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Gaining Insight into Teaching: A Phenomenological Exploration of the Lived Experience of the Teachers of the Year

Robin F. Amparo
Florida International University, amparor@fiu.edu

FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Miami, Florida

GAINING INSIGHT INTO TEACHING: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL EXPLORATION

OF THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF TEACHERS OF THE YEAR

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of

the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

in

CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

by

Robin Faith Amparo

2013

To: Dean Delia C. Garcia
    College of Education

This dissertation, written by Robin Faith Amparo and entitled Gaining Insight into Teaching: A Phenomenological Exploration of the Lived Experience of the Teachers of the Year, having been approved in respect to style and intellectual content is referred to you for judgment.

We have read this dissertation and recommended that it be approved.

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Charmaine DeFrancesco

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Gail Gregg

_____
Lynne Miller

_____
Erskine S. Dottin, Major Professor

Date of Defense: March 29, 2013

The dissertation of Robin Faith Amparo is approved.

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Dean Delia C. Garcia
College of Education

_____
Dean Dr. Lakshmi N. Reddi
University Graduate School

Florida International University, 2013

DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to those teachers, (past, present and future), who work
tirelessly to bring enlightenment to their students and the promise of hope to the world.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Above all, I thank my family and my friends. Orlando, my husband, has been the sustaining force that energized my efforts. My children, Raquel and Richard, along with their spouses, Jason and Lindsey, respectively, were a constant reminder to me that knowledge helps to make this world a better place. May Tristan, my first grandchild, and those grandchildren not yet born, also be inspired to engage in lifelong learning and develop into the best people that they can possibly be. My brother, Jay, continually offered me heartfelt words of encouragement for which I am grateful. To my friends of a lifetime, and one of you in particular, I reiterate what we have said often to one another: "that together we can do anything." Thank you to all of you for believing in me.

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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by

Robin Amparo

Florida International University, 2013

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Professor Erskine S. Dottin, Major Professor

What qualities, skills, and knowledge produce quality teachers? Many stake-holders in education argue that teacher quality should be measured by student achievement. This qualitative study shows that good teachers are multi-dimensional; their effectiveness cannot be represented by students' test scores alone.

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to gain a deeper understanding of quality in teaching by examining the lived experiences of 10 winners or finalists of the Teacher of the Year (ToY) Award. Phenomenology describes individuals' daily experiences of phenomena, examines how these experiences are structured, and focuses analysis on the perspectives of the persons having the experience (Moustakas, 1994). This inquiry asked two questions: (a) How is teaching experienced by recognized as outstanding Teachers of the Year? and (b) How do ToYs feelings and perceptions about being good teachers provide insight, if any, about concepts such as pedagogical tact, teacher selfhood, and professional dispositions?

Ten participants formed the purposive sample; the major data collection tool was semi-structured interviews (Patton, 1990; Seidman, 2006). Sixty to 90-minute interviews

were conducted with each participant. Data also included the participants' ToY application essays. Data analysis included a three-phase process: description, reduction, interpretation.

Findings revealed that the ToYs are dedicated, hard-working individuals. They exhibit behaviors, such as working beyond the school day, engaging in lifelong learning, and assisting colleagues to improve their practice. Working as teachers is their life's compass, guiding and wrapping them into meaningful and purposeful lives. Pedagogical tact, teacher selfhood, and professional dispositions were shown to be relevant, offering important insights into good teaching. Results indicate that for these ToYs, good teaching is experienced by getting through to students using effective and moral means; they are emotionally open, have a sense of the sacred, and they operate from a sense of intentionality. The essence of the ToYs teaching experience was their being properly engaged in their craft, embodying logical, psychological, and moral realms.

Findings challenge current teacher effectiveness process-product orthodoxy which makes a causal connection between effective teaching and student test scores, and which assumes that effective teaching arises solely from and because of the actions of the teacher.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

***Star Teachers* by George William Russell**

EVEN as a bird sprays many-coloured fires,
The plumes of paradise, the dying light
Rays through the fevered air in misty spires
That vanish in the heights.

These myriad eyes that look on me are mine;
Wandering beneath them I have found again
The ancient ample moment, the divine,
The God-root within men.

For this, for this the lights innumerable
As symbols shine that we the true light win:
For every star and every deep they fill
Are stars and deeps within. (1917)

The image of "the teacher" has been portrayed in various ways; ranging, for example, from an image of Socrates, the Socratic guru, to the "school marm" on the Western frontier, to "Sir" in the movie *Blackboard Jungle*, to Nick Nolte's character in the movie *Teacher*, to Jaime Escalante in *Stand and Deliver.* The recent educational reform agenda in America has been formulating images of "the effective teacher." "Some policymakers have recently advocated that a passing score on a test of subject matter knowledge, and a background check, are all that are needed to become an effective teacher" (The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, NCATE, 2006, p. 4), while others insist that knowledge of the subject matter is insufficient because the effective teacher also possesses "an understanding of how people learn, and an ability to use principles of learning and teaching to stimulate student learning and achievement" (p.

7). The debate over the qualities, skills, and knowledge that characterize and identify quality teachers continues.

Persons on both sides of the issue have made a correlation or justify a link between teacher quality and student performance (Podgursky, 2005). Indeed, the 2001 No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation (Public Law 107-110), which requires highly qualified teachers in every classroom has prompted many states to reform licensing requirements and spurred heightened interest in how teacher preparation programs impact teacher quality and teacher effectiveness. Despite the increased attention and discussion, many policymakers believe that teacher preparation and licensing systems continue to fall short on ensuring teacher quality because they do not evaluate the teacher in terms of student learning gains (Keller, 2007).

Just what quality teacher or effective teacher means is unclear, as is the definition of effective teacher preparation program (i.e., traditional or alternative). Alternative routes to licensing have increased the labor pool, but are these candidates well qualified to teach? "Although the need for teachers is being met, the caveat that the teachers are truly becoming highly qualified is not" (Sutherland, Denny, & Gunter, 2005, p. 42). In this climate of so many different teacher licensing options, many educational researchers have been looking at teacher preparation programs and the variety of licensing pathways as important variables in predicting and measuring teacher quality.

To complicate the issue of teacher quality further, there is the question of tacit knowledge. Does the effective teacher possess a highly developed, but unconscious, dimension that facilitates or enables his or her effectiveness? The concept of tacit knowledge allows for the presence of an intangible and undefined mechanism which

permits us to become aware of our concrete or explicit knowledge; it can lead us to

discovery. Parker Palmer (1998) discussed "the selfhood from which good teaching

comes" (p. 4), wherein a crossroads of the authentic identity and integrity of the teacher

is what provides for effective teaching. Rooted in the work of Polanyi (1962) and Schön

(1987), the notion of informal educational practice exists: where through a tacit

dimension the teacher comes to an awareness based on intuitive thoughts and feelings,

resulting in a better understanding of what might be going on in different situations

(Smith, 2003). Palmer asserted that effective teachers know themselves, their students,

and their subjects on a deeper level – wherein the act of teaching materializes from one's

inwardness and the dynamic in the classroom is grounded in deep personal meaning for

the teacher (Smith, 2005).

Furthermore, Max van Manen (1991) has introduced the related construct of

"pedagogical tact," whereby he describes the effective teacher as one who seems to

spontaneously have the knowledge appropriate to respond, verbally or by action, to actual

situations. Van Manen described pedagogical tact as

> a kind of practical normative intelligence that is governed by insight while relying
> on feelings…to *see* a situation calling for sensitivity, to *understand* the meaning
> of what is seen, to *sense the significance* of this situation, to *know how and what
> to do*, and to actually *do* something right. To act tactfully may imply all these and
> yet tactful action is instantaneous (p. 146)

Based on this construct, it would seem that the teacher who possesses "pedagogical tact"

is the teacher who would be more effective than one who does not. However, is this

quality identifiable? Should teachers recognize such a facility or faculty within

themselves? Should they attend to van Manen's pedagogical tact or Palmer's selfhood

and inwardness? Should teacher licensing pathways consider these qualities as having value?

This chapter provides a background to the problem, presents the problem statement, the purpose of the study, the related research questions, and the theoretical framework that guided the study. The significance of the study, delimitations of the study, assumptions of the study, definition of key terms, and organization of the study are also included in this introductory chapter.

Background to the Problem

Although there is a vast body of literature on teacher effectiveness, studies offer conflicting or inconclusive findings. Given the current educational climate of teacher accountability and performance-based measures, the value-added model to measure the effectiveness of teachers is growing in popularity. Federal programs such as Race to the Top, developed under the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009* (ARRA), Section 14005-6, Title XIV, (Public Law 111-5), require states to develop and implement processes to measure the value that an individual teacher adds in terms of student performance on standardized testing instruments. The value-added model distinguishes among those teachers whose students demonstrate academic growth from those teachers whose students do not show achievement or learning gains. However, what are the underlying characteristics, factors, or essences that result in one teacher who is capable of adding value while another is incapable of producing this result? Harris and Sass (2007) stated that "there is no consensus on what factors enhance teacher quality" (p. 2). Furthermore, a recent synthesis of research conducted by the Center for Educator Compensation Reform (2010) confirmed

that there is a wide variation in the effectiveness of teachers, yet traditional measures of teacher quality (i.e., education, degrees, and certification status) are not strongly associated with student achievement. This would suggest that the measures of teacher quality most commonly used by school districts are missing the mark in identifying highly effective teachers. (p. 1)

Why does this phenomenon continue to be such an enigma?

Prior to the standards movement of the late 1990s, the U.S. public school teacher was measured by indicators other than student performance. In McNergney, Imig and Pearlman's report on teacher evaluation (2002), the authors discussed the history of teacher evaluation in the United States. According to their historical research, in 1896 students classified the characteristics of good teachers to include such items as "helpfulness" and "personal appearance." By the mid-1900s, the opinions of supervisors about their teachers provided most of the information on teacher effectiveness, even though the 1950 research of Domas and Tiedeman (as cited in McNergney et al, 2002) established that in "more than 1,000 studies of teacher characteristics, defined in every way imaginable,…[there was] no clear direction for evaluators" (p. 1).

Typically, teachers are expected to demonstrate a variety of skills or competencies that are believed to enhance student learning (Markley, 2004). Such skills or professional behaviors include a commitment to student learning and welfare, knowledge of the subject matter, pedagogical knowledge, commitment to lifelong learning, organization and behavior management, and ethical professional practices (Florida Educator Accomplished Practices, 2010). "Obviously, the definition [of the effective teacher] involves someone who can increase student knowledge, but it *goes beyond this* [emphasis added] in defining an effective teacher" (Clark as cited in Markley, 2004, p. 2). Just what does *going beyond this* mean? At the very least, we have to wonder about the value of

empirical measurements of teacher effectiveness, and explore the nature of quality teachers by alternative research methodologies.

The background to the problem reveals, therefore, that gaining insight into teaching is guided more by a technical, quantitative orientation to effective procedure, and very little by "pedagogical meaning and significance of experience" (van Manen, 1991, p. 72) of the lives of teachers.

The Problem Statement

The standardized testing climate and the call for a highly qualified teacher in every classroom (NCLB, 2001), focuses a spotlight on teaching, and even more particularly, on good teaching. For example, does the call for more alternative licensing also enhance a better understanding of "good teaching"? The research literature available does not answer this question very well.

More than two decades ago, Nias' (1989) qualitative research on teachers' stories revealed

> teachers' inevitable inability fully to satisfy their own consciences and their wider audiences leaves them feeling simultaneously under pressure, guilty, and inadequate. Vagueness on goals (and therefore responsibilities) is coupled with the absence of clear or valid criteria by which teachers may be judged. (p. 193)

Given the ongoing debates about teacher licensure criteria and teacher effectiveness, the ambiguity that Nias discussed more than 20 years ago still persists.

To date, there are few studies that focus on self-defining the phenomenon of what it means to teach effectively. In addition, emphasis, as necessitated by NCLB, has been on measuring highly qualified teachers in terms of student performance indicators as measured by standardized testing. However, Fenstermacher and Richardson (2005)

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cautioned that the empirical studies conducted under the process-product approach were "meant to be used solely as a statistical probability endeavor with a large sample of teachers. It [the process product approach] would not be valid for use with one teacher" (p. 200). As such, the parameters and particulars of individual teacher quality and effectiveness remain somewhat of a mystery. Especially, metaphysical attributes such as pedagogical tact and teacher selfhood proposed by van Manen (1991) and Palmer (1998) respectively, can be hardly understood by and through standardized testing or other quantitative approaches.

The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological study, therefore, was to gain insight into teaching through the lived-experience of teachers recognized as outstanding teachers.

Research Questions

The primary research question was: How is teaching experienced by recognized as outstanding Teachers of the Year (ToYs)? A related research question was: How do ToYs feelings and perceptions about being good teachers provide insight, if any, about the relevance to teaching of concepts such as pedagogical tact, teacher selfhood, and professional dispositions?

Theoretical Frameworks

In qualitative research, we ask the participants to tell their stories; this approach is reflective of the nature of interpretive studies, whereby the overall goal is "to understand the *meaning* people have constructed about their…experiences" (Merriam, 2002, pp. 4-5). In and of itself, a mere label such as "an effective teacher in every classroom," "engenders expectations that often impede fresh perception" (Eisner, 1998, p. 67). In

studying the experience of teachers who have been recognized as outstanding, I was interested in capturing the essence of their particular feelings and perceptions about being a good teacher.

As a system of inquiry, positivist and empirical approaches have been the traditional and acceptable methodologies for research regarding the nature of science. However, in terms of understanding the human realm, other approaches have emerged in order to provide opportunity for the consideration of plural understandings—the study of the human realm cannot always be reduced to "principles of deductive logic and intersubjectively verifiable data" (Polkinghorne, 1983, p. 2). Quantitative methodologies that serve the physical world in order to produce objective truths result in limiting our understanding of human nature and human experience. As such, postpositivists have adjusted research methods to allow for more than one possible truth whereby knowledge is not only an apodictic truth. In the human science model (Polkinghorne, 1983), knowledge is recognized as having new understandings about human phenomena. These new understandings add a depth and breadth to our knowledge base; they deepen and enrich our perceptions, resulting in more valuable understandings than any formerly held.

The human science model of inquiry concerns itself with much more than behaviors; it "includes not only the hopes and fears and thoughts and acts of individuals, but also the institutions that have emerged out of life activity" (Polkinghorne, 1983, p. 25). The study of human science is an aggregation of individual lives, an accumulation of history, and the social realities by which humankind has operated. The study of human science includes dimensions of speculation, intuition, poetry, and spirituality. The study of human science recognizes that it is in our everyday lives that knowledge begins, and as

such, human science needs to "address the intersection of life patterns and the individual's interpretive efforts toward meaning-giving" (Polkinghorne, 1983, p. 29).

Significance of the Study

Because there is no clear agreement as to what exactly is meant by good teaching, and as policymakers continue to increase standards, including those regarding teacher licensure, this study's goal is to add to the literature in terms of a deeper understanding of the concept of quality teaching in the field of education. If we can develop a deeper awareness and insight into the phenomenon of good teaching, then stakeholders will be in a more informed position to further the discussion about teacher preparation programs as well as teacher evaluation processes. And as teachers reflect on their own practice, having an increased understanding of the phenomenon of good teaching can provide them with clearer avenues toward their professional growth and development.

Limitations of the Study

This study limits its focus on how the research participants perceive their lived experience as quality teachers. The results of qualitative studies are not generalizable (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007), and as such, the findings presented herein are not intended to serve as the predictors of behavior of effective or outstanding teachers. The data presented and their interpretations are intended to increase the depth and breadth of information on the ToY as a highly qualified teacher, and may offer insights to which other teachers or teacher-candidates can relate.

Delimitations of the Study

This study is delimited to teachers in Broward County Public Schools who have been recognized as outstanding teachers as a result of receiving a ToY award. The study

was focused exclusively on (10) ToYs and how these outstanding educators have experienced the phenomenon of effective teaching. This study focused on the lived experience of ToYs in terms of individual teacher quality, not on the quality of the teacher's school setting or the quality of the Broward County Public School system.

Additionally, this study was conducted as a phenomenological study to in order to glean an understanding about the lived experience of highly qualified teachers. The research was intended only to understand the essence of this phenomenon itself, without the imposition of constructs or the manipulation of variables inherent in empirical research methodologies.

Assumptions of the Study

Additionally, given the nature of the Teacher of the Year (ToY) Award and its widespread application, this research was conducted solely on the premise that award recipients represent high quality teachers and/or effective teachers. The study further assumed that ToY recipients are deserving of this recognition and that each year of the Broward County ToY selection process has operated with consistency and integrity.

Definitions of Terms

Human science. Human science is the examination and description of the experiences of human beings. Human science recognizes that the historic and current experiences of people are valuable in the furthering the understanding human nature. Human science includes the study and interpretation of the elements of everyday life in order to illuminate and gain knowledge about how the human being understands his or her existence. It is an analysis and interpretation of human activity to gain insight into and enlightenment about human phenomena. (San Filippo, 1991).

Pedagogical tact. The ability to exercise a spontaneous interpretive intelligence in dealing with children by the application of abstract and unconsciousness knowledge in concrete situations, and simultaneously exhibiting a practical moral intuitiveness, a sensitivity and openness toward a child (van Manen, 1991).

Phenomenology. Phenomenology is both a philosophical framework and a methodology in qualitative research studies. Philosophically, it is an examination of "phenomena" in terms of describing how things appear in our experience. The methodology studies the appearances, the meanings, and the conscious thoughts about a phenomenon from a first person perspective in order to gain deeper understanding. "Phenomenology studies the structure of various types of experience ranging from perception, thought, memory, imagination, emotion, desire, and volition to bodily awareness, embodied action, and social activity, including linguistic activity" (Smith, 2008, para. 6). Phenomenology is one of the approaches used in the realm of human sciences.

Phenomenological research. A strategy of inquiry in which the researcher identifies the essence of human experiences about a phenomenon as described by participants. Understanding the lived experiences marks phenomenology as a philosophy as well as a method, and the procedure involves studying a small number of subjects through extensive and prolonged engagement to develop patterns and relationships of meaning (Moustakas, 1994).

Philosophical analysis. A method of inquiry that breaks down complex structures of thought and experience (i.e., phenomena) into smaller and simpler units so that it can be interpreted and understood more fully and more clearly. In a philosophical inquiry

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what one is trying to do is not to discover something of which until now one has been

ignorant, but to know better something which in some sense one knew already; not to

know it better in the sense of coming to know more about it, but to know it better in the

sense of coming to know it in a different and enhanced way. (Collingwood as cited in

Beaney, 2009).

Teacher certification: Although the term certification relates to the process

administered by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) to

become a National Board Certified Teacher (NBCT), much of the literature regarding

pathways to teacher licensing, uses the term certification to discuss both traditional and

non-traditional (alternative certification) teacher preparation programs and processes

(NCATE, 2006). As such, the term certification and licensing are used interchangeably in

this study.

Teacher dispositions. The fundamental moral fibers of the individual that

manifest themselves in the teacher's value system (*character*), the teacher's ability to

understand and apply ethical behaviors (*intellect*), and the teacher's capacity to

demonstrate concern and compassion for others (*caring*). These moral fibers are

evidenced as dispositions by the teacher's conduct (Sockett, Ed., 2006).

Teacher licensing: A license is defined as "a permit from an authority to own or

use something, do a particular thing, or carry on a trade; formal or official permission to

do something" (http://oxforddictionaries.com/). Requirements for teacher licensing vary

from state to state, but the general common denominator among states' licensing criteria

is that the applicant must demonstrate knowledge of the subject area, usually by the

passing of an examination (Libman, 2009).

Teacher selfhood. The concept of the teacher being aware of him or herself as a teacher; that the teacher's practice materializes from within the internal identity of the teacher, and that how and what is taught is intimately connected to the teacher's intellectual, emotional, and spiritual way of being in the world (Palmer, n.d.b).

Teaching. The experience of inviting a special relationship with a student aimed toward recognizing, supporting, and enhancing the identity of the person (Palmer, n.d.a).

Organization of the Study

In this study, outstanding teachers' perspectives of teaching were examined. This chapter established the background to the study, problem statement, purpose of the study, research questions, the Human Science Model of Inquiry as the theoretical framework, significance of the study, delimitations of the study, limitations of the study, assumptions of the study, and definition of terms. The next chapter reviews the literature that supports this inquiry, including research into teacher effectiveness, and self-perceptions of teachers. Chapter 3 describes the phenomenological research design. Chapter 4 presents the data and findings of the study. Chapter 5 formulates conclusions and suggests recommendations.

Summary

This research sought to increase the understanding of effective teachers as seen through the lived experiences of ToYs. This study was phenomenological in nature, both in its theoretical framework as well as in its methodology, with goals to add to the research about the deeper meaning of experiences of recognized as outstanding teachers. The literature review presented in Chapter 2 indicated that although there has been extensive research on teacher effectiveness, the concepts of "tacit knowledge" (van

Manen, 1991) and "inner selfhood" (Palmer, 1998) as they apply to teaching required

further exploration. There is a need to better understand the phenomenon of teaching

through teachers who have been awarded ToY status to garner a fuller awareness of how

these practitioners perceive their teaching, and insights that may be gleaned through their

perceptions about the qualities of effective teachers. Through interviewing 10 ToYs, this

research examined the phenomenon of their lived experience as teachers, and relates their

perceived fundamental essence (Moustakas, 1994) as they understand teaching. While

this research did not explore directly participants' routes through teacher preparation and

licensing, given the controversies and inconsistencies regarding routes to teacher

preparation and certification, as well as the increased emphasis on teacher accountability

for adding value to student achievement, this study may help to shed some light on the

phenomenon of teaching that may be germane to the foregoing.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

What we are, that only can we see.
(Emerson, 1836)

The Definition of Teacher: A Duality of Meaning

Fundamentally, within western philosophical thought, there are two distinct attitudes that direct meaning for the term *teacher*: one in which the teacher facilitates critical thinking and understanding through a mutually educative and caring relationship between himself and his pupil; the other in which the teacher delivers a set of prescribed mindsets to his student through directed methodologies (McEwan, 2011). The first attitude speaks of a teacher who fosters a relationship with the student and works in collaborative "life situations in which the meaning of facts, ideas, principles, and problems is vitally brought home" (Dewey as cited in McEwan, 2011, p. 134). This is the teacher who continues self-development along with facilitating the growth of understanding and enlightenment in his or her students. This is the teacher who believes that teaching is much more an art rather than merely technical skill in the delivery of information. This is the definition of teacher that embodies a moral obligation and a realization that schooling "serves more expansive ends than scores of academic achievement" (Sanger & Osguthorpe, 2011, p. 570). Noddings (1991) has also believed that teachers must focus on the development of the student's sense of ethics, that nurturing the child's moral fiber is the primary responsibility of teachers. Burant, Chubbuck and Whipp (2007) discussed the teacher's practice in terms of ideas and feelings that reflect a "moral sensibility," which connects the selfhood of the teacher with his or her behaviors in the classroom. Citing Hansen's work of 2001, these authors

further explicated that "'a teacher's moral sensibility should be understood as an achievement in its own right…it is *not like a tool* [emphasis added] that a teacher pulls out of a box and then replaces once he or she has done the sensible thing'" (p. 405). Inherent in Hansen's concept is that there is something natural within the *being* of the teacher that contains this dimension of moral sensibility.

In contrast, the other philosophical tradition believes that the teacher is one who engages in formalized and generalized instructional methods. In this view, the teacher is responsible for the delivery of information via the deployment of an artificial or constructed system, and as such, teaching is only the act of "the application of approved techniques and practices" (McEwan, 2011, p. 128). This attitude about teaching aligns itself with efficiency models most often found in business or the scientific orientation toward teaching whereby education's purpose is to provide set of technical skills and, for the most part unquestioned, common core values. Furthermore this position asserts that education is for a specific end product rather than to value knowledge and reasoning abilities in and of themselves (Smith, 1996, 2000). Teachers working under this philosophy are following the established scientific management and social efficiency models that emerged in correlation with the industrial revolution in the United States (Bobbitt, 2009).

Given the current and prevailing educational policies that require both student and teacher accountability via standardized testing, public school teachers are commonly adhering to mandated processes and procedures in the delivery of their lessons, including but not limited to the implementation of commercially formatted and scripted lesson plans (Dudley-Marling, 2005; Lopez, 2002; Meyer, 2003). The former Secretary of

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Education Rod Paige defined teaching as the combination of subject matter with verbal fluency, implying that a talking head will suffice as a teacher in public school classrooms (as cited in Pearson, 2003). In fact, Imig and Imig (2006) discussed the implied paradox regarding the need for subject area expertise in teachers if we are giving them a prescriptive curriculum and expect them to follow a commercially prepared product. The standards movement continues to subordinate the affective domain and the nurturing of the whole child in deference to the cognitive domain and the ability of empirical studies to produce measurements in relationship to standards (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 2004). This perspective and educational philosophy result in little opportunity for public school teachers to foster holistically enlightened students. Cornelissen (2010) informed us that "what matters today are learning outcomes and whether students are able to increase their performance on what they have learned" (p. 530). Students of these teachers are repeaters and reproducers of already existent knowledge rather than critical thinkers who can formulate, generate, and articulate new ideas on their own. This encroachment of control procedures and administrators who practice micro-management over public school classrooms may limit the definition of teacher.

Effective Teachers

Great teachers make a profound difference in the lives of children. Each of us can remember the personal qualities of a great teacher whose influence stretches into our adulthood—or who gave our own children a solid start in life. But these elusive qualities are hard to measure. It's even harder to use them to predict who will become a great teacher. (National Council on Teacher Quality, 2004, p. 1)

Cruikshank (1990) studied effective teaching and found that teacher effectiveness could be clearly classified into seven domains: (a) character traits of teachers; (b) teacher

knowledge; (c) curricula decisions of teachers; (d) expectations of teachers; (e) delivery styles & methodologies of teachers; (f) teacher interaction with students; and (g) teacher's classroom management (as cited in Shanoski & Hranitz, 1992). However, a decade later, Goldhaber and Anthony (2004, 2007) explained that education research has failed to reach a consensus over which, if any, readily identifiable teacher characteristics are associated with students' learning gains (2007, p. 134). What is accepted among educational scholars is that "the quality of the teacher in the classroom is the most important schooling factor predicting student outcomes" (Ferguson, 1998; Goldhaber, 2002; Goldhaber, Brewer, & Anderson, 1999; Hanushek, Kain, & Rivkin, 1999; Wright, Horn, & Sanders, 1997 as cited in Goldhaber & Anthony, 2004, p. 4). As such, although the accepted importance of qualified teachers has even impacted educational policy and legislation (i.e., NCLB and Race to the Top), there are no clear-cut determinants of teacher quality (Clotfelter, Ladd & Vigdor, 2006).

Over the years, a variety of approaches have been applied in order to measure quality teachers. There are several major examples of such research outlined and reviewed by McGee (2006). The common denominator among the studies discussed by McGee (2006) was that "effectiveness is a vague concept when considering the complex task of teaching" (p. 30). Although policymakers and scholars concur on the importance of having highly qualified teachers, the debate is long and ongoing as to how to define teacher quality. The dominant four measures of teacher quality over the years have included: (a) student achievement results; (b) performance evaluation ratings from administrators; (c) credentialing items such as documented subject-area knowledge and fulfillment of certification requirements; (d) evaluation feedback from other sources, such

as students and parents (Stronge as cited in McGee, 2006). Early studies tended to examine teacher character, later research focused on teacher behaviors, and the more current investigations concentrate on the connections between teacher behavior and student performance (McEwan as cited in McGee, 2006). While most data result in ambivalent findings, scholars have agreed that qualified (i.e., knowledgeable in the content or field they are teaching) teachers are a central predictor of student performance when measured on standardized tests in reading and math (Ingersoll, 2007; Stronge as cited in McGee, 2006). The need for teacher preparation and training in pedagogical concepts continues to be an unanswered question, and is at the core of the debate between traditional and alternative certification pathways (Ingersoll, 2007).

Process-Product Research on Teacher Effectiveness

Process-product investigations have been a major approach in educational research to empirically identify effective instructional behaviors and practices that in turn could be taught to preservice teachers and then generically applied to increase the performance and achievement levels of students (Fenstermacher & Richardson, 2005). The effectiveness of the teacher under the process-product approach is defined by the students' demonstration of having learned what the teacher has presumably taught. This measurement paradigm of teacher effectiveness emerged in the 1960s and is still operating today under what Floden (as cited in Fenstermacher & Richardson, 2005), calls the "effects of teaching" (p. 200) research model. Although developments in cognitive psychology in the 1970s shifted emphasis away from watching the mechanics of teachers' instruction and focused more on teachers' cognitive strategies and decision-making faculties, teacher effectiveness was still dependent upon student output; and later,

when psychological learning theory encouraged examining the teacher as a facilitator of a student-centered environment, the measuring of teacher effectiveness concentrated on measuring how well the teacher could create and foster opportunities for students to construct knowledge (Fenstermacher & Richardson, 2005, p. 203).

Gage and Needels (1989) responded to criticisms on process-product investigations of teacher effectiveness. Although there are four broad categories of types of criticisms to which they offered in-depth discussions of defense, they did stipulate that "the criticism that process-product research does not consider the teacher's self-reported intentions is valid" (p. 255). This concession indicates that the teacher behaviors studied under process-product models have not examined the underlying phenomenological nature or essences of the teacher.

Does Experience Breed Expertise?

Within the process-product approach to measure teacher effectiveness resides the assumption that experience and practice of a skill over time improves the competencies of the practitioner, so that effective teaching is relative to a teacher's length of service and the concept of developing an expertise (Berliner, 1994). Confirming this notion, Stronge (as cited in McGee, 2002) reported that "experienced teachers *tend to know how and understand* [emphasis added] their students' learning needs, learning styles, prerequisite skills, and interests better than novice teachers" (p. 37). From where exactly does this know-how and understanding of the expert teacher originate? The verb *tend* is elusive in this context and does not provide for tangible, objective measurement. Stronge (as cited in McGee, 2006) alluded to elements such as "real-life experiences, classroom practice, and time spent in the classroom" (p. 37), but did not explain the meaning of the

combination or interaction of these elements or how the teacher perceives this

phenomenon within lived experience. Berliner (1994) outlined five stages in the

development of teacher expertise ranging from Novice level to Expert level, where the

last stage, the *experts,* are described as having

> an intuitive grasp of the situation and seem to sense in nonanalytic and
> nondeliberative ways the appropriate responses to be made. They show fluid
> performance, as we all do when we no longer have to choose our words when
> speaking or think about where to place our feet when walking. (p. 10)

This description of the expert teacher echoes the aesthetic connoisseurship of Eisner

(1998), the pedagogical tact of van Manen (1991), and the selfhood and inwardness of

Palmer (1998). At first glance, this framework may imply that all one needs is practice

and that eventually all teachers evolve into experts and as such are effective or quality

teachers. However, Berliner (1994) asserted that not all teachers reach levels beyond that

of low or minimum competence, or what he called the Advanced Beginner level.

Remaining unidentified is what *it is* that allows some teachers to continue to grow and

function at the highest levels of expertise, while others do not. What is the essence of this

phenomenon?

Tsui (2009) studied four English language acquisition teachers (ESL teachers) in

the same school with varying years of teaching experience, one of whom was considered

outstanding by the administration and faculty. This 18-month, case study investigation

included observations, interviews, teachers' reflections, and the examination of their

curricula and instructional materials in order to find the characteristics of the expert

teacher among the group; that is to isolate the differences between the expert teacher and

the other teachers. In accordance with Berliner's (1994) ideas regarding length of service

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leading to expertise, the teacher identified as outstanding did have the longest period of teaching experience, (i.e., 8 years). The findings of the study showed that the expert teacher: (a) had greater faculty in the synthesis of pedagogical and content area knowledge into lesson delivery, (b) had a keener understanding of contextual implications in her teaching; and (c) had a deeper capacity as a reflective practitioner (p. 8). Tsui specifically concluded that "one of the critical differences between expert and non-expert teachers is their capability to engage in conscious deliberation and reflection…making explicit the tacit knowledge that is gained from experience" (p. 21).

Although Tsui's work referenced the concept of tacit knowledge and related it to quality or effectiveness in teaching, the study did not explore the nature of this phenomenon. Furthermore, Tsui's work focused solely on one expert teacher as described by administrators and colleagues, not on highly qualified teachers selected by a rigorous screening process, and the study was limited to comparative features among four teachers. This pervasive conclusion about the difficulty in identifying the characteristics of effective teachers provides a rationale for examining more deeply the lived experiences of ToYs as those individuals already identified and recognized as quality teachers.

Relevant to the concept of experience as a factor that leads to expertise, Wallace (2008) studied the lived experience of 15 Texas ToYs with varied experience as teachers. The ToY participants completed seven essays as part of their applications for the ToY Award, and Wallace sought to find meaning about their lived experiences from their writing in response to the seven essay prompts. The researcher grouped five ToYs in each of three ranges: less than three years of teaching experience, three to five years of

experience, and more than five years of experience. Wallace referred to these stages as novice teacher, competent teacher, and expert teacher, respectively; intending to uncover commonalities or variances within and among the three stages of experience.

Based on the principles of hermeneutics that "include finding meaning in any text," (Shank as cited in Wallace, 2008, pp. 53-54), the analysis of data was synthesized into three themes: (a) a description of who the teacher is; (b) a description of what the teacher does; and (c) a description of influential external factors. Wallace found that the descriptions changed from one stage to another in accordance with the length of experience of the ToY. For example, in describing who the teacher is, novices "were characterized by…academic preparation, second career, community service, role model, passion and enjoy[ment] of my [their] job" (Wallace, 2008, p. 118). However, the traits describing the experts included "advanced academic preparation, innovation/current, family, passion, role model, community service, enthusiasm, flexible, initiative, and student centered" (p.118). Wallace concluded that teachers have different needs as they acquire more years of teaching experience and development, and that the participants' movement from novice to expert teaching was aligned with the Dreyfus' theoretical model of Skills Acquisition (as cited in Wallace, 2008).

Wallace's (2008) investigation also supported Berliner's (1994) ideas about the growth and development of teachers from novice to expert; however he did not identify or describe the intuitive aspect of Berliner's expert teacher. Further research about this phenomenon may provide insight to this concept.

Effective Teaching versus Teaching Effectiveness

A technical distinction must be developed between the terms effective teaching and teaching effectiveness. Effective teaching or quality teaching refers to that which the teacher does; while teaching effectiveness is dependent upon the students' ability to demonstrate learning (Fenstermacher & Richardson, 2005). Effective teaching describes the tasks of teaching: clear delivery of information, the establishment of a rich learning environment, the selection of supportive learning materials, or any combination of teacher decisions and applications. However none of these items, alone or in combination, ensure that students will perform well.

On the other hand, teaching effectiveness connotes that effective teaching has been successful in yielding the intended learning outcomes in accordance with accepted standards (Fenstermacher & Richardson, 2005, p.189). Although this perspective is in keeping with the current value-added model of teacher accountability, Brown, Morehead, and Smith (2008) cautioned that there is much more to the commonly held beliefs about professional identity of teachers and that "we must recognize and incorporate the common definitions of a good teacher as caring and concerned for children" (p. 180). Thus, as much as we might want a simplistic and clear-cut view about the constitution of quality and effectiveness in teachers, their professional identity is extremely complex and often ambiguous. Indeed, Hamachek (1999) said that "consciously, we teach what we know; unconsciously, we teach who we are" (as cited in Korthagen, 2003, p. 77).

ToYs Defined as Effective Teachers

For more than fifty years states have been recognizing and honoring outstanding teachers and state winners go on to compete for a national title: National Teacher of the

Year (NTOY). School districts select their nominees beginning with school-based elections, and then "within the states the selection processes vary, but each state conducts a rigorous selection procedure in validating the State Teacher of the Year's abilities in the classroom" (CCSSO, 2011, para. 8). Typically, teachers complete applications packages that include several essays and offer letters of support; they participate in personal interviews and deliver lessons while being observed in order to fulfill requirements of the competition process (Jensen & Templeton, 1993). Professional organizations in particular content areas also recognize a teacher of the year for that discipline, such Art Teacher of the Year (SCAEA, 2011) or Social Studies Teacher of the Year (FCSS, 2011). However, it is generally understood that all ToYs are outstanding and exceptionally effective teachers (Shanoski & Hranitz, 1992). According to Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO):

> A candidate for National Teacher of the Year (NTOY) is a State Teacher of the Year who is an exceptionally dedicated, knowledgeable, and skilled teacher…The National Teacher of the Year candidate should
>
> ▪ inspire students of all backgrounds and abilities to learn
> ▪ have the respect and admiration of students, parents, and colleagues
> ▪ play an active and useful role in the community as well as in the school
> ▪ be poised, articulate, and possess the energy to withstand a taxing schedule. (2011, para. 2)

A qualitative research study on ToYs was conducted by Verner (1999) with the examination of 17 teachers in Illinois who had been selected as finalists or awarded teacher of the year status. This research effort, conducted under the grounded theory framework, intended to formulate generalizations about teacher effectiveness based on teaching behaviors and the interactions between these teachers and their students. Data collection included interviews, observations, and the examination of personal documents.

Although Verner (1999) concluded that there were common attributes among the

participants, this study did not define or reveal the underlying essence of being an

outstanding teacher. The six thematically presented behaviors that emerged from this

study are that ToYs:

1. have a passion for teaching
2. are pedagogical nurturers
3. emphasize the use of positive interpersonal dynamics in the classroom
4. are available to students
5. are involved in a variety of activities outside of the classroom, and
6. use humor with their students. (pp. 182-83)

Verner's (1999) findings and conclusions offer some, but limited, insight into a

fundamental essence or the notion of a ToY's conceptualization of tacit knowledge (van

Manen, 1991) or an inner selfhood (Palmer, 1999).

Another 1999 qualitative study by McGill also examined the self-efficacy of nine

South Carolina ToYs in order to understand their professional efficacy constructs as well

as their personal teaching efficacy constructs. In examining ToYs, McGill (1999)

employed a random stratified selection of participants from among thirty-four South

Carolina ToYs, so that the nine participants represented two teachers from each decade

between 1965 and 1999, plus one additional ToY, purposefully included to align

proportionally with the race and gender of the total population. The research participants

were interviewed for approximately one hour, and McGill (1999) analyzed the audio-

recordings of each interview following the Developmental Research Sequence Method

(D.R.S. Method) by Spradely (as cited in McGill, 1999, p. 13). This study determined

that these ToYs hold the following professional and personal teacher efficacy beliefs:

1. They purposefully intended to make a difference in their students' lives
2. They purposefully modeled the rewards of continuous lifelong learning and authentic personal satisfaction upon achieving a goal
3. They regarded professional challenges in the same way they regarded personal challenges; both were perceived as opportunities for improvement or positive change when dealt with patience, commitment, and steadfastness
4. They developed mutual positive relationships with colleagues and community members
5. They believed in maintaining a sense of collegiality and professionalism; they felt this attitude supported ingenuity and risk taking in their practice
6. They believed that their deep sense of responsibility and commitment for their students helped to motivate them to exceed expectations in building students' self-esteem and self-confidence. (McGill, 1999, pp. 108-109)

The purpose of this investigation was to specifically identify and describe professional and personal efficacy beliefs of ToYs that buttress their success as teaching practitioners. McGill recommended that recognized as outstanding teachers should be more involved with the school improvement and school reform, and that ToYs play a supportive role in building confidence in other teachers when they are faced with implementing innovative ideas in their classrooms. Equally important, may be a deeper understanding of how ToYs self-efficacy is developed, how it comes to exist. If we can describe the essence of this belief system, we may be better equipped to prepare future teachers. McGill (1999) asserted that "the challenge is to extend their [ToYs] influence and inform others of their effective practice" (p.111). In conducting the current study, we can, in part, give additional voice to ToYs and permit them to express a clearer understanding of nature of their practices.

McNeely (2004) studied semifinalists or winners in the Pennsylvania Teacher of the Year process from 1997-2004. This research focused on an examination of their self-efficacy, instructional practices, and their uses of technology. Data were collected using mixed methods and the findings illustrated how recognized as outstanding teachers chose

and implemented technology into their teaching repertoires. Additionally, since this study was situated within the theoretical framework of teacher self-efficacy (Bandura as cited in McNeely, 2004), it offers information on teachers' beliefs as they relate to their use of technology. The findings of this investigation provided only minimal evidence of a relationship between teacher beliefs having some impact on teachers' uses of technology because although the participants reported having definitive beliefs about the importance of technology to learning and to teaching, they did not frequently use the technology in their classrooms (McNeely, 2004).

Even though the McNeely (2004) study provided information about ToYs, the focus of this research was unrelated to understanding the lived experience of teachers recognized as exemplary within their respective disciplines. Additional research on ToYs or those selected as viable ToY candidates is needed to assist in understanding the complex nature of teachers.

Based on Gallup and Gallup's survey instrument, "The Great American Success Quotient Test," Jensen and Templeton (1993) investigated the personal attributes and experiences of 196 named National/State Teacher of the Year (NSTOY) honorees. The research subjects were those NSTOY honorees who agreed to respond to the questionnaire from among 390 solicited. The survey results were compared to a 1988 study by Jensen (as cited in Jensen & Templeton, 1993) that was conducted using the same instrument with a professionally diverse group of subjects. As a result of their findings and the comparison of data to Jensen's earlier study, the researchers concluded that NSTOYs share common characteristics and experiences with other successful professionals (Jensen & Templeton, 1993).

The subjects' responses to the survey provided self-evaluation in 20 domains by assigning a rating of zero through ten to each item. It is interesting that "with the exception of specialized knowledge…the majority of the items with higher ratings tended to be characteristics and abilities which feature the affective components of attitudes, motivation, and emotions" (Jensen & Templeton, 1993, p. 9). In fact, the data indicated that above all else, the NSTOYs believed that "caring about other people" (p. 28) was the single, most important characteristic that influenced their success. Although Jensen and Templeton's (1993) research did add to the body of information about ToYs in terms of how they rate factors contributing to their success as teachers, the theoretical framework and survey instrument presume the criteria related to their success. Jensen and Templeton (1993) did recommend further study of recognized as outstanding teachers, and as such, it seems reasonable to believe that a phenomenological inquiry into the lived experience of ToYs would bring an enriched understanding of their self perceptions as successful teachers.

Since affective domain attributes, such as caring, are fundamentally emotive and subjective in nature, this researcher believes that they should be examined more thoroughly through a qualitative lens in order to understand the underlying nature of these basic human capacities. In fact, Van Schaack and Glick (1982) recognized that affective dimensions are just as significant as the measures of intellectual elements (p. 67), and they believed that the "elusive essence of the superlative teacher can be researched" (p. 1).

Van Schaack and Glick (1982) reported Van Schaack's study of nine NTOY finalists and three professors from higher education. The NTOY participants included

both elementary and secondary school teachers from diverse grade levels, subject areas, and geographic parts of the country; the university professors also represented different disciplines and were recipients of distinguished teaching awards. The research methodology for the elementary and secondary teachers included notes from site observations, photographs of student-teacher interactions, completed observational scale instruments, tape-recorded interviews with each teacher, their students, and their colleagues. The NTOY participants also completed an attitudinal scale, the Teacher Perception Q Sort (Gooding & Wilber as cited in Van Schaack & Glick, 1982, p. 23), as well as providing documentation from their ToY application packages. The researcher also visited the classes of the three university professors, interviewed these participants, their students and former students, as well as their colleagues. In the case of two of the three university professors, the examination included documents from their application records for their distinguished teaching awards. Upon a compilation, analysis, and synthesis of the data, Van Schaack and Glick (1982) reported that "the 12 teachers in this [Van Schaack's] study are similar in 10 dimensions," (p. 31); implying that there may be commonalities among recognized as outstanding teachers, regardless of grade level and/or content area. The 10 dimensions are:

1. Supportive Family Background
2. Strong Personal Faith
3. Enthusiasm for Teaching
4. Self-confidence
5. Communicative Skills
6. Socratic in Approach
7. Warmth
8. Concern for Students
9. Avoidance of Failure in Students
10. Professionalism. (Van Schaack & Glick, 1982, p. 33)

The methodology of data collection does not seem consistent among the 12 participants of this investigation. None the less, the list of 10 dimensions may provide an interesting profile and suggest the need for further research. The list of dimensions, in and of itself, does not explain how these dimensions work together, or even if the distinguished participants are aware of how these dimensions impact their practice on a daily basis.

Fenderson (2011) published his findings about the personality characteristics of the 2009 candidates for the National Teacher of the Year award. This quantitative case study was based on the NEO Five Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI) that determines a personality profile as developed from a recurring language-driven testing instrument (Costa & McCrae as cited in Fenderson, 2011). Seventeen of the 56 national ToY candidates responded to the personality instrument, and Fenderson (2011) found, when compared to the NEO-FFI normative data, that his participants scored very high Extroversion, high Agreeableness, high Conscientiousness, average Openness and low Neuroticism. The scores reflected the common personality traits of his sample. These results were informative since Fenderson (2011) interpreted his findings to indicate "strong personality and unique behaviors that contribute to successful classroom teaching" (p. 41). In accordance with his findings, Fenderson recommended that preservice and inservice teachers should also reflect the personality characteristics of the recognized as outstanding participants in his study, so that improvements are made in the recruiting and hiring of teachers, as well as providing for quality teachers in every classroom. However, the question remains as to what underlying phenomena defines or creates these dimensions of personality as described by Fenderson's investigation. Were the 17 participants of his study aware of themselves in terms of these personality

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dimensions and did they have an awareness of how these factors define their teaching experience? The teachers' self-perceptions about their lived experience as outstanding teachers were not accounted for in this study.

An earlier study on the personalities of ToYs was conducted by Ruston, Knopp, and Smith (2006). These researchers examined 39 school-district level ToYs using the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), and comparing their results with two groups of elementary teachers ($n = 804$, $n = 189$) who had been studied and typed previously (Myers & McCaulley, 1985; Reid, 1999 as cited in Ruston et al., 2006, p. 26). The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (Myers, McCaulley, Quenk & Hammer, 1998) is based on four pairs of antithetical descriptors: (a) extroversion (E) and introversion (I) which are "attitudes or orientations of energy"; (b) sensing (S) and intuition (N) which are "functions or processes of perception"; (c) thinking (T) and feeling (F) which are "functions or processes of judging"; (d) judging (J) and perceiving (P) which are "attitudes or orientations toward dealing with the outside world" (p. 6). A four-letter type results from an individual responding to forced choice items on the MBTI instrument. The results of MBTI Type Indicator can also be analyzed in terms of combinations of preferences or by pairing the attributes in order to describe common features that different types have in common. For example, an individual who's responses result in the type Introverted (I), Sensory (S), Thinking (T) and Judging (J), (ISTJ) can have pairs of attributes in common with other types whose pairs include Introverted/Sensory (IS), Introverted/Thinking (IT), Introverted/Judging (IJ), Sensory/Thinking (ST), Sensory/Judging (SJ) or Thinking/Judging (TJ) (Myers et al., 1998, p.38).

In the Ruston et al. (2006) study the comparison of data indicated a significant difference between the personality type most often found in elementary school teachers as Introverted (I), Sensory (S), Feeling (F), Judging (J) or an *ISFJ* and the type reported by ToYs as Extroverted (E), Intuitive (N), Feeling (F), Perceiving (P) or an *ENFP*. The examination of individually paired attributes (i.e., EP, SF, NF, SJ, and NP) also showed significant differences between the two groups of teachers. The identification of the dominance of the ENFP type among ToYs defined this group of teachers as "energetic, enthusiastic people who lead spontaneous and adaptable lives…their intuition often draws them to new ways of doing things" (Martin, 1999 as cited in Ruston et al., 2006, p. 30). This suggested that ToYs may inherently possess a quintessence or embody an undefined spirit that catalyzes and empowers them to excel in their practice as teachers. Further exploration of the lived experience of ToYs may provide insight into this phenomenon.

Teachers' Self Perceptions

And so it is "I," the person among other persons, alone yet inseparable from the community of others, who see as if for the first time and who reflectively comes to know the meanings that awaken in my consciousness. I am the person who gives existence its essence, the one who returns essence to existential life. (Moustakas, 1994)

"The me…is one of the many things that the I may be conscious of" (Pajares & Schunk, 2002, p. 5). Indeed William James (as cited in Pajares & Schunk, 2002) first explained the distinction of the self as an "I" and as a "me," in that the individual has the capacity to consider himself or herself as two distinct entities: the self as knower and the self as known. With this concept in mind, the study of teachers' self-perceptions can also

provide valuable insight into the definition of teaching and for the explication of its lived experience.

Nias (1989) researched primary grade teachers extensively to gain an understanding of their self-perceptions as teachers, and to understand what it feels like to be a teacher. Her data were collected over a span of ten years, with initial interviews and observations from 1975-77 and follow-up interviews in 1985. From the study, Nias (1989) concluded that it is possible to be a teacher and yet not feel like a teacher; her findings indicated that those teachers who felt like teachers had the following perceptions of self:

1. A strong sense of personal identity with little distinction between self inside and outside of school
2. A blurring of the lines between personal and professional lives; having a sense of unity and wholeness and completeness
3. A state of naturalness rather than phoniness or a contrived condition, in that when adults interact with children, teaching is a natural part of that interaction
4. An understanding that they need to forge relationships with their students
5. An understanding that there is always the tacit assumption of power or control over students; that doing the work of the teacher requires being in charge, organized, and directing the classroom
6. An assumption of responsibility and concern for the welfare of the children
7. A willingness and ability to reconcile the conflicting and paradoxical work in teaching; to understand and accept that the teacher must control and dominate the student in order to facilitate his or her growth and development toward independence; to understand and accept that the teacher's personal dispositions and principles may not align with the institutional goals and values; to understand that they are expected to maintain professional consistency in the face of an ever-changing context. (pp. 181-201)

Nias' (1989) findings and interpretations regarding self perception of primary teachers underscored the complex nature of teaching and she emphasized that in most cases it is the work of teaching that has the ability to influence the teacher's self-image. Nias (1989) initially studied 99 primary teachers, and ten years later she interviewed 50 teachers,

most of whom participated in her initial research. Although she investigated the lived

experiences of these teachers by listening to their stories, her work did not focus on

teachers who had been recognized as particularly successful or outstanding.

Notwithstanding, Nias (1989) recognized that their interpersonal skills were sometimes

"almost intuitive, such as the 'pedagogic tact' described by Van Manen (1984: 2)"

(p.197-98). It is of interest then to investigate this concept with teachers already

identified as superior among their peers.

Agne (1999) discussed her current and earlier studies on teachers' self-

perceptions that included findings about ToYs. She pronounced that ToYs "were found to

hold beliefs that *spring* [emphasis added] from higher levels of self-efficacy and from an

internal locus of control" (p. 171). Herein, the choice of the diction is interesting; what is

the embodiment or essence which provides this springboard? Furthermore, in describing

the atmosphere created by these master teachers, Agne talked about "the caring *aspect*

pervading [emphasis added] expert teachers' classrooms" (p. 171). Again, we see an

intangible, almost ethereal descriptor that leaves undiscovered or undisclosed the

wellspring of this phenomenon. As a result of her research, Agne (1999) concurs with

Berliner's (1994) descriptions about expert teachers in that "superior teachers are more

intuitive" (p. 176). Is the nature of this intuitive aspect recognizable within the lived

experiences of ToYs?

The concepts of teacher selfhood and being aware of ourselves as teachers are

discussed by Hamachek (1999) as necessary areas for study. He cautioned that sometimes

> in our quest for better teaching methods, more efficient instructional strategies,
> specifically defined behavioral objectives, and more effective methods of inquiry,
> we lose sight of the fact that the success of those "better" things depends very

much on the emotional makeup and psychological underpinnings of the teacher who uses them. (p. 209)

As such, the study of externally overt teaching behaviors is not sufficient in the identification and description of effective teachers. It is equally, if not more, important to probe and prod further, so that the *underpinnings* to which Hamachek (1999) refers are excavated and brought to the surface. The internal essence of the self is the genesis of what eventually is observable as external teaching behaviors. Given that, if we ask about the nature of the lived experience of master teachers, we may be able to understand how their awareness of selfhood translates into their teaching behaviors. Hamachek (1999) has advised that we need more research about what teachers *are* and less research about what teachers do.

Phenomenology, Philosophical Analysis, & the Human Science Model of Inquiry

"Phenomenology is the study of the life-world—the world as we immediately experience it pre-reflectively rather than as we conceptualize, categorize or reflect on it" (van Manen, 1990, p. 9). Given this definition, it is appropriate to apply phenomenology to the field of education in an endeavor to enhance our understanding of the lived experience of effective teachers, in that it is a human experience filled with feelings, imagination, and intuition as well as observable behaviors. Rather than imposing externally preconceived, constructed systems of characteristics, dispositions, and skills on the research and the object of the research, the phenomenological approach permits elements, themes, definitions, and the natural or raw essences (including the possibilities of feelings, imagination, and intuition), of the object of study to emerge out of itself and thereby clarify our understandings. Although positivists may argue the validity of

information derived from natural inquiry based research, researching "lived experience…becomes not just an alternative site of knowledge production, but, rather a privileged site of knowledge production" (Barnacle, 2004, p. 61) because it allows us to explore and clarify knowledge of an intimately personal and internal nature. The narrative that unfolds in describing the essence of the phenomenon is "used by researchers with a nonpositivist, interpretive orientation, in which the immediate (often intuitive) meaning of actions to the actors involved are of central interest" (Erickson, 1985, p. 8).

Sexton-Hesse (1983) asserted that in an effort to ensure objectivity in their investigations, empirical researchers have often paid scant attention to the human condition. Yet it is the human condition with which research in the social sciences concerns itself. Human science inquiry is essential for the study of human practices because the experience of our everyday lives is where knowledge begins, especially when there is interest in understanding the concepts of free-will and intentionality (Polkinghorne, 1983), because "everyday knowledge structures our unexamined reality" (Beattie, 1995, p. 57). It is this concept of the unexamined reality to which Beattie referred that this study, and phenomenology, in particular, concerned itself. The focus of this kind of research is to gain insight into the "understandings and ways of knowing of those who live out their lives in those settings" (Beattie, 1995, p. 56). Cole and Knowles (1993) recognized that research in education had shifted to include those methods "in which the intensity of human actions and their meanings are centrally located" (p. 477).

Since "phenomenology is the science of the essential structures of consciousness, [and] study[ies] [are] based on the intuitive grasping of the essences of phenomena"

(Polkinghorne, 1983, p. 41-2), this researcher believes that this investigation has provided for meaningful insight into the phenomenon of the lived experience of effective teachers. Creswell (2007) also advised the use of a phenomenological research design when the researcher is asking questions about that which is at the heart of a phenomenon. Researchers, faculty, and students recognize the frequently employed method of phenomenology as well as its robust philosophical tenants in the educational arena (Tesch, 1988 & van Manen, 1990 as cited in Creswell, 2007).

Beattie (1995) summarized several important qualitative researchers that have catalyzed descriptive and naturalistic inquiry modes in education. Although the researchers that she has reviewed ask different questions of their subjects, they all believed in the power of listening to the subject's story (Coles, 1989; Connelly & Clandinin, 1992, 1991, 1990, 1988, 1986; Elbaz, 1983; Jackson, 1990; Janesick, 1968; Paley, 1986, 1981 as cited in Beattie, 1995). Indeed,

> biography, autobiography and narrative have all been used to study the question of how particular people are the way they came to be and the way they are; narrative alone uses historical, emotional, personal, factual data in an interpretive way in order to reveal what is meaningful for the purposes of understanding classroom practices. (Beattie, 1995, p. 61)

Beattie's work indicated that the deeper understanding gained from listening and analyzing teachers' narratives provides for the improvement of schools as well as how we prepare our teachers.

Paul and Marfo (2001) explained that for a discipline to conduct healthy research, it must embrace all modes of inquiry. Indeed, "faculties in education are becoming more epistemologically diverse research communities, with an increasing number of faculty member committed to qualitative approaches to research" (Paul & Marfo, 2001, p. 527).

It is important to remember that the naturalistic or human science modes of inquiry call for the understanding of the details in human life, and allow for diversity in the exploration of each individual form (Paul & Marfa, 2001). Furthermore, it is necessary to apply the research paradigm that aligns with the researcher's orientation and assumption about what is known, who knows what is known, and how the knower knows (Guba as cited in Paul & Marfa, 2001). In this particular situation, the researcher believes that phenomenology clarifies knowledge because it articulates the nature of knowing and allows for the individual to express the underlying features of knowing, including tacit knowledge or intuitive knowledge (Smith, 2008).

Kesson and Traugh, (2006) as teacher educators, in conjunction with their student, Perez III, reported on the nature of the phenomenological foundations of the graduate teacher preparation program at the Brooklyn Campus of Long Island University. This teacher preparation program requires students to conduct studies that are inquiry-oriented under the phenomenological approach entitled "Descriptive Review" (Himely as cited in Kesson, Taugh & Perez III, 2006). In "Descriptive Review", the researcher-teacher studies children in order to develop a reflective acuity, providing insight and understanding of otherwise taken-for-granted realities. Perez III reported that as a teacher he "started to ask, 'what happened?' instead of asking what J [his student] had done" (Kesson, Traugh & Perez III, 2006, p. 1874). Herein is the significance of phenomenological inquiry; phenomenology is offering educators and educational researchers an enriched opportunity to understand the way that we experience teaching and learning because the essence of the experience "surfaces to consciousness *without* the filter of theory and deduction" (Barnacle, 2004, p. 66).

Skemp (2010) completed a phenomenological investigation of six of his colleagues at the high school in which he taught with the intention of gaining a deeper understanding of these teachers' practice. The six teachers were all "cluster teachers" (p. 47-48), whereby their classes were comprised of general education students as well as special population students, with the assistance of a specialized teacher for that population. The participants were from 3 different departments, teaching a mixture of classes at many levels; they ranged from a first-year teacher to a teacher in his twentieth year. Their ages ranged from a 25-year old to a 43-year old. Skemp (2010) interviewed his participants twice for about 45-minutes each, seeking an understanding of how they perceived themselves as teachers, the first interview serving as a pilot to test his interview questions. After analysis of the first set of interviews, the interview questions were revised to allow for broader and more reflective responses. Skemp (2010) concluded that his participants were reflective by nature, irrespective of his types of questions and that through living the experience of teaching, they became "more skilled in the process of tacit knowing and integration" (p. 168). Furthermore, his data identified four dominating themes present in the lived experience of these teachers: (a) their purpose for teaching coupled with their value system reconciled with the realities of the educational system; (b) their building of structure to manage the system and environment in which they practice; (c) their relationships that developed with students and their colleagues; (d) their emotions as metaphors for defining, understanding, and explaining their work as teachers (Skemp, 2010). He inferred from his findings that through experience teachers synthesize the details of teaching with tacit knowing and that "there is a particular type of knowledge in the doing" (p. 170). If Skemp's conclusions were correct, then it is

important to study ToYs, since their lived experiences may provide a keener understanding of how master teachers come to know themselves and their work.

Skretta (2009) also conducted a phenomenological investigation of 12 teachers who had won the 1997 Sallie Mae First Class Teacher Award, which recognized a teacher of the year in his or her first year of teaching. Twelve years after winning the Sallie Mae award as a beginning teacher (BToY), this researcher was interested in understanding the participants' ongoing commitment to teaching. Although 16 winners had valid contact information, only 12 were still working within an educational setting and agreed to participate. Of the 12, six were classroom teachers, two were teaching at higher education institutions, two were administrators in elementary schools, one was a professional development leader at an elementary school, and the last participant was a college academic advisor. Skretta (2009) collected data through telephone interviews and used a constructivist lens to analyze and interpret the results. In general, the data collected from all 12 participants showed that they were strongly committed to teaching.

The data were further analyzed to understand the nature of their commitment, and dimensions were designated to be cognitive, behavioral, or affective. Some aspects of the participants' understanding of commitment to teaching did overlap and intersect. Skretta (2009) concluded that these first-class teachers' commitment was defined by the following descriptors:

1. Student focus & sense of purpose
2. Work ethic & dedication to continuous improvement
3. Passion & exhaustion coupled with energy and fulfillment. (p. 103)

Although this research is titled as phenomenological, the theoretical framework did not discuss phenomenology as a philosophical construct. Rather, Skretta (2009) presented a

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comparison/contrast discussion about other theorists who have measured commitment to teaching or who have examined the conditions that foster commitment to teaching. The narrative, lacking in depth and breath, did not provide the essence of the lived experience of the participants.

In an early phenomenological study to explain the lived the experience of recognized as outstanding elementary teachers, Puglisi (1986) collected data on two teachers for a period of two years through observations, interviews, and documentation of the classroom (physical space) and sample materials. Using Stone's conceptualization of Husserl's life-world (as cited in Puglisi, 1986), the data were organized under the paradigm of five strata:

1. stratum one – the deepest, private, and innermost attitudes of the teacher
2. stratum two – the notions, knowledge, and methods presumed as true by the teacher
3. stratum three – the subjective values, intentions, and motives underlying the teacher's behavior
4. stratum four – the experiences between teacher and student; the experiences between teacher and parent
5. stratum five – the reflections and introspections of the teacher about teaching and about being a teacher. (pp. 26-27)

Puglisi (1986) concluded that the teaching and classroom behaviors demonstrated by the participants "appear to be driven by their *invisible* [emphasis added] inward motives, intentions, and beliefs" (p. 120). The findings of his study indicated that it is important to continue to understand the nature of that which is invisible in the effective teacher. Furthermore, Puglisi (1986) asserted that "there are clear causal relationships among their life-world strata or belief systems…each life-world strata appears to influence other strata" (p. 124). The deepest levels of the teachers' life-worlds, in combination, impact

and impel the strata closer to the surface of the individual. Puglisi (1986) described this phenomenon as an unseen, but understood, process where

> an invisible set of values and beliefs are being transferred from Foss and Thompson [the participants of the study] to their students through a diverse variety of competencies…It is this transfer of beliefs from teacher to child that is the core of effective teaching. (p. 142)

If Puglisi's analysis was correct, the enhanced understanding of the life-world or lived experience of a diverse group of ToYs would provide insight into how effective teaching comes into being.

A year later, Stone (1987) conducted a phenomenological study of ToYs in order to seek commonalities among them as effective teachers that might be applied to the recruiting and hiring process of teachers. This study was situated within the theories of self as delineated by Erikson, Fromm, and Maslow in that "these scholars viewed the self as being grounded in an inner core of values and unfolding over time" (Stone, 1987. p. 5). The researcher was interested in discovering whether or not ToYs exemplified the loving, productive, generative (i.e., concerned with the welfare of the future and future generations), and self-actualized (i.e., one who has developed to the highest levels of being; motivated solely by intrinsic values) individuals as defined by the aforementioned educational psychologists, respectively.

Stone's (1987) investigation included eight participants that had been named a California SToY between 1974 and 1985. She conducted recorded, personal interviews with interview questions that focused on significant life experiences and qualities that set these individuals apart from other teachers. Stone's analysis resulted in a list of sixty-seven character traits of the eight SToYs, that were then grouped into four quadrants:

(a) common qualities as described by at least six of the participants; (b) collective

qualities as described by four or five of the participants; (c) shared traits as described by

two or three participants; and (d) individual traits as described by only one of the

participants. Of the four quadrants, the shared traits had the largest number of named

qualities, 27 in total, but are these essential effective teacher characteristics if only two or

three of the SToYs identified them? Additionally, Stone concluded that 37 themes

emerged from her data which she again grouped under the same four quadrants. Once

again, the shared themes quadrant contained the most items at 13. Just how impactful is

this information if only two or three participants alluded to these themes? Finally, Stone

developed a hierarchy of characteristics of teacher candidates from the participants'

responses, resulting in a list of 31 descriptors grouped under the shared characteristics

quadrant. As such, if less than half of the ToYs in her research agreed on these qualities,

would that have been enough to apply in the screening process for future teachers? Of

noteworthiness was that all the SToYs in the study "regret that their expertise has rarely

been called upon to define" (Stone, 1987, p. 126) the effective teacher. The culminating

synthesis of the data concluded that

> the development of their [the participants'] personality traits [is attributed] to the
> influence of one or more significant individuals in their lives. They are in
> agreement…that not everyone has the potential to become an effective
> teacher…"a good teacher –is somebody that's born"…"there's a certain
> quality"…"it's not something you can learn…it's something that's born in you."
> (Stone, 1987, p. 133)

Given the uncertainty of Stone's results as reported by quadrant information and her final

comments as quoted above, this work decidedly indicates the need for further exploration

in an effort to describe the *something* in the effective teacher, and calls into question the

concept of tacit knowledge and teacher self-hood as discussed by van Manen (1991) and Palmer (1998), respectively.

Summary

Given the confusion and tension that has existed and continues to exist in defining and measuring effective teachers as well as teacher effectiveness, continued research is needed. Although ToYs have been the subjects of several studies, the literature reviewed does not indicate that we understand the inner nature of being a ToY, nor do we understand how the concept of tacit knowledge or inner selfhood may relate to the lived experience of recognized as outstanding teachers. As suggested by many educational researchers, the need for the study of the experience of teaching as told through stories is infinite (Beattie, 1995; Carter, 1993; Noddings, 1991). Furthermore "the lifeworld is constituted by the never-ending experiencing of the daily lives of its members; thus the subject matter of phenomenological research is limitless" (Dahlberg et al, 2001 as cited in Gibson & Hanes, 2003, p. 199). With this in mind, this research intended to combine the power of narrative with the unfiltered lens of phenomenology to gain insight into the lifeworld of teachers who have been recognized as a Teacher of the Year.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

The utility of being able to identify effective teachers is self-evident; the method for doing so is not. (Strong, Gargani, & Hacifaziloglu, 2011, p. 3) *I do not know what constitutes the "essence of excellence in teaching." I have come across hints, glints, and glimpses of this complexity, but it is much more diverse than my capability to describe it. Like the ocean, it is an awesome idea—and worth reaching out for.* (Van Schaack & Glick, 1982, p. 44)

Research Questions

The primary research question was: How is teaching experienced by recognized as outstanding Teachers of the Year? A related research questions was: How do ToYs feelings and perceptions about being good teachers provide insight, if any, about the relevance to teaching of concepts such as pedagogical tact, teacher selfhood, and professional dispositions? These questions necessitated a phenomenological study, both as the philosophical framework and as the research methodology.

Overview of Phenomenological Method

One might minimally characterize phenomenology as philosophy that investigates experience from a first-person point of view, that is, as it is presented to the subject. (Merleau-Ponty, 2011, p. 4)

Phenomenology is a philosophical approach to scientific investigation in that it seeks to avoid the Cartesian mind-body or mind-matter dualism (Kockelmans, 1994; Romdenh-Romluc, 2011; Sokolowski, 2000; Stewart & Mickunas, 1990) inherent in empirical scientific investigation. When Descartes asserted "I think therefore I am" he allowed for the segregation of the mind from the rest of the body, and as such, he proffered the possibility of a purely rational and objective approach to studying and understanding the world, exclusive of a physical relationship between the observer and that which is being observed. In other words, Descartes' position advanced the theory

that the manner in which we come to know something resides outside of ourselves. This philosophical orientation is grounded in the teachings of Plato, who also believed in a dualism of the soul and the body. Platonism includes the belief that meaning, or what and how we understand, is an independent object. Therefore, meaning resides in what Plato called the soul and that this soul is separate from the body. Based on this Platonic premise, meaning or how we come to understand is independent of our consciousness or our physical body (Romdenh-Romluc, 2011).

The phenomenological approach offers, instead, holistic insight regarding that which we observe or experience, in that phenomenology acknowledges and embraces the concept that our minds and bodies are not separate entities. Yes, we have the faculty of reason (i.e., our mind), but reasoning is never completely separate from the faculty of our feelings and attitudes, (i.e., our body and our consciousness). This is so because if we accept reality as an object that we see, and we see ourselves as an object within the same reality (i.e., the world), then it is not possible for us to *be in the world* and *to be of the world* simultaneously without an intimate connection between our minds and our bodies. Phenomenology does not attempt to force a sterile objectivity over that which it studies as though there were no connection between the one who is studying and the object being studied. Therefore, from a phenomenological perspective, meaning and understanding are subjective in nature, and as such, meaning cannot exist outside of one's consciousness (Romdenh-Romluc, 2011).

Furthermore, there is a connection that phenomenologists refer to as *intentionality*, wherein we recognize "the conscious relationship that we have to an object" (Sokolowski, 2000, p. 8). When phenomenologists speak of intention, the

application is not in the practical sense of an action, but rather in the knowing or cognitive sense of an object. Phenomenology provides for the many ways in which we can know something or understand something. As our understanding of an object changes in accordance with our intentionality, we can then begin to understand the diversity regarding the ways humans come to know, and how we share reality with others and the world (Sokolowski, 2000). Once we realize that all consciousness has intentionality, or a way of knowing, this way of knowing can be studied as a phenomenon. For example, the way in which a person experiences baking is not the same as the way that person experiences listening to a pastry chef lecture on baking. In both instances, baking may be the object under study, but the intentionality or the way of knowing baking is clearly not the same. When we bake, we are in the world living the experience of baking. This experience, by being in the world, cannot be studied or contemplated in isolation from the world; just as the subject experiencing the baking cannot be isolated or extracted from the world.

Husserl's term *Lebenswelt* (Stewart & Mickunas, 1990; Romdenh-Romluc, 2011) defines the phenomenological sphere of lived experience, or lifeworld – the world of everyday experience. Herein, Husserl, referred to as the father or founder of phenomenology, ("Phenomenology," 2008; Romdenh-Romluc, 2011; Rutt, 2006) provides for the contextual space of our daily lives, the space that we inhabit along with the subjects that we study. Again, distinguishing itself from the Cartesian orientation to the world where the mind exists separately from body, phenomenology can study "all aspects of the *Lebenswelt*, and uncover its essential structures" (Romdenh-Romluc, 2011,

p. 13). The empirical or rational orientation to the world and truth will only study those aspects which are measurable.

Using a phenomenological lens to understand the world also requires that our everyday or taken-for-granted understandings or intentionalities be set aside. That is, every person in the state of being conscious has a customary standpoint or natural perspective toward the world of ordinary experience; Husserl called this our "natural attitude" (Sokolowski, 2000, p. 49; Stewart & Mickunas, 1990, p. 24). In this natural attitude, we unquestioningly accept that the world exists and we identify items that exist in the world, both animate and inanimate along with values, judgments, and feelings. However, from a philosophical vantage point, the natural attitude does not provide for a sense of wonder; the natural attitude does not question *how* our understandings or intentionalities of everyday experiences come to be. Therefore, the goal of phenomenologists to flesh out the essence of a lived experience requires that we suspend our natural attitude in exchange for a philosophical attitude, as a "demand to know the rational foundations of the world, or as Aristotle put it, it is to know the 'reason why'" (Stewart & Mickunas, 1990, p. 26). Husserl referred to this exchange of the natural attitude for the philosophical attitude as the "phenomenological reduction" (Stewart & Mickunas, 1990, p. 26).

> The phenomenological reduction is the move from the natural attitude to the phenomenological; it is the restriction of our intentionality from its expansive natural attitude, which targets any and all things in the world, to the apparently more confined phenomenological attitude, which targets our own intentional life, with its correlated objects and world. (Sokolowski, 2000, p. 51)

Phenomenological reduction then is the process by which we self-consciously examine our understanding or our intentionality to the point of transcendence in that thematic

implications rise up or become conscious to us based on our self as the instrument of truth.

In order to achieve phenomenological reduction and the phenomenological attitude, understanding or truth resulting from one's natural attitude must be recognized and acknowledged as superfluous and/or accidental. The effect of such recognition and acknowledgment establishes opportunity for the offsetting of commonly held beliefs and allow for the questioning of judgments that result from our natural attitude lens on the world. In the acknowledgment of predispositions and prejudices, an epochē or suspension of perceptions is realized. For Husserl the epochē serves to neutralize the intentions of natural attitude, making possible the emergence of layers of understanding as perceived from the philosophical and phenomenological attitude. When an individual experiences the epochē, he or she can bracket or set aside those extracted prejudgments. Significantly, "as a result of phenomenological bracketing, consciousness is purified and only phenomena remain. Analyzing the phenomena, in turn, reveals the basic structure of consciousness itself" (Stewart & Mickunas, 1990, p. 36).

Therefore, phenomenology was the appropriate philosophical framework for this study since it seeks an understanding of the essential structures of teaching within the lived experience of teachers. Moreover, the philosophical orientation of phenomenology acknowledges and accepts the influences of perceptions, where reality may be revealed to us from different angles and in various stages. These levels of awareness or changes in the perceptual process allow for plural descriptions of the world and affirm the problems with the Cartesian mind-body dualism because as Merleau Ponty (cited in Romdenh-

Romluc, 2011) explains: "I cannot view the world from nowhere; I always perceive the world from my own particular perspective" (p. 19).

Bracketing My Personal Story

For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
(Wordsworth, W., 1803)

In 1993, at the age of 40, I graduated from the College of Education (COE) at Florida International University (FIU) with a Bachelor of Science degree in English Education. This was a mid-life career change for me, and although I could have availed myself of other preparation options, I never once considered seeking a teaching certificate without a degree in education. My personal perception had always been that teachers need to be taught how to teach. Where this philosophy came from, I am not really sure. I do recall my family being very impressed by a distant cousin who graduated from Columbia Teachers College in New York City; the family thought it was "a really big deal." I also vividly remember two school years (7th and 10th grades) when one of my classes was taught by a student teacher under the supervision of my regular teacher, and this seemed very exciting and important to me. As I watched those student teachers, I can recall day-dreaming about my own student teaching experience and how my classroom would look. Somewhere in the back of my mind, I always wanted to be that student teacher and eventually a cooperating teacher. In a way, I believe that a traditional, university-based teacher education program was my obvious choice – I wanted to learn how to teach, and I wanted to attain what I believed to be the necessary credentials. In

those years, I never gave a thought to whether teachers could actually be taught to be effective teachers; I just took it for granted as a given – *a priori* of sorts.

My career as a high school English teacher has been challenging, exciting, and rewarding. One of the fortunate individuals who loves her job, I consider teaching to be a privilege – one that I believe I earned by serious scholarship, student teaching, and the passing of state exams. In my initial year of teaching, I joined other distinguished teachers as a recipient of the Sallie Mae First Class Teacher Award. In 2000 I earned a Master of Science in Education from Barry University, in 2006 I returned to FIU to participate in the COE's doctoral program in instructional leadership, and in 2008 I successfully completed the National Board Certification process for teachers. In 2010 I successfully started a business that offers writing coaching services to college applicants. What is it about me that made me an effective teacher? Throughout my teaching career, I have consistently relied upon traditional teacher education coursework to continue to develop and hone my teaching skills. Until recently, I never questioned the necessity of my preservice and inservice traditional teacher preparation courses and programs, believing that these types of credentials were necessary to be a professionally certified teacher who would be an effective teacher.

Since 2004, I have also been an adjunct instructor for the College of Education at Florida International University. The two courses that I teach are General Decision Making for Teachers (EDG 3321/5414) and Secondary Classroom Management (ESE 4322/5344). These courses are offered by the college's Department of Teaching and Learning and are categorized as methodology courses by the Florida Department of Education (FDOE). With this designation, the courses can be taken by students as partial

fulfillment of an alternative certification process. Over the past nine years, I have experienced an increase in the number of students enrolled in my classes for certification purposes only; some are non-degree seeking students who are already classroom teachers with temporary teaching certificates, or degree seeking students who are majoring in an academic area other than education. While it is difficult to substantiate, I have had an intuitive sense that many of these certification or elective-only students are not serious about learning how to teach; it is as though they do not believe in the value or necessity of these courses. I say this because of an overall attitude that many of them seem to possess – they often exhibit tardiness to class, lack of participation in class discussions, aloofness, and repeated absences from class meetings. Additionally, the work products of these students are frequently sub-standard in comparison to the assignments completed by degree-seeking education majors; oftentimes the elective or certification-only student does not respect due dates. It may very well be that these alternative track, non-education majors agree with the deregulation of teacher preparation and the validation of content knowledge as the key to teacher quality. In this regard, the alternative track, non-education majors' position is antithetical to my personal experience and belief system about traditional teacher education and preparation. This dichotomy of viewpoints is representative of Brewer's (2003, 2006) studies regarding the "research rumble" over what approaches in teacher education produce the best teachers.

These suppositions have become my musings. Janesick (2004) states that "researchers ought to have the opportunity in their training and in practice to sharpen their intuitive skills, which often open up avenues of data previously unknown or hidden" (p. 108). As such, working with this concept of exploring my intuition-based thoughts, I

am interested in gathering more information about the nature of the effective teacher. Moreover, I am specifically interested in the ToYs understanding of their practice and how they perceive their coming to be an effective teacher, especially since their perception and understanding of this phenomenon may be distinctive from my own interpretations and belief systems. I understand that it is my responsibility to recognize my biases about routes to certification and set them aside during the data collection and analysis process. I am also intrigued by the concepts of Palmer's inner selfhood (1998) and van Manen's tacit knowledge (1991) because an administrator recently told me after a classroom observation that I "possess an internal gift…that there's a light from within me that shines on my practice." I admit that I hoped to hear that other teachers also have this internal gift or light, but I must bracket my personal desire for such a confirmation.

Additionally, it was difficult for me to judge if my own position as a high school teacher will influence this interview and research process. In addition to the principle of bracketing for phenomenological reduction, Merriman (2002) discussed how the researcher must self-examine any possible factors "that may affect the investigation" (p. 31) in order to promote the trustworthiness of the study. With that said, I could not help but wonder if my current successful practice as a teacher of Advanced Placement English at a suburban high school serving an affluent population would affect my interview conversations. Technically, there would not be a hierarchical relationship between myself and the participants. However, Bogdan and Biklen (2007) have warned about the importance of "class and status differences…in fieldwork relationships" (p. 95). The disparity among teaching assignments has the potential to breed jealousy, frustration, and resentment among teachers. Because I was aware of this and I have sometimes sensed

resentment from teachers in other work locations, I did question whether the participants in my study will feel uncomfortable or compromised in any way. As such, in order to promote the establishment of a comfortable rapport, I planned for a meet and greet appointment with each of the participants prior to their respective data-collecting interviews. As it turned out, these meetings were unnecessary; preliminary telephone conversations were sufficient to give me confidence about the nature of my relationships with the participants. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) talked about how "the researcher enters the world of the people he or she plans to study, gets to know them and earns their trust" (p. 2). As such, it was this concept of trust that I did not take for granted.

Design

I was not seeking to confirm or negate a preconceived hypothesis, but rather gather, analyze, and synthesize interview data to inductively construct themes and to identify possible issues or factors that may offer an enlightened understanding of effective teachers in their lived experience. The nature of qualitative research may initially be guided by formulated research questions, but this type of inquiry is "a general idea of how they [the researchers] will proceed and what they are interested in, to state exactly how to accomplish their work and what specific questions they will pursue would be presumptuous" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 54). The inductive and flexible nature of qualitative research offers each participant the opportunity to tell her or his story of effective teaching in her or his own way. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) explained that "the goal of understanding how the person you are interviewing thinks is at the center of the interview" (p. 106). Working under this premise, the idea of standardized procedures was not a component in my qualitative research process.

Capturing the essence of inductive reasoning, Heidegger said: "We never come to thoughts. They come to us" (1971, p. 6). In relation to this concept of inductively, (and perhaps intuitively), developing ideas Merriam (2002) and Bogdan and Biklen (2007) discussed the nature of qualitative research as phenomenological. This fundamental precept of qualitative investigation permits me, as the researcher, to derive meaning from the ordinary activities and interactions of people in their everyday settings. As I was going to endeavor to develop meaning from the everyday experiences of the participants, my research method was phenomenological.

Van Manen (1990) and Elliot Eisner (1998) both discussed the opportunities offered by reflecting and clarifying our awareness of a phenomenon through the telling of stories. Indeed, it is often in and through the descriptive relating of stories and ideas that our awareness or understandings of concepts rise to a level of consciousness and clarity. However, the authentic essence or meaning of these concepts requires a process of "reflectively appropriating, of clarifying, and of making explicit the structure of meaning of the lived experience" (van Manen, 1990, p. 77). As such, this qualitative study was phenomenological in nature and also was conducted under the theoretic framework of phenomenology – describing an experience and reflecting on that description to, "construct a possible interpretation of the nature of a certain human experience" (van Manen, 1990, p. 41). In other words: to come to know something and know that we know it. Eisner (1998) metaphorically referred to knowing as a "connoisseurship," wherein the nature of understanding is significantly more than a cognitive representation. As a connoisseur, the qualitative researcher understands the essence of a concept through a

visceral experience that depends upon the engagement of all sensibilities to capture the full and authentic meaning of the phenomenon being studied.

In accordance with federal and university policies, this research was conducted following the regulations for research studies that involve human subjects. The researcher completed the training required to understand how to maintain the safety and welfare of the participants, and the proposed study had the approval of the university's Internal Review Board. Permission and approval to conduct this research was solicited from the Broward County Public Schools Department of Student Assessment and Research. During an initial communication with each potential participant, I offered a detailed explanation of the purpose of this study. Additionally I provided each interviewee with a written letter of intent for their signature. This document acknowledges their understanding and agreement to participate. A copy of this document appears in Appendix D of this study.

Since teachers are sometimes wary that their comments will be used for evaluative purposes, I did my best to assure the participants that my interests were purely for the purposes of educational research, and that I would use the utmost care in protecting their confidentiality. This study presents data using assumed names for the participants does not name their school sites.

Semi-Structured Interviews

The primary method of data collection in this study was semi-structured interviews of the participants. The phenomenological investigation customarily employs this method of inquiry because this research approach is centered from the internal perspective of the participant and not from an external point of view (Moustakas, 1994).

The utilization of the semi-structured interview allowed for the participant's story to emerge. Although the researcher had a drafted list of possible interview questions, the participant's responses and the expression of his or her experience determined what probing or follow-up questions were asked (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). As such, the drafted questions were a point of entry into a conversation, the possible queries that the researcher asked in order to encourage the participant's responses around the nature of teaching; ultimately, they were not definitive. Semi-structured means that there are partially planned questions; these questions are merely the key to the portal that will open a channel for the disclosure and discovery of the individual's story, which in turn will elucidate their meaning or essence of good teaching. Seidman's (1991) *Interviewing as Qualitative Research* guided the development of the interview questions. Seidman's work provided a useful guide to a phenomenological approach to in-depth interviewing. A copy of these questions may be found in Appendix A.

Since participants needed to feel comfortable during the interview process, I began the interviews with light conversation in order to set an inviting atmosphere with no perceived risk (Moustakas, 1994). The participant in a qualitative study should feel trusting of the interviewer and the interview process. Once I established a rapport, it was important to encourage participants through the questioning to elaborate in their descriptions of experience to include not only memories, but the feelings, insights, and understandings of those experiences as disclosed. In a sense, it was a recursive process, where through the ongoing articulation of the descriptions of the experience, the participants' deeper levels of consciousness were articulated and ascended to the surface, bringing the participant back to the experience in a different way – having new

realizations and clarity about the experience as it was being recounted. In this manner, "rich, vital, substantive descriptions" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 116) of the teacher's lived experience emerged.

Documents

Supplementary data (Jensen & Templeton, 1993; Van Schaack & Glick, 1982; Verner, 1999; Wallace, 2008) were also collected from personal essays written as part of the ToY application process. Since it is typical for ToY applicants to respond to a variety of essay prompts that may reflect their philosophical and pragmatic dispositions of teaching as a lived experience, the research data included an examination of these essays (CCSSO, 2011). Bogdan and Biklen (2007) have stated that such material can provide "rich descriptions of how the people who produced the materials think about their world" (p. 133).

In addition, other personal documents, such as diaries, journals, logs, letters, and electronic mail were collected as data as they become available to the researcher. Sometimes teachers keep written reflective materials or share their reflections in writing with other professionals. If a participant mentioned having written any of these types of documents, I then asked for permission to read them and include the information as data for the purposes of this study. These types of documents are capable of capturing a moment in the lives of individual while he or she is still under the "immediate influence of an experience" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 136), thereby recording and preserving significant feelings and deeply personal considerations. The words chosen by the author are literally still in the moment. Minimally, they can provide subtle messages about the life-world of the person being studied (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Therefore, document

analysis was appropriate for this phenomenological study because the documents were crafted from the participant's perspective, offering opportunities for uncovering meaning and essence beyond a literal or superficial reading of their writing.

Sample

This investigation employed the technique of purposeful sampling or "selecting information-rich cases for study in depth" (Patton, 2002, p. 46). More specifically, the sample reflects criterion purposeful sampling because the participants all held ToY status. At the same time, the ToYs selected for this purposeful sample represented an array of grade levels, an assortment of school climate demographics, different lengths of time in the classroom, and a variety of content area expertise. This mixture of participants provided information-rich data in describing the phenomena of the effective teacher's lived experience. It was also possible that any given participant may hold National Board Certification, and this factor was reported and considered in the description and analysis of the data. The combination of types of ToYs generated substantial data regarding the recognized as outstanding teacher's life-world. In accordance with generally accepted qualitative sampling guidelines, that discuss the need for a large enough sample to be useful and simultaneously small enough to offer detailed and deep information from each participant (Curtis, Gesler, Smith, & Washburn, 2000; Maxwell, 2005; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007; Patton, 2002; Sandelowski, 1995), this research included 10 ToYs who were currently teaching in Broward County Public Schools. Patton (2002) advised that

> sample size depends on what one wants to know, the purpose of the inquiry, what's at stake, what will be useful, what will have credibility, and what can be done with available time and resources….In-depth information from a small number of people can be very valuable, especially if the cases are information-rich….purposeful samples should be judged on the basis of the purpose and

rationale of each study….**The validity, meaningfulness, and insights generated from qualitative inquiry have more to do with the information-richness of the cases selected and the observational/analytical capabilities of the researcher than with sample size** [emphasis in the original]. (Patton, 2002, pp. 244-245)

Creswell (2007) provided support for a maximum sample size of 10 when he suggests that phenomenological investigation should include in-depth interviewing of no more than 10 individuals. In the event that the list of Broward County ToYs did not result in the availability of 10 participants, the researcher would have communicated with Miami-Dade Country Public Schools for permission to contact the ToYs within their district. This secondary pool of candidates was not necessary since the 10 participants were available from Broward County Public Schools.

Data Collection/Analysis

The purposeful sample was developed through a list provided by Broward County Public Schools of the past finalists for the Broward County Teacher of the Year Award (BCTOY) who were currently teaching in Broward County. BCTOY finalists were contacted via email with an explanation of the purposes of the study and a request for their participation. Upon receiving their electronic invitation (Appendix C), six ToY finalists or winners responded affirmatively within a few days. Of these six, five were suitable for the study because they were currently classroom teachers and represented diverse grade levels, subject areas, years of service, gender, and etcetera. A second and third round of electronic invitations resulted in the additional five ToYs who accepted my invitation to participate. A subsequent email offered me the opportunity to obtain the ToYs preferred telephone contact information. I called each ToY to set a meet and greet type of appointment that would have taken place at his or her convenience during non-

school hours. However, upon speaking with each ToY via telephone, the meet and greet became unnecessary. All the ToYs were enthusiastically interested in my project and expressed a readiness for the interview. As such, we immediately set appointments for the interviews; 60-90 minute in-person interviews were conducted with each of the participants. In order to provide an additional layer of trustworthiness in the transcribed data (Merriam, 2002), I included opportunities for member-checking during the interviews by seeking clarification of the participant's comments. Additionally, after the audio tapes were transcribed into written documents, I again sought each participant's feedback regarding the accuracy and clarity of the transcription of their interview. To do so, I shared with participants, by e-mail, a copy of the typed transcript.

Qualitative researchers do not seek to increase standards for improved validity of their findings. Instead, validity is derived by the researcher's ability to approximate the participant's reality as confirmed by several types of data, and to provide reliability by a consistency between the results and the data by asking if the interpretation of the findings is plausible, feasible, and supported (Merriam, 2002).

The interviews were recorded using a digital voice recorder and I took notes to capture facial expressions and nonverbal gestures of the participants during the interviewing sessions. I suggested that the interviews take place at the participant's location of choice, in order to make the interview process as convenient as possible for each of them.

After member-checking was completed, the transcripts were coded by me and, as recommended by Merriam (2002), by a peer in a peer review process. This peer became a secondary pair of eyes and independently coded "to scan some of the raw data and assess

whether the findings are plausible based on the data" (p. 26). Coding is a systematic

classification procedure to organize the data collected. Although there are coding

software programs available, this investigation used a manual coding process that

included both symbols and color coding. This process requires the researcher to identify,

code (mark), categorize, classify, and label the primary patterns or themes in the data

(Patton, 2002). It is imperative that the researcher see what data fit together or converge;

regular patterns may emerge and division of the data into categories should be consistent.

Just as important however, are the data that do not seem to fit together or diverge from

the categories already defined. This additional data must be analyzed fully in order to

determine if they are an extension of the data already categorized, or identified as

"*deviant cases*" (Patton, 2002, p.467) in that they do not fit the previously identified

schema. Coding categories used in this study are presented in Appendix E of this report.

The peer reviewer was a colleague in qualitative studies and has previous

experience working with the primary researcher. This colleague independently coded one

interview transcript in its entirety as well as a ToY application essay. Upon completion of

the coding, I spoke personally with the peer reviewer to discuss our respective coding

results and the patterns that we identified in the interview transcript.

Furthermore, I developed and maintained a researcher's journal as an ongoing

element of the study. The journal provided opportunities for reflectivity, an audit trail of

information among the peer reviewers, as well as notes that served as reminders to me as

I worked through the research process. The catalogue of the types of entries included in

my journal offered me infinite opportunities to record information that worked to

elaborate and clarify the research process and experience (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). The

journal often provided a reflective check in support of the transcripts. Additionally, these reflective expressions provided a conduit to elucidate ideas or perspectives that would otherwise not surface into my conscious awareness, and therefore go unnoticed (Eisner, 1998).

As indicated above, this report uses assumed names for each participant; the names of ToYs schools, and the names of any and all administrators and colleagues that were mentioned within the interview conversations are not reported. The real names were changed or omitted to maintain confidentiality, something that I personally promised the interviewees when I spoke to them about using a responsive interviewing model (Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

Additional data were provided by the participants' essay responses from their ToY application packages (Jensen & Templeton, 1993; Van Schaack & Glick, 1982; Verner, 1999; Wallace, 2008). Participants had copies of their essays available for me at the time of their respective interview. I asked the participants to reflect on their essays as relevant to the research questions. If a participant mentioned any other writings relevant to their understanding of the lived experience of an effective teacher, I asked their permission to include these writings in the study. Document analysis under the hermeneutical, phenomenological framework often results in enhanced understandings of the phenomenon under investigation (van Manen, 1990).

The coding of the documents made available by ToY applications as well as any individual participant submissions of writing were coded and processed following a method similar to that of the transcribed interviews, the steps of which appear in subsequent sections of this chapter. Deconstruction of text allowed themes to emerge

which did or did not reinforce themes found in the interview transcripts. A peer review process was also implemented for the coding of the documents in order to confirm the plausibility of the findings as previously described in the section on the coding of the interview transcripts.

With regard to the coding of transcripts and documents, if ambiguous or contrary interpretations had resulted between the primary researcher and the peer reviewer, the researcher would have requested a qualified and independent third party to code the data. This third party's findings would have served to resolve any conflicts in coding or misinterpretations of the data. The researcher would have fully disclosed any third party intervention that was necessary during the data analysis phase of this study. Patton (2002) underscored the importance of the researcher's obligation to "**monitor and report their own analytical processes and procedures as fully and truthfully as possible** [emphasis in the original]**"** (p. 434).

In qualitative research, including phenomenological studies, the concepts of reliability and validity (i.e., trustworthiness) are important. Qualitative researchers cooperate with the participants of their study to present reliable information, in that it is "accurate and comprehensive of their data" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 40). When a qualitative study is deemed reliable, it means that the reporting of the data represents as closely and as authentically as possible the setting observed or the phenomenon as described by the participant. Accordingly, the member-checking process and the researcher's journal are critical tools in accurately describing the data collected during the time in the field. Validity is having confidence that the interpretations are trustworthy (Vagle, 2009), that other researchers would hear and or see the same thematic threads

when examining the data, and that there is a logical pattern of critical thought moving from the data presented to the analysis of findings.

Creswell (2007) discussed the idea that validity and trustworthiness within a phenomenological study are achieved by a solid foundation of information that is supported well by the data. He suggested that researchers ask themselves several questions to enhance trustworthiness in their studies. In responding affirmatively to Creswell's questions, I committed to the fact that

1. I have conveyed an understanding of the philosophical tenets of phenomenology.
2. I have a clear "phenomenon" to study and articulated these ideas concisely.
3. I have employed a recommended procedure in my data analysis (i.e., Moustakas).
4. I have rich descriptions of the experience and the context in which the experience occurred.
5. I have been reflexive throughout the study. (Creswell, 2007, pp. 216-217)

These are the standards to which I held myself accountable, and I was empowered by Patton's (2002) charge to me:

> You [I] realize that completely value-free inquiry is impossible, but you [I] worry about how your [my] values and preconceptions may affect what you [I] see, hear, and record in the field, so you [I] wrestle with your [my] values, try to make any biases explicit, take steps to mitigate their influence through rigorous field procedure, and discuss their possible influence in reporting findings. (p. 93)

Phenomenal Analyses

Phenomenology as a method of data analysis is a multi-step and multi-level process. This study followed the Moustakas (1994) modification of the Van Kaam method of analysis of phenomenological data (pp.120-121). As the researcher moved from the first step toward the last, the level of understanding the natural essence of the phenomenon deepened and crystallized. The first step in data analysis was

horizonalizing, where the researcher acknowledged equal attention and significance to all comments expressed by participants relevant to answering the research questions. The second step was cataloging the units of meaning recognized to exist within the horizonalized data. Once the researcher had a listing of the units of meaning, themes were identified by clustering together the units of meaning. Based on these clustered themes, the researcher textually described the experience, eventually delving into the structure of the descriptions or examining how these descriptions came to be. Finally, all the textual and structural descriptions of the participants were synthesized to articulate the meaning and fundamental essence of the phenomena studied (Moustakas, 1994). Each of these steps is outlined in more detail in the subsequent sections of this chapter.

Horizonalizing data. The first step of phenomenological data analysis requires that the researcher examines the data for any and all relevant statements. In this part of the analysis, I accepted all expressions as equally valid and important with respect to the phenomena being studied. It was therefore necessary for me to be critically aware of my personal biases and to have reached Husserl's epochē so that all of the participants' relevant data were included for further analysis. In order for me to complete the horizonalization of data, I listed all relevant statements expressed by the participants (Moustakas, 1994).

Units of meaning. Once I listed all the relevant statements from the data collected, the next task was to eliminate any redundancies or overlapping statements made by a participant. The resulting list represented and was delimited to, the invariant horizons or the units of meaning of the experience as described by the participants (Moustakas, 1994).

Identification of themes. At this step in the phenomenological process, I looked for relationships among the units of meaning. As the connections were identified, I clustered the related units of meaning into thematic groupings. Each theme derived from the clustering of the invariant horizons identified a defining attribute or core descriptor of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).

Textural description of the experience. At this point in the data analysis, I synthesized the themes to offer a textural description. In this stage of the narrative, I included direct quotations from the data collected, and through elaboration presented a textural rendering of the experience. The textural rendering included the natural experience as well as the participant's focus in describing the experience; it was the description of the appearance of the experience (Moustakas, 1994).

Structural description of the experience. This stage required me to interpret *how* the textural descriptions emerged. Herein my narrative "provide[s] a vivid account of the underlying dynamics of the experience, the themes and qualities that account for 'how' feeling and thoughts" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 135) are connected to the experience. In developing the structural description, I peeled away the more superficial layers of meaning, analyzed and reflected on the textural descriptions in such a way as to function with imaginative variation which is a "*structural differentiation among the infinite multiplicities* of actual and possible cognitions, that relate to the object in question and thus can somehow go together to make up the unity of an identifying synthesis" (Husserl cited in Moustakas, 1994, p. 35). Structural descriptions moved beyond describing an appearance, they expressed the meanings behind the appearances and thus opened the portal for the essence of the phenomenon to emerge.

Arriving at essence. In this final stage, I integrated the textural and structural descriptions of each participant to form composite descriptions of the lived experience of recognized as outstanding teachers. First, I synthesized the textural descriptions to produce a rich and comprehensive picture of what the lived experience looked like for this group of ToYs. Secondly, I synthesized the group's structural descriptions using imaginative variation, reflection and analysis to construct a description of the forces underlying the phenomenon. The use of imaginative variation is the phenomenological way of intuiting the essence of an experience from words both heard and seen; it is the synthesis of extracted meaning. "The composite structural description is a way of understanding *how* the…group experience *what* they experience" Moustakas, 1994, p. 142). Lastly, I integrated the synthesized textural and structural descriptions to elucidate meaning and articulate the essence of the phenomenon.

Summary

This study was intended to increase the understanding of teaching as seen through the lived experience of ToYs for educational policymakers and practitioners. This study was phenomenological in nature, both in its theoretical framework as well as in its methodology, with goals to add to the research about the deeper meaning of experiences of recognized as outstanding-teachers. The literature review of Chapter 2 indicates that although there has been extensive research on teacher effectiveness, the concept of "tacit knowledge" (van Manen, 1991) and "inner selfhood" (Palmer, 1998) require further exploration. This study was undertaken to better understand the experience of teaching for ToYs and to garner a fuller awareness of how these practitioners perceive teaching. Through interviewing 10 ToYs, this research examined the phenomenon of their lived

experience as teachers, in order to get closer to the fundamental essence of teaching (Moustakas, 1994) as they understand and live it. Given the ongoing controversies and inconsistencies regarding routes to teacher preparation and certification, as well as the increased emphasis on teacher accountability for adding value to student achievement, the reporting of this study is timely.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH RESULTS

*Information **becomes** data only if a researcher is able to make it meaningful...It is imagination that gives the world nameable categories that package what might otherwise be unexperienced or chaotic.* (Eisner, 1998, p. 185)

Approach to Research

This phenomenological study's purpose was to examine the lived experience of recognized as outstanding teachers in an effort to gain insight into teaching. The research questions that guided this study were:

1. How is teaching experienced by recognized as outstanding Teachers of the Year (ToYs)?

2. How do ToYs feelings and perceptions about being good teachers provide insight, if any, about the relevance to teaching of concepts such as pedagogical tact, teacher selfhood, and professional dispositions?

The methodology of this phenomenological investigation included interviewing 10 winners or finalists of Broward County's Teacher of the Year award and the examination of the participants' personal essays on teaching that were submitted as part of their ToY application packets. The 10 participants in the study were selected purposefully from among the county's finalists and winners over the last 24 years; the primary selection criterion was that each ToY finalist or winner had to be a classroom teacher at the time of the interview. Broward County Public Schools Internal Review Board granted the researcher authorization to contact elementary, middle, and high school principals for permission to invite ToY finalists and winners to participate in the research (Appendix B). With the exception of two principals, permission was granted by

administrators for the researcher to contact school-based personnel. In turn, an email was

sent to Broward ToYs who are still classroom teachers in the Broward school system,

inviting them to participate in the study. A sample of this email appears in Appendix C.

The teachers who agreed to participate represent elementary, middle, and high school

grades. Their years of teaching experience range from 40 years to as little as six years in

the classroom. Both genders are represented as well as several ethnic groups. A variety of

subject areas and grade levels provide additional representation. Five of the 10

participants hold National Board Certification and eight participants have earned

advanced degrees. Of the two participants without a graduate degree, one is permitted to

teach with only an Associate's degree. The school settings of the participants are also

representative of diverse student demographics. The diversity among the individuals that

comprise this purposeful sample was intentionally designed to offer the researcher the

depth and breadth of meaningful, lived experiences as classroom teachers and to increase

the opportunity for narrative descriptions that would be rich and insightful (Patton, 2002).

Figure 1, *Profiles of the Participants*, follows and summarizes the basic and diverse

characteristics of the group of ToY participants. For organizational purposes the

participants are listed in order of their years of service, from most years teaching to

fewest years teaching. However, this sequence is not intended to rank the participants in

any way. Herein, the participants are introduced using their assumed names. Later in the

chapter, each participant will be described with more detail.

Figure 1

Profiles of the Participants

Name	Ethnicity and Gender	Highest Degree Earned	National Board Certified	ToY Finalist or Winner	Grade Level or Subject Taught	Years Teaching
Marie	White Female	MS	Yes	Winner	Grades 9-12 English/Language Arts	40
Christopher	White Male	MS	No	Winner	Grades 9-12 Biology and Chemistry	32
James	White Male	MS	Yes	Finalist	Grades 9-12 Mathematics	29
Diane	African American Female	BS	No	Finalist	Grades Pre K-5 Kindergarten	28
Rosa	Hispanic Female	MS	Yes	Finalist	Grades 9-12 Spanish and French	27
Taina	Hispanic Female	Ed S	Yes	Winner	Grades 6-8 ESE, ESOL, and Reading	22
Juliette	White Female	MA	Yes	Finalist	Grades K-5 General Music	21
José	Hispanic Male	AA	N/A	Finalist	Grades 9-12 JROTC	15
Tom	Asian American Male	MS	No	Finalist	Grades 9-12 Social Sciences	9
Sylvia	White Female	MA	No	Finalist	Grades 9-12 Drama	6

Originally, the researcher intended to have a preliminary meet and greet appointment with each participant to facilitate the establishment of a rapport. As it turned out, during the telephone conversations that took place to setup appointments, each ToY was immediately friendly, expressing an eagerness and readiness to be interviewed. Because of the ease in establishing a comfortable rapport, the researcher decided that the meet and greet appointments were unnecessary. Each ToY winner or finalist was interviewed individually during non-school hours; the interviews were audio recorded.

The researcher also maintained a journal where observational notes and comments were documented during the interview, as well as analytical and reflective memos during analysis. For each of the participants, the researcher listed three to five adjectives that described the demeanor of the ToY winner or finalist during his or her interview. In accordance with member-checking practices (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Creswell, 2007), transcripts of the recorded conversations were sent to each participant via email to check for accuracy and to offer opportunities for additional commentary or feedback. Feedback from participants served to affirm the accuracy of their expressions, in that the ToYs found their responses to my questions, including how they elaborated on their ideas and feelings captured their intended thoughts and feelings. None of the participants requested any changes in his or her transcript. Nine of the 10 participants were able to provide their essays from the ToY application package that each nominee had submitted to Broward County. One participant no longer had the application essays available.

As explained in Chapter 3, the interview transcripts and the ToY application essays were phenomenologically analyzed using the Moustakas (1994) modification of the Van Kaam method of analysis of phenomenological data (pp.120-121). As recommended by Bogdan and Biklen (2007) and Patton (2002), a peer review process was used to affirm the plausibility of themes identified in the coding process. The primary researcher invited a peer with expertise in qualitative research to independently code an interview transcript and a ToY application essay. As a result of this effort, the independent coding process did not identify any ambiguous or contrary interpretations of the data. The transcripts and documents were analyzed for themes that emerged as well as a structural analysis of their narrative. Riessman (2008) has stated that "thematic

narrative analysis has strengths...but also limitations" (p. 76). Therefore, attention to how narratives are constructed and the rhetorical choices a narrator makes in the telling of his or her story can hold significance and provide additional insights (Riessman, 2008; Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

In the subsequent sections of this report, when the participant's narrative contains an ellipsis of three dots, this designation indicates that a few words have been left out of the quotation. When there was a pause or disconnect in the participant's expression of his or her thoughts, a long dash appears within the transcriptions quoted.

Summary and Presentation of Data

Background, Demographics, and Life History

Marie. Marie's interview was on May 19, 2012. The researcher has also communicated with Marie via email and telephone several times. The quotations included in this section are from her interview transcript unless otherwise indicated. As a 40 year veteran of teaching in Broward County and as a Broward County Teacher of the Year winner, Marie explained that she "became a teacher because of a scholarship offered by the State of Florida." She had entertained some ideas about a career in journalism because a professor in college "really pushed me to be the journalist." However, Marie's teaching plans firmly crystallized when she realized that reporters do not make much money and that if she didn't teach it would mean that she would "be poor forever, and pay back this loan as well."

Marie's vast experience includes teaching at both middle schools and high schools, although the majority of her experience has been at the high school level. Because Marie excelled in all subjects, she studied enough math and science to hold

teaching certification in those areas in addition to English, speech, and journalism. Although some teaching assignments early in her career included math and science, she thinks of herself as an English teacher. In her current position Marie teaches high school juniors Advanced Placement English Language and Composition, American Literature, and Creative Writing within a dual enrollment structure.

Marie's resume includes numerous awards and distinctions, including membership in the National Teachers Hall of Fame, authorship of articles and grants, and instructorship for local colleges and universities. The researcher's field notes documented Marie as "articulate, poised, confident, and perky" during the interview and Marie confirmed this when she disclosed that her own son labeled her as "pathologically cheerful."

Christopher. Christopher's interview was on June 12, 2012. The researcher has also communicated with Christopher via email and telephone several times. The quotations included in this section are from his interview transcript unless otherwise indicated. For the last 32 years, Christopher has taught in the same high school and the same classroom. His teaching schedule has included regular, honors, and advanced placement levels of biology and he has also been asked to teach chemistry from time to time. In addition to his teaching responsibilities, Christopher has also been the school's Science Coach and he has served as the Chairperson of the Science Department since 1994. He shared that he "always had a latent desire for teaching" that surfaced during a part-time instructor's job with a community college while studying for a Masters Degree in Biology.

During the interview, the researcher noted that Christopher was "unassuming, affable, and engaging." The field notes also include comments about how animated his expressions were and the energy of his non-verbal gestures that accompanied his remarks. Christopher is all about being a teacher, asserting: "I've been teaching 32 years and I have no plans on retiring...they'll wheel me out kicking and screaming" (Interview).

As a Broward County Teacher of the Year winner, Christopher holds many other notable awards. Among Christopher's recognitions is the title of Florida Biology Teacher of the Year, and he works actively to support the development of new science teachers. He has collaborated closely with county curriculum specialists in the development of science curriculum for Broward Public Schools.

James. James' interview was on May 17, 2012. The researcher has also communicated with James via email and telephone several times. The quotations included in this section are from his interview transcript unless otherwise indicated. This ToY finalist is "formal, analytical, precise, and structured." These are the adjectives that the researcher recorded to describe James. He has been in the Florida public education system for a total of 32 years. James has been high school math teacher for 29 years, but also worked as an assistant principal for three years. He did not find administrative work "as enjoyable" as teaching and returned to the classroom. Teaching was James' first career choice, having "always enjoyed watching good teachers" in high school and also wanting to "emulate" his algebra teacher who James described as his "role model."

Of the 29 years in the classroom, James has taught in both Miami Dade County and Broward County Public Schools. He has been a soccer coach for 15 years, and a club sponsor for the same period of time. For the past four years, James has also been a class

sponsor. His resume includes part-time work as a professional referee for Major League Soccer and as a Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) assistant referee at international soccer matches. James has also been involved with the Rotary Club and Parent Teacher Student Association (PTSA). After Miami Dade County Public Schools cut their funding of a program to mentor new teachers, James designed and implemented a new teacher support program.

Diane. Diane's interview was on May 29, 2012. The researcher has also communicated with Diane via email and telephone several times. The quotations included in this section are from her interview transcript unless otherwise indicated. Early in the interview, Diane indicated that she thought she "had always planned to become a teacher from the beginning" considering that "when I was growing up there weren't as many opportunities for women." And even though Diane has 28 years of teaching experience, she also has an employment history that reflects skills and talents beyond the realm of classroom teaching. Between 1990 and 1999, Diane held positions as a corporate trainer, an educational sales consultant, and a sales manager. However, regarding her kindergarten teacher status, she stated in her ToY application essay that "no other job has been as satisfying or rewarding" (Diane, personal communication).

The researcher's notebook captured the profound calmness and deliberateness in Diane's voice during her interview. She impressed the researcher as being a "reflective, warm, and sensitive individual." Although Diane is one of two participants who do not hold an advanced degree, she has accumulated 38 graduate credit hours earning a 4.0 grade point average. In addition to her ToY finalist accomplishment, Diane earned top

scores on the National Teacher's Exam, has authored curriculum guides, and has received awards for outstanding service in education.

Diane's shifts in her career, leaving the classroom and then returning to it in 2002, were the result of personal circumstances in her life: changes in marital status, relocations to different states, and the terminal illnesses of her parents. Her classroom teaching experience spans public school districts in Ohio, Virginia, and Florida, where she has taught students in both low and high socioeconomic areas.

Rosa. Rosa's interview was on June 6, 2012. The researcher has also communicated with Rosa via email and telephone several times. The quotations included in this section are from her interview transcript unless otherwise indicated. This ToY finalist has taught for 27 years; all of her positions have been in Broward County Public Schools. In addition to teaching, Rosa has been the Department Chairperson for World Languages and introduced the Advanced Placement Program for Spanish and French to her high school.

Rosa's personality, as noted by the researcher, is "gracious, focused, diplomatic, and caring." While she speaks, her smile radiates warmth and sincerity. Rosa taught for 10 years, then left teaching for 12 years to raise her daughters, and returned to the classroom in 1995. She agrees that teaching is "the mother-friendly profession," a job that is convenient for parenting with its early hours and summers off. There was no inner sense that she was born to teach; in fact, Rosa explained that she became a teacher because of an interest inventory test administered to her as a ninth grader. "The test was always in the back of my mind" she explained. She studied Spanish literature and graduated from a local public university's College of Education to have "a fast route into

the profession." Because she had married a year before completing her degree, Rosa knew that she "wanted to have a family and...[she] thought being off in the summer was a good thing" (Interview).

Also a winner of the Florida Foreign Language Association's ToY award, Rosa's resume delineates extensive service commitments by sponsoring student clubs and organizations. She has served as Co-Chairperson for the School Advisory Council (SAC) and she has consistently attended continuing education workshops, conferences, and seminars. Rosa shared that she "always felt refreshed when I go and do a workshop and things like that" (Interview).

Taina. Taina's interview was on June 19, 2012. The researcher has also communicated with Taina via email and telephone several times. The quotations included in this section are from her interview transcript unless otherwise indicated. When you see this participant, it is difficult to believe that she has 22 years of teaching experience. Her vibrancy, liveliness, and enthusiasm coupled with a non-aging appearance have you feeling as though you are talking to a twenty-something year old. Taina's teaching career includes positions at elementary, middle, and senior high schools in New York and Florida. She also is an adjunct instructor at a local, private university of undergraduate and graduate courses in Exceptional Student Education (ESE) and Teaching English to Students of Other Languages (TESOL).

Taina has worked on the committee to revise National Board Professional Teaching Standards for Literacy in Reading and Language Arts for early childhood through middle school and she served as a scorer of Assessments of National Board Candidates applying for certification in the Early Adolescence categories of ESE and

Social Studies/History. She has co-authored curriculum manuals for Special Education teachers and was awarded two Walmart grants. Currently, Taina is working on her Doctoral Degree in Instructional Leadership.

According to the researcher's field notes, this participant spoke very rapidly and loudly; the field notes also include comments about how whole-heartedly Taina answered questions, with extensive details and examples. She seemed to embrace every question, telling researcher, "I give my all, that's just the way I am, I give my all" (Interview).

Juliette. Juliette's interview was on June 8, 2012. The researcher has also communicated with Juliette via email and telephone several times. The quotations included in this section are from her interview transcript unless otherwise indicated. After teaching for 21 years, Juliette continues to believe that she was always meant to do this work. She stated in three separate responses to my questions during the interview: "I was just called to it; it was something I always wanted to do." "It was like a mission from God." "It was something that I was born to do; there was never any question." (Interview).

The researcher's descriptive notes include the adjectives "devoted, determined, and goal-oriented." Juliette graduated number one in her class from a university that she attended on a 4-year scholarship, and went on to earn a Master of Arts in Teaching, with "emphasis in all three areas: Vocal Performance, Music Education, and Choral Conducting, because I wanted to cover what I hadn't gotten in undergrad." Juliette also spoke about how most elementary schools have a Chorus as an after-school club or extra-curricula activity, however as the Choral Director at her school, she "look[s] at it as a whole program in and of itself" (Interview).

Juliette is certified in Elementary General Education (K-6) as well as in Music Education (K-12); in light of budget cuts she was assigned to teach both music and Physical Education (PE) classes during the 2011-2012 school year. She expressed that "it was a tough pill to swallow this year, having to teach PE." She also runs the school's morning news show. Independent of her fulltime public school position, Juliette owns and operates a summer music camp, celebrating its fifteenth year, for children ages six through 14 and offering a full curriculum in general music.

José. José's interview was on April 26, 2012. The researcher has also communicated with José via email and telephone several times. The quotations included in this section are from his interview transcript unless otherwise indicated. José is a retired military officer holding the rank of Sergeant Major. Teaching the Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) program courses for the past 15 years, José served 24 years in the army before retiring from active duty. In order to teach in the JROTC program, an individual must be retired from any branch of the US armed services and hold an associate's degree. Currently, José needs seven credits to complete his bachelor's degree.

José's shift in careers was inspired by his first commanding officer; a sergeant who he says "was just like a father-figure...and would guide me to be the person that I am today." José believes that he can also "be a role model and a mentor" (Interview). He has assumed additional responsibilities by monitoring students during lunches and during school bus arrival to and departure from the campus. When José is out of school he is running camp programs such as Challenging Outdoor Personal Experience (COPE),

where he instructs approximately 300 youngsters in physical and mental exercises that require critical thinking skills using concepts in math and science.

The researcher's journal described José as "dedicated, succinct, and prepared." His responses were extremely direct and to the point: "I love what I do." "I know why I'm here." "I'm here for the kids." After considering his retirement from teaching in two years from now, José has decided against the idea. He admitted that his wife claimed he "would be coming here [the school] pushing a walker" (Interview).

Tom. Tom's interview was on May 1, 2012. The researcher has also communicated with Tom via email and telephone several times. The quotations included in this section are from his interview transcript unless otherwise indicated. A relatively young man, Tom has been teaching for only nine years. He has held positions in two different high schools in Broward County where he has taught a variety of subjects such as World History, Advanced Placement Human Geography, Multicultural Studies, and Sociology within the Social Science Departments of each school. At one point since his employment in the Broward school system, Tom was Chairperson of the Social Science Department. In his current assignment Tom is a fulltime classroom teacher.

Tom asserted that "teaching chose me." Spending four years in the Air Force as an avionics technician right after high school, Tom explained how circumstances came together that prompted him to want to teach. Participating in volunteer programs at local schools while in the service and having a military instructor who took a personal interest in him influenced Tom's career choice. He described an unplanned series of events where "the perfect storm kind of came together," resulting in his desire to become a teacher (Interview).

The researcher's field notes listed the following attributes about Tom: "meditative, sensitive, intuitive, humble, and compassionate." In describing himself as a teacher, Tom reflected, "I just think that our job is more than just what we teach. It's how we make somebody feel at the end of the day" (Interview).

Sylvia. Sylvia's interview was on May 18, 2012. The researcher has also communicated with Sylvia via email and telephone several times. The quotations included in this section are from her interview transcript unless otherwise indicated. The ToY finalist with the fewest years in the classroom is perhaps the most dynamic story-teller of the study's sample; Sylvia oozed with emotionally charged narration during the interview. It may have something to do with her content area expertise and her love for theater, but the researcher recorded only two adjectives: "alive and on-fire" in the journal, adjectives that Sylvia used herself during the interview. Sylvia's expressions exploded with descriptions and non-verbal gestures to support the communication of her ideas. She shared her internal thoughts with me that she repeated over and over to herself before finding a teaching assignment: "'Listen, God, can we find a position for me where I can activate all this stuff that I know and love and am passionate about?' Then I would dream about being in circles of kids and plays over and over again" (Interview).

Sylvia withdrew from a doctoral degree program in NY when she realized that she no longer wanted to become a university professor. During her doctoral studies, she discovered Theater in Education (TIE) or applied theater, where she worked with groups of high school kids as part of a creative arts team. She came to the conclusion that she wanted to teach teens. While in Florida visiting her mother, Sylvia believes that "all my stars lined up" because an unexpected opening for a high school drama teacher appeared

between Thanksgiving and Winter Break. She laughed when she related that she was interviewed on December 22nd in the school's parking lot (Interview).

As a member of the English/Language Arts Department, Sylvia's teaching schedule has included 10th and 11th grade English classes and Reading classes for students in grades nine through 12. However, Sylvia calls herself a Drama teacher. She holds membership in many professional organizations, including Folger Shakespeare Memorial Library, International Thespian Society, and American Alliance for Theatre and Education. Among her many honors and recognitions as a teacher-leader, Sylvia received the Reba R. Robertson Award and the Sontag Prize in Urban Education in 2011.

Summary of background, demographics, and life history. As current classroom teachers, all of the participants are involved in additional school activities outside their own teaching responsibilities, including the sponsoring of clubs and belonging to the School Advisory Council. Although they have varying degrees of years of experience and they may have come into teaching under different circumstances, all of the participants are definitively happy as classroom teachers. In the majority of cases, teaching was not their first career choice. Some of the ToYs have had breaks in their teaching careers, but all returned to teaching positions. In fact, two participants have held administrative positions, but rejecting that career path they also returned to the classroom.

It seems almost too much of a coincidence that all the participants were so easy to speak with and how quickly I established a rapport with each one of them. Several of the participants extended invitations to meet with me in their homes. Many of my memos and journal entries concern themselves with my feelings of "the ease of conversation and camaraderie" during and after our meetings. All of the participants expressed interest in

my research and have continued to ask questions about the study even after the conclusion of their respective participation. In general, all the teachers in this sample are knowledgeable and good-natured human beings. They are all invested in their working lives and seemed to really enjoy having the opportunity to talk about themselves as teachers. Sylvia said, "I love talking about this stuff. I can talk about this all day" (Interview). Marie told me, "It was fun. Obviously, I like talking about teaching" (Interview). Christopher may have said it best when he thanked me by expressing that he found renewal as a teacher from the interview experience; he remarked how "this interview…it energizes you again" (Interview).

Figure 2, *Summary of Background, Demographics, & Life History*, follows and summarizes the reason each ToY chose teaching as a career, whether there is a family history of teachers, grade level teaching experiences, non-classroom assignments, and other career experiences. For organizational consistency, the participants are again listed by their length of service, from most years in the classroom to least; there is no hierarchical implication in this sequencing.

Figure 2

Summary of Background, Demographics, and Life History

Name	Teaching as first career choice	Decision to Teach	Classroom Teaching Grade Levels	Non-classroom Assignment	Family History of Teachers	Non-teaching Work Experience
Marie	NO	To avoid debt	6-8; 9-12	Dept. Chair	YES	NONE
Christopher	NO	To satisfy a latent desire	9-12	Dept. Chair; Science Coach	NO	Pharmacy-Biochemist
James	YES	To emulate his HS teachers & be a coach	9-12		NO	Assistant Principal
Diane	YES	To fulfill a lifelong intention	K-5; 6-8		YES	Educational Sales Consultant
Rosa	NO	To secure convenient employment	9-12	Dept. Chair	NO	NONE
Taina	NO	To fulfill a passion	K-5; 6-8	ESE Facilitator; Reading Coach	YES	Curriculum Developer; Assistant Principal
Juliette	YES	To fulfill her God-given mission	K-5	Chorus Director; Morning News	NO	NONE
José	NO	To be a role model & a coach	9-12	Buses	NO	Military Career (Army)
Tom	NO	To be a role model & a coach	9-12	Dept. Chair	NO	Military Career (Army)
Sylvia	NO	To fulfill a passion	9-12	Theater Production	YES	Temporary Worker and Graduate Assistant in Theater Companies

Only three of the ToYs explained that they always intended to be a teacher

(James, Diane, and Juliette); the other seven either had a career prior to teaching or they

changed their career plans during their academic pursuits targeting a non-teaching degree.

Diane began her work career as a teacher, but left for sales and consulting positions,

eventually returning to the classroom. Both James and Taina went on to become school

administrators, but also left those positions to return to classroom teaching. Four of the

ToYs have a history of teaching jobs held by family members (Marie, Diane, Taina, and

Sylvia). Although Christopher does not have a family history that includes teachers, his

wife is a teacher; she was already teaching when Christopher decided to leave his career

in biochemical engineering and become a teacher. Sylvia was pursuing a doctoral degree,

in order to become a university professor, but realized her passion was to work with

teenagers. José and Tom, initially military men, found an enjoyment and purpose in

working with adolescents while performing their army duties. Only Rosa and Marie

originally decided to teach based on the pragmatics of money or the expediency of

securing a convenient job. One half of the participants has also held or is holding a

concurrent position, such as curriculum coach, support facilitator, or department chair

(Marie, Christopher, Rosa, Taina, and Tom). At the time each interview was conducted,

each ToY expressed intentions to remain a classroom teacher until retirement; in some

cases retirement is not even a consideration. Christopher told me that there's a standing

joke about him in his school, his colleagues tease him thusly:

> You know that Mr. C. will never retire. Yeah, kids, you all have Mr. C., right?
> You know what's going to happen? When he's about 92, that door is just going to
> open up and they'll have two people in white jackets and a wheelchair say, "Mr.
> C. it's time to go." And they will wheel him out kicking and screaming.
> (Christopher, Interview)

Details of the ToYs Experience of Teaching

The participants of the study represent a diverse mixture of teaching assignments, both in grade level and in content area. The core subject areas of mathematics, science, English, and social sciences are represented as well as elective areas such as JROTC, drama, and music. The grade levels taught span from kindergarten to grade 12, including courses that are eligible for college credit.

Current Job Descriptions. When asked to describe what they do in their present jobs, the ToYs did respond with information about their teaching assignments. They described how many periods or blocks they teach as well as information regarding curriculum and standards. Several participants included information about their teaching strategies and methods employed in their delivery of content. Some also offered information about classroom management policies and routines, and their administrative tasks.

Marie. As a high school teacher of dual enrollment classes Marie teaches college level Freshman English, college sophomore level American Literature, and college sophomore level Creative Writing. She explained that she has to tailor her lessons to satisfy both the college curriculum and the emotional maturity level of high school students. Marie explained that "we recognized that they're kids and you needed to acknowledge and celebrate the developmental level of a 16-year old that needs to have some fun...at the same time push them academically to a sophomore level in college" (Marie, Interview). Marie added that she rarely encountered discipline problems, and as such, she rarely had to call a parent and kids don't skip her class because she "create[s] that loving environment...that comfortable environment that they want to be there"

(Marie, Interview). When asked for an example of how she creates this nurturing environment, Marie described how she has "always gone out of my [her] way to know the kids and find something literally to like about each one of them" (Marie, Interview).

Her dual enrollment teaching assignment requires that Marie work in collaboration with other high teachers and college professors; she said, "We work totally collaboratively; we sit down and plan for a course" (Marie, Interview). Marie also described her course load by semester, so that she taught the Freshman Composition classes in the fall, the American Literature classes in the spring, and the Creative Writing classes in the summer. She said that the collaboration with the other three teachers was so synchronized, that they "taught the same thing, did the same writing assignments...the same vocabulary study...the same PSAT/SAT study" (Marie, Interview).

Marie teaches three or four sections daily of the semester's corresponding course and also meets with students individually throughout the day. She explained that the one-on-one meeting with each student is not optional; students are required to meet with her for writing conferences as part of their coursework. Sometimes, if students are not earning at least a B in her course, Marie's job description becomes that of a tutor for remediation. She described this type of situation as follows:

> So my view is if you're in my classroom here, you need to be making an A or a B. A grade of C won't get it. So if you're making a C, I am your very best friend. You're just going to be sitting down with me all the time until we can find what it takes to get you the skills to make that B at least on your own. You should be capable of a B. (Marie, Interview)

The last aspect of Marie's description of her current job involves the projects and reward systems that she develops and implements for her students. Marie believes that she encourages participation by including some creative activities in her lessons, such as

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the "American Authors Dinner Party," where each student researches an author, makes a plate, attends the party dressed as the author, shares a dessert served on his or her plate, and makes a presentation (Marie, Interview). She also says that she's the "Point Queen" and features her outstanding writers during an "Academy Awards" ceremony that presents Oscar-type trophies and other prizes to the winners (Marie, Interview).

Christopher. In addition to his non-instructional responsibilities as the Department Chairperson for Science, Christopher labels himself as an AP Biology teacher who this past year, had to take on the responsibility of teaching chemistry when a science teacher abruptly abandoned his position. Christopher stated, "I had to inherit his chemistry teaching schedule" (Interview). He also explained that in the past few years, he only taught one or two periods per day because he was also functioning as the Science Coach, whereby he was coordinating curriculum and supporting the teachers in their efforts to prepare the students for the Science Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) and the new End of Course (EOC) exam. But all of that changed this year, when he unexpectedly became a chemistry teacher. Christopher stated

> And so for the last three to four years, except for this last year, I didn't teach – I wasn't in the classroom very much, I taught maybe one or two classes in the day. Remember we're on block scheduling so like two, three, four classes I would be roaming, observing, pushing into classes, pulling kids out....

> This year unfortunately we had some personnel issues. We had a science, a chemistry teacher next door just suddenly leave. And when I say suddenly leave I mean abandoned – I couldn't contact him. We still don't know whatever happened to him. Just walked out – we tried calling his girlfriend, his mother, everybody, the whole world – just never came back. So what happened was unfortunately, I had to inherit his chemistry teaching schedule. But by that point though I had a co-chair with me...that helped. (Christopher, Interview)

Regardless of his non-instructional titles, Christopher shared that he has taught AP

Biology since his second year teaching as well as other courses; he smiled when he said

"I've run the whole gamut" (Christopher, Interview).

In talking about his teaching, Christopher says he incorporates "physical

modeling, labs, demonstrations," and he went on to describe how he does his best to

make science "tie into their everyday life" (Christopher, Interview). In offering me

examples of how he does this, Christopher responded thusly:

> You see these cabinets here...I have in these cabinets toys, models that I use in my teaching all the time. You know, when I teach about something called ATP, which is an energy molecule in living cells, I use a battery. I use this Christmas tree stuff here to show how chromosomes interact in a nucleus. I have these little toys to show how a heart sends oxygenated and deoxygenated blood. I use these little, pipe cleaners as chromosomes to show how they move about inside of a cell. I have these little ducks to show how you inherit traits, black and white feather in ducks. I mean all of these cabinets are just full of this stuff...I use all of this creativity to get my point across...I would try something new and I'm still learning. (Christopher, Interview)

James. When asked to describe his current teaching position, James immediately

stated that he sees himself as the "curriculum expert. I present the material to them and

then I do everything I can to try to make sure that they understand what the curriculum

is" (James, Interview). Teaching in a high school that was on block scheduling at the time

of the interview, James delineated his teaching assignments:

> I have three classes both semesters. Students are approximately 25 per class. This past semester it was all AP Calculus, two classes of Calculus A/B, one of Calculus B/C. The previous semester I had two classes of Honors Calculus; those students continued on to A/B and one Pre-calculus course. (James, Interview)

In terms of James' delivery of the curriculum, he concentrates on how he can support his

students in acquiring and assimilating new information and concepts. He offered a

detailed explanation when asked for an example:

I've taken a look at how I can help the students step up, in terms of their understanding of the curriculum. I think they tend to use the calculator too much...so they're not quite as good computationally as I would like them to be. Perhaps they have not studied in a certain way, when they can have access to formulas and relationships that we need them to have in calculus...

So in order to put them on the fast track, what I've done is I've done a lot of work toward the Internet to make sure that they have all the extra resources, dynamic geometry worksheets, for example, that I create, posts on the web, and then they have a chance to explore relationships, perhaps detailed solutions of problems.

This has evolved to the point where now everything I do in the classroom is posted on the Internet. For example, all of our notes, detailed solutions to problems, everything is there for them, so that that way the time they spend in class, instead of taking notes, most of all is spending time paying attention, interacting with what's going on, then we do a lot of problem solving work.

"Okay, now we understand what we're trying to do. Here's a problem. You try it." And then immediately there are the solutions, so they can compare, and we can engage in discussions immediately to see, "Okay, why did things happen the way they did?" Is it perhaps the way they did it initially on their paper? (James, Interview)

Additionally, James recognizes that "math tends to be very dry sometimes, so I try to interject a certain amount of humor, without getting off task. We celebrate students' successes, so that they get excited about when they get problems right" (Interview).

Similar to Marie and Christopher, James seeks ways to get to know his students and to make his lessons as relevant to them as possible.

I try to get to know them on a personal level....I want to know for example, if a student is interested in horses. If they are, I'd like to know about that, because then I can somehow interject that into some lessons, sooner or later, here or there. If they're part of the debate team, I'd like to know that – whatever their interests are.

For example, if a student reveals to me that they're aspiring engineers, then perhaps there can be a connection between some of the lessons that we're doing with their interests, and that seems to make the curriculum flow a little bit more easily. They can connect a little better, and they seem to enjoy the lessons better. (James, Interview)

Diane. As a kindergarten classroom teacher, Diane said "I try to assist students...just take them as far as I can, as far as their potential will allow them to go"

(Diane, Interview). Her current class size is 20 students and she does not have an aide.

She described her teaching responsibilities in detail:

> I have some students, they come in and they don't know a single letter, sound, number, color, whatever, which is unusual these days; you wonder, where have they been all this time? But sometimes with grandma or sometimes there's language barriers, so they might just need some assistance.
>
> A lot of parents don't even realize the kids should know some basic skills before they even come to school. So this is where I have to differentiate instruction for those kids. And then I have some kids coming in, a few, who are actually reading when I get them. So the challenge is trying to incorporate all these different learning styles and children, different levels where I get them and through the year develop the skills and strategies that I know have always worked with these children.
>
> Because I taught upper grades, I know where they're heading, I know what they are going to have to try to deal with and I don't water down what I'm teaching them. I will start with a lot of basic skills and a lot of ESOL strategies that work for all kids that have English as a second language or not. And I use a lot of hands-on, a lot of visuals, we sing, we dance, I just try to make it as fun and enjoyable and as exciting as I can...so my main goal is just to make them excited about learning and to push them to do as much as they can. And let me tell you, pretty much everyone is reading and writing, I mean, it's amazing. (Diane, Interview)

Diane's classroom is filled with students' work; the researcher's notes commented on the busyness of the space and the variety of work samples that exemplify the differentiation that Diane refers to in her narrative.

In addition to seeing her instructional position as the foundational springboard for her students' academic growth and development, Diane understands her primary objective is keeping the students focused on the learning activity.

> The main goal is to keep everyone engaged in something. Most of them enjoy – if they have to stop do something else, you hear this "Awh!" whining sound – I mean even to go to Specials and things sometimes, they don't want to stop working on what they're doing to change gears sometimes...the more they do, the more they want to do. It's like trying to keep them busy is an all day experience, it's just going from one thing to the next. And I try to rotate centers and activities and things so that they're not all doing the same thing all at one time.

Occasionally, a whole group thing is easier for me, but for them, they see someone doing something else, so they want to do what they're doing, so they can get to do the next thing as well and they get to do all the projects. So when we're done, everyone has had that experience, but they do get to choose a variety of things and they enjoy selecting and choosing the order in which they do things, but then they all pretty much come out with having all done the dinosaurs or they've all done the ladybugs and that's it. (Diane, Interview)

At the end of her interview, Diane pointed out the specific areas of her classroom that reflected the variety of activities and stations at and on which the students had worked, such as the dinosaurs and the ladybugs. She repeated the idea of "find[ing] stuff that's going to be so exciting" (Diane, Interview), and with an emphatic tone stated:

It's not the way kindergarten used to be with little blocks and the housekeeping stuff. Now they write about careers and they draw and illustrate. I still have hats and puppets and I dress up and still do a lot of things like that, a lot with puppets, that's one of the ways I love to teach and express; so when the puppet comes out, it's like their attention – because you know you have to have special effects these days. And that's one of the things that really still grabs their attention.

And they like to do plays and act out the characters. I'll make little masks that they'll hold up when they do the characters. There's so much available. Any teacher that isn't having fun or kids aren't having fun in class, I think you're just missing an opportunity – you can make anything kind of fun, you can turn something that's ordinary into something extraordinary, just put a twist to it, a little effort, something different. Just having them see you animate and act out and change your voice, it's like you've become a whole other person. And the kids love it. (Diane, Interview)

Diane's description of her current classroom assignment prioritizes creating a motivating and engaging environment for her students.

Rosa. At the time of the interview, Rosa explained that she was teaching Spanish II and Spanish V. She also said that she has a mixed class of Spanish V and AP Spanish Language and Composition. She had the option of offering Spanish V for those students who wanted to continue their study of the language without having to take the advanced placement course. In addition, Rosa accepted two students under an independent study

process to complete the curriculum for AP Spanish Literature and Composition. She

described her teaching load this way:

> Well, right now I teach Spanish II. I teach Spanish V. I decided to teach Spanish
> V because the kids weren't ready for AP. I'm the one that started AP here with
> foreign language a long time ago, and some of the kids wanted to stay with me
> learning, and yet they were afraid to go on to the AP, because they knew it was
> really hard.
> So I created – not created – I decided, you know, just have Spanish V after
> IV, because I like the kids that had III and IV and they wanted to go on to V, as an
> honors class. So I taught that.
> And I had one mixed class of Spanish V and AP and another pure class or
> AP...I also did AP literature before we had the College Board gave us, you know
> – what do you call it – the audits. So I took kids that had taken AP Language and
> they wanted to take another year. So I took them as independent study. (Rosa,
> Interview)

Rosa also indicated that she is the faculty sponsor for the Spanish Club, as well as the

Department Chair for World Languages.

Rosa sees herself more flexible in her current teaching position then in years past

because the approach to the curriculum has changed. There is more emphasis now on

verbal communication in the new language rather than acquisition of the technical

knowledge like spelling and grammar. Rosa elaborated that

> like in Europe, it's more communication. So they don't have to stop and think *O*
> before *U*, but just get it out so the other person can understand what they're trying
> to say.
> So I've become a little more lax, and so I want them to be able to express.
> Always, always I've given extra points for speaking, always, and I've told them
> just by speaking they'll get extra points, and they will not be penalized if it's
> wrong, because of the effort is what I'm looking for....
> We have been always writing and writing and fill-in-the-blank things, and
> that's not the way to go. (Rosa, Interview)

Rosa did refer to teaching the reading and the writing of the language as well, describing

the measurement of student comprehension by their ability to summarize a passage of

text, instead of translating.

Taina. As a middle school teacher who holds several certifications, Taina's

teaching schedule represents a mixture of subject areas. She teaches English as a Second

Language (ESOL) to a class that includes sixth, seventh, and eighth graders. Taina also is

a reading teacher for students who are reading below grade level. Lastly, Taina's teaching

responsibilities include servicing exceptional education students as their Support

Facilitator. In terms of her Special Education Students (ESE), Taina works with them in

their general education classrooms and also pulls them out of their classrooms in order to

give them one-on-one support. She describes her teaching schedule as follows:

> I'm an ESOL teacher, sixth, seventh, and eighth grade, 90 minutes for one period.
> And I teach general education, below grade level students, reading. Then for two
> periods, I'm an Exceptional Student teacher, Support Facilitator, for ESE students
> that are learning disabled or emotionally or behaviorally disturbed, or hard-of
> hearing. I monitor them, I go to their classrooms, I pull them out, I give them
> Diagnostic Assessment of Reading Fluency, the CMAT, the Comprehensive
> Mathematical Abilities Test, and I see where they are at. I give the data to the
> teachers so they can see and I review the IEP [Individual Educational Plan] with
> the teachers so that they know where the child's at and what is expected of
> them...So I make sure the teachers know what their students' IEPs are and I
> monitor the kids, make sure they're behaving, that they're organized – I look at
> their book-bags, I organize their notebooks, I just – monitoring them I call the
> parents if the child listens to me, but doesn't listen to their classroom teacher. So
> that's what I do and I write their IEPs; that takes seven hours from testing to
> writing; I interview the teachers to see how the kids are doing. Are they doing
> their classwork? Their homework? Do they get along with the other kids? Do they
> bring their supplies? (Taina, Interview)

Taina also repeated that her two periods per day of reading classes were comprised of

low level students. She described them "like at-risk students" (Taina, Interview).

Taina shared that her daily routines include a good deal of collaboration and

teamwork. She mentors other teachers and works closely with her colleagues. She also

uses collaborative techniques with her students.

I train my responsible kids...I train them to be mini-teachers...I divide the kids into groups and I have one or two student teachers in every group...that allows me to circulate, but it allows the kids to help each other...especially in ESOL where they're learning the language, they're all at different language levels and for me what has working is pairing and cooperative learning and teaching the kids how to work in teams. (Taina, Interview)

Taina added that she's grateful that she can create her own schedule. She talked about being so tired after teaching ESOL, Reading, and then facilitating for her ESE students that she needs her planning time to be the last period of the day. She explained, "So I always have sixth grade planning because I know by 1:30 PM which is the beginning of sixth grade planning I am wiped out" (Taina, Interview).

Juliette. This elementary school music teacher had an interesting teaching assignment at the time of her interview. Due to budget cuts, Juliette was assigned to teach physical education (PE) as well as music. She explained the situation in detail.

Well at our particular school, the position came about because our Specials budget was cut to 1 ½ people. And our PE coach taught second grade this year and I took over his position because...we have under 500 students. We have an Art teacher/Guidance teacher 50% each. And then we had, this year music and PE as one person, and then that was it for Specials. No Media [Center Specialist], nothing.

Now back in 2008 we had fulltime media, fulltime art, fulltime PE, and fulltime music, so this is like less than half of what we had when times were good. So, the reason why I got stuck with music and PE is because our PE teacher didn't have any music certification, and in order to teach another subject area you have to be certified in it, right? So, he and I both certified as Elementary General Education, K through 6, so I having that certification it qualifies you to teach PE. But he didn't have music, but I had the Elementary General Education, she put me as PE and music and put him in the classroom, hoping that it would only last a year.

The way the schedule worked, it was four days of music, four days of PE. No classes at all on early release days in order to give us time to catch our breath and plan – and I had a morning post, supervising kids in the hallway, and I also ran the morning news show for the school, so that was a big part of my time. I also taught six classes a day at 40 minutes each. I also had, it was an eight day schedule. So it was A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H. And on A-D, I was music and on E-H,

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I was PE. Okay, so that meant that I would see the students that I had every eighth day for music and every eighth day for PE for forty minutes. (Juliette, Interview)

Juliette's description of her current teaching assignment indicated that it was not only awkward for her, but undesirable as well. In using the phrase "got stuck with music and PE," she revealed her distaste for her schedule. It's important to keep in mind that she's been teaching for 21 years at the same elementary school, and this is first time that her responsibilities included teaching PE. During the interview, Juliette offered a detailed description of how she managed this challenging teaching schedule.

> But because they saw me every four days for either one or the other, what I did was in order to try to cover as many of the benchmarks from both curriculums as possible, what I started doing was beginning every lesson, whether it was music or PE, was starting every lesson with the same set of stretches all year long. So they [the students] always got consistent stretches and three to five minutes of cardio exercise, no matter where we were, whether it was music or PE. If we were doing PE, then they would run the lap around the field outside. If we were inside the music room, then I would have them dance something fairly active for two to three minutes. This year I taught them every dance that every typical party-goer would know, like the Macarena, we did Cotton-Eyed Joe, we did Thriller, we did Electric Slide, we did a couple of folkdance things like the Mexican Hat Dance and the Troika from Russia when it was back in November and December times. So I tried to use Musical PE and Physical Music all year long, for at least the first 20 minutes or so of each lesson.
> So that way it covered both benchmarks. Because to my surprise, when I looked through the PE curriculum, I learned that probably a third to a half of the curriculum is in rhythmic movement, and I happened to be certified in rhythmically moving curriculum, which is the PE curriculum that uses music to teach PE. (Juliette, Interview)

Juliette used her background in Music Education to support her teaching of PE and then incorporated as much movement as possible into her teaching of music. It may sound as though the combined teaching schedule was productive, but Juliette admitted that "it wasn't the best for the kids...that's basically what I did as far as integrating the two

curriculums and being able to meet as many of the curriculum benchmarks as I could"

(Juliette, Interview).

José. This former career soldier explained to me that he teaches the "Junior

Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC), which is like a leadership course" (Interview).

In his classes, José primarily has ninth graders, but these elective courses are open to

students in grades nine through 12. In his 16-year teaching career, José has initiated and

developed the JROTC program at two high schools. He told me that

> it's something that I started back in ___, and I opened this school. As a matter of
> fact, I was the first teacher hired in this school...I remember doing the
> groundbreaking ceremony right here where the parent dropoff is. I brought my
> Color Guard from ___ [my previous school]. (José, Interview)

In answering the interview question about what he is doing in his present teaching

practice, José first talked about the atmosphere in his classroom; then he discussed his

curriculum. The Sergeant Major explained:

> First of all, I try to make my classroom an environment where kids feel
> comfortable, because if they're comfortable they open up. In my classroom
> everybody's opinion is valued....
>
> I guess the fact that they feel safe, they feel they're not threatened, they feel they
> can come to me for anything, not only for studying, other things, personal
> problems, they talk to me about anything. I try to guide them and help them.
> My classroom is an organized environment. Every day I have to be
> prepared, because if I'm a role model, I can't take a day off. It has to be
> continuous. I tell them this is black and white. I don't play with the gray. They
> understand that. So once you establish the rules, the kids follow.
> I call my classroom organized chaos. Organized chaos, because everything
> we do is in groups. When the groups are working together, it's healthy for them to
> talk to each other. So when you walk in my classroom, it seems like everybody is
> yelling. They're talking about whatever the assignment is and they present the
> assignment.
> When they stand up in front of class, it is a nonthreatening environment.
> Nobody makes fun of them, because they know I have their back. Because of that,
> these kids can stand up, give a speech, talk about anything, and that nervousness
> of public speaking disappears.

> I'm organized as a teacher. My lesson plans...I follow them to the tee, and they know that. They're required to do things, and I challenge them to do it and I make them do it, because I know that's going to be something that's going to be beneficial to them in the future, whatever I'm teaching. I teach life skills, public speaking, financial planning, first aid.
>
> So everything that I try to teach them, it's not for college, but it prepares them for life...Leadership Education and Training....
>
> We have to teach communication process. There's a reason why you have two ears and one mouth. You're supposed to listen twice as much as you speak.
>
> We teach about behavior patterns, why they behave the way they behave. We do something called personal skills, personal growth, which is determining what their strength and weakness is, as far as stress management, time management, interpersonal relationships. (José, Interview)

José described his classroom's atmosphere in first person singular narrative, perhaps indicating he is solely responsible for establishing a safe and inviting space for his students. As the description of his current teaching assignment shifted towards the curriculum elements of his courses, José's narration also shifted into first person plural. This shift from a singular to plural syntactical structure may reflect the collective nature of his curriculum goals and objectives. José, in collaboration with his students, facilitates teaching and learning – fundamentally the communication skills buttressing the JROTC curriculum necessitate participation by all. It may also represent his continued sense of connection with the military, since the JROTC program is based on learning modules that are produced by the armed forces. José, as a teacher of this material, is a part of that larger unit.

Tom. When asked about his current teaching assignment and to describe what he does as a teacher, Tom first listed the subjects of World History, International Relations, and Advanced Placement Human Geography. However, he quickly began describing what he sees as his role in the classroom, instead of what he teaches:

Well, I kind of look at myself as the coach, I guess. I mean, I'm a teacher, but sometimes teachers have such a negative connotation, depending on who you're talking to. We talk among ourselves. I think we understand the complexity of what it takes and the dedication, but you talk to the guy on the street, in the corporate world, "Oh teachers, yeah, yeah." When people think of a coach, it's just more of a paternal/maternal kind of feeling I think that I get with it. (Tom, Interview)

Tom continued reminiscently:

It's funny. When I first started teaching I taught by the book. It was one of those things where, you're just as green as the kids are when they come in...They don't really prepare you at the university level how to manage a kid with a behavioral problem. They give you some suggestions, but at the end of the day you're a fish out of water.

I think that I realized very quickly I was making a lot of mistakes, because I had this idea there was this sense of perfection that had to happen; it had to happen immediately in a 45-minute time frame.

And I also felt that sometimes you succeed even when you lose, and that it was impossible for me to save every child that walked in my door and ensure that every kid feels good about themselves. These were things that I learned very quickly, very early. And I remember somebody asked me, this is early on in my teaching career, he said, "Which teachers...do you have a favorite teacher?"...I started describing what I liked about these teachers, and the person said, "You know, it's funny, because you didn't say anything about this Teacher-A made you love math...it had nothing to do with math. It was other stuff. He taught you integrity. He taught you to be timely, be responsible, life skills...outside of his job description. He took a personal interest in me as a person...he just made me feel like I was special."

When it was presented like that, I had to step out and say, my job is not to teach kids to love history. It's to make them – as a coach, like coach them, cheer them on, give them skills and things they can utilize, things they can look back on and say, "You know, I'm glad that person came in my life. I have this person to thank, if not, more mindful of this, or they brought awareness of this social issue"....

I think I'm going back to the original question, how would I describe myself as a teacher. I think I just try to be realistic. I try to control what I can control. And I just know that our job is more than just what we teach. It's how we make somebody feel at the end of the day. (Tom, Interview)

Tom elaborated about how he tries to leave his students feeling at the end of the day:

> I just kind of say these casual, interesting questions. And I'm really genuine, I really want to know, "How was your weekend?" They kind of look at me weird and they're like, "It was good. I went to the mall"...
> I'll take about 30 seconds while they're supposed to be doing individual work. "Yeah, I want to see that movie." I kind of put my hand on them and say, "Okay, get back to work." It's amazing. There was no confrontation. Now they're getting their work done.
> So the coach, going back to the coach, what methods have I used. I think that kind of approach on an individual level has really made the difference....
> I think it's one of mutual respect. Obviously, I say that generally speaking...I think generally...they come in with a smile...when they come in I'm about productivity, that I'm very passionate about what I do and I expect, and I expect – it's not about them being passionate about the same things that I am, but they know they need good production, to say the least, but the relationship, as a whole, I think is one of mutual respect.
> I really think the kids feel supported in my classroom, that I'm not going to – I'm very flexible with them, I try to be flexible with them, but at the same time I do try to have – not try – I do have these standards, deadlines. So it's one where there are expectations, but at the same time I'm realistic, and I understand that people are people, and people have a bad day, and that if the excuse is good enough, then I'm willing to listen. I would probably describe it like that. (Tom, Interview)

To follow-up, the researcher asked Tom how his students knew that he was passionate about his subject matter and his practice. In response, Tom shared that

> I use PowerPoints. I love PowerPoints. So instead of just talking about it, I want them to feel it. I want them to see it. I really try to – I mean, I have this – I'm trying to structure this answer, because sometimes I'll do poetry if we're talking about the Renaissance and we're trying to get them to be creative.
>
> I don't like to just pull assignments right out of the book. I really believe in critical thought, critical thinking....And as to the passionate part, a lot of that comes with – you might know about this – the RAFT, the R-A-F-T acronym [Role-Audience-Format-Topic], but role playing. So I want them to get up. I want them to be accountable for what they're reading in the book. I want them to be presenting what it is that they're learning about...I really try to get them to thinking about, how does this lesson apply to today, how is it relevant?....
> So I think the passion is evident in just the type of activities that I try to come up with to get them interested. If I didn't care about the subject, it would just be, open the book and sitting at my desk and telling them to shut up or letting them know when they can and can't go to the bathroom. (Tom, Interview)

Tom's descriptions of what he does as a teacher seems to be more about the relationships that he fosters with his students, then the methodology he uses as a teacher.

Sylvia. When this participant was asked to describe what she does in her current job, she began with the schedule of her day and included details about curriculum and teaching methodologies.

> My first class of the day is a 10th-grade English. With that class currently we are reading *Of Mice and Men*, which I use theater in all my classes, theater strategies...So with *Of Mice and Men* – I don't believe in throwing books at kids and saying, "Get on with it," or "I'll type and you guys can read and then we'll have a quiz." It's very dynamic...so I do a lot of reading aloud, and then I release them into it and think alouds. I think these are really necessary, and I will say to them, "Watch my brain. I'm going to verbalize my brain while I read." I will do that for a very long time in the beginning until they can be released into the think aloud....
>
> I think the main job of everything I do, whether it's the English classroom or the theater classroom, is to legitimize voices...they don't think they have anything to say, and the ones who do don't think they'll be heard or are worthy of being heard. So there's a lot of make safe environments in there as well. Anything goes.
>
> There's a lot of group work....they have to discuss....so you hear it, and the group that's taking the longest is learning the most. I'm not worried about the group who can't get it together, because they're having discussion. The other ones who think they've got it knocked didn't have much of a discussion. So I do a lot of that kind of work.
>
> I like to teach reading through writing....So I do a lot of that....I won't ever teach a whole movie, and sometimes I won't even teach a whole book. I'm like from the school of, it's okay to teach parts of books, especially when I teach Shakespeare. There is no reason on earth to teach all of *Julius Caesar*...but in terms of any kind of film study, what I like to do with a number of my texts is take one scene from five different versions, and I will clip them out...so we can look at adaptation....I want to give them an experience of what they're going to be like as adult learners....
>
> Then I go into a Drama I class with 53 kids...I usually partner with so many outside institutions, like David Spangler's Lovewell Institute at Nova...They do lots of devised musicals around issues like bullying and HIV and lesbian/gay issues...we partnered this year....so what Drama I has been doing is really, we've been catering to a lot of these projects. (Sylvia, Interview)

After a long description about one of the projects, Sylvia returned to describing her

Drama I class' curriculum:

> So that class has been doing a lot of that, and in between we look at monologues, we look at Shakespeare, we look at a lot of improvisation. My whole entire teaching base is improvisation and not just, you know, funny little stereotype things. I studied improve for years and years, and there are three rules that I work with that I think are great for their lives as well.
>
> One is, always say yes. If you say no on stage, there's no theater to make. And I tell them take that into your lives, obviously not with something that will hurt you.
>
> The other is, say the first thing that comes into your head, which is my way of saying, don't over think things.
>
> My favorite one, which is the last one, is always make your partner look good, because in this world it's about your partner, not you, and if you make your partner look good on stage or in life, you will look fabulous....
>
> So using those rules and lots of structure, I have them go away and make things. We might also devise around a theme....I don't' like preaching things....so we do a lot of devising in there....
>
> Then I have Drama II...these are students who have been with me for a number of years, and we do our productions in that class....again, I use a lot of image theater, and that's Augusto Boal....he's a Brazilian – he developed theater for social change....Boal wrote *Theater of the Oppressed*. Find the community issue, you make the theater, right, the theater cannot be stopped. You can jump in for the protagonist and practice your arts and all its strategies against that oppressor.
>
> I don't mean to sound radical, but that's just the way he labels them. The oppressor could be the boy who doesn't want to wear a condom, or the oppressor could be the boss who doesn't want to give you a raise....
>
> I mean when you can jump in there and really put your body and voice in there. That's how it's life changing....it's very beneficial for children to put on plays. That's where the learning happens. The learning kind of happens from spectator to stage...but I think the real learning goes in putting it together, asking those questions or jumping into a form piece. You need to put your own flesh into what you're doing.
>
> Including reading. I don't just mean this for theater. You need to put your body and your voice and your blood into what you're doing and I think that goes for teaching. You need to be active in front of those kids and alert and just as curious in that same process...there's always something to discover with them while you're there, and you need to sort of be a partner in that discovery with them, instead of "I'm going to do a whole bunch of tricks now so that you can be activated to discover what I discovered long ago."....

The Drama II class, more advanced – and then they have their crews to put together, as well. I want them to do everything from tickets to programs to publicity....

And then at the end of the day I have another 10th-grade honors English class. (Sylvia, Interview)

Sylvia's detailed descriptions reflect her intense energy about her practice. When indicating that her second section of 10th-grade English is reading *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, she shared that in giving instructions to her students, she told them, "You're all going to get Shakespeare in your mouth" (Sylvia, Interview). Sylvia's craft is a visceral experience.

Summary of Current Job Descriptions. Although the participants offer a rich diversity in the way they responded to the interview question about describing their current teaching position, there are two assumptions that are implicit in all their responses. First, all of the ToYs consider the practice of teaching as their life's work, and second, they describe how this work is much larger than the mere content information that they impart to their students. There is a sense that the work of being a teacher is active and organic, and as such, the researcher has determined that their work is personified by four roles: *Lovers, Doers, Shakers*, and *Believers*. The following section delineates these major themes in relationship to the research questions.

Findings Regarding Research Question One

The first research question of this study asked, "How is teaching experienced by recognized as outstanding Teachers of the Year (ToYs)? In relation to this question, more than 30 categories were identified from the initial readings of the transcripts and ToY application essays. In concert with many of the research studies reviewed in Chapter 2 regarding ToYs and effective teachers (Jensen & Templeton, 1993; McGill, 1999; Nias,

1989; Van Schaack & Glick, 1982; Verner, 1999), the Broward ToY finalists and winners

are dedicated, hard-working individuals with a serious, steadfast commitment to

improving the lives of children. Their lives as recognized as outstanding classroom

teachers certainly share common behavioral elements, such as staying late hours and

helping other teachers improve their practice. However, beyond the mutual patterns of

behavior, it is their value systems that consistently reflect the prominence of their work in

their lives as a whole, and a deep understanding of how their work as teachers fill and

define their lives with meaning and purpose, regardless of other commitments and

relationships in their lives. Christopher described with fierceness his overwhelming need

to get through to his students:

> ...all of a sudden a kid goes: 'I got it! I understand it!' Those are the moments that
> you just kind of want to bottle, put a lid, a cap on it, just take it home with you—
> those quintessential moments where you feel like you have really made an impact,
> that someone you finally made understand, **that your breath is not there to just
> ventilate the air** [and slamming his hand down on the desk's surface], that you
> were really-really making an impact. (Christopher, Interview)

Christopher breathes because of his students. Echoing Christopher's emotional surge of

all-encompassing commitment to his teaching, Taina shared:

> Yeah it's frustrating when they're not in the mood...it's like pulling teeth, it's a
> battle and it's draining and I'm not giving up and I'm exhausted. Everyday I have
> to take a nap, I'm exhausted. I'm just exhausted...I'm exhausted, I put my all
> during the day, that by 1:30 p.m., thank God that I can create my own schedule so
> I always have sixth grade planning...because by 1:30 p.m. I am wiped out. I'm
> giving my all, I'm always circulating...I'm constantly [claps and snaps her fingers
> rapidly] saying to them "No, no, no: let's start, come on let's start." You know
> that's exhausting, that's exhausting. (Taina, Interview)

Although every sentence in this section of narrative conveys Taina's flow of energy

depleted and stripped by her teaching efforts, she is relentless; her life as a teacher is non-

stop. There is no giving up or turning away from life as teacher. Indeed, Diane simply

stated that "I mean this is my life, the classroom and everything; this is what I do" (Diane, Interview).

Because the participants were disclosing a fundamental value system in how they lived their lives and how they found meaning in life, the continued coding and analysis process of the transcripts, documents, field notes, memos, and researcher's journal indicated that the lived experience of the ToYs participating in the study could be synthesized and organized into four major themes. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) discussed how in qualitative research "analysis is a process of data reduction" (pp. 185-186). Many of the originally coded units of data overlapped or were not sufficiently substantial to provide insight, eventually leading me to recognize that the lived experiences of the participating ToYs reflected four grand purposes or roles that I have metaphorically labeled as: *Lovers, Doers, Shakers*, and *Believers*.

A Lover is the term for the role that the teacher assumes each time she or he describes his or her passion for the work of the teacher. This is the teacher's expression of heartfelt bliss as she or he interacts with students, with the act of teaching, with the act of learning, and his or her subject matter.

A Doer is the term for the role that the teacher assumes each time she or he describes his or her daily activities, including assigned tasks, short-term and long-term goals, and the routines or techniques applied to get the work done and achieve results.

A Shaker is the term for the role that the teacher assumes each time she or he describes overcoming obstacles, invoking change, or negotiating power; in other words, these ToYs shake things up.

A Believer is the term for the role that the teacher assumes each time she or he describes being filled with hope and promise as she or he guides, fosters, and encourages those around them. The Believers see tomorrows filled with success.

Within each of these four themes, sub-themes also emerged. Figure 3 outlines the organization of the themes with their respective sub-themes and includes examples from the ToYs interview transcripts and/or essays reflecting each theme. Following the figure, each of the themes is discussed in depth. Common among all four themes is an underlying sense of faith and determination that if they work hard enough in each of the four roles, these teachers can make positive differences in the world. Sylvia's thoughts capture this concept when she says:

> My role as a teacher is to develop responsible, passionate and committed human beings by educating the whole child…My role is to be a catalyst for their growth – not only to teach them subjects and content, but also to teach them form and a way of being in the world that will serve them as soon as they step out of my room (Sylvia, personal communication).

The 10 ToYs descriptions of their relationships with colleagues, parents, and the community were varied. In fact, some had close relationships with parents; others did not encourage parental involvement. Some of the ToYs did not have extensive or significant relationships with the community, but others talked about major involvement with community groups and organizations. Although none of the participants described their collegial relationships as poor, some of the ToYs did describe a lack of interaction with other teachers in their schools. Nonetheless, the differences among their descriptions about these relationships fall under the themed role of Shaker. These differences in relationships are explored further during the discussion of how the ToYs are Shakers, in

that it serves to illustrate how each teacher manages authority and autonomy as part of his

or her role as a Shaker.

Figure 3

Question One: Inductively Developed Thematic Roles in the Lived Experience of Recognized as Outstanding Teachers

Themes	Sub-Themes and Examples
Lovers	*Love children*: "If you don't love kids, find another job" (Interview with Juliette). *Love teaching*: "I fell in love with teaching" (Interview with Christopher). *Love learning*: "I teach so that I might continue to learn" (Essay by José). *Love their subject matter:* "I'm passionate about my classroom. I'm passionate about my subject" (Interview with Tom).
Doers	*Accept responsibilities*: "Because there's so much to get done, so much paperwork, and you have to set up the classroom, and you have to look at the materials, and you have to plan…you have to find the time" (Interview with Taina). *Set goals*: "Because my end product is to see results. I want those results" (Interview with Rosa). *Employ methods*: "A stimulating environment laced with a variety of music, movement, poetry, learning games, and inviting projects can keep students engaged and excited to come to school" (Essay by Diane).
Shakers	*Manage change*: "What I've done is a lot of work toward the internet…this has evolved to the point where now everything I do in the classroom is posted on the internet" (Interview with James). *Manage authority & autonomy*: "I don't presume to tell any administrator what should or shouldn't happen…they do invite me to be part of leadership teams…I sit back and see what their concerns are, what their mandates are…then within that, they allow me to and I'm careful about it, I ask, 'How about if we try to do this? How about if we incorporated in the course like this?'" (Interview with Marie).
Believers	*Believers as coaches*: "Well, I kind of look at myself as the coach" (Interview with Tom). *Believers as nurturers*: "My kids; make them feel part of the group because we're a family" (Interview with José). *Believers as optimists*: "My role is to be a catalyst for their growth…to teach them form and a way of being in the world" (Essay by Sylvia).

Lovers. Short and simple: the ToYs are passionate people. Interview transcripts and personal essays consistently displayed that this group of teachers love kids, they love learning, they love teaching, and they love their subject areas. In all cases, the ToYs are very vocal about expressing deeply emotional connections to their lives as teachers.

Lovers of children. Marie talked about how important it is to make every student feel welcome saying,

> I've always gone out of my way to know the kids and to find something literally to like about each one of them…to make every child think that he's the only one in the class, or she's the only one in the class. (Marie, Interview)

She explained how she stands at her classroom door, every day, every period to greet each child personally.

When asked about advice for new teachers, Taina's very first sentence in response to my question was: *"So to me you have to love children. You can't be in this profession if you don't love children"* (Taina, Interview). Similarly, Sergeant Major José, talked openly about his love for children: "I love being with these kids, because I know I can help them and I know I can guide them...I tell my students, 'I'd rather be with you guys than adults'" (Jose, Interview). Christopher also declared, "I love these kids" (Christopher, Interview).

The ToYs interview transcripts and essays indicate that this role as a lover of children is an important part of their lived experience as a teacher. They take this role very seriously and embrace the idea that the experience of being a teacher is an emotional experience:

> The first day the kids they just jumped on me like a bean bag. They just wanted your attention. Going from a military environment where you're just treated like a solder and no type of human emotions or connections. That was wonderful and I

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decided at that moment when I get out of the military I've got to look into teaching. (Tom, Interview)

You know, children are very loving and very happy and warm. And that's very contagious and makes you feel like they're glad to see you, they're happy for you to come; they want you to be there and they are very open to new ideas and new suggestions. So it was just very inviting. (Diane, Interview)

Lovers of teaching. This emotional connection to the classroom and to the being of a teacher resonated frequently in the data. The ToYs are lovers of the act of teaching; they are in love with teaching; they personify it and look at teaching as a lifetime partner. "Diane described her teaching environment in her application essay as "the classroom that I love" (Diane, personal communication). It is as though the lived-experience of the act of teaching is an experience of loving fulfillment. Christopher's attraction to the experience of teaching is also undeniable, so strong an attraction and relationship that he compared the amount of his time at school to the amount of time that he spent with his wife:

> When I came to this school my career just – it was like God said "touch you." I worked and worked and worked, like you worked hours and hours and hours. When I was a beginning teacher in this very classroom, I would stay here for hours after school, for hours trying labs, trying demonstrations, finding ways to make a hard concept easier. I would sit in bed at night like this going how do I make this clearer to my students? You know, and uh, I just fell in love with it, you know. There were times, my wife thought, "my God, you're spending more time in this school than we me." So you know, but uh, that's it; I found my niche and just ran with it. What can I say? (Christopher, Interview)

José talked about the loss he feels when school closes at the end of every year; he is so emotionally connected to the work of teaching all year, that he actually slumps on the last day.

> I do buses. I teach three classes. I do lunches. I do buses. But that doesn't tire me, because I have the energy. The only time I get tired is on the ninth of June, the last day of school. Because I'm in such a high the whole year, it comes down, and

I sleep all that evening and the next day…As long as I'm here I feel energy…Let me tell you, in a summer I get bored…I go to visit my kids…Texas, New Mexico, and Connecticut…When I come back, I come to school in the summer. (Jose, Interview)

Juliette describes her hard work as the result of her love for teaching. She describes her classroom with emotion as well:

When the room was remodeled due to damage from leaks, I repainted the room with a nautical boardwalk theme. A lot of planning and creativity went into the Boardwalk, and my students love it! It's definitely a happy, one-of-a-kind place…People often ask me, "why do you work so hard? What drives you? Can't you just relax?"…Anyone who knows me knows I am dedicated to teaching… (Juliette, Interview)

The idea of loving the work of teaching was also shared by Tom. He said, "I'm very passionate about what I do…so I think the passion is evident in just the type of activities that I try to come up with to get them interested" (Tom, Interview).

Lovers of learning. A commitment to lifelong learning is one of the standards for teachers to meet as mandated by the Florida Department of Education (2010), so it is appropriate that the ToYs lived experiences of teaching reflect this condition. The first piece of advice that Marie suggests for new teachers is to "take all of the professional training that you can" (Marie, Interview). In Juliette's ToY application essay she committed to the following goals for herself, and by implication, for her fellow music teachers:

To continue my own professional development by attending relevant trainings in choral conducting, voice training, Orff pedagogy, technology and infusing music into the general classroom curriculum on an ongoing basis.

To promote the professional development of music teachers by sharing instructional expertise, self-developed teaching tools, compositions, finale accompaniment tracks, and classroom management strategies. (Juliette, personal communication)

With 32 years of teaching experience, Christopher said, "I'm still learning. Of course,

you know, a true teacher is always learning….They want to learn" (Christopher,

Interview). Christopher reiterated Juliette's advice to new teachers; in his interview he

suggested:

> Know your subject, know it well. Always want to get better. Strive. Even if you
> teach English 10 Regular, strive to become like an AP teacher, even if you don't
> teach it. If you teach algebra, strive to understand it like calculus. Because here's
> the reason why – and this also helps with lower levels grade too. If you
> understand – if you go to the top of Mt. Everest then you can relate what it takes
> to get to that point, see? Because if you've never been up there, how do you
> know? You can't explain that, you can't tell new teachers that, how to do it, but
> watching and learning as much as you can….It has to be someone insightful,
> some who loves to learn, someone who loves to read, who evinces this desire to
> always learn. (Christopher, Interview)

When I spoke with Tom, and read his ToY application essay, I was moved by the depth

of commitment he has about lifelong learning. Tom's essay discussed the need for giving

teachers "more support, such as summer academies and in-service workshops…to keep

them informed, competent, and motivated" (personal communication). That evening, I

wrote how my doctoral studies are much more than merely reflective of my personal love

for learning as a student; there is also a clear connection between my continuing

education and my teaching. While I listened to the participants and read their essays,

there were so many thoughts and perspectives that I know I will carry-over into my own

classroom. As such, this research work that I am doing as a student is in itself part of my

lived experience as a teacher.

   Lovers of the subject matter. Of course it may seem like common sense to say that

teachers should love the subject(s) that they teach. It just makes sense that most people,

in any profession, when given the opportunity, will choose to work in the field to which

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they are attracted. However, the ToYs emotions toward the courses and content areas they teach reflect a remarkable attachment to their subject matter.

Rosa made it a point to include the concept of love for subject area when she offered her suggestions to new teachers. She said she would tell new teachers "you have to know your subject and you have to be happy doing it. If not you're are not going to last" (Rosa, Interview).

Sylvia's passion for the field of drama resonated through almost every page of her transcript:

> But then there was something called Theater in Education – TIE – which is now called applied theater which came from England. In its most active and brilliant form, I think it came from England. That's what interested me…I remember thinking everything I've ever thought about education and teaching people how to think has been wrong. Basically, this was a tool, the tool of theater to really teach what people talk about, in terms of critical thinking, ownership of ideas.

> So the creative arts team, they taught us by having us – by throwing us in with a group of high school kids all the time. So we would go in and do our thing…so it was really through graduate school that I realized – I don't want to teach in a university. I want to teach teens. I want to talk about what my field of expertise is, I say: teens, literature, theater. (Sylvia, Interview)

Toward the end of the interview, Sylvia recalled a day when she stopped in the middle of a drama class that she was teaching and thought, "I'm having the time of my life, like right in my skin at this moment" (Sylvia, Interview).

James also provides commentary about being a lover of his subject matter. He admitted that, "I don't like to do things that I'm not good at, and so I dedicate myself to doing the best I can...I take pride – last year for example, we had 100% of our students pass A/B Calculus" (James, Interview). Field notes recorded that James smiled proudly as he shared this statistic; he loves math and he is pleased when his students excel in his

subject area. He added, "So we celebrate. And I think we feed off of each other. They get

excited about that. I get excited about that" (James, Interview).

José described his feelings about his subject matter in the following way:

I know that's going to be beneficial to them in the future…I teach life skills,
public speaking, financial planning, first aid…So everything that I try to teach
them, it's not for college, but it prepares them for life…Leadership Education and
Training.
    It's under the JROTC umbrella, but a lot of people feel that what we do is
much better for them...We teach about behavior patterns, why they behave the
way they behave. We do something called personal skills, personal growth, which
is determining what their strength and weakness is, as far as stress management,
time management, interpersonal relationship, things of that nature.

It's what I teach them, how I act. It's what I teach you, it's how I am. It's black
and white. I don't play with the gray…I do it at home too. I do it everywhere I go.
(Jose, Interview)

For José, his subject area is his life; they are not separate from one another; he is the

embodiment of his curriculum.

When Tom shared his story about choosing to teach in the social science arena,

his deep, personal connection surfaced:

I think subject really was determined by probably my personal ethnic background.
I had an older brother who just loved history, and he loved social sciences,
sociology. We were so young – we didn't understand the complexity of society
and how much we were influenced by history and race and all these things.
    I have a bicultural background. My mother is Asian, my father is
American. I never quite felt either one in the history class. So any time I talked
about World War II it would always come up the evil empire, Japan, and I was
like that lonely kid, thinking to myself "man, my mom is so nice."
    So I always wanted to know more than probably the average kid in
history. Most people just say, "Oh, yeah, Iraqis are bad, Japanese are bad, we're
Americans." But for me it was always like, "Why are we stationed in Japan? Why
doesn't my father speak the language?"
    There's always these questions. My family was not your typical American
family, and I think it started with my brother. He became very interested in that,
and just being around him, it just kind of influenced me. Same way like love for
football – you just kind of look up to your older brother, and what his interests are
kind of rub off on you.

So I think there, the family interest was just a consequence of the composition of my family and why we weren't exactly as the others. I wanted to know more about social science. It just really appealed to me.

My father was in the military. We lived in Japan. I was in the military. I was stationed in Europe. May dad's a war veteran. It's all these events that are happening in history. It just seemed something very natural to me to kind of go into that. (Tom, Interview)

In looking at Tom's narrative, his personal, emotional investment in the study and his teaching of social sciences is integral to the persona that is Tom; he is attached to the content he teaches as an individual as well as a teacher.

Summary of ToYs as Lovers. The ToYs discuss and illustrate much love within their experiences as teachers. They have a deep and vigorous capacity to love children, teaching, learning, and their subject matter. This condition makes it possible to call them Lovers and designate it as one of the grand themes or roles in the lived-experience of these recognized as outstanding teachers.

Doers. As part of the lived experience of teachers, ToYs indicated that a major themed role that they personify is that of someone who accomplishes many tasks. They discussed their teaching responsibilities, the goals that they set, and the methods by which they realize their goals.

Doers accept responsibilities. In the life world of these teachers, there is no question about the profound commitment with which they approach the responsibilities of their jobs. Taina goes to work sick or injured. She told me:

And I am rarely absent; I have to be dying or I go to a workshop. And I tell them in advance, I go, "Look Miss T's going to be at a workshop, be on your best behavior. I'm going to leave work with the substitute and you'd better listen and you'd better do my work…that's not free time, it's lost time which is hard to get back…No, don't waste time. Time equals money."

So all that, I love what I do, but I'm exhausted, I'm tired and I'm going to get ill, I'm going to get sick, it's going to affect my health. And it was because I was getting heartburn, my heart was hurting and I went to the doctor and they said it's stress. You don't know how many doctors have told me that I need to slow down. And I say, "How am I going to slow down? I have so much responsibility and I'm a person who has a conscience. I cannot give my all? That's just the way I am, I give my all.

I sprained my ankle this year, sprained my ankle; I fell at 2 AM here and I still went to school limping. I didn't go to the doctor until that evening and by that time, forget it, my ankle was horrible…it probably would have healed in about a month, not taken three months because I didn't take the day off. I took half a day to get my boot…because if I don't go to work, my kids don't learn. (Taina, Interview)

Taina's selfless behavior is demonstrative of how seriously she takes her responsibilities.

As a teacher of Spanish, Rosa also discussed sense of responsibility and how she

is a doer:

Well, right now I teach Spanish II; I teach Spanish V. I decided to teach Spanish V because the kids weren't ready for AP Spanish. I'm the one that started AP here with foreign language a long time ago, and some of the kids wanted to stay with me learning, and yet they were afraid to go on to the AP, because they knew it was really hard.

So I created – not created – I decided, you know, just have Spanish V after IV, because I kids that had III and IV and wanted to go on to V, as an honors class. So I taught that.

And I had one mixed class of Spanish V and AP and another pure class of AP. I also did AP Literature…So I took kids that had taken AP Language, and they wanted to take another year. So I took them as independent study in one of the classes they did literature. (Rosa, Interview)

Rosa's willingness to take on the responsibility of fulfilling the needs of her students is

reflected by her by the initiative she took to modify the course offerings in Spanish and

assume the work of extra lesson planning.

The ToYs are also the doers who accept responsibilities outside the classroom that

benefit their students. For example, James explained how he has taken the time to

supplement in class learning time via technology or practice sessions during afterschool

hours:

> So in order to put them on the fast track, what I've done is I've done a lot of work toward the internet to make sure that they have all the extra resources, dynamic geometry worksheets, for example, that I create, posts on the web, and then they have a chance to explore relationships, perhaps detailed solutions to problems.
> This has evolved to the point where now everything I do in the classroom is posted on the Internet. For example, all of our notes, detailed solutions to problems, everything is there for them.
> And likewise, I have afternoon sessions that everyone is not required to come to, but this year my B/C Calculus students started taking the course in January, it was very hard for them to go ahead and recall the material we covered before…so a lot of the students are required to come and participate on Friday afternoon sessions. (James, Interview)

In terms of putting in more hours than is required by the official teaching schedule,

Christopher also holds afterschool sessions; he disclosed that, "Every Tuesday the kids

know is my afterschool tutoring day…so some of them come you know" (Christopher,

Interview). Juliette works countless, afterschool hours with her chorus as does Sylvia

with the drama club. Tom also described afterschool responsibilities that he accepted:

> I stayed here until like 5:00, 6:00 every day. My classroom was open. They didn't even have to ask me. They just signed me up. If there was a homecoming dance that needed a chaperone, I mean, I did everything. It's like working for free, but you graduate from the university knowing that this is why you're getting in it. (Tom, Interview)

José related information about his sense of responsibility another way. During the

conversation he talked about developing reward systems and tutoring programs in a

variety of content areas:

> I do this, signs of success…I print out a certificate and present it in front of the class. It costs me two cents for that certificate, but the smile on that kid is priceless.
>
> I take them to field day. I text their mom and I say, "They're going to the military ball. No is not an answer here. They are going."

> I pull their grades every two weeks from every class, and I sit down with them and I say, "Why is this happening? Tell me. Is it because you don't know what you're doing? Is it because you're lazy?" And they tell me. "You don't know what you're doing? I'm going to help you." So every time they're going to have a test, I have somebody tutor them and get them ready for their test. Not my class. I'm talking about algebra and biology and every other class. (Jose, Interview)

The ToYs as doers accepting responsibility is a vast role, involving both the usual and customary classroom tasks associated with teaching along with hours of personal time in fulfilling supplemental responsibilities.

Doers set goals. The participants of the study clearly presented a goal-oriented experience in their lives as recognized as outstanding teachers. Their essays and interviews reflected setting goals for their students, themselves, and sometimes for their colleagues.

Diane talked extensively about the challenges in setting goals for her students:

> Okay, as a kindergarten teacher I try to assist students. They come to me in variety of backgrounds and learning experiences and what I try to do is just take them as far as I can, as far as their potential will allow them to go. And I have some students, they come in and they don't know a single letter, sound, number, color, whatever, which is unusual these days; you wonder, "Where have they been all this time?" But sometimes with grandma or sometimes there's language barriers, so they might just need some assistance.
>
> A lot of parents don't even realize the kids should know some basic skills before they even come to school. So this is where I have to differentiate instruction for those kids. And then I have some kids coming in, a few, who are actually reading when I get them. So the challenge is trying to incorporate all these different learning styles and children, different levels where I get them and then through the year develop the skills and strategies that I know that have always worked with these children….So my main goal is just to make them excited about learning and to push them to do as much as they can. (Diane, Interview)

Moving from a kindergarten setting to a dual enrollment program where students

are earning high school and college credits simultaneously, Marie also described setting

goals for her students:

> So we took our jobs really seriously in terms of that. So we were very rigorous, very focused in what kinds of writing skills we gave them. We would examine the syllabus of the other courses that they were taking at the college, philosophy courses and the like, so that we could see the expectations of those professors, and then incorporate that into our courses.
> And since the majority of our kids went to the University of Florida, we also got a hold of the syllabi from various courses at UF to see what their expectations were, so that we could make sure that – we figured if we were preparing for UF, regardless of where they were going, since that's the flagship, most of our kids go to UF, of them that stay in the state, at least, so we figured if we prepared them for that, we were pretty much doing what anybody wanted in the state.
> So then in American Lit we again tried to model what they would have. We didn't want them to miss out on a typical high school program either, because traditionally American Lit is 11th grade and British Lit is 12th grade. So we made sure that we required an American Lit class. (Marie, Interview)

Marie's goal-setting is also reflected in the high standards she sets for her students, she

explained that "If you're in my classroom here you need to making an A or a B. A grade

of C won't get it" (Marie, Interview).

Sylvia's goals for her students are focused on the critical thinking she believes

that they will need in life. She admitted that she doesn't look for her students to become

lovers of literature or to become good actors. Rather she emphasized, "I want to make

healthy human beings…I want to see self-actualized human beings" (Sylvia, Interview).

In terms of personal goals, Taina already holds a Specialist Degree in Education

and yet she is continuing to work toward a doctorate degree. In her ToY application essay

(Taina, personal communication) she wrote about the importance of self-improvement

and how she models this behavior for her students, in order for them to have goals and

keep trying to improve themselves. She expressed the following sentiments:

> Presently, I'm pursuing a doctoral degree in instructional leadership. I believe that if I emphasize education to my students, I must set an example, and not just "talk the talk," but "walk the walk."

> Although sometimes rough around the edges, my students are survivors who demonstrate great coping skills. I view them as diamonds in the rough, which merely need to be imparted with academic tools and social/interpersonal skills in which they are deficient.

> I have great expectations for my students and thus, set high standards, and demand effort. (Taina, personal communication)

Juliette also spoke repeatedly about setting high standards for her students; in her

interview she used the expression "I teach to the top" a total of 11 times. This repetition

indicates that a significant portion of her lived experience as good teacher resides in

setting goals.

On a broader scale, Tom's essay (personal communication) is written from a goal-

oriented perspective in terms of what he wants to see happen in education regarding

minority students and students from lower socioeconomic levels. He wrote:

> The effects of not addressing the issue of enrolling and successfully producing more lower income minority students who take AP classes will be the continued disparity that plagues our society; such as the high school dropout rate, college enrollment, teenage pregnancies, and crime to name a few.
> In order to reverse these effects we need to find resolution to this "crisis." There are many things we can do. One is to increase the number of minority teachers who teach AP courses and those who are currently AP teachers to take a more active role in the AP community. Two is to target potential students earlier than high school and more aggressively. Teachers, administrators, and counselors must discuss the importance of taking rigorous curriculum and the benefits of taking AP classes and exams. Three is to be sure teachers do what they can to ensure culturally diverse curricula that appeal to all students. (Tom, personal communication)

Tom's goals also speak to the idea of invoking change in our system. The role of ToYs as change-agents is developed in the following section on teachers as shakers.

Shakers. All of the participants shared information that reflected the behavior of agents for change, and the ability to manage authority and autonomy. Although none of the participants advocated breaking the rules and policies established by any level of authority, they did not hesitate to critically comment about policies and practices that they believed to be wrong. Furthermore, the participants described how change is an integral part of their lived experience as recognized as outstanding teachers.

Shakers manage change. The ToYs actively promote change either for themselves or for others; their lived experience as teachers embraces the concept of change on many levels and circumstances. Tom recalled how he willingly changed his approach with students to establish a more meaningful relationship with them, evolving into a mentor rather than an authority figure. He told me:

> You know, I think, again, in the very beginning my perception of what a good teacher was, was the stereotypical authoritative, stood in front of the classroom, demanded respect. I tried to be that teacher, and it was easy, because I came from a military environment...but I found how ineffective that was. I mean...it seemed like the more that I demanded of this kind of respect...the less I got.
> And I started to think about my own father. My father is a military man, very authoritative, very guarded, very defensive. Suddenly I remembered I didn't like that about our relationship, that he was such a guarded person. He never revealed things about his insecurities and who he was. Now I found myself in a position where I'm kind of an authoritative person, and yet I'm kind of reacting the same way.
> Now I'm looking back and I see how silly it is for me to be so guarded and then it just kind of provokes them [the students] more. So I think I just became much more transparent, not about everything, but to a level where if I feel they're [the students] not interested in something I'm talking about, and obviously they're doing something they shouldn't be, maybe before I would have went to them and said "Give me your cell phone. I'm going to write you up." Throw the book at them. That didn't do anything to change anything about that kid. That kid just hated you after that. You'd fight ten more battles because of the way you handled

it. Now, he knows I see him texting or whatever. Instead of bring up the texting, I'd be like "Hey, what's going on? How's things at home? So what are you doing in school today? How was your weekend?"

        I just kind of say these casual, kind of interesting questions. And I'm really genuine, I really want to know...They kind of look at me weird and they're like "It was good. I went to the mall." So now I take about 30 seconds while they're supposed to be doing individual work...I kind of put my hand on them [Tom touched my shoulder to demonstrate] and say "Okay, get back to work." It's amazing. There's no confrontation. Now they're getting their work done. (Tom, Interview)

Like Tom, Marie also discovered that she would change her approach with students. She

explained that "I would come up with something, **ka-boom**, right then, change my whole

approach, change it...to change it around" (Marie, Interview).

In welcoming change, the ToYs are responsive to the needs of their students; they

exhibit behaviors of refocusing or modifying the direction in which they present

information. José's ToY application essay indicated "there are times when I feel a bit out

of touch...I learn to understand how hard it is to be young in these tumultuous times...I

learn how to focus and adapt...the objectives...of the program to fit their changing needs"

(José, personal communication). James also discussed this concept in the following

passage.

        ...but the experiences that I have, I build on from one year to the other. In fact, I build on from one moment to the other, because as you perceive, the students give you feedback. If they're not getting something, okay, we try a different way. Since I've been doing it for a while, it's a little bit easier to say "That's not working. Not a problem. Let's try it this way." (James, Interview)

Furthermore, James offered a specific example of how this change works in addressing

students' needs:

        Well, I recollect, for example – this is not necessarily a good thing – but last year, somewhere around October, I'm walking around and helping students as they're working through some problems, and I have this hand go up and two students working together, they look at me and I get all excited that here comes a great

calculus question, and they look into my eyes, both of them, and sing like it was coordinated, "How can we get out of this class?"

Now I'm mortified. "It's a little more challenging than we had anticipated." I just look at them and say, "You cannot get out of this class. You signed up for it, you made the commitment for the year, and now you're in it." And I said, "If you're not happy with the C that you have at the moment, then you need to work harder."

So I thought about that response, but that was the response. The next day I went back, it took me 24 hours, and so I said, "Well the question that you asked, I gave you the right answer. But the bottom line is, let's look at how **we** [James stresses the pronoun] can tweak things and make this more manageable for you, and perhaps let me hear your side of the story." (James, Interview)

By sharing this narrative, James disclosed just how receptive he is to his students, and based on his wanting to divulge this particular incident, he recognizes that change is an integral component in his lived experience as a teacher.

Paradoxically as it may appear, change seems to be a constant in the lives of these ToYs. Diane considers change to have been a forceful influence in her life as a teacher. Because Diane left classroom teaching for a few years and then returned to it as a kindergarten teacher, she remembered thinking that "a change in scenery and atmosphere would be good...I thought at the time that I wanted something a little different; I wanted a change" (Diane, Interview). Further into my conversation with Diane, when she talked about returning to the classroom she again stated "it was just very inviting, I just thought that I might like that kind of a change" (Diane, Interview). Ultimately, with a large grin on her face, Diane asserted "I love it; you know I've observed so many changes throughout the years, from having been in education so long" (Diane, Interview). The participants in the study seem to embody and/or embrace change; they do not consider change to be threatening or offensive, rather a natural extension of their mode of being.

Shakers manage authority and autonomy. In addition to change as a usual and customary part of their lived experience as teachers, the ToYs also manifest an ability to manage authority and maintain autonomy. In Stone's research (1987), the participating teachers of the year expressed disappointment that they were not called upon to offer their expertise about what defines the effective teacher. This attitude indicated that those ToYs wanted to have voices or roles as consultants to those in leadership positions. Similarly, the ToYs in this study also demonstrated or expressed ideas about their capacity as critical decision makers who are successful in overcoming obstacles or negotiating power, also alluding to their potential as a reservoir of untapped expertise.

Juliette's teaching assignment of music and PE for the 2011-12 school year proved to be extremely challenging. She described it "as a tough pill to swallow" and as having gotten "stuck with music and PE" (Juliette, Interview). Despite the difficulties of this non-negotiable schedule, Juliette devised and implemented the following plan:

> ...what I did was, in order to try to cover as many of the benchmarks from both curriculums as possible, what I started doing was beginning every lesson, whether it was music or PE, was starting every lesson with the same set of stretches all year long. So they [the students] always got consistent stretches and three to five minutes of cardio exercise, no matter where we were, whether it was music or PE. If we were doing PE, then they would run the lap around the field outside. If we were inside the music room, then I would have them dance something fairly active for two to three minutes. This year I taught them every dance that every typical party-goer would know, like the Macarena, we did Cotton-Eyed Joe, we did Thriller, we did Electric Slide, we did a couple of folkdance things like the Mexican Hat Dance and the Troika from Russia when it was back in November and December times. So I tried to use Musical PE and Physical Music all year long, for at least the first 20 minutes or so of each lesson. So that way, it covered both benchmarks. (Juliette, Interview, June 8, 2012)

Juliette's ability to find autonomy over her imposed schedule resulted in a successful way to manage an undesirable situation.

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Juliette also does not compromise her standards and expectations for her students. She reiterated several times during her interview on June 8, 2012 that she "teaches to the top." While explaining her rationale for teaching to the highest level students, she disclosed her firmness in taking this posture:

> I think most parents respect me because I teach the kids at a high level. I don't teach to the middle, I teach to the top. Most teachers teach to the middle, I don't. I teach to the top and my principal said that I need to slow down so that the kids that don't grasp the concepts should have more of a chance. But the reason why I get such top results with my kids is because I teach to the top, not the middle. And even if the ones – I do make the time of course to remediate those that aren't getting it as best as I can. This year was a real challenge because I saw them so infrequently, but I really feel that teaching to the top is what we should be doing. You know, by teaching everyone to the top, maybe there are some kids who aren't mastering, but they're going to achieve more than if you only taught to the middle. It's proportionate, I think. Now maybe, I don't know if that's supported by any kind of research, but in my opinion, if you don't challenge ...it's not the same results. (Juliette, Interview)

Juliette's convictions are firm about having high expectations and high achievers; she is undeterred by her principal's directions to slow down in the scope and sequence of her lesson delivery.

Taina realizes that she has a good deal of autonomy over her lived experience as a teacher. She tells new teachers to "Get noticed for the things you do, not for the things you don't do" (Taina, Interview). Herein, her perspective on teaching confirms that although you have to comply with policy and procedure, there is still ample opportunity to accomplish requirements in a manner that is self-satisfying. She explained that within the realm of following the rules, there is still room for maintaining control and a sense of autonomy.

> Okay, you have to dedicate time, follow procedures, read that teacher's manual. If they want the board configured a certain way, make it that way. You could do it your way, but make sure you have want they want on it. There's a lot of flexibility

to teaching. Yes, administrators want you to have certain things, you could have what they want and still do it your way. There's still a lot of creativity. You know, teachers could still have a lot of creativity, and autonomy and you know, freedom to run their classrooms (Taina, Interview).

Taina's autonomy and confidence in herself as a teacher was also reflected by a personal experience that she shared with me.

I went to my brother's son's school because my nephew who's in third grade was being bullied and nothing was being done. And my nephew is the most altruistic kid. He'd tell the other kid, "Don't bother me." Or he'd move away from the bully. And it got to the point where my nephew just had to strike because the other kid hit him and he had to defend himself. Then we had to go to school because my nephew got suspended and my brother was all upset. And my nephew was saying that they wouldn't listen to him, that he had to defend himself; they assumed that my nephew started it, but the other kid was bothering him the whole time and my nephew just defended himself. So I had to go and speak. The school just called and said that he was suspended; they didn't even ask my brother to come to school and discuss it. They just said his son was suspended and here's the paperwork. They didn't investigate, nothing, they just suspended him. Then when we showed up, they asked if we had an appointment. We didn't need an appointment for something like this and then they didn't even talk to us in an office – in the hallway, chairs in the hallway. I let my sister-in-law talk and then I chimed in and the assistant principal says, "Who are you?"

"Me? I'm a National Board Certified Teacher, Broward County Teacher of the Year. I worked for 17 years in _____ Board of Education and _____ County Public Schools, and I was an assistant principal."

And then she's like, "Oh, okay." You know, then it's a different tune. So it's sad.

And I said, "Look, first of all you didn't even tell us to show up. We showed up because we're involved parents and relatives. Number two, we're in the hallway? People are passing by."

And she said, "Oh, I really don't know him [my nephew], I was just covering for the other AP; he's not really under me."

"Well, my nephew said that you didn't really let him talk."

"Well I don't know him and I don't know the other kid."

"Okay, so can you investigate? Because if you don't know him, you don't know that he's an altruistic kid. He has never, a teacher has never called the house to

say that he's misbehaving, or that he's a disruption. This is a gifted school, he's in a gifted school, the whole school's gifted. And we have the report cards – E, E, E [Excellence]; so wouldn't you want to talk to his teachers and talk to other students and investigate? Because this is not a pattern with him, so wouldn't you—"

They saw that I wasn't wrong. So that's the only time I'll not be humble and say who I am so that they'll know that they cannot pull the wool over my eyes because you're talking to somebody who's in the system. (Taina, Interview)

Although this anecdote occurred outside of Taina's classroom and involved her family rather than her students, it is indicative of how she manages power and can challenge authority when she feels strongly about an educational issue. It is also an example of how Taina understands how her credentials offer her a voice that she may not otherwise be able to vocalize.

Marie reinforced this idea when she shared that she's used her credentials "to weasel my way in to be like a policy-maker or be on a standards committee" (Marie, Interview). Then she added, "I won't deny that I haven't used that to get myself on the State Standards Committee or the National Professional Teaching Standards Committee" (Marie, Interview). With a frankness and directness, Marie admitted that, "Yes, I did, because it gives you credibility. So that's okay, too" (Marie, Interview). The ToYs illustrate an ability to seek positions of leadership and work in situations where they will have the power to establish educational policy. This behavior is interesting when considered in relation to Stone's (1987) research on ToYs lived experiences. Stone found that ToYs wanted to share their expertise in order to define and describe the effective teacher. Stone's participants regretted not being asked to participate in the policy-making discussions (p. 133), whereas Marie does not wait for an invitation – as a Shaker she "weasels" herself a seat at the discussion tables.

Rosa and Sylvia both talked about having influence or power on broader levels. Rosa asserted, "Something has to be done so the students are geared more for the future. If I could work on that, not even teaching Spanish any more, if I could work on something to make a difference" (Rosa, Interview). In kind, Sylvia quoted Gandhi's advice to "be the change you want to see in the world" in her ToY application essay (Sylvia, personal communication), and she followed the quotation by explaining that "I spend almost all of my spare time in professional develop experiences." These perspectives are representative of the ToYs intention to leverage their positions affecting an increase in their power and influence others.

Believers. The participants have high hopes for brighter futures for their students. Overall, they are positive thinkers and they believe that they should take on the roles of guardian, caretaker, and encourager in order facilitate positive outcomes for their students. Skemp's (2010) research findings mirrors the data in this study, with meaning brought to teaching via teachers' relationships with students based on caring and sympathy.

Believers as coaches. All the participants, with the exception of Diane, used the word coach at least one time during their interview. Although Diane did not use the term, her narrative still contained some of the characteristics consistent with coaching behavior, such as explaining that "I take them as far as I can, as far as their [the students'] potential will allow them to go" (Diane, Interview). The concept of coaching assumes an underlying belief in possibilities, in improvement, and in success; to coach is to emit a can-do energy. The ToYs are all filled with hope that their students can beat sometimes impossible odds, that they can improve markedly, and that they can succeed.

Christopher shared this optimistic attitude, his coaching attitude, when he explained that "instead of getting discouraged, oh, oh alright, it didn't work out. Let's try again, you, so – so that's the whole idea" (Christopher, Interview). Later in the conversation, Christopher elaborated on being the hopeful coach to his students.

> I take them under my wings, and you go, you pull a kid aside and you go: "You are really sharp, you're good at this. You should think about a career in science, you know." And they need that, they really do. And you know, some of them come across as being so macho because they don't want to show their friends that they have any interest in education, God forbid. But you can tell when you talk to them one-on-one, they're still kids, they're still impressionable...And that's what keeps me going because I like the idea – I pulled one kid aside and I said: "You know, D____, after God and your parents, do know who your biggest fan is? Who is it? Who's your biggest fan?"
>
> D said, "Mr. C?"
>
> "Yes, that's right and I will applaud you when you get your college diploma, I will be there cheering, screaming the loudest." (Christopher, Interview)

Christopher's looking ahead to a positive outcome for his students, using the term *fan*, implies his belief that his students can be winners, just like the coach believes in his players, Christopher is calling the plays and cheering them on from the sidelines.

José described his coaching techniques with his students. He stated that "I try to build self-confidence and self-esteem, because I tell them 'When you look in a mirror, you've got to like what you see'" (José, Interview). He expanded on this idea when he talked about deciding to teach after retirement from active duty.

> From meeting kids that had no direction, because I had to talk to high school kids, and a lot of the high school kids were in a lot of troubled schools. When I saw that I remembered myself, and I realized that some of these kids just need a mentor or role model to kind of point them to be the citizen that we want in this country. I felt by teaching I could do that.
>
> What prompted me to start teaching was because I saw with my own eyes some of the things that were going on in high schools and some of these kids that had no

direction. I think all they needed was somebody to kind of push them a little bit and give them some guidance in order to hopefully get their lives straightened out.

They're required to do things, and I challenge them to do it and I make them do it, because I know that's going to be something that's going to be beneficial to them in the future, whatever I'm teaching. I teach life skills, public speaking, financial planning, first aid...So everything that I try to teach them, it's not for college, but it prepares them for life. (Jose, Interview)

José's commitment to the improvement of his students' lives is exemplary of coaching behavior; his expressions are filled with references about his student moving forward and about having purposeful lives as adults.

In her essay Rosa talked about the competitive nature of the world and how she encourages her students to practice and take part in scholastic competitions. Like a coach, she established goals for her students and described how her coaching improved achievement scores over the years.

The ultimate goal of education is to prepare our students for a better future...We live in a competitive world. The mastery of other languages, especially Spanish for the area we live in, is imperative in the business world. I encourage my students to take part in county competitions. I have had many students receive first and second place ribbons for declamation, poetry recital, singing, dancing, projects, and the posters they submitted. I started teaching AP students in a combination class several years back as I thought it imperative for students to become more fluent in the language. I have had perfect passing scores for two years. The year before last I had a class of 28 AP students, all of whom passed. (Rosa, personal communication)

Rosa looks forward to a time of improved social conditions. Her spirit for her students to compete and succeed reflects a can-do, coaching attitude embedded into her lived experience as a teacher. This spirit carries through into her personal life, indicating that this aspect of her teaching life is not merely confined to the classroom.

I want my grandchildren to have a teacher that knows the difference, knows what's important, and helps them try to figure out why they're not doing well.

Maybe they're not feeling well that day, to know about them enough to be sensitive to their needs, you know, and how to reach them. (Rosa, Interview)

Rosa's inclusion of the clauses "know about them enough to be sensitive to their needs" and "how to reach them" are indicative of the importance she gives to the teacher who believes in students from a coaching-type perspective.

Believers as nurturers. Those who nurture others inherently believe that growth and improvement can be achieved through their efforts. The ToYs who participated in this study often compared themselves to caretakers, parents, relatives, guardians, and etcetera. There appears to be a common thread among them in that these ToYs provide sustenance to their students, and in doing so, the ToYs see hope and promise for their students' futures.

Marie told me during our conversation that her students called her "Mom." Diane also tells her students that she's their "mommy when you are at school" (Diane, Interview). Christopher shared that he's "had a very good relationship with the students over the years. I even tell them, 'You know you people to me are like my nieces and nephews, you're not my students, you're my nieces and nephews'" (Christopher, Interview). Christopher's nurturing perspective and assuming the role of a caring family member reflects his belief that he helps his students realize a brighter tomorrow. He explained his ideas about the future this way:

> I have a theory about that. I think that maybe it takes time – maybe 10 or 20 years and maybe they [the students] look back and think maybe I wasn't so smart after all, judging that teacher, so even there we have – but the teaching profession...it's not like you work for a company and you put out widgets and you can see within a few months whether it's profitable – ours is a very long term kind of thing. (Christopher, Interview)

Taina's thoughts about nurturing her middle school students in a manner similar to parenting were related anecdotally; she recounted about a time that she had to be away from school.

> And that's the kind of thing that a dedicated teacher does, because if I don't go to work, my kids don't learn. And then everything that I've established and all the gains that I've made, they'll go backwards, you know they'll regress and I don't want them to regress and I'm like, if I don't go to work, my kids won't learn. Even if I leave lesson plans, the substitute doesn't follow it. So you feel this obligation, they're like your children. If you get hurt, but you can still limp and cook: are you not going to cook for your children? No, you're going to get up there in pain and make your kids breakfast, and make your children lunch and whatever and dinner, because that's what a responsible parent does no matter what. (Taina, Interview)

The metaphor of cooking for one's children is an action in the fulfilling of a basic need to sustain life and promote growth. Taina's metaphor about the mother cooking for her children, no matter how difficult or painful, captures this concept.

Juliette's Arts Teacher of the Year acceptance speech (Juliette, personal communication), echoed her nurturing and caring for elementary school children always keeping their futures in mind. She proclaimed:

> Anyone who knows me knows I am dedicated to teaching music...But it's not just me who benefits from my arts passion. M____ a former student and chorister of mine, was in 5th grade when her brother died of brain cancer. Having taught 4 of her 7 siblings, I rallied the Chorus Booster Association to help raise money to pay the family medical bills so the family could keep their home....M____'s older brother who suffers from drowning-induced cerebral palsy, and who was also in my chorus, began studying again after his mother's passing. He passed the FCAT and graduated from high school with a regular diploma. (Juliette, personal communication)

Her ToY application essay (Juliette, personal communication) also reflected her belief in the power of nurturing her students. She wrote: "I believe that a teacher's most important mission is to safeguard and enrich students' spirits."

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The teacher that James hoped to emulate was the teacher that "cared about the students" (James, Interview). José describes this aspect of caring and safeguarding of his high school students in detail:

> First of all, I try to make my classroom an environment where kids feel comfortable, because if they're comfortable they open up...I have a kid in first period, he'll show up fourth period. If he finishes his work in other classes he'll ask the teacher, "Can I go see Sergeant Major?" That makes me feel good. Although that increases the numbers in my classroom, it makes me feel good because I understand that he's comfortable coming to me to talk to me about anything, and that's what I want them to do. I want them to get comfort and have that person within the school that they can go to in case they have a problem or a situation or need any help...That know that, and they feel so comfortable that they come to me. (Jose, Interview)

José, James, and Tom all disclosed a sense of responsibility for the welfare of their students; more so than merely being the facilitator of learning, they profoundly cared about providing a safe space for their students and building students' self-esteem. When Tom talked about recommendations for new teachers, his response included the importance of caring for students affectively because he believes that most students remember the teacher who "really made me feel good about myself. I didn't believe in myself. I didn't think I was capable....he made me believe in myself. Where I thought I couldn't even graduate, suddenly I realized I have the power" (Tom, Interview).

On a more detailed level, the following passage represents how these ToYs go beyond the classroom walls and curriculum to protect their students:

> And there's been things that happened that helped kids, and I don't know, some of them have remembered me and searched for me and all that.
> There's one particular child, she was crying really hard this year. It was just before lunchtime. And I said to her, "E_____, what is wrong with you?" And she had pent up emotions, because she had been molested, and her parents didn't want to think it was true. I noticed that she was getting heavier and heavier, and she had lost her boyfriend and things like that.

And so we talked and I said, "You know, because I have to report this, but I want your parents to do it. You have to talk to your parents and talk to your mother and father. Sit them down."

Because it's something that was gnawing at her. It was gnawing that they didn't really believe her or care – I'd say more the mother than father.

So she did, and she's going through the counseling and everything. She now emails me. She wanted my email because she graduated this spring. She said she'll never forget me. (Rosa, Interview)

The impact of nurturing for a brighter future is also manifested at the kindergarten level.

As Diane walked me around her classroom to look at her students' work, she said:

I am so proud of them, yes! This little one, he didn't like to write at all. And I started praising him and all of a sudden – boom! Like in two days he was just – he started to really enjoy writing, and it looks so nice. And I would tell him, "Go show everybody." And he would walk around the room to show everybody, just marching in a little line. Then another kid would ask, "Can I go show everybody?" I would say, let me see and say, "Yes, you've done a good job, go show them." And so you know, it just that pride that you take in them. (Diane, Interview)

Believers as optimists. All of the participants voiced concerns over the current direction in education regarding standardized, high-stakes testing and/or the added-value approach to evaluate teachers. In general, they are critical of these growing trends. More specifically, Diane told me that

I don't like to give tests and I think the worst thing is all the new testing that has been pushed upon us. It's not so much the tests themselves, but it's the fact that we have to do the – we have to do one-on-one with a child in front of the computer screen and input their scores right there while the rest of the students are pretty much left doing – .

You know you try to set it up so they're engaged and all, but it's not the same thing because your presence isn't there overseeing and being involved. You're doing this one-on-one and I'm sure the kids are nervous, but you try to make them comfortable. But all of that testing – I really, really don't like that. Even math tests – I mean I teach them testing skills, they have to cover their paper and they learn how to bubble-in and all that, but it's just grueling to me. That's to me **not** [loudly and resolutely] what teaching is all about and there are other ways to assess kids besides the tests that we have to give them! (Diane, Interview)

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James also had concerns over testing and the growing trend to evaluate teachers by the value-added model. "This business we're in, it's not a profit and loss statement, and I don't think you merely measure success by a test score" (James, Interview). Moreover, in James' application essay for the ToY award, he stated:

> I believe the policy of tying teaching pay to student performance on test scores is well intentioned yet misguided and if instituted would result in the loss of quality teachers. We have no experience with this model and many variables contribute to student performance. To sum it up, teacher compensation should be tied to those variables the teacher has control of....
> Merit pay is not the answer as a highly qualified instructor may be working very diligently with a group of low performing students who are simply unable to achieve the mandated annual yearly progress despite the instructor's effort. (James, personal communication)

Taina became emotional over the subject of the growing public attitude toward teachers and how teachers are misunderstood and mistreated because teacher quality is increasingly measured only by test scores.

> You know I do so many things that are not required of a teacher, but nobody sees that. And sometimes, the kids, you know that day that the kids don't want to show effort, that day it hurts...I was feeling disappointed with society, disillusioned...I was disappointed...society doesn't respect us...you're asking more and more of us and taking away teachers, so that teachers like myself have added responsibility. So I was really feeling just disappointed and disillusioned with the educational system in the United States that they don't respect teachers...and just the public not supporting us, the parents not supporting us and feeling unappreciated and taken for granted....
> Because the kids are also getting more difficult and we're just dealing with kids that are depressed, kids that are suicidal, kids that are violent, kids that are angry. And you have to deal with the affective domain and the kids' emotions before you can start teaching....So they never talk about **that** [stressed intonation] stuff. (Taina, Interview)

In Sylvia's ToY application essay she asserted that

> A shift needs to occur in what we are holding the members of the village accountable for. Standardized test performance is only one part of the equation. We need to start looking at educating the whole child and coming up with viable assessments that indicate this growth. There is a difference between evaluation (to

form an idea of the amount, number or value of) and assessment (to estimate the nature, quality or ability of). We find the problem articulated in the definition. The results of evaluations are precise numbers with which policymakers and educators can analyze to reward or eliminate. The results of assessments (a word that does not usually appear without "alternative" in front of it) generates descriptions which are not quantifiable or easily manipulated, but in the enacting, carry the relationships, emotions, communications, failures and retries that contribute to the development of a whole, integrated human being. (Sylvia, personal communication)

Herein in Sylvia, like her ToY counterparts in this study, decries the current emphasis on students' test scores and teacher accountability based on the value-added approach.

Despite the ToYs position about what they believe to be a negative educational climate, the participants are collectively positive individuals who still see teachers as an optimistic force in the lives of their students, and they feel hopeful about positively impacting the future.

Marie's advice for new teachers encapsulated her positivity and her belief in a better tomorrow while indicating her concerns about current educational policy:

Remember that teaching allows you in so many ways to impact the future in ways that no other profession possibly can. When you have a child in your classroom you leave forever an imprint, and just make it a positive imprint. Do something positive, because you affect the future.

I would just say stay positive, ignore the negatives, don't listen to it. Everything is cyclical. After 40 years being in the classroom, I've seen every program, and this too shall pass. So whatever people think is bad now, it won't last, because the kinds of things – you can't measure teaching. It's a creative process. It is not producing a product.

Creativity cannot be measured in the same way that a product can be measured. And so teaching is creative. It's personal. Eventually they're going to come to understand that that is the case and how they're going to – I think how they're going to come to understand this is when they see the disconnect between who we regard as really good inspiring teachers, and test scores; there's going to be a terrible disconnect, and are you going to fire these inspiring teachers and keep the robots, and you're not going to do that, because everybody is going to

say, "Oh my god, there's something wrong there, that disconnect." And there is going to be a disconnect and this too shall pass.

So that's what I would say to them, "stay positive." (Marie, personal communication)

In this narration, Marie's focus is on the positive impact in the lives of students. She is an optimist and believes that current erroneous policies and practices will pass away.

James also used his ToY application essay (personal communication) as a platform to criticize the issue of merit pay for teachers. Although James takes a negative stance on the issue, he is nonetheless optimistic that positive outcomes will prevail.

> In a final word on the recent heated debate on merit pay, let me say that teachers must be held accountable for factors that are strictly under their influence. To provide an analogy from my past as a professional soccer referee, when a serious foul takes place in a game, the referee assessor rates the game official's performance on his response to the reckless tackle. The fact that a reckless tackle occurred in the match has no impact on the referee's performance unless visual cues prior to the incident were ignored and appropriate preventative actions were not taken by the official. So it is with education; teacher evaluation is a complex process and unrelated to the business model proponents of merit pay wish it to be. (James, personal communication)

James' position speaks from someone who believes that a change in perspective is possible and he uses an appeal to logic and rationality in his analogous illustration.

Sylvia expressed her optimism when she spoke to me about understanding how her life experiences have impacted her teaching and her identity as a teacher. She related:

> I've been through some difficult times in my life. My parents divorced, and that was pretty tough. So I know what I'm looking at with teens. There was some substance abuse in my family with siblings. So I know what that looks like.
>
> It's really from the hardest times that I really feel is the reason I'm a good teacher.
>
> I was sort of lost at the end of my marriage when I ran into Chris and Helen and their form of theater, and not only taught me that there's a different way to teach and different way to teach kids to think. It really saved my life to some extent. And I think that it's really satisfying to be able to do that for somebody else.

I really like figuring out what good teaching is, and being self-actualized by it, is what I want to share, what I want to pay it forward or whatever. So – and I love that teen stage. It's an awkward, messy stage. It's sort of like kids are finding out their identity and what they're going to do later, and there's lots of pressure and they're a little reticent, and they're finding their voices. And I like that place, because I know that, I've lived that place and came out of that place to be pretty fearless, and that's what I want for everybody. (Sylvia, Interview)

Sylvia is a hope-filled individual; she is optimistic about the results of being a good teacher and a positive force in her students' lives so that they will "feel happy and healthy as an adult" (Sylvia, Interview).

Similarly, Taina personal experiences also support her belief in a better future and spread optimism throughout her lived experience as a teacher. She shared some of the circumstances of her upbringing with me:

I lived in low socio-economic communities...I experienced two fires in my life. At age eight, an apartment building burned down. We're eating breakfast and we were like, "okay we've go to get out of here." And at age 16, an electrical fire, we lived in ____ and our house burned down. And then you know how insurance companies are, my mother paid for insurance; the firemen said it was electrical, and the insurance says no, it wasn't – that it was neglect on my mom's part. So my mother had to refinance the home, and you know what, my mother was always positive, never angry, never negative. So I get that from her; that no matter what life throws your way, you just pick yourself up. And you smile and you try to endure it at the moment because better things, good things will happen.

So I can relate to my students because I also went to Title I schools; I went to this kind of school with the same population of African Americans, Hispanics and Caribbean. And I tell them [the students] that, I tell them, "don't think that because Ms. T is educated and she likes to dress up and that I'm a teacher, that I can't understand what you're coming from because I've been there. Even though you might not think so because I'm always happy and positive"...so I think my life experiences have helped me to be a better teacher, to be understanding, but still demanding and expecting from them, that that's still not an excuse because you know what: I made it and I wasn't traumatized; I had traumatizing experiences....but still that's not an excuse...Bad things happen to everybody, you're not immune to life – it's how you deal with it. (Taina, Interview)

Taina's attitude about her personal struggles is exemplary of her strong optimism. She recognizes the importance of thinking positively, and in turn, she seeks to instill the same positivity in her students.

Summary of the results regarding research question one. The participants of the study embody a complex mixture of cognitive and affective elements that describe their lived experiences as recognized as outstanding teachers. The coded interviews and essays offered insights to four grand themes or roles wherein the ToYs lived experience is portrayed as: Lovers, Doers, Shakers, and Believers. These individuals' lives are defined by these roles; they feel themselves to be alive because they are teachers. Their energy source is their teaching. José said that in terms of being a teacher, "It's how I am and that "as long as I'm here [at school] I feel energy" (Interview), and Juliette said, "It was something I was born to do" (Interview), and Sylvia said that she is "alive in the field of teaching" (Interview).

They demonstrate a vast capacity for making lasting connections with their students. These connections are not only successful in terms of facilitating learning, but also in promoting healthy human growth and development. Tom's account synthesizes this idea:

> So our numbers [test scores] were never good enough for the county. We weren't that great at sports either. We really didn't have a lot to cheer about. We had a stabbing at our school and we had a killing at our school. There were just always negative things.
> Luckily, we were able to kind of start this poetry and after-school workshop. The kids wanted to start performing. There was just – we had a very supportive principal at the time, and he allowed us to have a quarterly assembly.
> I mean, these kids worked two or three times a week for a whole quarter just so they could do one 3-minute poem in front of 500 kids.
> But these were kids that did not excel academically. These weren't kids who were stellar athletes. These were just your everyday, average kid who

probably wasn't going to stand out in a school of 3, 000, but for that one moment they could get on stage, they could talk about anything. And they talked about some pretty heavy stuff...we heard about shootings. Those were the kinds of issues that they touched on.

I had teachers who taught 35, 40 years coming to me after this in tears saying, "I've been to a lot of assemblies, but man, those kids really moved me with what they had to say."

And I think I kind of fed off of that, too. I mean, I'm not getting paid to do this either, but it was really a good feeling. (Tom, Interview)

The lived experience of the ToYs in this study also indicates an extraordinary level of commitment and compassion for their students. José told me that "being a teacher, you teach, and you continue to teach...my reward comes later. It's not monetary, it's not trophies, it's not any of that. It's the fact that a kid comes back and tells you, 'Thank you'" (Jose, Interview).

For these recognized as outstanding teachers, being a teacher is synonymous with their purpose for being alive. As Lovers, they are emotionally committed to a 4-pronged relationship – it is as if *Teacher* is a persona that they are bound to or are made one with by their love of the students, by their love of the act of teaching, by their love of learning, and by their love of their subject matter. Tom said, "Teaching chose me" (Interview). His rhetorical construction personifies the profession and exemplifies the fundamental precept that teaching for these ToYs is a living force; Tom accepted the proposal to teach. Metaphorically, you can compare Tom's relationship with teaching to that of the couple who choose to experience life together. Teaching seemed to call out and select Tom; in turn, Tom consented to being chosen to teach.

As Doers, the ToYs are highly productive; they embrace responsibilities, establish goals with tangible results, and strategically design processes to fulfill commitments.

Juliette described teaching as her ongoing and global productivity, touching every

moment of her life:

> Well, I look at everything I do in life as something that I can draw on as a teacher in the classroom, *everything* [emphatic intonation]! Even the stupid leg problem I have right now. You know...I think of teaching as the highest calling that there is because you are preparing the future, really. And everything that I do is something that I share with the kids, especially from personal struggles that I've gone through and conquered I guess is the word, or just walking into the grocery store and asking the kids – you know one of the things in the music curriculum is to discuss how music is used in the world – and to make them stop and reflect about that. "Well when you walk into any department store what do you hear? Well you hear music piped through there. Well, why do they do that? Hum? When you have a holiday, what do you do? You sing songs or a birthday celebration, or what have you." And to get kids to reflect on that. So there's life application in teaching. (Juliette, Interview)

In identifying the ToYs as doers their lived experience is active; it is an experience filled

with busyness toward achieving purpose.

As Shakers, the participants of the study do not accept the status quo without

deliberate consideration; they understand that change is an integral aspect of their lives as

teachers. Moreover, these ToYs possess acuity in terms of managing administrator's

authoritative power and maintaining their individual autonomy over their classrooms.

Marie's comments reflected a strong attitude about maintaining the integrity of

curriculum and autonomy as a teacher. She asserted:

> Because we don't want to destroy the curriculum for a mandate, and we don't want to destroy the autonomy of the teacher and have – I've been pretty vocal about canned programs and scripted programs, a real vocal critic of that. And if you have the trust of the administrator, even though somebody has said this is a great idea, I've been fairly successful in telling them, "This is not a great idea! This is not what we want to do!" (Marie, Interview)

Marie's frank expression is indicative of confidence in her knowledge base and using the

second person plural point of view, *we*, she reinforces an underlying assumption of

unilateral teamwork and a partnership between herself and the administration.

As Believers, there is no question about looking toward a brighter and better

tomorrow; these recognized as outstanding teachers inject hope and promise into the lives

of their students. They coach, they nurture, and they infuse every inch of their teaching

environments with positivity and optimism. Taina explained that she deliberately and

repeatedly reminds her students that

> life is hard, but life is what you make it. You could have a good life and still,
> there's going to be obstacles in your path. Even when you do the right things, you
> study, and you have obstacles. But it's much harder if you're not prepared. You
> know that education's the key....It's not your aptitude, it's your attitude. (Taina,
> Interview)

With similar optimism, Christopher also urged his students to

> want to get to the point in your career where you're at the top of your career, you
> want to get to a point where you understand, but you're always learning, but you
> can share things with other people and help them get better. You know that's the
> whole idea, making other people get better themselves. It's not waiving my
> credentials in anybody's face. You know I hate when people do that and it doesn't
> accomplish anything. It's what we do for other people – that's the fulfillment of
> life you know. (Christopher, Interview)

Ultimately, the four roles are not mutually exclusive behaviors; rather the ToYs

lived experience of teaching embraces all of these conditions, elements, and concepts –

they intertwine with every facet of their lives, and weave a living tapestry of their core

values and their dispositions.

Findings Regarding Research Question Two

The second research question of this study asked: How do ToYs feelings and

perceptions about being good teachers provide insight, if any, about the relevance to

teaching of concepts such as pedagogical tact, teacher selfhood, and professional dispositions? The findings of the study do suggest that the concepts of pedagogical tact, teacher selfhood, and professional dispositions are relevant to teaching and may offer important insights into good teaching. Most of the participating ToY finalists and winners did in some way refer to intuitive qualities or moments of enlightenment that were not concretely or clearly explicable. Metaphoric terms or concepts, some perhaps relating to a spiritual nature, are employed below to discuss these intangible qualities. Reflecting Palmer's (1997) philosophy about spirituality in education and inner selfhood, many of the ToY finalists and winners lived experience as teachers "recover a sense of the *sacred* [emphasis added] in knowing, teaching, and learning" (para. 50). As a result of the coding and analysis of data, two major themes emerged with respect to research question two. The themes identified in relation to question two are Moments of Knowingness and Inexplicable Power. Figure 4 outlines the organization of the themes with their respective examples from the ToYs interview transcripts and/or essays supporting each theme. Following the figure, each of the themes is discussed in depth.

Figure 4

Question Two: Inductively Developed Thematic Roles in the Lived Experience of Recognized as outstanding Teachers

Themes	Examples
Moments of Knowingness	"I wanted to see children's eyes light up" (Interview with Taina).
	"What possessed me...I have no idea...it was like God said, 'touch you'" (Interview with Christopher).
Inexplicable Power	"You can turn something that's ordinary into something extraordinary, just put a twist to it, a little effort, something different" (Interview with Diane).
	"Is being alive in the field of teaching teachable?" (Interview with Sylvia).
	"Water is harmless, but it's flexible, persistent. It can move mountains" (Interview with Tom).

Moments of Knowingness. Realization and understanding often comes to us during moments of clarity, when we believe our comprehension is illuminated or we have been enlightened somehow or made more aware. I am calling this concept Moments of Knowingness. We hear it often enough, *having a light-bulb moment*, but what does that expression mean within the lived experience of recognized as outstanding teachers? We also hear expressions like: *illuminate me on the subject*. How do recognized as outstanding teachers illuminate understanding for their students? When the participants of this study described how they experience good teaching, the majority of them included a direct reference or metaphoric expression involving light bulbs or illumination, the ah-ha moment, and some implied an enlightenment of the soul as aspects of their teaching experiences. They talked about a sense of knowing and understanding, thus the Moment of Knowingness.

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For these recognized as outstanding teachers, good teaching is dependent upon and synonymous with student performance. In fact, they had difficulty in articulating what the experience of good teaching is like without the using the student as a measurement – they were unable to isolate their teaching behaviors from their students' learning behaviors. It was as though this light of understanding or awareness is like neurological connective tissues or electrical wires that transfer energy between two points, in this case between teacher and student.

When asked to describe a situation when she experienced good teaching, Diane said:

> Yeah! [big smile radiating from her face]. Yeah, I remember when we were doing these different science experiments and the children were involved with things that sink and things that would float. And we had different tubs of water going on and they were experimenting and they found that certain things that they didn't expect to sink—well they did sink, and things that they thought would float, did not. And what they found out was that a pencil will float, but if it stays in the water long enough it gets water-logged and eventually sink.
> We had that going on, we had some other writing activities going on and it was like the whole room was just alive and lit up with different things and all the kids – it seemed like they were having fun and they were engaged and some were on the computer. And, I don't know, that particular day, I just felt like it was a perfect day because it was going smoothly, everyone was behaving because they were really focused on what they were doing and it just made me feel successful that I was doing what I was supposed to be doing. (Diane, Interview)

In this scenario, Diane talks about the her classroom being animated and bright, but she expresses this idea in relation to her students' discovery of information coupled with her self-affirmation that she was doing "what I was supposed to be doing" – her Moment of Knowingness (Diane, Interview).

Sylvia's description about the experience of good teaching included moments of enlightenment for herself as well as her students. She even used the word "sparked" twice

within a short span of discourse to relate how this was an energetic emergence of

understanding:

> So this sparked an incredible discussion in my class about casting practices and about what does it mean to represent Hitler in the form of a black female playing Hitler. So most of the class, whatever ethnicity, said, "No, you couldn't do that, you couldn't have a play in which Hitler was black."
> Then there was one girl who said, "That's a lazy choice, to always have Hitler be white – Hitler represents a barrage of things that are internal, in terms of discrimination and hatred. Then it's a lazy choice to say that Hitler would always have to be dark haired or blond and blue-eyed."
> And that sparked a huge debate and I remember before she spoke up kind of nodding with the rest of the class going, "Yeah, it would be difficult to cast Hitler as a black female," until she spoke up, and she really taught me something that day....
> She taught me that good teaching is co-intentional. Good teaching is truly co-intentional....So that's what good teaching is, when you're truly learning from them, with them. (Sylvia, Interview)

Sylvia's account exemplifies this sense of reciprocity – that ah-ha moment of illuminated

understanding is not exclusive to the student; rather this enlightenment, this Moment of

Knowingness represents awareness for the teacher as well. The electrical current can flow

both ways. This co-intentionality of the teaching experience echoes van Manen's (1991)

theory of pedagogical tact, wherein the teacher acts and reacts spontaneously and action

and reflection seem to happen simultaneously.

Christopher's response to being asked to describe moments of good teaching

resulted in this response:

> Well, first of all it feels marvelous, as any teacher will tell you. You can tell when the light bulb comes on. You can just tell. When you're standing up there, when you're discussing as a group or you're doing small group things, and all of a sudden a kid goes, "I got it! I understand it!" (Christopher, Interview)

However, this Moment of Knowingness for his student is not enough; Christopher seeks

even more. For Christopher to fully describe good teaching, the flow of energy between

himself and his student must continue until the student can recognize the concept outside the sphere of the classroom. Christopher continued:

> Like in biology, I'll be talking about carbohydrates, fats, and proteins and they'll say something like "now I understand why my uncle can't eat such and such a food, because it has this in it" – well and that's where you know...it does happen and that's what drives you. (Christopher, Interview)

Rosa also experiences good teaching when the Moment of Knowingness is extended by the student's application of the information to the outside world. She explained:

> I love when that happens...If they get it, and you tell them to give you an example, you ask for it and answer – you can see the light on their faces and you can see them thinking "I got it," and when they say that, "Oh, I got it," you know that feeling of teaching it that they were able to understand. (Rosa, Interview)

For most of the participants, good teaching is described as moments of light within the classroom, where student understanding is visible by an illumination within a sphere that encompasses the teacher as well. Even more distinctively, José narrated the experience of good teaching thusly:

> I tell my kids, "You have to have the confidence that when you walk in a room, you bring a glow with you." It could be a closed room, it could be a dark room, but because of the fact that you have their confidence and the ability, a glow follows.
> I tell them, "Every time I walk in a classroom a glow follows, because nobody knows more about what I'm going to speak about then me."...I try to build self-confidence and self-esteem, because I tell them, "When you look in a mirror, you've got to like what you see." (José, Interview)

In this case, José's experience of good teaching resides in his self-confidence and expertise – his Moments of Knowingness; he possesses the knowledge of subject matter and of himself, and as such, the glow of confidence follows him into his classroom.

In some manner, most of the ToY finalists and winners participating in this study indicated an indeterminate or unexpected influence on their decision to become a teacher.

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Regardless whether or not teaching was their first career choice, all the participants implied that at some point in their lives they were *called to teach*, or that there was an aspect within their character or personality that pushed or guided them to bring improvement and enlightenment to their students. For many of these teachers, circumstances inexplicably developed that placed them on the doorstep of teaching, and they reach a moment where they simply *knew* they should teach. For these teachers, their goal of enlightenment is not merely their students' mastery of prescribed curriculum; rather enlightenment is offering their students an understanding of themselves, making sense of their place in the world, and finding purpose in their lives. These teachers seek Moments of Knowingness.

Christopher's explicit remark, "What possessed me...I have no idea...it was like God said, 'touch you'" (Christopher, Interview), is perhaps the most emphatic example of this concept. However, even Rosa, who seemed to pragmatically decide on teaching because "I wanted to have a family, and I thought being off in the summer was a good thing for a woman at that time" (Rosa, Interview), also stated that "I thought it would be nice to teach upper – like high school. I was interested in being able to teach; I thought that I could help" (Rosa, Interview). The notion of *helping* is a basic tenet in Palmer's work regarding inner selfhood and spirituality in education. He talks about teachers providing sustenance for their students, in that, good teachers have "some sort of connective capacity, who somehow connect the students and the subject being studied and the students to each other" (Palmer, 1997, para. 67), and that good teachers are those for whom creating community is essential (Palmer, 1997). Perhaps, Rosa did not realize it

at the time, but her decision to teach was far more than merely a matter of practicalities; she reiterated several times during our conversation that

> with my students, I try to go beyond teaching...where as I take interest in their lives...If I know more about them, then I'm able to see how I can help them better...I want them to feel free. I tell them to come to me if they have any thing that they need help with, that I could help with. If there's something like they're having problems at home or something...But I want them to be comfortable enough to be able to come to me.

> I say at the beginning of the year, I'll tell them when my planning times are, and if they have any concerns to see me during lunch or after school. And I – just by my personality – I want them to be, you know – I try to be in a welcoming way. (Rosa, Interview)

Rosa's deep concern for her students as human beings and her interest in improving their well-being is representative of how she builds community within her classroom. "You find the community that a good teacher evokes and invites students into, that somehow weaves and reweaves life together" (Palmer, 1997, para. 71). Rosa's lived experience supports Palmer's theory; she said, "I am more than a Spanish teacher. I have always been more than a Spanish teacher" (Rosa, Interview)

Sylvia (Interview), who originally intended to work within academia, realized that she did not want to become a university professor and quit her doctoral program. After a couple of years of moving around and doing random jobs connected with theater, she eventually found herself in a position as a high school drama teacher. Her narrative illustrates an unexpected and somewhat illogical turn of events:

> When I found the job at _____ High School, I was on vacation here visiting my mother. I was not even looking to live in Florida...There was a position posted for a theater teacher and an English teacher, and I said, "How could this be?"
> I had gotten my paperwork in two months earlier, just on account of because – you know, you never know. I was putting my papers in Florida and New York, thinking: "Okay, so how do I get access to teens without being a

respected theater company or whatever? – try the high school." So when this job
came up I was ready to go.

They said, "Well, it's three days before Christmas. Can you meet us in the
parking lot at 7:00 a.m. on December 22nd?" and they hired me – I'm not kidding
– they hired me in the parking lot at 7:00 a.m. We didn't even have an office to go
into.

And they said to me: "How is it?" They looked at the resume and said,
"How is it that we need a theater teacher and you have this incredible resume,
incredible background, and all this pedagogy about teaching teens, actualizing
teens through theater, teaching social justice to teens through theater?"

I told them my story. Then I said, "How is it that you need a theater
teacher and that position isn't filled in 17 different ways?"

Extremely interesting story. The gentleman who had been teaching theater
at that school died of an aneurysm on a plane. He was a 33 year old Black,
healthy male, who just dropped dead over Thanksgiving vacation. And because I
wasn't really certified yet or in the system, if this had happened in the summer
they could not have hired me, but because it was in the interim, they could hire
me. *So all my stars lined up. God was good* [emphasis added]. (Sylvia, Interview)

Between the light from the stars and the conceptual guidance of a higher power, Sylvia's

call to teaching was solidified.

Both José and Tom had military careers prior to becoming teachers. While

serving in the military, both men coincidentally experienced working with youngsters.

José worked as an army recruiter and while speaking with potential recruits he "found

that a lot of them needed direction" (Interview). Tom volunteered in a program at the

local schools that was designed to build community relationships between the army and

the public. He said "I took it as an opportunity to kind of get away from my job for a

couple of hours during the week" (Tom, Interview). The turn to teaching careers for both

of these soldiers was an unplanned outgrowth of having an experience connecting with

kids, but they believe it was something meant to happen.

From meeting kids that had no direction, because I had to talk to high school kids,
and a lot of the high school kids were in a lot of troubled schools. When I saw that
I remembered myself, and I realized that some of these kids just needed a mentor

> or role model to kind of point them to be the citizen that we want in this country. I felt by teaching I could do that. (José, Interview)

> The first day the kids they just jumped on me like a bean bag. They just wanted attention. Going from a military environment where you're just treated like a soldier and no type of human emotions or connections. That was wonderful, and I decided at that moment when I get out of the military I've got to look into teaching. (Tom, Interview)

An instructor that helped Tom during his military training program affirmed his decision to transition from soldier to teacher.

> In the military you're just a number, but it was amazing, because he [the military instructor] saw, I guess, something I didn't see in myself, and he took time out of his day and his life and civilian life, and he met with me at the barracks and he kind of coached me and I passed that test. It was worth it. I *saw the power* [emphasis added] a teacher had if they just go that extra mile. So I figured when I got out I wanted to be in some type of capacity where I was doing the same, where I could be the same kind of influence. (Tom, Interview)

In both cases, these men found themselves in circumstances that assisted them in identifying teaching as their next path in life. In the above quotation José said that he "saw" and then he "realized" he could help young people. In Tom's words above he said that he "saw the power" and he wanted to pass on this vision to his students. Physically speaking, the act of seeing requires an external reflection of light. Philosophically speaking, this act of seeing requires an internal reflection of light. For Tom and José their sense of knowing they should teach seemed to swell from someplace within them.

The theme of Moment of Knowingness encompasses both the metaphoric and spiritual connotations of the term light as described in the lived experience of the ToY finalist and winners of this study. The participants' narratives included explicit terms such as light bulb moments and ah-ha moments to indicate an external display of illumination that comes with the experience of good teaching as demonstrated by student

understanding. Furthermore, the ToYs responses often indicated powerful circumstances that pushed or guided them into teaching. Ultimately, seeing the light symbolically signifies some level of a divine intervention, or that their practice includes a spiritual dimension.

Palmer (1990) has enlightened us on this idea when he said that "good teachers dwell in the mystery of good teaching until it dwells in them...the insight and energy of mystery begins to inform and animate their work" (para. 4). Certainly, it seems as though good teaching does dwell somewhere within the participants. In fact, Tom explained that good teaching for him did not come from preparation, rather from his own analysis and inward reflection. He shared a memory that depicts this concept.

> I remember when I first started they gave me a book, a manual like this [gestures 2" thickness] first year as a teacher – how to be an effective teacher. I can't tell you one thing I remember out of that book. I mean, I'm sure there's a lot of good stuff in there, but what I do remember is conversation and reassessing how I approach teaching. I think that when you approach it like that, you become much more compassionate. You're more flexible. You can kind of self-critique yourself in a way that's like, "Okay, this wasn't working. Let me refocus." (Tom, Interview)

The mystery of good teaching dwelling within Tom prompts him to awareness and sensitivity that result in Moments of Knowingness.

Inexplicable Power. The second thematic implication extracted from the interviews and essays of the participants reveals a strength or force possessed by these recognized as outstanding teachers. This power is not learned, nor is it tangible; this power or force seems to be recognizable in the aftermath of its presence or its application; when the ToY has had the opportunity to reflect or upon realization that an ah-ha moment has just occurred in the classroom. These forces may operate in many

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directions, but all of them enhance the ToYs ability to bring about positive outcomes in their classrooms.

Beginning with Tom's story, he talked metaphorically about an underlying force when he is flexible with his students.

> Flexible, but just try to remember, are you an authoritative figure that demands this, this, and this, or are you this flexible, compassionate coach that's like water? You can move around things, through things, but you don't pound at things...the Chinese, Confucius, he has a saying, water, you have to be like water, where water goes around, but it doesn't destroy. But over time it sculpts, like waterfalls. Water is harmless, but it's flexible, persistent. It can move mountains.
> I think that's kind of how you have to be. You can't expect to change something over one day. The longevity of just being flexible, eventually you'll shape the mountain. (Tom, Interview)

Perhaps Tom's notion of flexibility in working with his students and in the delivery of his lessons reflects Palmer's concept of the teacher being open to truth,

> whatever truth may be, wherever truth may take us...that any path walked with integrity will take us to a place of knowledge...encourages us to welcome diversity and conflict, to tolerate ambiguity, and to embrace paradox. By this understanding, the spirituality of education is not about dictating ends. (Smith, 2005, para. 9)

The spirituality of education is this transcendence, where an underlying confidence or sense of security on the part of the teacher to allow an openness of truth results in students finding their way and developing into purposeful members of the community. It requires an inner strength of some kind to allow such flexibility, to have the willpower and the faith in a positive outcome. Only with such an inexplicable force comes the ability not to dictate, not to mandate. Tom's metaphor about the power of water reflects a quality of strength that is part of his experience as a recognized as outstanding teacher.

Juliette also described a concept of inexplicable power when she discussed experiencing bad teaching.

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What happened? I feel like I'm sitting there spinning my wheels. Like I explain it and they have no idea what I'm talking about. And then I usually, after a lesson like that, I'll go home and rethink the whole thing and a lot of times it's because I'm not addressing all three learning styles in the lesson. I think that's extremely important. Teachers don't stop and think: what do their kids need? They think: okay, this is the material I have, so this is what I'm going to do. Well who cares? If this is what you have to teach, then you have to reach them; it doesn't matter what materials you have. Well if you don't have materials, you'd better dream them up somehow. And that's what good teachers have to do...I could teach music with trash cans and sticks...I don't need trombones and tubas; I can improvise just fine. (Juliette, Interview)

Within this narration Juliette suggests that the power of resourcefulness is a part of her experience as a recognized as outstanding teacher. The ability to be creative and innovative, "to dream [it] up somehow," when you have limited materials with which to work may be another identification of an inexplicable force. Juliette's challenging schedule to teach both music and physical education presented her with limited time to meet the state of Florida's standards and benchmarks of the two curricula. Her concern over this teaching assignment and limited time prompted her to ask herself two questions: "How is it I am going to teach those things? And number two: find enough time to teach them to mastery?" (Juliette, Interview). However, Juliette's inexplicable power to improvise supported her in finding a solution. She explained that she "tried to use Musical PE and Physical Music all year long, for at least the first 20 minutes or so of each lesson. So that way, it covered both benchmarks" (Juliette, Interview).

Taina's story also relates her inexplicable power to

always be positive, never angry, never negative…that no matter what life throws your way, you just pick yourself up. And you smile and you try to endure with it at the moment because better things, good things will happen. So those life experiences and I was bullied in school; I was bullied in fifth and sixth grade, you know so I see it happening and I stop it because I know I was terrified. But I remember going to the assistant principal at the time, crying and terrified and how the assistant principal helped and intervened. So I can relate to my students

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> because I went to Title I schools; I went to this kind of school with the same population of African Americans, Hispanics, and Caribbean. And I tell them that, I tell them: "Don't think that because Ms. T is educated and she likes to dress up and that I'm a teacher, that I can't understand what you're coming from because I've been there. Even though you might not think so because I'm always happy and positive, but I could tell you stories." (Taina, Interview)

Herein is the fundamental concept that Taina has an inner strength to be positive and happy. She uses this force to encourage positivity in her own students and it is a part of her experience as a recognized as outstanding teacher.

Marie's intangible force was expressed in terms of an ability to spontaneously create a shift in her lesson delivery. She shared:

> Because I would turn it around right then. I would come up with something; kaboom! Right then, change my whole approach, change it from me directing to putting them in small groups, or if they were in a small group and I'm listening and it's not working, and they're kind of off topic and it's not want I want, to change it around, refocus it. And they didn't even know I was changing it. I mean, they had no idea.
> For me, I'm just totally comfortable with what I do. I feel completely confident in my content knowledge…I think it's just total confidence – turn it around. I am totally confident. I'm never unsure. (Marie, Interview)

These remarks from Marie reveal her ability, her power to sense that her students are not engaged or not comprehending, and dynamically change the learning environment seamlessly. She elaborated that her intention is to "create that golden moment, so really spontaneously" (Marie, Interview).

Rosa's inexplicable power is revealed in her narrative about needing good teachers. Similar to Marie, her power resides in her ability to change the learning environment to meet the needs of her students, consistently questioning herself regarding her craft. Her commitment and energy bespeak the forces within her.

You need good teachers. We need teachers that have the commitment, that have the energy to go beyond all this silly stuff [politics] and really enjoy and get rewarding feelings like I have had, and to know that that's what really counts.

I would always be searching for a better way to teach. If that doesn't work, try a new way. Don't just go one way they [administration; curriculum specialists; FDOE; etc.] tell you to. Just find a way that you feel comfortable teaching and you see results.

You have to be happy doing it. That's one important thing. If not, you're not going to last. So they have to find a way that they're happy enriching the kids...you can know your material perfectly...but it's not enough to learn your material well. It's how you present it. And you always have to test yourself. "Is this a good way?" "How could I have done it differently?" Don't get stuck in a rut, and don't think it's the students' fault. It's not always the students' fault. It's our fault for not finding ways for them to get it. (Rosa, Interview)

José's power or force is symbolized by a glowing light that shines from his inner confidence. Echoing Marie's sense of certainty about her knowledge and how she feels strong and in charge, José also believes in the power of self.

I tell my kids, "You have to have the confidence that when you walk in a room, you bring a glow with you." It could be a closed room, it could be a dark room, but because of the fact that you have their confidence and the ability, a glow follows.

I tell them, "Every time I walk in a classroom a glow follows, because nobody knows more about what I'm going to speak about then me."...I try to build self-confidence and self-esteem, because I tell them, "When you look in a mirror, you've got to like what you see. I know I'm short, I understand I'm short, but you know what? I'm pretty intelligent. So I wasn't given height, but I was given something else. So we've got to work with what we have and use what we have." (José, Interview)

In the power of understanding his assets and liabilities, José is describing an inexplicable force to clearly see himself for what he is and transform this self-awareness into a glowing presence in his classroom.

During Sylvia's interview, she attempted to explain to the researcher why she thought teaching was an art. In her narration is the underlying force of her passion and total commitment to what she does every day as a teacher.

This is an art. It is not those who can do and those who can't – that's just a ridiculous thing to me. There's not many people who can teach as far as I am concerned…There's some fabulous teachers, but it is a very specialized field, and yes, you can learn it, but there's also a piece that has to be there. There's a piece that has to be in an individual to be a truly good teacher, I think, and it is the – and that's about empathy or connection or relation to something with other human beings. And I don't know if that's teachable. I really don't.

I mean I have a lot of passion, but what I want from my kids at the end of the day is to have passion about whatever they choose…I always tell them "I don't give a shit-ake mushroom if you care about Shakespeare the way I do, but I want you to feel that passion for something. Look at what passion looks like." That I don't know if it is teachable. That I don't know about; is passion teachable? Is being alive in the field of teaching teachable, like feeling alive and on fire? I don't know. Is that teachable? I don't know. I am alive and on fire. I'm such an extrovert that I actually relax when I'm in front of 500 people, even more so than sitting on my couch watching a movie. I relax in those rooms of kids, teachers, whatever it is. That's where I belong.

That's the place when things – when teaching is happening and it is happening well. I'd rather – I know I was meant to be in that spot on this earth in that time slot, more than any other place in the universe. So, you know – and you can feel yourself thinking that. (Sylvia, Interview)

Sylvia's passion is a life force that empowers her every time she is in the classroom; this is her genesis of energy that motivates her and propels her forward into her craft. Palmer (1998) would call Sylvia's infinite wellspring of passion her "inner ground from which good teaching comes" (p.141).

The theme of Inexplicable Power resounds within most of the participants' narratives, albeit described in a variety of ways. However in all cases, this identified aspect of the lived experience of recognized as outstanding teachers includes some kind of force that supports, facilitates, and enhances the teacher's ability to teach. Their stories include the power that they derive from characteristics such as flexibility, adaptability, and positivity; they refer to unwavering commitment and confidence that is sustained by a passion that impels them, propels them, and compels them to strive for excellence in their teaching. James may have summed up this point when he shared, "I just do my job

because I want to be motivated by who I am, not by anything else" (Interview). James, in keeping with the other participants in this study, is empowered by his internal core value system – a value system that directs its energies toward the betterment of students.

Summary of the results regarding research question two. The participants of the study suggest that their lived experience as recognized as outstanding teachers does include such concepts such as pedagogical tact, teacher selfhood, and professional dispositions. As such, the findings of the study indicate that the concepts of pedagogical tact, teacher selfhood, and professional dispositions are relevant to teaching and may offer important insights into good teaching. The themes Moments of Knowingness and Inexplicable Powers are the umbrella terms used in this study that envelop the participants' intangible qualities – qualities that render them a heightened sensitivity and more intense skill set with which to practice their craft. In combination, these intangibles seem to be illustrative of van Manen (1991) and Palmer's (1998) respective theories regarding a pedagogical tact and an inner selfhood of good teachers.

Summary of Results

The findings of this study describe teaching as experienced by 10 recognized as outstanding ToYs from Broward County Public Schools. The participants represent diverse grade levels, content areas, and length of service as classroom teachers. The findings indicate that these ToYs are dynamic individuals: passionate about their craft, and about making a difference in the lives of their students. The lived experience of these teachers is grounded in a well-defined value system that manifests itself in four roles: Lovers, Doers, Shakers, and Believers. Moreover, the findings provide evidence to

support the relevance to teaching of concepts such as pedagogical tact, teacher selfhood,

and professional dispositions.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Write on my tablets all that was permitted,
All that was for our human senses fitted…
(Keats, J. 1818, *Endymion*)

You shall go down deeper than your words. You shall seek
the lost fountain-heads of the streams, and you shall be
a hidden cave echoing the faint voices of the depths which
now you do not even hear. (Gibran, K., 1933, p.46)

The implicit questions explored in this phenomenological investigation are on the surface seemingly simplistic interrogative constructions: "What is it like to be a teacher?" and "What is teaching like?" However, the implications derived from the phenomenological analysis are not simplistic. Max van Manen (2007) reminds us that Heidegger cautioned "that phenomenology 'never makes things easier, but only more difficult'" (p. 13). At the core or the essence of meaning of the lived experience of these recognized as outstanding teachers reside noteworthy interpretations. Based upon the themes and metaphors discussed in Chapter 4, the lived experience of the participating ToYs is a richly intricate and meaningful phenomenon.

Findings Related to the Research Questions

In order to gain insight into teaching, this phenomenological study examined the lived experience of recognized as outstanding teachers. The research questions that guided this study were:

1. How is teaching experienced by recognized as outstanding Teachers of the Year (ToYs)?

2. How do ToYs feelings and perceptions about being good teachers provide

insight, if any, about the relevance to teaching of concepts such as pedagogical

tact, teacher selfhood, and professional dispositions?

In seeking to answer these questions, the findings do provide an insight into teaching for

a variety of stakeholders. The significance and application of the insights are discussed in

subsequent sections of this chapter.

Findings Regarding Research Question One

In general, this study's findings are aligned with many of the research studies

reviewed in Chapter 2 regarding ToYs and effective teachers (Jensen & Templeton,

1993; McGill, 1999; Nias, 1989; Van Schaack & Glick, 1982; Verner, 1999). As

Broward County ToY finalists and winners, the participants of this investigation are

dedicated, hard-working individuals with a serious, steadfast commitment to improving

the lives of children. These ToYs exhibit common behaviors, such as working beyond the

school day, engaging in lifelong learning, and using their knowledge and skills to assist

other teachers improve their practice. But of much more significance, is the commonality

of their core value systems as exhibited by four grand roles: Lovers, Doers, Shakers, and

Believers. Their lives as teachers are fueled and sustained by values that germinate from

deeply inspiring passions, from driving productivity, from keenly managing change and

possessing confidence of self, and from embracing inexhaustible faith and hope.

Their work as teachers is their life's compass; it is the force that guides them and

wraps them into meaningful and purposeful lives. The simplicity of Diane's comment

that "this [teaching] is my life, the classroom and everything, this is what I do"

encapsulates the concept that it is the experience of teaching that defines who and what

the participants *are*, regardless of other relationships and activities they may have in their lives. The teacher in them is their essence – impacting and directing them as individuals. Marie did use the cliché "once a teacher, always a teacher." And that "it wasn't until he [her son] was in my own classroom that I could see what was going on with my own kid" (Marie, Interview). Even her role as a mother is informed by her teacher's life world. Additionally, Juliette stated directly that "I just keep doing what I do because that's what I do, it's who I am" (Interview). José affirmed this idea by saying,

> It's not what I teach them, it's how I act. It's not what I teach you, it's how I am. It's black and white. I don't play with the gray...If I tell you to do something, I'm going to do it too. I do it at home too. I do it everywhere I go....My attitude doesn't change. I don't change my way of teaching or my way of being...I'm myself. (José, Interview)

José as a person and José as a teacher are one and the same. Ultimately, the ToYs do not seem to separate their teaching lives from their non-teaching lives. These recognized as outstanding teachers, are simultaneously the embodiment and the manifestation of who they are as people, and therefore, teaching is not merely a job or a profession during which time they take on the grand roles identified by this study; teaching is the way the ToYs *are* in the world at all times. Crystallizing this concept is Marie's comment: "there was always that sort of teaching aura around everything. So it just seemed natural, just a natural thing" (Interview).

Findings Regarding Research Question Two

The concepts of pedagogical tact, teacher selfhood, and professional dispositions were shown by the study's findings to be relevant to teaching and may offer important insights into good teaching. The four roles identified and developed in response to question one speak directly to the concept of professional dispositions. Their attitudes

about the welfare of their students and the direction of education reflect professional dispositions that are congruent with their values and beliefs. Burden and Byrd (2012) indicate that teacher professional dispositions are a combination of personal value systems coupled with a sense of commitment. In other words, the four roles described as Lovers, Doers, Shakers, and Believers manifest themselves in overt behaviors originating and emanating from their core beliefs and values (i.e., their professional dispositions). Furthermore, the transcripts of the participants' interviews and their essay documents did include references to their intuitive perceptions and their moments of inexplicable awareness. The articulation of these metaphoric expressions often represented spiritual and intangible qualities possessed by these recognized as outstanding teachers. Such findings are supportive of both van Manen (1991) and Palmer's (1998) respective work on teachers' pedagogical tact and inner selfhood.

Both themes, Moments of Knowingness and Inexplicable Powers, include how the participants found themselves to be unable to clearly articulate and concretely define experiences of ah-ha moments or spontaneous shifts of interaction in their respective classrooms. Somehow, they were just able to create a positive learning experience for their students without always knowing exactly why or how they did what they did. "I don't know how you replicate that exactly," remarked Marie as she struggled to explain what she does to bring about the "kaboom!" moment during a lesson (Interview).

Perhaps José had the most difficulty to articulate these intangible concepts when he attempted to describe those moments of good teaching; he shared:

> Well, you know, I could tell you when I knew they got the message, which is more or less good teaching. A lot of times they don't get the message right away. They don't understand what I'm trying to tell them right away, but then come

back later and it clicked. "I understand what he's trying to tell me. Now I know why he said that."

And my biggest experience – even though teaching to me, I think for me is easy, because it's all – I've been doing it for so long, and I know the way I want to do it….

So being a teacher, you teach, and you continue to teach, and you want to experience a moment like that, but the benefits come later, or my reward comes later…It's the fact that a kid comes back and tells you "thank you." (José, Interview)

In this section of narrative, José never actually offers a definition or description of good teaching. Rather his expressions are vague; he refers to delayed understanding on the part of his students, whereby the kids experience an epiphany of understanding at some point after leaving José's classroom. So *how* exactly did that understanding happen? Jose can never explain that. Moreover, the Sergeant Major stated, "you teach and you continue to teach," but he does not describe what the action verb "teach" entails. What is this "moment like that"? And just what is *"it"* when he asserts that "I know the way I want to do *it* [emphasis added]*"* (José, Interview)? Oftentimes, the significance of an experience is indicated by what is not said. Paradoxically, when José was unable to concretely describe the teaching experience, it may well be because he is really telling us that an unconscious level of awareness exists. He cannot describe it, but he knows that teaching is happening; he does it over and over, whatever *it* is. Herein is Polayni's (1962) theory of tacit knowing, since tacit knowing includes the "knowing what" and the "knowing how." José is not clear on either of these two elements, yet he is sure that teaching happened because his students confirm that they "got *it*." Additionally, he feels his efforts are legitimized and rewarded when students return to thank him.

Tom explained that he could see good teaching happening when his students responded affectively.

I think human emotion tells you when good teaching happens, the expression of pain and suffering and empathy. Because I teach history and I teach on social issues, and when you see a kid suddenly care about something that happened 200 years ago, and they can see the relevance today, you see that eye get wet when you're showing some images, you start talking about certain stories of the human narrative.

It doesn't happen from the textbook. It happens from sitting down like this and talking about personal stories – stories related to the topic you're covering….

Like right now we're talking about imperialism…and then you show the film, *Hotel Rwanda*, and then you start talking about genocide and you start talking about Darfur, you start talking about Bosnia. They ask, "What year did this happen in?" They start shaking their heads. That's when you know you've lifted a veil off their head…There's moments like that….

Going back to a good teacher, what are the kids going to remember about their teacher?...They're going to remember the stories. They're going to remember how they [the good teachers] made that relevant to their life, that aspect of teaching…that's where I really want to be effective. That's where I really try to reach out to them and with some type of imagery. (Tom, Interview)

Tom's concern over his students' understanding of the human narrative on an affective

level indicates his capacity to teach with "heart and soul" (Palmer, 2003). In the article,

Teaching with Heart and Soul: Reflections on Spirituality in Teacher Education (2003)

Palmer defined spirituality as "the eternal human yearning to be connected with

something larger than our own egos" (para. 9). From this perspective, it is evident that

Tom, similar to the other participants, exemplifies this intangible quality as a recognized

as outstanding teacher. He works with the intention of wanting to connect with something

larger than his own ego, and in doing so, he also wants his students to connect with

something larger than their own egos. In this manner, inner selfhood and the depth of an

inner spirit are relevant to the ToYs lived experience as recognized as outstanding

teachers.

It is the intangible aspects of the descriptions of good teaching by the ToYs that

inductively lead us to understand that an element of being exists in these professionals

which does not have a concrete name or a concrete form. Yet from their narratives we see, hear, and feel this element within them. Parker (2003) tells us that

> *What* one names this core of the human being is of no real consequence to me, since no one can claim to know its true name. But *that* one names it is, I believe, crucial. For "it" is the ontological reality of being human that keeps us from regarding ourselves, our colleagues or our students as raw material to be molded into whatever form serves the reigning economic or political regime. (para. 16)

Sylvia echoes these sentiments when she told me that she "really feels like figuring out what good teaching is, and being self-actualized by it, is what I want to share, what I want to pay it forward" (Interview). The notion of figuring it out is important for all the ToYs. Parker (1998, 2003) believes this is at the heart of our humanness (pun intended) and a necessary component for good teachers.

Major Insights

The results of this study indicate that for these recognized as outstanding teachers, teaching is experienced by getting through to students using effective and moral means. In terms of her role as a teacher, Sylvia explained that

> My role as a teacher is to develop responsible, passionate and committed human beings by educating the whole child…My role is to be a catalyst for their growth – not only to teach them subjects and content, but also to teach them form and a way of being in the world that will serve them as soon as they step out of my room. (Sylvia, personal communication)

Underlying Sylvia's description of her position and how she defines her role as a teacher are three aspects of the essence of the ToYs who participated in this study. First, the ToYs are effective in getting through to students by being emotionally open; they exhibit deep capacity to feel and trust their feelings; to teach from the heart; to teach who he or she is; to teach honestly and openly. Second, Sylvia's comments reveal that the ToYs are effective in getting through to students by having a sense of the sacred in their

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knowing, in their teaching, and in their learning. The sense of the sacred is the inner

selfhood of the teachers, connecting so strongly and intimately with their subject, their

students, and their learning that they can know "the inwardness of the things of the

world" (Parker, 1997, para. 45). And third, the ToYs are effective in getting through to

their students because they operate from a sense of intentionality: Intentionality means

doing things for a reason, or on purpose. Intentional teachers are those who are constantly

thinking about the outcomes that they want for their students (Psychology Campus, para.

5). Sylvia's intentions are clearly stated in the above excerpt of her narration.

Christopher also reveals the essence of his lived experience as a teacher in terms

of getting through to students using effective and moral means.

> I don't know – our society....a different world, a different universe! What we were
> expected to do in high school, by God, and if I brought home less than a B, my
> parents would have killed me. I would have been made vegetable soup. But that's
> what it is, it's that these kids go home now, first of all there's no one to greet
> them, and then you don't have the encouragement, these kids so many of
> them....these kids are so bereft of any personal experience. And what's really the
> most scary thing of all, this is the most scary thing, really God forgive me, they
> are now so far along the parents of this generation, many of them, you know you
> can't always generalize but many of them, they themselves did not take education
> seriously, they're not encouraging their kids and these kids are under the
> impression – well my parents are receiving assistance, welfare, etc. I had one kid
> actually say to me, "Mr. C, why should we kill ourselves, when we know we are
> going to go on federal assistance someday?" I almost dropped dead. I said, "that's
> the kind of life you want to look forward to?" But see, it's not like they can say, "I
> want a better life and I want to be able to make a good salary and have a richer
> life, etc." They don't know a richer life; their parents don't experience it, so how
> would they know? So that's what I'm saying.
>
> So when they talk about this conundrum of this, this repeated sociological
> whirlpool that they're in, that they just can't get out of, that's where it breaks your
> heart. That's why I love these kids...that's why I take them under my wings, and
> you pull a kid aside and go, "You know you're really sharp, you're good at this.
> You should think about a career in science." (Christopher, Interview)

Christopher's remarks capture the essence of his effective and moral dimension as a

teacher. His intentions are purposeful; he is emotionally open, and definitively speaking

with a sense of the sacred.

In terms of Taina's lived teaching experience and how it gives meaning to life as

a teacher, her essence becomes evident when she described how her English Language

Learners (ELLs) participate in competitions:

> Because especially every year when we have the ESOL Academic Competition and my students to compete with other middle school students from Broward and I prepare them for three months. They have to recite a poem...they enter the spelling bee, the talent competition, the impromptu speaking...so we prepare for three or four months. And my kids this year won for the whole competition, they beat the other middle schoolers. We won the talent competition and we got a big trophy. They won first place for some of the poems and there are different levels...so we always – every year we win medals and trophies and ribbons and the kids are so proud because I pump them up. I'm like, "I know you can do it and even if you don't win, I just want you to have the experience of competing and feeling good that you prepared yourself. And when you prepare yourself, you're going to see results."
>
> Some of my kids, this is their second year and they won last year and they said, "Don't worry Ms. T.; we're going to do well." And you should see them; they're so proud, like peacocks, so proud. So that's rewarding and seeing that the kids – they see how much time I put in with them to prepare for the competition. And then some of them say, "Ms. T., some of the kids from the other schools, they didn't know their poems, they were fumbling. How could the teacher not prepare them?" They don't say it's the student, they feel badly for the student, that the student has to go in front of a judge and doesn't know – hasn't memorized the poem or hasn't been taught to talk on a topic – because they give you the topics in advance, so there's no excuse. I come with like 17 kids and some teachers come with five or three, because it's a lot of work.
>
> And it's extra; I don't have to do it; I *w-a-n-t* [louder and drawn out intonation] to do it. I *want* my kids to have that experience of competing with other ESOL kids and feeling good about winning a medal or whatever. So, I *want* my kids to have that experience and not every ESOL teacher in middle school or high school enters. So, my kids feel badly for the other kids that are not prepared...So they feel proud that yes, I'm strict, but I'm not going to let them fail. I give them the tools and we prepare in advance so they feel good and confident when they compete. When they go up in front of three judges and they go against, competing with the other kids, they feel confident. And that's what it's about; it's about giving the students the experience, boosting their self-esteem,

and that it's okay. "You don't have to win everything, but you have to try your best," I say to them.

>And then, them observing their environment, their peers from other schools, the teachers, their teacher's effort and that's when they really like, "Wow, Ms. T, you really prepared us!" They're just proud. (Taina, Interview)

Taina's narration about her students and their participation in the countywide ESOL competition reveals the emotional interconnectedness between her students and herself. Her intentionality as a teacher is expressed by the emphasis she places on the word *want*, not only repeating several times, but also emphasizing it tonally. Her hard work and her students' awareness of this hard work reflect her professional dispositions about using effective means in getting through to her students, and finally, her faith and belief in her students unearth her sense of the sacred in her lived experience as a teacher.

That human life is always more complex than depicted by even our most subtly reflective portrayals. (van Manen, 1996, p. 40)

Major Insights into Teaching

Skemp (2010), conducted a phenomenological study of high school teachers and found that

>the whole of teaching is the relationship between the themes of purpose, structure, interactions, and emotion, as well as the metaphorical understanding that teachers have of their practice. This relationship reveals an organic process by which teachers identify what they want, need, and value; design a flexible order and form to move toward their idea; and negotiate the relationships, variables, limitations, restrictions, and changing contexts, while dealing with the corresponding emotions that accompany this process. (p. 155)

In examining Skemp's (2010) phenomenological description of teaching, we can see a parallel to the findings in this study about the significance of beliefs and values directing the teachers' practice, and how their emotional connections are the touchstone for all they do and for all that they are as teachers. We can see the concept of intentionality

embedded in Skemp's description of teaching. As such, the findings of this study are congruent with Skemp's findings.

Furthermore, the literature describes the concept of intentionality of teachers thusly:

> An intentional teacher uses a wide variety of methods, experiences, assignments and materials to be sure that their students are achieving all sorts of cognitive objectives. Along the way a teacher will make sure that a student is learning knowledge, creativity, application of knowledge, and affective objectives such as love of learning, respect for others and personal responsibility. The way that a teacher can become an outstanding teacher is related to teacher efficacy. Teacher efficacy is a teacher thinking that he or she is making a difference, and is at the heart of what it means to be an intentional teacher. (Psychology Campus, para. 6)

In being teachers who are emotionally open, have a sense of the sacred, and who operate with intentionality, the ToYs in this research also reflect the aspects of quality teaching presented in a philosophical analysis of teaching by Fenstermacher and Richardson (2005), whereby the authors established a distinction between learner-sensitive pedagogy and learner-dependent pedagogy. Their analysis highlighted the aspects of quality teaching, examining more than simple learning; more than whether something is taught, but how it is taught; not only must the content be appropriate, proper, and aimed at some worthy purpose, the methods employed have to be morally defensible and grounded in shared conceptions of reasonableness (Fenstermacher & Richardson, 2005).

In learner-sensitive pedagogy, the worthiness of the teaching activity is examined in terms of standards for the subject matter and methods of good practice; this comports with morally defensible and rationally sound principles of instructional practice. On the other hand, learner-dependent pedagogy only measures the worth of successful (good) teaching by the students' realization of the intended outcomes (Fenstermacher &

Richardson, 2005). The learner-dependent perspective is the philosophical framework for most current evaluation practices of measuring the added-value that a teacher contributes to students' test scores. However, a non sequitur about quality teaching is apparent here because

> it was never assumed that student achievement scores could be used to determine whether an individual teacher is effective. This approach to identification was meant to be used solely as a statistical probability endeavor with a large sample of teachers and students. It would not be valid for use with one teacher. (Fenstermacher & Richardson, 2005, p. 200)

In focusing on the learner-dependent platform for quality teaching, policymakers should find this perspective to be limiting and misguided since it does not call to question the highly relevant philosophical aspects of teaching. However when a teacher properly engages in his or her craft, and we examine the learner-sensitive pedagogy of the good teacher, then we can see how he or she operates within three philosophical realms:

1. Logical – defining, demonstrating, explaining, correcting, and interpreting;
2. Psychological – motivating, encouraging, rewarding, punishing, planning and evaluating;
3. Moral – exhibits and fosters moral traits; honesty, courage, tolerance, compassion, respect, and fairness. (Fenstermacher & Richardson, 2005)

The learner-sensitive platform directly relates to the findings of each of the research questions that directed this study. The ToYs lived experience as captured by the interviews and the application essays envelope the realms of teaching enumerated above. The ToYs references to data about their students' test scores were minimal, if mentioned at all; at no time did the participants refer to data about their students' test scores (standardized or otherwise) when asked to describe good teaching or what it means to them to be a teacher and a recognized as outstanding teacher. The ToYs did not indicate that they believed their students' test results to be a determining factor in receiving ToY

status. In fact, it is noteworthy to keep in mind that the ToYs do not necessarily represent those teachers whose students scored the highest on standardized tests for the year in which each ToY finalized for or won his or her title as Teacher of the Year. Many of the participants teach subject areas for which there are no standardized tests, such as drama or JROTC; the overall school score for FCAT Reading in Broward County is applied to evaluate those teachers for whom no corresponding test score is available. So although these individuals are not teachers of the students with the highest test scores in their respective schools, they were nonetheless recognized and awarded as outstanding teachers by Broward County. There seems to be a distinct contradiction between the current practice to remunerate teacher quality by the learner-dependent platform and select teachers of the year by what can be considered the learner-sensitive platform.

Good Teaching as Fully Engaged in Craft

The first research question of this study asked how teaching is experienced by recognized as outstanding Teachers of the Year (ToYs). In terms of the logical and psychological realms, the essence of the ToYs experience is indicative of being properly engaged in their craft with respect to cognitive and affective behaviors. Fenstermacher and Richardson (2005) assert that "'quality teaching' calls for not only certain teaching practices but also a set of contextual characteristics supportive of student learning" (p. 191). Tom's narration about his students' poetry performances provide an example of a context in which Tom's teaching illustrates the logical and psychological realms:

> So our numbers [test scores] were never good enough for the county. We weren't
> that great at sports either. We really didn't have a lot to cheer about. We had a
> stabbing at our school and we had a killing at our school. There were just always
> negative things.

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Luckily, we were able to kind of start this poetry and after-school workshop. The kids wanted to start performing. There was just – we had a very supportive principal at the time, and he allowed us to have a quarterly assembly.

I mean, these kids worked two or three times a week for a whole quarter just so they could do one 3-minute poem in front of 500 kids.

But these were kids that did not excel academically. These weren't kids who were stellar athletes. These were just your everyday, average kid who probably wasn't going to stand out in a school of 3,000, but for that one moment they could get on stage, they could talk about anything. And they talked about some pretty heavy stuff...we heard about shootings. Those were the kinds of issues that they touched on.

I had teachers who taught 35, 40 years coming to me after this in tears saying, "I've been to a lot of assemblies, but man, those kids really moved me with what they had to say."

And I think I kind of fed off of that, too. I mean, I'm not getting paid to do this either, but it was really a good feeling. (Tom, Interview)

The rational and affective qualities of good teaching seem to be emphasized consistently throughout my conversations with the ToYs. José's impressive commitment and compassion for his students highlights this idea: "being a teacher, you teach, and you continue to teach...my reward comes later. It's not monetary, it's not trophies, it's not any of that. It's the fact that a kid comes back and tells you, 'Thank you.'" (José, Interview).

The intentionality of her teaching and its relationship to Fenstermacher and Richardson's (2005) logical and affective realm is demonstrated by Juliette's discussion of purpose.

Well, I look at everything I do in life as something that I can draw on as a teacher in the classroom, *everything* [emphatic intonation]! Even the stupid leg problem I have right now. You know...I think of teaching as the highest calling that there is because you are preparing the future, really. And everything that I do is something that I share with the kids, especially from personal struggles that I've gone through and conquered I guess is the word, or just walking into the grocery store and asking the kids – you know one of the things in the music curriculum is to discuss how music is used in the world – and to make them stop and reflect about that. "Well when you walk into any department store what do you hear? Well you hear music piped through there. Well, why do they do that? Hum? When you have a holiday, what do you do? You sing songs or a birthday

celebration, or what have you." And to get kids to reflect on that. So there's life application in teaching. (Juliette, Interview)

Marie also reveals the deliberateness of her intentions when she talked about the politics involved in curricula decisions.

> Because we don't want to destroy the curriculum for a mandate, and we don't want to destroy the autonomy of the teacher and have – I've been pretty vocal about canned programs and scripted programs, a real vocal critic of that. And if you have the trust of the administrator, even though somebody has said this is a great idea, I've been fairly successful in telling them, "This is not a great idea! This is not what we want to do!" (Marie, Interview)

In her statement, Marie exemplifies Fenstermacher and Richardson's (2005) belief that there are so many factors in teaching that normally are not considered or examined when looking for quality teaching. Marie is aware of how so many issues outside her classroom will impact her students; she operates in all three realms (i.e., the logical, the psychological, and the moral) to establish a context most suitable for her students' success. This is at the core of Marie's lifeworld as a teacher.

The ToYs narratives that are included in this section support the philosophical position about quality teachers from the learner-sensitive perspective. This section underscores that the ToYs essence is a combination of logical, psychological, and moral realms; and in turn, these realms facilitate their ability to get through to their students using effective and moral means.

Good Teaching and Moral Dispositions

Question two of this study asked about the concepts of pedagogical tact, teacher selfhood, and professional dispositions, and whether or not these concepts were relevant to good teaching. The concept that seems to have the most relevance in relationship to the life experience of the participants is teacher selfhood as presented in the literature by

Palmer (1998). Teacher selfhood and a sense of the sacred as positive aspects of ToYs

lived experience are clearly indicated by the results of this study. Palmer (1998)

stipulated that it is "the human heart that is the source of good teaching" (p. 3) and that

"good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher" (2000, p. 11). The

10 ToY winners and finalists of this research are representative of the teacher who

teaches from the heart, who teaches who she or he is, and who teaches honestly and

openly. The emotional dimension of the participants in this study is the inner selfhood of

which Palmer speaks. Their heightened sensibilities are part of their essence.

Additionally, the conclusions of this investigation also reflect Palmer's definition of the

sacred in teaching – that it is possible to have a "sense of the otherness of the things of

the world" (1997, para. 50). Palmer applied the term sacredness to mean the

establishment of an intimacy, a connection so strong with an organism or object "that you

somehow have to have a *feeling* [emphasis added] for it"; that you can know the

"inwardness of the things of the world" (1997, para. 44; 55). The recognized as

outstanding teachers presented herein seem to exemplify having a sense of the sacred in

their knowing, in their teaching, and in their learning. Palmer has told us that

> If you go deep, the way you go when you seek that which is sacred, you find the hidden wholeness. You find the community that a good teacher evokes and invites students into, that somehow weaves and reweaves life together. (1997, para. 71)

So it comes of no surprise that Marie explained

> I never thought that my best teacher would be my own son...and then my view there too is that you can measure a lot of things, but you can't measure that. You can't measure that relationship that you build and that unique student – that's where I got this business of trying to understand the aura of the classroom, and trying to understand individual students. That where I got that whole idea right there, that changed it. It's not just me, it's not my classroom, it's our classroom.

Seriously. And it's not what I'm doing for you; it's what we're doing together. (Marie, Interview)

Palmer's (1997) sense of the sacred in being relevant in the lifeworld of the ToYs facilitates their ability to get through to students using effective and moral means.

Furthermore, the moral realm of quality teaching (Fenstermacher & Richardson, 2005), shows relevance in answering question two of this investigation. The essence of the themes Moments of Knowingness and Inexplicable Power are imbued with moral dimensions, wherein the ToYs exhibit and foster moral traits; honesty, courage, tolerance, compassion, respect, and fairness.

When Diane described a situation where she knew she was experiencing good teaching, her closing remark of this section of narration highlights how a sense of what is morally right informs her practice. Diane said

> Yeah! [big smile radiating from her face]. Yeah, I remember when we were doing these different science experiments and the children were involved with things that sink and things that would float. And we had different tubs of water going on and they were experimenting and they found that certain things that they didn't expect to sink—well they did sink, and things that they thought would float, did not. And what they found out was that a pencil will float, but if it stays in the water long enough it gets water-logged and eventually sink.
> We had that going on, we had some other writing activities going on and it was like the whole room was just alive and lit up with different things and all the kids – it seemed like they were having fun and they were engaged and some were on the computer. And, I don't know, that particular day, I just felt like it was a perfect day because it was going smoothly, everyone was behaving because they were really focused on what they were doing and it just made me feel successful that I was doing what I was supposed to be doing. (Diane, Interview)

Within her "alive and lit up" room, Diane feels validated as a teacher because she "was doing what I [she] was supposed to be doing" (Diane, Interview). Her moral realm tells her that she is experiencing good teaching because she is doing the right thing.

The following account by Sylvia (Interview) also indicates the importance of the moral realm in teaching:

> So this sparked an incredible discussion in my class about casting practices and about what does it mean to represent Hitler in the form of a black female playing Hitler. So most of the class, whatever ethnicity, said, "No, you couldn't do that, you couldn't have a play in which Hitler was black."
>
> Then there was one girl who said, "That's a lazy choice, to always have Hitler be white – Hitler represents a barrage of things that are internal, in terms of discrimination and hatred. Then it's a lazy choice to say that Hitler would always have to be dark haired or blond and blue-eyed."
>
> And that sparked a huge debate and I remember before she spoke up kind of nodding with the rest of the class going, "Yeah, it would be difficult to cast Hitler as a black female," until she spoke up, and she really taught me something that day....
>
> She taught me that good teaching is co-intentional. Good teaching is truly co-intentional....So that's what good teaching is, when you're truly learning from them, with them. (Sylvia, Interview)

Berliner (1994) asserted that the more experienced teacher often demonstrates a cultivated expertise, in that some teachers could grow into an expert stage where they seemed to have an intuitive capacity to say or do the right thing without hesitation. However, at the time of her interview, Sylvia had only been teaching for six years. What Sylvia describes in the narrative above is how her moral dimension, rather than any years of experience, is the critical element of her essence as a good teacher.

Good teaching for Christopher was explained when he told me:

> Well, first of all it feels marvelous, as any teacher will tell you. You can tell when the light bulb comes on. You can just tell. When you're standing up there, when you're discussing as a group or you're doing small group things, and all of a sudden a kid goes, "I got it! I understand it!" (Christopher, Interview)

But Christopher needs more to see that he has gotten through to his students; his moral realm necessitates that his students find relevance between what he teaches them and the real world.

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Like in biology, I'll be talking about carbohydrates, fats, and proteins and they'll say something like "now I understand why my uncle can't eat such and such a food, because it has this in it" – well and that's where you know...it does happen and that's what drives you. (Christopher, Interview)

When Rosa told me that "I am more than a Spanish teacher. I have always been more than a Spanish teacher" (Interview), she was articulating how she builds a community with her classroom, Rosa's expression demonstrates her compassion for her students as human beings and her concern for their welfare. "You find the community that a good teacher evokes and invites students into, that somehow weaves and reweaves life together" (Palmer, 1997, para. 71). Rosa's lived experience aligns with Palmer's theory of the community associated with teacher selfhood. Additionally, the moral dimension of Rosa's essence also speaks to Fenstermacher and Richardson's (2005) views about caring for students as an integral part of the learner-sensitive perspective on quality teaching.

with my students, I try to go beyond teaching...where as I take interest in their lives...If I know more about them, then I'm able to see how I can help them better...I want them to feel free. I tell them to come to me if they have any thing that they need help with, that I could help with. If there's something like they're having problems at home or something...But I want them to be comfortable enough to be able to come to me.

I say at the beginning of the year, I'll tell them when my planning times are, and if they have any concerns to see me during lunch or after school. And I – just by my personality – I want them to be, you know – I try to be in a welcoming way. (Rosa, Interview)

In terms of question two, the data indicate that teacher selfhood (Palmer, 1997) has a relevance to good teaching. Moreover, the moral dimension of quality teaching as situated with the learner-sensitive framework (Fenstermacher & Richardson, 2005), is relevant in the lives of the ToYs who participated in this study.

Implications for Educators

The focus on linking effective teaching to student scores on standardized tests assumes that effective teaching arises solely from and because of the actions of the teacher. Current educational policy is thus predicated upon the causal connection between teacher improvement and student learning as measured by their scores on tests. This policy is based on a "Teaching as Transmission—Process-Product Research" (Fenstermacher & Richardson, 2005, p. 198) model in which effectiveness means that teachers use certain empirically supported successful instructional behaviors to transmit knowledge and skills to students. Effective teachers are then identified on the basis of their students' achievement, and classroom behaviors that are assumed to lead to student learning are codified.

But, Fenstermacher and Richardson (2005) contended that "Quality teaching is what we are most likely to obtain when there is a willingness and effort on the part of the learner, a supportive social surround, ample opportunity to learn, and good practices employed by the teacher" (p. 191). And from Fenstermacher and Richardson's (2005) learner-sensitive perspective on quality in teaching, we know that the priorities should be to recruit, hire, and foster those teachers who are: emotionally open; have a sense of the sacred in their knowing, in their teaching, and in their learning; operate from a sense of intentionality.

As we move forward with ever increasing standards and measurable systems of accountability it is difficult to envision how the emotional nature of good teaching can thrive. It may sound hyperbolic, but the conclusions and affirmations of this study may serve as a warning. If we lose sight of our values and beliefs that are directly informed by

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how we feel, then the practice of teaching is in serious trouble. If we do not take into consideration the inner selfhood of perspective teachers, then we may be recruiting and hiring individuals without heart and without soul. If we do not nurture and mentor new teachers to develop heightened sensibilities and to trust their inner selfhood, then we miss the opportunity to grow good teachers. Palmer (2003) admitted that for most teachers, there is strong pressure to conform to the usual and customary expectations established by social standards and policies; he recognized how teachers have the need to "look good in the eyes of others" (para. 11). However despite this pressure, Palmer stressed the need for a teacher "whose spirituality connect[s] him to that largeness called the life of a child – a connection that may well pit him, heart and soul, against ego-seducing educational and social conventions of all sorts" (Palmer, 2003, para. 13).

If we believe that a teaching soul can be educated, then our teacher education programs should embrace a curriculum that assists preservice teachers to understand themselves and to become aware of their inner selfhood – to have an acute awareness of their values and belief systems and to want to connect with something beyond their own ego-driven personalities.

Recommendations for Future Research

The findings of this study raise several questions that could direct future studies. First and foremost, the ToY winners and finalists who participated in this research effort represent only a small number of recognized as outstanding teachers as determined by a selective and competitive process. The findings of this study while not generalizable because of inherent phenomenological restrictions, do suggest, however, that future studies might consider a much larger sample of ToYs that crosses school districts and

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states. Continuing to listen to teachers' stories can only enlarge our scope of understanding in terms of what it means to be a teacher.

In addition, subsequent phenomenological explorations of the lived experience of teachers can be conducted using other groups of teachers, such as those whose students' test scores show marked improvement from one year to the next. The comparison of data and conclusions among a variety of groups of teachers should provide yet a deeper understanding. Teachers can also be grouped by their type of pre-service preparation (i.e., traditional or alternative certification). Teacher preparation programs also have an opportunity to test and research curriculum and interventions which are specifically designed to develop heart and soul in pre-service teachers.

More importantly, further research is needed on why the moral dimension of teaching is excluded totally from the current focus on identifying effective teachers. The idea of effectiveness being linked to purpose or aim is given credence from of all likely sources, research on worker effectiveness in areas outside of education. Harris & Rutledge (2010) in their research on worker effectiveness conclude that the choice of effectiveness measure defines the education outcomes that are important and establishes the underlying purpose of the work. These authors maintain that the underlying purpose, or in their words, "theory of ethics," lies within the realm of philosophy and defines what the work is supposed to accomplish, and the theory of behavior (or theory of action) is rooted in the social and psychological sciences and establishes how people achieve the objectives established by the theory of ethics. In this sense, the two theories are interconnected, and one cannot have a model of effectiveness without both. So, for example, the Hippocratic Oath in the medical profession outlines the profession's

purpose which in turn reflects the health of the patient as the priority, and as a result is translated into predictors and measures of effectiveness of doctors linked to measures of patient health. Effectiveness becomes the degree to which doctors produce outcomes related to their profession's purpose. It seems logical then that the moral dimension of teaching would be a significant aspect to consider when identifying effective teachers.

Also of importance is the question of tacit knowledge. Further exploration of the concept of tacit knowledge seems appropriate from the findings of this study. The ToYs lived experience as recognized as outstanding teachers indicates that tacit knowledge is part of the phenomenon of their practice as illustrated by their Moments of Knowingness. This concept has also been studied by Elliott, Stemler, Sternberg, Grigorenko, and Hoffman (2011) where by they found that the teachers who participated in their study were more successful when they developed tacit knowledge in regard to their jobs. Their study also found that those teachers who had difficulty in developing tacit knowledge were more likely to experience problems as teachers moving forward in their careers. Many questions remain however. Exactly what is the nature of tacit knowledge? How is it acquired? Why do some teachers seem to develop tacit knowledge, while others do not? And how can tacit knowledge be useful to teachers?

Conclusion

This study was based upon a phenomenological analysis of the semi-structured interviews of 10 winners or finalist of the Broward County Teachers of the Year award and the ToYs personal application essays. Chapter 4 of this report identifies and describes the major themes or roles of the lived experience of these recognized as outstanding teachers: Lovers, Doers, Shakers, and Believers. In addition, the findings discussed in

Chapter 4 do indicate that the concepts of pedagogical tact, inner selfhood, and professional dispositions have relevance to teaching. These concepts are represented by two themes: Moments of Knowingness and Inexplicable Powers.

In Chapter 5, I discuss the significance of the study in terms of how fluidly the ToYs simultaneously live all four roles and how their practice is emotionally open. They are authentic and sincere; their value systems and their teaching practice are congruent. The ToYs meet the definition of quality teachers when examining good teaching as defined by the learner-sensitive pedagogical model (Fenstermacher & Richardson, 2005).

The conversations that I have had with the participants and my analysis of the data have enriched my own understanding of the phenomenon of my profession. When I say that I am a teacher, the word connotes much more for me then it did when I embarked upon this journey. I find myself pausing more frequently to sense, to listen to my inner selfhood, and explore my feelings. I am consistently asking myself if there is congruence between my value systems and my practice so that honesty and openness live in my classroom. I believe that this study has empowered me to improve my personal teaching practice. Of course, I make these statements cautiously; my intention is not to claim that I have found the one key to good teaching. I am merely making a personal connection to the lived experience of these ToYs with my own lived experience as a teacher. In fact, Seidman (1991) captures my feelings when he says

> It has led me to a deeper understanding and appreciation of the amazing intricacies and, yet, coherence of people's experiences. It has also led me to a more conscious awareness of the power of the social and organizational context of people's experience. Interviewing has provided me with a deeper understanding of the issues, structures, processes, and policies that imbue participants' stories. It has also given me a fuller appreciation of the complexities and difficulties of change. Most important and almost always, interviewing continues to lead me to

respect the participants, to relish the understanding that I gain from them, and to take pleasure in sharing their stories. (p. 103)

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Appendices

APPENDIX A: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Review the intent of the research and the interviewing process with the participant, thank him/her for the time and contribution of data to the study, and secure his/her signature on the consent agreement.

Interview Questions

A. Background and demographics

1. How long have you been teaching? Describe your position for each year that you have taught to include grade level(s), content area(s), and school/district location
2. In what year were you named Teacher of the Year?

(Data Collection Chart)

Year	Academic Year	Grade Level Elementary Teacher	Content Area(s) Secondary Teacher	School and District Location
1				
2				
3				
3				
4				
5				

B. Life history

3. How did you come to be a teacher?
   a. Possible probe – Were there significant influences in your becoming a teacher?
4. Was this your first career choice? If teaching was a career change, what did you do prior to teaching?
   a. Possible probe – What prompted this change?

C. Details of the Experience of Teaching

5. What do you do in your job presently?
6. How would you describe your relationship with your students, colleagues, administrators, parents, and the community?
   a. Possible probe – Are there specific examples exemplifying the descriptions of your relationships that you can share?

7. Describe a situation or situations in your teaching when you felt that you had experienced good teaching.

8. Describe a situation or situations in your teaching when you felt that you had experienced bad teaching.
    a. Possible probes – Are there specific stories surrounding your good and bad teaching that you can share?

D. Reflection

9. Have your life experiences and your work now helped you understand what it means to be a teacher? A good teacher?
10. Is your present experience in the classroom giving meaning to your life as a teacher?
    a. Possible probe – Can you share specific critical incidents that provided meaning for you?
11. Has winning the TOY award impacted you in your teaching? How do you feel being a recognized as outstanding teacher?

E. Closing the Interview

12. How do you feel about this interview? What are your perceptions about this interview in terms of understanding what we discussed?
13. What would you recommend to new teachers to help make them become good teachers?
14. Do you have any additional remarks or thoughts about our conversation? Do you have any questions for me?

Thank the participant again for his/her time and contribution of data to the study. Provide timeline and process information regarding member checking of the narrative developed from the transcribed data. Reiterate appreciation for his/her cooperation and participation in the study.

APPENDIX B: SBBC IRB AUTHORIZATION TO CONTACT PRINCIPALS

THE SCHOOL BOARD OF BROWARD COUNTY, FLORIDA
STUDENT ASSESSMENT AND RESEARCH
600 SOUTHEAST THIRD AVENUE • FORT LAUDERDALE, FLORIDA 33301-3125 • TEL 754-321-2500 • FAX 754-321-2520

DEAN W. VAUGHAN
Institutional Review Board (IRB) Chair
dean.vaughan@browardschools.com

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BENJAMIN J. WILLIAMS

ROBERT W. RUNCIE
Superintendent of Schools

March 21, 2012

Mrs. Robin Amparo
1226 NW 167th Avenue
Pembroke Pines, FL 33028

Dear Ms. Amparo:

Thank you for submitting your research proposal, #688 — *Gaining Insight into Teaching: A Phenomenological Exploration of the Lived Experience of Teachers of the Year* — for consideration by the Broward County Public Schools (BCPS). Staff has reviewed your research proposal and approval has been granted for you and/or members of your research team to *contact Elementary, Middle, and High School Principals only*.
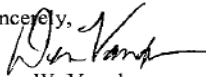
Reviewer comments:
> This is not a significant issue relevant to students; however, if the research can truly pinpoint the attributes of an effective teacher it would assist in recruiting quality teachers who serve Broward students.
> As a member of our district's TOY selection committee and the FLDOE's TOY selection committee, I am anxious to read and learn the results of this research.

This approval means that we have found your proposed research methods to be compatible with a public school setting and your research questions of interest to the school district. The expiration date of your proposal is *Thursday, March 21, 2013.* If you are unable to complete your research by the expiration date, you must submit an Annual Report/Request for Renewal, (http://www.broward.k12.fl.us/research_evaluation/IRB.Pdf), to the Student Assessment & Research Department *four weeks* prior to the expiration date. If a renewal is granted, a Renewal Approval Letter and Approval Memorandum will be issued.

Implementing your research, however, is a decision to be reached by the affected school-based staff on a *strictly voluntary basis*. To assist the school-based staff in their decision to participate, please outline the operational steps to be performed by staff at their school. Based upon this information, each school-based staff would then be *asked to make a decision to participate or not* and *inform you or the requesting research parties of their decision at the time of your/their request.* School-based staff has been instructed not to cooperate, unless you **provide the Approval Letter and Approval Memorandum.**

The anticipated date for submitting an electronic copy of your research findings is *Monday, July 22, 2013.* If additional assistance is needed from our staff, **please contact me at 754-321-2500**.

Sincerely,

Dean W. Vaughan

DWV/CLH:bt
Attachments

Educating Today's Students for Tomorrow's World
Broward County Public Schools Is An Equal Opportunity/Equal Access Employer

APPENDIX C: SAMPLE EMAIL INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

Dear _____,

As a doctoral student at Florida International University, I am conducting interviews with Broward County's finalists and winners of the Teacher of the Year Award. Congratulations on having been a (finalist/winner)! I am very interested in hearing about your teaching experience and your perceptions regarding good teaching.

Attached are the approval documents from the county and my university that authorize me to conduct this research. The extent of your participation is delineated in the attachments as well. There is no compensation associated with this study and there are no known risks to you that are associated with your participation. Please understand that your participation is completely voluntary and you may withdraw your participation at any time. Your principal, (Ms. /Mr.) _____, has granted me permission to invite you to participate, however this permission does not obligate you to do so.

The interview should take approximately 60-90 minutes of your time, and I would schedule both the time and location at your convenience. Should you have any additional questions, please feel free to contact me at my university email: <amparor@fiu.edu>. Thank you so much and I look forward to hearing from you soon.

FIU | FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

ADULT CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY
Gaining Insight into Teaching: A Phenomenological Exploration of the Lived Experience
of Teachers of the Year.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY
You are being asked to be in a research study. The purpose of this study is to learn about
the lived experience of recognized-as-outstanding teachers.

NUMBER OF STUDY PARTICIPANTS
If you decide to be in this study, you will be one of 10 people in this research study.

DURATION OF THE STUDY
Your participation will require at least 3, but no more than 5 hours of your time.

PROCEDURES
If you agree to be in the study, we will ask you to do the following things:
1. You will be interviewed by yourself for 1 to 1 ½ hours. The interviews will be tape
   recorded. You will be asked questions about your experiences as a classroom teacher.
   Your essays from the teacher of the year application that you completed will also be
   examined for information related to your ideas about the nature of teaching. The
   transcript of the recorded interview will be sent to you for your review as to accuracy
   and clarity of content
2. You will also be asked to review the transcripts of your interview via email
   communication for accuracy and clarity of the information you provided.

RISKS AND/OR DISCOMFORTS
The following risks may be associated with your participation in this study: There are no
known risks associated with this study.

BENEFITS
The following benefits may be associated with your participation in this study: The
participant will be provided with refreshments during the interview.

ALTERNATIVES
There are no known alternatives available to you other than not taking part in this study.
However, any significant new findings developed during the course of the research which
may relate to your willingness to continue participation will be provided to you.

CONFIDENTIALITY
The records of this study will be kept private and will be protected to the fullest extent provided by law. In any sort of report we might publish, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely and only the researcher team will have access to the records. However, your records may be reviewed for audit purposes by authorized University or other agents who will be bound by the same provisions of confidentiality.

COMPENSATION & COSTS
There is no compensation provided for participation in this study.

RIGHT TO DECLINE OR WITHDRAW
Your participation in this study is voluntary. You are free to participate in the study or withdraw your consent at any time during the study. Your withdrawal or lack of participation will not affect any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. The investigator reserves the right to remove you without your consent at such time that they feel it is in the best interest.

RESEARCHER CONTACT INFORMATION
If you have any questions about the purpose, procedures, or any other issues relating to this research study you may contact Robin Faith Amparo at home, 954-392-0586, amparor@fiu.edu.

IRB CONTACT INFORMATION
If you would like to talk with someone about your rights of being a subject in this research study or about ethical issues with this research study, you may contact the FIU Office of Research Integrity by phone at 305-348-2494 or by email at ori@fiu.edu.

PARTICIPANT AGREEMENT
I have read the information in this consent form and agree to participate in this study. I have had a chance to ask any questions I have about this study, and they have been answered for me. I understand that I am entitled to a copy of this form after it has been read and signed.

_____   _____
Signature of Participant   Date

_____
Printed Name of Participant

_____   _____
Signature of Person Obtaining Consent   Date

APPENDIX E: CODING CATEGORIES USED IN THIS STUDY

Research Question One

Four major themes emerged from the data in relation to research question one. Each major theme was coded by color. Within each major theme, sub-themes were also identified. The sub-themes were coded by abbreviations.

Color Code   Abbreviation Code

ToYs as Lovers   (yellow)
        Lovers of Children   LC
        Lovers of Teaching   LT
        Lovers of Learning   LL
        Lovers of Subject Matter   LSM

ToYs as Doers   (green)
        Doers accept Responsibilities   DR
        Doers set Goals   DG
        Doers employ Methods, Procedures and Processes   DMPP

ToYs as Shakers   (pink)
        Shakers manage Change   SC
        Shakers manage Authority and Autonomy   SAA

ToYs as Believers   (blue)
        Believers as Coaches   BC
        Believers as Nurturers   BN
        Believers as Optimists   BO

Research Question Two

Two major themes emerged from the data in relation to research question two. Each major theme was coded by a number.
1. Moments of Knowingness   (1)
2. Inexplicable Power   (2)

VITA

ROBIN FAITH AMPARO

Born, Brooklyn, New York

May 1993	B.S, English Education Florida International University Miami, Florida
May 2000	M.S., Human Resource Development/Adult Education Barry University Miami, Florida
2010 – present	Owner & Director *AP*titude LLC Pembroke Pines, Florida
2004 - present	Teacher Broward County Public Schools Cypress Bay High School
2004 - present	Adjunct Instructor, College of Education Florida International University Miami, Florida
1993 -1997; 2002 - 2004	Teacher Miami-Dade County Public Schools Miami Norland Senior High Miami Coral Park Senior High
1997 - 2001	Regional Manager of Human Resources Development HMSHost Corporation Orlando, Florida

Awards and Certifications

National Board Certified Teacher
College Board Certified Advanced Placement Teacher
Myers-Briggs Type Indicator Certified Consultant
Principal's Quality Circle Award
Miami-Dade County Magnet Teacher of the Year
Sallie Mae Beginning Teacher of the Year