three key assumptions to indicate how these were expanded by their study. The assumptions concern modeling, situated learning, and higher-order thinking.

Reflective practice is a focus of the next article, by Adenike Akinbode; the article is titled “Teaching as Lived Experience: The Value of Exploring the Hidden and Emotional Side of Teaching through Reflective Narratives.” This article offers insights into the broad and familiar topic of reflective practice, using a framework of six “dialogical movements.” Three stories illustrate the author’s own “narrative journey” and her collaboration with a teaching colleague. Discussion considers emotional aspects of teaching, ways to deepen reflection, and uncomfortable moments in such a study.

Anchoring this issue that focuses on collaboration is the closing article by Mary Lynn Hamilton and Stefnee Pinnegar, whose work is well known to members of the self-study of teacher education practices community. In “A Topography of Collaboration: Methodology, Identity and Community in Self-study of Practice Research,” the authors use topography as a metaphor as they develop their understanding of the practice of collaboration. Four poems help the authors consider four “topographic moments” that shed light on the self, positioning, methodology and collaboration, and community. This article adds to our understanding of the many roles served by collaboration in research on self-study of practice.

This first issue of Volume 9 is slightly smaller than our usual issue in order to create additional space for a Special Issue in the next issue. Special Issue Editors Susan Elliott-Johns and Deborah Tidwell are assembling articles that extend papers presented at the Ninth International Conference on Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices at Herstmonceux Castle (UK) in August 2012. The focus of these articles is the transformative nature of self-study of teacher education practices.

Tom Russell and Amanda Berry
Editors

RESEARCH ARTICLE
Uncovering Our Feminist Pedagogy: A co/autoethnography
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What does it mean to be a feminist educator? How would we know if we were? We call ourselves feminist teachers and yet we have not focused on this identification and its influence on our teaching in some time. In this self-study, we set out to look at our practice using co/autoethnography. As our study progressed, we began to realize that our research methodology seemed to align more with feminist principles than did our teaching. We became increasingly aware of how our methodology illuminated areas of our practice that may well have remained hidden. With our attention now on co/autoethnography itself, with its embrace of the autobiographical notion in sociopolitical context and an evolving epistemology, we were attentive to how co/autoethnography is itself a feminist research methodology. As we retrace our journey to this realization, we share this co/autoethnographic self-study.

Keywords: feminist; co/autoethnography; self-study; practice

Are you talking, Monica?

No, I'm listening. (Skype conversation, 1 February 2012)

We express, display, make claims for who we are – and who we would like to be – in the stories we tell and how we tell them. In sum, we perform our identities. (Mishler, 1999, p.19)

As the particular people and the teachers we are, our identities are important. We engage in our practice as teacher educators from perspectives developed and undeveloped through experience, dialogue, and reflection that inform to various degrees who we are as teacher educators. For us, a central identity is as feminists and as feminist pedagogues. Our research began when we looked at ourselves and wondered: are we who we think we are? In other words, how do we define what it means to be a feminist teacher? In this article, we discuss how we came to see ourselves and our pedagogy differently, examining our practice using co/autoethnography. Here, we tell the story of our collaborative exploration of our teaching as feminist educators through the intermingling of narratives from our co/autoethnography to re-create rather than simply describe our unique research process. Unlike a traditional research paper, which is often reported in a particular order such as research question, context, literature review, method, findings, and conclusions, here our findings are discussed as the different phases of the self-study unfold. This unique style of writing research is an attempt to put into practice our emergent poststructural feminist beliefs (Lather, 1991; Peters & Burbules, 2004; St. Pierre & Pillow, 2000). We are the

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stories we tell and are told. In telling our stories, we come to a deeper understanding of how we can be and who we might become. The very process of writing our experience informs our understanding of that experience, and our understanding is informed by other stories. In this way, we do not acknowledge rigid epistemological boundaries between stories and reports on experience. The richness of fiction is illustrative of the truth. Here, we model this process of coming to know using literature to name our experience and our stories to illustrate it. This coningled writing of our experiences means that our approach is unusual. We hope the reader will delight in the opportunity to share our non-traditional approach to thinking about our practice. As Greene (1992) wrote, “feminist pedagogies . . . demand critical examination of what lies below the surface. They demand confrontations with discontinuities, particularities, and the narratives that embody actual life stories” (p. x). With this in mind, we approach the vast and somewhat daunting landscape of our self-study.

Starting
I am arguing for an intensified awareness of women’s own realities, the shape of their own lived worlds. (Greene, 1994, p. 22)

We started our study with energy and excitement at the beginning of the summer of 2011. This was not the first time we had thought about our self-identification as feminist teachers; not only have we called ourselves feminist teachers for many years now, but also it was this strong inclination that first drew us together 14 years ago.

Reflecting on the Past
Monica was interviewing for her first professorial position at a small liberal arts college where Lesley had been teaching for several years. Lesley invited a nervous but hopeful Monica into her office for an informal interview. Monica immediately recognized The Education Feminist Reader (Stone, 1994) on Lesley’s desk, and we began to talk about our shared passion for Maxine Greene, Valerie Walkerdine, and Sue Middleton. Perhaps in that moment, we recognized ourselves in each other and the potential of our collaboration.

During 14 years of working together, we have engaged in self-studies, writing narratives and having extensive conversations about our past and present as women and educators. Relatively early in our collaboration, we each changed institutions: Monica moved to a large state university and Lesley moved to a small liberal arts women’s college. The distance did not affect our work, and engaging in self-study together led us to a methodology that we call “autoethnography.” For this particular study, we juxtaposed the autobiographical stories we have archived with new narratives of our past and present reflections about our teaching practices. For our present teaching reflections, we focused on different pedagogical contexts over the course of a year. Lesley teaches in an educational studies program and focused on a diversity course she teaches. Monica is running an urban teacher residency program for secondary science and mathematics teachers and examined her formal and informal mentoring sessions with teachers and students. As in medical residencies, preservice teachers (residents) in the urban teacher residency program serve a one-year clinical apprenticeship under the tutelage of a core-teacher in a high-needs school (Solomon, 2009). Being involved in alternative programs rather than traditional teacher education allowed us opportunities to be innovative, autonomous, and true to our feminist ideals. This was an optimal time to examine our own practices because we were actually teaching in ways that made sense to us.

Focusing: Getting down to work
Passionate about our question and excited by the prospect of a summer exploring it together, we set about trying to define feminist pedagogy. As we each sat in the sunshine, Monica on her deck and Lesley on her porch, we engaged in rich and intense conversations about Ellsworth. Revisiting the text after 20 years, we polished our newly acquired reading glasses in an effort to see what light the new sense we were making would cast on our teaching. But the quiet reflection moved quickly from grappling with the difficult issues raised by Ellsworth to the comfort of our libraries, where we sought out definitions of feminist pedagogy. Before long, we had found what we considered our starting point: a list of criteria, large and important. We then looked to see if they were reflected in our
practice. While there are many definitions of feminist pedagogy (Cobee, 2004), Webb, Allen, and Walker's (2002) six principles resonated for us: “Reformation of the relationship between teacher and student, empowerment, building community, privileging voice, respecting the diversity of personal experience, and challenging traditional pedagogical views.”

As the summer ended and we returned to our classes, we talked about our teaching and mentoring in terms of these simple criteria. After several months of collecting data, we came to a sudden and shocking realization: we were engaged in the kind of simplistic and reprehensible practice that makes us shudder when our students do it. We had ended up with a check-off list: if we formed community, we were on the way; if we encouraged student voice, we were doing even better!

We needed a more complex understanding of feminist teaching. Returning to the poststructural feminist literature, two essential concepts emerged: unknowability and uncertainty. Teaching has a certain unknowability that cannot be captured in a checklist of criteria. It is something we "knew" but had somehow forgotten in our turn from our experience to the literature. Teaching draws on an epistemology founded in difference; it is epistemologically unstable in this sense. The question therefore arises: What does feminist teaching look like when we acknowledge its inherent unknowability? Like Ellsworth (1989), we came to see that feminist teaching involves “a practice grounded in the unknowable [that is profoundly contextual (historical) and interdependent (social)]” (p. 323). Through reflection on our autobiographies and practice, we also identified uncertainty. The uncertainty we welcome into our classrooms as a result of our feminist beliefs opens up space for others to be heard. In feminist classrooms, power is always negotiated. It moves around the classroom and it demands vigilance. The uncertainty engendered can often make us feel uncomfortable and unsettled, as if we are on “shifting ground” (Lather, 2001, p. 191). As teachers, we experience “coming up against stuck place after stuck place” (Ellsworth, 1997, p. xi) in order to keep dancing within “the impossibility of teaching” (Ellsworth, 1997, p. 9) so that we can learn and grow from “our ruptures, failures, breaks, and refusals” (Lather, 2001, p. 189). We came to see how everyday unknowability and uncertainty were deeply embedded in our practice.

Making a List and Taking a Wrong Turn

Morpho Eugenia. Remarkable. A remarkable creation. How beautiful, how delicately designed, how wonderful that something so fragile should have come here, through such dangers, from the other end of the earth. And very rare. I have never seen one. I have never heard tell of anyone who has seen one. (Byatt, 1992, p. 21)

The gardens where we work, where the butterflies live, look messy. Classrooms are rich complex environments where experiences are not lined up in neat rows that can be dealt with separately. We are not dealing with a monoculture but a rich ecology. Nonetheless, in an effort to isolate and capture our particular experience as feminist pedagogues, we brought out our butterfly nets. We turned to the literature with a large butterfly net and set about capturing the characteristics of feminist pedagogy as if they were butterflies to be pinned in place in a display case. We captured the attractive red admiral (building community), along with the massive moon moth (voice). We even snared the elusive small brown echo moth (listening). Now we had a set of principles: all out of context. They provided a function, but were limited. We had performed the collectors’ task. We had isolated our specimens and placed them individually in a protected place to preserve them.

We found it all too easy to run through lists of characteristics and say “Yes, did that.” But somehow we seemed to have missed the point. We were at an impasse.

What was missing of course was the critical, in-depth, collaborative engagement with each other, the literature, our lives, our histories, and our practice. The brittle beauty of our criteria, such as butterflies pinned to a display board, was meaningless if our capturing, labeling, and pinning down extracted it from the holistic and organic way we actually attended to it in our practice. Our new reading of Ellsworth was only the beginning and we put it aside in the grass as we chased butterflies. Drawing from our decade-long history of self-study, we knew instinctively that our only way out would be in the re-examination of our practice. We needed to return to our narratives with a new purpose. It was through this process that we began to discover our first phase of findings.

Pausing to Reflect: Unpacking our process

Was there ever a life more riddled with self-doubt than that of a female professor? (Sarton, 1961, p. 29)

Monica wrote: so much of my residency work is outside of the classroom and involves coaching, mentoring, and advising. It involves the relationships I have built with the residents and often the affective perceptions I have about them. For instance, we have one resident who is really struggling with his teaching. He is becoming a science teacher and is very much a techie. He is used to being very smart, success in school comes easily for him, and he always speaks with authority. Over the summer at the museum, he liked to play the role of the "professor" with the students. He tends to think of knowledge as fixed and his role of teacher as transmitting knowledge. Both his classroom mentor and one of his faculty mentors have taken a practical strategy and focused on developing his planning, scripting, and teaching strategies, but my gut instinct is that his issue is about the ways in which he engages or does not engage in the world as a person. He seems to miss social cues. He is not a good listener and does a lot of monopolizing, talking without checking to see if the students are following him. He tends not to be self-reflective and often misses that he has lost the students. And so I face a strange dilemma — in this instance, I have to work on who he is as the person, and not so much as the teacher. I have to help him develop his empathy so that he perceives how the students are thinking and feeling. Will I be able to really help him? Can I nurture an empathetic stance? Can we really nurture the person in our students? Does our own personhood help or hinder that? (9 February 2012)

We could easily examine our narratives and size them up against our checklist of criteria using the a priori method but would that lead us to a deeper understanding of pedagogical relationships? Clearly, Monica’s narrative demonstrates that she has developed a different type of relationship with her students. She is building trust, so she can give feedback. She is interested in the student as a person. She is trying to empower him and help him find his voice. But what is she really doing? How do her feminist principles help her make sense of her role and responsibilities in this “pedagogical relationship” (van Manen, 1995)? For as van Manen (1991) writes:

It is possible to learn all the techniques of instruction but to remain pedagogically unfit as a teacher. The preparation of educators obviously includes much more than the teaching of knowledge and skills, more even than a professional ethical code or moral craft. To become a teacher includes something that cannot be taught formally: the most personal embodiment of a pedagogical thoughtfulness. (p. 9)

How do we cultivate this type of thoughtfulness in both our students and ourselves as teacher educators? Is this a question that can be easily and concretely answered? Or does
this question lead to recognition of a certain unknowability in teaching? This unknowability cannot be captured in a checklist of criteria for, as Stanley (1990) argues, “feminism is not merely a perspective, a way of seeing; not even this plus an epistemology, a way of knowing; it is also an ontology, or way of being in the world” (p. 14). What does feminist teaching look like when we acknowledge its inherent unknowability? Ellsworth (1989) would respond that feminist teaching involves, “a practice grounded in the unknowable [that] is profoundly contextual (historical) and interdependent (social)” (p. 323). What then does that look like in our daily interactions with students?

Lesley wrote: Today I stood before my class on learning theory, literally doing my little dance to illustrate what for me has been a central metaphor of teaching. Elbow’s (1986) idea of teacher as raindancer, when it suddenly came to me that it no longer fits. When I read Elbow as a beginning teacher, I identified so closely with the uncertainty of teaching he voices that I can quote him: “If I got the steps right for the rain dance, rain came (or I knew till I was wet whether but I was close). I never seemed to have any sense of what a good rain dance looked like.” (p. xi). Today, for the first time, the metaphor collapsed. I moved into my Isadora Duncan-esque dance to illustrate the quote to my students and with their amused eyes upon me I knew I did not believe my own dance. It was a moment of change. Before that moment, the focus had been on my actions as a teacher and how we can never know when we are going to be successful. Today, as a result of our thinking about what it means to be a feminist educator, I saw that the uncertainty has to do with the ways we move together around, between and with our students in a community that is uncertain because it is alive. Our discussion on Monday of the problems with the lists and our determination to go back to Ellsworth, Middleton, and Greene found its center in my dance routine. I was dancing both literally and metaphorically the rain dance when I felt how wrong it was. The uncertainty of not knowing whether my dance would work (Elbow’s point) was the wrong kind of uncertainty (February 2012).

There is a type of knowing that comes from the physical act of teaching. It often manifests itself when the teacher takes for granted that she is the center of the classroom, the authority, the most knowledgeable. Our teaching has never been about us in that sense. The uncertainty we welcome into our classrooms as a result of our feminist beliefs opens up space for others to be heard. It provides students and teachers with never-ending room for “moving about” (Min-ha, 1986/1987, p. 7). But it can often make us feel uncomfortable and unsettled. As feminist teachers, uncertainty emerges because our questions about teaching “are constantly moving” and “one cannot define, finish or close” them (Lather, 2001, p. 184). This is one reason we were both drawn to the self-study of teacher education practices. As a methodology, it invites us to explore our authentic and often dynamic questions as they shift and change to the rhythm and beats of the teaching dance, a dance that is never a solo performance.

Feminists, such as Britzman (2009), talk about the inherent conflict in learning, within the learner herself and the conflict within knowledge itself. This makes both the material and the delivery problematic. From this point of view, Olesen and Clarke (1999) describe knowledge construction as, “continually dynamic – new frames open which give way to others which in turn open again and again” (p. 356). They continue, “Knowledge are only partial … It is not that there is no platform for action, reform, transformation or emancipation, but that the platforms are transitory” (p. 356). As we look at Lesley’s story, we see echoes of Britzman’s suggestion that one solution to this complexity of teaching is to make the other familiar in order for understanding to be easier to evoke. This recognizes that the uncertainty lies in the relation of both teacher and student to the subject, which is also uncertain.

Co/autoethnography Sheds Feminist Light on Our Self-Study

He felt changed but there was no one to tell. (Byatt, 2010, p. 197)

We were able to identify two central feminist strands in our pedagogy, uncertainty and unknowability, by using a methodology we have come to call co/autoethnography (Coia & Taylor, 2007; Taylor & Coia, 2006). While uncertainty and unknowability are not only recognized by feminists, or even always acknowledged by feminists, they are characteristic of poststructural feminism. In this section, we describe how our methodology helped us see uncertainty and unknowability as central to our practice in a way that making a list and matching it to our teaching could not. In the process, we shall show how the insight gained was in no small part due to the feminist aspects of co/autoethnography used as a self-study research methodology.

Co/autoethnography emerged organically when we realized that the “use of autobiography to examine, understand, and improve aspects of our own teaching practices” (Coia & Taylor, 2007, p. 19) was not enough. More than 10 years ago, writing autobiographies alongside the students and teachers with whom we worked and sharing them in a democratic space, we came to understand we were not writing individual pieces but in fact “writing into each other’s lives” (p. 23). The experience of writing autobiographies alongside each other led to narrowing the space between us and opening spaces for reflection. In this collective writing of individual autobiographies and our continued dialogue about them, we came to see that our stories were not fixed but rather texts that required “re-examination, re-living, dialogue, and inquiry” (p. 23). We are the stories we tell, but what these stories mean depends on who we are, and to whom we tell them. These realizations led us to co/autoethnography and, in particular, to the work of Reed-Danahay’s (1997) in anthropology and Pratt’s (1999) in postcolonial theory of Strathern’s description of auto-anthropology as “doing an ethnography of one’s own culture” (p. 5) seemed to fit our needs. As we reflected:

In a sense, we are doing an ethnography of our self as teacher within the context of what that means among teachers, as part of the inside culture of teaching, and within the greater cultural context of what that means from outside the world of teaching in society. We are insiders, investigating the culture of teaching. Those who collaborate with us are insiders because they are also teachers but at the same time outsiders because their experiences will be different and their identities complex. The interweaving of the narratives allows the insider to move from inside/our and the outsider to move from outside/in. (Taylor & Coia, 2009, p. 178)

We developed co/autoethnography around the idea that teaching is a profoundly personal and social activity (Coia & Taylor, 2007) and cannot be examined without self-reflection in a collaborative setting. This is based on the idea that no one can completely understand or one’s self without others. As we have argued, “Our understandings of ourselves and others can, however, be enhanced by composing our autoethnographies together” (Taylor & Coia, 2009, p. 178). This blurring of insider/outside builds on the understanding that our identities are multiple, partial, and dynamic. Our aim is to improve our practice through collaborative self-understanding and reflection on ourselves as people whose lives are constructed in narrative and in community. Thus, our interest, in common with postmodern feminisms, is not “truth,” that “destructive illusion” (Olesen, 2000, p. 225), but understanding. In writing collaboratively, we are striving to “bridge that
mythical divide between insider and outsider, researcher and researched" because as Weston (1996) reflects, "I am neither, in any simple way, and yet I am both" (p. 275). From this self-study orientation, we are both the researcher and the researched and from this perspective can attempt to answer Neumann and Peterson's (1997) question, "What will we learn if we view research as a personal and social phenomenon — as an experience within a researcher's life?" (p. 3). As we note (2007), in co/autoethnography "our specific contribution lies in what happens in the interweaving of our stories: the reliance on the reflection that results from our stories being in dialogue, the role of the other in this dialogue adding validity, and analysis" (p. 26).

In co/autoethnography, we learn by collaboratively looking at the stories we tell of our everyday experiences with a practiced eye. The stories we tell are not "war stories," or "OM stories." It is the "everydayness" (Bateson, 1997) of these stories that stands our stories on their head. The importance of everyday stories lies, as Bateson points out in her foreword to a book of teachers' narratives, in their ability to help us understand our practices and expand them: "Everyday is, after all, where the learning takes place" (p. viii). The stories we tell each other about our experiences have a certain flavor or texture. They are not representative of all teachers or courtroom testimonies of absolute truth: they are stories for "self-understanding" (p. viii). Our everyday stories can do this because of the intimate connection between narrative and identity (Eakin, 1999, p. 101). Who we are is connected to what we are researching and our research affects who we are as people. Similarly, Neumann and Peterson (1997) explain: "we conceptualize research as a personal experience — not because we wish to undo ongoing processes whereby individuals learn to do educational research, but because we want to enlarge and complicate them" (p. 3). Our stories have a purpose; we do not just tell our narratives for the sake of telling. We hope, as Loughran (2010) says about stories of teacher educators' work, that the learning derived from our research will produce "new knowledge of teacher education practices" (p. 224). We are sharing our stories because in the act of sharing we will become more knowledgeable about who we are as teachers (Geurzen, de Heer, Korthagen, Lunenberg, & Zwart, 2010) and hopefully improve our collective practice as our experience resonates with that of others.

Insight comes in telling our stories to one another. We do not tell the stories because we have insight: they are not complete in that way, with their lesson neatly attached. Rather it is in the telling and the retelling to each other that meaning is made and insight is gained (Coia & Taylor, 2007). As the Arizona Group (2006) say, "Our collective dialogues enabled us to see that issues in our individual community were not idiosyncratic … In dialogue we began to understand the larger cultural themes being played out in our individual contexts" (p. 62). Much like the Arizona Group (2004), our dialogue has become a process of knowing. The stories are always in context and always in relationship. In the retelling to each other, we add additional context from our different but connected experiences informed by our libraries, our lives, and our knowledge of each other. As we write and rewrite, some stories stay with us. These become our co/autoethnographies. They are always in process, just as we are always becoming. As teachers we are, as Britzman (2009) says talking about Greene's existentialism, "an incomplete project … searchers[s] in the process of becoming a teacher with others" (p. 30).

Co/autoethnography illuminates the question of how we understand who we are in the classroom because it allows for and embraces the complexity of lived experience and is grounded in a conception of the self that recognizes that we bring ourselves (what is constructed) to the research situation (which also constructs us) and we end up with a new understanding (partial new construction of ourselves). We are who we are in relation to our practice, but we are not totally consumed or constructed by it. We are people in relation, people who are becoming, people with significant pasts, and people who exist in a sociopolitical context. As Freire (2000) writes, we are searching to describe a pedagogy that, "affirms men and women as beings in the process of becoming — as unfinished, uncompleted beings in and with a likewise unfinished reality" (p. 65).

Would we be changed if we had no one to tell? Change may happen without community and language, but our work shows this change would be less meaningful. We recognize ourselves in community in order for the change to be meaningful. Community is not merely or obviously those around us now, but includes our relationships with ourselves, our crowded pasts, our connections through the literature and study, and our connections with self and others. This is not a new thought in self-study where an expansive and inclusive view of collaboration and community has long been celebrated (LaBossy, 2004). As Pinnegar and Hamilton (2009) say, "[From the beginning, S-STEP researchers have worked to create a community where people are cared for and caring" (p. 160).

Telling and Retelling: Developing a co/autoethnography

All old stories, my cousin, will bear telling and telling again in different ways. What is required is to keep alive, to polish the simple clean forms of the tale which must be there … And yet to add something of yours, of the writer which makes all these things seem new and different, without having been appropriated for private or personal ends. (Byatt, 1990, p. 350)

As we worked together, choosing, telling and retelling our stories, going back to the literature, reflecting on our everyday practice, and writing into each other's lives, we found that co/autoethnography allowed for the many complex layers of our self-study. As we reflect back, we realize that there were three interconnected phases of our self-study. We began by studying our practice as feminist teachers but when we came to an impasse, we turned our attention to co/autoethnography, to better understand our feminist principles. With the discovery of the feminist nature of our methodology, we returned to our original self-study question and focused on transforming our practice as feminist teachers mining feminist aspects of our co/autoethnography.

We attempted to look to our past and present through multiple entry points. Many of our newly generated stories of the past were triggered by tensions in our personal lives as well as instances of our teaching. It is important to realize that just as with any autobiographical work, we choose which stories to tell each other. Not all the stories ended up being used. Stories were written, shared, and rewritten as meaning changed. Using personal history, our memories of the past, is a skill. We are inclined to think of memory as a static record of our past with the concern, as voiced by the main character in Murakami's (2000) novel, Norwegian Wood, that "writing from memory like this, I often feel a pang of dread. What if I've forgotten the important thing?" (p. 9). In co/autoethnography with its relational view of self, and understanding of the self as constructed by and constructing meaning through reflection on the past, "the important thing" cannot be overlooked.

Along with our narratives from the past, our current writings and reflections, our data included teaching journals and the field notes from our conversations. These collectively were used to produce a co/autoethnographic narrative (Taylor & Coia, 2009). We co-analyzed these texts using a reflective, participatory, and collaborative stance, examining them through "a blurred lens of a researcher/participant, a subject/object, or an insider/outsider" (Taylor & Coia, 2009, p. 177). We looked for categories and patterns to emerge by means of constant comparison (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).
Once we identified the emergent themes, our next step was the crafting of the co/autoethnography. Together we wrote and rewrote our narratives through the many perspectives that we bring to the writing as feminists, teachers, and writers within the larger social context of teacher education. We addressed the issues through "the thinking that writing produces" (St. Pierre, 1997, p. 178). We not only constructed our stories through multiple tellings and retellings, but these were intentionally informed by the simultaneous reading of texts and reflection on our daily practice. Our co/autoethnography began to resemble Middleton's (1995) article on postmodern feminism education, where she "transgresses conventional academic forms in order to expose their constructedness" (p. 87). Blurring the personal and the academic, she incorporates "everyday experiences which are usually rendered invisible in academic writing" (p. 87), to show how instances of "lived reality" can be "generative of feminist educational theory." We attempted the same blend of personal and professional stories, pushing the boundaries of conventional academic writing. In addition, we paid close attention to our choice of language and the potential ways in which our writing will be interpreted by the reader. There is an esthetic quality to writing a co/autoethnography, a characteristic that helps blur the genres of research reporting and narrative. Similarly, we recognize that our co/autoethnographic study differs from other qualitative research in terms of how we establish trustworthiness.

Trustworthiness

Stories are data with a soul. (Brown, TED Talk, 2011)

As mentioned, we write co/autoethnographies to help us understand and improve our practice. Thus, in an important sense, our work is about us and for us. This is what leads some to consider autoethnography, on which co/autoethnography draws, to be narcissistic or self-indulgent (Coffey, 1999) and therefore of limited scholarly significance. This type of criticism is one the S-STEP community, with its focus on the self, has addressed in several ways. Feldman (2003), for example, draws on the existential orientation of self-study to argue that the study of ourselves is undertaken "not as navel-gazing but to understand the way we are teacher educators and to change our ways of being teacher educators" (p. 27). More recently, one can see Pinnegar and Hamilton's (2009) argument that we should pay attention to ontology rather than epistemology as playing a role in how we understand and use trustworthiness as a valuable criterion for evaluating our self-studies.

We can use this overall approach to help us understand what trustworthiness means in the context of co/autoethnography and this study in particular. The participatory nature of our research where we are, in Baxter Magolda, Creamer, and Sisk Mezars' (2010) phrase "in and of the data" (p. 240), seems, at first sight, to limit the extent of the analysis and interpretation, and thus the usefulness of the work as research. This is because traditionally trustworthiness is seen as something that is ultimately conferred by others.

In this context, Richardson's (2000) criteria for assessing the trustworthiness of writing as a method of inquiry are particularly appropriate for our work because of the important role that writing plays in our methodology. Richardson's first criterion is substantive contribution. In our context, the question would be, does this self-study contribute to our understanding of teacher education practices? We believe that our findings interspersed throughout this article as well as our conclusion directly address this question.

The second criterion is esthetic merit. Does this piece succeed esthetically? Richardson (2000) asks, "Is the text artistically shaped, satisfyingly complex, and not boring?" (p. 937). If trustworthiness is demonstrated when a text resonates for another, how the narrative is written is essential because it determines the accessibility of the experience to the reader/audience. As we rewrite our co/autoethnography for this article, we are attuned to the reader's experience of reading it. As we discussed earlier, crafting is a vital part of the process. It is what leads to our insight. We are writing with the hope that the audience will appreciate our self-study esthetically, that it resonates or rings true for the reader. In some ways, for our work to be trustworthy it must move you in some way. It should stir the reader to think about or rethink aspects of his/her own practice.

Richardson's (2000) third criterion is reflexivity. Here, one looks at how we came to author this particular text and how our subjectivities are both "producers and products" (p. 937) of the text. As a self-study, we hope we have shown that this study is both self-initiated and focused (LaBoskey, 2004) and that the producing of the text has resulted in new understandings of ourselves and our practices, as well as being a product of who we are.

The fourth criterion is impact. This characteristic relates to the second one as it speaks directly to the audience of our work. It is the meaning that is generated by the work but is independent of it. If our work is trustworthy, it will move the audience. Richardson (2000) uses the following prompts to address this criterion: "Does it generate new questions? Does it move me to write? Does it move me to try new practices? Move me to action?" (p. 937).

For Richardson (2000), the final criterion of trustworthiness is that it expresses a reality. Have we, in our co/autoethnography, provided "a fleshed out, embodied sense" (p. 937) of our lived experience (Merleau-Ponty, 1967)? As with self-study work in general, the trustworthiness of our work depends to a large extent on the audience, but it also involves us being trustworthy and, from an ethical standpoint, having integrity (Hamilton & Pinnegar, 2000). Part of demonstrating our integrity is the extent to which we can be transparent. In discussing their self-study methods, Lunenberg, Zwart, and Korthagen (2010) draw on Coppola's (2007) four characteristics of scholarship, one of which is that scholars make their work transparent and in doing so become trustworthy. In our case, conducting a co/autoethnography with its conscious working and reworking of memory and our professional knowledge into our reflections on our current practice, we use all of these criteria as we collectively write our experience.

Still the question may remain, "Is this particular co/autoethnography trustworthy?" Our audience may cry "Show me the evidence? Where are the data?" And we can bring them the paper and the texts, but in a co/autoethnography this would be only one and not the most important test of trustworthiness. While we certainly experienced that which we report, our interpretations change. A central part of this work has been how our re-reading of Ellsworth and other texts is different today to what it was 20 years ago. Similarly, we would not and could not claim that our reading of our experience will stay the same. If we come back to the same question 20 years from now, we will in all likelihood not refer to the exact same data, the exact same stories. This is part of what we learn from feminism, undertaking co/autoethnography, and studying ourselves. The trustworthiness of this co/autoethnography ultimately lies with the community that we construct together.

The Importance of Vulnerability, Ambiguity and Doubt

What kinds of practices are possible once vulnerability, ambiguity, and doubt are admitted? (Britzman, 1989, p. 17)

Are we the feminists we thought we were? Two decades ago, fired up by the politics of the pro-choice movement and our own coming of age as feminist teachers, we read Ellsworth
and Lather. We were confident calling ourselves feminist teachers, but were we really practicing feminist pedagogy? We have grappled with this issue. We have looked back. We were different then. Reading the texts as young teachers inspired us to take risks and gave us confidence to address social justice issues in the classroom. It helped us open spaces for difficult conversations with our colleagues and our students. What we got from the text then met our needs. What we can say, as we have looked back is that we were not ready to welcome “vulnerability, ambiguity, and doubt” into our classrooms. At that time, Lesley read Ellsworth (as her notes in the margin attest) as primarily a challenge to Marxism. Monica, as her dissertation attests, had Ellsworth as part of her arsenal as she started a girls’ group. Now as we read Ellsworth, we problematize voice and community. Obviously, how we read is affected by our positionality and everything should be revisited in light of that salient perspective. If, as we and others claim, we are always in a state of becoming then who we are as teacher educators is dynamic. No text remains the same, including the narratives of our lives. For us, this self-study has brought home again the importance of focused rigorous reflection from various viewpoints on issues we think we already know.

What we identify with, what we care about, is what gives our professional as well as our personal lives meaning. In this self-study, we carefully considered our long-standing, but not necessarily thoughtful, identification with feminism. Through our year-long co/autoethnographic study, we have strengthened this identification. It is more firmly part of who we are, and we see evidence of this in small but significant ways throughout our professional lives. We have not changed dramatically. There was no light bulb or OMG moment. The changes have been subtle and have emerged over time.

As we came to see feminist pedagogy as more complex, we saw notions such as uncertainty and unknowability as central and in need of constant consideration. We understood that they do not have stable realist meanings. This led to increased pedagogical confidence. This view of ourselves as incomplete and working in uncertainty as central to what it means to be a teacher was, perhaps paradoxically, a relief and a release. An important aspect of feminism is the recognition of how we are constructed by our social and political and, in the case of teaching, our institutional contexts. It is also important to see ourselves not as merely pushed and pulled between our constructions as objects and our constructing ourselves as subjects. Our study has revealed a space where we live with our lack of perfection, ambiguity, and doubt not debilitating and destructive of ourselves and of our relationships with our students. Our newfound confidence has led to more open and explicit discussion of our feminism with our students, a more equitable relationship as we do not shy away as much as we did from criticism or direct confrontation of issues. We also found that our renewed understanding of what it means to be a feminist teacher has influenced our classroom interactions. We have come to think of this as living our feminism. This is something we are still observing in ourselves. It would be inconsistent with the argument of this article if we implied that this was done, complete and that we now move on. Living with incompleteness and unknowability and being context-dependent make it hard to draw clear lessons that you can apply tomorrow and the next day, to this year’s students and the ones to come, but we believe the effort is worth it.

Conclusion

It is almost summer again. We have been engaged in this self-study for a year. This weekend Monica went on the Unite Against the War on Women March in New York City. She wrote:

And to think for the past year we have been asking ourselves, “Where did all the feminists go?” On this beautiful sunny afternoon, we gathered, feminists, young daughters and older mothers and fathers, white, African-American, and Latino, straight and gay, male and female, to protest the war on women. We summoned the ghosts of first wave feminists, as we stood in front of the Triangle Shirtwaist factory and remembered the value of women’s work and the importance of being activists. We heard second wave Erica Jong describe her continued commitment to the fight for women’s rights and we were rallied by Martha Plimpton, a contemporary actress. We admitted to feeling as if women have been asleep for the past two decades. I was moved by the blending of the past, present, and the future and the feeling of possibility. As I looked into the faces of some of the adolescent girls, I saw myself in them. I wanted to share: “Just like you, I was raised by a long line of women, my great-grandmother, grandmother, and mother, who modeled the importance of fighting for equality.” Like Plimpton remarked, I have been asleep but no more, no more. (April 28, 2012)

We are awake again. We return to the beginning and see our world differently. To paraphrase the quote with which we began this piece: we are more aware of our realities as women educators and how they shape our lives. (Greene, 1994). Our self-study has changed us. As the Arizona Group (2006) discovered as a result of their work on dialogue, “We stand in a different relationship to the world” (p. 62).

Co/autoethnography has the power to help us reach beyond the classroom. It insists we are larger than we seem. We have grappled seriously with the issue of whether we are the feminist teachers we think we are. We have looked closely at what we do but seen that we have step back to reflect on the larger more amorphous questions of identity and identification. It is by working through these issues that we gain understanding and a new approach to our practice.

We have to look outside the classroom to understand ourselves in it.

References


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