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AUTHOR Smith, Louis M.
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ABSTRACT

This autobiographical paper describes the teaching of an adjunct faculty member at Washington University in Saint Louis, Missouri, and the doctoral and postdoctoral students he taught. The paper discusses the author's study of the area of biography and autobiography; the use of ethnography, history, and biography in qualitative research; the "legitimation process" of qualitative research; students' dissertation projects; and the author's writing projects such as "Nora Barlow and the Darwin Legacy" and an essay on the biographical method for the "Handbook of Qualitative Research." The paper proposes that: (1) intense personal educational experiences lead to deeply held educational beliefs that may be strong enough to influence, if not control, educational practices, which has major implications for teacher education at all levels; (2) lives have interwoven strands that continue over long periods of time, and these strands can be broken into meaningful units such as episodes and projects, by individuals themselves or by outside researchers; (3) educational inquiry, including ethnography and action research, should occur in college and university classes; and (4) settings in which researchers live and work are important, as group norms are sometimes elevated to the status of "natural laws." (Contains approximately 50 references.) (JDD)

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Living Lives, Studying Lives, Writing Lives:

An Educational Potpourri or Pot au Feu?

Louis M. Smith

Department of Education

Washington University

St. Louis, MO 63130

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Presented as an Invited Address to Division K, American Educational Research Association, Atlanta, Georgia, April 14, 1993. As usual my seminar students and colleagues at Washington University and around the metropolitan area have been most helpful in multiple ways. (Revised 4/24/93)

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2

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1. Introduction

Potpourri, according to my well worn Webster Collegiate dictionary, means "a mixture, as of spiced flower petals in a jar," an image that carries more pleasant sensory connotations than another French word that I can't really pronounce, and seldom use, "pot au feu," which, to follow my trusty Webster, means "a dish of broth, meat and vegetables boiled in a pot." It perhaps carries connotations of more substantive fare. Hopefully, we'll join the two in some kind of palatable combination. For an audience of Division K, Teaching and Teacher Education, talking and thinking about "living lives, studying lives, and writing lives" should carry both fascination and seriousness. That I have set as my task of today.

My use of the phrase "Living lives" will refer mostly to the teaching I do and the students I teach. The phrase also will carry some autobiographical emphasis, that is, each of us as teacher at a certain point in our lives. "Studying lives" carries multiple meanings - my trying to understand and help my students and their attempts to understand and change their classrooms, their teaching, and their students. Further, it includes our attempts to understand the lives of others and of the people who write about other people. "Writing lives" refers to our attempts to turn some of our understandings into interesting and informative prose. If all that seems too wordy and complicated, focus on the issue of "people," the individuals who wander in and out of educational settings. In my more perverse moments, I believe that is what psychologists and educators, and even educational psychologists, should be focusing upon.

In recent years, most of my teaching has had several unusual dimensions. Several years ago I gave up my undergraduate ed psych teaching and went on half time status. Mostly that was a concession to age - waning energies and abilities, a remaining large self generated intellectual agenda, and a desire to focus. That was a very difficult decision, one with many complications. The decision was made in the context of a

supportive chair and dean. Later, we might talk more about that decision and its implications and ramifications. Living lives has its complications.

My recent teaching has been mostly with Ph.D. and post doctoral students within and across departments, colleges, and universities in the metropolitan St. Louis educational community. That is a very special group of lives in which I have been involved. Most of studies carried out by this group have involved qualitative methods - ethnography, history, and biography. Some of these are more experience near, personal and practical, that is, variants of action research. Some are more experience distant, studies of other teachers and their settings, with more general conceptualizations and interpretations. The settings in which I teach are threefold: a course I call "The Classroom as a Pedagogical System," a seminar that carries the title, "Qualitative Research: Ethnography, History and Biography" and a one on one "Independent Study." I try to sequence these, but exceptions arise.

And most of my own inquiry life: studying, reading, and writing in the last few years has been in the area of biography and autobiography. Partly this started with a study of the life histories of a group of educational innovators in the Kensington School and the Milford School District. That part of our follow-up study we called Educational Innovators: Then and Now (Smith et al., 1986). That led to my attempt to do a "real" biography. A woman named Nora Barlow entered my life in the guise of "the Darwin legacy." An agenda of larger proportion than I imagined arose. Among other activities, I spent a semester sabbatical living and working in Cambridge,England at the University Library. The experience was so vital and significant that I decided to do a short 25 to 40 page essay summarizing it. The essay grew to be a 270 page monograph, Doing Ethnographic Biography: A Reflective Practitioner At Work During a Spring in Cambridge (Smith, 1992). That byway, an autobiographical kind of life writing, consumed almost two years. Another "opportunity," and advisedly I put opportunity in quotes, arose in writing a chapter on "Biographical Method" for the

Denzin and Lincoln Handbook of Qualitative Research. That essay opened a number of further avenues and major sets of literature, some of which I knew reasonably well and some totally new. These decisions and activities have been partly by design and partly by serendipity, a kind of happenstance. But what started as happenstance has progressed into rationalization and rationale. The design, as I state it now, is building a perspective and position in life writing. This building a personal perspective and position, is a major piece of grounded theory for anyone moving into a new, alternative, or non traditional mode of inquiry. I believe it is an important dimension of my current efforts. These activities have made for a life of great joy, some anxiety, and considerable hard work. All this was occurring as I moved into and through what Levinson (1978) has called "the transition into older adulthood," a label that belies the problems.

These experiences have made me more than a bit of a believer in the importance of educational concepts such as project methods, transformative learning, reflective practice, collegiality, major life problems, and the norms and mores of professional work settings and contexts. For better or worse, a conjecture here is that these intense personal educational experiences lead to deeply held educational beliefs, beliefs strong enough to influence if not control educational practices. If that series of conjectures is even partially true, it has major implications for teacher education - at all levels.

2. Living Lives

Telling stories of one's teaching, as I want to do in this section on "living lives," carries all the problems and possibilities of autobiography. At its worst, to use Gusdorf's (1980) pithy phrasing, autobiography engages one in "posthumous propaganda for posterity" (p. 36). So, beware! At its best, as some of the feminist and minority writers stress, autobiography is an act of liberation, the creation of "a more inclusive, more fully human conception of social reality" (Personal Narratives

Group, 1989, p. 3). One of my major conjectures is that "teacher research" or "action research" to use two of the more widely used labels is "really" an exercise in autobiography. Think on that for a moment! With those contextual disclaimers let me tell you a bit about some of my recent teaching experience.

2.1 The Students

In an interesting way, my students are mostly self selected, and they come for a variety of reasons. They cluster relatively easily along several dimensions and categories. By level of training they are mostly from three groups: postdoctoral, recently completed Ph.D.s (in the last couple of years), and those well into their Ph.D. programs. They also cluster in terms of their backgrounds, current professional positions, and their research topics. These aspects seem very significant in the educational perspective, point of view, or personal theory, I am trying to develop.

The Post Docs (Edwards, Madsen, Neumann, Otto, Powell, B.Taylor, and Zeni) have degrees in medicine, instructional psychology, clinical psychology, and various specialities in education. Some have strong quantitative training and want to expand their repertory into qualitative methods. Others want to convert prior dissertations into books. The recent PhD's (Beyer, Garner, Lee, Light, Pike, Uljee, and Wolfmeyer) all took their degrees at Washington University or University of Missouri, St.Louis. With some I served as chair and with others I was "just" another committee member. But they all did studies with some variant of qualitative methods so I became a major member of most of the committees. Among other things, being a central committee member raised the amount of work involved well beyond my initial planning, particularly when the students ran into some very intriguing methodological and substantive problems. The active, well on their way, students are a half dozen in number (Fisher, Franzen, Mecham, Osburg, Riesmeyer, A. Taylor, Van Den Berg, and Walker).

Most of these individuals have been active in a variety of educational organizations and many have been on the AERA program in the last few years or are presenting at the meeting this year. It is a busy, active group. Other simple and tentative generalizations or patterns appear: 1)the substantive topics are very diverse; 2) many are studying their own professional situations and practices; 3) they come from, go to, or return to varied settings from the elementary schools to colleges, universities, and professional schools; 4) continuing inquiry is supported or demanded in quite varying amounts; 5) our experiences together, while I believe are important to them and to me, are just one small piece in their larger, busier professional lives, for instance, many are place bound and will not be able to leave the St. Louis community when their degrees are finished; 6) in some settings qualitative research remains a non valued mode of inquiry which means we face some harrowing experiences together, and 7) this builds some strong emotional ties among us; 8) I think my comments are beginning to take the form of an old fashioned causal theory - Cartwright and Zander (1953) might even recognize it.

In some fundamental sense, I am "just" another student and colleague in the group - a little older, more experienced, and with responsibilities for shaping and administering the agenda, but just as eager about my projects as anyone else. I present the projects for discussion and criticism. As I will indicate I get plenty of both. For instance, in paraphrased form: "as an English teacher, I kept wanting to make your sentence fragments into full sentences," (I like to use fragments for effect, damn those English teachers, but they are usually right), "chapter five is terrible" (it was), "you can't be serious that a classroom can be an analogue to a Skinner box" (I was and still am, sort of). On and on it goes. The give and take is vigorous, helpful, genial, and ofttimes hilarious. No one sharpshoots. Everyone gets a turn "to be helped."

2.2 Settings

When one draws students from multiple departments and from multiple institutions, one quickly comes to appreciate the importance of "settings" in the ways lives are lived. And reading a little Roger Barker (1963), George Homans (1950), and Cartwright and Zander (1953), to mention only a few of my older favorites, helps one to "understand" and to "plot strategy and tactics" toward survival or enhanced quality of life in those settings. Although I might raise issues about St. Louis University, Midwest University, Principia College, Fontbonne College, Webster University, Southern University, and the University of Louisville, from which students (as faculty members or Ph.D. students) have come, joined, or returned to, I will focus on my own University and the University of Missouri, St. Louis in which the majority of my recent students are enrolled as Ph.D. students. And even here I will only make a point or two.

Being invited and deciding to join the faculty of the Department of Education at Washington University in the Fall of 1955 clearly ranks among the two or three major and best decisions of my professional life. From my perspective WU is a major research university, quite traditional in many respects, "medieval" in my more angry moments, with strong traditions of academic freedom, light teaching loads, and excellent students. Initiating a creative program of research and the writing of articles, monographs, and books about those experiences are norms of the highest salience and priority. If one doesn't like to do those things, Wash U. is not the place to be. For almost four decades, the Department of Education has been a place with vigorous students and colleagues - idealistic, intelligent, well trained in social science and the humanities, and with unbounded need achievement, pursuing a vision, probably best and most generally stated in Robert Schaefer's (1967) little book, The School as a Center of Inquiry. Within this setting, several of us have been able to establish a "qualitative niche." Over the years, case study inquiry across ethnography, history,

biography and action research has come to have a legitimate place. We literally expanded the norms of what is "legitimate." That process deserves a story of its own.

At the University of Missouri, St. Louis, where a number of my students live, the "legitimation process" of qualitative research is both more recent and more stormy. And, for better or worse, I have had a small and interesting role in that recent history. A number of years ago, a student who had taken a course in field methods with me finished her dissertation, a study of a school principal "turning around" a difficult school. She had trouble in her final orals, although she passed. The study was perceived by some of the faculty as not "real research." That event started a series of conversations that led to a meeting of the Dean of the Graduate School, the Dean of the School of Education and a Professor of Educational Administration who chaired the dissertation of the "turn around school principal" and who had encouraged the student to take work with me. I was the fourth member of the group. The discussion was amicable and focused on a concern with the quality of research by Ph.D. students and the prevention of any future "end of the road" catastrophes. One of the major suggestions was that I become an Adjunct Professor of the UMSL education faculty, with the privilege and possibility of formally sitting on, but not chairing, Ph.D. commiitees. I was pleased with that result.

With the ebb and flow of Deans and faculty members, I have been able to argue with some success from a more equal position. And arguments we have had. The array of meetings has been one of the most vivid experiences in "the good, the true, and the beautiful" being group norms, cultural artifacts, ways of living of a community. And we, some of the faculty and Ph.D. students were trying to change those norms. In effect, I was part of a tour, if not battlefield, of Bennis, Benne, and Chin's (1969) The Planning of Change and Cartwright and Zander's (1953) Group Dynamics, with a bit of a reinterpretation via symbolic interactionism and critical theory. It was pretty heady stuff: we had frequent and long meetings, really more than I had anticipated. We

had fascinating methodological and substantive problems. One student was threatened with a law suit which brought central office personnel into the discussions as well as the university lawyers. One outcome was the judgment that the university and its lawyers defended its faculty but not the Ph.D. students. With timidity I raised my hand and a question, "How about adjunct faculty members?" The lawyers didn't know but would check. Later I found that I came in under a "good faith" clause. Fortunately that was never put to test.

On another occasion, a stormy faculty committee meeting with a high ranking administrator resulted in perceived insults, "You don't have faith in your faculty," threatened walk outs, and my attempt at humor, "I have been insulted by better administrators than this one," which was received with the good intentions I had in mind and which broke the tension of the moment. The student's work was met with eventual success in the Ph.D. program. Some of her work has been presented at national meetings, and articles and a book are underway.

At a simple bureaucratic level we finished four Ph.D. students in a period of fifteen months, a kind of record for the School of Education, I believe. At a more complex level, from my perspective, the dissertations were on important intellectual problems and involved keen interpretations. Some parts are on their way to publication and others are part of a continuing program of action research on teaching. My original intent was only partly trying or helping change the norms of a university, rather it was mostly trying to protect students whom I perceived to be doing good work. But "good work," whether teaching or research, is a normative issue. I obtained another perspective on school innovation and reform, a substantive issue in which I have been long interested.

Each individual and his or her institution presents a different story. The small liberal arts colleges are very different from the medical schools that two of my students and colleagues have been parts of. Figuring out what to do, in these "situations of

practice" characterized by value conflicts, uniqueness, and ambiguity has pushed me more and more toward the conception of "reflective practitioner," raised in detail by Donald Schon (1983, 1987) in his provocative books. Technical rationality seems of limited help. Yet there are ways of talking and thinking about the issues. "Settings" have to be an important part of that theorizing.

2.3 A Lesson or Two

When one is a teacher, part of "living lives" comes down to "lessons" one teaches. Over the last few years, which is the time that most of this essay reflects, any one of a number of lessons might be selected - some that went well or badly by my personal evaluation or chosen for other reasons. One evening stands out as a vivid illustration of some of the complexities and possibilities in living, studying, and writing lives. The story of the evening goes this way.

Kate was pleased. I had brought a couple of bottles of inexpensive Chardonnay, apple juice, and cranberry juice for the celebration. Excitedly, she had called me over the week-end indicating that she had received a contract for her book, Educational Reform at the State Level.

The contract was a major way-station in a story that had started a couple of years ago. At that time she had had a paper accepted for AERA on the problems of implementing new educational legislation at the state level. The reviewers liked the ideas but had some reservations about the methodology. Through a chain of acquaintances she had gotten my name and called me. As we talked it seemed that the kind of help she needed was beyond a simple one or two shot conversation and I raised the ploy, not unusual for me, that she might find it profitable to sit in on my seminar, "Qualitative Research: Ethnography, History and Biography," and work on her paper in that context. My argument was simple: make the methodological issues the focus of "your semester's project," read some of the classical materials such as Glaser and

Strauss (1967) and Miles and Huberman (1983), have a chance to present to the group for critical reactions, and participate in the discussions with others worrying along other qualitative research problems. She did. The paper, including the methodological innovations, was well received.

We started discussions regarding a possible book. My role in the book production was mostly guilt, for I had run into snags with several Ph.D. dissertations, and I was not able to do as much reading and critiquing of the manuscript along the way that I had hoped, planned, and promised. Open ended agendas create problems for me as teacher and colleague. She finished the book, sent if off, and waited for what she thought was an interminable time before hearing. And this last week-end she did hear, and now we were celebrating. Kate had returned to the seminar, as did several other post doctoral students, because she had a new project, and she wanted a setting for developing the substantive and methodological ideas. One of the generalizations implicit in her story, and similar in a number of other stories, is that a number of educators working in the public schools and small colleges don't have a group of colleagues to talk to about inquiry issues. The informal grapevine brings them to my seminar and each other, and sets the occasion for exciting teaching and learning.

But that was only the beginning of the evening. Carl reported that he had met with his committee at Southern University, and they had approved his Ph.D. proposal. He indicated that the differences between the early draft and the later draft had come about partly from the discussion we had had a month ago on his work and the kind of reading we had underway. He was pleased and thankful. I don't have all the pre and post documents, but in the latter a long autobiographical section carried more than a trace of Doing Ethnographic Biography, which we had read and talked about in class. I was pleased to find that he saw the relevance of the ideas and adapted them in his work.

Then Rosalie spoke up. She had run into difficulties, really a continuation of difficulties. We had planned for her project, "How Children Construct Knowledge," to be up for discussion tonight, but I had scheduled it to follow a bit more commentary on the first chapters of Schon (1983 and 1987) and the first chapters of Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Miles and Huberman (1984). We were gradually moving toward building rationales for the myriad of qualitative projects underway among class members. I raised the dilemma with the group, talked briefly about the growing reasons for taking up her project immediately, and then decided to move directly to Rosalie's work. I am not sure why, but over the years, the particular seems to win out over the general, and the struggling student seems to get priority over the published expert. At a minimum those dilemmas remain productive tensions throughout the semester. For me they remain important but only partially analyzed theoretical issues.

Her story had more "morals" than I can present quickly and easily. The document we were considering was a letter she had written to her adviser about what she wanted to do. The first moral: A letter might be seen as a high risk way of presenting a formal proposal. But the letter had grown out of a prior telephone conversation between them. Later another student commented on some of her own problems with an "informal essay" that had been turned down by her adviser. I didn't react quickly enough to get a further moral on the table, "Once something is in print, informally or formally, it leads a life of its own. Look out!" As Rosalie's dissertation problem was evolving, it was moving from being a more traditional educational psychological study into more of an action research project. Being several hundred miles away from the University and having a full time teaching position, a third grade self-contained class in a metropolitan elementary school, introduces considerable constraint on Ph.D. work. Those are morals two and three. In addition Rosalie was due to take her Ph.D. exams, written and oral, this Spring. That's enough to make any adviser cautious about her beginning a dissertation with all of the design and data

collection issues. But her curriculum and teaching project was going to happen now, this semester, in her third grade class. "Now or not at all" seemed implicit in the discussion.

Briefly, she was working on a very general problem of how to shift her classroom from a more traditional form to a more teacher facilitative class. She had begun on the intellectual underpinnings of her thinking and teaching action this last semester. Now she wanted to turn to the central issue: "How do third grade children construct knowledge?" She is going to carry out a multidimensional unit in social studies. Children will be involved in four person groups, each studying a different ethnic group - Italian, African-American, Jewish, etc.- and the groups' contributions to American society. A big technology dimension, and help from two district personnel with camcorders, computers, video tapes, etc, will be involved. It is a complicated effort. The data collection demands are everywhere.

One of the most vigorous parts of the discussion arose on the degree of "teacher instigation," that is, whose knowledge, the teacher's or the children's, was getting constructed under what kinds of constraints. The illustration that carried much of the point concerned who determined the fate of the classroom tape recorders. For instance, could one tape recorder be free for pupil usage with only the general requirement - "If your group has something important under discussion, record it as you see fit." In a sense our "collegial critics" seemed to be arguing that the children then would be responsible not only for constructing their own knowledge but also deciding what if any of it is suitable for keeping as a record, and then what would be done with it later. Some of our more fun loving if not more imaginative seminar members, "the left wing subgroup," soon were running with that as central to her "real" problem, students constructing knowledge, and maybe reshaping totally her problem and approach to it. From my point of view the discussion had a real "zing" to

it - on target, full of good ideas, good humor, and genuinely trying to be helpful. As teacher I listened, occasionally made a point or two, and helped keep the flow flowing.

In the midst of Rosalie's research work, her adviser is due to leave the University this summer for another position several hundred or so miles away. It is a major career move for him. He announced his plans late last summer. He is worried about Rosalie and how she will finish her program. Further, Rosalie has recently become engaged, is due to marry this summer, and to then move to Kansas City, away from the District where she is doing her research. In the Fall she is to begin a four-fifth's time job with a computer company as a consultant and sales person helping teachers introduce technology into the schools. Is the summary moral in all that: Ph.D. students present problems of Gordian knot complexity? Or is it but a simple illustration of Schon's point about "situations of practice" containing elements of complexity, ambiguity, uniqueness, and value conflict? And if that be true, is this an instance when a teacher's "technical rationality" fails and s/he needs a concept of the order of "reflective practitioner" to handle the way s/he thinks of the issues? I believe so. The question remains for me as her "teacher," and I put that in quotes, "How am I to teach her qualitative methods?" Further, "How do I think about the problems?" And finally, "What do I do?"

The discussion of Rosalie's project was lively, sharp, yet sympathetic. Point by point each of us took a turn, and almost everyone participated at some time, and indicated how "we would do her study in improved fashion." She defended well, but interestingly to me as I sat and listened from time to time, was the power of the interchange on items such as "You can't do that with 3rd graders." Several of the group who had taught every grade from kindergarten to university countered with "Oh, yes you can" and reported tactics and strategies from their experience. What do we make of that small episode? We need an extra hour here!

In the course of the discussion at least three major themes arose as viable theoretical alternatives toward which she could strive. One of the most abstract and general was Vygotsky's (about whom I personally know too little) and his stand on how students construct knowledge. For me, the epigrammatic phrasing, and not a new one in the general case, that ran through my head was "When I, Rosalie, am finished what will I know about knowledge construction that Vygotsky didn't know? And along the way, what does he know that I don't know that will help me make better sense out of what I am doing and thinking? " I believe that is an important interdependent set of questions. Further I believe that that is a strong way to approach what is generally termed a review of the literature.

Silently, then, to myself, I wondered, "Is Rosalie good enough to take on such a task?" Now, as I write up my notes and recollections the interpretive thoughts continue and mix with the data per se. I'm not sure, but I think so. If she asks me, my current reaction will be - "It's worth a shot." In my experience, the reading and "thinking time" demands are extremely high. In my perception, her world is rich and full of multiple other personal and professional demands and possibilities at this time. And then I ask myself, would it make any difference if she were a male on a more "traditional" career line? I hope not. Then my thoughts drift back to the Kensington School and our studies of the careers of the talented male and female teachers there (Smith and Keith, 1971, and Smith et al., 1986, 1987, 1988). Gender issues don't go away in an imperfect society.

If I have a general "principle teaching" for all this, it's to talk about it, as frankly as possible, raise all the issues in their full perplexity and complexity, take arguments and counter arguments, and play out multiple scenarios in multiple contexts, until one exhausts one's time and intellect. Then leave the decision to the student. And then try to support her or him as best as possible in implementing that decision. Much of this seems rooted in Hare's (1952, p. 69) decision of principle, an ethical statement I

have found important over the years. Now I recall an earlier one-on-one discussion I had with Rosalie in which I think I tried to do that when I found out about her upcoming marriage and her move to Kansas City. We even talked of Virginia Woolf (1929), rooms of one's own and five hundred pounds, and Tillie Olsen (1976 and 1983) and children with their immediate unrelenting demands and Olsen's thoughts while standing ironing.

Late in the evening, Helen who was raised in a more standard paradigm within psychology commented that she "felt she was in a religious group," one full of "true believers." She had serious concerns about Rosalie reporting on one small group of children. She had further concerns about Rosalie seeing and reporting what she wanted to see - implicitly her project was full of, if not all, biases. "What can you know from that?" seemed to be her concern. Fair comments! And then we were in the thick of it again, but in a slightly different manner and substance. We refought many old battles.

One student said all research had such biases, only mostly the quantitative types hid them or left them implicit. Another student raised Freud and Piaget and the similarities of such clinical case study efforts. I jumped in with Rosalie as the next Piaget who with her 23 kids was not so different from Piaget with his own several children and with his small group of children playing marbles. Intellectual and moral development would never be the same after his "The child's conception of..." the physical world, causality, morality, and so on. With his small groups of children he rewrote child psychology for several generations of scholarly work and became the most influential child psychologist of the 20th Century. Hardly had I got that on the table than one of the more feminist of the group charged and made several interrelated points: the possible denigration of young children and the women who work with them, the empowering of individual teachers in their daily lives, irrespective of whether they were influential in the larger sense of Piaget, and so on. Fair points once again!

And then we re-raised and argued about the earlier discussion of taping the kids conversations. If you trusted Rosalie at that point and if the recorder was working properly, then the record could be agreed upon. From there, the context of the taping, the kinds of selection involved, and the multiple kinds of interpretations became isolatable problems to be contended with. We barely started on that. Later in a side conversation, Helen and I talked about her problems in convincing people at her school to try things especially if she didn't have the "harder" research data for support. In one sense I agreed and in another sense I raised John Elliott's (1991) Action Research for Educational Change wherein he argues that traditional school change people, and their theories and practices, may have it all wrong. The conversations and comments kept diverging.

To me, I thought we had an object lesson illustrating at the graduate level "students constructing their own knowledge" or "students engaged in meaning making." We did not pursue the issues of what is "knowledge" and what is "meaning making." Nor their similarities and differences?

But these later issues arose after the coffee break. We returned to take up Glaser and Strauss (rather than Miles and Huberman and rather than Schon). I was eager to run the general case against the individual one. I had distributed the Glaser and Strauss (1965) article from the American Behavioral Scientist which I thought was clearer than the book in offering an introduction. I linked into this with a brief quote on analysis of qualitative data from a new book by Lancey (1993) that I had just looked at, as I was clearing my desk over the week end. This quote on our concept "skimming the cream" integrated with several of the major points, the variation in openness and tightness of design - problem definition, instruments, and sampling - and the variations in analysis procedures that had been raised earlier.

My classroom story is already too long, and I haven't told you one of the introductory tidbits, a Calvin and Hobbes cartoon strip that my brother had cut out for

me, that I had used to start the hour. It had a thrust at the language - theory? - he thinks I spend too much time with. He feels it makes my prose unreadable to the lay person. The final panel of the Calvin and Hobbes cartoon has Calvin well on the road to becoming an academic with a book report titled "The Dynamics of Interbeing and Monological Imperatives in Dick and Jane: A Study in Psychic Transrelational Gender Modes." How's that for a theoretical perspective? We started with that, but let me finish with it. From my point of view we had had quite an evening.

But this story of an evening had a sequel, for teaching never really ends. I had typed a half dozen pages of this mix of "summary observation and interpretations" or "memo," to use two of our labels of records of field data. I asked each of the students to react in a paragraph or page to what I had written and to present corrections, elaborations, or alternative views. Most did. Most thought I had gotten the events reasonably accurately, and several had additions to the public events. In addition several related more personal and often emotional reactions that had not surfaced in the meeting per se. Some had other afterthoughts. All this expanded the meaning of the lesson for me. (I won't tell you which of us wrote a typed single spaced half dozen page reaction, nor the one who wrote hers at 30,000 feet on her way to a Florida spring break and Faxed a copy home to me. Several are in the audience now and we might get their reactions on any or all of this during the discussion.)

A final generalization: I find this kind of teaching demanding, fascinating, and intellectually provocative. For me, it is a way of "living a life" that creates pervasive satisfactions. I believe that inquiry into teaching and teacher education has to move to concepts, issues and dilemmas of the order of those we found and constructed here, if teacher education is to be true to the demands and possibilities of the field.

3. Studying and Writing Lives

As should be apparent already, "living lives" interacts in strange ways with "studying and writing lives." Now I want to shift focus a bit, for I had been studying and writing lives long before most of these teaching experiences I have been reporting on occurred. At times it seems as though whatever creativity I have grows out of obsession. And heaven help us if that conjecture even begins to approach a principle or law.

3.1 Earlier Interests in Studying Lives

Let me illustrate aspects of the obsession, if it be that. My interest in biography, largely represented in recent years in doing the book Nora Barlow and the Darwin Legacy, grew partly out of my earlier work with the life histories of the Kensington School and Milford School District teachers and administrators (Smith, et al., 1986).

My pursuit of Nora Barlow and her activities and writings in the Charles Darwin papers has run in many directions over almost a half dozen years. It precipitated interests in the history of science. Part of gaining my footing here brought George Sarton, the European polymath and later Harvard historian of science into view. He founded the journal Isis the same year his daughter May was born. He referred to them as his two children. Concurrently, interests in Vera Brittain, whose life overlapped many of the years of Nora Barlow's life and the events in England before, during, and after World War I, brought not only her documentary Testament books but also the Forwards by Carolyn Heilbrun. This led me to Heilbrun's (1988) powerful Writing a Woman's Life. May Sarton, the poet and author, daughter of George Sarton, appears throughout that book.

Also concurrently, I was writing an essay on "Biographical Method" for the new Handbook of Qualitative Research. Doing that chapter became a major excursion -

important and time consuming - but a major addition to the perspective and position I was constructing. The section on feminist biography and autobiography called for a longer look at May Sarton, who has written several relevant autobiographical books, e.g. I knew a Phoenix, Sketches Toward an Autobiography. In those sketches, I found that she spent time in England, stayed at the home of Julian Huxley, a friend and correspondent of Nora Barlow's. Also the young May Sarton visited with Virginia Woolf, who a few years earlier had rejected for Nonesuch Press a manuscript of Nora Barlow's. I seemed to be learning about the English intellectual aristocracy (Annan, 1955), but also some of its connections with American intellectual life.

But my obsession and its activities were not finished. Other strands were coming together. Concurrently, I had agreed to do a "profile" of B.F. Skinner for UNESCO's Prospects. Now as I read for that, I am entranced with Skinner's three volume Autobiography (Skinner, 1977, 1979, 1983), and the interesting problem of the consummate behaviorist doing an autobiography. For to some, an autobiography is the ultimate expression of the "inner life." That dilemma would seem to have implications for all the interrelated pieces I am about. About forty pages into Volume 2 of the autobiography, references appear to A.N. Whitehead and L.J. Henderson, two of the senior fellows of the Society of Fellows at Harvard in the 1930's, about which George Homans (1950) had written extensively, and which I (1991) noted in a retrospective review of his book The Human Group. Shortly after the Henderson anecdotes, Skinner recounts taking work in the history of science with George Sarton and writing "poetry" about Sarton's daughter May. He reports one verse:

Between the Is (is)

And the May be

Falls the shadow of Unsartonty

It may not be good poetry, although I won't make that judgment, but it does strike me as quite clever.

3.2 An Evolving Perspective on Writing Lives

My point of view on writing lives continued to evolve. Several generalizations, almost as foreshadowed problems, come to mind as I think about writing lives. The more personal thought is that everything takes longer now than it used to. And that is a big problem - especially when one has an open ended agenda. A more impersonal observation comes from the first sentence in Collins' book, Sartre as Biographer. It reads: "Biography is a fallen genre." (1980, p. 1). It suggests that I was moving into another contentious field. I should have read that a half dozen years ago before I moved from teacher life histories to doing "a real biography." Fallen genre or not, I was into life writing with a vengeance. A third generalization, or perhaps better, a way of working lies in my inveterate reading of prefaces, forewords, epilogs and related attempts by an author or his or her friends to locate the book in some personal, social, intellectual, or historical context. Beyond the human interest dimension, I believe such reading is important for anyone doing life writing.

And that brings me back to B. F. Skinner. I should have known the devastating implications of those items when I agreed to write the "profile" of him for Prospects, a UNESCO journal. But I was flattered when I received a letter from a Mr. Morsy in Paris indicating that he had heard that I was a Skinnerian expert and wanted me to do the profile. I wrote indicating I thought he had the wrong Smith. Though I had spent considerable time in earlier years thinking about Skinner's ideas - Bryce Hudgins and I (1964) had done a Skinner oriented Educational Psychology three decades ago, Pat Carpenter and I (1977) had evaluated a token economy program at CEMREL, Inc., and over the last decade, Marilyn Cohn, Vivian Gellman and I had always done a lesson or two on Skinner in our team taught educational psychology, an expert I was not. After an exchange of letters I agreed to do the task. In a sense, I would continue to round out the perspective and position I was staking in the general

area of life writing. Rationale or rationalization, that has become an important item in my recent decision making regarding professional activities.

The Skinnerian experience has been full of stories. The one I want to tell here concerns what seems to me to be a major anomaly. Skinner, the ultimate objectivist and behaviorist, wrote an autobiography, an activity which is usually considered the domain of the ultimate subjectivist. It is a big autobiography, three volumes, about three hundred pages per volume, about a thousand pages overall. Also he wrote a shorter autobiographical essay for Boring's History of Psychology in Autobiography. At the end of Volume III of the autobiography, Skinner wrote a brief "Epilogue." The scene I am painting is this: Smith is observing, note taking, and thinking about Skinner as Skinner produces his many books, but also as he writes his life on two different occasions, and as he writes about how he writes his life. In Leon Edel's (1979, 1984) terms, I am after "the figure under the carpet," the life myth, of someone who isn't supposed to have such a figure or myth. As I said, it seems an interesting anomaly or puzzlement.

One of the surprises I found in first approaching the three volume autobiography is that Skinner has no forwards or prefaces to the volumes. The books just begin. That engendered some initial speculation and conjectures on my part. But I read a little and searched a little, especially at the beginnings and the endings, observing how he got in and out of each volume. At the end of Volume III, I found his epilogue, fifteen pages, which I immediately devoured.

In the first paragraph of the epilogue Skinner makes a series of claims as to the nature of his autobiography.

> I have tried to report my life as it was lived. That does not mean as I now remember it. I have seen how badly memory fades when, after recalling some episode, I have come upon contemporary evidence. Fortunately I have been able to turn from reminiscences to more durable

> things. In writing Particulars of My Life [Vol. I] I had my mother's scrapbooks, my letters home, a diary, my college themes, my stories and notes, and a few publications; in The Shaping of a Behaviorist [Vol. II] I had my letters, particularly those to Fred Keller, my notes, and my papers and books; in A Matter of Consequences [Vol. III] I have had a much wider correspondence, many more clippings, my publications, and a mass of notes. My autobiography is, in a special sense, a documentary. (1983, p. 398)

Fair enough. He is trying to approach the task as a behaviorist reporting from traces of behavior left behind in a rich life. For me as the profile writer, who is also a seeker of patterns, I have a standard question, "What do I make of all this?," this verbal documentary "film" running along. At points, major interruptions in the form of books and articles by Skinner appear and are published elsewhere. Further his work excites or incites critiques by major figures in philosophy, the humanities, and the social sciences - Michael Scriven (1956), Joseph Wood Krutch (1953) and Noam Chomsky (1969). If you are a believer in "triangulation" as Denzin terms it or "multi-method, multi-trait" approaches to valid inferences about people, as Campbell and Fiske (1959) suggest, then you have found your "attic full of data." Biographical work can commence.

The topic sentences in the next half dozen paragraphs of the epilogue give further hints to the figure under the carpet. Each might be followed by a "Why?"

1) "I have tried to recount my life as it was lived in other ways. I have seldom mentioned later significances" (p. 398).

2) "There are several reasons why I have not often reported my feelings" (p. 398).

3) "I also do not think feelings are important" (p. 399).

4) "Rather than tell my readers how I felt, I have left them to respond as I myself may have responded" (p. 399).

5) I have also tried not to select episodes which show me as I now want my readers to see me. I have reported my failures as well as my successes" (p. 399).

6) "I am sometimes asked, 'Do you think of yourself as you think of the organisms you study?' The answer is yes" (p. 400).

Skinner illustrates each of the statements and adds a few more. It is a powerful agenda, and one that most autobiographers would hesitate to claim as theirs. To some, stripping the human organism of feelings leaves one with something less than a "human being." But the Skinner profile story continues, and this brief couple of paragraphs is only an illustration of the intellectual possibilities open to life writers of several sorts. It is an inviting world.

4. Some Summary and Concluding Thoughts

I have gone on too long. For those of you who are still with me, several interpretations toward a conclusion seem in order.

Mostly I have related simple stories, moments from my teaching, inquiry and writing toward a potpourri, hopefully a sensually stimulating set of experiences and preliminary set of images. Yet lurking within the stories I hope something of a sturdier substance, toward a pot au feu, also exists. I don't want to give away either. Perhaps stories with a moral is closer to my personal goal.

But I didn't plan this address with these specific intentions and illustrations in mind. Initially I planned to tell you more about the process and product of Nora Barlow and the Darwin Legacy, a large part of my life. That receded in the background for the moment as other activities pressed, and the writing process took over. Further, I had planned on telling you more about the problems, dilemmas, and frustrations and joys of a group of students who have finished their Ph.D.'s in recent

years, but the press of a new cohort arose as more salient. Finally, teaching my current seminar has been so stimulating, energizing, and provocative of reflection, that I found myself making notes, turning them back to the group, and iterating through again and again. My own writing obligations were so varied this year that I kept bringing preliminary drafts for discussion, more than usual. At times biography and autobiography were front and center; at other times they seemed to seep into the cracks and crevices of other topics.

Theoretically a number of concepts toward a grounded theory of lives, inquiry into lives, and life writing seem relevant for making sense of the experiences I am reporting. These include notions that lives have interwoven strands that continue over long periods of time and that these strands can be broken into meaningful units such as episodes and projects, by individuals themselves or by outside researchers. Chronological time lines are very helpful for an initial kind of order, an idea that I should have learned well in the fifth and sixth grades, but didn't. On occasion I feel that some other educationists didn't learn that lesson either.

I am also making an argument that educational inquiry, including ethnography and action research, should occur in our classes in the colleges and the universities. In a sense I am only advocating what some of us have been urging on elementary and secondary teachers for years. Lessons, project methods, and transformative learning can occur at this tertiary level also. Into this discussion I had hoped to make a more intensive analysis of these concepts. For many years, I have been enamored with Kilpatrick's (1918) short statement The Project Method, and with his student Ellsworth Collings' (1923), An Experiment with a Project Curriculum. I wanted to note the similarities and differences between then and now, between elementary school and graduate school, rural Missouri and metropolitan Missouri, and their more developed conceptualization and theory and my more latent perspective.

As I argued earlier, as action researchers we can be victims of what Gusdorf (1980) said about autobiography, it's an essay in "providing a sort of posthumous propaganda for posterity" (p. 36). But plenty of witnesses exist to provide a continuing triangulation of multiple perspectives. Those of us interested in action research can see the usual hoped for outcome of professional development as a sub unit or theme of the larger conceptions of personality change, life history, or biography. For me, action research is autobiography.

My students are unusual. None are required to be there, and that is a major too little analyzed variable in teaching and learning. Most have a major idea, issue, or problem, often a Ph.D. dissertation project, they bring and need help with. For some reason, I am reminded of the comment that Skinner keeps his experimental animals at 85 per cent ad lib weight. I always thought that that was more important than lots of other things happening in the Skinner box. Uniformly my students are able, experienced educators. Many are looking for alternative ways of educating and studying educational processes. But there are ways around, strategies and tactics, for teaching other groups of students. I wish I had had time to tell you about a required educational psychology course for undergrads and MAT preservice students that Marilyn Cohn, Vivian Gellman, and I team taught for ten years (Smith, Cohn, and Gellman, 1987). I believe that some of my present interpretations apply more broadly.

Throughout this presentation I have made another simple but important point - the settings in which we live and work are important. Group norms are sometimes and by some individuals elevated to the status of "natural laws." And that is a problem, especially for individuals doing non traditional inquiry.

I have raised in some detail parts of "lessons" that occurred in my teaching. Yet the label "lessons" seems a bit off the mark for what we did during the two and a half hour weekly meeting. "Happening," a term from an earlier generation might be closer. "Creating happenings" seems different from "planning lessons." Different

kinds of consequences seem to appear as well. When I raised that metaphor in class some of my students didn't like the label. Too ephemeral and momentary. Not enough emphasis on the spiraling back around to ideas and topics. The discussion provoked "gatherings." That didn't work either. I countered with an idea that we had raised in our study of the Missouri Parents as Teachers Project (Smith and Wells, 1990). In that investigation, "lessons" were construed as "significant conversations," and we had done some theorizing about the implications of that. Mary then argued for "significant encounters," for those times in which she found herself listening intently but not saying much. (I had some problems recalling times when she didn't have something to say.) Mary then fumbled with an old recollection about "diamond dust" from a column in the Christian Science Monitor from a decade ago that she had used in her high school English teaching (Thompson, 1984). The next day she found and faxed me a copy. The key line was a quotation saved over a couple of generations.

> As Diamond dust makes other diamonds shine,
>
> So minds are polished bright by other minds.

For her that was what significant encounters were all about. "Diamond dust" is now part of our class culture. Metaphors do funny things to thinking processes, especially when classroom interaction emphasizes and permits them to become generative.

In recent years I have been persuaded that ethnography, biography, and history have very much in common as qualitative research methods. I have not pursued that here in any analytical fashion. Rather, the intertwining has been latent, more in the stories per se. But I believe it is an important point.

Finally, and especially for those of you who tend toward being educational theorists, I want to leave you with an epigram from the French intellectual, Paul Valery. I discovered it in Olney's (1980) book, On Autobiography. I haven't been able to find the original source. The line is this:

> There is no theory that is not a fragment,
> carefully prepared, of some autobiography.

My interpretation of this is that it is a very suggestive conjecture of the origin and nature of social science theories. If it is even partially true, it raises some interesting dimensions for exploration of those of us trying to construct educational theories, no matter how grounded, nor how focused in scope or generality. When one worries along issues such as " living lives, studying lives, and writing lives" one enters into territory where the epigram seems both important and relatively unaccented in much of educational inquiry, thought and practice. I believe that students of teaching and teacher education might well consider the tension between autobiography as "posthumous propaganda for posterity" and "There is no theory that is not a fragment, carefully prepared, of some autobiography." May the conversation begin!

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