did not name emotion explicitly, my job as researcher was to work with them and their story to interpret and understand how emotional resonances emerged based upon what I know about emotion and language. In some cases emotion was working as a force for growth and positivity in the literate and educational lives of participants, where as in other cases it was working as a force for extreme vulnerability and exclusion. At times it took multiple readings and coding to form ideas about how or if emotion was present in the narratives I had collected. Of course each person I interviewed had moments where both of these forces were at work, but overall I tried to understand the most prevalent role emotion played in each person's life. Further, my attunement to life history lead me to construct each narrative independently, first simply writing a very thorough life profile of each participant, and then working to fine tune and edit that narrative with attention to the particular themes and narratives that most stood out from them. In that sense I had a kind of 'realist' approach to life history, embracing the notion that "stories reflect a lived reality that can make an important contribution to knowledge" based upon the persona's "objective account" (Ojermark 15; Charmaz). After developing a very thorough or "thick" narrative profile of each participants, I began to see more deeply how each narrative overlapped and interconnected and I was more easily able to group and develop chapter themes as a result.

Life histories, ethnographies, case studies of individual literacy habits have helped researchers to understand how literacy is socially situated, and the impact of social and cultural forces on individuals' experiences and literacy choices (Brandt *Literacy*; Heath; Vieira; Behar). In essence these approaches have connected the individual to the wider frames in which they

live, a central project of my own methodology. In *Lives in Context: The Art of Life History Research*, Ardra Cole and J. Gary Knowles write that, "life history inquiry is about gaining insights into the broader human condition by coming to know and understanding the experiences of other humans. It is about understanding a situation, profession, condition, or institution through coming to know how individuals walk, talk, live, and work within that particular context" (11). In this sense, the life history helps to reveal a particular sense about how individuals come to know and make meaning of their own world and experiences. Almost all individuals have experienced education, and the acquisition of literacy (both inside and outside formal institutions) in some form and these experiences often are a major component of our lives that shape and mold our life trajectories and pathways. Further, given that emotion is expressed as both a personal and social construction, life histories, narrative histories, and life stories as a methodology will help me to get at how emotion comes to matter in the lives of individuals as they experience, sense, feel, and accumulate education and literacy.

The ability to get to know my participants was deeply important to the goals of better understanding how emotion is embedded in an individual's life. As this dissertation argues, emotion is at once deeply emotional and singular, and equally tied to larger cultural and social forces of experience and expression. It was helpful to my research that I knew participants ahead of time because there is a reflexive relationship between the interviewer and interviewee. Life history places a large priority on 'coherence' in the construction of the unit of life history, and this sense pervades not only the data analysis but the interview process itself. In that sense, the narrative becomes the central work of the dissertation, and I argue for researchers to hear and connect to our research participants, which becomes even more essential in talking about their emotional lives. Charlotte Linde argues in *Life Stories: The Creation of Coherence* writes,

"Coherence must also be understood as a cooperative achievement of the speaker and the addressee; it is not an absolute property of a disembodied unsituated text. The speaker works to construct a text whose coherence can be appreciated, and at the same time the addressee works to reach some understanding of it as a coherent text and to communicate that understanding" (12). Life history offers a template and basis for constructing and building this type of intimate connection with participants.

In developing the frame and methodological choices for my study I drew upon Tierney's interpretation of life history, which makes a case for a kind of postmodern perspective of qualitative research. Tierney suggests that life history does not necessarily offer us the chance to get rid of and expose power dynamics by revealing the 'truth' but rather they offer us the chance to explore these issues of power within social frames with more texture. Drawing upon theories of intersectionality, I conducted my study by including a range of individuals that represent various ages, races, and genders in order to develop a more diverse representation of narratives (Crenshaw; Collins; Grant and Zwier). The aim of life history research is to present the lived and embodied experiences of participants, though I am not only interested in presenting these narratives without context. That is, I utilize these narratives in order to offer insight into deeper themes around identity and individual experiences with literacy. Life history offers me a clear path into observing the presence of emotion within the "little narratives" of my participants – it offers me a chance to understand the individual and social experiences of emotion, and to pinpoint how emotion connects, disrupts, and shapes individual experiences with writing and learning (Daniell). These theorists and qualitative literacy work provided the grounds for developing my study and interview questions, selecting participants, and informed my ultimate data analysis and construction.

Once I began crafting the narratives from initial memos, notes, and coding into the profiles found in the chapters themselves, I chose to take a highly narrative and linear approach to the composition of the participant profiles, echoing those theorists who embrace narrative inquiry and life history as a form for storytelling and personal connection. "Narrative inquiry has a long intellectual history both in and out of education…one theory in educational research holds that humans are storytelling organisms who, individually and socially, lead storied lives…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" (Connelly and Clandinin 2). Researchers intervene in these stories as naturally as possible, working with participants to craft and connect to their stories – after analyzing the data (outlined above) I made an effort to read the narratives completely and make clear choices about their construction. As Linde makes clear through her work, the life story is a unit of research which expresses our sense of self, "who we are and how we got that way" (3). She continues, "…we use these stories to claim or negotiate group membership and to demonstrate that we are in fact worthy members of those groups, understanding…life stories touch on the widest of social constructions…in order to study life histories we must assume that a life story is something most people have, something they have created, and something that, for both personal and social comfort, must be created in a coherent fashion" (4). These are important considerations throughout the course of this dissertation but especially in the narratives included in this project for a few reasons. First of all what Linde clarifies here is that life stories are *created* within the context of social and cultural groups as a means to understand ourselves, that they do not evolve in isolation, and this is especially true when stories are being explained and expressed within the context of a research project. And a second key point is that life histories help to give space to often unheard, small,

and neglected narratives in our research. One of the central reasons that I have used life history as a form of narrative and qualitative research is because I find that it is a way for me to more acutely express the sentiments of emotionality. That is, it helps us to see the interior of the emotioned story and to then consider the ways in which that emotional interior is connected to and predicated upon the wider social frame within which that person lives. You will see that I have made particular choices about linearity, about letting the stories guide readers into an experience with the participant's life by expressing their story more biographically as means to then create connections between stories and between the themes. This is consistent with the narrative inquiry approach to constructing story telling which sees the researcher as listening "first to the practitioner's story," and then enables the research to draw from those voices and perspective to develop a cohesive narrative (Connelly and Clandinin 4).

There is a tension in this approach of course, it can lead us down a rabbit hole about research ethics and methodology, about whether we can truly ever speak for others, about power relationships, and though I acknowledge this tension exists, it is not the object of my argument. Perhaps there is no way to fully bridge the divide between the stories of others and our own devices as writers and researchers, but part of this tension I suggest can be helped or overcome with emotional attunement toward our participants. But this is my truth as a researcher, it felt like the right way to approach a conversation about emotion, to help us to truly see and feel it, and the decisions here are intentional – any research project requires smart, grounded informed choices about data and presentation based upon the specific questions at hand. Or put another way, "Like other qualitative methods, narrative relies on criteria other than validity, reliability and generalizability…each inquirer must search for, and defend the case that each inquirer must search for, and defend, the criteria that best apply to his or her work" (Connelly and Clandinin

7). As opposed to leading with an explicit theme and retrofitting the narratives into that argument, I allow the narratives to lead to the themes, connections and conclusions for readers. This was a choice made upon the "form and substance" of the data and based upon the "purposes of inquiry" based upon my set of questions (Connelly and Clandinin 11). As a researcher my own emotional attunement requires that I allow and enable the telling of a story in a connective and linear way to keep it as close as possible to the subjects I profile, especially considering that I am drawing from a small pool of participants (by design). By maintain the cohesiveness of the narratives I hope to honor the student's own stories as closely as possible, all while acknowledging that each narrative is in a way a literary construction.

In constructing participant profiles I chose to keep these narratives as complete as editing allowed, in the hopes that readers got to "know" participants as I did, based upon my construction of our interview and relationship, a method consistent in forming narrative inquiry profiles. I felt this was part of my ethical duty as a researcher calling for deeper attunement to the stories and emotions of others. In addition to focusing on a complete history of participant's schooling and education I worked to understand the people and places that were most impactful to my participants to move toward a more layered understanding of the interplay between all of these forces. Because I had met many of my participants in some capacity previously, I had the added benefit of our conversation flowing in a natural progression, as well as a strong sense of the student participant before hand. Further, I had noticed in my teaching of writing that racial identity, gender, disability, and emotion were intimately intertwined to emotion and I wanted to unpack and understand the full scope of relationships within these various identity experiences. It was my aim to select people from a wide range of backgrounds and experiences, and ultimately I ended up with a rather diverse group of participants ranging from students born outside of this

country, to those born and raised in small towns, to students of color, and those from other unique backgrounds. I felt this diversity would offer a better range of how various people react both similarly and differently to education and to emotion. My hope is that readers will have a holistic and complete understanding of who the participants are in each chapter, in addition to understanding the themes and connections I gained from hearing their life stories and experiences.

Lastly, this sense of working to empathetically construct participant narratives in a full and more embodied manner felt like part of my ethical duty as a researcher interested in emotion. This approach is close to what I understand as an "ethics of care," one that requires researchers to approach caring as an ethical responsibility in research in an attempt, "to place herself in an empathetic relationship in order to understand the other's point of view. For this reason an ethic of care is dependent on the engagement of 'the personal'" (Kirsch and Ritchie 21). One of the arguments in later chapters of this dissertation is that emotion should be a complex empathetic force embedded in our tools and attunement as researchers, and part of that process is about contemplating more deeply what it means to interview and make data out of the stories of human beings. Part of that process then begins understanding our participant's experiences more completely. I began to see my project as a view of what happens when begin to see emotion as an inherent part individual narrative itself. The intermingling of emotion and empowerment also connects to Kirsch and Royster's call for "strategic contemplation" in their call to embrace the work of feminist rhetorical practices (19). They propose that critical imagination can transform the methodology and protocols within intellectual work, thereby creating a space that privileges dialogue and rhetorical listening between research subjects. My goal in sharing the stories and experiences of others as the focus of my research is to answer this 'call' toward attention to the

lived, embodied, often neglected experiences of emotion in the lives of participants. I do that by enabling their narrative to drive the themes, arguments and our understanding.

I am deeply indebted to Brian, Lucy, Claire, James, Lisette, Matema, Lee, Derrick and Karina[3]. Each participant willingly opened themselves up to me in the most vulnerable and connective ways, allowing me to go with them on a journey of understanding their personal growth and challenge in their lives as it related to education, family, and other relationships. This process is not easy, especially knowing ahead of time that my goal was to better understand emotion and the difficulty of identity in school, and each participant embraced the experience. Over and over again we shared true moments of intimacy and connection throughout our interviews, moments where both the participants, and I were moved to tears. This experience evolved my understanding of the intimate meaning of research, of the profound emotional burden of connection to both students and subjects. I recognize the emotional weight of these conversations and opening yourself and your life up to interpretation and I could not have achieved this deeper look at emotion without their willingness to truly *go there* with me on this journey. This is in large part why it was so essential that I use life history interviews to get to the answer to my questions – it allows for a more connective and personal understanding of the person's emotional register than simply seeing them in a social setting.

In taking on this project, I hope readers pay attention to the many crossings students make in their paths of learning – both physical and emotional – to see the spaces where these students reside, the effort and work they must expend to belong, the emotional toll of these seemingly simple gestures of exclusion, and the vulnerability and emotion implicit in learning to

[3] All names of interviewees and significant individuals in their lives have been changed or eliminated to protect privacy in accordance with regulations from the IRB. Some place locations and schools have remained the same to maintain readability. In addition please note that when appropriate I asked participants before interviews to select their own self-identifying pronouns and labels – this is reflected in the specific language and terms used in each narrative.

write and become educated. We often take this work for granted, not seeing all of these journeys in our students before they arrive in the desks and chairs of our classrooms. In essence I hope that all readers alike embrace an 'ethics of care' in their reading and interpretation of these narratives and arguments, that the work of empathy is actively engaged in the reading process, and that readers resist the urge to simply reinforce their own assumptions (Kirsch and Ritchie). In the process of engaging in this reading, I believe we move closer to truly hearing and feeling, to restoring a kind of public feeling and emotional attunement to the way in which we understand our student's lives and progress as thinkers and writers, and to our own journeys as well (Cvetkovich). My hope is that emotion can serve as the bridge or the source for this type of strategic contemplation and empowerment in our work as researchers, and I aim to contribute potential techniques and ideas for continuing this work beyond this project.

A Final Note to Readers…

I would like to leave readers with a final note before moving forward with the dissertation – it is important for me to contextualize how I understand literacy, writing, and education throughout the course of this project so that my stance as a writer and researcher is clear. My masters in English Education, and my subsequent interest in teaching and pedagogy, deeply informs how I think about literacy and emotion, and how I have come to understand the complexities and challenges of becoming educated – that is, I see the work of analyzing how we become educated to be intimately woven to discussions of how literacy and writing is developed. I believe it is essential to talk about the ecosystem of education (both formal and informal) that came before a student ends up in our writing classrooms, and I am always interested in the multiple sites where learning and literate development takes place. This belief arises from my teaching and background, and informs the basis for my interest in the questions that I pursue in

this dissertation. While completing my masters at NYU I also worked as a research assistant and program leader at an arts based afterschool program in New York City where I witnessed a group of diverse high school students in a transfer high school (most were just a few credits short of graduating and often older students), drawn to different genres of writing and ways of making meaning. I saw these students working out their personal lives and interests through writing and art, I witnessed them (whether conscious or not), grappling with their emotional relationship to school, to society, to power. These experiences with students became a central part of my own 'English education,' embedding in me an interest in better understanding the why's and how's of literacy development. I began to question more deeply how race, identity, gender, emotion, class, and relationships impact a student's desire (or fears) around composing, and to question why these ways of making meaning seemed so vital to their sense of self.

While grappling with this question I also began to define composing and literate work on a broader scale as I saw students paint murals, make movies, write scripts, compose poetry, make computer programs – I began to think about literacy and writing more broadly in the domain of how people make meaning, to think about the rhetorical relationship between genre and argument and composing (before I really knew what this awareness meant, before I had a body of literature to hitch these ideas to). These insights came prior to my introduction to a core body of literature from Composition and Rhetoric facilitated by the mentorship of Glynda Hull in my masters program, subsequently compelled me to shift my plans to became a high school teacher and instead to pursue a PhD. This is all to say I am thinking about literacy and writing and education in a more broadly defined and fluid manner in this dissertation beyond just the phenomenon of learning to read and write.

In this dissertation I am at times examining emotion in student writing, in their relationships to teachers, in their literacy histories, in their educational development or in the ways in which students express and explain their personal life histories. I am interested not only in literate production, but in the rhetorical development of emotion that emerges in the narratives I present here, in their literacy histories, in their educational backgrounds and in how they talk about these ideas. I explore the settings, ecosystems, and production of literacy and writing, shifting how I look for emotion to offer a sense of texture, and to personalize the experience for the individual student I am profiling. I am interested in how students become educated into a sense of the world and themselves, and how they talk and express this experience to the world through writing, through the courses and majors they choose, through the rhetorical construction of their own personal narrative histories. In some cases writing was more central to the lives of students than others, and in some cases it is more important to focus on the history of the student, their educational background and relationships to teachers – language is always a reflexive and integral part to this, the composing of their narratives in our interviews is as important as their literate and writing development. At times I analyze themes in student writing, and at times the life history itself becomes a document for analysis and contemplation. It ultimately becomes impossible to understand the development of reading and writing without examining the person learning, and as you will see in the interview protocol (found in the appendix) I was leading students through a literacy history of sorts and they often moved into the realm of the personal, the emotional rather quickly. Part of the argument of this dissertation is to consider if our limited or functional definitions of writing and literacy might constrain what and how we view emotion, and my hope is to offer deeper insight into the possibilities opened up by talking about emotion

within this context. Ultimately I am concerned with the human experience within the institutions of education, literacy, and writing.

John Duffy articulates the need for this type of awareness in literacy research and the void that often exists in our research and study of literacy by excluding emotion. He argues that, "the role of emotions in literacy development has not received a great deal of attention from historians…Oral testimonies in contrast, have the capacity to reveal the full range of the human experience, rational and emotional. 'The in-depth interview,' Yow has written, 'can reveal a psychological reality that is the basis for the ideals the individual holds, and for the things he or she does' (1994, p. 15) …when a speaker discloses an emotional state or condition in the course of an oral testimony, the result may be profoundly transforming, on a human level…" ("Recalling the Letter" 96). No doubt this insight on Duffy's part leads him to develop a broader definition of literacy in his examination of Hmong literacy. In his "rhetorical conception" of literacy development Duffy concedes that becoming literate is not only about the functional, graphical codes for reading and writing but about the identities, conditions, environments, ecosystems, and people where this learning occurs. Drawing rhetoric into the equation helps him to see the ideologies, arguments and identities of experience and knowledge formation, to offer the "frameworks in which individual acts of reading and writing take place" (*Writing from These Roots* 15). Duffy continues:

> In a rhetorical conception of literacy, individual acts of reading and writing, of decoding and encoding, have little meaning in themselves. They are largely technical operations…this means that all elements of literacy instruction, including the selection of reading materials, the choice of teaching methodologies, the assignment of essay topics, and even the teacher's conception of the learner are ultimately rhetorical and ideological, ultimately intended to promote a vision of the world and the place of learners within it. To see literacy development as rhetorical is to consider the influence of rhetorics on what writers choose to say, the audience they imagine in saying it, the genres in which they elect to write, and the words and phrases they use to communicate their messages (*Writing from These Roots*, 17).

I draw upon Duffy here because I believe his acknowledgement of the capacity for literacy within this broader frame of rhetoric is similar to my own thinking around literacy, writing, and education in this project. We must view the experience of learning within a situated context of experience. It is essential to consider the human being in our research and part of this requires a sense of the wider contexts and conditions within which meaning and literate development occur – and because I am interested in emotion, it becomes essential to consider the broader social and cultural frames within which these feelings are developed. And of course there are countless theorists who engage in this work in the afterglow of NLS (Delpit; Gee; Heath; Street). As I began to deepen my understanding of rhetoric and literacy scholarship through the course of my PhD these beliefs about the complexities of literacy only grew. I am less concerned with pinning down and projecting what literacy means in this work than I am about exploring the wider ecosystems where it is developed, where it occurs, and how it is pursued (and the emotional effects that accompany its uses). I clarify in each narrative what the primary object of interest and study is in that section and I hope this will be clear to readers. My teaching in writing classrooms, community literacy programs, college preparatory programs, in writing centers, for developing writing teachers, have only continued to grow the initial seeds of interest that were planted seven years ago when I began my masters program. These experiences have deepened my interest in understanding the essentially human desire to make meaning, to tell our stories, to grapple with emotion via personal expression. I hope to contribute a call for deeper attunement and sensitivity to these issues for the students that cross into our classrooms and educational settings of all types, and I hope to encourage teachers and researchers alike to move toward a more engaged and connective relationship with empathy in their work.

Chapter Previews

Each chapter utilizes three in-depth student profiles to draw conclusions about the relationship between emotion, education, and literacy. Participants profiled in this dissertation have a unique and particular relationship to schooling, to their identity, and to emotion. I believe that my job as a researcher was to connect with my participants as deeply as possible, to truly hear their story as they shared it, and allow that narrative and data to then guide my development and construction of their story and ultimately the wider arguments of each chapter. I worked to cohesively construct their stories with attention to the choices that each student made in sharing their life history and narratives with me (Linde; Tierney). As such, I worked to construct full pictures of my participants, to enhance reader connection and understanding, so that the themes and ideas between participants could be more easily explicated. I begin each chapter with a clear theoretical frame that can be used as a lens to read the narratives through, but I also encourage readers to truly embrace the fullness of the narratives themselves, in many cases I worked diligently to make choices about constructing narratives based upon the exact transcript and impact of each moment in participant's lives. These stories give way to knowledge, they yield, as I explained when I opened this introduction with my own story, a deeper sense of how intimately emotion is integrated into our lives, how we are mediated, formed, shaped by the emotional experiences and responses to our social worlds. There are limitations and challenges to this work: I am working with a mall sample size, emotion can be hard to pinpoint, and in the process of analyzing narratives I have to work not to extrapolate or make straw-person arguments about one person's narrative. That said, my hope is that the conclusions you draw from this, will have a powerful effect on how you think about research, student engagement, writing experience,

pedagogy development, and schooling more broadly. My goal is to make clear what is emotionally at stake for students when they arrive in our classrooms.

The second chapter examines how emotion works to facilitate a connection between writers and their literacy sponsors, both in school and out of school. The narratives in this chapter from Brian, Lucy, and Claire paint the picture of writers who are emboldened and inspired by their emotional reactions to their lives, who take these experiences and use them as a fuel for their output and production. The chapter builds off theories from Royster and Brandt to make an argument about how emotion is intertwined in identity formation, sponsorship, ethos, and literature output. In essence these narratives show how emotion is woven into literate sponsors, a fact often overlooked in literacy narratives as a key driving force.

The third chapter examines the other side of emotion, that is it highlights the experiences of students whose emotional vulnerability has fostered a kind of exclusion in their schooling and literate lives. This is not to say that the narratives of James, Lisette, and Matema demonstrate students unsuccessful in school (quite the opposite), but they do demonstrate the inherent struggle of being on the margins of school, of being emotionally disempowered by their emotional responses, of the vulnerability of race and identity in the schooling process that often goes unnoticed. We see these students often sagging under the weight of personal advocacy, vulnerability, and emotional labor as they seek to fit in, overcome fears of being different, and work to make sense of themselves within the context of schooling. These narratives suggest the challenge of fitting into institutional spaces when feeling marginalized, and the work needed by teachers and schools alike to pay attention to the effects of this emotional marginalization in our student's lives. I use theories of identity, race, and vulnerability to examine the emotional labor

of racism and fear, and the significance of paying attention to this work in our student's writing and their educational experiences.

The fourth chapter analyzes three additional narratives from Lee, Derrick and Karina, highlighting the impact of personal identity conflicts on their emotional and educational development. I further analyze the role that identity plays in emotional development and educational negotiation, articulating the importance of paying attention to identity in our work as teachers. Ultimately we see these conflicts giving way to a deeper relationship to the world, to writing, to the educational paths that each student pursues. In this chapter I also argue for the importance of "critical empathy" and "critical narratives" in understanding the work of our student's narratives and identity conflicts, arguing for a more attuned approach to how we see the emotional affects of student lives in our classrooms (Leake, "Writing Pedagogies of Empathy"). I conclude the dissertation in chapter five by reviewing the conclusions and contributions of the data chapters and narratives, and proposing ideas and arguments for how teachers and researchers can incorporate a critical attunement to emotion and empathy in their work and pedagogy, and to argue for how emotional attunement might help us in our qualitative research and political discourse.

Chapter 2:

'I write because I feel things': Emotion and The Sponsorship of Writing and Learning

> "Education aims in part to help us understand our values and priorities, how we have come to believe what we do, and how we can define ethical ways of living with others. Emotions function in part as moral and ethical evaluations; they give us information about what we care about and why. Thus a primary and under-explored source for this transformation and resistance is our emotional experience as it informs both our cognitive and moral perceptions. Our emotions help us envision future horizons of possibilities and who we want to become" (xv).

-Megan Boler, *Feeling Power: Emotions and Education*

> "Across the generations, school-based writing was widely associated with pain, belittlement, and perplexity. Handwriting was recalled as a heavily monitored activity, and those who struggled with it remember it as a source of humiliation or defeat. A 68-year-old former Spanish teacher said that poor handwriting in her early education discouraged her from writing…If writing in school was more associated than reading with emotional conflict, surveillance, and punishment, it also could be associated with sharper pride and individual accomplishment. Many people remember receiving certificates for excellent penmanship or accurate typing. Other recalled with pride instances when their compositions were selected to be read aloud or published in school publications" (164-166).

-Deborah Brandt, *Literacy in American Lives*

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I was raised in a family where emotion was central to how I interacted and made sense of the world. In the sixth grade I was one of a small group of students to be pulled out of the English class to attend a small workshop with a poet who was visiting my school. The poet discussed the power that writing played in his life, the importance of words and language in the small container of the poem, the cathartic work that writing can have in structuring our worldview. He gave us the opportunity to try writing small poems ourselves, and we practiced writing metaphors about ourselves first over and over again on sheets of lined school paper. I still have that sheet and think of it as my first poem. In my own literacy and writing history I

often point to this as my first pivotal moment experiencing the power and pull of language. That experience stayed with me, it imprinted and stirred passions. It made me aware, for the first time, of writing's power and presence in my life, of the emotional connection one can have to language. But, as much as I was compelled by this moment of literacy uplift, I also recall not understanding why only a small group of students was pulled out of class to experience the gift of writing. Why was it restrictive, and what effect did that have on other students? Even then I was sensitive and attuned to the emotional and incongruous effects of education.

This awareness and sensitivity came into my mind more fully after my older brother, a brilliant thinker and writer, dropped out of high school one year prior to his graduation. After witnessing this experience, both the extreme joys and traumas of education became even more apparent to me. Unlike me he felt unwelcomed in school, he was labeled a troublemaker, and teachers had a hard time seeing through his tough exterior. He experienced traumatic moments where teachers kicked him out of the room for asking challenging questions. In essence he reacted emotionally to school in a completely different manner than I, he was never able to fully connect his passion for learning and writing within the context of school. Even for someone who had many advantages that would provide for a good education: a supportive family and home life, access to relatively good schooling and teachers, being raised in a middle class home, he still struggled. Often the emotional responses to education are tied to deeper socio-political and cultural forces, which this dissertation will highlight, but even with much of that in place, school was still a struggle, still emotional and complex. The rows of chairs in a classroom equaled terror and fear, he never felt included or recognized, and as such he chose to rebel against the system. Instead of finding intellectual engagement in the institutional conditions of school, he sought to learn independently to use his cultural and artistic curiosity to guide his growth and intelligence.

In many ways, my brother's emotional response offered an emotional education to me, helping me to understand who was valued in school and what emotions were privileged. Part of my own success in school, like some of the narratives you will read in this chapter, were a result of my own self-sponsorship and determination, yet it was also a result of the fact that I was more readily able to interpret the rules and regulations of institutional and school settings, and less apt to emotionally react against any perceived regulation. Though school was emotional for me in other ways, I could find strategies to channel that 'appropriately' enough within the context and setting that I was schooled in. In essence I knew how to feel properly and usefully. My positive emotional connection to school served me in that space, connected me to the institutions of learning in productive ways that my brother experienced only independently. Emotion often becomes about what can be properly understood, properly expressed within the often emotionally unforgiving and strict social contexts where we reside. Emotion, like literacy, often comes down to an issue of power and control (Boler, xiv, 4).

In recent years researchers in Composition and Rhetoric have focused on how emotion is present in particularly traumatic experiences with literacy, culture, and in the public sphere, yet we have not explored its relevance and presence in our daily lives and in our interactions with education and writing. Most centrally I use this chapter to observe how emotion's presence in writing contexts structures a connection to writing, in turn teaching the writer about themselves and empowering them through language. I aim to make tangible the emotional complexities of learning and writing and the ways in which we are often emotionally bound to the sources of our inspiration. Reflecting on literacy learning, writing, and school experiences requires a profound awareness that writing and school is personal and emotional, and an awareness that the composing process is more than the functional and the rudimentary act of script and letters on the

page. These issues, I believe, are common threads that lead to Deborah Brandt's development of theories tied to literacy sponsorship, and so I start my analysis here. What, she asked, is the impetus for an individual to engage in the pursuit of literacy and what contexts, people, or materials compel or withhold these pursuit? Sponsorship like emotion, is reflexive, it can at once be the foundation for literate action, and can also make students vulnerable, impotent and unable to move forward in traditional literate and school contexts. Sponsorship looms large in the field of Composition and Rhetoric for good reason – it arose during a time when the field itself sought to better understand and integrate an awareness of the social and cultural practices that underpin a person's relationship to language, to communication, to writing, fostering with the revelations from NLS. Though there has been a proliferation in recent years around theories of emotion in composition, qualitative research has lacked explicit attention to emotion in the lives of participants as the primary object of study. There is considerable research around the powerful contributions Brandt and New Literacy theorists offered to the field, the most resonant to me, are the ways in which she acknowledges the invisible influences that bear down on language and writing, the elements that had always been there but perhaps were not given their due. We often allude to emotion in our research, without fully bringing it forth in our understanding of how it influences writer's to embrace or reject literate experience. I propose that we see emotion as a key component to literacy development – emotion connects writers to the sponsors of literacy in important ways, providing the fibers of connection between the personal, material, institutional, individual. In a similar way then, I turn to emotion's link to writing and literacy contexts to examine how emotion provides the foundation for many writers.

Revisiting Brandt: Recovering Emotion in Literacy and Qualitative Research

I start with Brandt for a few key reasons, namely because in my data analysis I began to see a common theme of emotion's relationship to literate output, and explicit educational choices and decisions. In *Literacy in American Lives,* Brandt defines sponsorship as "any agents, local or distant, concrete or abstract, who enable, support, teach, and model, as well as recruit, regulate, suppress, or withhold literacy – and gain advantage by it in some way" (19). Throughout her analysis she exposes just how "networks of literacy crisscross through many domains, potentially exposing people to multiple sources of sponsoring powers – secular, religious, bureaucratic, legal, commercial, technological. It is these characteristics of the sponsors," she continues, "that give contemporary literacy its demanding qualities of complexity, multiplicity, and stratification its sense of surplus and its volatility" (*Literacy* 70). Within this complexity, brought forth through over 80 interviews with her research subjects, there is clear evidence of emotion, regardless of whether it is apparent to the researcher or the subject. Much has been written about the materiality of sponsorship's reach but emotion here within the frame of these narratives is more used as a resource for production and sense making (Latour; Vieira; Miller). And part of the deployment and experience of that resource involves the body, the mind, and soul of the individuals. In *Embodied Literacies* Kristie Fleckenstein proposes, "teaching (or not teaching) literacy directly implicates the spiritual, psychological, and physical health of the citizenry, and of the community as a whole" (47). If that is so, then we need to understand all layers of this 'spiritual and psychological' and I would add, *emotional*, experience to literacy. And yet we often take emotion for granted in our qualitative research around writing and literacy, denying it as part of the larger institutions and forces that influence those we embrace literate lives. Adding this layer into our analysis, makes "emotion a critical category—an occasion for interrogation" in

our work as researchers and teachers, as we understand the complexity it plays in the development of writers and learners (Worsham qtd. in Micciche, *A Way to Move* 163).

In drawing emotion into the frame of literacy contexts we begin to see the networks and connections underneath those sponsors and institutions that might otherwise lay dormant in the influences of literate development in writers' lives. Drawing sponsorship into a discussion of emotion reframes emotion as an active, embodied part of the composing and literate process, as central to how literacy is developed – we begin to see how emotional responses to events and situations take root in the lives of those who seek and find literacy. Take for example Brandt's portrayal of Johnny Ames, an African American man who taught himself to read and write while he was imprisoned for 16 years. Ames recalls that one of the central motivations to become literate was the urge to read and understand the transcript of his own trial. At his trial Ames explains that he "didn't know what was happening. I literally did not understand what was going on…When I could read and understand what they said about me, [I could see that] they made me out to be something that I was not. And it hurt me real, real bad, in my heart, in my soul. And I said I would never let anyone talk over my head again" (Brandt, *Literacy* 61). The feeling and sense of discomfort moved Ames toward an embrace of literate production. In addition to seeking texts, jobs, and teachers within the prison to help him learn to read and write, Ames explains that he also began writing on his own to, as Brandt describes, "record incidents of racial tensions and injustices that he witnessed in the prison" (*Literacy* 63). Ames states, "I'd write my feelings about that and throw them away…I knew there was trouble to get into for speaking, so I said, well I'm not going to speak it. I'll just write it down" (*Literacy* 63). Throughout Ames' narrative and many others in Brandt's book, the presence of emotion (and in his case reaction to traumatic experiences) spurred his desire and willingness to learn to read and write. That is, I

believe emotion connects individuals to the sponsors of their literacy in profound ways; it is reflexive and active, a key part in the sense and knowledge making connected to language. Though it is the institution that directly implicates his ability to obtain literacy, it is the emotional and connective response to being disempowered by the institution that motivates Ames' impulse and desire to learn and pursue the more functional aspects of literacy. In this sense I understand sponsorship here to be the connective tissue that binds an individual to the dominant spaces and experiences where writing and literacy is performed. In the case of Ames, the trauma and exclusion of not being literate was deeply and emotionally felt, an instigator and motivator for him to find new literate pathways for learning and action. Emotion can and does create direct connections to literate production. I isolate Ames as just one example of the many moments where emotion is directly tied to literate production, a theme that reoccurs throughout the narratives in this chapter.

My focus is to highlight exactly how emotion connects individuals to their literate selves and more specifically how emotional responses to personal and cultural experiences impacted three participants from my study to become writers. Acknowledging the affective, emotional, and psychological dimensions of writing and the development of writers is essential to embracing writing as process, and writing as socially situated. As Bazerman argues, "….writing may require access to emotions or imaginative constructs that will reverberate with the imaginations and feelings of others or will provide surprise and novelty or comic incongruities. Locating those means of engagement with others and the sources of invention in oneself are also part of the choice making for effective writing…." ("Writing, Cognition, and Affect" 96). And these, more 'internalized' behaviors, are the core of what I am interested in excavating. I consider what emotions and feelings connect writers to the sponsors of their literacy, in order for

us to understand how writing functions in more personal ways. The narratives in this chapter highlight the entanglement between emotion and the embrace of a writing identity, suggesting as Bazerman glosses above, that this negotiation is part of the complex work of the writing process.

A key question that I grappled with in my analysis of the narratives in this chapter is just *how* and in *what* ways emotion connects people to the sponsors of their literacy, I considered in what ways it connects participants to the institutions and forces of their literate development, how is it active and embodied? This line of thinking largely flows from Ahmed and Micciche's theories relative to emotion as a tangible, active, alive force, as one that is not merely held within the individual. Ahmed writes that, "The 'doing' of emotions…is bound up with the sticky relation between signs and bodies: emotions work by working through signs and on bodies to materialize the surfaces and boundaries that are lived as worlds" (191). What Ahmed suggests here is that that emotion helps us to know, learn, and do – they go beyond just something we abstractly *feel*. This claim – that emotion helps us to materialize the relationships, knowledge, experiences, and judgments between individuals – offers us a direct connection to the socially situated nature of literacy and of education more broadly. It is revolutionary to reframe the work of emotion as an agent of action, precisely because we viewed emotion as 'reactive' versus an active and core part of experience and judgment formation (Ahmed 3). In keeping with Ahmed and Micciche I argue that emotion is more than a reaction to a situation, it is an inherent part of how we come to know and experience the world around us, it directly feeds our cognitive functions, it inspires literate action, and how participants reconcile our own literate identities. We must remain attuned to this relationship, to recognize emotion is present and to train ourselves to see when something reverberates with emotion.

By attending to the *doing* of emotion we come to see emotion as tied to language, we come to see that emotions "shape the landscape of our mental and social lives" and are deeply intertwined and bound up with reasoning itself (Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought* 10). Emotion then operates as a form of action and connection to one's literate and educational sponsors; it is a catalyst, the motivation. Much like literacy shapes and connects to an individual's social experience with the world, so too does emotion compel and propel individuals to write and experience the empowerment of language. In the experiences of the narratives found below, literacy looms large and powerfully in their lives, these are people who are deeply empowered, engaged and inspired by language and for whom the connection between literacy and emotion is most apparent. Emotion undergirds the networks that New Literacy Scholars have long focused on – they are intricately woven into the social, cultural, political forces of writer's literate lives, they are often the motivating source for seeking access to literacy and literate materials. Within the spaces of their lives, emotions and feelings directly sponsor literate output, words on the page, and a growing sense of self, as they come to understand their deeply productive literate identities. Emotion revealed here, throughout these narratives is a tool of action and reflection, a space for identity reconciliation, sharing, and sense making; in essence it is the sponsoring and governing force in their lives. These narratives highlight how emotion can be seen as a force for knowledge formation, how it can empower a sense of self and learning, and as such why we must stay attuned to its role in the lives of students and writers everywhere.

Situating Emotion in the Lives of Others: Narrative Interview Profiles

Lucy, Claire and Brian each come from vastly different socioeconomic and racial backgrounds, but they do have one thing in common: they view themselves as writers and they write in a multiplicity of contexts and for a variety of purposes. The story though, of just how

they came to be writers and in what ways writing and literacy impinges upon their lives is layered and complex. Their narratives, when viewed together, highlight the multiple forms emotion takes as a motivating agent of literacy, the events, responses, and effects of living as emotional beings in the world of writing and language. I find it useful to read the narratives independently and yet together. One central task that I faced as a researcher is how to best present the emotional interior lives of participants even when that might not have been overtly the question or responses that we discussed in our interview. I worked toward this goal by clearly articulating the life story of each participant, highlighting what emotion does, what it enacts in the experience of participants' writing and education lives, and then by bringing them together in a deeper discussion with one another and highlighting the overlapping force that emotion plays.

The choice to make the narratives the centerpiece of my work throughout each of these chapters is explicit and connected to my goals of unveiling emotion in the life history of writers and learners. I also utilize theoretical lenses from Brandt, Royster, Bazerman and others to read through the notion of ethos, of literary and emotional embodiment, and identity. After sharing and analyzing these narratives I offer four key conclusions and articulate how I arrive at these in my analysis. In reading carefully how these students respond to their life events, we see how emotion informs their literate activities and sense of self. In these narratives we see emotion operating as a sponsor albeit in different ways, for different purposes and motivations, we see it shaping writing identity, production, and the student's sense of self. Emotion is a powerful force to connect students to sponsors, a motivating agent and resource, the foundation and source for writers to turn to the page to write, to develop their sense of ethos, their sense of self.

Brian: The Power of Literacy to 'Save' – Developing the Ethos of a Writer

I begin my analysis on the relationship between emotion, and the sponsorship of writing with Brian, a young African American who was 21 at the time I interviewed him for this project. I first met Brian as a sixteen-year-old high school student in New York City. He was a soft-spoken and relatively shy student, who would rarely volunteer in class. I would often attend and observe his English and Language Arts class, as a research assistant during my masters program before the afterschool program that I helped to co-lead as a part of the research began. In spite of his quiet nature in class, Brian talked to me of his passion for screen writing and movie making with the ease and confidence that very few teenagers possess. He was full of banter, one-liners, and an infectiously bright laugh that would echo through the halls of the empty school and classrooms. I was immediately taken and drawn to his ability to speak so perceptively about what made writing, and screenwriting in particular, so singularly impactful to him. Brian's prolific writing and creative drive inspired me and motivated me to ask deeper questions about the motivations and mindset of someone who so readily believed and embraced the power and possibility of literacy. Throughout the course of our time working together, I learned much about Brian's life and background and when I began this project I knew that I wanted to speak with him in a more structured and focused manner to hear what had developed and changed in the intervening years since we had worked together. This is just to say that I care deeply about all my participants, but I probably feel the most sense of duty and connection to Brian, because I have known him since he was a young teenager and care for him and his success deeply. I have watched with an immense sense of joy and satisfaction as he has set goals for himself and pushed himself to reach them, constantly awed by what he is able to accomplish in the face of circumstances that are not always in his favor.

Brian's life history demonstrates how being in tune with feeling and emotion can lead to the compelling act of writing, and in his case, writing prolifically and in mass volumes – in his narrative we see how establishing his ethos as a writer is emotionally sponsored and deeply tied to his sense of self. I connect to theorists like Jacqueline Jones Royster and Sharon Crowley, in their discussion of writing ethos, and the ways in which this creation of ethos offers agency and power, especially for people of color. As Royster clarifies, "one of the first tasks a writer faces is the need to form an ethos, a way of being in the world, that permits the writer to create and present to the world a dynamic speaking and writing self" (168). Royster articulates how "situated ethos" (defined as the existence of relationships within language spaces that require African American women writers "to define themselves against stereotypes and cultural expectations" and "invented ethos" (or the "invention of themselves in writing space and to create their own sense of authority, agency, and power within the text") as deeply structuring the experiences of African American women writers as they sought to express themselves and empower themselves through language and seek agency (168). In Brian's story we see this pull of a writerly ethos, this sense of self-articulation through his emotional response to his surrounding life, trauma of losing a father, and in direct retaliation against the expected norms of the neighborhoods he grew up in. Brian uses writing as a form of empowerment and self-negotiation, as a way to emotionally connect with others around him and to himself, he views writing as a kind of 'salvation' to borrow Scribner's metaphor, it held a deeply felt and emotional position in his life. I see ethos then (in his life especially) as inherently connected to the emotional conditions within which the writer is writing, bound and connected to the individuals' efforts to acquire agency and power.

At the time of our interview in March of 2015, Brian was living in Brownsville Brooklyn where he grew up, one of the more disadvantaged and high crime neighborhoods in the borough of Brooklyn. He was studying film making at Brooklyn College, continuing to pursue his dream of being a filmmaker, producer, and writer. Brian grew up in a large family with eight kids. His father died when he was seven years old from cancer and his mother struggled to make ends meet through a series of odd jobs and then after an on-the-job accident, through disability payments. Even though much of Brian's life was chaotic growing up, he remembers his family and their interactions warmly and positively. He recalls an idyllic time before moving to Brownsville, when he lived with his grandmother in East New York. He explains nostalgically that, "it was you know, it was fun, it wasn't you know worrying about what people say and this and that, it was just, at that time I was living my life as a child...it is not like now where Jesus Christ you can't even step outside without a little pow, pow [making a gun gesture] or someone might get shot, but it was just a fun environment, my childhood was just so much fun, I mean if I could go back and just relive it one more time, that would be a fricken' amazing…". For Brian, this moment stood out because it is in such stark contrast to the other early memories in his life, of losing his father and getting caught up in challenging circumstances in this own neighborhood. In many ways we can see writing as a recovery of his life, it is in no small part an attempt to get back to some of this innocence and childhood connection in his life, a continual reliving and recapturing of something he knows he will never experience again in the same way, as he remains committed to reflecting and writing coming of age stories and complex family relationships. At each step in his development of a writing ethos, I see Brian drawing from his background, a nostalgic connection to the past, from his familial challenges, drawing from a deep emotional well in order to develop himself as a writer and to connect with his audiences.

Brian's trajectory as a writer profoundly exemplifies the relationship between personal experience and literacy sponsorship and production. From an early age Brian identifies himself as different, as an "awkward, but intelligent child." He was aware of the fact that he was unique, that the very things he was drawn to (writing in particular) were inherently different from other kids his age. He explains, "I was not the typical young boy who used to play sports, I was a child who would [go] with my notepad, and write. Intelligence wise, it was great, it was a stage of development that was happening, and I knew I was on to something I just didn't know where it was going, and that was around when I was 10…". The theme that Brian uses throughout his narrative to describe this early time of his life is the "development stage," that is he sees himself as beginning to develop as a thinker and writer during this time period, that he was laying the foundation to an essential piece of the writer he was to become later on. It was the combination of coming from a large and loud family, a chaotic neighborhood and watching a lot of Tyler Perry movies and reading the screen plays that pushed Brian to consider writing his own. It was this delight he felt in watching and reading about family dramas and interpersonal relationships that reinforced his own desire to write screenplays and recover a strong "foundation" by expressing his own feelings. "I just started to write personal feelings that I was going through you know, that my family was going through and going back to finding hope in that foundation is going to come back…I was just writing them down, and that is when I started to hear, character A, character B, so it was just having a conversation." In many ways this 'conversation' is something that Brian continues to engage in throughout the course of his writing life, the ongoing, dynamic conversation of trying to make sense of his life and relationships while sharing it with others. For Brian, this conversation was best had in the work of screenplays, where he can create relationships in real time, and where his emotionality could be adequately displayed by the

characters on the page. Just like Royster's subjects are drawn to the essay as a form for reconciliation and reflection, the screenplay is particularly important to him as a writer, as a means to cement and explore the emotional undercurrents of the people and places around him in 'real' time.

It was the loss of Brian's father that motivated him and pushed him to write as a form of recovery, emotional reckoning, and sense making. He describes the experience of losing his dad with raw emotion still to this day, he recalls being the first child to wake up, seeing his dad laying down on the family's living room floor, covered with a white sheet and being aware that the world had shifted irrevocably. "…At that moment I knew that the foundation left, I knew it was like, it was like part of the piece of the puzzle had left the building and that piece is not coming back. So now the puzzle have [sic] to find a way to really navigate around and they can't replace that piece, but they have to find a way to work without that piece being there." One of Brian's projects then, was to turn to writing as a way to reinsert that piece and foundation into his life to reconcile his own feelings of grief at the loss of his father and the knowledge that he would forever live without one that he would never speak with him again. Brian's first screenplay that he recalls writing, was about a guy who loses his dad, "basically my story" he says – in this sense there is a very clear connection between the emotional feelings of loss connected to his father and literate production.

Yet at the same time Brian's embrace of writing, though fueled by a trauma in this instance, is imbued with many emotional responses and reactions to the world around him, not only by the feeling of loss. It is not simply that he *works out* his emotional responses in writing, but rather, he uses writing as a form of knowledge and identity making, as a way to connect with others in his community and to share his vision with the world. Just as Ames is pulled to writing

as a means to reconcile and understand his emotional response to racism, to being in jail, Brian describes being compelled to write to understand himself, and the loss of an important person in his life – emotion is the tie that binds him to the wider sponsoring of writing facilitated by teachers, school, movies and books. Brian turns to writing for stability and empowerment, to paraphrase Ralph Cintron, Brian works to create respect through his writing, under emotional and personal conditions where there is little to no respect (164). When conditions are less than ideal, when these conditions work against your sense of self and humanity, there is a kind of active response through words, creativity, and action. For Brian writing was a way to, in his words "navigate" when you "can't replace that piece" of the puzzle, to restore order and a sense of self after loss. In this way emotion is both the response to the situation, and the action undertaken to work against it and make sense of it.

This action suggests an important relationship between writing and emotion and specifically the mutually reinforcing relationship between the two. It is not only interesting to me that Brian turned to writing as a way to directly translate and make sense of emotions surrounding his father's death, I think that is a more expected type of response. But rather, it is significant that this writing continued in new forms, as a way to create his ethos and sense of self as a writer and intellectual. And this is clear in how Brian thinks about himself still to this day. One of the elements of Brian's story that was most compelling to me during our interview was his ability to articulate the themes of his life so clearly, as though he was verbally composing the screenplay of his life. Even in spite of this awareness and internal drive, Brian did not always feel he belonged in school, but writing was a constant and the place he turned for personal refuge. Brian is intensely aware of where he has been and where he wants to go as an artist,

using each opportunity he is given to reflect and connect to his life and sense of self more deeply, to establish his ethos and his sense of self as a writer.

Though Brian speaks at length about his impulses and inspiration as a writer, he recalls very few specific memories of schooling in his early elementary school period, instead recalling his life in relationship to the loss of his father, and to the writing that he was engaging in at the time. During late elementary school Brian describes being bullied for being too dark-skinned, he recalls being called names and being labeled as gay because he was a writer. Yet still, even though writing was the object of the teasing, he describes writing as an "escape" as a way to silence voices and find calm. He explains, "writing was a different world for me, it was a peaceful world that I could just sit down … it wasn't a judgment zone, it wasn't people screaming in your ear, it wasn't this and that, it was just me paper, pen and feelings, being all thrown on that sheet…" This relationship to writing and to the text itself is something that has sustained Brian throughout the course of his life. He spoke often of wanting to resist categorization, to resist stereotypes of race, masculinity, schooling, through writing, and that for him it was the breaking of categories that helped to define and compel him. I see Brian pushing against what Vershawn Ashanti Young terms the "burden of black male racial performance" (131). That is, there are particular societally imposed ways in which black males need to act and if they do not, they are questioned, maligned, seen as not fitting in. I heard this same sentiment of the burden of 'performing race' echoed from other participants in my study. For Brian writing was a release and an escape, a response to challenging moments, and a chance to reconfigure the type of person that he wanted to be on the page, to make sense of himself and the world through creating and language. To return to Royster, Brian's writing echoes that sense of "situated ethos" where he can define himself against the burden of racial performance, where he can step away from the

expectations placed on him. And I maintain this process is facilitated by an emotional underpinning beneath it all, it serves as the connective tissue that draws him to the space of the page.

In the midst of these personal challenges Brian helped his mom take care of brothers and sisters, including a brother who was autistic, he himself lived with a slight learning disability, and he navigated through a less than supportive neighborhood and schooling environment. Brian started off his high school experience in a large regional high school in Brooklyn. He describes this time as transitional, one where he was trying to assert himself and his identity as a writer, struggling to fit in with others, feeling dismayed with school as he began to cut class, and trying to make sense of how to get school to work for him. Brian explains, "I felt like oh my gosh I am a writer, I should be producing movies and this and that, I was fricken 14, 15, I mean what the hell do I know about producing movies? But I felt that way and that is what really got in my way, because that ego was there and I felt like oh I didn't need an education." It was Brian's mother who told him that if he did not go to school however, than he could not live at home so he capitulated. At the same time however, Brian knew he could not stay motivated at the school he was currently attending, which he described as "toxic." Along with a supportive high school teacher, he began to come up with a list of possible alternative schools that he might attend.

Eventually Brian ended up at a transfer high school in Manhattan, which is where I met him as a teenager. The school is a small, community based high school that is designed to support and serve students who are over-aged and under-credited, but are looking to earn their high school diplomas and graduate or transition to college or a career. For Brian, the smaller atmosphere and more one-on-one attention from teachers was path altering in many ways. He explains that the teachers were "motivated, innovative" and that they "showed their commitment

to their students." This sense of community, commitment and nurturing was important to someone like Brian, who felt that was lost in his own life at an early age, he described coming into the environment as getting closer to the foundation and support that he felt had faded away once his father had passed away – the school and the relationships formed there were essential to his sense of self, his emotional well-being. Moreover, Brian began to realize that emotional support was something that he needed, that as internally driven as he was, the people and teachers at his previous school had left him feeling disconnected and uninspired, and exceedingly vulnerable to challenges around him. And throughout this commitment of support from teachers and students Brian continued to write. It imbued in him the feeling of belonging and connectedness, the emotional response of being heard and supported. Emotion then was both the inspiration and the outcome of his life. Writing for Brian represented the common thread, the element that most motivated him and pushed him forward, through the challenges at home and at school, in this sense he embraced his outsider 'artist' status, as the piece that separated him and compelled him in a different way than other students. At the time we were working together Brian had incredible patience, often sitting down in our after school program editing lines of dialogue and using his spring breaks to churn out 120 page screenplays. In pushing Brian to consider exactly how and where his motivation came from, he underscored the sense of embodying the life and work of a writer.

> …I always told myself if you are going to be a writer, be a writer, don't just say it, be it, ***be*** about it. That's what they used to say on the streets, don't just **say** about it, ***be*** about it. So I challenged myself, going back to challenging myself, writing those 120 pages, staying up those late nights…and it was just within me, and I just have to live up to what I know, you know, what I said I was going to do. You know be a writer, BE a writer.

This drive toward authenticity, to be a writer who truly writes, is connected to that ethos of identifying as a writer; it is bound to his sense of self, to his emotional connection to his father,

family, and sense of self. Even through challenging moments in high school, a mess up in credit hours that kept him back for a year, the long arduous march toward obtaining all of his perquisites, he was singularly motivated by this drive to live completely as a writer, as a creator intent on sharing and connecting with others.

And it was this drive, the combination of an ethos as a writer, an emotional connection to the act of literacy and writing that encouraged Brian to go the next step and apply to community college. This transition however was fraught with a sense of fear and dread for Brian, the feeling that he did not belong or could not make it. This is also the other side to literacy and schooling, the side that often can bring about shame and fear, the sense that there is a "right" way to be in the world, that leaves struggling students wondering if they can succeed. In this way institutions are powerful, looming presences in the lives of students. Brian explains, "…it was nerve wracking, because I am like, I just graduated high school. The feelings that I felt on the first day of high school came, had returned on the first day of college, 'cause I'm like oh my god, I don't know anybody…I was nervous, I was anxious, I was shy, all that was just in me. Because I'm like I don't know no one here, it's a new environment what is going on, if I say something wrong, all these questions I just wondered in my head." Eventually though, he found his way in community college, seeking friends to help support him and using his strengths as a writer to find success in some of his courses and to eventually transfer from the community college to the initial school he applied to. Brian used writing as a way to write himself into school, it was the bridge and tool that he knew brought him success and he used it to propel him forward in school, helping him overcome the emotional turmoil of a new school and environment and fueling his drive to succeed.

In this context, writing and creating for Brian is an act to see himself and others more clearly, to write what he knows and to bring his vision about others to a larger audience of people, to share his story and create connection by sharing the wider story of the African American experience. For Brian the act of writing is inherently embodied, it is an act of empathy an act of response to the world around him, he needs to write as a part of the emotional work he is doing. It is both within him and the extension of the work of his literate mind and body, his emotional response to school, loss, and power that draws him in (Fleckenstein, Haas, Miller). Brian and I talked often towards the end of our discussion about where he is now with his film and writing projects and where he sees himself going as an artist. He has transitioned from writing feature length films to shorter web series and TV shows, in addition he has made an effort to network with influencers in the filmmaking world and secured himself a writing partner. His college professors in film encouraged him and he sought as much experience behind the camera and on a set as he could find. And, in the fall of 2016 Brian announced that the series he had been working on, a series that follows a group of young people living in Brownsville, would be available for streaming on Amazon. Brian was compelled to write, create, and produce films and TV that are driven by characters, by drama and strong experiences, he spends time populating his art with the inspiration of those he has met in his life in order to connect with others around him. “I lived it, I feel like a lot of students can relate to it, I feel like if they start to see themselves portrayed in a positive light on television that they will feel like OK the industry does care about us, they really do care that we are also human beings, we are not just kids you know going through financial aid situations, and all this stuff, this is real topics, they are talking about it, so let us as viewers tune in.” Part of this connects to a space of inspiration for Brian, of wanting to display and convey a broader spectrum of the lives and experiences of people in his

life and community and those coming of age stories that paint a deeper picture of how lives and individuals are made.

Brian is consumed by a sense of ethos as a writer, he emotionally identifies as an artist and his initial draw to write about an emotional event eventually translated to a different sense of action and sense of self. Yet still Brian is aware of the incredible bias and barriers that exist in the film industry for him as an African American male, largely mirroring the racial challenges he faced in his own life. Though he takes a lot of inspiration from people that he names frequently: Tyler Perry, Spike Lee, Gina Prince Blythwalde, Shonda Rhymes, and Ava Duvernay, he recognizes the inherent racism in the film industry. When I asked him what it means for him to be an African American male in the industry he explained: "…it just means I have to work even harder, and put in the work, not just put out BS. That's why I am so, on key when it comes to writing, and people are like you wrote 9 drafts! Because I am putting in the work, and if I don't put in the work, people are not going to take me seriously…" This was a common refrain amongst students of color that I interviewed. It also underscores for Brian, that the only way out was through, through his writing, his own sense of hard work and perseverance, it is this sense of self and who he is that he so clearly underscores as being the central reason for his own productivity as a writer. He has absorbed the not so subtle, but powerful, social messages about his race, and attempted to use his own focus and drive to work against them. And yet as important as those initial familiar moments of struggle are for Brian, it is not something that solely defines his experience as an artist. Brian's story lays within him, the motivation, the work to belong, to be the best or better than the best, and yet, he is not consumed by the emotional response to his father's death it is instead absorbed within him.

Emotion for Brian, and more broadly in the lives of individuals, is most effective here when it elicits a reaction, an action, a response to the event. Put simplistically, Brian writes as a means to recover or make sense of the loss of a father. It is the wellspring, the source, the initial motivation, and yet it becomes woven more tightly and less obviously perhaps over time – what emotion is doing here is turning Brian into a writer, into a person who inscribes his story in various ways, and seeks to connect to the world around him through the stories of others in his community. To return to Ahmed, emotional struggle is not just about discovering our good and bad feelings and then expressing them, but about what we do as a result of these feelings. "[emotions] are about how we are moved by feelings into a different relation to the norms that we wish to contest, or the wounds we wish to heal. Moving here is not about 'moving on,' or about 'using' emotions to move away, by moving and being moved as a form of labour [sic] or work, which opens up different kinds of attachments to others, in part through the recognition of this work *as* work" (201). Here Brian uses emotion to engage in the work of literacy, of writing, of story sharing, of his ethos – emotion then is the opening up of possibility here, the anger or pain turning into potentiality and action. He explains:

> I want someone to know about my story, you will receive a message, of moving forward, you will get the twists and the turns that everybody love, at the end of the day you will see a young African American man, not feeding into the no's and really creating his own yes so that he can put his stories out there, so that when you watch [my] material, you can feel that he put his heart and work into this …I have to connect with my audience because I know what my audience want, I know when somebody see film [from me] OK, they are walking into thinking that they know but they leave, wow, it's like come as you are, you are going to leave different…it is just the beginning and the book is never going to close it is just going to continue to be written, that chapter is done but it is a new chapter that is being evolved and now it is in the process of being written.

Brian also finds inspiration and connection beyond simply a desire for personal and individual success, for him it is about the audience, about making those personal emotional connections to others through art. Writing for him is inextricably linked to his sense of self, it is in that way

inherently emotional. At the same time that he finds inspiration in motivating his family, Brian is aware of this impact and he wants to use his story and his own life as a way to connect with others. His personal story, like those people that he writes about and directs, is a narrative force – in it there are plot, twists and turns, and ultimately (he hopes, and I hope) a story of triumph and success.

Lucy and Claire: Naming Emotion as Central to Empowerment and Learning

The stories of Lucy and Claire echo Brian's story in that they also view themselves, over the course of their lives, as writers. Writing for both of these young women, similar to Brian's relationship, has a profound effect on their identities and sense of self. From a young age both Lucy and Claire turned to writing, and reading, as a way to turn against the strain of personal and familial challenges and to make sense of their internal emotional lives. And similar to Brian this relationship to writing grows, deepens, and shifts over time especially as their in school writing personas develop. In spite of these shared similarities, we also see emotion working differently in these narratives, perhaps more overtly in how each of these young women understands themselves. These truths suggest the dynamic and reflexivity of emotion, the ways in which it is multi-pronged and unique to each individual and just how emotion can serve action and identity in complex ways. Lucy and Claire, though coming from vastly different socioeconomic and familial backgrounds, are more easily able to identify and name their emotions and are more readily comfortable naming and identifying emotion and personal trauma as a clear sponsor of their writing identities. In addition, both Lucy and Claire identify as living with a disability, as a more significant part of their schooling experiences and personal identities. Unlike Brian, Lucy and Claire had clearer personal sponsors (often times teachers) that encouraged their emotional sponsorship and grappling with self. Each one of them used writing to make sense of their

identities and personal traumas in unique ways, drawing upon their emotional wells to articulate their experiences and sense of self through both schooling and writing.

Lucy grew up in Milwaukee, Wisconsin and like many people living in the highly segregated city of Milwaukee she identifies the neighborhoods based upon what ethnic or racial groups lives there. Lucy, who identifies as being 'Mexican' is a savvy, smart, articulate person who has a great sense of how to express her feelings and personal view points, honed through years of introspective writing and experiences in therapy. Emotionally, Lucy uses writing and literacy in her life in similar ways to Brian, as a means for self-exploration, but also as an escape and refuge from her life, even if her writing was not only about those events, she used writing to establish her identity, create and develop respect, and as a means to self negotiate. Lucy has a kind of boundless energy, talking dynamically and quickly with little prompting, dressed in bright clothes and bright lipstick that reflect the energy she gives off during the course of our interview. She spent much of her youth searching for a connection to those around her, seeking to fit in, and to as she puts it, 'identify' with others. This sense of connection to others occurred to a varying degree of success, ebbing and flowing throughout core moments in her life. She grew up as a self identified bookworm, someone that loved school and excelled at it and was easily able to navigate the social complexities and realities of where she lived. School and language was in many ways a refuge, from a chaotic family life, from a father with substance abuse issues, from neighborhood schools that were less than welcoming, and from a disability that she had to come to terms with early on in her schooling experience. Schooling for Lucy was a productive way to assimilate, something that she identifies throughout our interview as essential to her survival and to the survival of her family. Many of the most difficult moments in Lucy's life were times where perhaps assimilation (because of her disability, race, her father's

drinking problem, or her own skepticism of the world) felt unnamable and unexplainable to her. Lucy is very direct about how chaotic and challenging her growing up experience was, stating, "it was just constant chaos, it was awful." Literacy and writing then became a strategy for Lucy to assimilate within the dominant culture, to slip in, to connect, to find empowerment and connection with others. She explained at one point "we couldn't talk about feelings at home, and I was told [by family] I couldn't talk about feelings at home" so in reaction to that she turned inward, to texts, to the page, to her own identity work as a writer to work through her emotions.

Claire, another young woman that I met through a fellow writing teacher, described similarly positive feelings toward literacy and writing that began early on in her life. Claire described her growing up experience as one of carefree curiosity. Unlike Lucy, she grew up in an upper middle class household in a suburb of Chicago where her mother held a master's degree in math and her father had a PhD in Biology/Chemistry. Claire recalled always knowing that education was centrally important to the lives of her parents and as a result was important to her. Similar to Lucy, Claire identified herself as an avid reader and writer from an early age. Her parents tell a story about her writing at four years old, and she explains that this story exemplifies' the type of child she was growing up. She continues, "we were at Six Flags, and I was obsessed with writing even from a young age, so I would take my…composition notebook in the line, and be writing in the bugs bunny [ride] line or something, and all the other kids would be playing with their Barbie's and I would be like trying to write my story…" Claire went on to describe writing as the form of processing and making meaning that she was most drawn to. She described creating her own form of knowledge by asking people questions, writing it down and "compartmentalizing" her experiences on paper. This relationship continued throughout her early elementary school experiences where she remembers excitedly participating

in writing workshops, and fondly recalls publishing a book with original drawings in second grade. In essence, writing and education offered Claire a sense of freedom and empowerment, not just from personal challenges, but out of a genuine interest in the work of writing. She explains that her experiences writing in school, "really influenced me in the way that I thought of writing as more of a freeing thing, rather than something that needed to be really, I don't know pinned down. I think a lot of people think that about writing, that it has to be a certain way, and having that freedom was really useful I think." Claire's ability to embrace writing as a form of processing, of knowledge formation and most specifically as a space for freedom, continued throughout her life and pushed her to view herself as a writer from a young age.

Lucy described her growing up experience as 'chaotic' and as a reaction to this chaos, language, reading, and writing became a kind of escape and a way to establish her sense of self and personal belonging. She was trying to work out her emotions in writing and better connect to her peers and classmates. In this sense she was deeply empowered by narrative and language, responding to emotional situations in her life by developing and creating stories of her own. She explains: "I read everything I could get my hands on...I read everything...I made up stories constantly I was constantly playing pretend, I just, I escaped. And at the time it seemed normal, it was just OK this is what I enjoy doing, but now as an adult I am like hey, this was a coping method for living in a chaotic environment." Literacy was a refuge, a way to cope and understand feelings and emotions that perhaps she might not have otherwise been able to process. Lucy also turned to language as comfort and as a means to better live with her diagnosis of spastic diplegia cerebral palsy as a child which she identified as an emotional 'coping mechanism'. Lucy describes a time when physical activity was cut-off and limited in her life, when as a kindergartener she was bound to a wheel chair and when reading and language

provided support and comfort during moments when she would otherwise feel vulnerable and exposed. Lucy explained that though she felt visually and physically different than her peers, she felt comfortable in school because of the consistently positive work she was producing. This sense of identifying herself as smart helped Lucy to make friends and fit in, in ways that she otherwise would not – school was the route to find connection and to dismiss the vulnerability that was a part of feeling different or separated from those around her. She was validated and told by teachers, tests, and friends that she knew more words, read faster, and comprehended more quickly than her classmates.

After transitioning to college Claire described how previously diagnosed (and managed) ADHD and anxiety began to overwhelm her as a result of entering a completely new and foreign environment. The transition kicked off a long series of mental health challenges that Claire faced. She had to say goodbye to a long-term boyfriend who attended a different school and she felt disconnected during her transition to a new setting. This led Claire to seek substances, pot and alcohol, as coping mechanism from her sense of disconnected and disillusion at being in college. During the course of her freshman year Claire's personal life started to unravel. Her parent's marriage was strained and deteriorating, just as her own relationship was ending with the long-term boyfriend she had in high school. She struggled to fit in with people in her dorm, and during the summer after her freshman year it kind of came to a head. She describes this time as immensely psychologically overwhelming.

> I just remember struggling a lot then with my mental health, and I was very anxious, and everything just felt really overwhelming, and I didn't know how to relate what was going on with me so no one in my family had ever gotten help for their problems, which for me I was like, I can't live like this, so I started I didn't know if I should go to therapy or what, but my mom sort of used it more as a punishment more so, like you have to go to therapy because you are crazy and so I didn't really want to go.

Yet at the same time Claire knew she needed help, though she did not feel the support of those around her. After returning to campus for her sophomore year Claire had a panic attack within the first few weeks of school and was encouraged to take time off for a semester, which she did. During the break from school Claire went into an outpatient mental health program, where she met regularly with a therapist while also attending group therapy sessions. She found support in managing her anxiety and depression, managing an eating disorder that emerged when she moved away to school, and learned to manage stress and anger caused from an erratic relationship with her mother and father.

This time was one of extreme transition and empowerment for Claire. She describes the experience of leaving school as difficult by clarifying because it helped her to take responsibility for her personal mental health. Though Claire was made vulnerable as a result of what she calls her "invisible disability," she also knew that she needed to share and speak about it out loud, to "make sense" through the sharing, to construct her own knowledge and a sense of self in this process. It was this sense of reflection and commitment to reconnect to herself that Claire leveraged in her decision to return to school. When Claire returned to school she tried many different strategies to feel more comfortable and connected to the community. She searched for therapy locally, including turning to the university health services, which she found were not supportive or responsive to her specific needs. Claire found the experience of managing her mental health at school as a significant challenge. She went from a group therapy environment where everyone shared their vulnerabilities equally to a university setting where she felt she had to hide her mental health issues. Claire describes this tension upon returning to school. "It was really hard because I was coming from a space where everybody was talking about it [their problems] really openly, because DBT is group therapy, so you are talking to other people all the

time about your problems, and it becomes normal, and then you go out into the world, and you tell people you were in a lot of therapy and they are like, she's a nut…I knew that socially it was not acceptable to talk about a lot of the time." Similar to Lucy here, Claire articulated having a sense of what she should and should not share with others, as she worked to read the emotional pulse of a situation and make sense of how to fit into those spaces in a connective, honest, and truthful manner.

A combination of events helped Claire to adjust to school and to develop her sense of empowerment – writing and writing courses reentered her life during a time when she needed emotional support and emotional recovery. She sought support from disability resources on campus that helped advocate for accommodations in her classroom. In addition, Claire began to find supportive teachers and classes where she could open up about herself and forge connections with other students and individuals especially through writing. In many ways it was this return to language that was most empowering and clarifying for Claire and it was an intermediate writing class and writing instructor that helped reconnect Claire to her sense of self in a time of need. Claire describes this class as incredibly "validating" during a time of transition when she needed confidence and connection. She explains, "I hadn't been identifying as a writer since maybe sometime in high school, maybe since sophomore year of high school and she really made me realize that I was a writer and that I could do these things…and just like knowing that a teacher that I really got along with, could validate me even though they knew all about my disability..." This course and this teacher, happened during a time of deep transition and vulnerability for Claire as she came back from a break and worked to manager her sense of self and her personal battle with anxiety.

It was the combination of a validating and supportive course, along with a space to finally work through her understanding of herself through writing that enabled Claire to feel empowered and propelled by school. Taking transformative writing classes, and being inspired by these experiences also helped motivate Claire to become an English major and to apply (and get accepted to) a peer writing mentor program where she taught other students. Claire described this as an opportunity to reconnect to the sense of freedom that writing and language had given her in her early experiences with writing. In one of her creative writing classes she wrote about her own mental health struggle and experiences with therapy, which helped her to "process" her struggle and encourage others to seek the help they need. She finally found a place in school where she belonged and where she could share herself emotionally with others in class and through writing. The empowerment that Claire received in therapy as a means to name her feelings, combined with the ability to share her story via writing, translated into a sense of acceptance and belonging in school. There has of course been a long history of those turning to writing as a means to heal past traumas and emotional experiences, and studies from those such as James Pennebaker suggest that writing is in essence a way to put into words those entities emotionally weighing us down, offering us a better sense of self, a sense of emotional belonging and personal identification (Pennebaker). Because of her previous connection to writing Claire once again discovered her own emotional belonging in school and through the work of writing and reflection. It is empowering and confidence building to have one's emotions and feelings and experiences validated, either verbally through the support of teachers and sharing as Claire experienced, or using language as a tool for connection and validation. Claire, like Brian uses writing as a means of building relation to others, of empowering herself and others through language.

As Lucy transitioned into college she continued to remain reflective about her identity and sense of self. Much of what she endured during her youth (essentially taking care of her own father), both in the challenges she faced at home and in school, helped to give her confidence during this transition, but she also experienced the more typical emotional challenges of being away from home for the first time and being tasked with taking care of herself in a new way. One of Lucy's strategies for dealing with this emotional transition to school was trying to find 'herself' in the content of her schooling. School was the constant entity in Lucy's life that had supported her throughout a turbulent upbringing and this continued in her transition to college. It was one class in particular about the *frontera that* continued to push her sense of identity and self forward. She describes this shift that occurred as result of being exposed to stories, history and literature of other chicana/o people, deepening her own sense of herself as someone with race and history:

> …I learned that I too could be a chicana and that the color of my skin or whether or not I speak Spanish, or any of those other things that I always had on this check-list that legitimized my identity none of that mattered, it didn't matter at all. And anyone who said it mattered, they don't matter. It offered up a whole realm of writers, and thinkers and activists and theorists who understood the intersectionality of being a person of color and being poor, which is something I had always lacked elsewhere.

Lucy's openness and desire to critique and understand herself on a deeper level was I believe fueled by the fact that she was deeply in touch with her emotionality and reflective about her upbringing and proclivity toward language and story telling. There is this sense that she was able to reflect deeply and tell a story of herself that made sense that is contextualized and connected, and I believe that is sponsored by emotion in many ways. She was also incredibly drawn to the stories of others, and she looked for opportunities to deepen this connection by working with the Somos Latinos program, which collects oral histories from Latina activists in Wisconsin.

In articulating the inherent power of stories Lucy reveals her own beliefs about how composing, collecting, and utilizing language is empowering and core to knowledge, to identity to a sense of self. Further, Lucy gained a sense of cultural affiliation from the course, acquiring a new vocabulary to talk about and understand her sense of self and her emotional relationship to her race and identity. She came to understand her own racial and body identity through the language and stories of others and in many ways her collection of narratives of other chicana women is a kind of giving back of that same quality and purpose. She explains, "I didn't read a book with a Latina character in it until high school... I can't think of a book with a disabled character who is the main character, or even one that is visibly disabled. So things like that, when you aren't represented in the educational system in a way, you don't want to participate in it." All of a sudden Lucy saw and experienced the world in new ways, by having the language and vocabulary to further contemplate herself and to 'see' herself in school, to feel connect to the wider social and cultural world. This experience was similar to Lucy's explanation of making sense of her identity as a woman with a disability upon encountering an essay by Nancy Maiers entitled "On Being a Cripple" in her high school AP English class. She describes her encounter with this text as a prompting a profound shift in her sense of self that equally opened her up to new modes of thinking and empowered her to rethink her own relationship to disability.

> …this woman [in the essays] she was talking about, she has MS and she was talking about how her body slowly started to break down and suddenly she felt like she couldn't trust it, which is something I never really thought about but now I think about constantly…so to hear someone else say hey I also don't trust my body, it, something inside me clicked and I sort of took that identity on fiercely. I was like, this is it. And ever since then, being disabled has always been a part of my identity and it's not something I try to minimize anymore.

Lucy's description here is a powerful one, and when placed in conjunction with her description of coming to know her racial identity through her class on chicana literature, it suggests the deep

power in naming, in having the vocabulary and ability to know oneself through language. And Lucy's description of becoming more aware and more comfortable with identifying herself as someone with a disability, she underscores the power of this naming. Lucy's personal relationship to her disability prior to reading the Maiers essay was described as one of limitation and vulnerability, one where she felt uncomfortable and disconnected from her classmates and from the public at large – it was precisely her body that reminded her of her difference and her limitations. It was Maiers' personal and emotional reframing of her body in relationship to others, to space, her ability to describe the sense of distrust of the body that helped Lucy to reframe her own sense of self – in essence Maiers' helped to articulate for Lucy an aspect of her identity that she had previously not been able to verbalize or imagine and acquiring this language helped her to reframe her own relationship to empowerment and self. Once again she is able to name herself, through reading, and then through her own work as a writer and student, and this inherently emotional and personal task is facilitated and mediated by writing.

And this relationship between identity, literacy, and knowledge formation brings me to a deeper understanding of the relationship that both Lucy and Claire share toward emotion and sponsorship. Claire and Lucy both viewed school and writing as a place for freedom, knowledge formation, and personal expression, especially in times of hardship. It was emotion that they needed to connect them to school, to writing prompts, to teachers. For Lucy the feeling of being an outsider because of her race and disability, her emotional response of personal pain, and trauma pushed her to seek out the spaces in school to better understand her identity. And ultimately, each young woman, in similar ways to Brian, use writing in a relational, connective manner. They each use the emotional experience of being an outsider (through body or mind) to motivate them to write and connect to these wider sponsors of literacy. When someone

experience exclusion, which is highly emotional, they use language as a means of rebuilding relationships with people, in a kind of healing, reparative way. It was this sense of sharing and emotional sense making that emboldened and distinguished these young women. As Lucy explained to me, she sees the work of emotion and writing as inherently intertwined, "I write because I feel things, I don't write just because it's the physical activity of writing that is enjoyable, no I write because I have a feeling sometimes I have several feelings." In essence how these young women felt about themselves, their identities, their challenges, pushed them to seek out support through language, sponsored their school and literate identities, forged a relational connection to the world through their writing – it emotionally connected them to the sponsors of their writing and literate selves. And as Claire and Lucy's story suggests, this work of belonging and reclamation is facilitated by emotion, naming feelings and personal reflectiveness as a means to create knowledge and inspire action, to create relational connective tissue to other people, readers, and the world.

Excavating the Relationship Between Emotion and Sponsorship: Discussion/Analysis

Joining the narratives of Brian, Lucy and Claire together, articulates the complex and layered force that emotion plays in writing and language development, namely how emotion drives students toward writing, language and connections with others. Brian, Lucy and Claire, are drawn to writing as a force to negotiate their complex feelings around identity, loss, race, and a sense of self – these feel the sponsorship of development in school as writers. They each establish an ethos as a writer in various ways for various purposes, but all three participants use emotion as a way to facilitate this process of identity formation and negotiation – they write to make sense of themselves, to express their emotional centers, to forge relationships with readers. In that process they engage in an emotional sense-making, gaining a better connection to their

emotional centers and their social and personal relationships through the work of writing. Together they represent students who are buoyed by literacy, who stay afloat on the promises of what writing can offer them, in school, in their solitary individual lives, and as a means for work in some cases. And yet we have a hard time naming the impact these forces have on our students and writers. A recent issue of *Composition Forum* in the fall of 2016 dedicated exclusively to emotion suggests that emotion is a centrally motivating and important force in the field and in our understanding of writing and language, even as the editors admit in the introduction to the edition that, "it is difficult to say with certainty what emotion even is" (Weisser et al. 1). Perhaps this admission is one of the core reasons why emotion has been such a challenge for the field; we know it is there, we feel it in our classrooms, in the pieces our students write, we sense it in our research studies and interviews and archival work, but yet we still question what it is and how to precisely name it.

Our inability to precisely define or grapple with emotion signals our need to engage in this reflective work more fully. As researchers we have a desire to know and hold the things we study and yet emotion eludes us, it is present yet slips from our grasp again and again, begging to be pinned down. I believe however, that not recognizing the function that emotion plays is akin to not fully recognizing how identity, race, gender, trauma figures into the experience of writing – that is, we should not and cannot ignore it, and these interviews show us why. We would miss something in these stories, if we do not remain attuned to the emotional contours of what brought Brian, Lucy and Claire to their sense of selves as learners and writers. Not only might we miss the very inspiration behind their work, but the ways in which emotion can serve not only as requisite internal responsive feeling, but rather how it operates as an action, a creation as each participant works to understand themselves as a learner, an artist, an individual. My aim in this

first chapter was to more clearly articulate how emotion functions and moves as a creative and empowering forces. I hope to push this forward by joining emotion to sponsorship, perhaps one of the most recognizable and prolific explanations for how literacy functions and develops, as a means to understand it as not just a background force but as a concrete condition of literacy learning (Brandt, *Literacy*; Vieira), it is active, alive and ever present even if and when it still feels ephemeral (Micciche). From these narratives I draw the following conclusions:

Conclusion 1: Emotion is a grounding, foundational source for writing, learning, and language development – it connects us to the larger sponsors of our literate development. And naming our feelings is essential to this process. Sponsorship is not a singular force buy layered, often "crisscross through many domains" (Brandt, *Literacy* 70). And as Brandt suggests this "synchronization among literacy learning, histories of economic and political struggle, and sponsorship suggests a need for definitions of literacy that better incorporate the ways that literacy actually gets made in the lives of people" (Brandt, *Literacy* 70, 71). Emotion then offers us an attempt to move beyond thinking of merely the "mental or scribal skills that are required to perform reading or writing at a particular level" and toward an understanding of "the origins and makeup of those components themselves" (Brandt, *Literacy* 71). In reading the stories of Brian, Lucy and Claire we can understand how school, teachers, texts, and media might all be clear points of entry to understand how they developed as writers. Yet, emotion grounds the lives and actions of writers, pushing them to take up writing and seek new relationships to language and vocabulary and social worlds. This clarifies the significance of writing as a mediating force for personal reconciliation and understanding, and as the work of knowledge creation both cognitively and emotionally.

The impetus for emotion to push and influence writers is especially obvious in the case of Lucy. Perhaps more than any other student I interviewed Lucy had a profound ability to reflect on the interior of her emotional life, to articulate her emotions, to make connections between her emotions and the work she did in school and in her sense of self. This was the result of a few different factors that all worked together to influence her ability to name and identify her feelings. The first factor was that Lucy's chaotic home life meant she had to grow up quickly – she turned to writing and reading from a young age to push against the challenge and trauma of having an alcoholic father and unstable home life. In addition she faced physical challenges as a result of her disability, and worked to reflect thoughtfully on her feelings around these experiences in addition to meeting with therapists at different times in her life. Her predilection toward writing and the work of being able to name her emotions and personally reflect in therapy highlights how integral emotional connection can be to working through personal conflict and crisis. Emotional work also drew Lucy to writing in the first place, it brought pen to page and in turn there were moments of incredible uplift that Lucy felt through the well-placed essay or narrative assignment that helped to sponsor her literacy development. This suggests the power of emotion to connect us to sponsors – emotion can connect us to those within our family that specifically might push us to write, people and places within school settings, and even texts themselves. Emotion is an integral component to Lucy's life and her ability to see this and articulate it means it has an even more powerful force. As Lucy expressed above, writing for her was about expressing feeling, it was about the emotional connection, without that she would not have been as apt to express herself and compose. In essence writing became a space for her to truly "know" what she was thinking, as she expressed to me in our interview, it was a place to be mindful, reflective, and expressive. It was a forum where she could free herself from the

regulating capacities of schooling and literacy, where she could potentially break convention and reflect on her interior and exterior life. In short emotion facilitated her writing sponsorship and writing emotionally freed her internally. Writing offered her space for emotional understanding and paved the way for her to see herself in amore complex and layered way once she got to school, fully coming to understand herself as an 'intersectional' human with a desire to know and share with others.

This openness of self also impacted others around her. In our class Lucy was a prolific writer and student whose enthusiasm for writing and reflecting had an infectious quality on other students, she loved teaching and learning alongside of them, and sharing with them as well. Her anger, fear, chaos, and empowerment expressed in our interview about her life all mediated her relationship to family, self and education and it came through in her writing. For example in one of her class assignments Lucy decided to write a creative nonfiction piece of writing about alcoholism and addiction, drawing upon her own feelings and experiences of embarrassment, fear and shame to express the experience of living with an alcoholic and encouraging others how to handle and deal with the experience. Seeing emotion as central to the grounding, relational experience to writing is central to Lucy's story. Various teachers, particular essays, other students, narrative writing projects, and other broader institutional support sponsor Lucy in school, but central to that is her emotional connection to these elements. Literacy practices are often bound to the social, cultural, and emotional contours of a person's life (Brandt and Clinton; Besnier). Recognizing this reality helps us as educators to see the complexity of emotion as a form for motivation, and offering students the chance to reflect and name their feelings might have a positive and connective effect on their educational development. Without paying attention to emotion we might miss the more acute and nuanced events that lead to Lucy as a writer and

thinker, how the chaos, anger and fear informs her writing and encourages her to grow. Instead of seeing the institutions (or people) themselves as being the only sponsors of literacy, it is important we see how the emotional components of Lucy's life negotiated and mediated her connection to the sponsoring agents in her life, and that we pay attention to the undercurrents of individual sponsorship.

In the case of Brian we saw him turn to writing after the death of his father as a way to 'make sense' of his feelings of loss and sadness. As Brian puts it, the piece dealing with the loss of his father "was actually the first thing I had written, how I felt without having dad, you know how it felt like I am seeing everybody else you know with their dads … I can't talk to him anymore…but that is where all that came from, that is the first thing that I had written you know, when I was in the development stage of writing." That initial motivation becomes a sustaining factor for his writing over time – again and again Brian turns to the work of writing not only to grapple with the emotional trauma of loss and family relationships, but because the work of that initial motivation was a positive one, because writing has a way of sense making and personal formation and understanding for him and he desires to share his vision and stories with others. Though this desire to create is always there, he then translates this emotion into a sense of an ethos as writer and artist, working to establish himself as a storyteller with his audience ultimately seeking connection and validation through the stories he shares with others. In Claire's experience, an emotional response to a traumatic moment of anxiety and personal struggle fueled her desire to find an academic home that honored her desire to read, share, and teach the work of storytelling to others. The courses she took upon returning to school pushed her to develop independent literacy skills and made her feel valuable while also inspiring her to teach others the art and work of writing. This basis was always there but became more important

during a time of emotional strain. She learned how to name her feelings through personal work and private therapy, but the work of writing and sharing with others made her feel a sense of belonging, and that power in turn is something she sought to share with others in her work as a peer mentor.

Conclusion 2: Emotion has a direct bearing on identity formation; it is a deeply embedded part of embodiment and how people experience the world. In Lucy's words, "taking Chicana/ Latino studies courses [in college] really helped me sort of open up and feel more comfortable with my identity, instead of seeing it as something that didn't or doesn't fit." Though Lucy felt initially that she was an outsider as a result of her disability, her connection to school and her emotional pull toward self-recognition inspired her to seek classes and teachers who helped offer the cultural vocabulary to better understand herself. Likewise, Brian's pull to writing about the familial and social relationships of African Americans was motivated by his own struggle to make sense of his identity after being classed as different as the other. Both of these narratives suggest the profound relationship between racial and body identity, and emotion.

Ahmed offers us tools to better understand how emotion is intimately combined within a person's body and identity within their experience of the world (Ahmed). We see this emerging in the narratives by how essential it is for Brian, Lucy, and Claire to tell their personal stories of emotion on their way to discussing and describing their writing and literate development. This focus on emotion as a mediating force "reminds us that knowledge cannot be separated from the bodily world of feeling and sensation; knowledge is bound up with what makes us sweat, shudder, tremble, all those feeling that are crucially felt on the bodily surface" (Ahmed 171). As a result, emotion helps attune us to the embodied experience of the individual. Drawing upon Ahmed's theories of emotional embodiment, Micciche points out that emotion holds and 'sticks'

people together within a particular context and that "emotion is an expression, experience, and perception mediated by language, body, and culture" (*Doing Emotion* 8). Thus, emotions are produced between people and between their surroundings, and as such they are the strings and ties that bind us to one another, they are a performative aspect of our relationships to others and to the world – in this instance they bring students to themselves and to writing (Ahmed)[4]. And this fact connects emotion to experiences with race and identity in distinct ways. As such Micciche reminds us in an updated reflection about her work, "The importance of engaging with racialized emotion when discussing with our students rhetoric, identity, power, literacy, writing, and much else, seems to me especially crucial at this moment in time… Emotion studies provide a critical vocabulary for making sense of the world and for investigating smaller scenes—classrooms and professional arenas. Perhaps most compelling in the current political climate, emotion studies illuminate the operations of social justice movements" ("Staying with Emotion"). In the next chapter I focus exclusively on this dynamic relationships between identity, race, and emotion, examining how it is both an effective and subjugating relationship that exposes core vulnerabilities and power relationships. Ultimately we see emotion move from being internally tied to in someone's mind, toward an embodied, socially interconnected experience, especially when connected to writing and literacy.

Conclusion 3: Emotion helps to turn what could be vulnerabilities into moments of empowerment. In Lucy's case it was readings from teachers, the space to write and explore her identity that lead her to the power of not only sharing *her* story but the story of others through

[4] Here, additional perspectives in the neuroscience of emotion from theorists such as Damasio and Wetherell might be useful. Damasio offers a clear step-by-step picture of how the brain registers feeling and then how emotion develops as a result. However, given the scope of my argument I do not believe a full neurological account is necessary, given that I am interested in the social and cultural implications of emotions and not how emotion relates to psychological disorders. Central to this relationship is the notion that biologically emotion makes thinking possible, and from that process language occurs, thus they are intimately connected.

her work collecting narratives of other Latina women. Though Claire had a clear proclivity to writing, she also was able to reconnect to its power and value after returning to college. She shared her own experience in therapy and with mental health challenges with others at the encouragement of teachers, which was empowering to her, and she also turned this sense of inspiration and empowerment with language into her work as a writing mentor. And for Brian, he found encouragement and empowerment at different moments in his life. An 8th grade teacher that encouraged him to write a play for an assignment, a high school program that encouraged his creativity, and when he got to college it was also teachers pushing him to embrace his talent as a writer for the assignments in their classes. In each of these narratives we see a strong balance of personal and internal motivation with the institutional support and encouragement from teachers and the educational system, in this sense, the students in this chapter utilize challenging personal experiences into the work of writing, teaching, and playing with language. In each of these interviews we see the students grappling with what could be incredibly precarious and vulnerable identities and turn to writing as a space for empowerment, literacy in this sense is sponsored by vulnerability, and works out for these individuals as a useful tool for personal advocacy and success.

In paying attention to the persistence of these writers, in reading their narratives closely we gain a sense of how their emotional responses help each student to persevere, and how these emotions connect them to the sponsors of their writing. Or put more directly, these students are able to continue to move forward because of their ability to make sense and reconcile challenging experiences through writing and learning because of the emotional connections to the sponsors of their writing. These revelations highlight our need as a field to remain more open to how emotion and feeling can incite literate and rhetorical action – we need to recognize that

emotionality is often not a choice on the part of our students, but rather it is an essential and implicit byproduct of the ways in which they experience life and move throughout the world. Emotion is not merely a private manifestation but a visible, public, and social reconciliation of past experiences. In the case of Brian, Lucy and Claire, that manifestation occurs through their uses of writing and language, and they use these tools to work against what could be personal challenges and setbacks, into a place for personal fulfillment and empowerment. Though Lucy and Claire found success in more traditional school settings, and Brian largely sought out and sponsored his writing success on his own, they each find ways to embrace and use writing as a tool for understanding and belonging. And yet this sense of empowerment as a result of vulnerability and marginalization is not always positive, others interviewed in subsequent chapters will highlight the double-sided nature of emotion.

In talking about emotion within the space of literacy and writing studies we often tend to focus on the role that emotion plays in the product of student writing. The emotional, pathos driven pieces that students write in our courses, the emotional and personal resonances that inspire students to take up particular research projects and topics of interest. Though that is an important part of understanding the full range of emotion within the space of literacy and writing, that is not the central focus of this chapter and it is not the central take away. It is not just enough to understand emotion as the by product within particular pieces of writing, but rather I see it also as the entity, the sponsor, the ephemeral but material condition that pushes students to consider themselves as writers, to take up the pen in the first place. As writing instructors we often ask: "How can we come to understand the welter of emotions and states of mind that surround, inhabit, and saturate the act of writing" (Bazerman, "Writing, Cognition, and Affect" 100). One solution is that this leads to a deeper relationship to text. Bazerman argues

that, “In constructing our texts we also may be learning to construct ourselves as writers, reflecting not only about the texts and their effect but also ourselves as creators of texts, both in our internal workings and the external social presences we take on through the embassy of our texts” (“Writing, Cognition, and Affect,” 101). And it is this emotional construction of the text, the draw to write itself, that I find most significant and salient, that tells the power that emotion plays in our creating lives. We might never understand each individual and ephemeral emotion within the experience of the writer, but the pull these writers have to make sense of themselves, their emotions, and their feelings suggests something essential about the work of writing. It is at once a solitary space, yet always connected, like a thin thread of a spider web to the public audiences that we write for, even if those audiences are ourselves. There is something profound in the work that emotion does to pull us into these spaces as a way to understand the self more deeply and to empower ourselves through text. Ultimately what makes these narratives most powerful is the action taken once feelings, emotions and responses are recognized. Emotion is a powerful actor internally and externally, often propelling the work of knowledge formation.

In future chapters, emotion shifts into a different and equally dynamic form. The next chapter suggests ways in which emotion elides empowerment, where vulnerability and not belonging is subversive to the students that experience it. This is not to say that the students in the next chapter are not able to ‘overcome’ the experience of not belonging, but rather it suggests ways in which there is an emotional labor and fatigue to constant personal advocacy, hardship and the experience of not immediately belonging in school. Emotion is not always an unmitigated good, just as literacy is not always empowering. In this way emotion then is begged to be seen as central to our social and cultural interactions. We see it factoring into our learning, our writing, and our literate experiences even if the effect is not always apparent, even if it does

not produce ‘written’ product as it does in these narratives, we see emotion and exclusion as having incredible consequences in the learning lives of students. Continuing to pay attention to emotional turbulence then reveals the pressing truth of time and separation, of injustice, shame, fear, insecurity and dislocation just as it reveals the effect and products of those entities (Ahmed). These are not simply elements that can fade into the background of literate and learning contexts, but rather they become a central and active part of how we connect to and make meaning of our worlds. It is time that we see emotion in our students and in their writing and literate experiences, not as weak byproducts of their memories or lives, but as an intertwined core to how they see and feel and experience the world. As such, I see literacy and writing within this frame as the foundation to foster identity and connection, and as a tool to connect to a new languages and context. Yet, at the same time I am quick to point out that literacy and yes school, is a force of powerful exclusion, vulnerability and of unequal distribution – it is this line of thinking that I will explore in the next chapter.

Chapter 3:

Vulnerability, 'Emotional Labor,' and Dislocation in Writing and School

> "But in the course of doing this physical and mental labor, she is also doing something more, something I define as emotional labor. This labor requires one to induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others…this kind of labor calls for a coordination of mind and feeling, and it sometimes draws on a source of self that we honor as deep and integral to our individuality" (7).
>
> **-Arlie Russell Hochschild, *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling***

> "…it made me doubt if I really actually belong here on this campus...and I mean he was a white teacher…it kind of just made me, I was just thinking maybe I should go back home... And I always try and equate that [coming to college] it's like coming to a new country, you have no idea, you have a little bit of knowledge of what the country is standing for, but it is actually like coming to a new country and trying to not only learn the culture, and learn the language, but do it better than those who have been speaking it for their whole life, so that was really hard..."
>
> **- James, Interviewee**

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Coming to college is, for many students, a dislocating experience, and it can, in no uncertain terms, feel like 'coming to a new country' (Bartholomae; Gloria and Kurpius; Ladson-Billings, *Dream Keepers*). And coming to college when you feel unprepared, or feel as though you do not belong, is even harder, as James expresses in the epigraph above. Implicit in this journey is a sense of not-belonging, of having to write yourself into a world where you do not know the language, of the emotional labor of advocating for yourself again and again to teachers, to classmates, to justify your existence. There is of course deep emotional 'labor' involved in personal and public exploration of feeling and knowledge formation, and labor involved in trying to fit into school, to navigate its complexities, to be successful. This includes reading the subtle rules of social settings, moderating our own relationship to those settings, determining the 'right' forms of expression and connection (Hochschild; Boler). Though in the quote above Hochschild

is talking explicitly about emotion as a form of economic exchange in labor contexts, the 'reward' of sharing appropriately in the context of school or writing might be public acceptance, connection, personal understanding, individual knowledge, and growth. And as teachers on the front lines of writing and composition classrooms, accepting new students into the folds of the university, we are uniquely positioned to understand and respond to the challenges marginalized students face. We are positioned to connect and understand the complexities or the emotional labor in this process. In the previous chapter, we see how students are able to use their emotional and personal struggles to support their writing and educational advancement, finding empowerment through emotional reconciliation in writing. Though Brian, Lucy and Claire have clear struggles with identity, race, and disability, we largely see them turning that sense of struggle into emotional productivity, as the inspiration and sponsoring agents of their work as developing writers and intellectuals.

In this chapter I examine emotion from a different angle, in different settings and contexts, turning our attention to the stories of students who often feel as though they do not belong or fit quite right in the context of schooling and the classroom, who struggle to leap over the emotionally laden boundaries of race and economics and school preparedness, to find success (though all of them do in their own way). In reading theses narratives together, we begin to see how emotional reactions to school, to feeling excluded because of race or language can often provide a barrier to connection and understanding. Understanding this reality requires us to read the individual student experience within the wider social frame, to understand their embodied experience of marginalization and emotional turmoil, to see the emotional labor involved in fitting in when you might not feel as if you do (Fleckenstein). The students profiled in this chapter struggle more acutely to seek where they belong and fit in, they struggle to cross

boundaries of race and status and economics, and we see the emotional toll this takes. Their sense of dislocation is multipronged: the students do not fit into school socially because there are specific expectations of what that looks like, and they feel on the outside as a result of their race and personal identity. In paying attention to these crossings and the labor involved in working to fit in, readers begin to have a deeper understanding of the complexity of how emotion, fear, shame, and anger resonate in the experiences of the students that we teach. Readers will also see students struggling under the demands of self-advocacy in the face of the dislocation caused by race, economic and citizenship status. In reading these narratives we gain a deeper sense of how exclusion works and how emotional labor functions as a tool for belonging in often-inhospitable places. I hope readers are able to see three key takeaways in these narratives: 1) The emotional labor of advocating for belonging in school is tiring but often essential for marginalized students; 2) School and language classrooms place emotional demands on students, especially those who are marginalized, requiring that they decode rules, and find personal strategies for success often outside of mainstream social channels; 3) Relationship building and institutional support is essential to student's emotional work and sense of connection to school, and we must stay attuned to our student's emotional stories and journeys in order to facilitate connection.

Central to these propositions is the claim that school is an especially vulnerable place for students of color, and that college presents new challenges and issues specific to them – vulnerable identities and vulnerable bodies face considerable challenges as they enter the public space of schooling and academia, as they cross boundaries and barriers away from their communities of origin (Behar; Ahmed). Vulnerability in these stories, and in these contexts is layered and it comes through in their writing, in their reflections on belonging in school, in the choices they make as students (Boler; hooks). School makes students vulnerable by breaking

them down, forcing them to reconcile with new identities, knowledge, and redefining their understanding of personal success. Though school is often a place to be seen as secure and connecting, for certain students of color that sense of security never comes, or when it does it is slippery and inconsistent. We often miss the effort and negotiation required for vulnerable students as they attempt to make it within a system of rules that is often working overtly (and covertly) against them (Gloria and Kurpius; Boler). And this negotiation of institutional norms is emotional. Perhaps by drawing attention to the **emotional impact** and **emotional labor** of these journeys, we will understand more acutely why it is so necessary to intervene and begin to create more connective places for all students to belong, and why crossing these boundaries into new arenas is so challenging (Hoscshild; Ladson-Billings). We often miss the little but profoundly impactful ways in which teachers and schools subvert the power of students, the ways in which these students then attempt to reclaim power, and it in sharing these narratives and stories I hope to push educators to consider emotion from new angles.

Composition and Rhetoric scholars are uniquely positioned to pay attention to these crossings and this work – all three of the students I profile in this chapter I first get to know in an intermediate writing course that I taught. I noticed these themes of emotion, dislocation, and a desire to find connection to their surroundings (to deeper questions), emerging in their writing and the work they completed in my class both in personal narratives and in more complex research projects, and I will analyze some of their statements and writing below to highlight how these themes are incorporated in their writing. Scholars like Julie Drew interested in sustainability practices for composition studies, reimagines students as 'travelers' entering our classrooms with particular sets of knowledge and experience worth mapping onto our sense of the writing space (Drew 59, 20). Similarly, Haswell et al. asks us to consider the ethical

implications of hospitality, of how we welcome students into the folds of our classrooms and stay attuned to the histories and experiences that have shaped them as individuals in our pedagogy. Ultimately as scholars interested in investigating and supporting the personal, social and cultural experiences of our students as they explore their literate and rhetorical identities, we remain positioned to ask deeper questions about how they engage in emotional labor and how the travel and journeys of students impacts their emotional reckoning.

The stories that follow of James, Lisette, and Matema demonstrate the consequences of what happens when we lose sight of creating belonging and hospitality not just in our classrooms, but in our public spaces, in the spaces of educational opportunity. In reading these narratives together we see the multiplicity of ways that students are made vulnerable in school, we see the work that goes into fitting in, the emotional costs of finding success and making connections. In the course of arriving in the classrooms where they will learn in college these students will have crossed borders, oceans, limiting neighborhoods, languages, obstructing teachers, family loss and more. This does not mean of course that they are left without any support, we see these students finding support from certain afterschool programs, government agencies, and teachers, but yet they have to double their efforts just in order to reach those places of connection and belonging. And at the same time we see certain teachers and institutions throughout their stories as impediments to their success. If we concede that the (partial) work of college is coming to understand the wider world and see ourselves in it, a tension exists when a student feels excluded from that world and place, when they cannot begin to see themselves in it. What happens if our students feel marginalized and if they are always forced to transition in and out of spaces where they are seen as the ‘other’?

Students in these narratives employ savvy techniques for getting by when they do not belong, those that include reading the invisible rhetorical rules of school and classroom, and using emotional labor and emotional rhetorical tools to find ways to fit in and succeed, to deploy their personal discourses or draw upon their 'identity kit' as learners (Gee). And other times students go inward and retreat internally in order to withstand the barrage of not belonging. Here, readers can see students border crossing, moving from contexts, home countries, home neighborhoods, making journeys to understand themselves and gain access to spaces that otherwise might seem completely unreachable. There is of course, inherently emotional work in crossing borders, in leaving a person's physical and metaphorical 'home', and this is something that Gloria Anzaldúa poetically describes in rich depth in her own text. She observes that: "A border is a dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep edge. A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary'. It is a constant state of transition. The prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants (25). Though the context and the examples are different the sentiments in these narratives are related. Throughout the course of this chapter, we see students crossing many types of borders, some physical and concrete, others metaphorical and pernicious in their invisibility. Yet amidst all of these types of border crossings, each of the students inevitably carry themselves, and their identities with them, even as they try to reimagine and remake themselves, and this requires emotional attunement and often results in a sense of dislocation and disconnection. In seeing students as emotionally and physically crossing borders in school, we as Henry Giroux articulates, "critically engage the struggle over those territories, spaces, and contact zones where power operates" – that is we can better see how the emotional struggle implicit in crossing into powerful institutions such as school and college and language classrooms (2). We see them, as Anzaldúa points out above,

stuck in the boundary between fitting in, and being on their own, between inclusion and exclusion, in a never ending loop of challenge, vulnerability, malaise, and personal advocacy. And this emotional labor is significant and important to pay attention to.

In the previous chapter and narratives, we see emotion and feeling sponsoring literate activity and personal identity negotiation. Though emotion is pervasive in these narratives, and motivation from personal challenge comes up, emotion as a whole moves differently in this chapter. Here, emotion teaches us about the depth of pain of marginalization, of trauma around schooling and racism, and the immense effort it takes to overcome such challenges (Ahmed, Trainor). We see the ways in which exclusion and feeling on the outside has incredibly vulnerable[5] and negative consequences – though the students persist over and over again, one gets the sense this is in spite of the challenges set in front of them, not because of them. In articulating these theoretical frames my aim is to ask readers to pay attention to how the students profiled below talk about exclusion, how they express their feels of anger and disenchantment, to stay attuned to the immense personal work they must engage in to 'make it' in basic ways in school, to be aware of the emotional labor and personal advocacy they must display to feel connected to school. Pay attention to these themes in the writing that I share, in their quotes and in the retelling of their life history. And on a broader scale what these narratives show us is a

[5] I understand the term vulnerability with complexity. I acknowledge it in the traditional way of being exposed to the core, of being wounded or raw. But yet at the same time vulnerability and exposure allows for growth and rebuilding, which is in part how it factors into education, it allows for an opening up and a growth, if used in the best of circumstances. In this sense I draw an understanding of vulnerability from professor of Social Work Brené Brown, who writes that vulnerability is deeply complex and yet also implicitly a part of "emotional exposure" (2). Yet at the some time it opens up a kind of possibility and hope for change and difference. She continues, "Vulnerability is the birthplace of love, belonging, joy, courage, empathy, and creativity. It is the source of hope, empathy, accountability, and authenticity. If we want greater clarity in our purpose or deeper and more meaningful spiritual lives, vulnerability is the path" (34). In essence it offers us a space for possibility, which is where I think our work as educators can begin. This is an important distinction and once again shows the reflexivity and complexity of feeling, I hope my context with its use as well as other definitional terms surrounding it make clear when and how I use vulnerability throughout this dissertation.

particular failure of school settings, both secondary and post-secondary, to attend to and adequately support those students who need it most. Instead of hospitable welcoming settings, we see these students have to navigate and advocate for themselves, often lacking significant in-school support systems to help them to succeed.

I begin with James' story in this chapter, and offer the most detail in retelling and developing his narrative, because I see it as a kind of larger frame for understanding the sense of vulnerability, dislocating, (not) belonging, and advocacy necessary for students of color to succeed – we see this playing out in each of the narratives here, in the story of Lisette and Matema in both connected and disparate ways. Emotion in each of these stories has a reflexive and dynamic effect: the dislocation students feel as they move to new locales and places for school is caused by their emotional distance and lack of belonging AND emotional distancing is in effect they means by which the students we read here deal with their sense of dislocation and not belonging. Ultimately these narratives reveal that emotion in our students' journeys through school (and literacy more broadly conceived), are not weak byproducts of their memories or lives, but are an intertwined core to how they see and feel and experience the world. Emotion then is begged to be seen as central to our social and cultural interactions, we see it factoring into our learning, our writing, and our literate experiences ***even if*** we would like to ignore it or ***even if*** we still worry about how to deal with it as teachers and educators, ***even if*** we still see it as messy, it is there. Paying attention to emotional turbulence reveals the pressing truth of time and separation, of injustice, shame, fear, insecurity, and dislocation (Ahmed). These are not simply elements that can fade into the background of literate and learning contexts, but rather they become a part of how we connect to and make meaning of our worlds. Navigating these new boundaries takes rhetorical savvy, emotional understanding, and emotional labor.

James: Expending 'Emotional Labor' and Relying on Personal Advocacy

James' story is one, of prolific border crossing, of literal crossing into new foreign communities throughout his life, and the metaphorical boundaries of trying to belong and grow in a place where he does not necessarily fit (Anzuldúa). This is the theme that we see again and again for James as he fights to belong, but to say he merely 'arrived' with ease would deny the work it took him to achieve success in school and beyond. James was a student in my intermediate writing class long before be became a participant in this dissertation. In that class one of the first pieces of writing he composed was a fictional story called "The Rose that Grew From the Concrete." The excerpt that follows comes from that piece of writing, and I use it as a frame here to show the feelings of dislocation that I believe he experienced in school contexts.

> *Good*[6] *botanist [sic] know that to grow plants, their seeds need to be cast upon 'good' soil, and cared for with proper amounts [sic] water and sunlight. It would be foolish for one to throw their seeds on the nutrient deficient concrete and expect for flowers to bloom. Although, what happens when something occurs that nature has demanded to be impossible?...The rose petals, although injured, still tightly holds the head of the flower together, only exposing a very small portion of the top. The rose petals, although tightly wrapped together, has lacerations inflicted from the harsh environment. Most animals and insects would walk past the rose and ignore it, doubtful that the rose would continue to grow, yet one bee understood the complexity and specialty of this rose, he flew to the location of the rose every day and hovered over it anticipating the day when it would expose its sweet nectar and perfume. It was not long before the head opened and exposed its nectar.*[7]

This piece of writing was a part of James' unit one portfolio writing which gave students a choice to write a piece of descriptive fiction in addition to a writer's history. James wrote about his imagination as being central to his way of viewing the world in that portfolio and this piece is

[6] Italics added to signify when a quote comes from a piece of student writing.

[7] Longer excerpts of student writing quoted in this dissertation can be found in Appendix B.

evidence of how he embraces metaphor, emotion and imagination as a means to process the world, something he shared in our meetings and in his writer's memo about his work. Because of that I read this piece as paralleling James' own personal story as I came to know it through our discussions. In his story I see the struggle for something to grow in inhospitable conditions, to thrive in spite of the harsh environment, of thriving where you might least expect it. James crosses many boundaries throughout his life experiences, but yet he cannot quite shake that, just like the rose, he does not belong. This was not to say that he did not have moments of incredible support and uplift from within and outside institutions, but it is to say that he more often than not struggled to fit into the spaces where he was raised, and where he went to school. Like Brown's own description of vulnerability, and like the rose above, there is exposure in this experience, but in that exposure growth can happen and it does for James. As teachers we must remain aware of the effect vulnerability and dislocation has on student as they transition into college, away from their home communities. James' own story shows us here, that sense of isolation, displaying his identity along the way. Because emotion is so distinctly tied into our identities, both our social-cultural identities, and literate identities, we must engage deeply with trying to understand how to respond and react as teachers – understanding these resonances are core to James. Because it is, "Through the writing we do, we claim, challenge, perhaps even context and resist, our alignment with the beliefs, interests, and values of the communities with which we engage" (Roozen 50). From the outset of his journey in school James feels like the outsider, though he was savvy in his efforts to find people and places where he belongs and thrives.

I was originally drawn to James as a person and student because of his ability to articulate the challenges and struggles he faced as a writer and student, and because he had a strong sense of himself as a thinker, as someone with a strong imagination who was also incredibly dedicated

to the sciences. At the time I interviewed James, over the course of a few different sessions, he was 22 years old and one year away from his college graduation. He was raised in a large family, identifies as black, and is one of twelve children who moved frequently in his youth, crisscrossing neighborhoods throughout Milwaukee. As a result, James' educational opportunities and support shifted and changed based upon where he was living. He explains that his mom often kept his brothers, sisters, and him inside the house stating, "my mom never let us go outside, because she knew what was going on outside." James does not recall a deep closeness to his mother or his siblings, a fact that he said became even more apparent when he transitioned to college and lacked a strong support system to get him through. James explained that his mom worked hard to maintain a strong standard of living for him and his siblings. But a promising educational path of her own, she was salutatorian of her class and on her way to a scholarship at Spelman College, was derailed by a "nervous breakdown or something" and instead " her life just took a total reverse." James admits that he and his mom have communication challenges, that she is reserved in what she shares with him and he is reserved and guarded in return. This is notable because James often felt alone and was tasked with finding his own way forward in school and life. James' story is a lesson and study in transition, in movement, in the search to belong in school when he is emotionally and physically uprooted again and again.

I learned early on in our discussions both in and out of class that James was in the pre-med program and interested in becoming a doctor. He was deeply committed to this path and worked as a science mentor for elementary children in addition to working in a university lab. He was nervous at the start of our class because he worried that his writing would not be up to par, and he took time to set up a meeting with me to talk about that. In fact very early on, James' first

writing history discussed his dislike of writing, the challenges he faced composing sentences, and reading texts. Much of that had to do with the sense that James had that he could not conform to the 'proper' rules and regulations of writing, that other students understood them better than he did, that his language and manner of speaking did not fit in the traditional classroom space.

But to understand James more fully it is important to go back to the beginning of his story. The challenges facing people of color in Milwaukee are well documented. In 2014 the Wisconsin Council on Children & Family reported that four out of every five African-American children in Wisconsin, live in poor households, and fewer than one in ten children in 8th grade are proficient in math (Boulton 1). Further, Wisconsin incarcerates the most black men in the country, and in Milwaukee County alone, more than half of all black men in their 30s and 40s have served time (Corley 1). In this city, and where James lives, you can literally see the effects of poor political and public policy decisions on the neighborhood demographics and organization. The corrosive and ever-growing wealth income gap, discriminatory housing policies dating back to the 1960's, aggressive criminal justice practices, and inequitable schooling and job training opportunities, play out again and again across the city for people of color, structuring a vastly different reality for those born north of the city just miles away from the nicer (read: whiter) parts of town (Desmond 249-252). I know because I live here, but I do not know fully, because I am white. This is in many ways the backdrop to James' story. Yet, at the same time I want to state boldly and forcefully, that though I am constructing James' story based upon our interview, I do not speak for or through James, and similarly James does not desire that his story be seen only as a feel-good "bootstraps" narrative. That narrative he suggested throughout our interview (and I agreed), is an old and tired one, often co-opted by

those within academic and research spaces, within the media, within political spheres, to show that transformation can happen, that through faith, grit, and perseverance anything is possible, that with a little bit of work (read: a ton of effort and sacrifice) the American dream can be yours. This is not that story, even if on the face of it you could read it that way. But, as researchers it is important that we struggle with our own sense of narrative alongside of the views that our participants have of their story, in that process I believe we find the core essence of storytelling research. This story is instead about what happens when institutions of education fail to meet the emotional and personal needs of students, and what they have to do to emotionally and physically advocate for themselves in that gap of support.

James suggests instead that his story is proof of the inadequacies and injustices of the system he participates in: of the 13 children in his family James was to be the first one to graduate from a university. Further, the fact that out of a class of 200 students in his high school, he was one of 10 students to go to college, to him does not point to success, but instead suggests the failure of a system to serve every individual regardless of race or class equitably. James' story then becomes a rich and important frame for the other two narratives in this chapter, to reveal what it really feels to not belong and the emotional toll of advocating for yourself again and again. This toll is akin to what my colleague Annika Konard, who investigates the literate and rhetorical labor of those who are blind or visually impaired, terms "access fatigue" (Konrad, "Access Fatigue"). Access fatigue describes the experience of those, in her case, those with visual impairment and disability, of needing to push back against dominant institutions to gain entry or access of even the most basic sense of inclusion. She explains it as "a consequence of the emotional, intellectual, and rhetorical burden that disabled individuals bear to constantly move people into the co-construction of access and inclusion" (Konrad, "Access Fatigue"). In

this case we see students attempting to gain access to education and personal connection and being fatigued, marginalized and emotionally spent at the turmoil of it all – it is a pernicious mix of emotional labor and fatigue.

James experienced marginalization, a lack of support and as such a deep vulnerability, as a student throughout his schooling experiences and well into college. This was at times the effect of a lack of school resources and support, and at other times was the effect of direct racism and insensitivity from teachers and peers. Though I learned much about James as his teacher, I came to know him more intimately through our two part, five hour interview. James' early schooling and life experiences are punctuated by change, transition, and a particular sense of loss and hardship. As Matthew Desmond details in *Evicted,* his sweeping ethnographic study of evictions and predatory housing practices in Milwaukee, eviction accounts for the inequality of people's experiences in the same city, and "why some families lived on safe streets and others on dangerous ones, why some children attended good schools and others failing ones" (252). This trend was true in James' own life, driving his early journey through a challenging public school system, and as a result of these experiences he learned very early on to shut out his feelings at home and at school. He was in an elementary school until third grade at a school with a curriculum geared toward deaf and hard of hearing students (he is neither of these, it was simply the school he got into) including courses on American Sign Language, he does not recall why he was placed in this school, and explained that it was an integrated student body and curriculum. He recalls teachers who taught him right from wrong when in a "rebellious" phase in third grade he stole a classmates' paint set and was suspended from school. He said the experience left him feeling "ashamed" of being kicked out of school because of his own hurtful actions but he did not fault his teachers, rather he saw their response as an important piece in his own personal

understanding of self. After his mother moved to the North Side of the city, James went to fourth and fifth grade in another school with less diversity, and according to him vastly lower educational standards.

In one of the more telling accounts of this time in his life, James recalls being at recess in his new school around 10 years old and mindlessly rough housing and trying to jump a fence. He recalls his classmates saying "dude you will never be able to run away from the police if you keep jumping the fence like that, and then they were trying to show me how to jump the fence, and it was just like what?" That kids could take an innocent school yard game and use it as evidence of James' lack of preparation to escape the police was a shocking and sad truth for James. It suggests the ubiquity with which black men and boys interact with police, the fact of life of a black male growing up in this immensely segregated neighborhood. But for James this moment meant something more, he identified this as a turning point in his life, as a key moment of recognition that his surroundings were inhospitable, that he did not quite belong here. This sense of shame and fear that James describes as a relates to school, as it relates to not belonging to the community is a common theme for him throughout his life in school – shame is often the kind of default setting of those on the margins, those with unequal power as a result of living in the less dominant levels of society (M. Young; Trainor; Tatum). And fear is ultimately the embodied responses to the "threat of violence" something commonly faced by both James and his classmates (Ahmed 69).

This interaction that James recalls as a young boy reflects the deeper more embodied relationship to trauma that he and his fellow peers faced given the cultural violence surrounding him. He continued in our interview, "the whole mindset, it was maybe reflection of pain at home, or just cultural [pain]." This cultural pain is deeply rooted, and James has an ability to be

reflective about it, as opposed to getting sucked into it, he was deeply impacted by the inherent pain and struggle he witnessed around him, and the effects of this pain on his experiences in school and out of it. This pain shows the effect of dislocation, and the residual traces of trying to make sense of the world around him a person in a space where he did not quite fit. This environment, where teachers had no control over the classroom, where students tried to "harm" and "jump" him, where he was mocked for his inability to escape police like it was a predetermined reality of his existence, left a lasting and significant impression on James. And it placed into stark contrast the sense that he did not belong or feel accepted in the community he lived in. He explains:

> …it made me realize that**, it sparked maybe I don't want to be in this environment for the rest of my life[8],** and just through looking at the environment continuously and seeing how poor people were, how sick people were, and all these problems they had to face, like they don't have enough money for rent, you know **it was just a lot of built on, it was just accumulating** I was like whoa, I do not want to stay in this environment but being in that environment at 35th street school it was the spark of saying like whoa, maybe I don't want to be here for the rest of my life.

This awareness and desire stayed with James throughout school but it did not necessarily make his own experience more bearable or easier. I also believe that this was the start for James of separating himself from his environment, of beginning to imagine that he could strive for more of knowing he must cross from one community into another even if the pathway was not clear and would require emotions emotional and intellectual labor. And it is important to take stake in this history of James' struggle, because simple access to education is not the balm to remove the pain, rather these moments of challenge stick with him over time, defining his responses and sense of isolation once arrived in college.

James' elementary school teachers were not central to the memories or experiences that he shared with me. In fact he explained that teachers were often coming and going and school

[8] Bolded emphasis added to draw reader's attention to important moments in the quote.

offered little sense of stability. He continued, "that is a story throughout my life like we had a really good teacher and they got sick or something happened and we had substitutes that came in that did not do a good job." Where as other students in my study expressed teachers having an immense impact in their formative years, on their writing, literacy development, and in the activities they pursued, James did not feel this relational support until well into middle school (Ladson-Billings, *Dream Keepers* 2-4). Lacking this institutional support James began to develop his own unique set of strategies for achieving success and stability including drawing from his own imagination and reading social cues around him. In one of the first pieces of writing James composed for our class, he articulates the role imagination played in his learning, in his ability to imagine his lessons more fully and bodily than other students, and the subsequent judgments he faced as a result of these behaviors. He writes the following about the importance of imagination in his life:

> *Although I was fortunate in having this mastering this coping mechanism, it was something highly discouraged as a child by teachers, parents, and the majority of the academic world…I did not fully understand the importance of having an active imagination or using it as a tool of benefit until I was encountered by someone, my teacher, who thought learning in this fashion was useless. It was then that I began to construct my learning balanced on an imaginative break bone, finding answers to problems in this safe place every time I am lost.*

This sense of retreat or protection inward in order to cope with feelings of not belonging, of disempowerment stay with James, even well into college, and is a common refrain for those students who feel dislocated or marginalized in school or literacy settings. Yet James learned that school was about regulation that this strategy did not fit in with the teacher's idea of proper learning strategies, and that there was a right and wrong way to learn and act in school. Even the subtle and private act of drawing on imagination points to the thoughtful rhetorical act of resistance, of coping and finding covert strategies to belong and make it within contexts that

have strict rules for success. Instead of seeing students as a blank slate we have to see and hear and feel that they have already absorbed messages from teachers and classmates about what counts as real knowledge. Or, to put it another way, "students are *already* socialized into discourses of race and power relations" before they arrive in our classrooms (Prendergast 49). Further, as Andrea Lunsford argues, writing is always informed by prior experiences, even in private writing, these interactions are exposed, the "form a network or conversation that comes from knowledge and from all the experience the writer has had" (*Threshold Concepts* 53). When we pay attention to the emotional resonances of these experiences in our student's writing and in their lived experiences we become aware of the residual traces of trauma and the labor or tools they use to establish a sense of stability and empowerment.

In middle school James recalls two significant teachers who deeply touched him and opened the door to his sense of possibility as a student – these teachers *saw* James as a student for the first time and helped to articulate a sense of belonging for him. James describe that his most memorable teacher personally and emotionally connected to students, drawing him in, that he "instilled so much confidence in us…I feel like his approach was way more personalized… he would get so mad if we were goofing off or something like that, how he would get so emotionally involved, when he saw us doing something like that, it was like, he was our mom or dad or something like that instead of just a teacher…" This teacher invited parents to be involved in their kids learning asking them to write notes to their children about how proud they were at their kids learning and advancement – this note, which James' mom wrote to him along with two books she purchased for him, is something he mentioned within the first few minutes of our conversation, it had an immense impact on him in terms of how involved and connected his mother felt to his own success. These reflections from James echo what educational theorist

Gloria Ladson-Billings articulates as a kind of "culturally relevant" approach to teaching students of color, to creating and establishing relationships and a sense of familial connection within classroom communities (*Dream Keepers* 61-63). This was essential to James and one of the only early literate experiences James shared or recalled – it was the first time his family and personal life was encouraged into the classroom, and this was profound for James, providing a template for how school can be inviting. Though James said that those around him thought he was a 'genius' because he was interested in school, he admits he did not apply himself as much as he thought he could and his middle school teacher noticed. It was this same teacher that told him it would "be a waste of a life" if he did not go to college. James says this statement stayed with him for a long time, that it was the first time someone had articulated his worth, that it was the first time college seemed possible to him. "I don't know he just made me feel real special, I was like wait what, really I can go to college? Actually I didn't even know what college necessarily was at that time." That the teacher was able to connect emotionally and personally to James redirected the course of his life and his own perception of his possibility. It was this verbalization that built the possibility of college, the image of it in James' mind, the first time it became real or even remotely realistic in his mind, it was an educational turning point.

James carried the potential dream of college with him as he transitioned into high school. His grades in math were high, helping flag him for teachers as someone who would thrive with additional support and focus. In his freshman year he applied to be PEOPLE, a pre-college program that would support him throughout high school and into college, and he was accepted, marking another moment where his life dramatically shifted. The PEOPLE program, "a pre-college pipeline for students of color and low income students," is successful in providing institutional support to students like James, often the first in their families to attend college, with

94% of high school graduates participating in the program going on to higher education ("PEOPLE about"). This program helped continue James' commitment to school, and introduced the world of science and medicine to him, identifying and highlighting specific programs he might apply to and offering him extracurricular experiences in research. As James began to learn more about the medical field, more about the intricacies of the human body he became inspired. Through the support of his collegiate program he was able to apply to a few different colleges eventually deciding to attend a larger state school. It was the support of after school endeavors like robotics and those in the college preparatory program that James described as being most significant. The day he was accepted to college, James recalls that his principal announced it over the loudspeaker, telling his fellow classmates to stop him and say congratulations when they saw him in the classroom. Though his classmates expressed happiness the feelings at home were more restrained. James has no recollection of his mother or family expressing their happiness after he was accepted into school, describing the fact that he was the first in his family to go to college as deeply "sad." He felt this was sad not because he felt as though he was losing connection to his family by going to school, but because it proved just how hard it was for people like James, black students from low-income neighborhoods, to achieve success, and he wished more people in his family had that opportunity.

And the sense that he did not belong was one of the reasons James had a hard time fitting in once he arrived on campus. The summer after high school James once again felt out of step with his surroundings, but this time it was for vastly different reasons. In the summer college preparatory program that he attended before fall classes, James found himself tasked with reading and analyzing literature, writing in an organized manner, and needing to understand a

syllabus for the first time. Language has a way of imposing a sense of rule, order, and power over students and he felt out of step and overwhelmed. He explains:

> I came into that program, **I thought it was going to be super easy, it wound up being the hardest thing ever**, we had to do these really long essays, we were doing literature with Shakespeare, something I have never done. Shakespeare, we looked at art, so many things, it was so overwhelming at that time…**yeah my freshman year, I didn't know what the heck was going on.** The syllabus, I have never had a syllabus in my life and the instructors expected you to look at the syllabus and from that syllabus you need to know what is coming up, and I didn't know that, so I was always confused like what is going on here? Um yeah, it was just really, really overwhelming for me at first, and I still to this day don't know how to study as well, I did not know the concept of studying…. So that summer collegiate experience I think I got a 3.0, and it kind of really deterred me… **I thought studying meant staying in the library for hours and just hammering home, which is not right, and I tried to study the language…I did not understand the language, like simple words, like fragmented, I didn't know what that meant**…I just did not even understand the language so I couldn't even answer questions on exams, because I was like, I don't know what they are talking about.

In essence James did not know the language or the rules of the world he had just entered and as such he struggled under the weight of expectation, and under the fear of not knowing or not belonging. He thoughtfully studied his surroundings to decode the rules but found himself coming up short. This brought about an incredible amount of fear and anxiety, and the emotional labor of muddling through this is immense. In addition to not understanding how to contextually read the syllabus (something many teachers see as basic), find his way in his courses, or knowing how to study, James also experienced a lack of hospitality and positivity with his instructors, finding that they judged him early on without offering him a fair chance, further adding to his sense of not-belonging (my emphasis added below).

> I had some teachers, I had one teacher in specific he was for this class with Shakespeare and art and everything like that, he was honest, **but he was one of those honest [people] that was coming off being a jerk a lot of the time**…Ok so this is post, after the summer collegiate experience, I came back in like I was getting help with the Writing Center on a paper, and I sat down, and he [the teacher, not writing center instructor] was reading my paper, before we even read the paper I was telling him everything about the paper, and he looked at me and he said 'wow [James], **I am really proud of you, some people you look at and you say, they're not going to make it**, or some people you look at and you

> say they're going to make it' he said, 'you weren't one of those people' [who I thought was going to make it], he said, 'I was really proud of you' and he laughed it off like it was no big deal or something like that...

This was an off the cuff remark that James' teacher clearly did not understand the effect of, and was one that left an indelible impression on James during a tender and transitional time. James was just getting used to campus, just finding his way as a person and a student, and in a way the teacher brought forth James' biggest fears, that he did not have a place on campus, that he might not be able to find success. There is a sense here in James' retelling to me, that the teacher was a kind of gatekeeper for James, that the key he needed to unlock success was a perfect articulation of himself, that there was no space for trial and error, or real genuine learning, regardless of the fact that is what he was there to do. In many ways (whether rational or not) the teacher became the stand-in for the institution, and how James felt a sense of exposure and lack of belonging, in essence this teacher had articulated his deepest fears.

As Beverly Daniel Tatum articulates, this feeling of subordination is a common experience for those living in non-dominant bodies and marginal identities in institutional spaces of power. "Dominant groups, by definition, set the parameters within which the subordinates operate. The dominant group holds the power and authority in society relative to the subordinates and determines how that power and authority may be acceptably used" (3). Although the teacher might have felt he was being encouraging by showing James he was proud of his success in the face of challenge this was not ultimately how the comment came off to James. He had trusted the teacher and ultimately felt let down and whatever the intended effect, it was lost on the recipient. The effect for James was a sense of dislocation, and deep emotional labor implicit in constantly having to advocate for himself and let others know he belonged or mattered to that

space. The effect was an ever reinforced and pernicious message that he did not quite fit in, and a sense of creeping doubt.

> …**it made me doubt if I really actually belong here on this campus**...and I mean he was a white teacher…it kind of just made me, I was just thinking maybe I should go back home... **And I always try and equate that it's like coming to a new country, you have no idea, you have a little bit of knowledge of what the country is standing for, but it is actually like coming to a new country and trying to not only learn the culture, and learn the language, but do it better than those who have been speaking it for their whole life**, so that was really hard...

In articulating this transition James has found the perfect metaphor for the feeling of profound confusion and isolation at arriving in this new "country" where he did not know the language or the culture. James had moved from his homeland, yet did not find it easy to make roots in his new place of home, he was in a kind of liminal space, between school and home in between two worlds where he did not feel as though he fit (Behar; Anzaldúa). The extent to which James felt a total sense of dislocation, in a school less than two hours away from the place where he grew up, is startling, but not unique to just James' experience. Lacking a sense of connection to school, and additional comments from roommates and friends (that he was only there because he was black, that he would not be able to hack it in school) pushed him further inward as a protective mechanism, and further contributed to his sense of isolation. Even though he had the support of the PEOPLE program he found himself not fitting in there with the other students either, and felt nervous to share and connect about his struggles. Instead of continuing to ask for help from the writing center or his teachers, instead of finding a place of home and belonging, James went inward again, to his own fortitude, imagination, and interior space. "…I stopped putting myself out there in general, I kind of closed myself off and I hid in the library so I wouldn't have to face that ridicule anymore." This strategy of going inward and overall sense of fatigue of not belonging is common for students who continually have to self-advocate, who continually face a

sense of not belonging and vulnerability in school. The retreat itself becomes a tactic for self-preservation that can, if sustained over time, be detrimental to student success (Gloria and Kurpius). Further, this articulates the consequences of not belonging, the consequences of what it means to feel highly vulnerable and unmoored in places where support is valued and essential. Though James still managed to find academic support from those within his college preparatory program, it was not enough for him to overcome his personal anxiety, and he lacked a sense of emotional connection and support. James' story reinforces that we must accept that emotion, like identity, is an active part of social experience, it then actively structures our students, actively informs their writing, actively informs their sense of belonging, and actively restricts them from moving forward if they do not meet the proper rules or regulations of emotion (Zembylas 112; Jacobs and Micciche 4).

It was another teacher, a teacher of color, in an education class that put it to James even more bluntly slowly opening up the reality of James' struggle and forcing him to consider his personal isolation. "I mean he just said you got to do better, because these white kids will eat you alive." Though this statement shocked James it by no means was something he disagreed with. In fact in a way, this comment liberated him to better understand the entrenched racial stereotypes and power imbalances he was already facing around him, it gave name to the many invisible forces of judgment and inequity that he was already experiencing with his fellow classmates. The comments and sense of caring freed James to truly feel what it was like to not belong, to reinsert his own power as a thinker and student and to take control in a situation where he felt there was very little power to assert. This moment also put a finger on a particular sense of disconnection that James was feeling. He did not feel like he belonged with the white students or the black students, and his experience as a black student on a white campus led to him feeling exposed,

and stereotyped by teachers and students – he felt they were always reading him and his skin color and making connections that were deeply troubling and challenging. He came to understand that this sense of isolation was connected to wider currents of institutional racism and educational injustice.

> I did not know, how horrible it [race] plays in American society until I got to college, until I got to classes where they talked education and like how education varies. **Like again before coming into college I knew my neighborhood was bad, but I didn't know necessarily that this was happening across the nation, where educational standards are way lower in poor probably black communities**…I felt like a lot of what the black students in college were doing was just really childish, like it didn't make any sense to me, I felt like it was kind of like crabs in a barrel, **everybody was trying to fight each other or sabotage each other** even though they were trying to smile in each other's face, for that key spot at the top, and so I was like I don't want to be around that anymore, so **I went into a deep isolation, and then I haven't been around that black community as much anymore,** I was really welcomed in the black community but because I had all those negative experiences with people from that community continuously putting me down for like my dreams, I haven't gone back in a while.

James expresses the feeling of being caught in a liminal space, and the opening and closing effect of this slow awareness of his own marginalization. These feelings are not linear nor are they often caused by a one time event, but rather they are facilitated by navigating the complexity of being a subordinate or marginalized person in a dominant space. Alongside of these less overt struggles James recalls witnessing outright racism on campus, and struggling to know how to respond whether in anger or fear because it was so common – of that overt racism James explained, there were times "I didn't even realize it, because it happens so often."

Slowly but surely James learned to find his way in this new world, crawling out of isolation bit by bit and finding his way. He got a new backpack, learned how to organize and plan, took classes he excelled in like science and chemistry, he kept reading and rereading for his English classes, in a dogged pursuit to find success and forge his own path. He continued to pursue new opportunities both in and out of school: going to the United Kingdom to participate

in a conference on black men in higher education; working as a medical volunteer in Haiti, further and deepening his understanding of the world, and reinforcing his goal to become a doctor and leader in his community. He pursued experiences that continued to open him up and teach him about the broader currents of the world around him. And in this process, James came to understand implicit bias, power dynamics, entrenched racism in new ways, confronting explicit racism from students and the pernicious subtlety of judgment. James took the 'advice' from the teacher of color to heart, regardless of whether he agreed that it should be that way, he knew he needed to find and new tactics to fit in and make it, he explains, echoing what Brian expresses in the previous chapter, as a sense of needing to do and be better in order to be noticed even marginally. "I felt like I just had to know the material, 20 times better than any student in there, just to even be taken seriously."

Toward the end of our interview, I asked James specifically how he continued to persist even amidst the many roadblocks to his success, and where his motivation came from. Success for James looks like graduating college, going to medical school, moving home to help disadvantaged communities, but it also means something more, it means showing his family that they too can succeed. James was the most emotional when talking about the impact he has had on his own family. He articulated this sentiment of succeeding in spite of, of succeeding to prove others wrong of the deep satisfaction of that, and the emotionality of demonstrating for his brothers and sisters that success in school and beyond is possible. Because he himself lacked role models, James became his own, and he persisted in the event he could provide encouragement own for those around him.

> **I have proved so many people wrong, it is funny and I love to see their faces like, you're still here, like he say a ghost or something like that, and I love that there is so much satisfaction in that.** Because I worked so hard, it is one thing to have something handed to you, like I earned this by myself and you can't take that away from me, **you**

> **can't say that it's because I am black that I got all these grades**, you can't say [that], I earned this on my own, that is a continuous motivation boost for myself. And then, I've inspired, I am going to get a little bit I don't know what the word is right now [pause, emotional] **I have inspired a lot of my brother and sisters, my nieces and nephews to even think about considering going to college, and they have done it.** Before me college wasn't necessarily that option or that choice, my younger sisters have gotten into college, she is actually at college right now, my youngest brother is trying to get into here right now, and my nieces and nephews they are thinking about, can I go to college just like you? So that, that is one goal that I have always wanted, to be that icon**… all those negative stereotypes against are all complete bullshit to be honest, they are all bullshit, just to told continuously to keep you here and you can't believe that, so that is a huge motivational boost also**.

In Catherine Prendergast's article examining the relationship between race and racism in composition studies, she describes race as a kind of 'absent presence' in our discussions of student work and experience (this same terminology has been used to describe the presence of emotion). Race she suggests is always there in the composing process even if we often speak about it in euphemisms ('basic writer' 'struggling writer' 'second language learner'), and as such it requires deeper examination to see "racism as institutionalized, normal, and pervasive" (36). There is no way she suggests, to "confront the racialized atmosphere of the university and no way to account for the impact of the persistence of prejudice on writers and texts" (36). And yet the presence is real and the effects are clear if we read and attune ourselves to narratives such as James. It is essential that we attune ourselves to where our students are from, where they are, and where they want to go; if we listen they will show us. James adequately articulates the effects of prejudice and racism, the vulnerability of not belonging, and the internal personal work he has to do in order to find success. He experiences a constant flux in his identity as a black person, as a male, as someone worthy of existing within the space of the school and university. But he largely has to engage in that work himself. Again and again he is forced to negotiate and advocate for himself, to show others he is worthy of their attention, and that he belongs. He largely felt he did not belong in the neighborhood where he grew up, and when came to school he felt he did not

belong there amongst the other white students, that black students criticized him, that regardless of where he is, he is either too black or not black enough. And yet he persisted, over and over. Emotion then, like race in Prendergast's description is an equal absent presence in the experience of our students, it is intertwined to the expression of exclusion in school, to that feeling of not belonging for students of color, to their experiences with writing and language, and it needs to be shared and given attention, to be heard and felt.

The emotional toll of racism and exclusion is profound, and though James ultimately finds personal success in school, we cannot simply ignore the routes and experiences he endures to get there. Instead we must pay attention to the stories of these students, to the emotional texture of the journeys they take – and this is where emotional attunement and empathy can be put to work. Racism is constraining emotionally and intellectually and one way to push against this is to tell its stories and push back against the idea that our challenges with diversity will solve itself – "Racism chains us to small, crabbed notions of self, demanding of us a simultaneous denial of relations for a sense not only of our own existence, but also and more especially for our sense of worth" (Condon 3). The role of the personal story like James' own becomes essential in understanding larger social experiences – critical race and critical legal studies have long acknowledge the role that the individual story plays in working against dominant structures of institutional racism and power (Ladson-Billings, "Critical Race" 56). As legal scholar Richard Delgado so elegantly states, "Stories humanize us…telling stories invests text with feeling, gives voice to those who were taught to hide their emotions…stories are useful tools for the underdog because they invite the listener to suspend judgment…" and they operate as tools to work against the dominant narratives of the institutions and people that oppress and that are told over and over again (2440).

In paying attention to James' story, in truly listening to what emotion and vulnerability shows us here within the frame of this narrative, we see the profound negotiation required by students of color, for those who are economically disenfranchised, and more broadly for students who lack the cultural, social and political capital to fit in. In suspending judgment we see that these students have to work harder in order to belong and over time that effort accumulates, compounds, and separates them from their peers – they have to work infinitely harder just to stay on the same solid ground. We see that effort as *work* and *labor* as opposed to just inherent success. Perhaps one way then to more deeply connect to the effects of racism and prejudice is to understand the nexus of their personal, emotional, and social lives – this becomes essential for those outside of dominant groups (because of race, class, gender) because it is so inherently tied to their journeys. We see the effect of this struggle coming through in the writing James does, in the classes he chooses, and in his experience of belonging or not belonging – ultimately he draws upon tools of emotional and rhetorical strength to reconnect and drive his experience in school forward.

As James described, he came to college as a stranger from a strange land, arriving in a new country with a passport to enter but no ability to make sense of the customs, the language, the subtle rules that seem so apparent to students with more advantages and support. And it is ***that*** part of the story we must attend to. In many ways this gives us the emotional effects, the emotional labor of what happens when students feel they are on the outside, and the ways in which they must work to overcome vulnerability, to use that vulnerability to their advantage. James ultimately finds his way, making sacrifices and personal compromises along the way, but there are many students who do not. And this, I suspect, is why James resists his narrative being used as one of triumph or success, because though he did succeed, the challenges should not

have been there in the first place, it should have been easier. James was opened up in school to the inherently entrenched inequities facing students of color, and he was not deterred when he might have been understandably fatigued. There is a sense of incredible determination for James as well as a persistence that cannot be ignored – he was given strength by finding key advocates, friends, teachers, and programs, and also ultimately by relying upon his own incredible sense of inner strength and personal fight. Emotion in this way is a tricky thing, it shows up, and demands of us in varied and complex ways, it both withholds and motivates advancement in a layered and shifting way. Unfortunately this pattern follows that of students of color more broadly – though we see this happen with students in the previous chapter, the kind of personal negotiation and motivation, it is more apparent here in James' story and is there in the narratives that follow.

Lisette – I'm 'Just Moving Along': Wandering Amidst the Weariness of Personal Advocacy

Lisette, a young black woman from the south side of Chicago echoes this exact feeling that James expressed of constant and perpetual self-advocacy, of arguing again and again for her own success, for the fact that she belongs. In Lisette's case however, she eventually grew sick and tired of engaging in that work, often having a more wandering and challenging time post-high school, moving in and out of classes and community college and back to the university again. As a young girl growing up on the south side of Chicago Lisette was aware of the violence, dilapidated projects, and drugs surrounding her even if she did not always come into contact with them. Lisette's parents took pains, similar to James' mom, to keep her inside, to shelter her from the ills and pain of the neighborhood. But Lisette was still aware of the immediate challenges even if she was protected, she explains "I mean there were shootings at night and umm, there was a crack house in the alley next door that got burned down, so I knew about it definitely." In fact the Southside of Chicago, the wider area where Lisette lived, has

violent crime at a ten times higher than other parts of the city (Christensen, "Crime Gap"). At the same time, however this was not something that dominated Lisette's experiences growing up, though she did know it limited her chances in being served by neighborhood schools. Lisette's parents expected much from her, demanding she excel in school, get good grades, go to piano and choral classes, pushing Lisette to stay focused and determined. Because her parents were pursuing careers and goals of their own, Lisette was often take care of by her grandmother, and she went to her grandmother's house directly after school almost every day as a young girl to complete her homework. But Lisette also spent a lot of time on her own, burdened by the expectations of those around her, and with the knowledge that it was important for her to succeed in school at all costs, regardless of whether there were role models or teachers or resources available to help her succeed. Though she often underplays her sense of drive, it is clear that from a young age, there was this sense of excelling at high levels instilled within Lisette from both her parents and grandparents.

Lisette explained to me that she had a strong sense of internal and personal duty, forcing herself to come home from school and immediately do her homework before watching TV or playing with her siblings. Though she was tapped to be in gifted classrooms beginning in fifth grade until 8th grade, she found that the expectations varied from teacher to teacher in the program, often feeling confused and missing key parts of a lesson and struggling to meet grade-level expectations (such as multiplication tables) but moving forward to the next grade regardless. She describes being swept up in a current that lacked teacher support and promoted students to keep them in their appropriate grade, with very few people checking in to make sure her head was above water. Lisette also experienced teachers moving in and out of her school frequently, often finding herself in a state of flux and lacking clear connections to institutional

support. Just as she would establish a connection and relationship to a teacher, she found that teacher moving on, lured by a better opportunity in a different school. She had some teachers who "got on our cases" and held her accountable, and recalls another teacher telling her she was a good writing and encouraging her to continue to write, but Lisette struggled to connect to these teachers, often feeling confused at what was considered 'good' with her work and struggling with how to translate that into continued success as a student or writer. Over and over again, Lisette describes a sense of bobbing along, a person clinging to a boat and subject to the waves and tides of the water.

When it was time for Lisette to transition into high school it was a teacher at an agricultural high school that attracted her to apply to Chicago's last agricultural focused school. She worked to get into a school outside of her neighborhood because those schools lacked adequate resources and support. Though she would later go on to major in high school in animal sciences (she did not want to be a vet, she wanted to be a doctor or nurse) Lisette thought it might be an interesting experience and solely wanted to go to the school because of one particular teacher she had met that worked there. She admittedly did not do well on her high school entrance exams so it was up to her to advocate for herself to obtain a spot in the high school – Lisette knew she would need to compose a formal piece of writing advocating to school leaders for why she belonged. She explains:

> **So I wrote all these letters and stuff because I didn't have the scores they wanted**. I wrote letters to every head of every department there plus the principal, plus the assistant principal –I don't know and I put it on this agricultural background sheet and it was all – and they called my mom and they were like we want her to come here um, and then when I get there the guy dies, the teacher that I wanted to, yes, so that program was done. But I got myself in anyways so, that was a good school.

Though Lisette was happy to get in, she described her time in high school as very a-typical, given the focus of the agricultural education. She busied herself going to FFA conventions and

delivering baby animals in addition to attending typical math, science and English courses. She described the setting as segregated, but also points out that she was able to find herself a diverse group of friends for support. Later in high school as she began to consider what colleges to apply to, Lisette's older sister was diagnosed with bipolar disorder, further diverting her parent's attention and energy. Lisette reflected upon this during our interview and felt resentful about – at no point along the way on her journey did she feel as though she was getting support she needed to succeed, not from her family, not from her classmates or teachers. She described being in classes where she did not understand the hidden rules of the classroom, similar to the experience that James articulated upon coming to college for the first time.

> I got into AP English, which I don't know how that happened, I shouldn't have been in there, that was the class were I realized I haven't read enough, I don't know enough. **These girls in this class, all the white girls in the class they have been reading the right books, at the right times, the right amount and so when we got in that class, we were supposed to read 4 or 5 books over the summer and I was like, are you kidding me I don't even read this fast**, like, I don't...and so they knew everything that was going on in English and grammar, she was a stickler about that and I'm like, **I don't even know these rules, I don't even know what is going on**…

Though Lisette recalls getting through the class, she says it felt like an inside "game" where certain people (aka white people) knew the rules of interpreting literature, and she found herself trying to catch up and learn them in order to play along. Emotion, reading the rules of the room, the dynamics of race, of who got it and did not, is a kind of rhetorical emotion strategy here for belonging, and trying to fit in, it is to go back to the introduction to this chapter the work of emotional labor of reading the room as way to strategize and succeed (Boler). Similar to James, Lisette expresses the sense that the unspoken rules of the classroom left her on the outside, that it was up to her to find things out, to navigate the covert rules of classroom engagement that were expected of students of color that feel stuck on the outside. This was ultimately unfulfilling for Lisette, and not something she enjoyed, she felt dismayed and on edge as she tried to navigate

these courses and find her way and her AP teacher was equally skeptical, almost laughing when Lisette told her she was going to get a "B" in the course for the semester. Lisette felt exposed and pushed down by a teacher at a key time in her personal intellectual development, when like James, she had already questioned internally whether she belonged in that space. Though some of her teacher's skepticism motivated her to push through, she also found the experience dragging, demeaning.

This sense and feeling carried into college though she lacked the focus and energy to continue to advocating for herself, setting the tone for what was to come in college – devising a new set of 'tactics' to gain power in response to a sense of dislocation (de Certeau 37-38). She felt she had expended all of her emotional energy to make it through high school just to get to college, as though there was nothing left to give.

> **I just felt like I had no energy left**, I had worked really hard in high school and I was doing a lot of stuff and **nobody was in my corner**, like 'oh where do you want to go, what do you want to do?' They weren't asking me questions, they weren't doing anything, so I was like well, we keep going to UW Madison…It just should have been different, it just should have been different, I should have, I don't, all the conversations that I should have had with my parents about what school I was going to, they just didn't happen, they didn't take place, and they should have…**and I was exhausted**, I was just like, this is a great school and my best friend was going too and I was like...

This lack of direction, support, and 'conversation' as Lisette puts it, continued to challenge her throughout school, as she worked to find a place on a large campus, to find a major that she felt connected to, to find people with whom she fit in. And as she expresses, it is tiring and all consuming to constantly fight. It became clear very early on when arrived in college, that she was an outsider, and that it was going to be deeply challenging for her to find her way amidst the sea of students and new rules and customs. Lisette explains that this lack of understanding, of being able (or willing) to read the silent emotional rules of school pushed her inward. Though this sense of dislocation is common for any new student to the university it is especially acute for

students of color, first generation college students, and non-native English speakers. Lisette echoes James' story, articulating a sense of dislocation, of not knowing how to operate in college.

> **I didn't know protocol for a lot of at first, so that was the big thing**, at first I was going to tutoring for chemistry and stuff, and I can't remember the other classes that I was in, but **I didn't know anything about talking to the teacher or talking to people, I just didn't talk to people at all and I had an issue talking to people because I didn't like talking to people**, so I didn't know that I could do that period and then some other stuff happened where, this guy broke up with me and I was like I'm not going to class [freshman year], so that's when I stopped going to class period. So I didn't know anything about incompletes or withdrawing or drop deadlines, I didn't know any of it.

These grey areas have in many ways shaped how teachers of writing are prepared to handle incoming students and the particular challenges especially facing students of color in the university. In this way Lisette's experience deeply echoes Tatum's articulation of 'survival' that students in non-dominant identity groups must employ in order to succeed in unequal institutions of power. Tatum explains, "In a situation of unequal power, a subordinate group has to focus on survival." Survival at times includes sitting back and letting the oppressive behavior continue without saying anything, survival sometimes means perpetual advocacy and fight, survival means reading rules you do not understand and trying to decode them, survival can mean going within. And indeed teachers can help support students to move beyond survival mode to thriving, but it takes being aware and connected to a student's experiences in order to intervene successfully.

After a freshman year plagued with low grades and academic challenges, Lisette was placed on academic probation and went to the local community college for a year. Unlike her time at UW Lisette "loved" going to the community college. She described loving the connections, the sense of diversity and the sense of community she experienced from both fellow teachers and students. She says, "They just seemed so passionate about teaching… I don't know,

there were various connections, but it was about the people, who people are makes it easier to connect to them or not, and the environment and the atmosphere…our lives had nothing to do with each other…we just had people from all over, and we would just talk about this stuff openly, but their attitudes about it weren't off...some of these people here are like out of their minds…"

In a more diverse environment, Lisette felt connected and inspired but it was not only the diversity that helped her. Rather she describes a setting with more student-teacher interaction, and with classes she felt prepared to handle academically. Experiencing connective relational attention from teachers was impactful to Lisette, and she found teachers in this smaller more focused setting that were emotional and deeply in tune with her as a student and person. Lisette began to learn in this setting, and the emotional input of teachers and students, the emotional connections and relationships experienced in the process of her time in community college was connective and inspiring to her. Lisette began to enjoy her classes and to see school differently, but she was still focused on getting back to UW to achieve the goal of obtaining a four-year degree because she felt that was important to her success overall. And, though she enjoyed this experience, Lisette's time going to community college did not better prepare her to deal with the challenges back at a larger university where she continued to lack connection and support. This lack of support was insidious, following Lisette around throughout her time in college as she struggled academically and felt unsure about what to major in – she articulated to me that she had still not figured out how to navigate the complexities and the rules of the larger university power structure. Because of these changes, Lisette describes each semester as being like starting over – "so I always feel like it is freshman year every semester, and I have to start over." She continued:

> **I don't have any motivation and I don't have like this end goal or this dream of what my career will be**…One of my classes, my capstone class, we have to make a business plan and he was asking us what our passion is and I'm like, **I don't even know that answer, I don't have anything that is making me go forward in all of this, I'm just moving along**.

Coming to campus with a lack of direction, burnt out from high school, lacking a core group of teachers and students to support her, Lisette resigned herself to not being inspired or engaged, propelled on a moving conveyer belt to "finish" with little inspiration or passion. Though Lisette felt connected to a dance group that she was a part of on campus, there was little else that connected her here and she became accustomed to not fitting in, to surviving. This sense of 'moving along' in spite of, was necessary to success and was echoed by many students of color that I interviewed – for Lisette fitting in meant modulating her feelings appropriately so she could gain credibility and advancement as a student, it meant adhering to the subtle rules to get the grades and obtain a degree. It meant expending emotional labor while not getting much in return that felt satisfying or connective. It became the 'tactic' of someone lacking power, attempting to regain her footing and control, to expend emotional labor in the service of obtaining social acceptance (Hochschild; de Certeau). In fact, during the course of a class on writing, Lisette chose a major research project about what she termed as the "unaffiliated student" on campus, the minority student who has no services or organizations (like PEOPLE program) to support them. In addition to talking to students of color and program leaders to try and get a picture of the challenges facing these students on campus, she shared her personal experience, offering an additional look at her sense of vulnerability at being alone and at sea. What follows is an excerpt form that project detailing the experience of minority students on campus:

> *The minority students' declining school spirit and overall moral for what this University stands for has been depleted due to our isolation and lack of help. My independence and*

> *responsibility for my own fate in an educational setting has made me steer away from connecting with others including my teachers, peers, and faculty. The competitive drive that leads the masses of students on this campus to flood University, Park, and Charter is not the same drive that gets me off probation or helps me pay for books each semester. My want and need to prove everyone wrong and to show the world that I made it* ***in spite of****, has redefined my idea of college: what it was, what it is, and what it should be.*

This passage echoes much of what Lisette revealed in our interview, and is similar to James' own experience as well, even though he did have institutional support. It is not that there are not programs available, wonderful teachers, and incredible possibility on college campuses, but students in states of distress, those in survival mode, those who have withdrawn, miss out on opportunities for connection, perpetuating their sense of isolation and dislocation. In a sense we must teach students how to advocate productively for themselves in school and beyond to get the most out of their experiences. The institution of course is not only to blame and Lisette would agree, but over time she became comfortable on the boundary, to act in her words as "robotic" and subverting her emotions simply to get through. And in order to survive she feels she had to subvert her emotional core, to hide it and put on a mask and she lost her central direction and motivation. Lisette explained that she had to 'take her feelings and emotions' out of it in order to succeed, in order to move forward and not care that the experience of school is so vastly different than what she would want or imagine from the experience. The 'emotional labor,' the personal advocacy, the fatigue of it all was just too great to overcome her sense of vulnerability and disconnection. Though she might have succeed on the surface, eventually graduating school, it came at a personal cost for Lisette, it came at the expense of truly being able to explore herself and her identity. Because she had to try so hard just to make it, she felt she had to give up on really exploring her future goals, she felt she had to burry her identity in order to just make it, which ultimately did not feel like success to her. Again and again Lisette asked herself if she belongs, in both overt and subtle ways, to the point where in the end she does not really know

her direction, what she is fighting for, or where to go. In short, the system of the university and its possibilities ultimately failed her. Lisette was a vulnerable student coming in forced to navigate and advocate for herself, to suppress her emotionality and connection, to sacrifice her passion and sense of self and internal motivation in service of succeeding, and getting by.

As Alberta Gloria argues in her examination of the persistence of Chicano/a students in institutions of higher education, it is essential that we understand why and how success or failure matters to individuals within academic spaces. Ultimately Gloria's research determined that institutional (and relational) support is essential for the most vulnerable students, echoing the wider challenges facing students like Lisette (and James):

> Viewed as a component of one's social support system, the university environment influences students' attitudes about staying in school. Not only is support from family and friends important for academic persistence, but students also need and value support from school personnel. Formal student support services and informal relationships can help facilitate the academic persistence of racial/ethnic students. This is particularly relevant for first generation college students as their family members may not fully understand the students' specific higher educational experiences. Further, Cardinal (1981) reported that nonpersisters viewed the university environment as competitive and impersonal, had fewer contacts with fellow students, and had fewer individuals in their academic network. From these studies, it is evident that perception of the university environment is related to persistence behaviors (Gloria and Kurpius 534).

Gloria and Kurpius draw attention to key factors working against students from outlying racial and ethnic backgrounds as they struggle to succeed, these factors, such as a lack of relational support and even just the perception that the university is working against them are engrained in how these students connect (or not) to school. What this claim suggests is that actual support and connective relationships translate into success. Even the simple *perception* of not belonging, the *perception* of an inhospitable university environment, is enough to force students to drop out or not feel connected – this is acutely echoed in Lisette's narrative. Instead of asking these students to burry themselves as individuals and change, to bury their emotional centers, to ignore the

journey that has helped them to arrive in college, it is instead important that we work to know our students in classrooms and in community settings, to create spaces where they want to and trust to share themselves, not only their feelings, but their past, and their future goals.

Matema – The Vulnerability of Movement: Crossing International and Linguistic Borders in School

Matema was born in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). He lived there for seven years during the civil war which broke out in the country in the 1990's and was forced to move to Tanzania where he lived there in a United Nations (UN) refugee camp for most of his early life, until finally moving to the United States (US) in 2006 at the age of 17 after a rigorous vetting process. Matema, like James and Lisette describes the work of constantly working to fit in, to read the rules of a new language, a new system of schooling, a new social and cultural dynamic vastly different than the one he grew up in. The feeling of dislocation was profound for him. Matema attended first and second grade in the DRC, and the rest of his schooling was completed while he was living in a UN refugee camp. He lost both of his parents in the war in 1996 when he was quite young, moving to the US with his grandfather and cousins who he considers his closest and only family. In our conversation Matema recalled leaving his home at the age of 7, and never returning again. He described that experience through a haze of memory and vague detail: "I can't remember exactly the details, like this is what happened and [then] this and that, but I knew we were in school, and they were just announcing the war is going on so everybody has to run, so you are just running and you follow the crowd where its going, so we just continue[d] running there. But to remember like who paid for us on the boat from Congo to Tanzania, I can't remember how and who put us in the boat and stuff." In many ways, Matema discusses his personal and individual traumas in similar ways to Lisette and James, with a

matter-of-fact concreteness, a sense of truth and honesty, but lacking the focused specific details that one might expect of a traumatic event like being forced from your home.

Like James and Lisette, I met Matema as his writing instructor. He is a dynamic, warm, inquisitive person and when I began this project I felt compelled to reach out to him. I became interested in considering how emotion factors into journeys across real international borders, and in the process of acclimating to a new country, language and school system. Matema's experience as a refugee places him in a different position than the other students profiled here, as someone who is displaced form home in an 'official' capacity he in a way expected to feel some sense of dislocation and difference. Ultimately when bodies move and shift in time and space, from one country or context to the next, when people cross borders, something distinctly emotional happens in this process. We tend to think of emotion as touchy feely, however in this context it is anything but– here, in this frame of migration and mobility, emotion attunes us to the trauma and the real lived and embodied experiences of migration. Here, better seeing emotion can help attune us to the inhabited experiences of individuals, to the ways in which bodies struggle to matter and belong to new language contexts, to new ways of being as a citizen, to a sense of dislocation as they leave their homes.

To understand Matema as a person and student is to understand the journey that brought him to the classroom in the first place to understand the moments of belonging and not belonging. As Carola Suárez-Orozco et al., show us in their analysis of immigrant students' learning and educational experiences, "Migration is not for the faint of heart. It almost inevitably involves feelings of dislocation, and at least temporary loss of status, difficulty communicating, and most significantly, leaving behind loved ones" (30). This sense of dislocation is obvious and profound in Matema's story but also in the stories of James and Lisette who cross into new

boundaries and places of schooling and advocacy in vastly different ways. As Suárez-Orozco et al. make clear here, these shifts are inherently emotional, and inescapably call upon our bodies and minds in profound ways, as such they require our whole selves, our savvy resources as learners and speakers to navigate the complexities of boundary crossing.

When I first met Matema in an intermediate writing class he had an understandable amount of fear and nervousness about being in a college writing class. In fact, his first portfolio was on the impact of being a second language speaker in the university and the effects of this experience on his educational journey. Matema's first language, his home language, is Swahili (in addition he speaks a number of other African languages and dialects) and the language he formally used in school to learn was French – he did not start learning English until 2006 when he moved to Texas as a refugee through the UN program. He had taken ESL classes in high school and community college previously and went into introductory and then intermediate English in college but still felt nervous about fitting in. In the writing history that Matema composed for our class he describes the emotional gap present as a non-native speaker, the sense of otherness and disconnection. His writing excerpt follows:

> *Of course everyone who speaks English and hears how I talk, must know that English is my second language because I don't speak like a Wisconsinite. Yeah, these people are right. I am learning English but they miss my other languages' accents. They don't know how fluently I speak my tribe language – Kibembe. When I meet Bembe people, we talk without stopping. We use tons of synonyms to show the emotion to what we are saying. One word may mean a lot of things just by using its different synonyms. Even when I meet Burundians, I talk without fear because I speak Kirundi very well and they cannot detect my accent easily. I learned Kirundi very fast when I attended a primary school in Burundi for three years and we also had Burundian neighbors in Congo that made me to learn Kirundi more easily. I wish English speakers would know some of these languages so I can show and express all the emotions that come to my mind when I am talking to them as I do when I am talking to Burundians and others.*

Matema articulates the emotional connection implicit in the spaces where language resides, and the core of what is lost in connecting with others when speaking in a language that is not your

intimate language of birth. In addition to these languages, he speaks French and Lingala (a Congolese dialect). And in spite of this predilection for language, Matema was often concerned about missing and not 'getting' the rules, about students not understanding him in class because of his thick accent. I reassured Matema in our conversations and tried to articulate a sense of support to him, but it was clear he was emotional and fearful stepping into class. Before coming to the US Matema had a limited understanding of America, however close friends from his refugee camp had moved to Canada, and in talking to them he said they described it as "half heaven." He explained: "Yes its just like in the heaven. Like god is not here, but it is exactly like in the heaven… That is what I thought of America, I thought everybody lives in those tall buildings, like skyscrapers in New York City. I never thought there could ever be any short house, I never thought there could be anything like there where [pointing] where you can see soil, or land or whatever. So all those kind of imaginations, that is what was going on in my mind." The possibility present in a move to America was profound and loomed large for him.

Matema described finding out he was cleared and accepted for immigration to the US as his "first happiness ever" since the day he was born. Once in the US, Matema and his larger family of cousins and grandfather faced incredible odds, and this reality quickly disavowed Matema of his visions of America as a place to be saved. Instead he found once again that it was through his own self-reliance that he would be 'saved' and find success. Matema and his siblings did not speak English and yet they were immediately placed in high school (for Matema he began in 9th grade). He explains a profound sense of dislocation at arriving in the US and being put in school, a dislocation and unease that echoes that of James and Lisette on an even greater scale. "I was feeling like, I was lost or something. Because imagine, I think camp is the worst part in the world, whatever if you have any negative image that would be a refugee camp. And

moving straight from a refugee camp to Texas, a huge city and to those schools, **it was just like oh my goodness, where am I, I was feeling so much lost**." Though Matema often felt lost at school because of the language gap, he described reading and decoding his surrounding environment, reading social cues, and "just listening and listening" as his key to success. He read English language dictionaries, examined popular texts carefully, studied intently to learn the language – he read literal rules to fit in and also worked to read the social and cultural cues around him, to try and understand the culture of American schooling. Similar to Lisette and James, Matema was forced to overcome his emotional responses to dislocation and to read the rules of the world around him. I think of Matema like James in the library, with the texts in front of him reading carefully and closely to try to understand and decipher the words and ideas. Within six months of moving to Texas Matema's grandfather died in an accident where he overheated and had a stroke in a hot bathroom because he did not know how to properly use a shower, and as the oldest Matema became responsible for all of his youngest family members.

After lacking adequate networks of support in Texas, Matema moved his family from Texas to Minnesota, using the money he had saved as a part time worker to purchase bus tickets. Once in Minnesota his family did not initially have lodging and spent the first few nights in a bus station until social workers from the Minnesota Human Services Department reached out with support. And still Matema endured, taking care of himself and his family as a person who barely knew the language or culture, living in a homeless shelter for part of the time and surviving on food stamps. He worked hard to complete high school and get his diploma, which was the first goal he had set for himself when coming to America. After achieving that he obtained his associates degree, and after two years at the community college, he then went on to get a four year degree and had to appeal to get into college, all while working part time at a cleaning

company and supporting his family. This is all before I even met him, before he was a student at the university where I taught him, before he began his journey to become a doctor or a dentist, which was his ultimate goal. It was in a way, this singular goal, similar to James, that helped Matema to endure, that pushed him through from one step to the next over and over again.

> I knew what I wanted to be, but I didn't know how to get there, so that just knowing that I wanted to be a doctor since I was back home, it was just a destination…so I was just knowing the way to be here [pointing] is to go to school and without giving up or anything …The death of my mom was during the war but she couldn't probably die if we had a hospital or good doctors because she was taken to the hospital and she died there the following day, so that really upset me, and when we were in the camp we were more than 60,000 refugees and we didn't have a doctor. We had doctors who volunteered, three or two times a week **…So all those memories were just building in me and feeling like how could they become a doctor, and my grandpa told me they went to school and I was, oh OK, that was my motivation even in the refugee camp, so I wanted to be like them**... So I struggled with English schooling and stuff, but just being a doctor is what I was looking at [very serious look, earnest, a bit misty eyed].

Matema described these revelations with an immense amount of intensity and emotion, and was one of the most outwardly emotional moments during our interview. This goal of becoming a doctor was personal for Matema, and though he described this with an unusual amount of restraint as "very, very tough" he also has an ability to translate this sense of personal trauma into a way forward for himself. I do not share this merely for us to consume an emotional story of struggle, but rather because the hardships that Matema faced are so common for immigrants. Many of these details were shared with me rather matter-of-factly with quite little emotion on Matema's part – it is important that we attend to the experiences that we adequately hear them. There is incredible emotion labor expended in carrying these moments with him into school, in reliving the fears of not belonging again and again as he enters high school and then college. And though emotion might not always be present it is still essential to how I came to know Matema as a person and in how I read his story and hear his words, emotion is resonating, bubbling beneath the surface of his descriptions, and it left me at times with questions about how to deal or make

sense of that emotion as a researcher. Emotion was a lens for me of making sense or understanding even if I struggled at times to identify it. And thus it is significant.

These emotional feelings of dislocation and disruption were most acutely expressed when Matema discussed leaving his family for the first time to go to a four year university, where he not surprisingly felt a new sense of displacement and dislocation being away from his community, and where he was most afraid to write, speak, and connect with his fellow native English speakers. Just as he experienced dislocation when he moved away from the refugee camp to the US for the first time, he felt a profound sense of dislocation leaving his family and community, and coming to a campus where he had little hope of finding people like him, to offer him a sense of belonging. Matema described the immense fear and emotional turmoil of leaving his family and coming to a new community in college:

> …this campus is huge and I feel like I am not included in a lot and that is probably because of myself, I am not going to go to a lot of things that [don't] include me, and I feel like I am included mostly geographically [in] the part of chemistry building… writing was something that I used to be scared of a lot, a lot, and even now I am scared a little bit, because I felt, I am afraid and I feel like I don't know a lot of words, so probably even if I wanted to express something, because my vocabulary is limited I cannot tell exactly what I want, so that kind of thinking makes me afraid with writing even as I am moving with my education…Yes, I had a lot of fear…

Though Matema eventually obtained success as a student on campus, finding a few student organizations and teachers to help support him, the pressure he placed on himself and that he felt from his own community to succeed was immense, and the obstacles for Matema felt at times insurmountable – even after all that he had been through, all that he achieved, he still had fear around fitting in, around speaking the language, learning to write, belonging in a space where we like to imagine all students are welcome. Carrying these experiences, advocating for oneself in every institutional context, is what emotional labor looks like, and it is what we must pay attention to. I came to know Matema as a student in my class and was impressed by the force

with which he advocated for himself. Perhaps because Matema was a bit older than Lisette and James when he arrived at a four-year university, perhaps because of the challenges he had been through, he viewed the effect of personal advocacy as just another barrier and goal that he had to overcome – he had already expended emotional labor just to arrive in a new country, to learn the language, and so he plowed ahead in school with a focused determination. Yet at the same time, this feeling of being on the outside, of not belonging, is very similar to James' description of college as a new country, as needing to make sense of the new language, the new rules and ways of being. Emotion and his connection to home, to his community drives Matema, and forced him to seek success even if it required that he be a bit uncomfortable along the way.

According to the United Nations Refugee Agency, there are more refugees and displaced people than ever before in human history. According to their count, there are 65.3 million forcibly displaced people worldwide, and 21.3 million refugees ("Figures at a Glance"). Each one of these individuals, those who show up in our classrooms, community centers, and offices has a story and emotional consequences implicit in their journey that beg to be understood. Further, we must stay attuned to the immense fear and dislocation that students, especially those that leave their home countries for different opportunities feel when they arrive. That being said, I do not offer Matema's experience as a generalizable account, but if anything it suggests why it is important to understand the embodied experience of all students, and particularly the challenges immigrants face not only acclimating to their new home country, but to the complex bureaucratic, academic and social situations around them –each one will carry with them memories and traumas from the worlds and homes that they have left behind.

Discussion: Why Understanding Vulnerability and Emotional Labor is Essential

The narratives of James, Lisette, and Matema highlight how students, especially students of color, carry with them to school a sense of inwardness, shame, survival and fear, leaving them feeling unsure of how to find networks of support and attention. By drawing emotion into our discussions of race and not belonging we are able to more readily see the thoughtful tactics and rhetorical labor necessary for these students to succeed, to cross boundaries and make their own path. And this fear and shame of dislocation becomes even more acute when stepping into writing and language classrooms, which feel so intricately woven to the rules, to correct ways of knowing and being. ***This reality is at the center of each narrative and at the center of each of the conclusions in this chapter: when students feel vulnerable and afraid, it is hard for them to learn, to feel positively connected, to feel successful. And language classrooms especially bring out this sense of palpable fear and worry about regulation and connection.*** It is no surprise that each of these students expressed their fear of not 'making' it in a writing class or school, of not being 'good' writers or good students. Before they enter our classrooms students are already harboring narratives and experiences within them that set the stage for their relationship to that course. Students are of course, as I have pointed out above, "already socialized into discourses of race and power relations" before they get into our classrooms which impresses upon them feelings about whether they are insiders or outsiders to the rhetorical and literate rules of the classroom (Prendergast 49). And this sense of fear, of not making it is pervasive for students, especially students of color. Part of this is because students of color and those outside of mainstream groups often pay higher prices for their feelings and sense of not belonging, as feminist scholar Alison Jaggar writes, "People who experience conventionally unacceptable, or what I call 'outlaw' emotions often are subordinated individuals who pay a

disproportionately high price for maintaining the *status quo*" (166). That is, the students who most experience feelings of shame and fear and anger, are often the least empowered to express those feelings, or to make sense of them in a productive manner. This is where we can intervene as teachers and administrators, to encourage reflection, connection and relationship building as a means for self-examination and support.

And as I have alluded to throughout this chapter, emotion is central, it is inherently woven into how students experience the world and to their identity, and as such, how they feel accepted or not within large institutions of learning. Better understanding it and how to use it is integral to giving students a sense that they belong that they can be more than just rule followers. Ta Nahesi Coates articulates this sense of dissatisfaction and disconnection with schooling as a young black boy growing up in Baltimore in *Between the World and Me.* He describes sitting in French class in school and feeling distant and disconnected from all of it as though there was no room for him, only room for following the rules and suppressing his innate curiosity (echoing in many ways, Lisette's own narrative).

> I remember sitting in my seventh-grade French class and not having any idea why I was there. I did not know any French people, and nothing around me suggested I ever would. France was a rock rotating in another galaxy, around another sun, in another sky that I would never cross. Why, precisely, was I sitting in this classroom? The question was never answered. I was a curious boy, but the schools were not concerned with curiosity. They were concerned with compliance (25).

There is of course a pervasive sense of instability and dislocation across all three of these narratives for different reasons. All three students are crossing into new locations and institutions to learn, synonymously trying to build their sense of self while shedding other parts of themselves, and being exposed as a bit out of place. And any student must work to cross boundaries in order to fit in, however the burden is especially acute for students of color. When you feel as though you are on the outside, suppressing emotion is a part of how you get

by, emotion and feeling is not seen as productive or generative from that perspective of those who are most vulnerable. The emotional labor of advocating for belonging in school is tiring, dislocating, and draining, especially when we examine this work over the course of a student's life – in the case of James we see this labor expended when he works to fit into his new college classroom; we see this expended for Lisette when she tries to read the rules of her AP class; for Matema when he must care take for his family while teaching himself English in order to get through high school. Though each of these students are successful in traditional markers, though they show resilience and grit, the question remains at what cost, when does the payoff stop being worth the effort? What these narratives expose about emotion is that it is a complex force, both motivating and dislocating in its possibilities and impact, that there are always forces mediating our social connections and bonds. Additionally, my analysis of these three narratives together brings forth the following conclusions to pay attention to.

Conclusion 1: Emotional Labor must be expended in moments where students feel most vulnerable, and we must remain attuned to the long-term impact this has on students. This labor is mediated in writing and in social and internal relationships. The choice (or need) to expend emotional labor is not always empowering, but is often a requirement for success that requires students to give up personal agency at the expense of making it. At the same time paying attention to emotional labor, also exposes possibilities for student and teacher action, for connecting and for learning. For example, at the end of the interview I conducted with Matema he took the time to remind me how meaningful it was to learn that he was not the only person in school who struggled with writing, that even though he felt linguistically isolated in school, there were strategies for working around that.

> Yes, I had a lot of fear [of communicating in English], and even, I am not saying this because I am in front of you, but even if…I will forget everything you teach us in that class, but the

> one thing I will never forget [emphatically] is the first article we read about 'just write' was it 'just write or just keep writing' that article and the way you explained it to us, I will never ever forget [shitty first drafts]. **Because it was scary**. You can remember the first week of the class I approached you and asked how many papers are we going to write, how are you going to be grading it, how long will be the papers, something like that. And you told me oh no, you will just be, exactly how you explained it but, that article we read, 'just keep writing' and from there for sure I wasn't afraid, just keep writing. Because I read those authors say they were afraid of writing too, they didn't know where to start because I was, oh really, is she talking about me, because she knows more English than me she's afraid, and I am afraid too, so I think the way is exactly as Anna says, just start writing.

These moments of fear and shame around fitting in and communicating should inspire us to respond. And the work of 'just writing' as I suggested to Matema and other students in class, just putting words on the page is half the battle, the first step toward small moments of inclusion and overcoming these boundaries and emotional feelings of not belonging in language classrooms. Further, students have sophisticated ways of navigating and thriving in these institutional and school settings and engage in critical labor and work before they even arrive in our classrooms. Literacy, writing, and rhetoric inherently implicates identity and as such emotion bound up to it. The students profiled here talk about strategies for studying, carrying around dictionaries to decode vocabulary they do not understand in textbooks, reaching out to classmates and teachers, going inward, observing peers as they study in the library, all useful strategies for decoding and making sense of covert social and cultural rules of which not all of our students are privy to. And though there are always going to be important personal reasons for creating strategies for success, the challenge is how can we empower students into making those decisions and tactics from a place of strength for themselves, versus making them feel they ***have*** to adopt these skills as the only means to survival.

As Vershawn Ashanti Young argues, schools and sites of learning intensify "the burden of racial performance" precisely because literacy and rhetorical work is so tied to these strict institutions of language practice – this is why students like Matema, Lisette and James are filled

with a sense of fear, shame and dislocation even in the sites where we speak about inclusion, community and belonging (131). It is not enough that we encourage education as "the best antidote to racism" it is not always a direct path away from the very real feelings, emotions, and challenges that accompany students to their sites of learning, rather we need to interrogate those power systems where our students are arriving, to consider what type of inclusion and exclusion is being communicated there (V. Young 141). It is our duty, as instructors and university leaders to engage in reflection and attunement to student emotional labor, to exclusion, to their often winding stories and experiences – to work to include students in those systems of education that we encourage them to take part in.

Building off of Hochschild's notion of emotional labor, sociologist Louwanda Evans examines the emotional toll of racism and the emotional labor of responding to racism in her study of black pilots and flight attendants. Evans' work is important and notable because she articulates the inherent power structures of white spaces and the emotional work of trying to fit into those spaces, articulating the emotional effect of racism, and the considerable toll it takes on an individual's sense of self and ability to thrive in those spaces. She explains the cumulative effect of this experience:

> One can imagine the cognitive emotional aspects of suppressing emotions of anger against racial affronts and the emotional labor that accompany these events. These flight crew members often note that though they experience anger as a real and appropriate emotion, they are not granted the ability, like their white counterparts, to openly express anger even when they feel it is justified…This raises the significant question—in institutionally white spaces are racism, prejudice and discrimination normative?...Even when complying with conventional emotion norms, their very presence is seen as an anomaly in this space. Therefore, their emotions and identity as black Americans are frequently outside of the normative structures… (Evans 84-85).

Evans' analysis of these narratives does not only apply to black flight attendants and pilots but rather she names and refers to many institutional instances of power and racial imbalance. She

articulates here an important point, which echoes many of the narratives in this chapter, that is there is an emotional complexity to making it in any dominantly white space, in institutions that are constructed primarily for white individuals. There is emotional labor and energy expended in the process of adapting, and this is expended at a higher rate when you are marginalized. This is echoed by all three narratives in this chapter, but most centrally by James and Lisette – James discusses essentially 'hiding' in the library to avoid ridicule form students and teachers, tired at absorbing their attacks and emotionally having to argue for himself constantly; while Lisette discusses feeling 'tired' forcing herself to move forward in spite of feeling uninspired and disconnected from a lack of support, connection and understanding of who she was in the space of school. The cumulative effect of this emotional labor is detrimental – though in these cases the students use the fight to persist, there are countless examples of students who just cannot overcome the exhaustion and frustration (and the gap in graduation rates between white students and students of color reflect this) – it is essential that we pay attention to the often invisible work associated with this emotional labor. It is worth noting that the power dynamics are inverted in the case of the narratives expressed here, that is the stakes are different for a student in a school than on a plane, and it might even create more of a power vacuum to be a student of color in a dominantly white institution because there is less incentive for teachers and administrators to meet the emotional labor of the students equitably (in comparison to the settings on planes that Evans researches). Because of the inherent vulnerability of schooling, the fear inherent in language classrooms, as Matema exemplifies above, we as composition teachers are especially attuned to respond to the challenges marginalized students face. As he directly states, "it was scary" to enter our intermediate writing class for the first time, and the vulnerabilities that come with this process do not always present itself as clearly as Matema articulates. Our attunement to

bodies of literature around critical literacy, critical pedagogy, and critical race theory, offer pathways for response.

Conclusion 2: Paying attention to the emotional labor expended by vulnerable students enables us to see the importance of relational support, of relationship building to their success, and exposes the gaps in our writing pedagogy, and institutions. We must stay attuned to the emotional currents of students crossing borders both physically and emotionally. Crossing into college is a unique and specific journey for each student, and one that takes its toll in uniquely emotional ways. I arrive at the understanding about how labor and vulnerability matters to student development and to a lack of support as being especially true in the case of Lisette. Her challenges in college, in finding an intellectual home in school, in feeling positively about her direction demonstrate the immense emotional toll that constant personal advocacy has on her ability to feel emotionally and personally invested to the broader community. As she articulated toward the end of our interview, she felt "tired" and drained from the work of not fitting in, of not having direction and support, of not feeling included within the space of the institution. It was clear during our interview that Lisette had withdrawn and felt disengaged by her experiences in school. She expressed feeling emotionally let down, angry, dismayed, excluded over and over again in school. This is where relational support (and institutional support) becomes critical. It is important that teachers identify students who might be on the boundaries, who might be vulnerable to not fitting in and consider how to best support and help these students. On the surface Lisette said she might have appeared as having an attitude toward teachers, or being quiet, but I see that as an expression of the overall challenge she found in fitting into the school around her. She found more acceptance and personal attention in community college where classes were smaller and more diverse, which suggests she can and

could fit into educational settings. Part of her feelings of exclusion had to do with race, and she came to expect exclusion from the predominantly white institution she was educated in. But part of this also had to do with feeling as though she was not able to articulate who she was to other teachers, because she did not have the strength or perseverance to do so after many years of personally advocating for herself in her family and in school. And the emotional labor she expended over and over again went largely unnoticed by teachers and students, who instead focused on her grades and class outcomes as proof that she was not successful in school.

One of our roles as educators is to understand the broader emotional toll of this advocacy, to consider how we can empower students without burdening them completely. What I am suggesting is that it is not enough to ask students to always overcome their own vulnerability and lack of direction but rather we need to meet them where they are, to take a more nuanced and textured view of why she feels that way in the first time. Lisette's narrative demonstrates the immense emotional labor of not feeling accepted, not having support, of institutional barrier. Instead of only being placed on academic probation as she was a number of times, is there something else the university could have been doing to help her more emotionally reconcile and understand her sense of dispassion and not belonging? What about additional mentorship and emotional support? My belief in analyzing Lisette's narrative is yes. Though Lisette was a strong writer and thinker, she expressed never fully believing that because she did not see her talents as being valued she did not feel seen or understood in school, and all of the work she had put in behind the scenes was rarely valued. This constant emotional drain is one reason why Lisette is compelled to write about the unaffiliated student for a research project in our course – in feeling out to sea herself in school, Lisette sought to understand and reconcile her feelings emotionally in writing, to learn more about that for herself but also to share it with others as well. These

realities push me to conclude that relational support, reading between the lines of student engagement, fear, and vulnerability will help us to understand how to reach out and support our most marginalized students, and to attend to their emotional well being in more productive and engaged ways.

In *Teaching to Transgress,* bell hooks reflects on the emotional capacities of teachers and students alike. She offers a useful heuristic for working with vulnerable, dislocated and marginalized students. hooks explains that true empowerment is not about tacitly and unceremoniously telling students they have 'authority' as thinkers and writers, but rater it is about engaging a community of learners in multiple forms of knowing and connecting.

> As a teacher, I recognize that students from marginalized groups enter classrooms within institutions where their voices have been neither heard nor welcomed, whether these students discuss facts—those which any of us might know—or personal experience. My pedagogy has been shaped to respond to this reality. If I do not wish to see these students use the 'authority of experience' as a means of asserting voice, I can circumvent this possible misuse of power by bringing to the classroom pedagogical strategies that affirm their presence, their right to speak, in multiple ways on diverse topics. This pedagogical strategy is rooted in the assumption that we all bring to the classroom experiential knowledge, that this knowledge can indeed enhance our learning experience. If experience is already invoked in the classroom as a way of knowing that coexists in a nonhierarchical way with other ways of knowing, then it lessens the possibility that it can be used to silence (hooks 84).

Part of our job then is to acknowledge our own vulnerabilities and 'emotional labor' in turn help students to find their own ways of speaking and knowing, that feel in tune with their sense of knowledge and self, as hooks illustrates above. It is not enough to tell students to use their own authority, because if they have not experienced that previously, or are vulnerable and disenfranchised we must pave the way for them to enter into classroom spaces in new ways, to as hooks illustrates, 'affirm their presence.' Just as Lisette needed her presence affirmed and supported. Each student profiled here articulates a person in their life who said you matter; you belong in their own way. And there are a multitude of ways that our students can feel included,

heard and supported, that their fear and shame can be understood, channeled, and assuaged. Part of that work however requires a kind of reflection on our own attachments and feelings as teachers to embrace a kind of radical relationship to the layered and holistic uses of emotion in our classrooms, and it requires that we acknowledge college as a sometimes dislocating, fearful, and vulnerable endeavor for students of color, and those on the boundaries.

Chapter 4:

Empathy in Action: Exploring Personal Conflict with Emotional Attunement

"In whatever form or focus, there is more call than ever to stay with emotion—whether in our personal lives, classrooms, writing, or political commitments. Staying with emotion is staying with others, for, without others, emotion has no meaning or effect. In that sense I see the power of emotion studies still in its ability to foreground how coalitions of people, of causes, of diverse others come together and/or break apart" (4).

- Laura Micciche, "Staying With Emotion"

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"Our campuses educated our citizens. Becoming an educated citizen means learning a lot of facts and mastering techniques of reasoning. But it means something more. It means learning how to be a human being capable of love and imagination…But we have the opportunity to do better…that is not 'political correctness' that is the cultivation of humanity" (14).

- Martha Nussbaum, *Cultivating Humanity: A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education*

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I began this dissertation by examining the current social and political conflicts (rooted in emotion) that have emerged since the election of Donald Trump. Emotion has arisen in response to the onslaught of daily news and civil liberties violations; in our classrooms as students work through their reactions to the political moments; in our communities as engaged citizens work through strategies for pushing back against dominant power structures ("Hate in America"). But within these wider social frames are individuals, often working through their own personal forms of identity and understanding, as is made clear by the student narratives explored in previous chapters. Conflict of any kind (individual, intrapersonal, political) is nothing if not steeped in a sense of emotional energy and emotional turmoil, and in our interactions and connections to these conflicts we must approach them with a sense of empathy and critical understanding. As Sarah Ahmed concedes, emotions we deem as negative or "destructive" often cause conflict – anger, shame, fear, rage – but at the same time these emotions can actually be "enabling or

creative," they can be generative and useful starting points for helping us to define our sense of self and to deepen our sense of the world, but only if we offer adequate support in examining them (201). Emotion helps us to see how people become inspired and empowered, and also how they feel marginalized and vulnerable (Micciche "Staying with Emotion"). The previous chapters have sought to underscore some of the key patterns around emotion that students and writers commonly experience. Emotion often deeply impacts and connects students to sponsors of literacy, encouraging writers to turn to composing as a way to reconcile pieces of their identity, to share and connect with others emotionally, to make sense of traumatic events and empower themselves through language. At the same time, emotion also exposes those who live in vulnerable bodies, causing students to feel as though they are outsiders – forcing them into advocacy, into emotional compliance. This reality emerges in student writing, in their personal understanding of themselves as students, in their interactions in school and out. We cannot just tacitly ask students to feel more or overcome challenge without understanding the social and cultural origins of their emotional lives.

Each of the narratives in this dissertation is at once individual, but interconnected. Because I was interested in examining emotion in different forms across narratives, there are overlapping themes between them, and I chose to highlight specific dimensions of them in each chapter, based upon the most pervasive role emotion played in each of the student's lives. But at the center of these revelations about emotion is the essential reality that emotion connects to a kind of mediation of identity and conflict, that in conflict whether personally, socially, culturally, there is a kind of emotional work in the making sense, in the development of self, of knowledge, of developing arguments. From the emotional work of personal understanding, students come to new forms of knowledge, of writing and literacy experiences, and gain a more nuanced sense of

who they are. School serves as a place for identities to be revealed and to be understood (when students are properly supported), even if it brings to bear complex emotions such as shame, fear, and feelings of exclusion.

And to begin engaging in the work of understanding emotion we need to view emotion as inherent to the process of our social and educational lives. Just as emotions help those profiled within this dissertation to know and learn and also feel vulnerable and marginalized, they offer a wider frame for a feeling of connection, belonging or not belonging in the world (Worsham qtd. in Micciche, *A Way to Move* 162). If we understand emotion as only tied to the individual and the interior we risk not understanding its pull in our wider social and cultural lives more broadly – we must see the networks, the patterns, the connections between emotion in order to make productive use of it (Chandler).

Sally Chandler's analysis about the relationship between emotion and writing reveals that asking students to write critically about identity "can evoke stressful emotions" (55). She continues, "Composition researchers have established a corresponding body of work connecting emotion and writing. These studies have become possible, in part, because of a shift in the perception of emotion. Within this new perspective, emotion…is understood as cultural rather than individual and biological…" What Chandler writes here is useful because she underscores a core contribution of the narratives throughout this project, that emotions are to be understand contextually and as interconnected, thus enabling us as researchers and teachers to recognize clear patterns in how emotions work in our students' lives and writing. Emotion is at once universal and singular. It is all too common that we make the assumption that "emotion discourse is only apparently about internal state" when ultimately it truly deals with "social life, power relations in particular" (Lutz, *Unnatural Emotions* 18). Emotions can be used as a way for us to

better understand our humanistic enterprises, they reflect our very negotiation of social and cultural experiences, and as such are connected to our sense of identity and individuality. And part of our work as educators is to 'de-essentialize' our assumptions about emotion. In doing so emotion "can be viewed as a cultural and interpersonal process of naming, justifying, and persuading by people in relationships to each other. Emotional meaning is then a social rather than an individual achievement – an emergent product of social life" (Lutz, *Unnatural Emotions* 5). And in arguing for this move, we must see how identity informs and relate to the social context of the classroom.

Reading emotions in this way, as the philosophical and at times ethical units which frame our lives and our historical understanding of the world, helps to bring this discussion in the frame of language, writing, and education. My central claim in this chapter is that ***emotion emerges in the navigation of complex personal and identity conflicts that often emerge in the social and cultural experiences of writing and schooling more broadly (Lutz, Unnatural Emotions; Zembylas). As teachers we must approach these revelations and challenges with empathy and critical understanding.*** The process of knowledge formation, of forming assumptions and ideas about the world, ultimately requires an interrogation of identity, of the self. And in that negotiation, emotional responses are tightly bound and a part of the process of personal development. To revisit Beverly Daniel Tatum, the concept of identity is "a complex one, shaped by individual characteristics, family dynamics, historical factors, and social and political contexts…integrating one's past, present, and future into a cohesive, unified sense of self is a complex task that begins in adolescence and continues for a lifetime—the salience of particular aspects of our identity varies at different moments in our lives. The process of integrating the component parts of our self-definition is indeed a lifelong journey" (9, 10). A part of this journey

involves negotiating complex interpersonal and identity conflicts. Identities, like emotion are "at once individual and social; they are the affective intersection of life experiences" and identity as it relates to the world of others, is "often constituted by the things we are least able to talk about" and inherently mediated by emotion (Zembylas 112). What Zembylas reveals are the buried lives of identity, and the ways that naming ourselves can have both an empowering and disempowering effect. These revelations come through in student writing but more so in student's personal understanding of self in their narratives, and if that is the case, then we must pay attention to it in our classrooms. And an attuned emotional pedagogy, empathy, or attunement to research methodology of emotion would pay attention to how these personal internal conflicts are mediated and how to respond to them accordingly in our work as educators.

In this chapter I examine three narratives of students reconciling personal identity conflicts connected to wider social and political conversations – the students here are grappling with immigrant identity, sexual identity, political belonging – within the context of school and language classrooms. I explore not only writing and literacy, but schooling and classrooms as sites for inquiry into identity development to better understand how emotion evolves in conjunction with educational and personal development. In this sense, I am interested the student's life worlds and ecosystems of growth, in seeing how they came to be not only as writers but as individuals who are articulate what is important and essential to who they are. It is something akin to the notion of examining a student's "funds of knowledge" the social and cultural and historical knowledge they bring with them from home, that impinge upon the work and person they are in school (Moll and Gonzalez). I look beyond the 'conceived space' of the classroom and of writing to the space of the everyday, to better understand how social practice around identity and emotion develops, and how students articulate those conflicts as a

whole, recognizing that "when we use words, we are always situating ourselves" (Leander and Sheehy 3,4). In two of the cases I had previously taught these students in writing classes, in one I had worked with a student in another undergraduate teaching program (though I did not teach him)– these conflicts emerged in their personal history and were exposed through the writing and classes that these students selected and in the development of their sense of self more broadly. In analyzing and discussing these narratives I draw upon discussions of identity, conflict and also empathy – I see empathy as a strategy for reading these narratives and for understanding how we should respond to challenges as teachers, students and administrators. The question for readers of these narratives and for teachers is how we can employ notions of emotion, empathy and narrative to further connections, and help students in their journeys of becoming? "Critical empathy" at its heart demands that we move beyond simply supplanting ourselves into the shoes of another on a superficial level in order to pass judgment (Leake "Writing Pedagogies of Empathy"). Empathy requires that we step outside of ourselves for it to be effective, that we engage in the work of intimate identification and understanding with the other – empathy in this frame is about moving beyond ourselves. It calls upon us to go beyond saying we truly know and understand when we have not yet addressed our own positionalities or vulnerabilities, it offers us something deeper and more connective as tool for engagement and critical understanding (Leake "Writing Pedagogies of Empathy"; Rollert).

Eric Leake discusses the importance of critical empathy as central to rhetorical argumentation, connection and education asking us to consider both its limits and judgments and possibilities. He proposes that, "critical empathy, on the other hand, starts with a recognition of unknowability…critical empathy asks us to attend to questions of dissimilarity and to the interests served by empathy and the conditions under which empathy is evoked" ("Writing

Pedagogies of Empathy" 4). Empathy understood in this more layered and engaged manner is not only about acknowledging similarities, identification, and connection but acknowledging when something is different, where the gaps and divisions lie. In bringing empathy into a discussion of the social consequences of emotion and conflict we stay attuned to the specificity of each challenge, and the possibility opened up in addressing these in our teaching and writing contexts. In essence I understand these forces as active versus passive, as the active tools that can lead to personal understanding, critical thinking, and political engagement. In this way possibilities are opened up for classroom use in writing (narrative, critique, invention, analysis), for research, for building community with students, and with other teachers. I use the narratives below in order to more clearly articulate the uses of emotion, identity, and empathy within our writing classrooms and universities more broadly. At no point is empathy more critical than in understanding the internal conflicts and complex identities of our students.

My aim here and in this project more broadly is to locate emotion in the embodied experiences of students as a means to move theory into situated practice. The eventual reality we run into with this approach is that we have long ignored emotion as a critical tool for understanding especially within our writing classrooms. In that context we have seen emotion arise as a kind of individual product, a personal response to a writing prompt that we somehow have to find ways to "deal" with. This response has limited the possibilities of understanding how deeply implicated emotion is into personal identity, and student processing and development (Leake "Expressivism"). In paying attention to emotion within the context of conflict, of identity, of possibility, we broaden the potentiality for its usefulness as researchers and educators; we see how emotion is implicated in a myriad of ways within the space of education and language classrooms. We begin to see emotion as not only something that happens

in personal narrative writing but as core to how students see and experience the world in both positive and negative ways – and acknowledging this requires a sense of empathy, of identifying and understanding the students we teach.

The conflicts that are examined here are likely to emerge in our classrooms, and in our research as a field invested in the social, cultural, and political effects of language, argument mediation, and knowledge formation. One of the students Lee, is a Hmong student who was born in the United States but whose parents moved here for political asylum in the 1970s. Though he has only been educated in the US he often felt like an outsider in his small Midwestern rural town, always having to reconcile his image of what it meant to be himself in a place that did not always respect or understand him. Derrick is a Christian white male who identifies as gay, having come to this sense of self as a young boy he had to work to evolve his own sense of what it meant to be 'acceptably' (in his words) gay, in a small town where that was not always embraced or understood. And Karina, is an immigrant from Russia. She was recruited by a small junior college in Texas to play basketball, moving to the United States at the age of 20. What comes through in these narratives of racial identity, immigrant identity, and sexual identity is the inherently emotional journey that students must go on to arrive at these personal evolutions. And further, these journeys often supersede the work and focus of schooling, or they work in parallel to the broader educational lessons and literacy work they are engaging in. That is, there is no way for these students to set these conflicts aside, rather they come up again and again in the process of their education, often mediating their schooling experiences, choices, and their sense of self.

The experience of students' social lives in school are often connected to the conflicts they experience in larger social contexts and these experiences, and in turn these experiences

influence a range of school experiences from the classes they choose, the projects they embark on, to their work ethic, and focus. In essence there is no way for these conflicts to be decoupled from their narratives as literate or educated beings, they are often the questions and conflicts that drive the work of students to ask deeper questions about themselves and the world. Our work as teachers comes then in understanding, reading, and hearing these conflicts with the critical empathy that Leake describes above, a critical empathy we can teach students, and teach ourselves as teachers and researchers, in how we read and understand student experience and narrative. Utilizing "critical empathy" in this way, "enables one to better question and acknowledge differences in economic, political, social and cultural positions" while acknowledging that emotion "becomes a necessary part of empathy" (Leake "Writing Pedagogy, Knowable Self", 157, 154). Empathy framed with this stance can be a kind of reparative tool for the inevitable conflicts that our students will face and a tool for us as teachers and researchers to see more clearly what lies on the other side of the divide.

Lee: Using Writing to Navigate Emotional Conflicts with Race and Masculinity

Lee was born in a small rural town in Wisconsin and is one of 10 children born to Hmong parents. His father fought alongside American soldiers in the Vietnam war, moving to Wisconsin in the 1970's for political asylum. When I first met Lee as his teacher in an intermediate composition class he was incredibly introverted and quiet, in fact I believe he would have blended into the background and never spoken had I allowed it. Yet for some reason I was able to get him to open up throughout the course of our time together, and a class that he initially dreaded became one he expressed as really enjoying. It was not until conducting our life history interview that I began to understand why he had a predilection toward not speaking in class. From an early age, Lee is someone who never had a lot of confidence when it came to school,

often feeling out of step because he spoke a different language at home and looked different than many of his classmates. As a young boy in school Lee was shy and reserved, always aware that he was different from his other classmates: those students he felt, had more money, more opportunity, were whiter. He lived in a small town in rural Wisconsin and knew that as a Hmong American, speaking Hmong at home and practicing a different religion than his classmates (Shamanism), that there was something essentially different about his experiences both in school and out of it. For Lee the question of identity, of not belonging, and how to negotiate his race in school, about revealing and concealing particular types of information about himself and about the importance of individual encouragement from teachers was imbedded in how he came to experience the world. One of the dominant themes that emerged from our discussion was this sense of conflict between embracing his Hmong identity, his interest in school and art, and rebelling against all of those entities entirely. This internal conflict was saturated in emotion and he attempted to reconcile it through school, through writing, through his personal relationships to better understand himself and his goals. With our stance of critical empathy we can see how a shy, reserved, student worked to make it in school and the emotional efforts he put into resolving his own internal conflicts.

Lee has four brothers and five sisters, most of whom were born in Laos. There is much that is hazy or not spoken about in Lee's family history for various reasons. For example, he does not know the exact dates of his parent's birth, but he knows his mom grew up in a farming family, that his father was recruited as a soldier in the Vietnam War and also worked teaching Hmong families in villages. He knows the entire family emigrated in 1987 from Laos to Wisconsin. Lee is close to his siblings especially his older sisters who helped to raise him, often reading to him after school and helping him with his homework. As a young boy Lee recalls

being a leader in class, reading aloud, being in accelerated reading programs, having no fear, getting in trouble here and there because he was a "loudmouth" being the class clown. He had teachers very early on in elementary school that saw the challenges he faced at home, reached out, and supported him, and there was more of a mix and balance of Hmong students when he was younger that made him feel connected and grounded to his community. In middle school and then high school Lee struggled, he explained that he felt he lost a critical connection to teachers, that through this connection he learned the best, and that in losing it he blended into the background of his classes. Part of this exclusion was a result of segregation, and another part of it was a disenchantment with the social hierarchy over all, as Lee explained: "all the Hmong students would hang out with the Hmong students and all the white students would hang out with the white students."

Later in his schooling Lee also became aware of the economic and personal challenges facing him at home. His father's vision was severely impacted during a bad injury sustained on a building project, and his mother was in a life threatening car accident that also forced her to stop working. Their livelihood was significantly diminished and Lee found his family living on food stamps and welfare as a young child. Though many of these events happened when Lee was younger, it was not until middle school and high school that he came to know the severity of his family's health and economic predicament – the economic and emotional strain on his family, decreased their sense of closeness, of care, of love, and Lee sought that reinforcement from teachers and peers in school. Lee recalls growing up with a strong sense of his father being closed off and disconnected from the world of feeling, receiving external messages that emotion was not manly or consistent with expectations of how he should act as a young boy. He remembers being startled as a young boy when his father became emotional after Lee told him he

loved him. This moment when he was four or five was the first positive memory he recalls of his father. Lee explains his reaction to this moment:

> I was like hmm, it is kind of weird because he had this sort of tough dad attitude where he is always telling me to do, what is right, or telling me to do all my chores. I always saw him as a tough dad that would never cry, never be emotional, but then after he told me that, I'm like um, I guess he does have feelings, I guess I am something to him.

And thus Lee felt a sense of exclusion at home, just as he felt exclusion in school, never knowing quite how to perform his masculinity, or his racial identity in either context (V. Young). This tension around emotional expression, exemplified by Lee's father who restrained from connecting with him, falls in line with strict interpretation of masculinity and gender roles within the Hmong community that has resulted from feelings of a loss of status in the familial structure and an increase in autonomy of women which ultimately places men of the family in a precarious position (Lee et al.). This discomfort was deeply felt by Lee in his own family structure and in his own work to fit in at school.

Part of the challenge of fitting in and reconciling his sense of self I suspect is the result of tension that scholars of have deemed as the challenge of Asian American as the "model minority" as "immigrants whose educational and economic achievement speak to their successful assimilation in the United States" which ultimately of course denies the complex and varied experiences with class, gender, and the self that Asian Americans experience (Duffy 5-6). These challenges ultimately provided Lee with a sense of trouble fitting in, and he describes an incredible "self segregation" amongst his Hmong students, and as a result a disconnection from his classmates and his teachers. Similar to students like James and Brian, Lee felt like he had a foot in multiple communities, as he tried to fit in with his white classmates his Hmong friends would judge him and vice versa. He describes, "I was a loner for a bit because I just couldn't find a place where I fit in because everyone separated themselves based on race and I just didn't like

that so I just hung out whoever I hung out with." Lee yearned to fit in and to try hard in his classes, finding a few teachers who supported him, but he always felt pulled in another direction, eventually deciding he wanted to fit in with students who acted out and rebelled.

Then in late middle school and high school Lee's inner conflict with belonging spilled out into a specific set of decisions that he later came to regret. He began acting out in reaction to not fitting in, to being seen as different, he resisted again and again as classmates tried to persuade him to come to Christianity to turn from the religion, shamanism, of his parents. As a result he lashed out in anger – anger and acting out was the way that he expressed his sense of sadness, exclusion and rage – in ways he felt were appropriately male, similar to his other Hmong male classmates. He explains:

> …**I was mad at the world at that time. Mad or lost about my identity, how society was, and pretty much the whole world.** I would compare myself to other students, like they have it good, they have it easy, I am from a low-income family, I don't get gifts like these students or people, I am treated differently because I am Hmong. Even though I was born here, people still see me as a foreigner**.** And since young Hmong American teens are sort of seen as gangster[s] in my town, so **a lot of negative connotation was toward Hmong people. I just felt really mad at that time…I felt like they saw us as uncivilized or something, I don't know I just felt like they didn't see us as true Americans or something.**

His anger ramped up from using drugs and alcohol to committing petty crimes and breaking into cars. Even during our interview Lee was reluctant to share some of these more challenging moments in his life, it was clear he was still emotionally struggling to make sense of this phase of his life and was embarrassed to admit them to me, his former teacher, out loud. It was not until he began seeing his friends drop out of high school one-by-one, that he found his way back to school through the help of his sisters and a brother-in-law, reinforcing the commitments that he had made to his parents to succeed. This is what happens when you feel like an outsider, and when you are reminded that you are not in the mainstream, over and again. It is of course,

understandably angering to feel this way, and to feel there is no adequate outlet for expressing this in school. He explained, "…kids during that time can't really see past their future, past high school and I was one of those kids and I was like if I continue living on like this I am going to end up in jail or prison, I am pretty much throwing my life away, I should do something useful with my life and I was like, maybe I will do something for my parents…" It was this realization that pushed Lee toward school for his answers; he came to understand in talking to his sisters and teachers, that school was perhaps the only possibility for him to find his way out of the cycle where he was.

Lee was relatively successful at reintegrating into the folds of school, but it was this connection to school, this frustration and desire to go inward, that he still carried with him to our class when we met. And it is while teaching Lee in college that I began to understand new strategies, for understanding how emotion comes into spaces where we teach without always recognizing it at first. As Lee had shared earlier in our interview, he was quiet and reserved in class, growing up in a community where listening and sitting back was seen as more respectful, he embraced this manner of acting even in class. In my class I found a way to tap into Lee's creative side, pushing him to consider his unique perspective and drive. It is not that I encouraged emotionality but rather it became necessary in his process of exploring a large continuing conflict in his life, his relationship to his father. Where as his anger and acting out might have been a more stereotypical reaction to his pain, in the writing for my class, Lee dug in, using his sense of self, his emotional connection to family and home, to better understand the personal and historic identity of who his father was and the relationship between America and Vietnam.

This revelation came during the unit of my class where I task students with composing a creative nonfiction piece of writing, combining research and interviews with their personal insights and reflections. Not all students decide to write topics of personal investment but some do, though all are requited to conduct some type of interview. Lee is unique in that he came up with a way to write about something personal but he did it in a critical and historical manner. He saw this unit as an opportunity to connect to his father and understand the context of his decisions to fight more deeply. Though Lee had been fluent in Hmong as a child he was no longer proficient, and because his father preferred to speak Hmong, he was concerned with being able to connect emotionally with him (his sister ended up helping and translating during the interview). Lee was reticent because he did not know if his father would agree to be interviewed. Once he did, Lee recruited one of his older sisters to sit with them and translate their conversation. He kept putting the interview (a central component to his project) off throughout the unit, finally doing it when time was running out. Lee was nervous to begin to engage in what he saw was a contentious relationship with this father, not knowing what he would feel during their conversation. The outcome was one that I have returned to again and again as a way to see how the personal and emotional is inherently imbedded within the historical, cultural contexts within which we live. In essence, I believe this can be used as a way to see through how emotion and the personal can be used in productive and critical matters of importance to our students.

This excerpt from his writer's note at the beginning of the project articulates his desire to know his father, and as such to know himself:

> *The real reason why I wanted to write this paper was really because I wanted to connect with my dad. My sisters are always telling me to talk to my dad more but it feels awkward going up to my dad and just asking him random questions about his past, unless if I am doing some sort of interview. But I also wanted to know more about what it was like to live and be in the middle of the Vietnam War.* [9]

[9] Addendum B: Excerpt of Lee's writing project about his father.

Even in talking to Lee about his experiences with this assignment he is characteristically reserved in reconciling his emotional relationship to it, and to his father. He explained his initial reservations in our interview, as he reflected on the significance of that piece of writing in his life:

> **At first I didn't want to write about it because it felt a little bit too personal, like should I do this for a class,** because I am usually conservative, and I usually write about topics that are of no interest, but not personal too, because I don't want to get too personal. Because I just don't want to, **I don't know it just feels like I am putting myself out there too much**…**I don't want to say things that I'm not supposed to say or how people might judge me**…I guess, the older I got the less I care about what people think of me now, so I just think maybe I will just do something different this time, maybe I will put effort into this writing, maybe I will actually write something that I will care about, so I did…I got to learn about my dad's past, what he felt what he went through, about my family, what he struggled on trying to raise his family…I got to see things from his viewpoint I guess, and I had a chance to put myself in his shoes, I was born here and he had to go through war, running away from communism, and living in a refugee camp, and I can't even imagine what that would be like except just hearing it from him.

Lee articulates significant themes in this section. First of all he articulates the fear and reservation students can have in putting themselves out there emotionally as they work to make sense of who they are. This fear happens often in personal writing but can also be present in research papers or in language courses more broadly. He also demonstrated a desire to learn. To connect to others, and to share his story with other classmates who were all intrigued by the story that Lee shared. Writing and language requires a kind of opening up, of exposing the parts of ones language and sense of self more broadly and as such we must respond as readers and teachers with critical empathy (Leake). Lee ultimately overcame his initial reservations about writing and emotionality, realizing that being vulnerable in this setting would help him to achieve something deeper, a closeness to his father, a better understanding of him and ultimately a deeper sense of who Lee was at that moment in his life.

What is most striking about Lee's story is the intersection of the personal, the political, the cultural, and the internal and empathetic struggle to belong. It would in a sense, be impossible to ask him not to pull himself into his studies, even if perhaps that was not his initial instinct as a student, it became important to his growth process. Lee used his inquiry his sense of a complex and emotional identity to search for himself in the story of his father. He used writing to reconnect to a man he thought he had long stopped understanding, finding along the way a sense of reconciliation with his own Hmong identity and a critical engagement with the world. Narrative in this form is not only a cathartic search and appeal but also a form of resolving and exploring identity and historical and political forces in a connected manner. Narrative inherently exists in our writing classrooms in both the stories students tell themselves and those that they share with others via writing and in less explicit and muted ways (Schwartz; Leake "The Unknowable Self").

Derrick: Drawing Upon Personal Challenge to Serve and Support Others

Derrick, like Lee, also grew up feeling like an outsider in his small rural Midwestern town of 9,000 people. This in part has to do with the 'small minded' nature of his classmates and neighbors, and in part had to do with the fact that Derrick is gay and thus felt inherently marginalized in a place he describes as "hicktown USA" and "overinflated with military personnel" from the nearby military base. But unlike Lee, Derrick is a white, culturally Norwegian, male, more easily empowered to blend and into the landscape of schooling than Lee. Derrick describes a relatively carefree growing up experience in a traditional nuclear family where his parents were both educators and open to non-conforming ideas of gender expression – because of this he was exposed to education and new points-of-view from a young age, often encouraged to reflect upon his identity. And though Derrick knew very early on that he was gay,

coming out to his parents when he was sixteen years old, he also struggled to express this publicly and openly throughout the course of his life, for fear of stereotyping, and because he did not want that to be seen as his complete sense of self and identity. He recalls receiving messages very early on about what it meant to be a boy or girl, about what toys boys can play with, about how expression operates, and as an intuitive and emotional male that confused and at times deeply troubled him. Derrick, like Lucy and Claire in the first chapter, understood how to navigate the complexities, the subtleties, the underground rules of school in ways that other students profiled throughout this project found challenging and debilitating. In the next two sections I focus less on student writing and more on how these conflicts arise in response to schooling and the environments that the students grow up in – I did not teach Derrick in a writing class, rather I met him through another undergraduate teaching program and he identifies the work of mentorship and diversity as more central to how he explored his sense of self and his future career goals than writing.

In our conversation Derrick recalled being aware of complex social dynamics of school very early on, of being smart and relied upon by teachers – he said his sense of being "liked" or fitting in was important to him, that it was communicated non-verbally and subtly throughout the course of his life by teachers and students alike. He was in a mixed age classroom, traveling from grade to grade with the same nine students, which gave Derrick a sense of connection. Learning in this smaller, more intimate setting was important for Derrick, empowering him to engage more intimately with students and teachers and supporting his sense of self throughout his early experiences in school. Derrick is reflective about this reality, especially in lieu of a younger sister who he says "deals with depression and anxiety pretty heavily." He recalls that his sister remembers not feeling liked, not fitting in, where as he was often told "oh you are such a

great leader" in addition to getting a lot of positive reinforcement from other students which "translated to me feeling liked." When I followed up with a question about whether Derrick felt this discrepancy had to do with gender he was quick to point out his understanding of that privilege.

> I think it definitely did. I think, it is hard because male privilege is something that I didn't really even start processing until I was a freshman [in college], mostly because of my identity as a gay man and I never really felt like I had it especially in high school… but because I was so comfortable being friends with girls and most of my really close friends were girls growing up, and I was also able to be friends with the guys because I was a guy, **and sort of bridged that gap…that had a lot to do with me being comfortable in both of those spaces**…I was the middle sexuality and that was a mediating structure…

What Derrick describes here is his sense that his privilege allowed him to cross certain boundaries. During our interview Derrick expressed not initially feeling privileged because he was gay, but realizing he had a lot of privilege once he learned more about systemic oppression. Though Derrick felt the pressure to act "appropriately" as a man, much as Lee did, he was able to more easily cross boundaries as a result of being a white male, to express himself as a precocious leader as opposed to a marginalized shy person, as Lee felt. Further, Derrick was sheltered by a fiercely protective mother, and although he attended a lower-income school because that is where his mother worked as a counselor, he had access to more opportunity and to the impression that he had a way to move forward successfully in school.

As Derrick moved away from the mixed age classroom with the same core group of students social dynamics started to shift in middle school and high school, which is a common time for most conflicts with self and identity to arise. Early and late adolescence is the time when these internal and social conflicts move students to consider who they are and how they fit into their broader world and environments (Eccles 34). This was true in Derricks case: he became more aware of the social expectations of being male, the expectations that he should like sports,

understanding those around him did, and finding himself more drawn to the arts and relationships with girls. Derrick excelled at math in school, entering into 8th grade math classes when was in sixth grade, and becoming more aware of his sexuality, finding himself attracted to men, and exploring gay porn. Yet he described not being ready to express that openly yet to his classmates or himself. As a result, Derrick began to develop strategies for trying to fit in. "I remember picking out girls to say that I liked, in case that I was asked, which were always the girlfriends of the guys that were attractive, because I knew like, well he is really attractive and he is dating this girl, so she must be justifiably attractive…" These strategies worked for Derrick, helping him to feel the sense that he could fit in, even as he worked to absorb the knowledge that some members of his church did not condone or support those who were gay. It took until the start of Derrick's freshman and sophomore year of high school, and feeling more comfortable in pursuing his passion for show choir, for him to come out to his friends and family and it was, in his view, a relatively smooth and accepting process especially from those close to him.

> So freshman year I slowly started telling people… that summer after freshman year, on one of our Florida trips with a family friend, was the first time I kissed a guy, and then when I came back in October [of sophomore, was just like I don't really care who knows at that point…I don't remember when I made this decision but I would tell my parents when I had a reason to…[and eventually after dating someone] I was like I'm gay, and my mom was like yeah, we have been waiting for you to tell us for years.

Derrick recalls that many people "knew he was gay", which he felt had to do with assumptions and stereotypes about the proper way to be a male:

> Gender expression was 100% the reason that I was being called gay for sure because it was, 'you don't hunt', which was everyone, 'you don't play a sport', …'you don't play a rough sport', 'you really aren't dating girls but you hang out with girls all the time', 'all your friends are girls', which that was another big one too, so it was very much, it was less like you like boys so you are gay, ***it was you are not masculine so you are gay…*** and part of it was the way I talked, mannerisms were a big piece of it, yeah how I interacted with men and women was a big piece of it too.

Even though Derrick was relatively comfortable in his identity he still wanted to fit in, he describes being embarrassed by the flamboyancy of gay culture, of wanting to skate by, not be detected, at 'succeeding' at being gay he recalls, "not trying to hide my sexuality but trying to make it so people in my town would like or would be OK with my sexuality…" Part of Derrick's complication with his identity as a gay person was exacerbated by the fact that he was an active participant in church youth groups and church culture and he still actively identified as a Lutheran Christian. Though Derrick describes a congregation that was largely tolerant, especially after a section of the church declared acceptance of those who were gay, even accepting that gay people could be ordained, he also faced another narrative. As a Senior in high school when he was asked to give a pep-talk speech for the school year at the start of a football game on behalf of his church youth group, he was ultimately told by church leaders that the only way he could give the speech was if he denied that he was gay and "asked for forgiveness." Derrick refused and ultimately students refused to participate in support of him. The response did not surprise Derrick, he describes being shocked he had not run into this sense of resistance earlier, but it did stick with him. He says he felt "embarrassed" and "exposed" that though his sexuality was not a secret, he felt he was the focus of derision and judgment, which left him feeling vulnerable.

Ultimately Derrick selected a college that would be openly supportive of his identity, interests and sense of self, deciding against going to a small religious school in Iowa in favor of the large state school. He recalls arriving on campus as a quick education into diversity, gay culture, being a member of the LGBTQ community, and the desire to change and deepen his sense of self, while critiquing the social structures around him. Whereas other students previously profiled found he campus inhospitable, Derrick was opened up and he felt, welcomed, by the university and the LGBTQ community. Derrick embraced taking classes on social justice,

and enrolling in extracurricular activities relating to educational diversity. He recalls this as a kind of opening up of his identity, of his privilege and positionality:

> And the very first [conference] workshop [on diversity] I went to was masculinity versus femininity in the gay world, and basically the speaker called out anyone who was looking for masculine only partners as being sexist. And I was like whaaaat, and then kind of really realized that was very much me he was talking about, and where those things were coming from. That you know femininity is bad, and where those bigger ideas and thoughts had stemmed from and so, that was when I really started to process, dive more into my identity and celebrating those identities, and myself, letting it be OK for other people to completely identify themselves**…[I came to realize] I was like, even in this identity I am privileged and now I think that is a really big piece of recognizing my identity. Recognizing that I am a gay white man, and at the end of the day I am still a white man even though I am gay, and there is experiences of oppression and marginalization within that, but then there are also experiences of privilege within that**, so holding both of those instead of trying to just hold on to the marginalization…

These realizations in addition to significant internship experiences and student interactions helped Derrick to understand he wants to work with youth in non-traditional settings, and that he wanted to major in community and non-profit leadership. He wanted to use his own emotional journey towards identity recognition to help and support others. Derrick's story is one of a person able to navigate rules, make rules of his own, cross boundaries, and reflect thoughtfully about his positionality along the way. He felt governed by particular narratives about what it meant to be a man, but was also helped by the very structures that he knows caused people to marginalize him in the first place. Derrick was able to 'pass' more easily than someone like Lee, or James or Matema or Brian, this relative sense of self and privilege helped him, empowering him to more easily cross boundaries, and shifting others' assumptions about sexual identity. These forces ultimately lead him to pursue a career in providing the same type of support and guidance to other students looking to engage in similar work around their sense of self and identity. Derrick was able to use his sense of reflection and emotion to reconcile the challenges of his identity as a gay man as a Christian, as a white and privileged person, and in part he found

success because he was a very emotionally aware person able to connect with a wide array of individuals. This takes personal reflection and personal inquiry however, it is not something merely given to us, but comes from an individual who is rooted in a sense of personal reflection and empathy. The challenges that Derrick faced are engrained in how he understands himself and his world, inspiring him to ask deeper questions about his own identity and seeking to help encourage students to ask those same questions themselves. Derrick acknowledges that one conversation about identity, diversity, and challenge "isn't going to get anybody anywhere," believing that instead it takes classes, effort, opening and exposing vulnerabilities before he can have the appropriate "language" to talk about difference "let alone make anyone else feel included." Through this awareness we see how conflict and challenge can offer a bridge toward empathy and the desire to connect and help others – Derrick is able to use his own initial anger and exclusion as a means to help others and think more deeply about the complexities of identity.

Karina: Working to Accept A Dual Identity – 'I cannot eliminate that Russian mentality from myself, it is in my blood...'

Karina, another former writing student that I interviewed served at the center of a moment in my teaching that has stayed with me for a long time. The interaction happened during a relatively typical intermediate writing class where students were going around the room sharing the beginning of their research projects with the rest of the class. One of my students was discussing a video project he was making on the Muslim Students' Association on campus. This particular student was inspired to create the video about an underrepresented group on campus based on a close friendship he had forged with a roommate who was Muslim. After he completed his presentation, Karina raised her hand and commented that as a Russian she just did not trust Muslims, that they gave her an uneasy feeling, and that she did not like being around them.

Predictably the rest of the students in the class looked to me to gauge my response to this admission. In that moment as a teacher when you are on the spot being asked to respond, you have to weigh the feelings of a student who chose to express these beliefs openly with the class regardless of whether they are stereotypical or narrow minded. Clearly she felt safe in that space to share this, but how to respond adequately? I interjected explaining that I appreciated her expressing what she felt, but that I thought it might be a bit stereotypical to lump all Muslims under one umbrella. I then turned it back to the student presenting, impressing upon him that his research project was more important than ever, that part of his audience were going to be people like Karina, who were skeptical and perhaps needed to be opened to alternative ways of thinking about this group and their goals. The moment diffused rather quickly without further confrontation, but it has stayed with me over time as just one small example of the type of identity-laden conflicts that can occur in classrooms at any moment and also, of my own attempts to approach a tense and emotional conversation with empathy, even if I did not agree with the statement being made. Of the vulnerable and emotional spaces that exist in our writing courses and in asking students to critically engage with other communities. It is also now, a reminder of the necessity to engage in difficult dialogue even with those we might disagree with, to use empathy as a form of connection and rhetorical listening, to hear the other (Ratcliffe).

Later upon reflection, I wondered if I should have shut the student down completely, if I could have made a stronger case, if it was better that I turned it back to the student to offer him a possibility for persuasion and connection. The student making the video later used this interaction as inspiration for his project expressing in a writer's memo: "In class, Karina made a comment to me about not being able to trust a Muslim. She said that Muslims give her an uneasy feeling and she does not like being around them. By taking this project on, I hope to show people

that what Karina believes is incorrect. Since I myself have lived with a devout Muslim the past 4 years, I have had experiences that disprove what Karina feels. Through this project, I want to show that these stereotypes are inaccurate." And when I began my dissertation I was interested in revisiting Karina's experiences to get a better sense of her as a student and person, to better understand what I saw as a very strong internal conflict between her Russian identity and a college student who had lived in the United States for almost six years. I remained fascinated by her outgoing personality, her strong work ethic and desire to make it in her new country, and her clearly deep and abiding love of her home country. Underlying this interaction I saw the pull of emotion, of internalized fear, and of shame and anger in other students who were taken a bit aback by this open admission in class. I was curious what laid beneath Karina's admission in class and I hoped that discussing her life history in more depth would reveal insight into her experiences and opinions.

I came to understand that this response from Karina was that of a person born and raised in Russia in the 1990's and exposed to unprecedented tension between her government and Chechnya. She saw came to know that tension as being inherently connected to religion and to Islam specifically, and thus had formed very specific ideas about the cost of religion on society more widely. I came to understand that there were perhaps social and cultural and political reasons for her emotional response in class. It is important to note that here too I focus less on Karina's writing and more on her social and emotional growth in schooling, which was driven by her strength of identity and personal fortitude. From the outset of our interview it was clear to me that Karina deeply identifies with a strong sense of Russian nationalism that is as personal, as it is emotional. She explained very early on in our interview:

> We totally do not relate it to European[s], we sort of have this unique identity we have in our minds, as Russians our mentality our culture, the way we express ourselves, the way

> we think about ourselves, are completely different from Europeans or Americans, and I know that America and Russia were rivals for a good amount of time especially in the 20th Century, right now it is kind of debatable, but still we consider ourselves as mighty, we do not relate to any of the European culture or anything like that, we are just very proud of ourselves as Russian, and we always say that it is hard to understand.

This sense of a strong Russian identity dictates much of Karina's relationship to herself and her peers regardless of the fact that she left home at the age of twenty to pursue opportunities in sports and school in France and then in the United States. And this sense of connection endures in spite of a challenging early childhood that occurred right around the fall of the Soviet Union. In fact, Karina did not dwell in our discussion on the challenge of living without diapers, milk, food, and other basic goods during that time, describing instead her life as "simple," explaining that in spite of the challenges, "I remember those times with such warmth and love." She explained that she never fully connected to the negativity of her upbringing, that she learned in school and at home a "utopian" vision of the past that continued to stay with her throughout her life. She explained, "I didn't remember anything talking about the repression or bad times in the USSR." This sense of fiercely identifying with her country of origin was striking in its lack of wavering, and was quite unlike the students I had interviewed who grew up in other countries. Yet, this deep connection clearly did present conflicts for Karina, especially as she worked to acclimate to the US and reconcile her sense of self in a new country.

Karina is an only child of divorced parents who was raised in her grandparent's home, and is exceedingly close to her mother. Her grandparents played a large part in her early development until the death of her grandmother when Karina was 12 when she moved in exclusively with her mother, often finding herself alone in Moscow to fend and take care of herself as her mother worked to support them on her own. The death of her grandmother, a child of World War II, was the most defining moment of Karina's youth, (though her grandfather had

died a few years before) and she mentioned it within minutes of our conversation, breaking down at a description of her grandmother's death. She recalls the moment of this loss with visceral clarity, recounting to me in our interview the smells, the sounds and sights, the exact way of feeling that she had that the floor had dropped from under her, that everything in her life had changed.

> I can still remember the smells, I can tell you what was in the cabinets, like what was in the kitchen, what I ate that day, what I was doing, I can tell you everything. I was just like I will never be able to live here, you have to sell this apartment because all this stuff we had, I just can't [beginning to cry a bit] I just hate that because we were living together for such a long time, [crying] I was always fearing to loose her and then when it happened that moment, it was just very hard…

It is my understanding that this sense of continual loss early in her life (along with the loss of other grandparents, her father) defined who Karina is, as much as it has made her the self-reliant, independent, strong, and driven person that she is today. And though she describes herself (and all Russians) as "introverted" and "standoffish" Karina was surprisingly (more than many other participants) outwardly emotional in our interview, breaking down in tears at a few points as she talked about her grandmother and early childhood, and later describing her passion and outspokenness as important survival tools for making it in the US on her own.

Like many of the other students profiled in this dissertation, Karina had a winding life path before I become her teacher and before I interviewed her at the age of twenty-five. Karina was always very athletic, and with a mother who attended university and worked as a coach and physical education teacher, she was deeply supported in her endeavors first in swimming and then basketball when she got taller and stronger. Karina describes herself as precocious, smart, scheming, and independent as a child, crisscrossing around Moscow on public transportation, sometimes alone for hours at a time, making her way to school and activities primarily by herself. She began to really have a passion and skill for basketball in her teens in middle school.

Though Karina describes herself as passionate about reading and literature, reading *Anna Karenina* at the age of twelve, and even eventually coming to major in Russian literature in college, her greatest skill was in sports, and that is what she spoke of in most depth and length during our interview. Karina spent two years working and playing basketball in France before being recruited with a full scholarship (through the facilitation of a private sports agency) to a small junior Baptist college in the middle of rural Texas. She saw this as her way out of Russia to more opportunity even though she and her mom had to Google the school to find out where in Texas was. Unlike Matema, Karina did not find America to be hospitable or the answer to her prayers (even if it did offer more opportunity), rather it has brought about a significant personal rift in her sense of self, and provides the central defining trait emerging from her narrative, the emotional and personal struggle with her identity and sense of self.

Karina attempted to positively embrace her transition to the US but struggled to make connections in a small religious college different from her own religious upbringing, instead forging stronger bonds with some adults in the community rather than fellow college students. She was also new to the language, (though she had studied English a bit in Russian school growing up) and to the system of education. She described her teachers as helpful but still found the other elements as challenging: “And they were helping me with my English, even though I would write everything in Russian and try to translate into English. I wasn't very familiar with computers because I had my first computer at 18, and all my school years, it was always hand writing, in cursive...And I was in developmental classes, developmental English classes… I had no idea how the American system works, so I had no clue…” In addition to struggling with language barriers and finding her own strategies for learning English, she worked to understand the system she was in, largely supported by teachers and coaches that she felt helped her to

succeed. Karina explained that she ultimately found help through tutoring, coaches, friends in the community, advisors, seeking relationships with others as a means to support her transition and facilitate her success as a student – because she had always advocated for herself with relative ease, this was more comfortable for Karina and she was effortless in her pursuit to make the new arrangement in the US work.

At the same time this was the first time in her life that Karina had really been exposed to diversity, many of her fellow teammates were black and some were openly lesbian. When I asked how she felt about that coming from Russia, she described policies in Russia against gay people as "restrictive" but common sense, explaining that people were just more covert about it there:

> …they are not allowed to preach those things to kids, that is the law, you can't just like promote gay rights and things in school, for kids because you know, they just grow up as they grow up, and if you are going to plant that seed, they just wouldn't want that. But there is nothing restrictive, and you know there is no abuse or anything, but really it is not that open, it's not like oh I am gay and I'm proud of it, I mean nothing is wrong with that, it is your thing but in Russia it is more reserved, like something you keep to yourself.

Though I disagree with Karina's interpretation of these policies (I interpret these government policies very differently), we can only read these reflection as revealing her own understanding and truth of them. I ultimately read this statement as an example of the inner turmoil and tension Karina feels toward being aware of a different way of being in the United States and yet being pulled to the tenants and rules of a home country that she has been intuitively taught to revere and love. Despite the internal political conflicts connected to Russia here in the US, Putin and his policies remain incredibly popular in Russia – in March of 2016 he had an 83 percent approval rating (Birnbaum). As such, Karina appeared to be incapable of openly criticizing her home country and its policies and positions in our conversation, a fact I came to learn early on, and this statement struck me as an exemplification of that turmoil. In my work of analyzing Karina's

narrative and contextualizing her story, I tried to find empathy in these types of statements, wondering how we can work with similar types of students, those who might see the world in such a fixed and immutable way, those with very particular judgments we might disagree with. Karina always chose the more optimistic or positive spin in her narrative, this is in part because she still so strongly identifies with her country of origin.

Two years into her time in the junior college Karina was recruited by UW to play basketball, an event she describes as happening out of the blue. Though Karina enjoyed the camaraderie of her new team, and the experience traveling around the country she struggled with health issues and did not get much playing time. This meant she worked hard to focus on school and an outside job, knowing that these opportunities would likely cause her more success in the end. She drew upon her sense of strength and independence to get her through and help her navigate in this new environment. Karina described the courses as being vastly harder, struggling to make it but eventually coming to a major she could succeed in: Russian Literature. Karina saw it as an opportunity to stay connected to Russia while using her English, studying and writing in English, which she came to love as a form of expression and connection. For example, in our intermediate writing class she also immersed herself into a research project shining light on underrepresented communities in the university, working to use her skills in sports to volunteer at the adapted fitness program, an aquatics program for students with physical disabilities. In addition to volunteering throughout the year she made a mini-documentary and wrote eloquently for class sharing the journey and experiences of students with disabilities on campus. It is clear that Karina still had a strong desire and capacity to connect with those around her even with the tension she felt ‘fitting in.’ And during the course of a summer internship before graduating she met a man and became married to him shortly after, cementing a more permanent life here.

Even after living in the United States for a few years, it is clear that Karina struggles deeply with her connection to home and the person she is here. In part she sought to reconcile the tension and disconnection felt in the United States by forming close relationships to the communities she lives in (as she did with the adapted fitness program) – in Texas, she became close to an older couple one who was a retired librarian at the college, helping them and being a part of their lives. In essence she discovered strategies for developing her community and support system through her own sense of self-reliance. When I asked why she came to the US when she had such deep ties to Russia, she said her mother always had plans to send her abroad so she could "be more developed in a way and learn new culture and new language…" and have more opportunities in the United States. But still this was not always easy to embrace, as her mother continues life in Russia. She explained:

> The first two years were very harsh and we can talk about it later if you have any questions, in the next interview, the perception of America when I came here I didn't like anything here, any of that, I was just like oh my goodness, it was a perverted reality for me, it was terrible, but then I got used to it and now having a husband, I am taken care of again, probably got off topic, but those two I can't balance them, I really want to go home again, and live that life, but I like it here too so much and I appreciate all the opportunities I have been able to achieve here.

Yet still Karina cannot let go of that sense of herself from before, even if she feels as though she should in order to assimilate and fully connect with others around her, which she admits is hard for her given her lack of patience for small talk and surface relationships. Much of this gap in connection she places on the difference between America and Russia, that sense of nostalgia and past that Russians are proud of and that she attributes to the strong feelings of her childhood. She explained feeling "torn apart" at having to grapple with loving Russia but living in America, having an American husband and knowing she will make her life here. "I have that soul of a Russian kid that is playing outside and watching old cartoons and hanging out with my grandma,

I am still that [Karina], I cannot eliminate it from myself, it is still there, and I am trying my best to be modern…" And modern for Karina is synonymous with 'American' and this tension persists within her. At another moment in our interview she expressed how hard it is for her to give up her Russian identity:

> Russia has a great old history we are an old country and Orthodoxy and we are all about subordination, ugh, strict rules, and um order and discipline… we open our soul up, we take it out for you, that is what we do. **And I take everything way too seriously sometimes, and better, it is getting better, but you know it is still, I cannot eliminate that Russian mentality from myself, it is in my blood.**

And though Karina states this proudly, as an interwoven part to her sense of self, with little shame, it is clear she is at once conflicted by it, as she attempts to succeed here, to fit in with a more modern, democratic society that she now is committed to living in as a worker, adult, and wife. There is immense emotional turmoil in these identity conflicts. Though I interviewed a few different people who were not born in the United States, Karina had the strongest ties to home, the strongest sense of herself as an immigrant from another country, because her nationality is so interwoven into her sense of self and her personal identity.

This fierce Russian nationalism is deeply embedded into the social fabric of the country. *National Identity in Russian Culture: An Introduction,* argues that the question of what it means to be Russian in terms of national identity has been a complicated historical question reaching back over 1,000 years through great political turmoil, but is central to the culture and wider public at large. The scholars explain the complication of what it means to be Russian. "A great deal of Russian culture is – explicitly or implicitly, to a greater or lesser extent – self-referential, about Russia or indicative of 'Russianness'. But the 'self' turns out not to be a constant, clearly definable entity. Russian culture expresses a range of different types of 'myths of Russia and Russianness (and here we understand 'myth' as a narrative which validates a community…"

(Franklin and Widdis 4). This sense of the complication of the self as connected to what it means to Russian, what it means to belong is inherent within Karina – it is partially why she feels so complicated about being tied to Russia while not living in it, this emotional turmoil is large and pervading in her sense of self, and infiltrated her personal relationship and her connection to school and to social belonging more widely. Understanding this identity conflict is key to understanding Karina as a student, it underscores her challenges, and the problems she faced with fitting in, questioning a diverse culture and beyond. It offers context to Karina's feelings, opinions, and reflections on social issues. Even after embracing the opportunities presented with her in the United States, Karina is unable to fully reconcile her sense of self as a Russian and person with deep ties to this country and she is not quick to resolve them. Rather I believe she holds on to them as a form of connection to home as central to her identity and sense of self.

Emerging Conclusions: The Emotional Upheaval of Identity and The Potentiality of Empathy and Critical Narrative

In analyzing these narratives I would like to come back to the space of the classroom, the democratic and social public sphere as a site for exploration, similar to the discussion that I articulate in earlier chapters and in the introduction to this work. The question I come back to in determining conclusions from narratives is always – what is emotion doing here, how is it operating and moving? What each of the narratives above has in common is not only that the students demonstrate considerable internal conflict, but that these conflicts happen in the space of schooling, in classroom tactics, relationships with peers and teachers during a formative period of identity development. These provide the basis for their knowledge and sense of the world, driving the students into particular modes of study (Derrick's desire to provide mentorship to undergraduates), toward writing projects (Lee's writing about his father, Karina's writing about underrepresented members in the university and love of writing more generally), towards a deeper sense of themselves. And emotion is central to that driving force, it is central to developing the reserves and 'funds of knowledge' that each student draws from their individual development (Moll and Gonzalez).

Conclusion 1: Emotion is deeply connected to both internal and external conflict. It mediates student identity and engagement with the world, and as such is inculcated in how students struggle within their own identity conflicts, and with political conflicts more broadly. The importance of telling these stories, opens up the possibility for what emotion can show us as educators, its complications, possibilities, and yes, limitations. The overall point is not to take each identity apart but rather to show how emotion factors into identity negotiation of multiple forms in multiple ways, to argue about the importance of emotion as deeply embedded in social

identity and social cultural experience and thus inherently tied to schooling and language contexts (Jacobs and Micciche 4). Emotion emerges as the mediating force for personal and social reconciliation and knowledge formation; it is the catalyst in these cases for Lee, Derrick and Karina to examine themselves within the larger social contexts of their lives. Lee articulates this emotion when reflecting on the poor choices he made in middle school; Derrick articulates this tension when exploring how he will come out to friends and family; Karina reflects this in her search for self after the loss of her grandmother. We see this coming through in the questions they are forced to ask themselves and others as they seek to navigate school, language classrooms, after school activities, and relationships with teachers and students. And the specific identity conflicts that are negotiated here within these narratives, echoes findings from the previous chapters, namely that emotion is directly implicated in identity formation, in vulnerability in coming to know the world.

In order to arrive at this conclusion I come back to Lee's narrative. In the case of Lee, his internal conflict with this father mediates his own sense of self, his sense of his place in the world, his sense of himself as a thinker and student. This is evidenced by his surprise at learning about the affection his father had for him as a young boy, the challenge he found in fitting in with other students in school, and his own personal search for meaning in high school and then in college. As Lee described it in our interview, he never saw his father as emotional or having feelings, and in turn this made Lee feel as though he did not necessarily fit or belong in his family of origin, as a result he turned "angry" and lashed out in school and at other students – he viewed his father as strict, not caring, and as being infinitely harder on Lee than his others siblings. Yet this emotion was grappled with externally throughout the course of the narrative he composed for my class, and then as he found his place in school. I saw this transformation of self

happen in writing, and throughout the course of our class, as Lee worked to open himself up to others, students responded positively and openly to the work he was doing in the course. When Lee recounted to me the experience of interviewing his father in our own interview, it became even clearer to me that the experience of writing about his father had a transformative effect on his sense of self and on their relationship, it was an externalization of the internal conflict Lee faced with this father. It is in this space of growth that I see how emotion can trigger shifts in identity and this work to resolve conflict.

As Lee articulated to me, the writing he did in our class offered him chance of writing about his father, enabled him to understand and empathize better: “I got to see things from his viewpoint I guess, and I had a chance to put myself in his shoes, I was born here and he had to go through war, running away from communism, and living in a refugee camp, and I can't even imagine what that would be like except just hearing it from him.” This awareness leads Lee to examine the historical and cultural origins of the war, to try and see his father and his family story within the wider frame of an international conflict. The work of interviewing and narrating the experience with his father, helps Lee to see him, as he writes in his story, as “human” as a more complex person, and in tern it helps Lee to understand himself better, to empathize and connect. This suggests the power not only of writing and narrative, but the power of emotion to mediate one’s identity, in both positive and negative ways. For example as a young student, this sense of exclusion from his family made Lee feel vulnerable and angry, where as his openness and sense of inquiry, his desire to learn and change in college opened him up in a positive and powerful way. In that sense emotion works in multiple ways for Lee. It was seeing the full texture of his father, his vulnerability and strength that helped transform his own relationship to his father and then himself. I am not suggesting the writing completely ‘resolved or healed’ Lee,

but it offered a chance to externalize his emotion and identity, to share with others, and in turn this helped Lee to grow and evolve. Lee still has a strong sense of duty to his family that he articulated in our interview and afterwards, but he has a better sense of himself in that place, he was able to emotionally reconcile his sense of self through the work of writing, humanizing, empathizing and connecting with his father, furthering his own sense of self. Lee was feeling afraid, unsure, and angry toward his father and the work of interviewing, writing connecting helps him to see his father in a fuller, more human way, and we in turn learn from that work he engages in. This suggests the power of writing critical narratives, and the power of encouraging emotion as a means to identity negotiation, instead of only anger and resentment, Lee was able to transform his connection to his father into one of empathy, understanding, and reflection and in turn transform his own sense of self and insecurities. Lee's story reveals the power of narrative and the personal within the space of the classroom, it reveals how even the most personal narratives can inspire a deeper more critical understanding of identity and the world at large.

The writing of this does not necessarily resolve everything for Lee, but it offers him a space to explore the complicated relationship with his father. This was also true of Derrick as he sought out student mentorship and diversity opportunities – propelled by his own sense of feeling at odds with his identity; he seeks to offer students a place for personal exploration and critical examination of their identities, something he hopes to do in the future. And Karina's emotional reckoning emerges in her personal efforts to reconcile her Russian and American identity – she made various efforts through volunteering opportunities, relationships with teammates, and those in the community to better understand the world she lived in and to connect to those around her, even while not fully connecting to a sense of American identity.

Conclusion 2: Writing and critical research projects can be a tool for negotiating personal conflict, personal awareness, and trauma. And in these conflicts of identity I see the potential and possibility to embrace narrative research and narrative writing in the prompts that our students engage in, through our research, and as critical tools for storytelling. Krista Ratcliffe writes that creative nonfiction narratives "effectively helps students see how the personal is always implicated in the cultural—and vice versa" and that is true of many student writers profiled here in this dissertation and others that I have taught (144). We see this most explicitly in Lee's story, but Karina was also driven to ask questions about community and inclusion based upon her own awareness and searching for these elements in her own life. These are all strategies for getting close to how emotion, empathy, and identity are interconnected in the space of the classroom, opening possibilities for engagement. In critical pedagogy, which embraces the tools of critical empathy, we are given a path for joining these concepts together. Min-Zhan Lu reimagines the work of narrative and the literate self in the context of social justice, building from Cornel West's call for 'critical affirmation' or a literacy "which might bring us hope and courage as well as vision and analysis for negotiating the crucial crossroad in the history of this nation" (173). By drawing this conversation into literacy contexts Lu argues for writing and personal narratives "as a site for reflecting on and revising one's sense of self, one's relations with others, and the conditions of one's life," and writing as a wider cultural force more generally (173). This joins together the notion of writing, critical empathy, narrative, and emotion where I begin to see more and more possibilities opened up. Emotion in this context then is not only about going inward, it is not the passive trite work applied often incorrectly to expressivism, but rather it opens up horizons for deeper reflection, argumentation, and critical

thinking (Leake, "The Unknowable Self" 149). In this sense emotion leads to action and self-negotiation, which we see in these narratives and in others throughout this dissertation.

Conclusion 3: Applying the lens of critical empathy enables teachers and researchers to pay deeper attention to the conflicts and experiences of students, and opens up possibility for community building, action, and empowerment. In the process of acknowledging the power of counter-narrative, of diverse identities, of little narratives in our research and literacy and rhetorical histories, is a sense of empathy and understanding for the other – in this case the narratives of Lee, Derrick, and Karina (and their responses to the emotional identity struggles in their lives) invite us to respond thoughtfully. Critical empathy, radical empathy, or 'love in action' might be another way to articulate the possibilities and purpose of humanistic liberal education (Nussbaum; Czarnik-Neimeyer; Tippet). Empathy might be a way for us to better understand the conflicts in this chapter and the broader conflicts that students profiled in each chapter face – I wonder, can empathy on the part of the teacher, the individual, the social unit, be a way to help students see themselves and education differently, more intimately? At the center of the emotion circulating here is a desire to understand and be understood, to have an attunement of critical empathy, critical emotion, critical connection. Empathy in this ways requires we listen and reach across to our students, that we might embrace a stance of 'pedagogical listening' as Krista Ratcliffe suggests, that we engage in listening and reflection with our students to expose social and cultural imbalances for what they are (136, 171). These possibilities connect deeply to the work of critical pedagogy within the frame of emotion and emotion studies. Scholar Julie Prebel draws upon the work of Lynn Worsham to point out that critical pedagogy which asks students to analyze "'the unequal power relations that produce and are produced by cultural practices and institutions'" acknowledges that writing is a political

process but ultimately leaves out emotion from its discussion, overlooking "the fact that emotion is not only a fundamental aspect of our political lives, but is also a critical means of sociopolitical empowerment" (2). Thus emotion is central to these relationships and to revealing the full complexity of these pedagogical tools. Perhaps in drawing theories of emotion, critical race theory and critical pedagogy we can begin to open up a more strategic, layered, and textured use of emotion within the classroom, within our community of learners, and within our research contexts. Implicit in this process is allowing for storytelling not only in writing, but in hearing the stories of students, and in the stories we tell in our research more broadly – this hearing, this staying with students and their personal selves is in essence the work of empathy, of possibility through emotion in action. This is what allows us to see the important work occurring in Lee's writing, Derrick's internal struggle, the complex and at times troubling tension Katrina finds in acclimating to a new country. That critical attunement, *that* empathetic understanding is a tool for me in understanding Katrina's anger and the incident that occurred in our classroom.

Ultimately, what I want to show in joining a discussion of identity, narrative, and empathy are the multipronged uses for these tools within the context of the classroom and our research, and the layered work of emotion and vulnerability – it is both empowering and subjugating. Identity, as the narratives in this chapter, and the narratives throughout the course of this dissertation prove, is rarely straightforward, rather it is winding and complex, it is filled with tales of emotional burden, empowerment, and subjugation, and it is vitally important to the learners and thus often hard to keep out of the classroom. And yet we often can overlook or dismiss emotional nuances of these conflicts, challenges and stories, not in our teaching or student writing and not in our research. Part of this is because there is a kind of grand narrative of emotion, one where we take a theoretical and distancing approach to it, or view it as the tool

of the expressionist of the teacher. We have historically placed emotion in a category of the messy, as belonging to someone else that is more equipped to deal with it, as opposed to seeing it as an implicit part of journeying throughout the world, throughout school, throughout the composition process. If we want to view the possibilities of emotion we need to get close to it as researchers and as teachers. It is evident that students have central cores of their identity that are exposed and explored in the process of becoming educated, of learning, of shifting schools and contexts. In that sense, emotion is often viewed as a form of connection and control, something not to be freely given or taken even if it is often inseparable from ourselves, and in that view we see it as a kind limiting factor in our teaching and research (Boler). But my analysis of students like Lee, Derrick, Karina, and the others in this dissertation lead me to draw some core conclusions about what emotion can look like beyond control, how it is wrapped into identity, notions of civic and educational engagement, how it connects to empathy, growth, and actionable possibility.

Chapter 5:

Emerging Conclusions in Emotion, Composition, and Education

> "The human being is a storytelling animal, or, actually, *the* storytelling animal, the only creature on Earth that tells itself stories in order to understand what sort of creature it is. Some of these stories are immense, the so-called 'grand narratives' of nation, race, and faith, and others are small: family stories, and stories of elective affinities, of the friends we choose, the places we know, and the people we love; but we all live in and with and by stories, every day, whoever and wherever we are. The freedom to tell each other the stories of ourselves, to retell the stories of our culture and beliefs, is profoundly connected to the larger subject of freedom itself" (xvi).
>
> **- Salman Rushdie, *The Best American Short Stories of 2008***

> "Education for human freedom is also education for human community. The two cannot exist without each other…In the act of making us free, it also binds us to the communities that gave us our freedom in the first place; it makes us responsible to those communities in ways that limit our freedom…Liberal education nurtures human freedom in the service of human community, which is to say that in the end it celebrates love" (5-6).
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> **- Bill Cronon, '*Only Connect*'**

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In my first semester teaching college writing I was young and inexperienced but full of enthusiasm and excitement to connect with incoming freshman new to the university. In that first fall semester in 2011, I had a student compose a personal narrative about the death of her best friend from a car accident in high school. It was a beautiful piece, raw and sacred in its emotional complexity and in its desire to share and connect with others. And even as emotionally in tune as I was, I felt at the time, as a new teacher, that I was wholly incapable of responding to the students' work, it was so deeply personal so viscerally felt and I did not simply want to treat it as another piece of writing, but she had also turned it in for a grade. When we met to discuss the piece in a conference I let the student talk about her motivations, about her friend, about the cathartic process of composing the piece, the first time she had articulated the pain and her experience with grief 'out loud.' I listened actively. I held her hand. I let her cry, and wiped away

my own tears. I told her how I felt reading it, and I explained that I would only share feedback on revisions and suggestions if she were ready to incorporate them, that otherwise the piece could be for her. She wanted advice and responses from me as a reader; she wanted to strengthen the piece out of a testament to her friend and to her own desire to share with others, her experience. Very little of my response in that moment was something I had been taught to do, in fact our intimate responses to students are rarely those that can be found in teacher training or pedagogy textbooks. But it presented, very early on in my teaching of writing, the sticky complexities of writing and emotion. And this is often how we think of emotion in our field, as the outpouring from a student about a topic of writing of emotional relevance, about the tricky nature of teaching personal writing and then our work as teachers to respond or "deal with" those emotions. Though I might not have been taught explicitly how to handle that moment of emotion, I believe we can and should prepare teachers to interact with the complexities of students of lives, and my hope is that this dissertation is a persuasive argument for why that type of critical attunement matters.

I come back to this teaching moment in the conclusion to this dissertation because it stayed with me for so long as the clearest example of emotion in the writing classroom, but as I have researched, conducted interviews, learned more about the philosophical and ethical routes that emotion takes in our lives, I see emotion operating in a more distinct and complex way. In fact as my dissertation argues, this outpouring of emotion onto the page is only one of the many ways that emotions come into our lives as teachers, readers, and writers. Emotion is always there, mediating our experiences, our connections, our motivations, and writing has a way of drawing that out, of bringing to bear the emotional complexities of the individual. Personal

writing, personal examples of catharsis might be the clearest examples of emotion in writing classrooms, but this is far from the only example of how it arises.

And upon reflection I know that this was hardly the first time I had experienced emotion in the lives of students. It was there in the students I taught in New York during the course of my masters program many years ago. It was present in their anger at the administration, at the school for not trusting them, for surveying them constantly; at their discomfort of being put through metal detectors and baggage x-rays every time they came in and out of school; in their frustration over having their cell phones confiscated each an every time they stepped into a classroom, in the heavy police presence in the school; in the cameras that watched their every move from the corners of the hallways where they walked and socialized. Emotion was there in how these students related to school more broadly, knowing that this was their last chance to graduate, to pass statewide exams, their last opportunity to count and matter and have the education that had long been promised to them as essential to their upward mobility (whether that was true or not). Emotion is there in the experiences of students of color as they step into an all white classroom. In the multilingual writer composing their first essay for a class, raising their hand and speaking in their second (third or fourth) language for the first time in front of their peers. It is there in the student with a disability working to navigate through the often restrictive physical spaces of the university. It is there in the stories throughout this dissertation of student writers, individuals seeking to belong, to learn, to expand upon themselves and their identities, and along the way finding the sticky work of emotion mediating those experiences.

All of these reasons, and more, pushed me to ask questions about how emotion was working and moving in the lives and contexts where we teach students. My interest was always situated in more profoundly understanding emotion's complexity, and noticing the theories of

emotion available in the field were not situated in the embodied lives of students, that made me want to embark on a qualitative study to better understand its presence. I aim to anchor emotion in our social lives, to create a more fixed sense of how it moves so that we no longer ignore it, or take it for granted. I was interested in excavating emotion because it falls at the intersection of challenging stereotypes around gender and race, of what is socially acceptable and not. The epigraph to this chapter is a quote that I have long included in my writing syllabi as a call to action for students as the profound power of any type of story telling both literal and metaphorical. Yet, I have come to appreciate in new ways, how this call to write and make meaning that we ask student to engage in through our work as teachers, is never very far from the reaches and treacherous pitfalls of emotion. In asking our students to consider themselves and the world around them, we ask them essentially, to be in tune with themselves emotionally, and as such we must meet them in that project. Paying attention to emotion requires we pay attention to how we act and react to that emotion as teachers, what we do with it, and how we ask students to engage with that emotion and sense of a shared reality. This is, as Cronon argues for in his treatment of liberal education, a uniquely human project, one tied to freedom and to acknowledgment of the communities we build, are beholden to, and those that we too often ignore.

Across this dissertation, I argue for a reframing of the transformative role that emotion plays in literacy development, writing classrooms, to the evolving identities and experiences of our students. I use qualitative life history data in order to argue for the importance of situating a discussion of emotion in the embodied, experiential lives of people, to move theory into situated experience and practice. As such I believe I am making contributions to wider arguments about of the purpose of telling stories, of being liberally educated, of the intimate relationship between

emotion and knowledge formation, of developing human community, and empathizing with the other, with those outside of our immediate spheres of influence. What we are left to grapple with and to engage with more deeply, is the question of how an awareness of emotion compels us to act and connect as teachers, as writers, as citizens, as students. In this final chapter, which I entitle "emerging" conclusions because we are always in the process of becoming, I aim to rearticulate the contributions and arguments made in the previous chapters, to underscore the limitations of my research, and to make room for future horizons and possibilities for exploration into emotion.

Overview of Arguments and Theories

Emotion & Literacy Sponsorship – I see an examination of emotion as being inherently tied to conversations of sponsorship, embodiment, and social/cultural experiences with language that often arise in our conversations around literacy theories. My time analyzing student narratives and teaching in the classroom has highlighted how essential emotion is in connecting individuals to sponsors of literacy, in both positive and negative ways. My aim was to add an additional layer of nuance to how we understand sponsorship, uniting emotion as a central component to the connections and threads of a person's literacy development. The narratives of Brian, Lucy and Claire in chapter two highlight how key moments in school, teachers, texts, and with media helped them to develop as writers, how the emotion behind their life experiences connect them fully to the sponsors of their literacy development. And emotional responses to these moments often grounds and mediates these experiences for each writer, pushing them to take up writing and seek new relationships to language and vocabulary. In arguing for the emotional currents of sponsorship I propose that emotion be viewed as a central force for understanding how student's social and cultural experiences with literacy are mediated,

encouraging teachers and researchers alike to draw emotion into our frames for research and in our classroom work, and to imagine emotional concepts of empowerment through language.

Emotional Labor and Vulnerability – My third chapter clarifies how emotion is a complex force for student marginalization, and not always an unmitigated good. Through the narratives of James, Lisette, and Matema I highlight the emotional journeys of marginalized students as they work to fit into the literate and school contexts where they are being educated. I propose there is an inherently 'emotional labor' implicit in the process of fitting in, something that leaves students exposed and vulnerable to social context that they often feel as if they do not have access too (Hochschild). In paying attention to these crossings and the emotional labor involved in working to fit in, readers begin to have a deeper understanding of the complexity of how emotion, fear, shame, and anger resonate in the experiences of the students that we teach. These narratives also reveal that institutional classroom settings demand a very particular type of emotional reaction, leaving vulnerable students feeling as if they have to keep quite or simply exist and persist as opposed to thrive. This vulnerability is often exposed in writing and in the ways in which students talk about their emotional journeys through schooling and learning languages. Ultimately emotion leaves us exposed, it regulates, asks students to comply and fit in, often at the expense of their connection and self identifying to school. Yet at the same time it can have the powerful effect of action, on the part of the student and the teacher to intervene, in paying attention to emotion we pay attention to the work of 'love in action' of how we can embrace the emotional experiences of students to move toward action in their writing and learning.

Emotion and Identity – At the core of many narratives, but most centrally in the narratives found in chapter four, emotion is exposed as central to the formation of identity,

belief, personal conflict and personal growth. This can at times be immensely empowering for students and in certain instances can be incredibly disempowering. Emotion is an inherent part of how identity is developed and formulated as evidenced by the stories of Lee, Derrick and Karina. I argue that Emotion emerges in the navigation of complex personal and identity conflicts that often emerge in the social and cultural experiences of writing and schooling more broadly. It is our responsibility as teachers to pay attention to these cites of conflict, to understand how these conflicts are mediated in the lives and bodies of students, to offer opportunities in writing, in the questions we ask of students for reflection and critical inquiry in the process of mediating these conflicts.

Empathy and Emotional Attunement – Though I focus on empathy in the fourth chapter and emotional attunement throughout the dissertation, I see both of these concepts emerging through my arguments and research as vitally important to how we need to read student work, how we encounter student experience, how we train teachers to respond in an attuned and centered way to the emotional complexities of our students. A stance of critical empathy and emotional attunement helps to open up the possibilities and tools for connecting in our classrooms, underscoring the importance of narrative storytelling, of telling complex 'little narratives,' of 'strategic contemplation' and emotional awareness in our research contexts (Daniell; Kirsch and Royster; Leake "Writing Pedagogies of Empathy"). These become tools for better understanding student experience and for critically examining our own stance as researchers and teachers. In many ways I have come to understand the possibility of this empathy as connected to Krista Ratcliffe's notion of 'rhetorical listening' as a reciprocal experience with agency on both sides of the listening divide (28). She describes listening and embracing the 'desire to be heard' as not only being about understanding but about "standing under the

discourses of others and rhetorically listening to them" (29). Ratcliffe continues, "understanding means listening to discourses that surround us and others…[it] means letting discourses wash over, though and around us and then letting them lie there to inform our politics and ethics. Standing under our own discourses means identifying the various discourses embodied within each of us and then listen to hear and imagine how these discourses might affect not only ourselves but others" (28). In many ways this form of listening and hearing the other, even those we do not agree with, and allowing that listening to have an effect, to make a change, to inform our ideas, sounds a lot like empathy, it sounds relational, connective, and inherently emotional, it turns our notion of learning, and logic and action into the work of knowing ourselves and others. It places emotion as central to knowledge formation and logos.

Broader Implications: Education, Narrative, and Emotional Attunement

I view the arguments articulated above as contributing most centrally to three distinct but interconnected fields: literacy and composition studies; education and pedagogy; and qualitative research/methodology discussions. Implicit in the revelations made in this dissertation is the broader question and contribution about the role emotion plays in the uses and experiences with liberal and humanistic education where I specifically contribute attention to the embodied work of emotion by revealing its complexities in the lives of students. Perhaps it is no surprise that before writing about the interplay between emotion and philosophy Martha Nussbaum wrote about the merits and purpose of liberal education, arguing that it is there to 'cultivate humanity'. One of the core capacities of this process in addition to critical thinking, self-examination, and establishing a deep connection to the wider human world is the capacity for what she deems "narrative imagination" which is: "the ability to think what it might be like to be in the shoes of a person different from oneself, to be an intelligent reader of that person's story, and to understand

the emotions and wishes and desires that someone so placed might have" (Nussbaum, *Cultivating Humanity* 9-11). This imagination is ultimately about "learning how to be a human being capable of love and imagination" (Nussbaum, *Cultivating Humanity* 14). Nussbaum comes to these conclusions not just as someone interested in education but as a philosopher, deeply attuned and tied in her scholarship to classicism, to the stoics, to Plato and Socrates, to the rhetorical tradition more broadly. This is significant because it gives way for the possibilities of drawing in these concepts to the field of Composition and Rhetoric, and to our attunement as a field to the experience of vulnerable bodies and identities, to argument, to the pursuit of equitable education and literacy, to belonging and not belonging, and to narrative as a whole. And in order to facilitate this sense of imagination and connection we must offer students tools for more deeply understanding themselves and the social experiences of others – we can do this by offering them opportunities for emotional exploration in writing, but we can also do this by opening a space to ask critical questions about identity, difference, vulnerability, and empathy in classrooms and research projects – we can do this by 'rhetorically listening' to them (Ratcliffe).

In order to better understand emotion, we need narratives of difference, of challenge, of those on the margins to push against the dominant tropes and messages we receive about the role of feeling. These opportunities for listening to critical narratives and experiences are connected to Richard Delgado's foundational work in the field of critical race and legal studies, "Storytelling for Oppositionist and Others: A Plea for Narrative" which offers insight into the potential of what telling stories about our 'otherness' about our internal lives and conflicts can do to push back against power structures and make room for justice and equity. Delgado argues that subordination occurs not simply because of cultural lag or inadequate enforcement of laws but because of a prevailing mindset, "by means of which members of the dominant group justify the

world as it is, that is, with whites on top and browns and blacks at the bottom" (2413). He suggests, as those interested in critical literacy have long suggested that, "stories, parables, chronicles, and narratives are powerful means for destroying mindset – the bundle of presuppositions, received wisdoms, and shared understanding against a background of which legal and political discourse takes place" (Delgado 2413). And I believe these revelations are as important to our classroom work in teaching narrative and critical thinking as they are to the narratives we tell in our research. Writing, as evidenced by the work excerpted throughout this dissertation and the relationships formed in writing classrooms, is central to the negotiation of emotion, writing classrooms bring out emotion in complex and important ways that we must remain connected to. It is not about us as teachers owning or colonizing these stories for our own purposes, but offering the space for these narratives and questions to exist. This suggestion is similar to what literacy scholars such as Beth Daniell have advocated when articulating the importance of 'little literacy narratives' to work against the grand narratives of power and domination. When we have fixed ideas of notions such as race, gender, or emotion they tend to pervade our 'mindset' about how these function in the lives of ourselves and of our students. There is then a practical classroom component to these suggestions, as well as a deeper theoretical push toward including more textured narratives in our work as researchers and theorists of composition, literacy and rhetoric. By letting in different more nuanced narratives we draw upon insight from Paulo Freire allowing students to see themselves in new ways, and become critically conscious of their identities and positions, in order to "'take action against the oppressive elements of reality'" (400). Little narratives of those often not found within the grand narratives of literacy and rhetoric, expose the "a relationship between literacy and oppression or freedom is rarely as simple as we have thought" (Daniell 403). It is through these counter-

traditions and counter-narratives that our reality, power, and history becomes more textured and emotion helps us to see why these narratives are even more critical and useful to our field and to student experience.

Paying attention to the wider currents of social and personal growth and conflict is essential for teachers of writing, and we must approach this with a deep and "critical empathy" and openness to the possibilities of emotion as a tool for revealing personal complexities (Leake). For example, when instructing and leading any new teacher of writing one of the first discussions we engage in is how to build community in our classrooms. This is important and vital work because it calls attention to the importance of making connections between students, between student and teacher, as a means to forge personal growth and trust. Imagine that all of the students profiled in this dissertation arrived in the same writing classroom, how might we honor who they are individually while building an environment that fosters communal connection and personal individual growth? I believe part of that work involves, as I have made the case for, understanding our own personal and emotional vulnerabilities and emotions and those of our students. But this work is sticky and is rarely a linear process. Megan Boler points out three features that make building community in classroom spaces deeply challenging if not impossible are "identity politics, power relations, and fear" (138). Unlike Lilla, Boler argues not for moving away from these realties but to imagine how we can build upon these to foster communal and emotional connection in our students. Bound up in each of these inherent challenges is the sense that the personal emotional world creeps in and impacts deeply our ability to forge community and move students toward scholastic and personal growth. Boler continues:

> Within educational institutions, unacceptable/emotional behavior is defined by what it is not: namely, the prototype of the rational, curious, engaged, "balanced," well-behaved white male student. Why does a thesis of emotional epistemologies seem far-fetched within the disciplined academy? Why is it so outlandish to think that, as an educational

> community, we might benefit from emotional literacies, from learning how to articulate the ways in which the social realm defines the private and how our passions inform our desires for knowledge? Why, in our fear and resistance, do we "lock out" the possibility of an emotional literacy regarding, for example, our vulnerabilities as well as systems of denial with respect to the pain and joy we necessarily experience in each of our globalized private and classroom lives? (139).

Building true community then, requires we acknowledge the gaps in our communities that would exist if we ignore emotional responses and diverse identities. It requires that we engage in an understanding of emotional literacy, that we concede social negotiation involves both the personal and private, that in the search for logic in knowledge, emotion is a part of our intellectual, spiritual and philosophical development as learners. In the process of building our communities, of integrating emotional epistemologies into our efforts is to consider how to open up possibilities for emotion, to demonstrate that there are no right and wrong emotional responses and identities within our classrooms, that narratives matter, that we must bridge difference with empathy and understanding. My hope is that the narratives I explored throughout this dissertation make significant contributions to discussion around education and writing classroom community building. I hope it humanizes our work, exposing the emotional core that exists in all of us. It is ultimately our job as educators to stay attuned and aware to these currents and to open space in our classrooms for emotion to matter and be understood.

I see these revelations as central to our call for more nuanced ways of teaching narrative, and of connecting and building community and they are equally critical in our work as qualitative researchers as well. My goal was to use this attunement in my own practice as a researcher to show how emotion and empathy can serve as a tool for deeper understanding not only in qualitative analysis, but also in rhetorical and literate analysis as well (Kirsch and Royster). This call for critical empathy not only in our classrooms but also in our research might look something like Kirsch and Royster's call for "strategic contemplation" in the work of

feminist rhetorical practices. Indeed the history of feminist research owes much to critical conversations around emotion, its role, its stereotypes and the importance of reframing our connection to it. Kirsch and Royster propose that critical imagination can transform the methodology and protocols within intellectual work, thereby creating a space that privileges dialogue and rhetorical listening between research subjects. They write that, "Strategic contemplation further suggests that we pay attention to how lived experiences shape our perspectives as researchers and those of our research subjects. We call for greater attention to lived, embodied experience because we consider it to be a powerful yet often-neglected source of insight, inspiration, and passion" (Royster and Kirsch 22). In this sense emotion serves as a way to move toward a fuller engagement with such strategic contemplation and empowerment in our work as researchers opening the space to read narratives and read ourselves in more strategic and empathetically aligned ways. Patricia Bizell's examination of feminist methods in the history of rhetoric argues that to Royster "we owe our most thorough theorizing of the role of emotions in feminist research to date" (201). Royster offered our field the belief and possibility that "theory begins with a story" that from the personal and the emotionally attached work that we do as students and teachers our lives and intellects are opened up in profound ways, and knowledge is created (Bizell 202). This exposes the way feminist methodology mixes with attunement to emotion to broaden the work and reach of our writing, rhetorical literacy, and literacy research – and I hope my own contributions around the importance of integration emotion into qualitative contexts contributes to this line of thought and to the potentiality provided by being aware of emotion in qualitative research settings (Duffy, "Recalling the Letter").

To reflect back to the introduction to this dissertation, at no time perhaps in recent memory has there been more discussion and call for the work of empathy in our strategic

discourses as teachers, citizens, researchers, and students. In our political discourse we often find ourselves wondering whether our political conflicts arise as a result of having reached our limits of empathizing and hearing others, and whether empathy and individuals can be a bridge to connection (Hochschild). And yet, we see in how these students navigate their worlds, that conflict is not the end of investigation but the beginning of possibility as teachers and researchers and learners (it can indeed incite action), and we must remain open to what it can reveal, how it is embodied and felt, and how we can better move to make our students whole human beings. As Nussbaum argues, "All political principles, the good as well as the bad, need emotional support to ensure their stability over time, and all decent societies need to guard against division and hierarchy by cultivating appropriate sentiments of sympathy and love," and I would add, by cultivating empathy and critical emotional attunement of the other (*Political Emotions* 3). My goal in joining narratives with theories of emotion, composition and education was to open up the space for this inquiry and to argue for a realignment of these elements in our work as teachers and researchers.

Study Limitations

This dissertation is only the beginning of what I hope is a deeper dive into the role that emotion pays in our field and in our social and political discourse. Any research project requires tradeoffs and compromises that emerge as a result of time and access limitations, scope management, funding, and life events. This project is no exception to the reality of those constraints. That being said, I do see these limitations as opening up possibilities for sustained research and possibilities for future revisions and development of the work.

Small Data Pool – Given the labor intensive nature of life history, the time investment of establishing meaningful relationships with participants, conducting thorough interviews,

transcribing my own interviews, amongst other constraints, my research project is not as large or robust as I imagined at the outset. As a result of that I tried to be more thorough in my explication of the narratives, the overlap between the narratives, and to fill in any apparent gaps with strong secondary research and analysis. I believe the research could be strengthened by additional interviews with a wider range of students outside of the university space, nontraditional students, students in community colleges, older students perhaps well passed their experiences in school and beyond. Additionally, research about emotion in other contexts (in social contexts, in business etc.) would add to a more layered understanding of emotion and how it circulates in the lives of people. Given the nature of where my research was conducted I believe I was able to develop a relatively diverse pool of interview participants but I do wish that it was a larger pool overall so that more coalescing and overlap could be noted and so that a more through heuristic for utilizing emotion could be developed for writing teachers.

Methodology and Unidirectional Interviewing – The choice of any one particular methodology of course limits the types of questions and the range of research that can be ultimately conducted. Life history privileges the individual orator and their experiences, using multiple overlapping narratives as a means to draw connections and make theories and concepts through their analysis (Linde). The strengths of this methodology, that the individual narrator is empowered and given prominence in the research and data, also happens to be its limitation, that is we often do not have a sense of the deeper relationships, individuals, and intuitions connected to the person interviewed because we are obtaining a perspective only from their point-of-view. In future iterations of this work I would be interested in speaking to the administrators, teachers, parents of the individuals profiled, to widen the net of whose emotional responses and experiences we are taking into consideration. This would offer more depth and layer, offering a

deeper interconnected web of relationships, emotion and identity. The research would benefit from a more longitudinal look at participants, and additional interviews with important individuals in their lives that participants' mention would add texture. Within this set of limitations, one might also point out that a lack of direct observation on my part, means I am relying only on the view points of one individual or in this case a set of individuals. As I set up in the introduction, I believe this is ultimately a strength of narrative inquiry and life history, and it served my purposes of understanding the intimate contours of emotion, but it does present a set of limitations to the depth and quality of the research and the conclusions one can draw from them.

Additional observations and insight connected to the broader world of the participants would be interesting and useful. In addition I would have been interested in interviewing teachers to get a more concrete sense of how those educators view emotion so that it was a more bidirectional understanding of emotion from their point-of-view as well. In the process of interviewing, the individual participant and researcher are mutually creating something that did not exist before – this is powerful and also emphasizes the contextual nature of interviewing. At the end of our interview, one of my participants Lucy, discussed being surprised by how much her background impacted her current interests and sense of self, she remarked, "I didn't realize how much I read as a kid until I started talking about it." This acknowledges the beauty and power of an interview situation, the revelations and knowledge that can be generated through the experience, while also acknowledging the temporal space of the interview itself and how participant responses are a reaction to that moment in time.

Definitional Challenges with Emotion and Literacy – Literacy and emotion are often overused and fluid terms lacking specific definitions in our research and literature. As outlined in

my introduction and throughout this dissertation, my interest in using emotion is directly tied to how I understand literacy, that is I was interested in examining the social and cultural experiences of emotion, the lived and embodied reactions to the experiences of learning, being literate, and writing. One of the aims of this dissertation was to use narrative to help work toward a deeper, more embodied, and lived definition of emotion, as a means to better develop a pedagogy of attunement, empathy, and emotion for writing teachers. At the same time defining emotion in the lives of participants is challenging, because when recounting their lives and experiences, people are not necessarily talking about emotion directly or specifically, rather they are speaking about emotion in referential terms, in less direct ways. As such I had to draw out the points of emotion through my research and analysis of each narrative (as was clear in the table of emotion codes from the introduction).

It is also important to acknowledge that emotion is also uniquely personal, and people rarely speak about it in the same explicit terms – there are of course the direct emotions: it made me angry, sad, and happy etc., but much of what I examined or found through my analysis of the interviews was in the subtext and in the rereading of student narratives in relation to one another. As a researcher, I worked to see and analyze the grounding and motivating forces of emotion behind the narratives, experiences, and relationships that were being directly implicated or discussed. I felt my own attunement, sensitivity, and awareness of emotion made this more possible for me than perhaps people who were new to considering emotion, but I also would have liked to offer a more direct process for uncovering emotion, a clearer methodological approach to readers. This made analyzing and finding emotion challenging at times. That said, part of my methodological process was creating categories of various emotions to try and

understand what themes and ideas emerged through these interviews, and I believe this is another area where significant contributions can be made in the future.

Hope for the Future of Emotion: Horizons for Additional Research

As mentioned above, it is my hope that the limitations presented in this dissertation open up the possibility for future research and expand the horizons of emotion's possibility in the field and beyond. I would like to turn the work of examining emotion to classroom spaces and observations, and to teachers as well, trying to get their sense and reaction to emotion and vulnerability that I have presented here. There is some work to this effect in the field, as I have pointed out, but none that specifically uses life history narratives to directly discuss with teachers their own experiences with student's emotions, and then in turn what experiences in their own life have led them to respond in the way that they do. I would also be interested in broadening an examination of emotion into different contexts and different populations beyond the university, teachers, and students – the study cited in the previous chapter from Louwanda Evans examining emotional labor of African American pilots and flight attendants is one example of this type of work. Additionally, though I propose that emotion is a connective thread between individuals and the sponsors of literacy, it would also be useful to consider if and in what ways, emotion is actually a sponsor of literacy in a more material way. I think one of the ways to achieve this type of analysis would be to look at different populations of writers and learners (perhaps those in business, in prison, in support groups) and to consider how emotion works as a deeper more material force in writing. In previous iterations of this dissertation I included a chapter on feminism, gender, and emotion – I excluded it here in the final version of the dissertation because I felt I lacked the proper qualitative data to support claims that pushed this conversation forward, and because it did not integrate well with the broader project of this dissertation,

ultimately it just did not fit. That being said it is an important body of literature to examine, and I believe additional qualitative work focusing exclusively on the relationship between emotion, gender, and feminism, especially given current political conversations, would be especially fruitful and significant.

Further, I believe the work completed here in this dissertation leads the way toward developing a clear pedagogical and research methodology for the teaching of emotion. With a more robust study of broader populations and groups a heuristic or operational tool kit for drawing in emotion into our classrooms could be developed, and would be fruitful for teachers interested in considering more specific strategies for emotion work in their pedagogy. Exploring in more depth just why writing itself makes students vulnerable would be of equal interest and importance. This type of work would be greatly enhanced by speaking to teachers and researchers to get their sense of how these forces already operate in their lives, by conducting a review of literature in the field, by speaking more directly to the field of feminist research methodology. I imagine that a clear critical approach to teaching emotion and researching emotion would be deeply helpful to teacher training and to qualitative methodology courses and my hope is that I have begun the conversation and offered a base of tools (and an example) for one way we might engage in this work.

I also imagine this work as the beginning of my own research exploring emotion, public political discourse, and the vulnerability implicit in the writing process. My hope is that this writing will compel others in the field engage in this critical work, to consider how emotion as a category for analysis and reflection changes or impacts their work as educators and researchers. Empathy is just a start to bridging the divides that exist between our students, and in our social spaces more broadly it is about what we do after empathy, about what we do with empathy as a

form (as I have pointed out) of action and connection with our students, ourselves, and our world more broadly. By reflecting upon this concept of 'love in action' I want to highlight that love, feeling, emotion, the notion of connection is not always the end in itself, but that it can inspire critical action, movement, demonstration, writing, deeper thinking and thought. This is an aim and possibility opened up by bringing in emotion into the classroom and articulates the possibilities created when we remain attuned. I draw upon this concept because I argue that feelings can inspire profound shifts, that emotion and critical empathy should be used to intervene, to facilitate action and growth. I believe the stories of the students in this dissertation reveal this to be true.

Atlantic writer John Paul Rollert points out that empathy is the basis for the hope and possibility that Barrack Obama articulated throughout his own autobiographies, throughout his subsequent campaign, and is a driving force in his political philosophy. But Rollert also suggests that empathy is not always able to "heal the racial divide" that it can often hit against its own limits – he reminds us that the work of writers like Ta Nahesi Coates show us that trauma, fear, injustice and vulnerability are not solved simply through optimism and empathy – because sometimes the walls are too thick between us, because the expanse of the divide is too wide. Empathy and connection can only be the start of bridging that political and cultural divide if we are able to truly step outside of ourselves. As Rollert writes and as I have argued, "A capacity for empathy relies not only on a willingness to step into the shoes of another person, but the ability to step away from yourself. If you can't leave your own world behind, at best, you may have the resolution but not the wherewithal" (6). My hope is that the narratives in this research with a diverse population of students offers a broader more socially conscious view of emotion, in all of its messy and layered glory. I believe this is equally important to those within the university, as it

is to those beyond the space of the university. I still fully believe that we all could benefit from a more sustained discussion around emotion and empathy in our public lives, that it should not only be a privilege, that it can help as we navigate challenging conversations around political division, race, inclusion, and beyond. My sincere hope is that this dissertation is just one additional voice in the broader chorus of this most imperative conversation, and that it encourages readers, teachers and students alike to reflect, engage, and act when needed.

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Appendix A: Life History Interview Protocol

Approved IRB Interview Topics

A note for interviewees: This is a sample of topics that might be covered during your interview, though please note we will likely not discuss all of the topics and questions on this list. In addition, please attempt ***not*** to provide any identifiable information about a third party (name etc.) but rather use generic terms (my fifth grade teacher, my mom etc.). If identifiable information is mentioned during the interview about a third party it will not be included in the transcript.

Demographic Information

- How old are you?
- Where were you born and raised?
- How do you identify in terms of both gender/race?
- What are the names and locations of the schools you have attended?
- What degrees do you have?
- What do you currently do for an occupation, what have you don in the past?
- Parents' schooling and occupation if known; siblings/family background.
- What languages and dialects do you speak?

Childhood Memories with Writing & Schooling

- What are your earliest memories of seeing other people writing?
- Earliest memories of your own writing?
- Where did reading and writing occur?
- What writing did you do both inside and out of school?
- Do your earliest memories include positive or negative experiences with writing? Please describe all/both.
- What materials did you have available for writing? How did this help and/or hinder you?
- Who were your earliest teachers of writing (in school and out of school)?
- How did you learn best when you were younger?
- Who were your favorite teachers, why? What characteristics did they possess?
- Favorite in school experiences generally and with writing.
- Least favorite experiences around writing (negative). Description of why and how impacted.
- Memories of kinds of writing done in and out of school; types of projects and examples
- Audiences for writing in and out of school – who read your work?
- Kinds of materials used for in and out of school writing
- Favorite writing projects when younger and why
- Memories about feeling included or excluded in school
- Memories of sharing writing with friends, teachers, family, peers
- Memories of reading the writing of friends, classmates, favorite authors etc.
- Organizations or activities connected to writing or reading

- Description of how you were evaluated in school and out of school
- Key memories associated with sharing writing and composing

Writing In High School, College, and Beyond

- Similar questions as above (relating specifically to high school and college experiences)

Writing & Career

- How did what you study in school lead to the career that you selected?
- What memories or experiences impact how you selected your current path/career?
- How do you utilize writing in your job(s) currently? In what ways does writing factor into your daily life both in your career and in your free time?
- Do you do more online writing in your career? What or how would you like the writing for your job to be different?
- Do you utilize the type of writing you were taught in school in your career or job?
- Did you feel prepared by school to enter your current career choice or not? Why or why not (explain).
- What skills do you wish you had learned in school to prepare you more for your career? Do you feel that you had to learn more on the job?
- Did you always know that you would go into your current job? What has surprised you about your life path to this job?
- Do you enjoy the career you are in (why or why not, explain positive and negative experiences/memories surrounding your career path)? Do you wish you could be in another career, and if so what is it and why would you like to move toward that career?
- How did you select or come into the job you are in (describe the factors that lead to this job/career and what or why they were significant)?

Other Related Topics and Line of Questioning

- What is your definition of emotion, how do you understand it/react to that when I ask?
- Do you think of yourself as a writer, why or why not?
- Favorite memories associated with writing and composing?
- Least favorite memories associated with writing?
- Did your upbringing impact how you saw yourself as a writer? Why or why not?
- Memories of people who had a hand in learning to write, and/or influential people that impacted your writing?
- Influential civic or political moments that impacted how you thought/learned to write.
- What motivates you to write if you continue to write? If you don't write now, why is that?
- Do you consider yourself an author, why or why not?
- How have you used writing in the past six months?
- Sense of how and when emotion has entered into your experience with writing or learning to write. That is, positive and negative experiences around writing or learning to write.

- What traditions, past personal experiences etc., impact the purpose that writing has in your life?
- Description of favorite tactics for learning writing, possible advice for teachers of writing.
- What meaning or purpose does writing and composing have in your life?
- How might someone learn from your past experiences, what would you want to teach someone about your own story/experience with writing?
- How does your personal identity impact your connection to writing?
- How do you imagine writing to continue to take part and evolve in your life?
- If you could give yourself a piece of advice as a young writer or student what would that be?
- How does the personal writing (if at all) you did/do impact the more formal writing you engage in (for school, work etc.)?
- Do you think of writing in positive or negative terms, why and in what ways?
- What are the first words that come to mind when I mention the word writing? When I mention school and learning?
- What do you wish you knew about writing during school that you never learned? How would you have liked writing to be taught to prepare you for your life?
- Did you ever feel excluded as a result of your writing or communication skills? Why was that, how did you handle it?
- Have you written personal narratives that have included emotion, if so why and who did that function?
- What narratives are you compelled to read and connect to? Did these include moments of emotional appeal?

Sample Interview Topics (Teachers)

- Have you had experiences with emotion in your classroom? If so, how do you deal with emotion in your writing classes?
- What effect does emotion's presence in the classroom have on the overall dynamic of the course? Do you feel that it is a useful teaching tool in the classroom, why or why not?
- How do you personally define or understand the meaning of emotion?
- How do you understand emotion and writing as linked?
- Do you directly incorporate emotion into your teaching, if so in what ways, and if not, why not?
- Without giving names/specific personal details, what is an example of a moment when emotion arose in your classroom or in a student's writing? How did you deal with it? How did the class respond?
- Do you feel that emotion is an important thing to reflect upon and consider as a teacher, why or why not?
- How as emotion worked in your own writing and learning experiences, how do you take these experiences and incorporate them (or not) into your teaching?
- What would you like to know about emotion and teaching that you don't already know?

Appendix B: Student Writing Excerpts[10]

James' Writing Excerpts

The Rose that Grew From the Concrete

Good botanist know that to grow plants, their seeds need to be cast upon "good" soil, and cared for with proper amounts water and sunlight. It would be foolish for one to throw their seeds on the nutrient deficient concrete and expect for flowers to bloom. Although, what happens when something occurs that nature has demanded to be impossible?

What lies on the sidewalk of the street is a single rose growing from the concrete. The rose has been greatly damaged, yet it stands strong and upright in the concrete. The rose is dark red, a color that imitates the oxygenated blood that runs throughout human's body which allows them to actively move and live. The head of the rose has not yet bloomed, hence still protecting the pollen inside, due to the lack of sunlight, water, and nutrients the rose had been deprived of from large trees lurking over the sidewalk with roots that reach a large surface area. The rose petals, although injured, still tightly holds the head of the flower together, only exposing a very small portion of the top. The rose petals, although tightly wrapped together, has lacerations inflicted from the harsh environment. Most animals and insects would walk past the rose and ignore it, doubtful that the rose would continue to grow, yet one bee understood the complexity and specialty of this rose, he flew to the location of the rose every day and hovered over it anticipating the day when it would expose its sweet nectar and perfume. It was not long before the head opened and exposed its nectar.

The stem is a sight to see because without this support the rose would have never surfaced. The stem stands in the middle of the concrete barely moved by the strong winds that beat upon the rose. The stem barely has thorns, as the rose grew some of the thorns ripped off leaving the stem bare. Some thorns remained due to their incredible strength used as they broke pieces of the unmoving concrete off as the rose continued to grow. One would wonder why the rose would sacrifice it thorns when the thorns are the rose only source of protection. Another may ask wouldn't the rose chance of survival significantly decrease with this protection? But to understand the actions of the rose, one would first have to understand its history. Although the thorns on the rose provides protection, it would not have been possible for the rose to live if it had not broken through the concrete to reach the surface. Only the thorns that provided the greatest strength dedicated to saving the rose life survived.

The concrete, a material used for its strength and support, had been significantly cracked in multiple spots, exposing parts of soil that still lied underneath. The cement block lied in the center of the sidewalk. One side of the sidewalk lied a lifeless street, nothing grew due to heavy traffic flow the street has to endure. On the other side of the sidewalk was a park that was full of life and nutrients.

As people walked down the street, they stopped and marveled at the rose. Some took pictures of the rose while others ran to get other people to see this wonder of nature. In the park next to the street, there grew hundreds of beautiful roses that had the same genetic DNA of the rose in the concrete, yet people weren't interested in them. More people were interested in the damaged rose poking out of the concrete, a plant that had to fight against all odds to reach the surface, rather than marvel at the roses that didn't have nearly as much obstacles in its growth. Once people began to notice the rose more became fascinated with its life journey and how it can continue on with their help. Politicians and government got wind of the rose and fell in love with it. They decided that the rose showed great strength and beauty, something that the city was in desperate need of. The mayor then used funds to create an even larger park surrounded around the rose. After the rose died it became the state flower and the motto which states, "LONG LIVE THE ROSE THAT GREW FROM THE COCRETE".

Imagination is Key

Growing up the eighth child out of thirteen supported by a single mother, our house was busy to say the least. Being locked in a house with such a large family and so much activity going on was very overwhelming at times, not to mention the dangerous neighborhood lurking outside filled with gangs and drug violence. Playing

[10] These excerpts are selected from longer pieces of writing that have been mentioned and excerpted in the dissertation above. I have removed identifying information and excerpted the writing intentionally to offer readers a sense of the overall range of the student's writing and argument as it relates to my references and argument. Writing from participants has been excerpted with the student writer's approval, following the IRB protocol form.

imaginary games with my siblings like hide-like-go seek, scientist, and wild life investigator became a safe place in my mind. I grew a true passion of using my mind as a tool to work out problems. This space I was able to create, has continuously shown to be beneficial even to the present. Although I was fortunate in having this mastering this coping mechanism, it was something highly discouraged as a child by teachers, parents, and the majority of the academic world. Using imagination as a tool to aid children in learning may prove to be beneficial if constructed correctly with educators who understand the importance of it. I did not fully understand the importance of having an active imagination or using it as a tool of benefit until I was encountered by someone, my teacher, who thought learning in this fashion was useless. It was then that I began to construct my learning balanced on an imaginative break bone, finding answers to problems in this safe place every time I am lost.

I can still remember the day as if it were yesterday. I woke up hot and sweaty due to the amount of people in the bed. I laid in the bed with my older and younger twin brothers. With my eyes closed I stuck out my tongue and rubbed it against my lips to get some moisture on them. I struggled to pull my dead arm from under my head so I could wipe the crust out of my eyes. When I awoke that morning it was dark. No lights were in the room except the ones that snuck in through the cracks of the busted window. The lights danced on the wall, falling prey to whatever designs I could think of. I directed my eyes to the ceiling; oh how magnificent it was. There on the ceiling I recalled scenes from movies, imagined my mom on her wedding day, dreamed of my family moving to a better neighborhood, and watched a city in distress and I undressed exposing the "s" on my chest with my red boots and cape. Right before I saved the last few citizens at the World Trade Center on September, 11 the images started to fade away as more light rushed into the room.

I squirmed back to my side, interrupted by older brother's foot in my face. I could still smell the stench of his worn out feet lingering from the night before. Bunions peaked out from underneath his foot taking the opportunity to get some air and rest before their day started again. I cautiously tried to push the beastly foot away, but it would have taken a crane to lift it. I then tried to lie on my back to escape the foul smell but I was intercepted by my twin little brothers snuggling behind me. I put effort into laying on them as a pillow, but I couldn't live with their smells either. They were facing each other with their foreheads and knees touching. Both had their mouths open with enough drool leaking out to completely dampen the area. The stench of their combined breaths completely over powered my brother's foot; I think they burned some of my nose hairs. Feeling trapped in this confined area, I closed my eyes and been to imagine myself as an ice climber. Behind me was a fire breathing two headed dragon, while there was a huge mountain in front. As the dragon made its way to me I quickly climbed over my brother's gigantic belly and came back to reality as I plopped on the floor. After getting up, I got dressed and prep my little sister for the school day ahead of us.

When we got to school, I thought the day was going to be normal, but I was soon going to learn a lesson that I would carry for years. When at school, teachers were preaching about men and women who have excelled in life because they used their minds to achieve their goals in life. At times like this, my eyelids would get very heavy and eventually close. Random colors began dancing before me as they had earlier that morning, forming images directed by will. I flew back to the Trade Center and saved those individuals who were trapped before; I then became Icarus flying at the right distance from the sun and the ocean. Wind rushing in my face and my arms stretched out as I soared through the sky, loving the feeling of being free. While in flight I lost focus and got too close to the sun, my wings melted and I crashed into the sea. When I opened my eyes my teacher was glaring at me, angry at me for daydreaming in her class. Her glare felt like a heat beam. In the past, every time my teacher caught me daydreaming, she would call me to the front of the class and pop-quiz me on the lessons she just went over and random information from past lessons. This would insure that I was listening and not sleeping like so many of students have done in the past. It was also to embarrass me and any other student who would carry on in this manner. I knew from her angry stare that today would be no different. I was so confused and nervous when she made me do this. As she called to the front of the class, my knees would collide like mini car crashes. I could feel my heart beating at the base of my feet, my stomach felt queasy, and everyone's eyes on me raised my body temperature and blood pressure. Every step forward was like walking on a bed of sharp nails. Gallons of sweat released from my pores. I walked to the front of the classroom and stood in front of my classmates and took a big gulp of saliva as the teacher read her question, "What is the name of the boy who took flight and disregarded his father's message as he got too close to the sun? Why was it important for him to listen to his father?" I let my eyelids drop immediately as I rummaged around my brain for answers. I imagined taking flight across that sea just as Icarus did, my mom telling me not to fly too close to the sun or water otherwise I would drown. I blurted out the answers while everyone stared, I felt a little less nervous. Bitterly my teacher said, "very good", her teeth clenched so tight they nearly broke. She directed me back to my seat while giving me detention for the day. I was confused and angry. I understood most of her lectures far better than my classmates who would simply read and memorize the text. When I read, I was able to live the experience of the characters through my mind.

The school day had ended and I slowly and painfully dragged my feet on the ground to the detention classroom where I was greeted by my teacher. Her face had a scowl on it, her arms were folded with sharp elbows pointing out, and her eyes were dead. I made my way to my seat as the teacher wrote one rule on the board, “No Sleeping”. Detention time was designed for students to sit in quiet room and reflect on their actions that landed them in that situation for an hour to an hour and a half, depending on the severity of the crime. Of course, as a child, detention was a time of trouble and I had to escape. As I had times before, I close my eyes and drifted away from the classroom. This time the drift was not too long because my teacher walked to my desk and slammed her hand on it, bringing me back to reality. Instead of yelling or giving me more detention, she decided to be a mentor and explain the world in her eyes. She tried to explain the importance of becoming professional to prevent the outcome of becoming like so many under prepared individuals in my community who have no focus or drive. She explained how rude and irresponsible it was for me to tune out, especially at a time when she talking about people who have excelled. She exclaimed to me that life is about cold hard facts, and there is no for this concept of “imagination”. She ended her lecture by exclaiming, “You have great potential, don’t waste it in LaLa land!” I remember pondering my teachers as I walked home, reflecting on what to make of the conversation.

After this encounter, I tried to keep my teacher’s message and implement it into my life, but regardless of the age or situation I always found myself looking to my mind as a refuge and safe haven when life has gotten too stressful or confusing In retrospect, there is truth to be found in this teachers advice. It is true that professionalism is an important aspect for success, having an active imagination and an ability to problem solve with it is just as important. An active imagination is assisting me in my studies of cellular biology and the body in general Cellular processes that occur use to be an unnatural phenomenon to man, but through logic and imagination scientist have broken codes to understand these processes. In my courses, professors encouraged that we imagine these cellular processes that occur in the body instead of simply remembering a bunch of facts, something I have used to my benefit and thrived in. Moving forward, the importance of using an active imagination is essential for growth of our society. Teaching children on how to constructively use their imagination may show to be the missing link to some students and their learning disabilities, whatever they may be.

Lisette Writing Excerpt

Is it Our Fault if We Fail?

…The idea of incorporating multiculturalism into American education is seen as "politically correct.” Universities everywhere have been on the hunt for years to go beyond integrating schools and reach towards supreme diversification. As much as their efforts seem pure and true their efforts have further segregated campuses and isolated groups across the United States. The majority Anglo-European wealthy population stability is being altered dramatically by the enormous changes in the composition and growth of nonwhite low-income and middle class groups in America. As these numbers continue to rise, the numbers for college students and graduates of these minorities decreases yearly, as they remain unaware of financial and social support…

What help is there for the "non-affiliated minority?” Those who are financially challenged but don't meet the federal governments standard of low income; the student who doesn't have communities or families on campus based on centers, programs, or scholarship groups to cling to; students who are denied the parent plus loan; the student who isn't a resident of Wisconsin or Minnesota; and lastly the student who the common scholarship application doesn't work for because their major has yet to be declared. These factors that are repeated stating what defines the needy student are not efficient and leaves out a select group of minority students to fend for themselves. I am that student. These issues are what motivated me to wonder why and ask these questions. I have had 18 credit semesters, worked two jobs totaling in 35 hours per week, and struggled to maintain my presence in a social and communal setting…I’d say I only know 5% of the minority population on this campus while most people have interacted with over 60% by the time they enter their sophomore year. Being outside of a program, center, or federally recognized need-based group has placed me in a category that will remain helpless and unknown.

… I agree with one student who believes that "having someone of his experience and caliber will add immeasurably to our collective ability to enhance graduation rates, improve campus climate and provide a supportive voice in our efforts to engage issues of diversity." Professor Andrew Delbanco believes that "College as a community of learning is, for many students, already an anachronism." Even if [redacted] proceeds in founding this program most students, myself included, don’t believe in the original context of what college was.

“College should be much more than a place that winnows the "best" from the rest. A college should not be a haven from worldly contention, but a place where young people fight out among and within themselves contending ideas of the meaningful life, and where they discover that self-interest need not be at odds with concern

for one another" (Delbanco 114). The minority students' declining school spirit and overall moral for what this University stands for has been depleted due to our isolation and lack of help. My independence and responsibility for my own fate in an educational setting has made me steer away from connecting with others including my teachers, peers, and faculty. The competitive drive that leads the masses of students on this campus to flood University, Park, and Charter is not the same drive that gets me off probation or helps me pay for books each semester. My want and need to prove everyone wrong and to show the world that I made it in spite of, has redefined my idea of college: what it was, what it is, and what it should be. Hopefully you have been able to see that the fault of my failure isn't simple to cast on any one thing. Instead, it is a collective work starting all the way back to the foundation of this school and the injection of diversity into an unprepared and ignorant society.

I was brought up to always take responsibility for my actions just as most of us were. So, it prides me in saying that if I fail it is my fault, but I will not fail. The problems that govern the restraints that hold me down and keep me away from reaching my goals are the problems of this institution as a whole. There is no help for students like me; we are not helpless for we help ourselves. In your eyes it may be my fault if I fail, but it will also be my fault when I succeed.

Matema Writing Excerpt

Say One More Time

If you haven't missed the first day of class, you may notice how it feels. The first day of Organic Chemistry Discussion – the first five minutes – everybody was quiet in the classroom. I turned my head left and right looking if I can see any student I have met before but everyone was new. No one seemed to recognize the other people in the room. Some students were busy manipulating their cellphones, flipping new notebooks' pages that had nothing written on them yet, and others put hand at cheek. The classroom was quiet for the first five minutes and no one began a conversation until when the bell rang. Before the bell rang, no one knew who had a Florida, Wisconsin, Cambodia or Congolese's accent in the class.

The bell rang as the TA was walking in the class with a bundle of printing papers in one hand and his backpack in the other saying; "Sorry guys, it took me couple minutes waiting for the printer to finish printing all the papers. It is the first day of class and things are not always ready but…I got them". He put the backpack and those papers on the front table, pulled a chair and put his jacket on it, and started unloading other handouts from his backpack. He started talking and writing on the blackboard. "Here is what we are going to do today. We'll do introductions, I'll go over the syllabus and course materials, and since we only have two lectures so far, I will briefly talk about some chemistry covered in the second lecture." He then added, "for the introduction part, just say your name, year in school, major, and something interesting about you."

My turn came after the students in the front row introduced themselves. I said: "my name is [redacted], I'm…" The TA interrupted me saying, "Can you say your name one more time?" I repeated slowl…[redacted] I am junior, majoring in biology, and something interesting about me..." I hesitated for a second and then I said, "I've been in Minnesota and Wisconsin for seven years, but when it comes to winter time, I really hate the place." Students laughed and then the TA immediately asked me whether I have been taking classes at [redacted] during those seven years. I said: "no. I've been in this weather for seven years but I am still not used to it yet." He then asked, "where were you before that seven years?" I said, "I am from Congo and I have been here for seven years now." It seemed that I took more time introducing myself and that I answered many additional questions that other students didn't answer. Was he trying to understand my accent?

Of course everyone who speaks English and hears how I talk, must know that English is my second language because I don't speak like a Wisconsinite. Yeah, these people are right. I am learning English but they miss my other languages' accents. They don't know how fluently I speak my tribe language – Kibembe. When I meet Bembe people, we talk without stopping. We use tons of synonyms to show the emotion to what we are saying. One word may mean a lot of things just by using its different synonyms. Even when I meet Burundians, I talk without fear because I speak Kirundi very well and they cannot detect my accent easily. I learned Kirundi very fast when I attended a primary school in Burundi for three years and we also had Burundian neighbors in Congo that made me to learn Kirundi more easily.

I wish English speakers would know some of these languages so I can show and express all the emotions that come to my mind when I am talking to them as I do when I am talking to Burundians and others. I hold good conversations with other people who don't speak my dialect too because I speak Lingala and French as well. Lingala is a second language in Congo after French. French is the official language and it is mandatory to speak it in school

and at government offices. Among all those languages that I speak, you can't beat me in Swahili. Swahili is just like my first language, because even my name is a Swahili name that means "blessing."
If you go to any East Africa country, particularly in Tanzania or Kenya, you will know the meaning of knowing Swahili. It is a marketing language in the East Africa countries and you will benefit a lot if you speak it. You will be free to listen to all the music because they sing in Swahili, television shows are in Swahili and even churches preach in Swahili. You will see how people jump at churches and how others dance in their courtyards to the Swahili Music. All of these make sense to me because I speak Swahili and it is easy for me to hold a Swahili conversation too because the words flow on my head like the air on leafs.

In addition to all the languages that I speak, now I am learning English – the sixth language in my brain. I call English my second language because a language that is not yours is always referred to as a second language. However, learning a second language is challenging but often important. If you haven't learned a second language, think about the time you were talking with someone who stammers. Stammering makes someone to speak less and slow. My English conversation looks exactly like a conversation with someone who stammers. I talk less than I want because the English words do not flow into my head like Swahili's. Sometimes I stop in the middle of a sentence and pretend like I am breathing while I am looking for words to say. The limitation of English doesn't only make my conversation boring but also isolated me from the Native English Speakers. We don't understand each other very well when we are talking. One may talk fast and use all the words and expressions he knows while the other has to stammer for second first before he talks. This turns the conversation very boring.

Look at many second language learners and you will notice something in common in many of them. They are usually quiet and lonely. It is simple to misunderstand their quietness and think that it is a personal's biological behavior. These people are quiet because of the limitations of how to say what they want to say. Sometimes my Native English Speaker Friends try to finish up a sentence that I started just to keep our conversation going. They may start talking and when I have to talk too, I would go like "yeah you know… I mean huh…haaa..." while moving my head up and down and using my hands to sign what I want to say. Then my friends would say; "oh yeah, yes I get you, mmhh. Do you mean…" and they would complete the sentence. Even if they complete the sentence with something I did not intend to say, I can't disagree because I don't know exactly how to say what I wanted them to hear. This is the challenge of learning English because many English speakers talk fast and expect you to respond in English fast too…

Lee Writing Excerpt

The Side of my Father I Never Saw

…Although I do not have a very close relationship with my dad, I look up to him. His name is [redacted]. He is a well spoken, ambitious, hardworking person. He always appears to be superhuman to me because I rarely see him cry or show any signs of fear. Because he seemed so superhuman to me, it was intimidating to ask him about his past. In fact I hardly speak to my dad. I was always curious about his past though. What I was most curious about was the Vietnam War. Always wondering what he was like when he was a soldier, a Hmong soldier more specifically, how becoming a soldier changed his life and what was it like when he was living in Laos. These are just a few of the many things I wanted to know about my dad.

There were only a few things that I knew about the Hmong in Vietnam War and my father. I know that during the Vietnam War, America secretly recruited Hmong villagers to help fight the communists. Because it was called the Vietnam War, many people might think that the communists are just the Vietnamese. But the communist party had a variety of supporters. There were Lao, Hmong, Vietnamese and many other communists. Other than that, I don't know much about the Hmong in Vietnam War. I don't know much about my dad either but I know that he was against communism and he was recruited by the American army. He was also a captain.

Now that I am in college, I feel like I should make a connection with my dad now rather than never because he is getting old. My dad is over seventy years old. If I don't try to connect with my dad now and learn about his past, I don't know when I will.

Instead of staying in Madison for Halloween weekend, getting wild and dressing up as silly characters, I went home to attend my sister's wedding. Home is Wausau, a small, quiet, relaxing town in central Wisconsin. Wausau was the town my dad chose to settle and raise his family in after the Vietnam War. Again, I always wonder about what my dad thinks about life in America compared to Laos and Thailand. I wonder if my father sees Wausau as home as I do, or does he still consider Laos his primary home because that was where he lived before the Vietnam War.

The end of October nears, and the skies are getting dark before seven. It's Sunday night and I have to drive back to Madison soon. I had to rush to complete this interview before it gets too late. But I waited until my dad was done with dinner before interviewing him. While he was eating dinner, I was coming up with interview questions in the basement. As I lay on the brown leather couch, I typed down questions that I have always wanted to ask my dad. After dinner, I asked my sister, [redacted] if she could help me translate my interview questions. She seemed more excited about the interview than I was.

I was scared and nervous to ask my dad if I could interview him for a research essay that I am writing. Luckily, my sister [redacted] helped me by asking my dad if he could spare a few minutes for me to conduct an interview about him. The interview was conducted in the living room with two of my other sisters[redacted]. They too appear to be more excited than I was.

My dad agreed to participate in my interview and sat next to me on the couch. Being seated next to my dad on a couch is a very rare moment. It's a rare moment because we usually are never in the same room together for more than a minute. Whenever I see my dad in the living room watching TV, I would just go to my room or elsewhere. We don't spend much time together. The times that we spend with each other are usually in the garage or the backyard. In the garage, I help my dad fix his cars. In the backyard, I help him with yard work. And of course, I usually don't volunteer to do these tasks. He ordered me to help him with these duties.

I opened up my tablet and asked him the first question I had typed down. I asked my sister to translate all my questions into Hmong for me because my Hmong vocabulary is very weak. Even if I tried to ask my interview questions in Hmong, it would not come out the way I want it to. So the first question I asked was, "What did you do before you became a soldier?" My dad replied in Hmong, "I was attending school, until the Americans came to recruit Hmong soldiers. I was eighteen years old during that time." The Kennedy Administration had the CIA recruit a Hmong army in Laos and told the Hmong that if they fight for the U.S., they will always be protected by America (Lindsay).

Then I asked him if he wanted to become a soldier. My dad said, "We didn't have a choice during that time. If we were not willing to fight, then were considered as criminals by law. Ultimately, I did not want to become a soldier because becoming a soldier means you have to put your life at stake. Your life will always be at risk, and I feared death." Hearing my dad say this surprised me. I had always thought that he found being a soldier was a thrill because that was just about all he talks about when he socializes with other Hmong elders. My dad was actually scared of death? The image of my dad being superhuman began to fade. He was starting to appear more human.

Next I told [redacted] to ask my dad, "How has becoming a soldier changed your life in Laos?" In reply he said, "Life was very different. It was very different than being a villager. Wearing a soldier's uniform turns you into a different man. Life as a soldier was miserable, because there is always that fear of death." Then I asked my dad what was the hardest part of being a soldier. "Killing was the hardest. I was hit many times and had many wounds. I was always scared of dying. Of all the gunfights, there was only one time that I could see the person I was shooting at. When I saw my enemy, I thought in my head that it was either going to be him or me. If I don't shoot, he will shoot me. I began to have sleepless nights after that encounter because I kept on thinking about the man I shot. I was scared that maybe he didn't die and was still suffering from the gunshot. Although he was my enemy, he was still a man, and human. Shooting and killing another person really disturbed me."

My perception of my father slowly started to change as the interview went on. The imaginary picture in my mind of my dad as a huge muscular medieval knight that charges into the frontlines of battle with a battle-axe began to fade as I heard him speak. My dad was not the ruthless soldier that I had imagined. He had feelings. Not only that, but he also sympathizes with the enemy. I thought that my dad was one of those soldiers that just wanted to blow every communist soldier's head off. Instead, my father sees the enemy as a human being just like himself. But due to the circumstances, he had to protect his own life. I wanted to hear more about this human side of my dad.

The next thing I wanted to find out was what he experienced while he was a soldier. My father said, "My role as a captain was of great challenge. There was a time when my team and I had to carry dead bodies by hand to clear out the field. No one wanted to touch the dead bodies. As a captain, I have to be the first one to start grabbing bodies, or else no one else would. I would then order the others to help me carry the dead bodies. Sometimes the corpses will exhale due to all the gas that was building up in the body while you are carrying them. It was horrifying and it gave me the chills whenever I hear the sounds of the corpses exhale right next to my ear."

Hearing my dad talk about these traumatic experiences made me imagine how hard it was for him to lead a group of soldiers during the Vietnam War. As he told me these war horror stories of how they dealt with dead bodies, I pictured what it might have been like. No one probably wanted to touch or look at a dead body. The smell of corpses filling up the air makes you feel nauseous. Since you are the captain, you have to be the first to touch the dead bodies or else no one else would. So you grab the first body you see without looking and breathing. You act

like it's no big deal, but inside you are terrified. And then you would tell the rest of your fellow soldiers to help you carry the bodies because they are heavy. My dad was able to find courage to go through such traumatic events.

Continuing on with the interview, I asked my father when he knew it was time to flee from the communist. My dad said, "It was when a close friend of mine told me that I was on the communist hit-list. After the U.S. lost the Vietnam War, the communist party searched for any Hmong that showed signs of intelligence or danger to the party. They saw that I was a teacher because I ring the bell every morning to signal the beginning of class. When I found out that the communist soldiers are killing many of the Hmong people that live in my area, I knew that it was time to gather my family and flee the country."

My other sister in the living room, [redacted], waited for my dad to finish his answer. I could tell that [redacted] really wanted to add something to what my dad just said. [redacted] was a young teen during the time they fled from Laos to Thailand. She then added, "A Hmong communist came to our village and told the women and children that they had food for everyone. The women and children followed that communist supporter and found out that they were tricked. The women and children were massacred. After that, our houses, gardens, livestock and possessions were all set on fire. That was when we knew it was time to run. It was time to run because all we had left was our lives."

Life seemed like it got worse for my father, sister and the rest of my family after the war. The tone that my sister used to help my dad answer his question was of a serious and very angry voice. [redacted] sounded very angry and upset at the Hmong communist that betrayed the village. Since my dad served as a soldier to fight against the communist, he would be considered an enemy to the country of Laos when it officially became a communist state. My father has been stamped as a soldier for the rest of his life. Wherever he goes, he will be seen as a soldier that aided the U.S. army. The title of being a soldier that supported the U.S. sounds rewarding, but not when you are in a communist country. In America he might be seen as a hero, but to Laos he was an enemy. According to Hmong historian Mai Xiong, after the communist or Pathet Lao gained complete control over Laos in 1975, they broke an 18-point policy which supported peace and neutrality within Laos after the Americans withdrew and started to massacre the Hmong that supported the Americans (Xiong). Because of the ongoing massacre of Hmong people, my dad and the rest of my family had to flee the country of Laos.

Next, my dad told me how it was like to move from country to country. My dad started off talking about Thailand first. "Life in Thailand was difficult. It felt like being reborn because I had to learn a new culture and language. We didn't have anything when we first entered Thailand except for the clothes that we had on. We were refugees. The United Nations was our main source of support because they provided food for us. But the food was very limited and sometimes it runs out so many families often end up starving. Although it was illegal for refugees to work, I had to find some work or else my family would starve. I did a lot of yard work and gardening by myself. Little by little I was able to able to buy my family plates, silverware and cooking utensils. I was able to build a relationship with an old Thai couple that I worked for. They told me that I should not keep on doing these types of jobs because it will eventually kill me."

I got a little teary when I heard my dad say that he alone worked in order to feed the family. There were a number of eight family members during that time. To be able to do hard physical work in the hot, humid sun such as gardening, farming and yard work in order to provide for the family shows how much my dad worried about his loved ones. In addition to that, he knew that it was also illegal and he could face jail time. This showed me that my dad was a very caring person. He was a man that would put his own life at risk to save his loved ones.

Continuing on with my father's answer to how it was like to move into a new country, he spoke about America. He did not have much to say about America, except that it is far much better than living in Laos or Thailand because it felt safe. Also he mentioned about feeling like a new born again because again he had to learn another new culture and language.

The way my dad described himself being reborn was very interesting to me. As a new born, everything is new so the new born has to learn about all the new things are being introduced. My dad still knows how it feels like to be a kid and going through the process of learning about your surroundings. Even after going through all the traumatic events, he still remembers how it feels like to be a kid. I could now picture my dad as a kid when he said that he felt like a new born.

The last question I asked my dad was, how being a former soldier during the Vietnam War has affected his life up to this day. My dad answered, "I get nightmares all the time. Many nights I am sleepless. Sometimes I come to the living room and just sit on the couch for the whole night because I couldn't sleep. Hearing gunfire like sounds scares me."

Now I know why my dad always wakes up in the middle of the night. I had always thought that he was just heading to the bathroom or checking up on us if we are staying up too late. My dad has been traumatized and scarred forever by the inevitable events of the Vietnam War.

After finishing interviewing my father, I was able to understand more of how being a Hmong soldier in the Vietnam War has affected his life. It was a difficult experience for my dad. He was forced to become a soldier that he did not want to be in the first place. Every day, he was worried about not returning home alive. Being a captain meant that he had to lead and encourage others to perform duties that no one would want to do, which was carrying dead bodies. After the Vietnam War he had to leave his home behind because his family and his own life were at risk. My father fled to two very different countries and was able to keep the family together. All of these events have made a huge impact on my dad's life. He finds himself not being able to sleep at night sometimes because of what he went through. Maybe my father is superhuman after all. But he is a superhuman with a heart. I respect my dad now more than ever.