

AN INVESTIGATION OF
FORMATIVE AND SUMMATIVE
PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT METHODS

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the qualitative study titled *An Investigation of Formative and Summative Portfolio Assessment Methods*, is to explore the experiences of a self-described eclectic, primarily constructivist writing instructor who employs portfolio assessment methods in post-secondary writing classes taught to pre or in-service writing teachers. This Action Research study focuses retrospectively on the experiences of the instructors' formative and summative assessment of post-secondary writing portfolios.

The study also explores theoretical grounding of which educators are often not consciously aware and adds insight into the existing body of knowledge on portfolio assessment practices.

The research question is as follows:

How does a post-secondary writing instructor employ formative and summative portfolio assessment methods within a constructivist writing community and how does s/he describe the teaching/learning relationship that consequently develops?

The goal of the study is to explore in depth one instructor's experiences in post-secondary writing courses. I used the following questions as a guideline.

- to discover how the instructor uses a formative portfolio assessment process of teaching to positively affect the development of writerly skills in a constructivist writing community
- to discover how the instructor uses summative portfolio assessment of writing to provide accountable end-of-term numerical ranking of student achievement for educational institutions
- to describe the perspective of a constructivist writing instructor on the use of formative and summative portfolio assessment practices at the post-secondary level
- to discover the effect formative and summative processes and the constructivist writing community has on the teacher/student relationship

Upon analysis of the interview transcripts, I found that teaching, for my participant, is a colourful tapestry that stands alone as her well-crafted teaching practice, but can also be viewed as 4 distinct panels that fit seamlessly together. These four themes are:

1. Portfolio evaluation of writing provides for the Constructivist conditions for learning as identified by Driscoll (2000).

2. Portfolio evaluation is most effective when built on a foundation of Community within a group of writing students.
3. Portfolio evaluation promotes balanced transactional experiences that result in transformation for both student and teacher.
4. Portfolio evaluation of writing, as a teaching practice, shows promise for the successful education of marginalized students.

I also found that this research has only rippled the surface of a pool of anecdotal knowledge that invites full immersion. I am drawn to further exploration, discussion, development, implementation and assessment of models of formative evaluation that will benefit our students of writing. To this end I have included recommendations for further study specifically aimed at exploring the promising practices of portfolio evaluation for marginalized peoples, most particularly First Nations, Métis and Inuit students, at various levels of education, including primary, secondary and post-secondary levels.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Background

During the 28 years since completing my undergraduate degree in Education, I taught children and adults in various private capacities as well as within primary and secondary school organizations across the province of Saskatchewan. A few years ago I assisted Bill Boyle (Now and Forever; Crossbar) to teach private adult screenwriting courses in a non-institutional setting in Saskatoon. This experience inspired me to develop a screenwriting course of study, titled *A Primer in Content Creation: Screenwriting* (Callele, 2004), for use at post-secondary institutions such as universities and film schools.

While researching appropriate evaluation methods for this post-secondary course of screenwriting instruction, I became aware of the strength of my own theoretical grounding in constructivist philosophies. I soon realized that the tint of the constructivist lens, through which I view education, coloured all aspects of course development including the implementation of the course and all attendant student assessment necessary for post-secondary institutions. I reasoned that constructivist assessment methods, suitable for the evaluation of post-secondary institutional narrative writing genres, could also be applied to screenwriting intended for the silver screen. I needed to learn about these methods and I chose to research them for my thesis.

While I explored the avenues of research open to me, I conducted a pre-study that consisted of a series of informal interviews. I interviewed Bill Boyle for whom I worked as an educational assistant and Linda Richards who had extensive experience teaching writing in many institutions to many age-groups. I found that identifying the theoretical grounding of their practice was something that neither instructor had ever chosen to do. This mirrored my own experience. They taught with the methods that worked for their practice without any conscious thought into the theoretical influences that may have shaped these choices. Both instructors used a version of portfolio evaluation that included peer critique as well as instructor feedback. They used constructivist methods, but would not have described them as such. These findings inspired me to create a qualitative action research study through which I would interview one instructor in depth. The study would

explore portfolio evaluation from an instructor perspective and report how his/her teaching practice was affected by unique lived experiences over time.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of a self-described eclectic, primarily constructivist, writing instructor who employed portfolio assessment methods in post-secondary writing classes taught to pre or in-service writing teachers. The study focused retrospectively on the experiences of the instructor's formative and summative assessment of post-secondary writing portfolios.

This study also explored the theoretical grounding of one educator, how it developed and changed over the period of a lengthy career and added insight into the existing body of knowledge on portfolio assessment practices. It provided me with time-tested, theory-based formative and summative assessment methods from which I can develop my own assessment tools for future screenwriting course evaluation.

Research Question

How does a post-secondary writing instructor employ formative and summative portfolio assessment methods within a constructivist writing community and how does s/he describe the teaching/learning relationship that consequently develops?

Research Goals

The goal of this study was to explore in depth one instructor's experiences in post-secondary writing courses.

- to discover how the instructor used a formative portfolio assessment process of teaching to positively affect the development of writerly skills in a constructivist writing community
- to discover how the instructor used summative portfolio assessment of writing to provide accountable end-of-term numerical ranking of student achievement for educational institutions
- to describe the perspective of a constructivist writing instructor on the use of formative and summative portfolio assessment practices at the post-secondary level
- to discover the effect of formative and summative processes and the constructivist writing community on the teacher/student relationship

Delimitations of the Study

Many issues that may affect the evaluation of writing have been excluded from this study.

- This study did not address gender issues or personality traits as being factors that affect portfolio assessment.
- This study did not discuss the genre of the writing in progress, the writing style of the author or the ultimate choice to submit certain pieces of work to the portfolio during the summative phase of the course.
- This study did not address variance in base-level knowledge about the craft prior to taking the course. It was assumed that the writer progressed and became successful at their own level, regardless of their background and not in comparison to the rest of the class.
- This study did not explore the perspective of the student.

The choice to exclude these factors was due to time and the scope of the study. These issues would be valuable to explore in further studies on the assessment of writing.

Contribution of the Study

This study expanded on the sparse existing scholarly research on portfolio assessment. It connected the literature on portfolios to research on constructivist methodology and encouraged implementation of this knowledge into pre and in-service, writing-teacher education. It was expected that the results of this study will contribute to the wider discussion on the teaching, learning and assessment of post-secondary writing genres.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The pre-interview with Linda Richards eventually became the clay with which I fashioned the ultimate direction of my study. She had extensive experience with portfolio-based writing courses and, though she would never have described her teaching philosophies as constructivist in nature, it became evident to me that constructivism informs every step of her teaching practice. The passionate, generous and focused teaching philosophies that she outlined for me enticed me to learn more. It was in response to this paradigm-altering interview that I decided to explore what it is that constructivist teachers do in their classrooms and how that affects their evaluation of student writing and their interaction with their students. I perched on the tip of the bobbing iceberg of constructivist thought and began to investigate the massive belief system below the water line.

Constructivists have stated that education should be learner-based and that “knowledge must develop and continue to change with the activity of the learner” (Driscoll, 2000, p. 379). There was agreement that “learning is a meaning-making and constructive process” (Gambell, 2001, p. 188), that the “constructivist approach implies that educators can more actively encourage students to construct meaning” (Gambell, 1999, p. 7) and Gilbert (1989) recommended that teachers “respect the experiences” the student brings to school. It was believed that these student experiences create the base supporting the scaffold of all additional learning. Kohn (1986) identified what he called “the constructivist position”.

The teachers role is to stimulate a child’s curiosity, to facilitate the process of playing with ideas and constructing meaning, and to aid in the development of intellectual and social skills. The goal is to get the student to develop an intrinsic, enduring commitment to this process (and to working successfully with others), to take responsibility for her learning and her behaviour. (p. 219)

Similar constructivist beliefs were echoed in the writings of Hamp-Lyons (2002), Gilbert (1989), Robinson (2000) and Lensmire (1998), the interviews I conducted with Linda

Richards (personal communication, March 19, 2004) and Bill Boyle (personal communication, March 19, 2004), and in my own teaching experiences.

Writing assessment practices during the last half of the 20th century moved through three distinct periods. According to Yancey (1999), from 1950-1970, purely objective testing was the norm, being replaced during 1970-1986 by holistic scoring of timed writing. The third of three waves, of latter 20th century writing evaluation, is portfolio assessment, which has displaced the others since 1986 (Yancey, 1999). Hamp-Lyons (2002) offered that “there is little disagreement that the last 15 years of the twentieth century turned the attention of writing assessment specialists...to portfolios as a fruitful form of assessment” (p. 10). Elbow (1994) defined the word portfolio as “nothing but a folder, a pouch – an emptiness: a collection device and not a form of assessment...but portfolios lend themselves to assessment” (Elbow, 1994, p. 40). Roberta Camp and Denise Levine (1991) mirrored the world of art by suggesting that portfolios presented “a demonstration of the range and quality of the writer’s work – most typically drawing on examples of only the best of a writer’s work.” (p. 196). It was in the assessment of the range and quality of student work that I have been most interested. I postulated that the use of formative and summative portfolio assessment opens the door to process-oriented, authentic, developmental evaluation, without jeopardizing the constructive alliance between student and teacher.

In the past, I had never consciously identified the epistemological assumptions on which I base the methods I employ to teach writing; with every word read, I began to do so. According to Duffy and Cunningham (1996) “...theories provide their own lens into the world, with each theory providing a different lens (or perspective)” (p. 172). Duffy and Cunningham (1996) continued by suggesting that these grounding assumptions are the “fundamental assumptions underlying our conception of the teaching-learning process” (p. 171). They were “always assumed”, (and lead to) “...demonstrably different goals, strategies, and embodiments of instruction...” (Duffy and Cunningham, 1996, p. 171). It appeared to me that every decision an educator made, with respect to methods of instruction and assessment, depended on these grounding assumptions, whether they realized it or not.

I accepted that over a period of nearly three decades I have increasingly been viewing the education of writers through a constructivist lens without consciously being aware of it and it is not a stretch to assume that others teach without consciously acknowledging this theoretical basis as well. Although I realized that many evaluation methods that result in numerical grades for institutions are not constructivist in nature, I assumed that many constructivist beliefs do guide the ongoing assessment that results in these grades. It was Driscoll (2000), whose writings held up a mirror to the multitude of approaches that comprise my teaching philosophy. I found that my teaching practice had, over time, developed a distinctive constructivist design. To frame this study in constructivism I turned to the publications that inspired my research.

Cognitive Constructivism

Driscoll (2000) stated that, within constructivist approaches, “learners ... are not empty vessels waiting to be filled but rather active organisms seeking meaning” (p. 376). Driscoll (2000) also asserts that “...knowledge is invented and reinvented as the child develops and interacts with the world surrounding her” (p. 188). This is the basis of how people learn and is of foundational importance to constructivist thought. Many other researchers have echoed similar findings. Duffy and Cunningham (1996) described learning as being a shared responsibility where students are considered active participants in their learning. Moffett (1968) identified similar beliefs when he contended that the writer always has personal reasons to write, in order to “get certain effects on a definite audience” (p.193). The writing student’s valuable experience is brought to the classroom and the learning objectives developed from the student’s own agenda contribute heavily to the learning that takes place.

Duffy and Cunningham (1996) provided a unique perspective from which to view constructivism. They stated: “The term constructivism has come to serve as an umbrella term for a wide diversity of views...(with the) ...general view that (1) learning is an active process of constructing rather than acquiring knowledge, and (2) instruction is a process of supporting that construction rather than communicating knowledge” (p.171). Constructivists accommodated the view that learning is based on the activity in context. Duffy and Cunningham (1996) stated “Rather than the content domain sitting as central, with activity and the “rest” of the context serving a supporting role, the entire gestalt is

integral to what is learned”(p. 171). Duffy and Cunningham (1996) quoted Von Glaserfield. “Instead of presupposing knowledge is a representation of what exists, knowledge is a mapping, in the light of human experience, of what is feasible” (1989, 134).” (p. 172). They continued by suggesting that the educator should be seen to “understand and challenge the learner’s thinking” (Duffy and Cunningham, 1996, p. 172) and to offer the student a state of puzzlement, or zone of proximal development as Vygotsky (1934-1987) identified it. Whitehead (1929) presented a similar view over 80 years ago: “Education is the acquisition of the art of the utilization of knowledge....” (p.4). In order to achieve this acquisition, Duffy and Cunningham suggested that the learner is simply trying “to make sense of the world....when the learner’s expectations are not met, and he/she must resolve the discrepancy between what was expected and what was actually encountered” (p. 175).

Kohn (1993) identified the three C’s of motivation which could be referred to as the three C’s of constructivism. Kohn wrote of collaboration, content and choice. Collaboration, not competition, he said, allows for student and teacher to work together and learning to be accomplished. “It is in the dialogue that the learning is found, not in the isolated absorption of facts.” (p. 214) Content, for Kohn, was about “things worth knowing” (p. 214) that were valuable to the student so that learning may be internalized. The tasks must be kept proximal to the ability of the student and just beyond their current skill. Choice must bring “autonomy in the Classroom” (p. 214). Students needed enough independence to decide what and how learning was to take place.

Driscoll (2000), identified a series of “constructivist conditions for learning” (p. 382) that correlate well with the aforementioned research. The conditions were as follows:

“Embed learning in complex, realistic, and relevant environments”
(Driscoll, 2000, p. 382).

This task encourages “problem-solving skills to be maximally facilitated” (Driscoll, 2000). Problem-solving skills develop when the student is faced with multiple learning goals that are complex and scaffold or build on one another (Driscoll, 2000), thereby increasing the depth of learning. Duffy and Cunningham (1996) identified “the need to situate (e.g., Brown, Collins & Duguid, 1989) or anchor (CTGV, 1992) learning

in authentic, relevant, and/or realistic contexts” (p. 179). An educator, who acts as a tour guide, rather than lecturer, facilitates the attainment of these goals. The educator points out the necessary sights as the learners progress along their own personal learning trajectories. In the constructivist model, teaching is not allowed to get in the way of the students’ learning. By using their learning to solve problems, students come to see the relevance of attaining smaller self-identified learning goals, as they progress toward their own larger goal.

“Provide for social negotiation as an integral part of learning”

(Driscoll, 2000, p. 382).

Duffy and Cunningham (1996) note that “...learning is an inherently social-dialogical process. Hence, our reason for using groups is to promote the dialogical interchange and reflexivity.” (p.187). Social negotiation allows the writer to learn to write by writing and testing the effectiveness of this writing by sharing it with groups of peers (Moffett, 1968). The learner then reworks their work developmentally, based on the feedback offered by themselves, their peers and the writing coach. Moffett wrote that “Feedback is any information a learner receives as a result of his trial.” (1968, p. 188) The trial is submitting work to be reviewed and the feedback can take the form of “his own perception of what he has done” (Moffett, 1968, p. 189), peer review (Driscoll, 2000), or the response of a teacher (Driscoll, 2000), (Moffett, 1968). It has been reported that this feedback can also cause the transformation of students, peers and teacher (Pea, 1994; Edelson, Pea, & Gomez, 1996), rather than causing only the transmission of information (Driscoll 2000). Driscoll (2000) explains the value of this process: “dialogue in a social setting is required for students to come to understand another’s view. Listening, or reading privately, is not sufficient to challenge the individual’s egocentric thinking.” (p. 385). Kohn (1986) advocated cooperative learning and his studies showed that students learn more effectively when allowed to bounce ideas off of each other. This means that students of writing should learn to write more effectively when their peers edit their writing.

Rogoff (1994) defined learning communities as places wherein “learning occurs as people participate in shared endeavors with others” (p. 209). This concept mirrors that of “joint cognition, where the tutor provides support or scaffolding for the individual until

the individual appropriates the knowledge or skill brings it under his conscious control for his own use” (Duffy and Cunningham, 1996). It also reflects an apprenticeship methodology within constructivist writing instruction that is clearly an indication of a shift from teacher as expert to teacher as facilitator. As Duffy and Cunningham (1996) wrote: “We no longer teach, but rather we coach – we have moved from the sage on the stage to the guide on the side” (p. 184). In this constructivist view of writing education, it follows that “the learner may not mimic the coach, but the deviations are knowledgeable deviations that the learner can defend and the coach can respect” (Duffy and Cunningham, 1996, p. 185).

Kohn (1986) quoted Shlomo Sharan, who spoke at the second annual Cooperative Learning conference in 1986 and could have spoken these words about education within the constructivist ideology rather than using them to identify these concepts as cooperative learning.

“Cooperative Learning [Constructivism]...gives students an active role in deciding about, planning, directing and controlling the content and pace of their learning activities. It changes the students’ role from recipients of information to seekers, analyzers and synthesizers of information. It transforms pupils from listeners into talkers and doers, from powerless pawns into participant citizens empowered to influence decisions about what they must do in school.” (p. 222)

“Support multiple perspectives and the use of multiple modes of representation”
(Driscoll, 2000, p. 382).

“Revisiting the same material, at different times, in rearranged contexts, for different purposes, and from different conceptual perspectives is essential for attaining the goals of advanced knowledge acquisition” (Spiro et al., 1991, p.28). Duffy and Cunningham (1996) offered a useful explanation: “...we tend to assume that others see things in roughly the same way we do, and that our world view is constructed as largely invisible. Providing experience that elevates our world view to a conscious level typically entails bringing up alternative views for comparison....” (p. 178).

Driscoll (2000) recommended the educational employment of sights, scents, tastes, tactile objects and sounds when she stated that “viewing the same content through

different sensory modes (such as visual, auditory, or tactile) again enables different aspects of it to be seen” (pp. 387-388). Duffy and Cunningham (1996) contributed valuable insight: “...all distinctly human instances of learning are constructions situated within a context that employs some form of mediational means, tools, and/or signs” (p. 180). For synthesis of the multiplicity in perspective and representation, I also turned to Duffy and Cunningham (1996): “...these means are very reminiscent of the multiple intelligences proposed by Howard Gardner (e.g., 1993): linguistic, musical, logical-mathematical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal and intrapersonal” (p. 180). *“Encourage ownership in learning”* (Driscoll, 2000, p. 382).

Learning must meet the needs of the individual student who, in the constructivist model, does not passively accept the agenda of the teacher. The student is then in control of what, when, and how they learn (Driscoll, 2000; Hannafin, 1992). The teacher is most valuable when seen, by the student, as a facilitator, not an expert. Gilbert (1989) considered “text ‘ownership’ and student ‘authority’ over texts” (p. 198). Graves (1981) wrote that “Most writers rent their pieces and the teachers own them” (p. 7). In constructivist theory, the student owns their writing and is responsible not only for working alone, or with peers and teacher to assess the state of the writing, but also to take responsibility for any renovations that need to be made.

When learners own the direction of their learning by choosing their own topics (Gilbert, 1989), they take responsibility for the depth and breadth of it as well. The classroom becomes learner-oriented and the student chooses which problems to solve, in what order, and “the reasons become clear as to why information and skills should be learned...” (Driscoll, 2000, p. 389). In writing education, the solving of one problem often reveals another and the writing process continues in a cyclical manner until the learner is satisfied. It was clear that “the teacher may have some specific learning objectives in mind” (Driscoll 2000, p. 380), but should operate as a tour-guide, pointing out the sights that must be seen, but not trying to control the gaze of the tourist. Dodd (1997) stated that “students do their best work when they feel some ownership of the task” (p. 268) and Gilbert (1989) wrote that the teaching of students is “relatively incidental to this process” (p. 98) once this state of personal ownership is achieved.

“Nurture self-awareness of the knowledge construction process”

(Driscoll, 2000, p. 383).

Once a student attains a level of reflexivity, or the awareness of their own role in the learning process, they can become capable of effective self-assessment. To do so effectively, employs a process of editing that depends on a deeper level of understanding than simple mechanics. Because rewriting makes up a large portion of the total writing process, this skill is invaluable. Driscoll, 2000, summed up this type of understanding: “when learners come to realize how a particular set of assumptions or worldview shapes their knowledge, they are free to explore what may result from an alternate set of assumptions or a different worldview” (p. 390).

To build this self-awareness, or reflexive metacognition, students are asked to edit their own and their peers’ work, to act as resources for each other, and to teach each other skills that they, themselves, have already learned. Vygotsky (1934/1987) and Perkins (1991b) argued that “it is the job of the constructivist teacher...to hold the learners in their ‘zone of proximal development’ by providing just enough help and guidance, but not too much” (p. 20). All writing is like an expressive dance between both artist and technician and the constructivist approach encourages a metacognitive awareness of this process.

Based on my research, I suggest that the evaluation of student writing using portfolios can be identified as a constructivist method of assessment. When the complementary strategies of formative and summative assessment are employed, portfolio use allows the student to actively construct their own meaning. The symbiotic use of formative and summative evaluation allows ongoing constructive, non-adversarial assessment to take place during the entire teaching term, and also provides objective student ranking with accountable numerical grading, to be carried out at the terms’ end.

Exploring Assessment

At post-secondary institutions, numerical evaluation of student work is accepted as necessary. This belief was illustrated by Broadfoot (1979): “assessment practices are one of the clearest indices of the relationship between school and society since they provide for communication between the two” (p. 11). Even prior to entry into post-secondary institutions, evaluation is an issue, as one considers “entrance requirements to

post-secondary institutions and other tertiary-level decisions based on grades” (Gambell, 1999, p. 9). Robinson (2000), noted that assessment “provides students with qualifications...and by virtue of their assessment, teachers can limit or open opportunities for students” (p. 255).

When a certificate or degree, from an educational institution with a respected reputation, opens school or career opportunities for the recipient, it also makes this assessment “an implicitly political act” (Hamp-Lyons, 2002, p. 5) that sets students and teachers up as adversaries (Elbow, 1994). This adversarial relationship does not follow constructivist theory; however, without an assessment system in place, institutions would not be able to rank students and justify the awarding of scholarships, certifications and degrees. It is this tension between the necessity for ranking of students for institutional purposes and the employment requirement of teachers assisting students to improve in their writing that makes the student vs. teacher, an adversarial model, less than adequate for effective education.

Evaluation choices reflect the dichotomy within the educator’s role: “it’s inherent in a teacher’s job to try to accept and welcome all students, yet also to try to reject those who are not worthy” (Elbow, 1994, p. 40). All teachers are expected, by the institutions they represent, to reject or advance students using their chosen grading systems. High-stakes assessment makes it essential that the grading systems be not only both quantifiable and accountable to the institution for which they are carried out, but also clearly indicative of the body of work the student has performed for the course in question (Linda Richards, personal communication, March 19, 2004). This is a tall order for any evaluation system to deliver.

Kohn (1993) weighed in with numerous concerns that show he is clearly not a proponent of grading and the inherent atmosphere of competition that grades produce.

Grades dilute the pleasure that a student experiences on successfully completing a task. They encourage cheating and strain the relationship between a teacher and student. They reduce a student’s sense of control over his own fate and can induce a blind conformity to others’ wishes – sometimes to the point that students are alienated from their own preferences and don’t even know who they are. (p. 204)

This discussion of the value of grading and competition is valuable, but it is not the focus of this thesis. Suffice it to say that grading is presently considered a necessary task for educators at the educational institutions with which I am concerned. I accept the assumption that for these institutions, grading is simply a method of sorting students into categories "...on the basis of their performance, which is useful for college admission and job placement." (Kohn 1993, p. 201) Presently the Evergreen Curriculum for English Language Arts, as set out by Saskatchewan Learning curriculum guides, requires graded evaluation. The guide defined evaluation in this way.

Evaluation is the process of making judgements on the basis of the information collected relative to the learning objectives. Assessment is the process of gathering the information to make the judgements for evaluation. Grading involves assigning a mark as a means of conveying the judgement. Reporting is conveying the results of the judgements made. In addition to determining student progress, evaluation communicates the message that a program and each of its components are valid and significant. (Saskatchewan Learning 2007)

"Traditionally, assessment is an activity undertaken after learning is accomplished: Communicate some knowledge, then test to see if the knowledge has been successfully stored by the learner...." (Duffy & Cunningham 1996, p. 186). In my teaching experience, I have found this fill-the-vessel, then measure-the-quality-of-timed-regurgitation method of evaluation to produce a result that is less than optimum, especially for writing assessment. Consequently, I have embraced research "introducing such terms as performance assessment, portfolios, authentic assessment...the process of building a technology of assessment based on constructivist principles" (Duffy & Cunningham 1996, p. 186).

Complementary Forms of Evaluation

Robinson (2000), identified developmental evaluation as being diagnostic or "formative assessment, those things that teachers do...to gain immediate feedback on what students are learning" (p. 256). The Center for Effective Teaching and Learning, or CETal (2004), similarly identified the formative aspect of evaluation. Formative

evaluation has been identified as “prospective”, to “analyze strengths and weaknesses towards improving”, to “develop habits”, to “shape direction of professional development” and provide “feedback” (CETal, 2004). CETal also noted a complementary aspect and calls it summative evaluation, which is “primarily retrospective”, “document achievement”, based on “documenting habits”, showing “results”, and is based on “evidence” (CETal, 2004). Saskatchewan Learning indicated that formative and summative evaluations are meant to operate in tandem.

Formative evaluation should be conducted continuously throughout the course. It is used to improve instruction and learning and to keep both students and teachers aware of the course objectives and the students’ progress in achieving those objectives. The results of formative evaluation are analyzed and used to focus the efforts of the teacher and students.

Summative evaluation occurs at the end of a unit or program. It is used with formative evaluation to determine student achievement and program effectiveness. Summative evaluation should form only part of students’ grades. An appropriate balance of diagnostic, formative, and summative evaluation should be used. Saskatchewan Learning 2007)

Both formative and summative assessment practices assist in maintaining a “transactional, response-oriented curriculum rationale” (Robinson, 2000, p. 261), instead of accepting the traditional, transmissional, information-oriented rationale (Robinson, 2000), that encourages adversarial student/teacher interaction.

Formative portfolio assessment

In constructivist pedagogy, it has been considered essential that the teacher be seen as an ally, rather than an adversary (Elbow, 1994), a facilitator, rather than an expert (Boyle, personal communication, March 19, 2004) and a guide, rather than a taskmaster (Richards, personal communication, March 19, 2004). Learning must be student-oriented, diagnostic and focussed on the question “what do you need to know in order to write this better?” (Richards, personal communication March 19, 2004). Formative assessment in screenwriting allows both teachers and learners to be focussed on the writing process,

rather than on the grading process. It allows the learners to develop “the abilities to self-assess and to provide constructive feedback to team members...this is not only an assessment process but also a learning process.” (Duffy & Cunningham, 1996, p. 194).

Elbow (1994) offered an explanation. “Portfolios reward students for using good writerly process: to explore a topic in discussion and exploratory writing; to complicate their thinking; to allow for perplexity and getting lost; to get feedback; to revise; and to collaborate” (Elbow, 1994, p. 41). These techniques have been echoed by Richards (personal communication, March 19, 2004) and clarified by Jones (1997). Jones expected her students to show that they do indeed “follow through on any writing they undertake...including the various drafts, self-assessments, peer responses, and teacher response is included in the portfolio” (Jones, 1997, p. 255).

At the beginning of the term, students should be provided with a rubric or set of criteria that incorporates all of the course requirements and indicates the marking scheme to be used for assessment (Richards, personal communication, March 19, 2004). Every writing draft reviewed by students or teacher should be subject to these guidelines and any conferencing, whether weekly or less often, is also based on this criterion.

Saskatchewan Learning echoed these guidelines:

Rubrics are scoring tools that list criteria for the assessment and evaluation of a particular task. Throughout this guide, sample rubrics have been provided to explain what is expected in an activity or assignment, and to state different levels of performance. These rubrics can be used by both teachers and students. Teachers can use these rubrics to plan and guide their teaching and assessment of student performance. By listing the criteria for evaluation, teachers make their expectations clear and show students what is important. Students can use them to guide peer and self-assessments. Rubrics provide students with feedback about their strengths and areas in need of improvement. (Saskatchewan Learning, 2007)

Writing portfolio assessment practices have been strongly advocated by Gilbert (1994), Gaughan (1999), Lensmire, (1998), Richardson (1991), and Phelps (2000). However, they all cautioned against teachers actively, or accidentally, using their responses to direct student revisions or to shift attention from the student voice to their

own. Lensmire (1998) summed up this concern: “encouragement is sometimes not far from coercion in the classroom given the unequal power relations among teachers and students” (p. 274). Richardson (2000) also found that students have been conditioned to respond to teacher responses, on their un-graded work, as if the suggestions were orders. This is because “students are convinced that teachers know the “correct” way to write, or at least the way they must write to succeed in class” (p. 127). “The consequence of this view... is that the student’ inquiry is not honored....learners quickly discover that the goal is not inquiry or exploration of a domain but rather discovering what the teacher wants....” (Duffy & Cunningham, 1996, 182). If written teacher responses are non-directive, non-judgmental and sometimes offered in an open-ended question format, students are less likely to interpret them as demanding conformity or evidencing oppression (Richardson, 2000). Richardson (2000) also modified the formative conferencing feedback process to include being “willing to suggest possible solutions to writing problems after listening to students’ efforts to articulate their intentions” (p. 138).

Elbow (1994) identified evidence of collegiality to be the greatest benefit of the formative aspects of portfolio assessment. Teachers should “be ally to students for virtually all of the semester: students don’t need to fight us as the enemy, because the more help they get from us, the better their portfolios will be and the higher their grades” (Elbow, 1994, p. 41). This may be the single most powerful indication that formative assessment practices will continue to receive positive responses from both teachers and students in the future.

Summative portfolio assessment

Jones (1997) stated that “quality counts, getting finished and meeting some kind of deadline counts too” (p. 256). I add that meeting the criteria of excellence in writing, and being rewarded for it with good grades, counts as well. This is the basis behind summative portfolio assessment. The buck stops at the end of the course and at the moment it stops, teachers “don’t have to hold back on critical standards since we’ve already given students so many opportunities to improve their work” (Elbow, 1994, p. 41). During summative assessment, “portfolios introduce the dimension of time” (Elbow 1994, p. 40). Portfolios also allow teachers to “get inside their learning...to know what concepts, strategies, and skills matter most” (Romano, 1994, p. 73). Summative

evaluation that focuses on the product of the students' labours should include input from both the student and teacher. It should also be recorded in an objective manner to justify, to both student and educational institution, the grade earned by the student.

Constructivist approaches emphasize student input, and even in the final evaluation of their portfolio, it has been recommended that the student have a voice (Richards personal communication, March 19, 2004). Richards and Jones (1997) both instructed their students to build their final portfolio, by including self-chosen pieces of writing and the drafts that preceded these final pieces. A preamble, or letter of introduction to the portfolio, was used to set the context of the writing and identify the strengths and weaknesses that have been identified during the term. Jones (1997) maintained "each individual student should be challenged; and no one is in a better position than the students themselves to know whether they have been challenged and whether they have achieved their goals" (p. 255). Jones and Richards both asked the students to evaluate their own work, justify their grade in writing, and hand it in with their portfolio to be assessed as part of the teachers' final evaluation.

Summative portfolio scoring must be consistent with the criteria provided to the students at the beginning of the course and must include numerical grades if these are required in order to conform to the directives that individual institutions provide for their faculty. In summative portfolio evaluation, the final score provided is a sophisticated distillation of much more than a few test and assignment scores. In this fashion, the scores will also be accountable, justifiable and indicative of student achievement over the time period of the course.

Saskatchewan Learning indicated the following recommendations in their portfolio evaluation guidelines:

English language arts portfolios can be an effective way for students, teachers, and parents to observe student progress over a period of time. Because they are purposeful collections of student work, portfolios can serve as the basis for evaluation of student effort, progress, and achievements in English language arts. (2007)

Jones (1997) quoted an anonymous student to indicate that her students appreciated portfolio self-assessment. “The quality of the writing has improved...self-assessment is very important...it helps to develop your awareness of the writing process and shows you what you have really attempted and where you have succeeded...I became more interested in probing my ideas and developing them beyond just a simple exploration” (p. 263). Weiser (1994) added, “student evaluations about grading fairness in general and the portfolio system specifically have been positive” (p. 228). Finally, Richards summed it up by indicating that her students’ evaluations are astute and assist her own evaluation process (personal communication, March 19, 2004).

Definitions of Key Concepts

Cognitive Constructivist theory

Duffy and Cunningham (1996) stated: “The term constructivism has come to serve as an umbrella term for a wide diversity of views...(with the) ...general view that (1) learning is an active process of constructing rather than acquiring knowledge, and (2) instruction is a process of supporting that construction rather than communicating knowledge” (p.171). They described that learning is based on the activity in context. Driscoll (2000) contrasts constructivism with the objectivist view of education, rejecting the suggestion that the learner is a passive vessel being filled with information and identifying the active learner, who builds knowledge on previous knowledge structures, as the key attribute. “Rather than the content domain sitting as central, with activity and the “rest” of the context serving a supporting role, the entire gestalt is integral to what is learned” (Duffy and Cunningham, 1996, p. 171).

Formative assessment

Robinson (2000), identified developmental evaluation as being diagnostic or “formative assessment, those things that teachers do...to gain immediate feedback on what students are learning” (p. 256). The Center for Effective Teaching and Learning, or CETal (2004), similarly identified the formative aspect of evaluation. Formative evaluation was described as “prospective”, to “analyze strengths and weaknesses towards improving”, to “develop habits”, to “shape direction of professional development” and provide “feedback” (CETal, 2004).

Formative evaluation should be conducted continuously throughout the course. It is used to improve instruction and learning and to keep both students and teachers aware of the course objectives and the students' progress in achieving those objectives. (Sask Learning, 2007)

Portfolio

Saskatchewan Learning (2007) described portfolios as “purposeful collections of student work...[that] can serve as the basis for evaluation of student effort, progress, and achievements in English language arts.” Roberta Camp and Denise Levine (1991) defined a portfolio as a collection device that has been borrowed from the world of art. It is:

...a demonstration of the range and quality of the writer's work – most typically drawing on examples of only the best of a writer's work. However, in the present pedagogical climate, a portfolio of writing will probably show as well some evidence of processes and strategies used to generate writing, of the writer's awareness of those processes and strategies, and of the writer's development over a period of time. In these cases, a portfolio will include a variety of finished pieces of writing and at least one piece accompanied by the brainstorming, notes, sketches of ideas, and early drafts that preceded the final product. In addition, it will probably include some record of the student's experience in looking back at his or her work, both for processes and strategies used in writing and for development over time. (p. 196).

Summative assessment

CETal identified summative evaluation as assessment that is “primarily retrospective”, “document achievement”, “documenting habits”, shows “results”, and is based on “evidence” (CETal, 2004). Saskatchewan Learning described it as end stage evaluation that “...occurs at the end of a unit or program. It is to be used with formative evaluation to determine student achievement and program effectiveness. Saskatchewan Learning (2007) recommended that “Summative evaluation should form only part of students' grades.”

Writerly process

Elbow (1994) identified writerly process: “to explore a topic in discussion and exploratory writing; to complicate their thinking; to allow for perplexity and getting lost; to get feedback; to revise; and to collaborate” (Elbow, 1994, p. 41).

Writing community

“In the simplest sense, communities are collections of individuals who are bound together for some reason, and these reasons define the boundaries of the communities” (Schwier, 2001, p. 5). Schwier (2001) also described a community as being “resilient”, “hospitable”, “multifaceted” and as having a “life-cycle”. Kohn (1996) defined communities as “...constructed over time by people with a common purpose who come to know and trust each other.” (p. 109) He identified a classroom as a community when “...it is a place in which students feel cared about and are encouraged to care about each other. They experience a sense of being valued and respected; the children matter to one another and to the teacher. They have come to think in plural; they feel connected to each other; they are part of an “us”. And, as a result of all this, they feel safe in their classes, not only physically but emotionally.” (Kohn 1996, pp. 101-102)

Using these descriptions, the constructivist writing classroom can be defined as a writing community. Moller (1998) added support to this belief by stating that a community’s “two prime functions are to provide (a) social reinforcement and (b) information exchange....by providing the learner with three different types of support: (a) academic, (b) intellectual, and (c) interpersonal” (p. 116). Rogoff (1994) added further definition when he wrote that learning communities can be described as places wherein “learning occurs as people participate in shared endeavors with others” (p. 209). I conclude that a learning community for writers could be identified as a writing community and such a community may occur in post-secondary writing classes.

Significance of the Study

This retrospective analysis is significant as action research because the instructor/participant can benefit. The participant may employ theoretical support for existing teaching strategies, adjust these strategies to include any recommendations suggested by the literature review and may use this study to build valuable course

constructions that could benefit future writing educators and students alike. This research confirms areas of competency, suggests areas that could benefit from improvements and identifies areas that could benefit from further exploration. The findings also inform teaching strategies that can be employed in the implementation of the course *A Primer in Content Creation: Screenwriting* (Callele, 2004) and to better accommodate post-secondary students in settings such as a university or film school.

Key Assumptions

A key assumption in this study was that the instructor participant was faithful to her practice when she indicated that she taught using a collection of constructivist methodologies. It was also assumed that the writing instructor chosen for this study was an educator of pre or in-service teachers with extensive experience in the use of formative and summative writing portfolio assessment. The final assumption for this research was that a writing community is fostered, during a term of writing study, by the interaction of the aforementioned constructivist teaching methods in this educators' post-secondary, pre-service, writing-teacher education program.

As expected the study explored the instructors' use of formative and summative writing portfolio assessment practices within a post-secondary writing community. The exploration of constructivist teaching methods was of secondary concern.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Context

Knowing that I wanted to do research on the evaluation of writing, I decided to do pre-interviews with those people involved in the processes of evaluating writing. The most obvious choice for me, someone employed by the film industry in Saskatchewan, was to interview those who write and sell their scripts in the industry and those who are the gate-keepers. The latter are those financiers, government agencies and producers who provide the money to get the screenwriters movies made. Although these interviews were illuminating, they missed informing my target. Reviewing my notes left me with the impression that only the attempt at selling one's work would truly allow evaluation of the work and even then, the only grading considered would be in an economic sense, by providing or failing to provide money to make films. This was a simple pass or fail grading system that would give a failing grade to all critically acclaimed work that was not a profit vehicle. This helped further my research not at all. The experience assisted me to close the doorway to the exploration of the non-academic evaluation of writing and follow another route. This adjustment mirrors what happens to writing in the real world, include writing for academic journals. Luckily there are always many paths to a single destination.

Continuing to explore possible research directions, I decided to conduct pre-interviews with two contrasting post-secondary educators. I chose one who taught screenwriting privately in Canada and one who taught writing and writing education for the University of Saskatchewan. I interviewed Bill Boyle and Linda Richards as reported in Chapter One. These two interviews directed my research towards its present location and informed my methodology. I wanted to collect data through informal interviews with one person; this led me to choose qualitative research methodology. I wanted my research to interpret lived experience shared as historical stories that built context to my participant's development as a teacher. This was best achieved through collecting conversational interview data. The lived experiences shared with me served as a foundation from which my participant and I constructed meaning from our dialogue. This

is an apt description of Action Research as used in a constructivist manner. Carr and Kremmis weigh in with this definition:

Action research is a form of self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants (teachers, students, or principals, for example) in social (including educational) situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of (a) their own social or educational practices, (b) their understanding of these practices, and (c) the situations (and institutions) in which these practices are carried out.

The participant was invited to offer data that included enquiry, self-reflection, as well as the subjective and objective analysis of same. My analysis and interpretation of this data lead to the opportunity for implementation of new methods of education and confirmation that existing methods fill the needs of the participant's students. As researcher, I was solidly situated within the study and understood that my subjectivity was not only built into the design of the study but expected in order to be best able to interpret findings in valuable ways for the participant.

This study was based on interviews with an experienced writing instructor from the College of Education in Saskatoon Saskatchewan. I chose an instructor who had been involved with portfolio assessment with a diverse group of students for a lengthy period of time. The participant taught elective writing courses, including various writing genres, to pre-service teachers since the year 2000. Although my participant self-identified as a "diagnostic educator" and described an eclectic collection of teaching strategies, her theoretical grounding appears to cover the constructivist ideals that satisfy my participant criteria. She was also genuinely interested in my research and very generous with her ideas and opinions.

Review of Interview Protocol

At the beginning of the interview process I reviewed the Letter of Consent with my participant and collected her signature. I identified the process as being a discovery of themes within her teaching experience and that the interviews would be dialogic, rather than conducted in a question and answer format. She was encouraged to expand the scope of our interviews to include issues that she felt were important even while covering the

questions I came prepared to ask of her. I emphasized that the interviews were to explore the use of portfolio assessment in her teaching, not to evaluate her teaching practice.

The interview protocol approved by the University of Saskatchewan Advisory Committee on Ethics in Behavioural Science Research appears in Appendix A. As required, the participant reviewed the transcripts of the interviews and authorized their use in this study. Additionally, the participant previewed her interview data as it appears in this document. The Committee on Ethics did not require her approval, but I allowed her to comment on the use of her data. I am satisfied that it is presented here in complete and valuable form.

Data Collection

I conducted semi-structured interviews in comfortable venues that the participant approved. The atmosphere was one that could have been characterized as a private space within a coffee shop where colleagues could meet in an informal manner. I believe that this informality benefited the collection of rich data that a formal office setting would not have supported. The interviews themselves could be described as collegial conversations and were designed to allow as much participant driven exploration as possible yet cover the territory of my prepared questions. I employed open-ended questions focused on the participants' retrospective analysis of transformational teaching experiences in a post-secondary writing community.

The interviews were audio-taped and consist of five hours of audio from four interviews during which the participant and researcher adequately dealt with the research question and subsequent goals. There was ample opportunity between the dates of the interviews for reflection on the part of my participant and myself. Each interview transcript was presented to my participant and reviewed prior to the next interview. This review allowed spiral interactivity, when the participant reviewed each transcript and modified portions when necessary, and encouraged follow-up questions and comments from my participant. The transcript review also allowed the participant and me to design the blueprints for the themes that were eventually constructed. Only once the transcripts were certified correct and signed by my participant did I begin analysis. Various hard copies of coursework and assessment tools were also captured and analyzed collaboratively by researcher and participant.

The transcripts of these interviews were coded and analyzed with the narrative assessment tool ATLAS.ti. Originally there were 31 codes many of which incorporated the actual descriptors used by my participant. Codes that related or overlapped were cross-referenced by ATLAS.ti. Repeated ideas emerged as categories and themes grew from concepts that began to dominate. The common strands, themes and patterns of the narrative began to present themselves and allow me to relate my findings with the research literature and to situate these threads of lived experiences within theoretical territory of my literature review.

Research Biases

I was well known to most prospective participants for this study as I may have taken classes from them, met them during my course of study at the College of Education or attended graduate level courses with them. As I had completed the necessary coursework for my Masters in Education, prospective participants did not have any authority over my research at this time, nor did I have any power over them. The participant selected was known to me and readily agreed to be involved with this action research study due to the possible positive knowledge sharing possibilities innate to a study like this.

This personal relationship with my participant assisted me during interviews to build the necessary rapport and ensure the richness, depth and breadth of the data collected during this qualitative study. However this personal relationship may also have affected the types of interview questions I used and the interpretations I made of the data collected and therefore possibly affected the reporting of the data. Subjectivity is part of the process of action research, however, so the value of the data is retained regardless.

My own constructivist leanings and positive experiences with portfolio assessment of writing may have biased me toward certain concerns and away from others that may have offered rich data as well. In my role as retrospective action-researcher, I was cognizant of the possibility of personal bias and tried not to allow my beliefs or expectations to negatively influence the collection, analysis or interpretation of the data.

Ethical Considerations

This study was conducted following the principles of the University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board. In order to protect the confidentiality

of the participant of this study, s/he is referred to only by the pseudonym L.M.. Readers of this study may be able to identify the participant due to the location of the study and familiarity to my research, however, the participant was informed of the possibility of identification when the participant signed the consent form. Transcripts of the interviews were approved by the participant prior to their use and were kept in confidence at all times. The participant benefited from the reciprocal nature of this research, as the participant was privy to the research findings.

CHAPTER FOUR: INSTRUCTOR PERSPECTIVE

Meeting the Participant

In this chapter, I describe the interview protocol and present the data that have been provided to me by my participant. I included quotations and observations where valuable and always tried to offer context as well. This is my research as I saw it in snapshot form. I realized that time and experience always affects one's perception, not only of the facts but also the interpretation of those facts. My research was ongoing and as such, this study became only a stop along the way. It was, however, a valuable stop.

My participant, known as L.M. presented as vivacious, generous of spirit and a charismatic human being. It was easy to envision her in the trusting community of her classroom, surrounded by chattering students totally engaged in their writing practice, their writing groups and the development of their own powerful stories. She was excited about our interviews and prepared to offer any assistance she could in order that her story, the story of the evolution of her portfolio evaluation teaching practice, could be shared with others who may benefit from her experience. I began by explaining the interview process and the interests that drove my research. I set the scene so that we could develop a rapport conducive to the sharing of knowledge, experiences and the grounding beliefs that would develop into the rich data describing her exploration of Portfolio Evaluation and its evolution in her teaching practice.

Participant History

L.M. was involved in portfolio evaluation as a high school student in an experimental program in Medicine Hat in 1966-67. She used portfolios as a teacher from 1973 as an English and Drama teacher in the K-12 educational system in Alberta and Saskatchewan, continuing in recent times as a writing and English instructor for the College of Education at the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. In total, L.M. had taught using the portfolio method of evaluation in some form for nearly 30 years. During that time L.M. used portfolio evaluation with children as young as Kindergarten students and as mature as adult learners. Her methods of evaluation evolved along with her development as a drama coach, as both writing instructor and writer and even as an equestrian instructor and learner. She estimated that she taught around 5000 students over her career to date and described the experience of teaching to be

transformational for her as well as for her students. L.M. found that teaching pre-service and in-service teachers in a university setting allowed her to make the largest contribution to education and being involved in my research allowed her practice to continue evolving with any new input that was made available. L.M. summed up her strong belief in evaluating using portfolios:

I don't think there's any stopping this. I think that portfolio is the way for people to look at the progress of their writing and I think that's everybody who's writing. ... I think portfolio works.

L.M. described the original portfolio that she created as a student in 1966-67 as having little developmental value. "We simply did things as a rough draft, did things as a good draft and tucked it into our portfolio." But once she began to use portfolios in her teaching practice, the evolution of form and function came fast and continued to evolve catalyzed by the specific needs of her students and the educational institutions for which she taught and the writing groups to which she belonged. The biggest difference over the format of portfolios during the first few years was having the student commit to:

...reworking the pieces until we felt that they were complete....that's the difference that I have with my students writing whether it's the high school level or the university level or in writing group which is a group of adult women who share writing together every two weeks.

In 1973, at Hanna Alberta, L.M. found herself in the position in which many new English and writing teachers find themselves. She was deep in piles of marking; she was overwhelmed by piles of marking. This was the first indication that changes needed to be made to how L.M. handled her evaluations. She reflected on this period in her teaching practice.

As a young teacher I didn't know how to control the amount of marking there was. I just always had a table stacked as high as I could stack piles. I was always marking, marking, marking. And if anything, I was really controlling everything that came my way.

Catalysts for Change

Time management was the original problem that encouraged L.M. to examine portfolio use in her classroom and teaching Drama inspired an approach that was novel at the time. L.M. began to use portfolios in her English and writing classes and based their design on the continuum of learning that she saw in her drama classes.

... I could look at a performance every day and see a process. And it was the drama process that really helped hone what I was doing and looking for. Here's the topic that's happening for students and here's a very creative outlet for students producing improvisational pieces from that.

The second challenge was clear when L.M. taught a "class of primarily First Nations students who had all failed the class before at least once". She struggled with the question of how a teacher can create an atmosphere that encourages socially and culturally marginalized students to find success in writing and in their school life.

They were fascinating students, but with them, whenever I gave them a topic for writing, their answers weren't anything that I expected them to be. ...they had such a different cultural background.

L.M.'s personal learning curve took an unexpected turn when she "asked the students to write about the most influential person in their life...." This assignment opened the floodgates for these students and the writing produced in turn opened her eyes to the First Nations reality in her school. She related her experience to me.

Many of the people they wrote about were their peers. So here were high school students who had lost peers who were hitch-hiking home and were killed on the highway, or drug overdosed, or beaten up and killed in street fights. When I asked them at a later date (several writing assignments later) to write about where they would be in five years time, they didn't know if they'd be alive in five years time. I was shaken by that. I couldn't imagine a group of students who could not believe that they would be alive in five years time, who didn't have goals for things that they were doing. I needed to step away from feeling that I was in

control of what direction things went and give opportunities for students to tell me what route they needed to go.

These two concerns prompted L.M. to re-evaluate her practice and redesign methods that could have some relevance to her students. It was interesting to note that L.M.'s own learning trajectory morphed into one that became problem-based and largely constructivist in nature. She created a scaffold with her own knowledge of students in the mainstream culture of Western Canada that could include the specific requirements of marginalized students. She began to allow these students to choose their own stories, their own mediums and their own methods of storytelling. The students responded overwhelmingly positively.

So with those students we worked on their writing skills, but we also allowed them to make use of their artistic skills (and they were a very artistic group). They had choices about whether they wrote about things or whether they did posters, an analysis of things or whether they created music. They sang songs; they did dances. I invited them to show me the ways that they best knew how to communicate, how they felt about the things we read and about the things we were learning. Now talk about changing the onus of who was in power because we became very, very accepting.

She stated that attendance improved so that “no one got squeezed out by attendance regulations” and the students ownership of their own education became the foundation of her teaching practice. Within one term of this paradigm shift, there was enhanced success for her marginalized students and this knowledge forever changed L.M.'s evaluation methodology. L.M. found that portfolios worked for many reasons.

I think that portfolio invites students to revisit something many times so that they have the time to let a piece mature or they have the time to say “this went rotten on me”. “This isn't as wonderful as I thought it was”. So, I can't imagine anyone who's done portfolio, not doing portfolio. It's like taking the training wheels off of your bicycle. I mean you'd never go back to using that for a crutch. And the business of writing something and only doing weak writing on it? I just don't

think you'd do that, I think you'd just - once you're past that, it's forever flying free. So I think there's a huge improvement in using portfolio.

Community

L.M. identified a sense of community that developed when she, as the teacher, became a facilitator who both guided the group and modeled appropriate behaviours while maintaining a safe environment in which the students could interact.

I believe there is a different relationship of trust that happens between that person who is an instructor who puts a summative mark on an assignment at the end of the term and the person who helped in the process of getting to that summative project. So I think that there is a real difference between students who come in who are fearful of offering their work in front of a group of peers and a stranger who is a teacher and a group of students who share that work with people in the process of building their confidence and teaching them the procedure that makes it safe to share first what they've written, and second how they feel about someone else's work. It's very easy to hear about classes where students said "Oh, I never understand his writing". I never allow students to be shut down by peers. Writers need to thrive in a classroom and there needs to be real care taken by whoever is instructing to make that a safe environment for students to share what they really have to share. Teachers must be right on top of the student who is finding a way to be nasty to someone, to dominate someone, to bully them. Creative writing is a vulnerable place which needs safe acceptance.

L.M. rarely used the word trust, but I identified the development of a trusting atmosphere and all the inherent activities that encouraged trust to be part of the way L.M. built a writing community in her classroom. She defined what made a writing community. There were shared goals for students to become better writers. There was a high level of trust and sharing. There was ample opportunity for students to offer criticism and accept criticism and feedback. Community was also built by just being

there, being an active participant in the group. That active participation was something that she expected from every person in her class including herself.

When L.M. first moved to Saskatchewan, she took a contract writing a historical novel. During that time she found the writings of Don Murray, whom she credited, along with Harry Rintoul, an early Saskatoon Writer in residence, with the ability to inspire her to write and with teaching her the process of revision that she uses in her own writing practice and while teaching her writing classes today. She integrated her formative portfolio teaching skills with these new methods and found that her university students benefited in many ways. They built an effective writing community and the benefits went far beyond the writing class. L.M. saw that students made deeper connections with their classmates.

In all cases I saw students building relationships with their peers in ways that they had never built relationships with peers in classes before. They are very forthright in their sharing and very caring about what happened in each other's lives. I think there is a real boon in the relationships built for the students. And as for me as an instructor in their classes, there is a huge affection that comes to a teacher of a class like that. The affection comes from being a trusted individual who cares about someone else's improvement as a writer, someone who knows their story. Your reward is what you build - a trusted relationship - with your students. And that's about where I am today.

At the time of interviewing L.M. had accepted sessional teaching work at the College of Education, taught high school English and writing classes in the provincial school system and sometimes even agreed to substitute in other teacher's classes as well. What motivated her choices?

Oh yes, when I make a choice whether I will teach at the university or whether I'll go back into the school system. Where will I make the biggest bang? I'll make the biggest bang by improving what teachers do in their classrooms.

I believe that that which you send out comes back, and I think that's pretty incredible. I believe that what I've done in my teaching, what I've done in

improving teaching for teachers who are out there is I make a better place for my daughter to be a student in the school. So I can only enhance what it is that's available for her, and when she's no longer in school, I believe it will simply go ahead and enhance someone else. So it's that business of paying forward. I think it [Pay it Forward] was a good movie - a great concept of what we can do. We don't pay back the people who were kind to us. We can send them thank you notes and we can respect them and we can be glad to see them, but I think we pay it to what is ahead.

This clearly indicated a commitment to education that was inspiring to say the least.

One of the ways L.M. modeled appropriate critiquing skills for her students was to use formative evaluation on her own teaching. She did self evaluation using a similar format to what she asked her students to use in her writing groups.

I have my students give me a report card mark at midterm and have them evaluate how well I've communicated to them. I ask them to do in Edward de Bono style - something positive, something negative, something interesting and they tell me hilarious things that I didn't know before which is a really nice thing to have at the time you're teaching students: if there's something that's not working, if the overhead that you're using is set on an angle and it's really hard for students to see that in the classroom...

L.M. suggested that sometimes one can effect positive change just by giving students a voice in their education.

L.M. gleans gems from every part of her life and applies what works in the familiar eclectic way of educators who respond to the varying and constantly changing needs of their students. She is candid about her practice and offers solid advice for other educators. Keep learning; keep growing. She speaks from a wise place when she says "So we're constantly in a state of change, or I hope we are."

The Equestrian Connection

Personal inspiration continued to come to L.M. and even arrived from a decidedly unexpected quarter of her life. She was surprised and ultimately pleased when she realized that being an equestrian student and teacher could inform her teaching practice. L.M. acknowledged that she transferred her knowledge in teaching equestrian skills to teaching writing skills in her classroom. L.M. told me a story about being trained in equestrian skills by a tough teacher who "... only trained me because he knew I was gonna make a real difference in what I did." He was the kind of teacher who told you "... all the things you'd done wrong and he showed you ways to make improvements to those and you quit riding when your horse was at a successful place." She used this kind of feedback for her students on a daily basis as well. "

...because I wouldn't end the day with any student without it being at a place that was good for the student. So sometimes they needed to stay a little after school or sometimes they needed to see me after class. We needed to get to a place so when we met the next day we were really glad to see each other.

L.M. made use of the best practices of this riding instructor and she learned from the less than desirable ones as well.

I never went to a class with him [the riding instructor] that I didn't throw up before the class, but I learned a ton and I had to keep going back to this thinking about quitting when it was right for the horse and it changed everything I did about teaching.

It is clear that L.M. allowed aspects of her experience, even as seemingly disparate as her experience with this tough as nails, no-nonsense riding coach, inform her evolving teaching practice. From her negative experience as an equestrian student, L.M. realized that the community of her writing classroom must be an inviting place to be for students. Students shouldn't feel like throwing up before class. They shouldn't feel abused in any way, *ever*, and each day must end positively for the greatest benefit to occur.

To end the day at a good place with your students. And if you haven't got that then they're gonna skip your class and they're gonna try you; you'll end up with a crooked relationship. On every interaction. I mean you've got a pretty positive aura going on around your world- not just you but around your world. Everybody feeling good about what happened there.

Personal Writing Practice

Another continuous source of inspiration and experimental information for L.M. was her personal writing group. L.M. mined her own experience as a writer to find the most promising practices and fashions her classes along the same guidelines that work for her personal, non institutional writing group.

A group of us created a writing group called Sisters Ink. We used exactly that technique that I've been using for people to come along with copies of pieces that they've written. They run enough copies that the other members of the group can read through the copy in advance. People read it through and they deal with it as a printed piece before they hear it. They write comments on it and provide feedback. They make suggestions, they point out things that aren't correct because this is revision stage. It doesn't matter that spelling be correct or that language be correct. At this stage people can have only small elements of it that are right. But you are encouraged to glean out what is there. So that group of people looked at each others writing. When everyone's writing has been looked at in written form, we have each of the authors read their work aloud to the group. Each of us would contribute our ideas about it: things that worked for us, things that didn't work for us, questions that we had, corrections we could suggest. We always sign the critique; we always return all written copies of the piece of writing. The author gets to take them home and choose to do what it is that they want to do from that. We have no right to challenge them the next time saying "I told you last time you should change this." We only offer them a suggestion.

A lot of what I'm doing is with my writing group so very often I pilot things that I'm doing with a group who I write with on a regular basis. So as I find new

things that I want to try out, it's good to try it on a tested audience like that and see what their reaction is to that. We use exactly this kind of portfolio technique, and people are publishing individual works and they're a part of collectives that we do. We do public readings from it. So it means that my personal pleasure is what I can easily sell to students. If there is something I've tried with my writing group then when I apply that to students it's easy for them to say "Right. You've tried this out; this part works; this part didn't work for us. Let's see what this part is like in a classroom environment."

Post-secondary Teaching Practice

L.M. spoke of her post-secondary teaching practice as being the culmination of her 30 years of preparation in portfolio education.

When the university asked if I would teach writing for them, I took exactly that approach to teach writing and taught a number of classes for them. I taught two classes one term and probably a third writing class. I saw a lot of students' work - probably 25 to 30 students in each of those classes per term. 3 hour classes were typically the way of it or an hour and a half twice a week - typical university style. Both work well. The whole thing [Portfolio teaching] is built for support; it's not for hammering people at the end of the time. So, if I'm going to have a complaint about somebody's work, I will have seen it in process and they will know that I have serious concerns about that - they won't have a grade on it, but they will know that they are not meeting my expectations of where their work should be. And that's the beauty of summative evaluation is that students then go from that kind of feedback which is encouraging for them or which is threatening for them which is remindful for them. You cannot assume that you can write this all the night before. That is not the process of the writing community; that is not a successful way for you to act as a writer.

L.M. believed that there is a writerly process that includes the type of organization that allows for writing success. She guided her students in their writing practice.

...I know that I need to keep a binder so I can date things and put writing into it so I can take a look at the process of it. I can't just keep it on my computer and I can't wipe it off the computer. I need to hard-copy it so that I can look at what changes I've made to see whether I like the change or not.

This integration of personal experience and teaching methodology allowed for L.M. to model the sharing of writing in her classes.

I find that when I start with a writing class it's really important that I bring along some of my writing. I bring along transparencies that I can put over the original copy of it to show what suggestions my peers in my writing group have made for me. So I can put them in different colors so that somebody's corrections or revisions or suggestions for me or compliments for me are in one color and somebody else's are in another. And then I show people what the next edition of it looked like. That way when students see that process of revision and see that that's the way that I want their portfolios set up so for each of their writings I want to see the stages of the revision.

L.M. had high expectations for her students which she clearly stated at the beginning of the term and reinforced throughout. She emphasized quality over quantity of output, personal responsibility to one's work and finally, group commitment to critical analysis rather than individual work in isolation from other writers.

[When] I'm talking with them about portfolio, I can't tell them what number of pages to write because they write in so many different mediums, but what I can ask them is a time allotment. I can say to them:

My expectation is that you will spend 30 hours of writing time in this portfolio - in this span of time. So if I give them a time allotment on it then they are free to fit that time allotment any way they like. And if I say that I've had somebody (I was mentioning earlier) who only changes one or two words on a six-line poem - they didn't spend their time. They did not need hours of time reading over that piece. It did not become polished by them. So it's easy for me to say "you have

not satisfied the time requirements that I'm suggesting on the number of pieces that you have" and it's often the only way that you can attest to what quality of work they have contributed to the piece. If it doesn't communicate well, if it isn't clearer by that transition. If their peers who have looked at the piece more than one time haven't found ways that can make an improvement.

They would not have been working well in their writing group. You know that would have been one of the obvious things. They're not a contributor in their group and they're not an acceptor in their group. So if they don't have ideas to share for other people - how they can improve that - you're gonna find that there is a group that isn't working very long. While other people need an hour's time, there's a group that's finished in 15 minutes of time. Why is that group finished in 15 minutes? Because they are not contributing to each other's advice, help, suggestions, or they are not accepting or they are defensive about what they have written.

And I'm going to be a participant in that group! I'm going to identify where the problems are and say "I want to be a part of your group". I'm going to bring along a piece of my writing then I will know what the problems are. So I have this wonderful option that I can sit in on any group. I can walk by and observe what's going on - if it's successful - and every group is being successful. I can continue to just walk around and I can sit down with [a] group and listen for awhile and step in and out. They don't have to listen to me; I don't have to make any contribution. I can simply be a sponge who is there on the side. But if I see that there is a problem, or there are skills not being used, then I can come in to be a part of that group - not as a teacher telling them what to do, but saying "come and tell me about this piece of mine and let me hear about yours". So again model for them behaviours they may not be using.

L.M. spoke of a unique relationship that developed between facilitators and students in portfolio programs. This relationship supported student responsibility and

self-evaluation, reduced concerns about marks and made lasting adjustments to the way students viewed his/her education. It encouraged life-long learning and an understanding of learning and writing as process based activities, rather than an end to whatever means has been haphazardly chosen.

I don't think that students who are concerned about portfolio programs are concerned about the mark at the end of it. So if you give students a one-trick-pony essay and all they get back from it is a little bit of feedback about it and they get a mark. If instead what you're doing is you're looking at stages of the process, and I'm very process related; you have to honour the process of development that's happened. You may not ever see the piece that the student takes to its completed state. It may never be at a publishable point, but the satisfaction on it should not be with the grade you receive. The satisfaction on it should be that the student looks at this as expressing what they really want to tell about that moment. So it doesn't matter what the grade is.

So I think a real change happens in classes that use portfolios, because the end product you must have is the trusted environment, the trustworthy relationship that really is only there to assist people to communicate their message more clearly.

Portfolio Teaching Methods

When L.M. introduced her portfolio evaluated writing courses, she focused on building community and creating the classroom atmosphere that would be conducive to effective peer analysis of writing. She made personal connections with each student by providing them with a letter she has written to introduce herself. She then asked each student to write a response. She read and responded to each student submission. L.M. used this assignment not only to get to know her students but also to see how the student wrote when given a topic (themselves) that they know a lot about. Ultimately L.M. believed that the instructor needed to ensure that the classroom environment adapted to the students needs. The instructor needed to ensure the students' voices were heard and that "they aren't just forced to write in a style that fits into the confines of a classroom".

Her next step was to clearly outline the requirements of the course and describe the portfolio evaluation process. Her instructions to the students included the following guidelines.

- Ten pieces of writing are required for the course during a single term.
- Write about things that are important to you, in genres that are important to you. Genres that have been explored in the past include short stories, poetry, novel sections, plays, commercials, and song lyrics, dramas for stage or video or radio and journalistic essays for magazines.
- Create a habit of keeping a notebook handy to jot down ideas and writing that comes to you when your portfolio is not available to you.
- Keep a portfolio of all the drafts you write and rewrites you make so that we can see the process of your writing. Number and date each draft so progress can be followed and previous drafts can be used as reference while revising.
- The time expectation for this portfolio of writing is 30 hours. There is no page allotment for the writing because the genres that may be chosen are for documents of different lengths. All final submissions must show polish and communicate well and there must be a clear indication that the work has been completed or shows significant progress during this period of time.
- At the end of the term, the student will provide a portfolio of six self-chosen pieces. Two additional pieces that are chosen by the instructor will also be included. These pieces will have been revised and polished with the numbered and dated drafts included to show the process of their learning over time.
- The student will also be provided with a marking rubric for the portfolio so they know on what criteria they are being evaluated.
- The student will have many opportunities to have his/her work critiqued by their writing groups and through regular conferences with the instructor. A scheduled midterm conference will be held with each student to discuss progress and specific requirements.
- There will be no midterm mark or individual marks assessed for pieces of work, but the student will be shown evidence of the quality of work he/she is producing.
- The student will also be expected to self- assess their writing.

- The portfolios will be assessed numerical marks at the end of the term.

At the initial stages of the term L.M. actively tried to make the learning relevant to the students. She always asked for input from her students and has them share with the class what they consider to be effective writing.

Now about the second class that I have with them I ask them to bring along a piece of literature that they think is really well written so that becomes a part of my file. So they give me a model of something that they think is well written and then when they talk about that piece...and we don't...depending on the size of the class we may not hear all the pertinent pieces but we may hear an excerpt that they've pulled that they think is really relevant to exemplify what they're talking about in good writing. Then we, as a group, talk about the things that we've found in that writing that made it effective writing for us. So I think what we're doing is we're again setting up models of what it is that people like about writing and when they discuss that, when they as a whole group have quite a large new sharing of information it's your word - metacognitive learning - that happens. They know why it happens, why they feel that way and how it comes to be significant for what they'll do in their own writing.

L.M. outlined how she arranged the classroom learning environment in order to bring the students online with her methods quickly at the beginning of the term. She arranged her students in their groups and had them reviewing each others writing by the end of the second class. L.M. indicated that groups of four seem to be optimal for group critiques. These students make up a regular group of reviewers who meet once a week in class to discuss the weeks writing. These reviews did not take the place of the instructors' review of student writing. L.M. emphasized that peer review was considered essential to the effective portfolio process for her students.

Yes it is, because these are their peers. The term peer means someone who walks in their same shoes, someone who lives in the same environment. I'm hundreds of years older than those students are. My issues are quite different from their issues and they will be empathetic to mine but not nearly as empathetic as someone who

is my sex, my age, my status. So their peers are all of those things - perhaps not their sex, but maybe that's a great bonus. They have a chance to share very, very intimate thoughts with both males and females.

Peer Review Techniques

L.M. shared some of her teaching materials with me. To assist students with effective reviewing techniques, L.M. made many recommendations to her students.

It's hard to know how to critique in a valuable manner. What should I be saying? How should I be saying it? So I like to model for students how I see it working for me and I have them critique a piece of my work as well, I again put up a piece of my work and they do a critique on it and give me feedback about something I'm working on. This makes me the one whose work is being presented in class and critiqued. That pays off. It can't be too scary for them to bring their work.

When L.M. taught her students to critique each others work effectively, she began with an overhead transparency of one of her own pieces of writing. She had color-coded overlays that showed the suggestions and comments that her writing group had for her. The final overlay showed the revision she made to the writing based on the critiques her peers provided and her appraisal of same. This procedure modeled the methods that she wanted her students to use when they critiqued their groups writing and when they set up their portfolios so that each stage of revision was shown. By using her work, L.M. modeled the experience of being analyzed as well as the analysis that was to be carried out. It was a good time for the students to see that it was the writing that was being analyzed not the writer.

Oh it's sort of funny looking at this and saying it's done in different colors and thinking "yeah what was there about it?" but I think it was the kind of people coming up with different ways of speaking about it. So they talked about things that they liked like personal content appeal - if it personally speaks to them - strong visual and sensory images and then the examples that are done here in red is 'the smell of the woods and the big smoke and the smell of harvest and they

liked catchy titles and satiric content and original style. They liked that it's personalized and they liked things of humour and they liked original language.

The students were influenced by the sharing of her experience as a writer. They begin to think and respond in ways that honour the writing but offer suggestions for improvement. Interestingly, L.M. also indicated that this procedure can also be used to show students "how to reject things that people say" without feeling like they need to apologize for doing so.

You know people are going to give you information that you can say "Nope that really doesn't work for me". And it's important that people know that the final words on the writing is the author. Yes, so the author always has the last choice of being right about what it is that they've written or what it is that they've wanted to share.

L.M. used a version of the following peer reviewing technique with all of her groups regardless of the age or proficiency of the writers. If it was possible, the writer would make enough copies of their work for the group in advance of the class so that everyone could read it through and write comments on it. The writing accepted at this time was at the first draft stage so it didn't need to be polished and the language and spelling didn't need to be correct. The critique at this time was more about the ideas than the grammar, although the writing was expected to communicate accurately.

At this stage people can have only small elements of it that are right. But you are encouraged to glean out what is there. So that group of people looked at each others writing. When everyone's writing has been looked at in written form, we have each of the authors read their work aloud to the group. Each of us would contribute our ideas about it: things that worked for us, things that didn't work for us, questions that we had, corrections we could suggest. We always sign the critique; we always return all written copies of the piece of writing. The author gets to take them home and choose to do what it is that they want to do from that. We have no right to challenge them the next time saying "I told you last time you should change this." We only offer them a suggestion.

The following guidelines were provided by L.M. at the beginning of a course. She provided these to the students in writing so that they could think about methods of helping authors in a positive manner.

- to refine the introduction and the conclusion
- to tighten the sentences
- to use more exact word choice
- to change sentence order
- to eliminate unnecessary words
- to organize the order of the content
- to enhance the examples
- to create sentence variety
- to expand ideas
- to tighten images
- to identify errors or problems of logic
- to correct grammar errors
- and to feel good about what they've written

The key was to help the writer feel proud of what they had written and to have some feedback to think about when they worked on their revisions.

I don't want them to stop encouraging others writing too soon. I don't want them to say "Oh that's really great!" on a second revision and stop there. I want them to keep looking for ways that each time that they hear that author's voice sharing that content that they're looking for ways to enhance what happens. So don't just get back to being a theatre patron that you accept everything that is delivered to you. Be sure that you take an active role in encouraging the other person to look for ways to improve what they've done. You can say, "I love what you're doing here, and have you thought of..." giving the person a way to consider that.

L.M. encouraged self analysis so students could assess their contributions and enjoy spiral learning. Writers were encouraged to write; self evaluate, employ peer assessment,

review, and rewrite and repeat that cycle again and again until the writer decided that the work was complete. Continued iteration of this process improved the writing and whatever critiquing that was attempted by the student. The student of writing began to internalize the understanding that writing was, in large part, rewriting.

So again the responsibility of the audience who are sharing it and critiquing it and “did I help the author by giving him or her somewhere to go? Was I not only critical of it but did I make some suggestions of word choice that would work better or something specific that would make this scene clearer for whoever was going to write about it?”

L.M. offered the bottom line for the intent of any critique. “When they’ve been critiqued by people they don’t go home damaged by that critiquing. They go home charged up about new opportunity.” This formative writing process continued during the term and allowed the optimum growth for the writer. The learning was not only about writing but about assessing both the writers work as well as the writing of their peers.

One of the things that I think you have to do when you’re teaching a writing class is I think you have to critique the language being used and so I think you have to go through students’ writing as it’s submitted to you and pullout things that are well done and things that could be improved. So I just brought a plus and minus sheet that I had and then I would have those students look to the sentences that I didn’t think were as well done and do revisions on them. They could learn how they could enhance writing. That’s something I’d do aloud in class. We’d do that on blackboards or overheads so they’d get a chance to look at something that’s well crafted from them and possibly their improvements from them. I’m amazed by how little effort it takes to do that and can make a marked difference in showing students things like parallel structure, or lack of logical thought, or grammatical errors that have been stoppers for them for a long time. If you look to those errors and share those in class and do revisions to them. Students are very receptive to that at the level of university we’re talking about. I’ve done this for a long time with high-school students, or junior high students, and again I think it’s potent. I particularly think when you have students in a writing class - they have a

goal of their writing being improved, and when they have a chance to see this, with anonymity - they don't know whose work it is like that. They'll recognize their own work but when they see the revisions that other people can create to clarify what their message said - really easy improvement causes a huge stylistic change.

L.M. took the sting out of recognition for the students by pulling anonymous work out of the writing and offering it to the class to critique together. This approach allowed positive growth in writers without singling out anyone, or anyone's work, in particular. Only the author would recognize whose work it was and this anonymity was a valuable asset to consistent learning within the writing community.

...because there is no way they can offend a friend by saying "that wasn't as clear as you can make it". I'm the one who's saying "there is some potential for improvement there" and it allows them to look at areas of grammar that they really may not know. So it allows me to teach what's specific to that group. I don't really have course content that is complete for my writing classes because every class is built on the needs of that group of students. Look at what it is that's realistic "this is really well done". I want you to see an example of something that's being written in this exercise that's well done. I want you to look at a place that's not as successful, and I want us to give it that same kind of clarity and so when it's placed on a blackboard like that people will do their revisions and then people can offer to go up and do the ones and you'll get two or three answers to change something that wasn't well written and I just know that other people write these down as well and make that their example. I like that; I like that tone; I like that sound.

Need to Know Learning

The need to know rule was used for teaching the mechanics of writing. When students had difficulties with a concept, they were offered work that would improve the understanding of that concept. If a student had mastered the concept, they were not

expected to use their time for this task. Students were also encouraged to be instruments of positive change for peers and themselves.

...one of the things that I noticed that students weren't doing was they weren't encouraging people for change. I don't want them to stop encouraging others writing too soon. I don't want them to say "Oh that's really great!" on a second revision and stop there. I want them to keep looking for ways that each time that they hear that authors' voice sharing that content that they're looking for ways to enhance what happens.

I don't know how writers survive without having peer review. I think it's very hard to write in isolation and all of the best writers who I read about now, who are sharing the technique, are talking about having people who had listeners to their voice. I know that when I think I've written something really wonderful on my historical novel and I take it to my group, they very aptly point out places where I haven't - places to improve where there are opportunities for a better job. There are things that I've not considered at all. So I don't know how people would have just written without having someone hear it, read it, share in that to say to them "this could be clearer. I'm not understanding you". So thank heavens for doing that, encouraging that.

L.M. maintained that formative evaluation is a powerful teaching tool and part of the responsibility of the instructor was to make certain that the students were apprised of their learning progress especially if they need extra assistance.

If I had any concerns about students not doing well in a class, if there is a chance of them failing that, they would hear that so early in the term. We would be looking for ways to enhance their skills whether that meant extra writing time together or it meant more conferences because I believe that that investment of trust warrants the reward of passing and success.

Over time L.M. became convinced that the instructor could enjoy a privileged view of the students' work when employing the portfolio evaluation methods she developed.

In portfolio you should have seen a piece probably, an instructor should have seen it two or three times or should have been standing behind the group while they're discussing it to hear what revisions are happening or what suggestions are being made to it. So there is seldom going to be pieces that you don't have some familiarity with.

At the end of term, L.M. sums up the quality of a student's work by marking the portfolio. Although this is the first summative evaluation of the student's writing, there is no reason for the student to feel "violated by that experience" as can happen in classes that are not formatively evaluated. The student should not be surprised about their mark because they have heard from their peers and instructor throughout the term just how effective is the delivery of their message. They had so many opportunities to improve it through revision that they were submitting their very best work. This was not a "one-trick-pony" marking of individual assignments without any opportunity to process the feedback and improve the writing. Having been provided with the marking rubric for the portfolios at the beginning of the term, the student would probably be an effective judge of their own final mark. L.M. often asked the students to grade themselves in their summary of their work that was handed in with the portfolio.

The whole thing is built for support; it's not for hammering people at the end of the time. So, if I'm going to have a complaint about somebody's work, I will have seen it in process and they will know that I have serious concerns about that - they won't have a grade on it, but they will know that they are not meeting my expectations of where their work should be. And that's the beauty of summative evaluation is that students then go from that kind of feedback which is encouraging for them or which is threatening for them which is remindful for them - "You cannot assume that you can write this all the night before. That is not the process of the writing community; that is not a successful way for you to act as a writer".

L.M. summed up her commitment to portfolio evaluation of student writing by identifying the benefits of creating a sense of community in her classroom. The quality of relationship built with students ultimately helped them become better writers, not only to pass the course at hand.

I don't think there are more successful ways of assessing. I think for time efficiency and quality of student response/teacher reaction to that writing, there is an intimate sharing that happens with portfolio that doesn't happen with simply essay writing or journal keeping. ...I've tried a lot of different methods but this one is very significant in building relationship and communicating student to teacher - teacher to student.

Negative Results of Peer Evaluation

L.M. found that it took time and effort to develop a trusting environment and a cohesive classroom writing community especially in K-Grade 12 classrooms where students may be less motivated. If this was not done in a consistent manner, some negative results occurred. The greatest downside of peer evaluation when the class was not guided properly was exclusion of students. L.M. saw some evidence of exclusion when she taught as a substitute in secondary classes for other teachers.

So I was into his [high school classroom teacher] classroom on two Fridays, on his writing days, and each case there was a first Nations girl who sat in front of me who never was part of a group. When I asked people to break into their writing groups she was never part of a group. And I had not asked the teacher why that was the case, so I asked her - I had some of my work along because it was a writing day. I asked her if she and I could work together, and she was a super writer and she was a terrific group member who somehow was being excluded - she was the only First Nation student in the class. Whether that was the problem or not I never found out, but it reminded me what I would be concerned about if she was my student because I would not want her to miss out on the opportunity of the feedback and the peer relationships. So what was

happening...was pretty typically her case. So I asked her “Were your group members away today?” And she said, “No I don’t belong to a group”. I’m thinking - well that’s just really rotten.

L.M. was a substitute teacher and was unable to affect long term change in that class so she tried to make the experience of formative review more valuable for this student while she was there. If this had been her own class, she would have had the time and the social capital to make a lasting difference in the lived experience of this student. If there is a problem with a group of students that she taught on a regular basis, she would inject herself into the mix in order to effect positive change.

And I’m going to be a participant in that group! I’m going to identify where the problems are and say “I want to be a part of your group”. I’m going to bring along a piece of my writing then I will know what the problems are. So I have this wonderful option that I can sit in on any group. I can walk by and observe what’s going on - if it’s successful - and every group is being successful. I can continue to just walk around and I can sit down with group and listen for awhile and step in and out. They don’t have to listen to me; I don’t have to make any contribution. I can simply be a sponge who is there on the side. But if I see that there is a problem, or there are skills not being used, then I can come in to be a part of that group - not as a teacher telling them what to do, but saying “come and tell me about this piece of mine and let me hear about yours”. So again model for them behaviours they may not be using.

Other problems arose in the day-to-day operation of L.M.’s writing groups. She identified overbearing criticism as a negative attribute of some group work. This was combated with extra attention to that group.

I’ve seen groups where there are members who came in who were critical members who would not just offer the ideas to the writer - who wanted to just hound them or drive it in or say “No, you aren’t listening to what I’m saying.” So instead of being contributors they were “I’m gonna teach it to you! You’re gonna

know by the time we're finished". And that's the only other, that's the only other trial that I can see in this would be people who find writing group is a place where they can dominate the agenda.

L.M. had strong views about how these issues should be handled. She has seen the damage even a single student can do to the self-esteem of a young writer and will not allow that kind of interaction to be rewarded in her classrooms. She steps into the mix.

It's just really important to hear that and respond to that quickly. Respond so that the group benefits from that by saying, "Oh, you know Mary, I wanted to speak with you about what you've just said because I don't know whether I'd have been able to hear that. I'd have just heard it as a criticism. What is it that you're saying that could be constructively phrased so that I could take that in?" Well, you give the person an opportunity to not be in a negative spot, but you also make it really clear that that isn't the way that things are to be done. It's important to do that early in the class. It's important to be very visible moving from group to group and hearing all the time. Plus you look for stricken faces across the room. The younger the students are the more chance you've got of that. What you'll probably find is people are so absolutely delighted by what their peers are writing that there is going to be a "falling in love quality" or "this time is a time when we talk about things that are really important". "I love how you say that." "You have me feeling like crying about that." "I laughed and laughed about that." "Would you consider changing the word order so that you use more alliteration in it because I think that would just prolong the effect? People offer suggestions. The person who is having their work reviewed doesn't do much talking about the work. I think they try and take in the information. They should write it down; they should have a copy of the script right there and they're writing down ideas. They get all that written information back from the people when they hand back the scripts. They get to read through that [when] they go home. They assess what is wheat and what is chaff, and they resolve for themselves what ideas they want to use. I haven't seen writing community as anything except a lot of fun for students

and a terrific creative outlet of work. Students will put hundreds of hours into assignments.

L.M. found that students learn more effectively when they take personal responsibility for their education and that the instructor must respond to student writing in appropriate ways so that this personal responsibility is consistently encouraged.

There are a lot of people who don't take that step up and there are a lot of students who don't take that step up, so they go home only having part of the information that they need - for assignments...for really important tasks that they have.

We were talking about the survey of writing feedback and the questions that I had asked students there about the feedback they received on portfolio, research essays and comments written on their assignments and helpfulness of those comments on the next draft or next assignments and I think a good question was "why do teachers or professors respond to your writing?". Not just the business of 'they have to' but I think that if the student sets in his/her mind that what they write has significant impact on whoever it is who views it, that it's a huge encouragement of their writing. Nobody needed to say that. It becomes a subliminal thing that we get from shared communication. So when students answered, and there were students who did answer, you know, the business of "professors are forced to" they got at least one example from this class where they've heard someone saying "I really liked what you said here or how you said this or you took me on this journey with you". And, it's probably the reason that people in writing classes or people in a lot of my classes build relationships with each other. I was on campus the other day to pick up tickets to go to graduation and saw two of my students and one of the girls said "you know all the people in our class are the only people I know and when we see each other we embrace and are so happy to see each other. We're great to work together if we have a chance but how did you build the relationships that we have? What did you do, because there isn't that in any of the other classes we took last term?"

Community Building

L.M. reported that students were impressed by the type of relationship they built in her classes; there was a positive result to this community that exists "...because of the trust and the respect, the desire to hear someone's communication. That's pretty significant." Although community building could be spontaneous given the right ingredients, it was not an accident in L.M.'s classes. She believed in actively developing community. Within three paragraphs of my transcripts of the first interview there emerged a dialogue on the value of a sense of community in portfolio based writing classes. And this dialogue interspersed all of the interviews.

And that brings me into talking about writing community. I believe in a class environment where students are working on portfolios, the most valuable feedback they get is from their writing group. I would have a group of people, probably 4 people to a group is an easy number of people to get to share their work during class times. If you get larger groups it's hard to get enough feedback during the meeting times, or you will discourage people from writing in the medium that they wish to write.

She identified some of the most important tenets of her community perspective. They were trust, support and collegiality.

The writing community should feel like a community, a community of support. It isn't meant to be a critical community. It's meant to be a supportive community that says "This part wasn't clear to me." or "This part you told me. Why don't you SHOW me instead so pointedly telling me the conclusion you want me to have?" The community should be a community of support. That's what I think can happen with these definitions. I think the idea of portfolio writing is looking at developing skills for the writer. Writers really need to have opportunities to learn new ways to say what they need to say. They need to look for ways that they can provide insight to important topics and create better pieces for their readers and for themselves.

L.M. actively promoted the development of community in her classes and always began the first class by sharing with her students on a personal level and inviting them to share as well. This set the scene for a trusting, reciprocal environment where everyone could be vulnerable enough to share their work and have it be critically reviewed.

I wrote them a letter first and then all of them wrote me a letter so I had these 54 letters from students. And there were questions that I had set out in my letter of things that I hoped that they'd share but what was amazing was the other things they volunteered. One of the girls who had been accepted and her mother, who was her inspiration, her mother who had been in the faculty [college] of Education and dropped out to be married and when the marriage didn't survive she knew that she would have to keep working to support her children, but she always wanted her daughter to be accepted to become a teacher. And the daughter was accepted, but was accepted after the mother died of breast cancer. So for her, yeah -so to get that as a letter- I'm thinking [that] being here is really significant to this young lady and this is two generations in this family to get to the one having the dream come true. And the worst part was that she didn't have her Mom to share, knowing that that had happened for her. But I remember getting to write back to her because I got to share back with her things that I thought about that so -so that, that was the first writing that the students did in what was a literacy class. So I just think that the things you do on one class just builds what you do in another classes and I build relationship with people. Like with my friend Dick who is the riding instructor, I rode with him for a number of years. I mean, he put me through tough, tough situations, but when he was critical, he wasn't critical to be mean, he was critical because I was making the same mistakes. He could see that I could make improvement. And as I made improvement to that, then, you know, he didn't have that to harp at me about anyway.

L.M. reiterated the need for "honesty and integrity in the relationship" between the instructor and the student during the periods of formative evaluation so that the summative evaluation would never be a surprise to the student.

If I had any concerns about students not doing well in a class, if there is a chance of them failing that, they would hear that so early in the term. We would be looking for ways to enhance their skills whether that meant extra writing time together or it meant more conferences because I believe that that investment of trust warrants the reward of passing and success. And if people [students] weren't willing to invest that, I can only invest half of it. You know I can only be half of the relationship there....

...but I'm not going to be looking to fail those people when they've been thinking they've been doing well all term long. I think it's just intolerable. I can't believe that's an accepted practice at all.

Ownership of Writing

L.M. spoke of student ownership of their work. She considered it to be both a right and a responsibility.

What happens with formative writing is that the formative writing is in process and it is in a revision state until the author believes it is a complete piece. So whether that's after a few writings or whether it's after 50 revisions and those revisions can be quite markedly changed. People may simply take one line from what they had originally created to be a part of their writing. Or whether it's a piece that emerges fairly fully developed is a part of what happens with formative writing. But again the power of the decision of when the piece is finished really comes from the author of it, not from anyone else.”

L.M. emphasized that in her portfolio teaching model there was also a feeling of personal ownership in a students' work. Learning in L.M.'s model was a shared responsibility, so there was also a feeling of shared success.

I think that there's a sharing in it too. I think that there's, there's the potential for saying that 99% of this is the student. I may have given them 1% that sent their piece to a better direction. So I have an ownership in their success. Now I can never reclaim that. I can never desire that but I'm going to feel that I gave them the best that I could give them to help them to get the best that they were seeking.

Formative and Summative Success

L.M. had high praise for the success of portfolio evaluation as a formative as well as ultimately a summative evaluation tool. Here are some reasons she gave.

I don't think there are more successful ways of assessing. I think for time efficiency and quality of student response/teacher reaction to that writing, there is an intimate sharing that happens with portfolio that doesn't happen with simply essay writing or journal keeping. Nothing succeeds like success. I've tried a lot of different methods but this one is very significant in building relationship and communicating student to teacher - teacher to student.

I saw overuse of journals from the 1970's on. They stopped being the original intent of journals and became instead somebody insisting "this is your assignment; this is your assessment" and very often high school students would have three journals going on in their five classes because people wanted their response. Well then we went to reader's response, and now we're looking to teaching literacy across the curriculum. I'm looking for other ways that we can have communication rather than just writing an essay at the end of the time, writing an exam at the end of the time. But it amazes me to still find people doing multiple choice exams as their means of evaluation at the culmination. The ease of simple marking becomes the technique of evaluation rather than seeking the best quality of response.

Spreading the Word about Portfolio Evaluation

L.M. asserted that she will continue to spread the word of Portfolio Evaluation to her post-secondary students who are pre-service and in-service teachers. It is through

these classes that teachers can safely explore new pedagogy while being both guided and supported by L.M. an experienced Portfolio educator.

The people who are working on graduate studies typically bring new ideas into their schools. When they do that then other people have a chance to see it tried out somewhere and maybe do some work-shopping in that area. And that's a place that professional development within the school can make a real difference. I think of times that, as one of the team bringing career professional development, we brought creative problem-solvers to the school to show people different thinking patterns - different ways of doing things. Or to go and do workshops for people integrating drama into their classrooms -making an opportunity for performance. If you allow people to learn how to do things in a small safe setting like that, there is a chance they will try that out with their students. So I think there is a real chance of people getting out of telling you that horrible story "Oh I've been doing those lesson plans for 24 years. I just pull it out of my filing cabinet. Well, what worked for students 24 years ago does not work for students now. You're stealing from them, all the learning that has happened in that 24 years of time. I think it has a chance of keeping teacher's fresher and making them better teachers. And portfolio: looking at English departments, I think it's just the new way of people communicating, and the enhancing writing skills. Will we use writing in our lives? Yes, very much. More and more jobs will make use of writing (more often with people sitting in isolation at a desk somewhere with their computer) - they're able to communicate with the world, I mean that's pretty lucky for the world. I think it has huge benefits.

Portfolio Evaluation across the Curriculum

I asked L.M. if she thought Portfolio evaluation could work in disciplines other than writing classes. She spoke of the usefulness of a portfolio for the evaluation of writing within other disciplines.

Well I think that same response can happen in math and in science. Very easily looking at my daughters' research in science with her science fairs, I see increased

awareness of what's happening there. She had an opportunity to write about it in a very interesting document and then she got a chance to put it up on a poster and then she got to talk with all kinds of judges and guests who walked through to observe what were there. I think the benefit that writing has is that writing always allows you to collect your thoughts. When you and I were working on the transcripts there were places where what I said was shot from my head without too much chance for honing of words. Whereas looking at your transcripts of what was written, I could look to what I said and know that was me filling space while I was thinking". Let me cut this part. Let me add this part. So that's what I think portfolio and reader response journals do. They give people an opportunity to think about what they have thought and then say it concisely -say it clearly and well. So I think it's opportune for students -easily in math and science. I think that's the business of literacy being used throughout schools - not just the reading of, but the writing about; it's all the literacy skills. It's the listening to; it's the hearing other people share ideas about it. We need to look at literacy as being what we're training people to do, not just the writing of the five paragraph essay - that's not the only means of communication. And we don't want to deny the people who are unable to do that writing. Their voice is important.

As I conclude this chapter, I find myself echoing L.M.'s words, "Their voice is important". It is the voice of the student that has always informed L.M.'s use of portfolio evaluation for writing instruction even as it continues its evolution. L.M. learned from her experiences and continues to epitomize the spirit of life-long learning and the precious ability to maintain an authentic and evolving teaching practice over time.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION OF THEMES

I see many threads of themes running through the data but every one can be sewn into one of four multi-coloured, multi-textured, multidimensional tapestries hanging beside each other with borders overlapping. These themes are thoughtfully interwoven in L.M.'s teaching practice but are also valuable when interpreted standing alone.

These themes are:

1. Portfolio evaluation of writing provides for the Constructivist conditions for learning as identified by Driscoll (2000).
2. Portfolio evaluation is most effective when built on a foundation of Community within a group of writing students.
3. Portfolio evaluation promotes balanced transactional experiences that result in transformation for both student and teacher.
4. Portfolio evaluation of writing, as a teaching practice, shows promise for the successful education of marginalized students.

Theme One: Constructivist Conditions

Portfolio evaluation of writing provides for the Constructivist conditions for learning as identified by Driscoll (2000).

The strongly coloured threads of a constructivist theme are present in all four tapestries displayed in the interviews of L.M. and Driscoll was not the only author to contribute to the authentication of the fabric woven. Duffy and Cunningham (1996) considered students to be active participants in their learning based on activity in context and that learning is constructed by the student not delivered by the teacher. Similar findings were offered by Hamp-Lyons (2002), Gilbert (1989), Robinson (2000), Lensmire (1998), Gambell (2001), the interviews I conducted with Linda Richards (March 19, 2004) and Bill Boyle (March 19, 2004), and in my own teaching experiences. Even early in the last century, Whitehead (1929) identified not the knowledge but *learning how to learn* as the goal of education and shortly thereafter Vygotsky (1934) offered constructivist teaching philosophy when he describes the necessity of keeping the student in a state of puzzlement in order to affect real learning.

Driscoll (2000), however, distilled much of this research and this prompted her to identify a series of “constructivist conditions for learning” (p. 382) that are echoed in

L.M.s portfolio teaching methods. There are strong connections between the theory collected in my literature review and the anecdotal experience of L.M.'s practice. For further explanation of each condition, please see Chapter 2, the Literature review.

1. *“Embed learning in complex, realistic, and relevant environments”* (Driscoll, 2000, p. 382).

L.M. believed that education should be learner based and that learning should be constructed by the learner in meaningful ways. L.M. allowed students to engage in writing genres that students consider valuable for themselves. “Writing should start by being important for the author.” It is not about acquiring knowledge, but about constructing meaningful knowledge based on the students’ complex and unique needs, prior knowledge and the students’ chosen activities. Portfolio evaluation of writing encourages a teaching style where knowledge acquisition is developed from the bottom-up rather than from the top down.

I think the idea of portfolio writing is looking at developing skills for the writer. Writers really need to have opportunities to learn new ways to say what they need to say. They need to look for ways that they can provide insight to important topics and create better pieces for their readers and for themselves.

Peer critiques of writing provided for individual students and groups to use problem based learning to improve writing skills. When teaching marginalized students, L.M. provided meaningful tasks and the opportunity to negotiate the genres and format of student writing response so that the student can actively engage in their own learning. Their learning was then better able to reflect, in the products of their creative writing, the cultural and environmental reality in which they live.

It is interesting to note that the problem of student plagiarism was all but eradicated by the constructivist pedagogy and all of the formative evaluation that occurs during the term before the final submission of the portfolios. It would take more effort for a student to try to pass off writing that is not their own, than to actually create something unique. The focus for L.M. was less on the product and more on the process so all writing would have been seen in various stages and thus proven to be the students own writing.

2. *“Provide for social negotiation as an integral part of learning”* (Driscoll, 2000, p. 382).

L.M. has been a facilitator who encourages student responsibility for their learning and the learning of their peers through interaction in shared endeavors. She noted that writing in isolation appears to be valuable only when the author is reworking his/her writing. Between these periods, the formative evaluation of portfolio work allows for reflexive learning within a peer group. This continuous formative review in L.M.’s classes, provided for the strong social dialogic component (Duffy and Cunningham, 1996) in learning as it includes continuous feedback (Moffet, 1968) from the student, the peer group critiques and the instructors’ responses.

This reflexive spiral or transformation caused by feedback (Pea, 1994; Edelson, Pea, & Gomez, 1996), created lasting improvement in the writerly process and the ability to assess ones own work. It also challenged the writers blocked or simply egocentric thinking and allowed for greater ability to respond to critiques with creative and informed revision suggestions. L.M. clearly saw herself as a writing coach (Duffy and Cunningham, 1996). The classroom writing community was not about her; it was about her students. Her teaching style allowed the student to explore recommended methods of improving writing without allowing mimicry of teacher or peers. Each writer had the opportunity and the responsibility to develop his/her own unique voice and style and this was supported by the social dialogical process of the peer review in which they engaged.

3. *“Support multiple perspectives and the use of multiple modes of representation”* (Driscoll, 2000, p. 382).

L.M. explored many different genres in her writing classes by allowing student choice to guide their modes of communication. She encouraged her students to write prose, poetry and lyrics. She allowed them to communicate their stories by making posters, creating dances and music as vehicles within which to explore their learning of writing. She revisited concepts in different contexts and at different times, using different methods (Spiro et al., 1991) and different sensory modes (Driscoll, 2000). Even during the presentation of each student’s writing, she allowed peers to read the work to be critiqued, hear it read aloud, and verbally respond to in person and to respond in written form both in groups and individually.

A valuable component of L.M.'s practice was the employment of multiple perspectives using multiple intelligences (Duffy and Cunningham 1996; Howard Gardner 1993) because it challenged student thinking about writing and encouraged critical thinking (or thinking about our thinking). Students had the opportunity to construct their own connections and the scaffolds on which they build them. They came to realize that their worldview is "largely invisible" (Duffy and Cunningham 1996) and learned to become more conscious about their own beliefs after being required to compare their own views with the views of others. Students were encouraged to become their own tour-masters within this writing environment and thus to become life-long learners.

4. "*Encourage ownership in learning*" (Driscoll, 2000, p. 382).

L.M.'s teaching practices ensured that the ownership of the learning and the writing remained with the student. In L.M.'s learner-oriented classroom, the student held final authority over his/her own writing and was responsible for his/her own learning while working alone, with peers or with her as the writing coach. This practice reflected the recommendations of Driscoll (2000), Hannafin (1992), Graves (1981) and Gilbert (1989) and provided the student with a feeling of personal success for the learning that took place during the term. The student chose the topics (Gilbert 1989) and owned the writing as well as any revisions that he/she chose to make during the period of formative evaluation. Dodd (1997) agreed with L.M. that this ownership inspired students to do their best work and when the work was truly owned by the student, the instruction was considered incidental (Gilbert, 1989) to the learning that took place.

As soon as they own it for themselves they can do something important for them about it. Writing should start by being important for the author. It's their choice then whether they share it.

In portfolio writing for L.M.'s classes, all writing was considered to be in process until the author decided it was complete. This took a few revisions or it took fifty and some pieces were not even complete or publishable by the time they faced summative evaluation. But that is the writers decision not the instructor's choice. Again, this showed both personal privilege and responsibility.

Another perspective on student ownership was taking responsibility for the need for improvement in their writing skills. L.M. employed problem based learning for improvement in spelling, grammar and writing structure skills. Learning requirements were viewed by the student on a *need to know* basis. If a particular concern was a problem in their writing, they *needed* to know it and own it and be personally responsible for improving it. The learner then chose which problems to solve and in what order; the learner kept solving problems in his/her writing until he/she was satisfied (Driscoll 2000). The teaching of concepts to the entire class became incidental to individual students learning specific skills that pertained to them.

In L.M.'s portfolio evaluation of writing, there was less emphasis on everyone being force-fed knowledge that only some students may need and there was more emphasis on individual learning. This had a positive effect on students by leading to less boredom for those who already had attained the skills that others were still trying to internalize. These students could then use the time for their own writing and their own unique knowledge requirements.

5. "*Nurture self-awareness of the knowledge construction process*" (Driscoll, 2000, p. 383).

During the entire formative evaluation process, L.M. encouraged self-awareness of the construction of knowledge. The peer critiques, periodic within the formative portion of portfolio education, helped to teach students how to effectively edit other students work. Students could then transfer this knowledge to their self assessment. This could only be accomplished successfully with a deeper level of understanding than simple grammar and the mechanics of writing. Students actively scaffolded new knowledge onto the base of previously learned writing skills within their writing groups as well as within the classroom. L.M. reviewed each students work and carried out interviews during the term in order to encourage this self awareness.

The reflexivity of writing, self-assessment, of rewriting, then self assessment in a spiral of methodical activity, displayed constructivism at its best. Students were also engaged in metacognition when they became resources for each other. During peer review, they taught each other writerly skills that were needed and in doing so assured that they each internalized these same skills. Peer critiques allowed ongoing constructive,

non-adversarial assessment to take place during the entire term and helped protect the instructors' facilitator role until the summative assessment. With this formative evaluative awareness throughout the term, students were not surprised by their final marks. In fact they probably could have assessed their own final numerical mark with a strong degree of positive correlation.

Theme Two: The Value of Community

Portfolio evaluation is most effectively built on a foundation of Community within a group of writing students.

This theme emerged as I analyzed the data and took on a life of its own. Early on in our interviews L.M. emphasized that a sense of community was essential to building the trust levels needed to effectively use peer formative evaluation in her writing classroom. She provided anecdotal evidence that suggested portfolio evaluation techniques flourished within the communities of writers and the development of a writing community enhanced the results of students' portfolio evaluations.

A strong feeling of community developed when L.M. became a facilitator who guided the group and modeled appropriate behaviours while she maintained a safe environment in which the students could interact.

I believe there is a different relationship of trust that happens between that person who is an instructor who [only] puts a summative mark on an assignment at the end of the term and the person who helped in the process of getting to that summative project. So I think that there is a real difference between students who come in who are fearful of offering their work in front of a group of peers and a stranger who is a teacher and a group of students who share that work with people in the process of building their confidence and teaching them the procedure that makes it safe to share first what they've written, and second how they feel about someone else's work.

Writers need to thrive in a classroom and there needs to be real care taken by whoever is instructing to make that a safe environment for students to share what they really have to share.

Effective creative writing was learned by students who put themselves into a vulnerable place while sharing their work with their peers and their instructor during critiques. These students and their writing thrived when L.M., through her writing groups offered a venue of safe acceptance. The development of this trusting atmosphere was crucial in a writing community as was the shared goal for students to become better writers. There was a high level of trust and sharing in the atmosphere that encouraged students to offer criticism, accept feedback and become active participants in the group. L.M. saw that the sense of community allowed students to make less superficial connections with their classmates.

In all cases I saw students building relationships with their peers in ways that they had never built relationships with peers in classes before. They are very forthright in their sharing and very caring about what happened in each other's lives. I think there is a real boon in the relationships built for the students.

L.M. reported that students were also impressed by the type of relationship they built in her classes. She believed that the positive result of community development existed "...because of the trust and the respect, the desire to hear someone's communication. That's pretty significant."

L.M. reported that one of her students summed up the student perspective by saying:

"You know all the people in our class are the only people I know [at university] and when we see each other we embrace and are so happy to see each other. We're great to work together if we have a chance but how did you build the relationships that we have? What did you do, because there isn't that in any of the other classes we took last term?"

L.M. identified some of the most important tenets of her community perspective to be trust, support and collegiality. She also described the experience of being part of an effective writing community.

The writing community should feel like a community, a community of support. It isn't meant to be a critical community. It's meant to be a supportive community

that says “This part wasn’t clear to me.” or “This part you told me. Why don’t you SHOW me instead so pointedly telling me the conclusion you want me to have?”
The community should be a community of support.

Although community building could be spontaneous given the right ingredients, it was not an accident in L.M.’s classes where she actively developed community. L.M. actively promoted the development of community in her classes by becoming vulnerable herself. She began the first class by sharing with her students on a personal level and inviting them to share as well. She iterated the need for “honesty and integrity in the relationship” between the instructor and the student during the periods of formative evaluation so that the summative evaluation does not surprise the student. This kind of relationship was best accomplished within a classroom that was a trusting community that included everyone, without exception.

One of the ways L.M. participated in this community was when she modeled community standards for her students. She asked her students for formative feedback on her writing so that they could see a model for their peer evaluations and she asked them to give her formative feedback on her teaching as well.

I have my students give me a report card mark at midterm and have them evaluate how well I’ve communicated to them. I ask them to do [it] in Edward de Bono style - something positive, something negative, something interesting....

Then she responded to what she is told in much the same way that her students are to do with their writing revisions. The students could see evidence of this reciprocal learning and the respect that was engendered strengthened the community bonds. This created transformational learning for everyone, whether it was conscious learning or not.

L.M. didn’t use the word community very often but her interviews were laced with the description of what happens in writing communities and what community does for portfolio evaluation. She revealed that there was a positive cyclical relationship between portfolio use and the development of community. One fed the other.

... I think a real change happens in classes that use portfolios, because the end product you must have is the trusted environment, the trustworthy relationship

that really is only there to assist people to communicate their message more clearly.

Theme Three: Transactional Transformation

Portfolio evaluation promotes balanced transactional experiences that result in transformation for both student and teacher.

L.M. described instruction as being a transaction between the teacher and the student that was evidenced by the feedback spiral that L.M. created in formative portfolio evaluation. The student provided the writing; the teacher offered feedback; the student used that feedback to improve their writing skills; they resubmitted the writing for further feedback and the students' skill improvement was reflected in their writing. And specific feedback given during conferences to the instructor about this improvement, guided her to rework her day to day teaching methodology. The students and teacher became part of the same team that was dedicated to improving all the students' writing. It improved the student/teacher perspective and in so doing, it transformed both. L.M. identified the crooked relationship that occurred when the teacher only provided the student with improvements that the student then mimicked to improve their marks.

L.M. said that it was crucial that the student retained ownership of their own work by choosing the improvements he/she wanted to make. Regurgitating the changes that the instructor made does not show ownership. This type of revision was discouraged by not a lack of rewards for it. The portfolio would clearly show if the student had revised using the route of accepting instructor revisions rather than choosing his/her own and the feedback would reflect this fact.

One of the concerns that L.M.'s students shared with her in their feedback was that they felt some teachers had conned them into believing they were their ally during the term but they gave them little feedback or gave them feedback but expected only that the student would mimic the teacher's changes verbatim. This fed the belief that the teacher knew the *correct* way of writing or would only give good marks to those students who could figure out what the teacher wanted. Lensmire (1998) found that "encouragement is sometimes not far from coercion in the classroom given the unequal power relations among teachers and students" (p. 274). "The consequence of this view...

is that the student' inquiry is not honoured....learners quickly discover that the goal is not inquiry or exploration of a domain but rather discovering what the teacher wants....” (Duffy and Cunningham, 1996, 182). If the student didn't take this feedback to heart or chose another path, they felt dishonoured. At the end of the term their work was often savaged by the actual evaluation and their mark was much lower than they had come to expect. Students didn't like being given little or misleading feedback when their work had obviously not been up to expectations. But they don't want to be given feedback as if it is an order during the term and then be harshly criticized by the final mark if they choose to improve their writing using another method than the one suggested during that feedback. This practice was seen as unfair. L.M. identified this as teaching by transmission, by expecting the student to jump through hoops for marks. She suggested that this method of teaching won't promote effective learning and it was clearly the opposite of what she recommended.

L.M. found that students benefit most if the learning is a transaction, if written teacher responses are non-directive, non-judgmental and sometimes offered in an open-ended question format. Students were less likely to interpret them as demanding conformity or evidencing oppression. Richardson also modified the formative conferencing feedback process to include being “willing to suggest possible solutions to writing problems after listening to students' efforts to articulate their intentions” (Richardson, 2000, p. 138).

Elbow (1994) identified evidence of collegiality to be the greatest benefit of the formative aspects of portfolio assessment. Teachers could “be ally to students for virtually all of the semester: students don't need to fight us as the enemy, because the more help they get from us, the better their portfolios will be and the higher their grades” (p. 41). This may be the single most powerful indication that portfolio writing education was considered a transaction and that the input from both student and teacher is valuable in that process.

L.M. believed in giving positive feedback in a package that was most likely to make an impact. In order to give a student something helpful, she found that she first had to get their attention. The best way was to offer them something that made them feel that they may be on the right track in something they are doing. She started with positive

feedback then continued with suggestions that were intended to help the student improve his/her work. She made feedback a “very salient and immediate connection”.

I make it easy for my students who get my feedback to say “you know I really liked this piece. I know she’s not a music specialist but she likes the lyrics; she liked what I created in the phrasing; she likes the turn of the phrase”. It gives them something that’s helpful. That’s what I think we’re there to do. That’s transactional teaching.

L.M.’s personal experiences as a writer helped her understand the student role in the feedback process and they informed the framework of the feedback choices she used in her classroom.

I don’t know how writers survive without having peer review. I think it’s very hard to write in isolation and all of the best writers who I read about now, who are sharing the technique, are talking about having people who had listeners to their voice. I know that when I think I’ve written something really wonderful on my historical novel and I take it to my group, they very aptly point out places where I haven’t - places to improve where there are opportunities for a better job. There are things that I’ve not considered at all. So I don’t know how people would have just written without having someone hear it, read it, share in that to say to them “this could be clearer. I’m not understanding you”. So thank heavens for doing that, encouraging that.

L.M. believed that educators needed this continuous opportunity for renewal and improvement. They needed transformation as well as do their students. It amazed her that all teachers aren’t doing continuous or periodic self-analysis of their material and their teaching methods to make certain that their students continue to be well served.

And frankly, I’m frightened when people tell me they’re using the same lesson plans that they created when they were [teaching] 22 years ago. How could you do that? How could you be so rotten lazy that you wouldn’t be bringing your work up to date? How can you possibly assume that information that was fact 22 years ago is fact now?

L.M. explained why she appreciated teaching in-service and pre-service teachers. She felt that her methodology gave these students a safe place within her classes to experiment with new techniques and hone their skills with these techniques prior to bringing these skills to their own schools and their own classrooms. She modeled new skills that they could practice and internalize prior to returning to their own classrooms.

So I think there is a real chance of people getting out of telling you that horrible story “Oh I’ve been doing those lesson plans for 24 years. I just pull it out of my filing cabinet. Well, what worked for students 24 years ago does not work for students now. You’re stealing from them, all the learning that has happened in that 24 years of time. I think it has a chance of keeping teacher’s fresher and making them better teachers.

This *refreshing of ideas* is what L.M. believed portfolio writing evaluation does for her students in the writing community where we have come to accept, even expect, transformation of thought. But L.M. also noted the improvement that feedback, in the transactional model of education, brought to the instructor. She stated clearly that she constantly revised her course work based on the dynamics of her classes as well as the people and the experiences that her students bring to them. She noted that this personal continuous revision of practice was one way to achieve educational transformation for the teacher. And she believed that this was indeed a valuable goal.

Theme Four: Promising Practice for Marginal Students

Portfolio evaluation of writing, as a teaching practice, shows promise for the successful education of marginalized students.

Marginalized students, for the purposes of this theme, are those students who are discriminated against due to their low socio-economic status, color, race, ancestral background, or country of origin. I believe that there are many other factors that can marginalize students but none of these were factored into this discussion. L.M., in her interviews, discussed only the First Nations and Métis students she taught in Alberta and Saskatchewan in the past 30 years.

Initially I was surprised that this theme emerged so clearly in the analysis of L.M.'s interviews. In retrospect, I see the connection. It was both the individualized learning that constructivist theory offered and the greater potential for formative evaluation that portfolio work provided that showed promise for a great variety of marginalized students while it continued to fill the needs of the mainstream. L.M. found that marginalized students needs were best accommodated by the process-oriented, problem based, individualized nature of writing education through portfolio evaluation.

The second challenge was clear when L.M. taught a marginal class of primarily First Nations students. These students historically faced failure in their writing classes and held a minority position within the wider community of her school. L.M. tried the methods that had worked in the past without much success. These students showed signs of falling through the cracks of the educational system. She saw the inadequacies of the system and felt her class was floundering. The breakthrough came for L.M. when she requested the students write about the most influential person in their life and received honest, vulnerable stories that woke her to the realities of their wider world. She became convinced that they could not relate to the realities of their education because it did not reflect the reality of their First Nations life. The educational system for which she taught was failing to engage these students, so she vowed to find a better way to reach them.

L.M. decided that it was time to re-evaluate her practice and redesign her teaching methods. She needed to search for course content relevant to her students lives and to find some way to build her own new understandings onto the scaffold of her mainstream western Canadian view of the world. She challenged herself to create teaching strategies to include these marginalized students and the first thing she did was to begin to "respect the experiences" (Gilbert (1989) the student brings to school. She began to encourage her students to construct their own meaning by using the creative skills they brought to the classroom, even though these skills may not have resembled any building supplies that L.M. had ever employed in the past.

So with those students we worked on their writing skills, but we also allowed them to make use of their artistic skills (and they were a very artistic group). They had choices about whether they wrote about things or whether they did posters, an analysis of things or whether they created music. They sang songs; they did

dances. I invited them to show me the ways that they best knew how to communicate, how they felt about the things we read and about the things we were learning. Now talk about changing the onus of who was in power because we became very, very accepting.

These findings support the constructivist views of Hamp-Lyons (2002), Gilbert (1989), Robinson (2000) and Lensmire (1998), the interviews that I conducted with Linda Richards (March 19, 2004) and Bill Boyle (March 19, 2004) for the literature review, and my own teaching experiences. L.M., though she doesn't often use the term constructivism when speaking of her practice, allowed her constructivist teaching methods to level the playing field of the writing classroom for the marginalized student. Though I have not found any evidence of research on portfolio evaluation or constructivist theory with respect to marginalized populations, it seems that L.M.'s experiences may offer unique solutions to difficult educational problems.

Initially the largest concern for her marginalized students was simple attendance. She tried to create an atmosphere that the students would choose to attend. She chose non-traditional methods of approaching writing. She invited students to use their many creative talents to communicate their thoughts and stories in her English class. This helped combat the truancy rates so that "no one got squeezed out by attendance regulations". L.M.'s paradigm shift enhanced the opportunity for her marginalized students' success and this knowledge forever changed L.M.'s evaluation methodology. This first class made such an impression on L.M. that its circumstances bear acknowledgement.

There were about 23 students in the class. One student moved away to live with a grandmother which is very typical in First Nations societies. But of the other 22 students who were there, they were all there. No one got squeezed out by the attendance regulations. (That school had an attendance regulation that students who missed 10 classes in a term didn't get credit for the term.) None of them missed out on being there at the end of the term and did they all pass? Well of course they all passed and they had an absolutely wonderful time.

From that point onward, L.M. came to believe that portfolio evaluation of writing works better than any other method she has ever used or seen used by other instructors. Student ownership of their own education quickly became the foundation of her present teaching practice for all students, anywhere, in any context.

The pedagogy of portfolio writing instruction, and its inherent community building method, also allowed for students not to be negatively affected by their peers. This is very important in multicultural classrooms where tensions may arise due to cultural misunderstandings and ethnocentrism. Students believed that their own experiences were the only experiences. They needed to learn different backgrounds were not wrong, just foreign to their experience. This is what L.M. had learned herself and she considered it a valuable lesson in tolerance. This translated into a more tolerant classroom where students were less likely to be shut down by others.

It's very easy to hear about classes where students said "Oh, I never understand his writing". I never allow students to be shut down by peers. Writers need to thrive in a classroom and there needs to be real care taken by whoever is instructing to make that a safe environment for students to share what they really have to share. Teachers must be right on top of the student who is finding a way to be nasty to someone, to dominate someone, to bully them. Creative writing is a vulnerable place which needs safe acceptance.

When substitute teaching in a Saskatoon high school, L.M. saw a difficult situation and attempted to resolve it for the period of time that she was teaching.

... I was into his classroom on two Fridays, on his writing days, and each case there was a first Nations girl who sat in front of me who never was part of a group. When I asked people to break into their writing groups she was never part of a group. And I had not asked the teacher why that was the case, so I asked her - I had some of my work along because it was a writing day. I asked her if she and I could work together, and she was a super writer and she was a terrific group member who somehow was being excluded - she was the only First Nation

student in the class. Whether that was the problem or not I never found out, but it reminded me what I would be concerned about if she was my student because I would not want her to miss out on the opportunity of the feedback and the peer relationships. So what was happening...was pretty typically her case. So I asked her “Were your group members away today?” And she said, “No I don’t belong to a group”. I’m thinking - well that’s just really rotten.

For L.M. this was a clear indication that this community needed some renovations and that she as the instructor had an obligation to be inclusive and teach the students to be as well.

When instructing marginalized students L.M. believed that it was essential that the instructor work with existing skills even while building towards more effective writerly skills. “First Nation’s students didn’t do a lot of revision, so you might get three or four revisions from them.” But that did not mean that L.M. gave up on the expansion of their abilities. Her belief in their ability to make lasting personal improvements to their writerly habits and their ultimate skill set helped them attain their newfound goals. She worked at making the students feel accepted, valued and wise in what they knew prior to their attainment of new skills. Portfolio evaluation gave her a vehicle to do this without the negative affects of marks during the formative portion of the writing course.

When I was teaching First Nations students, it gave me a way to hear their voice and credit their voice for clarity. There would be things that may not be articulate in English grammar, but there could be a way that I could support the clarity and beauty of what they said. That would invite them to accept some other things [that they needed to learn].

She also learned from her students about their cultural ways and how it affected their classroom experience and this learning is ongoing even today. She spoke of a need to learn a marginalized students’ “cultural language” in order to effectively teach them.

I was teaching literacy last term and two First Nations students were talking about teaching in culturally different classrooms. They were saying that in their society

there's a 'wait time' expected in response. In most classrooms, if the teacher is of European ancestry, when teachers ask questions, they expect immediate answers. This is different for a First Nation's student who is expecting to respect the question, think through the question before responding and honour the teacher. Often the teacher has gone on to someone else to answer because the wait time is not at all what the teacher expected. Same with eye contact. All of a sudden there are 27 people in the classroom who had a new knowledge of First Nations students respectfully keeping eyes down. No eye contact may mean a sign of respect, not downcast behaviour. Eye contact may not mean "we're on an equal basis; we're understanding" to first Nations students. So I think that the business of being a lifelong learner really ties into what we're talking about here. I'm quite humbled by the amount that I know and how much there is to know. I know very little and the more questions that I ask and the more opportunities I have given students of every age, people of every age to teach me, the more that I've learned.

L.M. showed a deep understanding and a sense of humility about how much she has learned and how much there is yet for her to learn about teaching marginalized peoples. This is refreshing news for me to hear from someone of her vast experience and extensive teaching experience. Clearly she is not stagnating in her practice.

Summary of Findings

To summarize this chapter on the discussion of themes, it is notable that a constructivist influence has clearly informed L.M.'s teaching practice. Although she was not a pure constructivist, because she used an eclectic tickle trunk of methodology, she could be described as a coach who guided her students to construct for themselves student-centered coursework to improve their individual writing skills. To affect this learning she constructed a social dialogic framework of self, peer and instructor feedback and situated it within a safe atmosphere that she took great care to nurture in her classes. This constructivist view of formative portfolio evaluation was the key to her success with students of writing.

Secondly, it is important to emphasize the importance of L.M.'s commitment to building and tending a sense of community within her classes. The students had to feel safe

in order to allow themselves the vulnerability required to share their creative writing with peers and to critique each others work on a weekly basis throughout the term. She actively created the foundations of community and inserted herself into trouble spots when needed in order to shut down potential abuses of the peer critiquing methods and to model effective ways to provide feedback. This community feeling allowed each student to own their work and to learn to be of assistance to their peers in a mutually beneficial relationship.

It is also valuable to be aware of the transformational properties of portfolio education. L.M. learned that there was a built in need for feedback flowing in many directions. This feedback kept the learning transactional and offered continuous opportunities for teacher and student growth. Self analysis and metacognition were encouraged. Transformation was almost assured.

Finally it is interesting to note that portfolio evaluation used with such a constructivist base, appears to hold promise as a teaching practice for the vulnerable classroom communities that include marginalized students. The understanding that all students have past knowledge to bring to the classroom and the ability to construct their own learning is of primary importance. With the acceptance of multiple ways to communicate, to display learning and with the ability for the students to set the agenda to fit what is valuable to them, the students in L.M.'s classrooms have been able to succeed.

These four themes woven together into a wall of color comprise L.M.'s teaching practice that has evolved over time and still evolves today. They chronicle portfolio use from the 1960's when L.M. was a secondary student and portfolios were receptacles for the first draft and the final draft of her writing, until today when portfolio evaluation of writing for L.M. is a process that involves many nuances and a sustained commitment to the development of writing. These four themes informed her practice as they operated in tandem and together their presentation under the umbrella title of shared expectations summarizes her growth as an instructor. It is in the weaving together of the threads of writing education through a sort of shared apprenticeship that L.M. has found the key to her longevity as a writing instructor and the ultimate success of her work. L.M. developed her teaching tools using the lessons from her entire life in a holistic manner. Her own writing practice, drama education for institutions and even equestrian skills methodology played a part in her development. Throughout, it has become abundantly notable that constructivism

and community have been the keys to L.M.'s practice. She has not only been able to use her practice to teach writing to students of many ages and development levels, but also to encourage others into teaching writing and maybe to employ some of the methods she exposes them to within her courses.

Writings such as those of Kohn (1986) and Duffy and Cunningham (1996) built the base for further investigation of other academics just as researching their work and that of many more has formed the support for mine. It is exactly this scaffolding onto prior experiences and knowledge (Gilbert, 1989), this construction of the meaning and the metacognition or the awareness of learning, of which Driscoll (2000) and Gambell (2001) wrote. Effective teaching practices are the result of research of our original education, post-secondary education, academic publications as well as the lived experience of trying on borrowed methods and tweaking them until they produce the desired results. Teaching is not only the science of constructing meaning and encouraging our students to build their own learning on the scaffolds that can be brought to the construction site, but it is also art as it creates a tapestry as it weaves together colors and textures of lived experiences and imagination. As L.M. sees it, a writing community is a dynamic, supportive workshop that allows students and teachers to be vulnerable enough for reciprocal learning to take place even while providing the type of numerical evaluations that institutions demand. The tapestry that is woven from those requirements can be hung on L.M.'s classroom wall and surveyed with pride.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Assessment of Data Collection

Reflecting on my data collection, I find that the semi-structured interview was appropriate to the task. It allowed me to cover the questions I had prepared and it allowed my participant the opportunity to include those topics that she found pertinent to my data collection.

On the technical and practical side, I was disappointed in the sound issues I had when reviewing the interviews. I realize now that I was more successful in finding locations that were conducive to our conversations and privacy than in dealing with the reality of coffee-shop noise and environmental sounds. I would also choose to use a Dictaphone device for transcription in the future due to the inconvenience of using a regular tape-recorder and the excessive rewinding that is required. I find that I am not proficient at transcription.

The amount of time taken for each interview was appropriate but there was still a need for some follow-up questioning once transcription was complete. Only once transcription was complete was it apparent that certain facts had been overlooked. Although this entailed setting up another interview, it did not cause undue difficulties. Next time I will build a final follow-up interview into my plans. My participant welcomed an additional contact but it would have been useful to have it scheduled into the original interview plan.

Implications of the Research

My initial view of portfolio evaluation was that it may show promise for writing classes so that teachers had another way to encourage students to be a bit more proactive about their writing education. I had heard many teachers complaining about the volume of marking that came their way every term and the almost universal concern that students were not trying to improve their writing but were expecting the teacher to give them the 'correct' way of writing so they could just imitate it and receive better marks. There were sad stories of teachers seeing students flip through their written feedback without pausing to review it, view the mark and then toss their entire paper in the garbage on the way out of the classroom. As many teachers before me, I wondered if there may be a better way to evaluate writing. This spurred my research and drove the development of certain

questions for my participant. I created the foundation of this study through extensive literature review; I prepared my interviewing package with care. But I found that when I opened my first interview and pressed the record button was when my education really began.

As happens so often, in the gap between what is available when one researches published works and what occurs in the reality of the classroom, what L.M. reported to me was not exactly what I had come to expect. This unexpected treasure is what has opened up a whole new area that just begs to be explored. It didn't surprise me that L.M.'s experience echoed my own and others as shown by the literature review with respect to the positive value of constructivist theories when applied to writing classes. Even the findings suggesting that community building improves the ability of the group to critique writing, to give useful feedback and ultimately to make huge gains in student responsibility and actual student learning are easily seen. I became convinced, by L.M.'s generously shared lived experiences that her transactional teaching methodology helped to create an atmosphere where education can transform both student and teacher. These findings clearly are valuable to the study. But what is the most interesting revelation to me, however, is that the formative aspects of portfolio evaluation could be seen as a truly promising practice for success of marginalized students in their writing education. This is interesting news that invites more exploration.

Further studies, both qualitative and quantitative in nature, could reveal if portfolio instruction and evaluation assists the wider population in successful writing education. Qualitative studies that focus on the perspective of a broader group of educators and their students and quantitative studies that access an even more extensive base of students and their teachers in statistically valid research studies could show correlations that have the potential to improve policies through out the field of writing education. As there is a dearth of literature presently available that examines the connection of portfolio evaluation with promising education practices for marginalized students, the field invites attention.

The potential value of portfolio writing education for marginalized students, coupled with the knowledge that a sense of community is beneficial for the successful peer interaction component in peer review of writing, is that many of our teachers and

schools could benefit from more knowledge in this area. Using the combined knowledge of the literature review and the experiences that L.M. related to me in the interviews, I would recommend that teachers (particularly of marginal and marginalized students):

- view portfolio evaluation through a sense of classroom community to be a promising practice for the education of marginalized students
- take writing classes/workshops in which they are recipients of the portfolio evaluation methods L.M. uses in her classrooms
- have the opportunity to develop their community building skills in courses they take prior to getting into the classroom
- share the development of learning experiences with their students so that learning scaffolds onto their prior experiences, is relevant to their knowledge level and is personally meaningful
- explore promising teaching techniques that assist students to take responsibility for their learning, feel safe enough to give and receive critical feedback on their work, begin to view writing as a process not just a result and develop the valuable skills of self-assessment
- become proficient in utilizing various modes of representation in their teaching and support multiple perspectives so that their students experience role modeling of these abilities
- nurture their own metacognition and the self-awareness of the knowledge construction process in their students
- explore their own psycho-social and cultural biases while they build their coursework and deliver it
- encourage critical thinking skills in their students and display their own
- interact with students as coaches and facilitators, giving feedback, not forcing specific choices on the student
- protect students from bullying critics in their groups and classrooms and foster a safe environment for sharing and feedback
- model effective writing and critiquing behaviours at all times so that the student has a consistent, positive and instructive atmosphere in their learning environment

- request feedback on teaching skills from their students at least once a semester in an Edward de Bono style by asking to be told something positive, something negative, something interesting about how they teach
- keep the positive interactive relationship of formative evaluation for as long as possible during the term and be very clear with the student about progress so that there are no end of term summative surprises
- learn more about their students cultural language every day and employ acceptance when that cultural language may be different from their own and the majority of their students' experience

It is in building community, allowing students to be the masters of their own learning in areas that meet their individual requirements and in allowing them to construct their own meaning that the successful education of writing appears to reside.

Recommendations for Further Study

As I reviewed written documents, I found very little published on portfolio evaluation outside of the elementary classroom and nothing at all on portfolio evaluation as it pertains to marginalized peoples. I think this is an important gap. I have become very interested in exploring portfolio evaluation for marginalized peoples, most particularly First Nations, Métis and Inuit students, at various levels of education, including primary, secondary and post-secondary levels. I believe there is value in exploring student and teacher perspectives on the use of portfolio evaluation for writing instruction in schools:

- where marginalized students make up the bulk of the student body
- where students are largely from the dominant culture
- located in rural Canadian communities
- located in urban and rural communities from other countries

I recommend:

- creating teaching packages for portfolio evaluation of writing for marginalized students
- developing and teach workshops aimed at helping students and educators better utilize portfolio evaluation in their language arts courses

- exploring other promising practices in the education of marginalized students at all levels

One of the results of completing any research project is the knowledge that one has just scratched the surface of an issue. With respect to the topic of portfolio evaluation, there are still many more questions to be asked than were just answered. And questions are infinitely more valuable than answers when constructing knowledge or scaffolding on prior learning. These questions inspire me to continue on my academic path and to encourage other researchers to take up the task of exploring these topics as well. Other researchers may find new avenues from which to pursue this topic in greater depth. They may employ more diverse methodology in order to study the identified areas and publish their findings for a wider audience and thus allow rapid expansion of the scope of this learning.

When evaluating the value of this research, I found that it was significant as a practical expansion of the theoretical findings of previous research that was offered in the literature review. It explored the anecdotal knowledge of one instructor over a period of three decades of portfolio evaluation in the Saskatchewan and Alberta K-12 school system including the past six years in post-secondary institutions where the students are pre-service and in-service teachers. This study now stands as a resource to benefit teachers considering using portfolio evaluation for the teaching of writing and certainly for the teaching of writing to marginalized students. It can help inspire educators to try L.M.'s methods to build a cohesive community in their classes while preparing them for the unique needs of a writing environment based on constructivism. It shows promising practices with respect to the teaching of writing to marginal and marginalized students and classes.

Finally, and of foremost interest to me, is that this study inspires a need to further investigate the role of portfolio evaluation in the writing classroom especially pertaining to marginalized peoples, including immigrants and First Nations, Métis and Inuit students, in Saskatchewan and in Canada. I would like to develop course packages for writing classes that focus on constructivist pedagogy, community building and the use of formative and summative evaluations of writing portfolios for marginalized students and then track the use of these packages as well as the success of the participants.

This has become the greatest value of my research. I have become inspired to find promising practices that assist educators in practical, grass-roots ways and to improve the condition of the playing field for their marginalized students. I think that teaching writing with constructivist methodology and evaluating it formatively and summatively with the use of portfolios are both methods of great value to writing education today. I find that L.M, who generously shared the lived experiences of thirty years of the evolution of her teaching practice with respect to portfolio evaluation of writing, is in whole-hearted agreement.

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Appendix A

Letter of Consent for Participation in Research

1. Title of Study:

An Investigation of Formative and Summative Portfolio Assessment Methods

2. Purpose of Study:

The purpose of this study *A Narrative Analysis of Narrative Assessment of A Narrative Assessment of Formative and Summative Portfolio Assessment Methods* is to explore in depth one instructors' experiences in post-secondary writing courses. This qualitative study is designed to explore the development and effect of Narrative Assessment of A Narrative Assessment of Formative and Summative Portfolio Assessment Methods on the writing of post-secondary pre or in-service education students who are engaged in a writing-teacher education program. The current body of research has focussed on students within the primary and secondary educational institutions. This study is designed to extend the previous research parameters to access the eclectic methodology that is employed at the post-secondary level while educating the next wave of writing teachers.

3. Procedures of Study: With your approval I will conduct a minimum of 4 semi-structured interviews that will be audio-taped. These interviews will be conducted over a period of one month and be approximately one hour each. You will be requested to review and edit what has been transcribed until you are satisfied that it reflects what you meant to communicate. You will then authorize these edited transcripts of the interviews prior to them being used in the study. Your total time commitment will not exceed 8 hours.

4. **Risks of Study:** Your participation in this study is voluntary and you may stop the process and withdraw at any time. You will remain anonymous throughout the study and a pseudonym of your choosing will be used in the reports that are produced. There is a possibility that readers of this work may be able to identify you due to the location of the study and familiarity to my research, however there is minimal risk. If you withdraw from the study, all data collected from you will be destroyed.

5. **Storage of Data:** All tape recordings, written material and transcriptions for this study will be stored in a secure location with my supervisor Dr. Barry Brown, in accordance with the University of Saskatchewan guidelines on Behavioral Ethics. They will be held for at least five years. Identifying data, such as this consent form will be secured separately from the data for purposes of anonymity.

6. Dissemination of Results:

The data collected in this study and the subsequent interpretations are to be used for my thesis, scholarly papers and possible presentation at scholarly conferences.

If you have any questions about your participation or your rights as a participant in this study, you may contact: the Office of Research Services at the University of Saskatchewan (966-2084), myself, Mary Callele (933-0069) or my supervisor Dr. Barry Brown, Department of Communications and Technology (966-7550).

I, _____, consent to participate in this study: *A Narrative Analysis of Narrative Assessment of A Narrative Assessment of Formative and Summative Portfolio Assessment Methods*. I understand that this research project was reviewed and has been approved by the University of Saskatchewan

Behavioral Research Ethics Board on _____ . I am aware of the nature of the study and understand what is expected of me. I have a clear understanding of the risks of the study as outlined above. I understand that I may withdraw from this study at any time. A copy of this form has been given to me and I will receive a final report at the end of this study.

Participant

Researcher

Date

Appendix B

Letter of Consent for Data Transcript Release

Study Title:

An Investigation of Formative and Summative Portfolio Assessment Methods

I _____ have reviewed the complete transcripts of the interviews and have had the opportunity to add, alter, delete and ask questions of the researcher, Mary Callele. I hereby authorize the release of the transcripts to Mary Callele to be used in the manner described in the letter of consent. I have received a copy of this release form for my own records.

Participant

Date

Researcher