ELEMENTARY TEACHERS' CONCEPTIONS OF LISTENING

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ABSTRACT

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This research study investigated five elementary teachers' conceptions of listening positioned across a complex and diverse state of dialogue. Social studies educational researchers have promoted democratic discourse in various studies aimed at preparing teachers to cultivate active student citizenship. The absence of careful attention to the multifaceted dimensions of listening is a notable gap in current extant research related to classroom discussion. Educational philosophers, alternatively, have argued for the moral and intellectual virtues of listening on equal grounds to its dialogic counterpart: speaking. I synthesized writing from various fields and categorized listening into two broad domains: thin and thick listening. Thin listening, widely conceptualized in education, is further characterized as obedient and attentive listening. Deeper notions of thick listening fall into the subcategories of democratic, relational, and pedagogical listening.

Hermeneutic phenomenology is the research methodology guiding the methods and interpretative analyses undertaken in this study. Applying principles from phenomenologist Max van Manen, I framed interview questions for teachers to reflect on

the nature of listening in their classroom and everyday experiences. I read and listened to the interview transcripts and recordings numerous times with openness and wonder, yet with an understanding that interpretation is never free from judgment or situated perspective.

Findings revealed elementary teachers conceptualized listening under thicker terms when engaging in reflective analysis, although thin listening ideas remained present at times in their thinking about students, the classroom, and dialogue. This study arranged thick listening findings into four broad themes: a) listening to specific students activating new ideas about listening, b) the dynamic relationship between listening and being listened to, c) the connection between speaking, thinking, and listening (*interlistening*), and d) disturbed notions listening. The conceptions teachers disclosed are significant to elementary educators and researchers in social studies teacher education because thin notions prevail unchallenged, thus rendering an unbalanced and incomplete view of classroom dialogue. Inquiry into the nature and process of listening can inform future studies related to common classroom discussion frameworks, such as *Structured Academic Controversies* (SACs), that social studies researchers value in civic education.

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My humble study on listening could not have occurred without a mutual commitment to dialogue involving family members, friends, and many people in the field of education. I begin with my participants: "Caitlyn," "Christine," "Hope," "Jamie," and "Leah." Without you, the contents of this dissertation have no meaning or soul. Readers will find motivation, enlightenment, and authenticity in your stories. Spending hours with me exposing your vulnerabilities and hopes takes courage. I leave this experience in awe of your teaching, intellectual curiosity, and humanism.

I have spent nearly 20 years working in public education as a social studies teacher, social studies supervisor, and director of curriculum in three amazing yet different settings. Each day, I walk school hallways thinking about how fortunate I am to be part of this educational community. In my various roles, I have worked closely with roughly 800 educators from the school districts: Hunterdon Central Regional H.S., Scotch Plains-Fanwood Schools, and the "Quad" (Allendale, Ho-Ho-Kus, Northern Highlands Regional H.S., and Upper Saddle River Schools). I have "listened" to you all at some point over the years. Specifically, I want to acknowledge my close colleagues, mentors, and friends in public education who have pushed my thinking and given me companionship: Noel Baxter, Christopher Bellotti, Scott Bortnick, Amy D'Ambola, Marco DiMarcello, Dr. Jocelyn Dumaresq, Dr. William Fernekes, Paul Gorski, Dr. Margaret Hayes, and Kathleen Rosander. I would not be in this field without you.

Spending a small but significant portion of the last nine years at Teachers College has opened my mind to a wealth of new ideas and perspectives. One must walk outside the school doors to "listen" to a complicated world of education that has changed

vastly in the past decade, and TC was always that place for me. In particular, I want to thank Professor Margaret Crocco for her early encouragement and for showing me the landscape of social studies education. Professors Sandra Schmidt and Megan Laverty, readers of this study, provided me with critical insight into my own work. They taught me about nuances of doing inquiry that I will take with me way beyond this dissertation. You are both model scholars and caring individuals—thank you! To my "writing coach," Kate Sheeran-Swed, I still cannot punctuate correctly, but I am eternally grateful for your altruism and constructive feedback along the way. Professor William Gaudelli has been part of my entire "educational" life. I tried to carry his torch at HCRHS when he left and followed him enthusiastically to TC. Now, as I prepare to leave the program, I can only hope some of his wisdom will stick with me. I hope our Maplewood coffee meetings never cease. I cannot thank you enough for everything you have done as an advisor, a teacher, and a friend.

My family has stood with/by me in support of my educational pursuits over the years. While I try to be present in your lives, I know that I have not been able to fully attend (listen) to your needs. If anything, this study has taught me the importance of this value. I first want to acknowledge the enduring support of my extended family, beginning with my wife's parents, Christopher and Carolyn McCormack, Wayne and Amelia Robbins, and brother-in-law and sister-in-law, Jonathan and Erin Robbins, and their daughter, Violet. My sister, Carolyn Topinka, and her family, Michael, Lucas, and Tessa, have provided me with laughter and love. My parents, Jim and Ilene Cappello, are huge influences who have "listened" to my complaints, stories, and successes. They

maintain consistency in my life, provide closeness, and offer enduring love to our family.

Twenty-five years ago I saw a cute redhead girl on the high school bus. I stood in amazement of her beauty, never imagining we would be together to this day. Christy, my soul mate, you are my best friend and the glue keeping our growing (and complicated) family together. You provide me with inspiration and support every day. To Benjamin and Cassandra, my spirited, loving children, I really learned to "listen" from you. I will close my computer now and play catch or stroll your dolls across our floors because our time together is precious.

B. S.

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Chapter I

LISTENING'S MYSTERIES

"Scarlet Begonias"

As I was walkin' 'round Grosvenor Square
Not a chill to the winter but a nip to the air,
From the other direction, she was calling my eye,
It could be an illusion, but I might as well try, might as well try.

She had rings on her fingers and bells on her shoes.
And I knew without askin' she was into the blues.
She wore scarlet begonias tucked into her curls,
I knew right away she was not like other girls, other girls.

In the thick of the evening when the dealing got rough,
She was too pat to open and too cool to bluff.
As I picked up my matches and was closing the door,
I had one of those flashes I'd been there before, been there before.

Well, I ain't always right but I've never been wrong.
Seldom turns out the way it does in a song.
Once in a while you get shown the light
In the strangest of places if you look at it right.

Well, there ain't nothing wrong with the way she moves,
Scarlet begonias or a touch of the blues.
And there's nothing wrong with the look that's in her eyes,
I had to learn the hard way to let her pass by, let her pass by.

The wind in the willow's playin' "Tea for Two";
The sky was yellow and the sun was blue,
Strangers stoppin' strangers just to shake their hand,
Everybody's playing in the heart of gold band, heart of gold band.

(Garcia & Hunter, 1974, *From The Mars Hotel*, Track 5)

Sitting at Starbucks on a late afternoon for my second daily infusion of caffeine is a regular experience. Here, situated equidistant between school and home, I transition places preparing for the next day before entering a household of two young kids exhilarated to share their day with me. People who spend time at Starbucks know the scene: teenagers after school socializing, adults in suits with laptops and Excel spreadsheets on the table, and a mellow vibe of music playing in the background. My world cannot typically tolerate these distractions when focus and attention are required, yet this place has always been a comfortable zone for me. Today, while in the middle of writing, I am struck by the opening chords playing "Scarlet Begonias" by the Grateful Dead. I immediately realize that my focus is in grave jeopardy, but I persevere through the first stanza trying to erase the sweet noise in the background. This effort is terminated for the next five minutes of what is one of the most beautiful songs in my estimation—I must listen to it. Body attuned, I observe other people around me: two people waiting for coffee and texting, a young couple scouring the pastries for what is left from the morning baked items, and bubbly students chattering about their day. I wonder at this moment how anyone can go on functioning as they normally do while this song is playing in the background. It was not the first musical notes from the Grateful Dead that stopped me midway through an e-mail; it was hearing Jerry Garcia's voice. What did other people in Starbucks experience at this moment, I wonder?

Were they able to listen intently to "Scarlet Begonias" while simultaneously attending to life elsewhere? And, if others in the room also shared the same passionate love for this song, how would I ever know if they listened keenly to every note unless I asked them to describe their experience? The ability to understand how people think about hearing is strange and unexpectedly complicated.

Starbucks plays many albums and songs currently saved on my iPod, but few evoke the type of listening that occurred in the moment I described. This type of listening was the "world stops in its tracks, put everything else down, and be one with every second of music" type of listening. Qualitatively, I realize this type of listening is far different from the many forms of listening we experience every day. I become aware that my listening has nothing to do with Robert Hunter's lyrics, thinking deeply about my oneness with "Scarlet Begonias"; instead, it is Jerry Garcia's transformational electric guitar and unique voice that capture my attention. In fact, these words have little meaning in my transfixed world. The sounds of instrument and voice created an attuned listening experience for me. Just like the lyrics of "Scarlet Begonias," a song conjuring vivid imagery of the human senses, this listening mystery goes unquestioned. When the song ends, I go back to my e-mail, and my listening wondering abruptly ends.

Introduction: "It Could Be an Illusion, But I Might As Well Try . . . "

Listening is interwoven into human interactions and relationships to such an extent that we often ignore its presence, avoid its challenges, and fear its complexity. This rendering makes listening a phenomenon worth studying in education and society. How frequently do we inquire deeply into our listening experience and arrive at feelings of awe or confusion? I have listened to "Scarlet Begonias" hundreds of times without much thought to its evocative meaning, yet the moment described above caused me to pause and reflect about listening. People listen to music in so many ways—while painting a house or doing chores, driving a car on the freeway, or sitting with a cherished partner over an elegantly prepared meal—these other activities are often at the foreground of our concentration. And, the music serves as the backdrop. On occasion, the music and sound become the focus without warning or reason.

One's enthrallment with music does not necessarily depend on how much or little a listener prefers a particular song. Factors such as context, temporality, space, and mood all govern how we listen (Levin, 1989; Lipari, 2014). Nevertheless, there are flashes in our lives when our hearing becomes so attuned and we listen with such intensity that a whole-body experience occurs. Lisbeth Lipari (2014), an educational philosopher who writes about the phenomenon of listening, imagines a world in which the wholeness of listening is embodied with the type of energy and presence described in my anecdote: "What if our ears aren't really in our heads, but our whole body? What if our entire body is one listening organ, one great resonating chamber? What if we are, in some sense, all ears?" (p. 43). The human senses are powerful biological instruments to capture experiences. Sight, sound, touch, and smell are often conceived as separate from one

another even though they operate together, creating a particular meaning from the experience. Lipari's metaphor raises our awareness to the fact that listening, at times, takes over our bodies and our sensibility to perceive information. Questioning why I listen a certain way to "Scarlet Begonias" in a precise moment at Starbucks and how it penetrates my body and soul are central to my inquiry of seeking to uncover its mysterious qualities.

The world of music is a medium residing outside of my particular research interest and expertise. Nonetheless, like many people, I commonly find listening moments of revelation through music. Wondering about how people listen transcends one distinct arena where the harmony of sounds, by design, may captivate the listener. Listening by and through Lipari's all-body description is something humans do experience in dialogue on particular occasions of reflection and questioning, which changes how we think, act, or respond to others. Sometimes, this occurs without serious attention to our conceptions about listening and how they are formed.

This opening chapter uncovers facets related to the mystery of listening as it pertains to dialogue. A close look at the phenomenon of sound from a philosophical lens will be complemented by the anecdotes, musings, and reflections collected through my phenomenological hermeneutic interviews with five elementary school teachers. My listening journey, wrapped within the listening experiences of my research participants, adds another dimension and personal context to my writing. Moreover, I will situate my inquiry of listening in social studies education, a place where classroom discussions are valued and cultivated to varying degrees. Locating listening in social studies education

has a deep connection to my dissertation research and to the listening education that teachers in my study experienced through reflective inquiry.

My arrival at a phenomenological study of listening resulted from the confluence of many experiences, all aimed at probing the nature of listening in dialogue. French philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy (2007) stated: " . . . to listen is to be straining toward a possible meaning, and consequently one that is not immediately accessible" (p. 6). Nancy's phrase, "straining toward a possible meaning," is significant because of the numerous forces making complex what is taken in through the ears relative to what we process cognitiviely and emotionally, as humans. Accessing meanings associated with listening requires deep reflection, an inquisitive spirit, and acceptance of the ongoing and uncertain nature of this process.

This approach, adopted fully in my own thinking and methodology, leads me to a primary research inquiry: *What are elementary teachers' conceptions of listening?* Within this larger question, I also seek to reveal teachers' conceptions about the nature and types of listening. Elementary teachers experience many dimensions of listening everyday—inviting, nurturing, and enacting it, while also sometimes reducing its possibilities with young students. The research question is not crafted with an intent to seek conclusive findings related to educational research. Adopting a hermeneutic phenomenological methodology involves exploring the essence of a particular notion, in this case listening, as a full inquiry into features that are not immediately accessible to people who experience it often. This study's methodology bridges two distinct, yet often complementary research traditions: phenomenology and hermeneutics. Phenomenologically, the lifeworld of elementary teachers will be revealed through

numerous anecdotes illuminating meaning to their listening conceptions. The hermeneutic thrust of my research methodology, however, will be embodied throughout this text as a result of my open, full, and critical interpretations of teachers' stories and reflections.

My intent is for readers to gain unique insights into how a small group of teachers conceive of listening. Their listening will not be discretely compartmentalized or synthesized into one form, yet I will present hierarchal categories of thin and thick conceptions I assign based on my interpretations of philosophical writing and personal experiences. Context, purpose, institutions, identity, and relationships embodied in listening all contribute heavily to the conceptions teachers disclosed. Considering the implications of my interpretations of teachers' conceptions of listening, I will argue that social studies educational researchers interested in investigating classroom discussion have failed to substantively attend to listening conceptions, particularly rich and diverse notions in their empirical studies. They should consider the complicated nature of listening in dialogue complementarily to the role that speaking plays for teachers facilitating venues for students' active participation, civil discourse, and advancement of citizenship education aims. In addition, I will claim the process of engaging in reflection of individual listening conceptions resulted in teachers educating themselves, subsequently attaining robust and dynamic notions that were absent prior to my study.

The Listening Phenomenon

Listening is a mystery at many levels, but the term *mystery* demands attention first before describing its attributes. Mystery has many implications and connotations. For

example, in the literary genre of suspense, one reads novels where a mystery involves a puzzle, often a crime, with unknown circumstances, where arriving at a solution is the reader's goal. With this perspective in mind, I am seeking to illuminate certain undetermined dimensions of listening in order to arrive at an understanding of its meaning, thus solving an existing mystery. A different association of mystery removes the element of solution and takes the enigma as it is, either attaining fuller comprehension of its presence or acknowledging that it cannot be fully understood. In the context of listening, I establish it will remain a mystery despite my attempt to reveal its qualities through phenomenological inquiry, though sometimes it is treated as a problem to solve.

A brief analysis of listening's mystery should begin with a discussion about its absence in discourse. This is the initial concern philosophers wonder about and critique. Listening's nearness to its counterpart—speaking—must indeed be acknowledged: "Perhaps we can start out by admitting that there could be no saying without hearing" (Fiumara, 1990, p. 1). This assertion presumes a position that humans would have no speech—no content or idea to express—without the sense of hearing. From this position, listening is conceptually cast as the catalyst for everything we utter, regardless of the context, setting, or situation. Educational philosophers concur that dialogue could not transpire without listening, yet they contend that listening is undertheorized and understudied (Garrison, 1996; Haroutunian-Gordon, 2003).

Each and every moment of human existence is a series of sensory experiences that could cloud our minds if each sense, taken on its own, were to be examined, interpreted, and studied for how we make meaning of the things happening around us. We live in a visual world that privileges sight as the definitive, often empirical source of meaning

evident in Enlightenment thinking and writing, but also omnipresent today in the media-saturated communication of 21st-century living (Fiumara, 1990; Levin, 1989). Hearing and listening, alternatively, are subjugated in a culture seeking visualization.

Martin Heidegger (1971) exposed the impenetrable state of being in a world seen: "Vocalization and sounds may no doubt be explained physiologically as a production of sounds. But the question remains whether the real nature of the sounds and tones of speech is thus ever experienced and kept before our eyes" (p. 65). Phenomenologist Don Ihde (2007) built on Heidegger, capturing perception humans routinely experience that bare hearing and listening at foreground of meaning. These perceptions are typically framed through sight, as Ihde revealed in phenomenological work involving listening and voice. For example, our heads turn when a jumbo jet passes by. We often look upward, peering through clouds and frustrated by the inability to see the plane we hear. Similarly, Ihde described the phenomenon of bird watching, where the bird watcher listens discriminatively to the sounds birds make and is often left eluded to its form in sight. Put differently, philosopher Nancy (2007) considered this relationship between the senses: "I can hear what I see: a piano, or some leaves stirred by the wind. But I can never see what I hear" (p. 10). Lastly, Ihde (2007) suggested sound and hearing can lead to intense meaning, an experience perhaps less common than sight:

> In physical terms the mosquito buzzing outside the window produces only one-quadrillionth of a watt of power; yet one hears it with annoyance, even if one can't see it. And the moment trained listening is considered, feats of discrimination become more impressive. (p. 7)

The improbable juxtaposition of miniscule electrical impulses next to the intensity of meaning created from the sound generated by the mosquito resonates because there are many instances where subtle noises influence experience. This reference also has an

added dimension of demonstrating how our listening heightens at unlikely and unpredictable moments.

Philosophers interested in the phenomenology of sound provide some insight into the mystery of listening. It may be the mosquito's piercing sounds that draw attention from our ears to our whole body's consciousness. Alternatively, our attunement to the mosquito's sounds could be based on intuitive or experiential fear of this creature's bite or an association to similar sounds from other instruments. While sight often prevails over sound (and silence) in the human condition, we can learn about the particularly sonorous sensibilities hearing opens when looked at with a phenomenological approach. Even so, discovering the complicated nature of listening is a demanding proposal, given the privileged stance of sight.

Locating Listening in Social Studies Education

> Courage is what it takes to stand up and speak; courage is also what it takes to sit down and listen. (Churchill, quoted in Campbell, 2011, p. 69)

Courage is an ideal that is explicitly taught across social studies classrooms, typically through vivid portrayals of brave soldiers' missions on the battlefield or bold sacrifices made by revolutionary activists fighting for equal rights amid tense opposition. Students' understanding of courage is conjured through images teachers routinely frame when teaching about human history, and these meanings will stay with them long after they leave the classroom. Jonathan Lear (2008), a philosopher whose work is read across multiple disciplines, invited readers to consider other notions of courage by providing a psychological, ethical, and historical analysis of the Crow Chief, Plenty Coups in *Radical*

Hope. Specifically, he explored how a thin meaning of courage, a principle governed by the beliefs embodied in warrior culture that is no longer possible, systematically shifts through Plenty Coups' vision for life on a reservation. Lear's analysis of courage here honors the imaginative capacity of a key American figure that sought to culturally equip his people with cognitive and emotional tools necessary to flourish in the face of adversity. For readers, Lear creates different possibilities of meaning for a guiding principle, courage, that others might consider when interpreting history and social issues.

My brief detour into the multifaceted meanings of courage has important connotations to listening in a democratic society, which writ large serve as the bedrock and inspiration for my research study. Attuned listening, either taken for granted or held inferior to speaking, matters a great deal in education, particularly in social studies education where progressive, constructivist, and democratic aims are often espoused, if not aggressively pursued. It requires courage to attend to listening with the same commitment that is given to speaking in a participatory democracy, an understanding Lear illuminated through analysis of Plenty Coups. Indeed, we must act *courageously* in an environment largely lacking in deep engagement with public issues, deliberative thinking, dialogic encounters, and meaningful involvement of students and educators in decision-making processes. Closer analysis of listening conceptions and their relation to speaking in dialogue is thus a relatively untapped opportunity for democratic educators.

Situating Lear's conceptual analysis of courage within my own exploration of listening conceptions has added connections. Lear (2008) characterized thicker notions of courage, imagined by Plenty Coups for his people, that were not previously considered as a way of life and cultural survival. My message in this dissertation is to raise

researchers' awareness to varied conceptions of listening and its varying degrees of depth and complexity. Recognizing complicated notions of listening may open horizons to its place in classroom discussion.

A Snapshot of Classroom Discussion and Listening in the Social Studies

Classroom discussion can be a powerful vehicle for embodying democratic education (Parker, 2003). In the field of social studies education, classroom discussion is a topic prominently examined by civic educators seeking democratic pathways and experiences. Enactment of democratic classroom discussions often encompasses students investigating social or historical issues, formulating informed perspectives on their learning, and preparing and participating in structured classroom discussions with peers (e.g., political strangers) to further advance, question, or complicate knowledge gained from these educational experiences (Parker, 2003, 2006, 2010). While many research studies have explored these highly constructed dialogic experiences, practices of deliberation, dialogue, and decision making are often suffused within an academic and social culture that promotes democratic discourses (Preskill, 1997).

Many social studies professionals seek and advance democratic aims in discussions, yet extant research suggests classroom dialogue is an elusive pedagogical occurrence for teachers (Larson, 2000a). Parker and Hess (2001) found that even the most adept, experienced educators struggle fiercely with their own practice teaching *with* and *for* discussion. Beyond classroom pedagogy, the political weight of high-stakes testing pressures has brought about "changes in instructional practices that are designed more to improve scores than to facilitate genuine student learning" (Stevenson &

Waltman, 2005, p. 4). These shortcomings have propagated numerous studies on how teachers ought to organize, facilitate, and evaluate classroom discussions in social studies settings.

Findings from social studies research signal problems associated with classroom discussion, but few researchers from this field have embarked on the complex nature of dialogue itself, such as the relationship between speaking and listening. Listening is a rarely studied element of dialogue, and it is habitually framed as passive, hierarchal, and strictly behavioral (Schultz, 2003). Paradoxically, listening is both pervasive in all dialogic exchanges and largely omitted from educational research related to classroom discussion (Campbell, 2011; Jalongo, 1995). Attuned listening, for example, is crucial to citizens who are bombarded with asynchronous communication, complex media forms, and limitless amounts of information from diverse points of view and authors (Bentley, 2000). But listening in a 21st-century social and global context is relatively lacking in curriculum and instructional planning, as well as the resources used to guide students in classroom dialogue (Wolvin & Coakley, 2000).

Listening, *Logos*, and Assertive Discourse

Heraclitus first coined the term *logos* as having broad meanings associated with rational discourse. Later, Aristotle and other Greek philosophers narrowed its definition by focusing on the rhetorical act of reasoned argument. The notion of engaging another person in dialogue about a mutually relevant topic for the purpose of advancing one's state of knowledge or being in the world clearly presents an important role of listening. Nonetheless, philosophers such as Martin Heidegger and Gemma Corradi Fiumara have

asserted that the full meaning of *logos* has not translated into myriad disciplines of writing, or, even more significantly, into the culture and fabric of human relations. This limited view of *logos* is crucial to unpack because it resounds across and within social studies educational research related to classroom discussions.

Heidegger investigated the Greek roots of the word *logos*. In *Early Greek Thinking* (1975), he explained *logos* is generally linked to saying and talking as opposed to hearing and listening. Interpreting Heraclitus' writing and delving deeper etymologically, Heidegger drew attention to "a similarly sounding legen: to lay down and lay before" (p. 60). From legen, he views a different and broader term, *logos*, to mean "laying" and "gathering" or "letting-lie-before-which is gathered into itself" (p. 63). This reading is crucial when interpreting hearing as much more than sound reverberations going in and out of a person's ear, involving a gathering of sort that defines the notion Heidegger named as hearkening.

Heidegger's reading of *logos* has not appeared prominently in Western culture and thinking for many reasons. Fiumara (1990) proclaimed that interpreting a "letting-lie-together-before" connotation of *logos* "may sound banal or even incomprehensible" to many readers (p. 7). She described a "hardness" to which people resort when encountering "problems of logic" potentially leading to a "listening [that is] stifled" (p. 7). For the most part, structured academic discussions pursued in social studies classrooms are orchestrated with antithetical aims to Heidegger's and Fiumara's reading of *logos*.

To present a fairly typical glimpse of a social studies discussion highlighting this tension: a fifth grade class explores the benefits and drawbacks of raising the federal

minimum wage. Students are assigned positions and resources to review. To culminate their exploration, these students prepare for a classroom debate by formulating a defined position with evidence and reasons to support their claim.

The social studies class reconvenes for a staged debate in which students, with prepared positions, argue for or against raising the federal minimum wage. Considering alternative points of view is an explicit goal many teachers espouse in classroom debates, yet the pedagogical structures and discourses may implicitly evade the "gathering" and "laying" meanings of *logos* Heidegger theorized. Fiumara (1990) postulated our students' dialogic dispute fall at this point into the existing "logacratic culture." Her characterization of this culture concluded that we become "anchored to assertive discourse," acquiring more evidence or support to reinforce our stance, frozen in our own ideological positions (p. 7).

Fiumara (1990) believed this is the place where interpretation of *logos* is misguided. Rather than take a listening stance, she asserted: "In simple speaking all we can do is keep repeating these antitheses, thus uprooting language from a wider and deeper context in which the vast realm of listening can be included" (p. 7). Heidegger's interpretation of *logos* as gathering fits suitably in this case, which he described in contrast to the mere sound reverberated from ear to ear. The *in-one-ear-out-the-other* maxim is the type of listening students may actually enact while debating the federal minimum wage because they are not necessarily taught otherwise and are immersed in a society where this form of listening is pervasive. They may hear every word of a rebuttal presented before them on the topic, so much in fact that they carry the precise words used against them in response. Further, the fifth grade debate on raising federal minimum

wages is a hypothetical example of classroom discourse regularized through consistent instructional activity that simulates speaking and listening behaviors not ordinarily experienced in authentic dialogic encounters. The staged qualities of debate, much like communicative habits students might acquire watching various media, can draw students away from fuller meaning of the *logos* they might actually experience in real-life discussions.

An honest evaluation of *logos* in Western society leads me to consider whether Heidegger's reading of *logos*, "letting-lie-before-which is gathered into itself," has potential in broadening our own horizons of listening's meaning. However, there are many dynamics of schools and society that cultivate the assertive discourse that prevents listening from taking place from a stance of gathering. My analysis of listening's conceptions—seen through conversations with elementary teachers and review of social studies educational research—reveals that a narrow, damaging view of *logos* could be a conceptual and cultural force that reduces listening from the start of dialogue.

Responding to Listening's Complexity

I will now shift from the phenomenon of listening and how I frame it in the field of social studies education to situating elementary teachers' conceptions of listening. In later chapters, I will provide readers with an extensive description of their conceptions of listening, as well as the various roles, registers, and contexts for listening. The experience of participating in my study, I will maintain, created an unforeseen occasion for reflective inquiry resulting in educating oneself about listening in dialogue. First, this introductory section reveals how elementary teachers navigate the mysterious attributes

of listening. Second, I will provide readers with a glance at how elementary teachers recognized key moments when they educated themselves on the nature and process of listening. These angles are integral to grounding and interpreting the ideas generated from my central research question.

Quizzical dimensions of listening are apparent in educators' lives, though a teacher's conception of its mystery is going to appear quite different from that of philosophers who study phenomenology. Leah, a teacher in my research study, compared listening to involuntary bodily systems: "We breathe all day without even considering how it actually occurs, but we know it works." Ubiquity of the listening experience, right or wrong, is a chief reason why humans—teachers in this case—give it little more than a passing thought. However, after initially examining the experience of sound entering the ear and associating it with the broader meaning-making interpretations that listening demands, teachers' notions of listening morphed to matters of complexity. As Caitlyn, another teacher in my study, put it: "Many people *won't go there* [nature of listening] when they realize how much personal reflection and intricacy listening involves." The awkward silences, pained facial expressions, and eventual stuttering formulation of meanings that ensued when prompted to consider the nature of listening is difficult to encapsulate in language. But each teacher exhibited these physical manifestations repeatedly when pushed to probe conceptions about listening they had never considered.

One teacher, Hope, recalled a conversation she had with her first grade students that does reveal with greater clarity how listening becomes a mystery when a young child is confronted with explaining, even defining, its core dimensions.

> First grade students eagerly assemble at "the carpet" occupied by many before them. This is a place where all-important happenings occur—the mini-lesson, ripe topics for discussion, a place to present all things that matter to six-year old children. It is the second day of school. Mrs. V. invites her co-inhabitants to define the rules and norms that her small community should honor at school. Typical responses relating to safety, respect, and order are expressed with confidence and authenticity. At one point, a girl exclaims that listening to the teacher and friends at all times is very important. Seeking clarity to this assertion, Mrs. V. responds, "Can you tell me what it means to listen?" The young girl seemed surprised by this query, causing a rash of clumsy phrases, " . . . you know what I mean, listening; you know, it's kind of like, listening." Mrs. V. spares the girl of her obvious cognitive discomfort when clearly paralyzed by her inability to communicate. Indeed, when faced with the proposition of putting simple words to an all-encompassing phenomenon, Mrs. V. chose a unique approach entirely appropriate to the six-year-old mindset: What if I were from a different planet and had no idea of what listening means? How would you explain it to me? Immediately, students captivated by illustrations of aliens invading earth, shouted, "so, they don't talk, they don't tickle, they get their brains ready."

The student's response demonstrates how listening is pervasive, complex, and ambiguous when one is asked to define it. Using the example of aliens looking in from the outside, Hope transferred the girl's senses from hearing to seeing. She realized that this student did not have the capacity to express the meaning of listening. Hope could have countered with questions, such as "What is it like to listen?" or "What happens to you when you listen?" Instead, she "flipped the switch" on the student's senses to guide her toward a construction of meaning that was less mysterious. Working with young children, Hope's reference point was a clever way to draw attention to the fact that listening is difficult to describe even though it happens all of the time. Asking the questions I posed might further expose the challenges of listening that are otherwise taken for granted by six-year-old students.

Teachers could not imagine activating the senses in the way Ihde (2007) and Nancy (2007) presented in their phenomenological writings. In fact, they had not

previously conceived of listening's nature. This response was evident in Hope's communicative adjustments:

> I've removed the term 'listening' from my vocabulary. At first, I would catch myself slipping. Instead of calling someone to listen I now use specific language to describe what I am seeking. In the classroom, I check students' "listening" by asking them if they understand what was said. Recently, I was involved in a heated debate with a neighbor who was not "listening" to me. He had not internalized meaning to my words, but rather than challenging his "listening" stance, I told him that he has not considered a different point of view than what he is asserting. I started to notice that my communication with people has improved realizing "listening" has no real purpose or meaning for many.

While the removal of a common word may seem inconsequential on the surface, it has in this case enhanced dialogue for one teacher involved with my study. What is the significance of removing listening from a person's vocabulary? Hope made a conscious, thoughtfully engineered decision to elude a mystery that accompanies listening. She believed using the term can lead to a vague, incomplete, or misdirected meaning from how listening was framed in discourse. Referencing a conversation with a neighbor who does not share the robust ideas about listening that the act entails suggests Hope viewed listening as having varied degrees, dimensions, and language associated within it.

The notion of eliminating listening from one's vocabulary suggests some people may adapt creatively to respond to its mysterious dimensions. This act, and others described to this point, should not be confused with an attempt to "crack the code," or in other terms, solve the mystery of listening. Instead, Hope sought to improve her communication and understanding in interpersonal relations by removing "listening" from her own vocabulary. Her discouragement led to a decision that sought to avoid meaning lost or misinterpretation when the term is broadly applied.

Educating Ourselves About Listening

How do we educate our conceptions of listening? To start, I assert that listeners effectively distinguish between sounds, nonverbal language, and meanings received in the hearing process. This transaction, however, only captures an element of listening. Full listening demands engaging the mind, body, and spirit in a way that is active and participatory. This dynamic all-body movement is not always summoned when we hear from a passive stance. The research participants in this study each described moments when they were more educated about their listening from an active and participatory stance.

The many interpretations of teachers' listening conceptions articulated in this research project are indistinguishably united within notions I bring to this subject. Moreover, my journey toward studying listening encountered a series of moments, both similar and variant to those of the teachers described. These ideas are expressed through reflective inquiry and short anecdotes, beginning with the one below, as profound education about listening.

> I scurried on a dark rainy night, after a long day of work, to get my three-year-son into his car seat. We'd picked up Greek food at a local restaurant. With a child in daycare all day and two working parents just trying to survive on a Friday, we were anxious to get our food and get home. Our son was noticeably irritable that evening. When we left the restaurant, I hurried Benjamin in his car seat while looking to escape the crowded parking lot. He was mumbling something at me while I focused on securing the belt buckles. As he repeated his words even louder, I got frustrated and asked him to sit still. He then thrust forward and belted me right in the face. Caught by surprise, I took a step backward and paused. My wife noticed and immediately asked sternly: "Why did you hit daddy?" His response was, 'Because he did not *listen* to me."

This particular story from several years ago stands out to me, even though similar interactions happened on countless other occasions. The everyday interactions of

parenthood involve numerous complicated actions and dialogue—too many to even think about. Nevertheless, this particular event left a strong impression for several reasons. While driving home, I reflected on what *listening* means to my son rather than the act of hitting. This incident occurred, coincidentally, on the same day I had had a difficult conversation with an elementary teacher in which I asked her to consider taking down a commercial poster displaying parochial notions of good listening.

In my 15 years as a social studies educator and school administrator, I have been committed to cultivating a classroom filled with rich, open, and democratic dialogue. My journey with/for/to discussion started when teaching high school and expanded to my professional world in numerous collegial and adult learning situations. A few questions continue to perplex me: How can my son, who lives with a father embodying active and complicated notions of listening, develop such a narrow conception at a young age? Do I teach my son to listen well, if at all? Seen in a different light, was my son enacting a more complicated notion of listening that I, at that time, was closed to considering?

Becoming a parent challenges every potential listening fiber in the human body. Beyond the literal words a child chooses to speak, a father must listen to his diction, tone, volume, and bodily expression. There are sounds radiating from a child's body—screams, cries, laughs, and grunts—as well as silence that must be *listened to*. Becoming a parent invoked a listening stance and sensitivity unlike any other experience or relationship previous to the birth of my son. A three-year-old stubbornly attacking me from a defenseless position in a car seat may not have reflected on his choice of words at that time, listening. Or, he might have had acute awareness of the fullness listening requires between father and son over the course of a lifelong relationship.

My brief anecdote represents one example that demonstrates reflective inquiry bridging my research interests with my personal relationships. Myriad listening stances and conceptions are penetrating my home, work, and research. They appear at different times and places in my role as a parent, life partner, sibling, son, and friend. In part, this stage of life is when I reconsidered notions related to my listening.

Leading adult educators in schools requires a type of listening different from the listening involved teaching children. Like an out-of-tune piano receiving services, my listening conceptions have tweaked and turned while working closely with teachers, principals, and other school leaders that ultimately seek to be *listened to*. Shifting roles from the teacher standing in front of the classroom to the evaluator sitting on the outside watching initiated an entirely different listening role. My peripheral listening—being able to hear through what sounds are immediately audible—surfaced when I was a classroom observer. Listening to 25 students and a teacher, the classroom community, is an overwhelming endeavor for someone seeking to interpret multiple meanings from the countless sounds and auditory experiences at any given time. Listening empathetically, compassionately, discriminatively, critically, and pedagogically, all explored in later sections, enables me to develop perspectives that occupy my experience in school leadership. The amplified listening required while working closely with adults contributes to this same idea of educating our listening selves.

I approach my thinking about listening with humility. That is, despite seeking a lifelong journey to evolve as a listener, for me it will never be complete or perfect. An intense disagreement with a colleague at work exposed my limitations as a listener due to the fact I was unable or unaware of the need to open my mind as a listener. Indeed, my

listening conceptions were pushed further out of my zone of understanding as a result of recent events described in this brief anecdote.

> "I am a forty-eight-year-old man. I will not be talked to this way; I refuse. In a different setting, two men who disagree use other measures to resolve conflict." These were the words he bellowed at me, nostrils flared. It took every ounce of restraint, I could see, for him not to take a swing at me. Over the years I have not managed to elicit even a murmur of irritation, much less the rage angled directly at me during this heated moment in the principal's office. I was agitated, confused, and speechless. Our conflict was over a test. For the past three weeks, we'd maintained our disagreement over assessment over e-mail, with spectators eating popcorn on the sidelines. I initiated the conflict by assertively contesting that the social studies department tests were entirely one-dimensional, unfair, and unjust. It was only a short time before our argument that I'd witnessed special education students with hundreds of flash cards banging their heads against desks yelling, "Why me?" Seeking an informed and reasonable outcome, I coalesced loads of research and evidence for a winning case: Ditch the fill-in-the-blank. There was no way any rational social studies leader could contest my highly analytical argument. His stance, engraved in stone, was "we know it works. Our kids do well, and there is no reason to change. Plus, if we [the social studies department] do consider changing our tests, it will be on our watch, not yours." The principal finally had enough with two grown men visibly undone. He interceded by ending the dispute. It was over for a period but has really never ended.

This was the first, and to this point the only, serious and sustained argument I have experienced in education. What remains a mystery to me, however, is how a person convinced that he listens fully and with openness managed to temporarily shut down his ears and body throughout this prolonged disagreement. Lipari (2014) summed up what was needed in this case: ". . . misunderstanding opens the doorway to the ethical relation by inspiring (or frustrating) us to listen more closely to others, to inquire more deeply into their differences, and to question our own already well-formed understanding of the world" (p. 8). Considering points of view quite different from my own is a conventional listening practice embodied in the hearing, thinking, and processing of information. That approach works differently when one's core principles, passions, and life's work are

scrutinized. What finally emerged from my reflection was that I never *truly* listened to this individual. I heard every word he uttered with such precision and accuracy that it became fodder for our next verbal exchange, a clear piece of evidence of Fiumara's (1990) "we remain anchored in assertive discourse" sentiment. Political theorists and philosophers have contended that we are not adequately equipped institutionally nor engaged under appropriate social norms to listen in conflict (Bickford, 1996; Welton, 2010).

I conceived of this person's life story and his traditional stance on teaching history. I had witnessed others around me become victim to his scorn, yet I never *truly* listened to him. Listening to his language, tone, and tact more fully would have made me think from a different angle. Listening to him would have rendered a different outcome rather than one that evolved towards a winner-take-all courtroom debate between two attorneys. That argument moved us no closer to consensus or to the discovery of value in his point of view. Listening and seeking agreement are not the aims sought here. Alternatively, listening to a person in a conflict requires accessing the wholeness of the person and his message in order to formulate a better response. I would not have retorted as I did if I had truly listened. Educating my listening self required a deep-rooted argument with another person that included high stakes on a matter of principle. A listening conception that is open, malleable, and hospitable works well until things become really difficult. I learned through reflection and application of a different stance that, had I been listening differently throughout this conflict, the inevitable misunderstandings could have been mitigated.

Educating Our Listening Through *Interest*

> College was a blur. Mostly I was either tired or zoned out in class. I was always in the present thinking about the next party or social event I had planned. Old professors, men with beards and glasses, sat above me behind a lecturn spewing information about abnormal pscyhology or an obscure event from ancient history. I could care less. My mind was completely immersed in my social world, and there were hundreds of people in large halls who were no different than me. In college, ironically, I did not have a voice or platform to think; it was all about the listening. Still, there was not an ounce of listening occuring in my body. I *became* a listener in graduate school. That is when I *became* a teacher, invigorated with a purpose for my life calling me to listen.

Jamie, a second grade teacher participating in my study, shared an honest assessment about her listening experience. Reflecting on experiences from long ago, each teacher in my study identified particular moments when their listening conceptions were awakened. Their bodies and minds might not have qualitatively morphed to listen differently, but their reflective awareness of their listening signaled a cognitive shift. Jamie's unabashed college reminiscing suggests her listening education was triggered by interest, though not the type of everyday whimsical interests that come and go. Instead, Jamie's interest is best represented within John Dewey's (1916) writings: "Interest in learning from all the contacts of life is the essential moral interest" (p. 165). Dewey (1913) used the literal meaning of interest, "inter-esse" as "to be between," in various essays to signify the difference between passing or static interests educators might mistake for students' engagement in educational experiences, compared to a more dynamic, enduring type of interest which should be a state sought in classrooms. In *Interest and Effort in Education*, Dewey expounded on the meaning of interest as an embodying force of movement and growth necessary in education:

> As we have already seen, it is one thing to make, say, numbers interesting by merely attaching to it other things that happen to call out a pleasurable reaction; it

> is a radically different sort of thing to make it interesting by introducing it so that it functions as a genuine means of carrying on a more inclusive activity. In the latter case, interest does not mean the excitation due to the association of some other thing irrelevant to number; it means that number is of interest because it has a function in the furtherance of a continuous or enduring line of activity. (pp. 42-43)

Dewey theorized interest by contrasting rote mathematical exercises students routinely performed with activities contextualized in a meaningful application of mathematics humans might encounter in the world. The parallel association between robotic performance of mathematics and listening holds significant meaning when one considers a dormant listening conception—a going-through-the-motions experience. For Jamie, her listening conception grew thicker, a point she could explicitly define in her educational career when "[she] identified [her]self with, or has found [her]self in, a certain course of action" (Dewey, 1913, p. 43). Did Jamie listen differently when a notion of interest akin to Dewey filled her being? Entering graduate school for the purpose of launching a career is the turning point many individuals claim sparks the type of interest Jamie describes and is present in Dewey's writing.

A possible interpretation of Jamie's remembrance is how closely associated the deep and durable form of interest is to listening. Indeed, she asserted that her deeper conception of listening coincided with the lifelong commitment to become an educator. The listening conception that Jamie pronounced carries relevance later as she, and many others, ascribed student listening to interest and her conception of the role of teacher in education. It is no mystery that a person inspired to pursue a life calling becomes interested in the subject matter and methodology essential for honing that craft, being an educator. Nevertheless, Jamie's mindfulness of her listening state in relation to finding interest in her career bears exploration and inquiry into her listening education.

Educating Our Listening Through Classroom Dialogue

As I have posited, the close relationship between speaking and listening in dialogue can be construed in many ways. Nevertheless, many people view speaking and listening in a binary relationship in the sense that one is either a listener or a speaker. Two teachers, Caitlyn and Leah, expressed notable insights into the listener-speaker relationship, specifically citing adolescent experiences in which each was educated about her listening through participation in classroom dialogue. In this respect, both teachers' conception of listening was turned around from the conventionally dualist perspective, either-or variety, in that listening was attuned from becoming a speaker. Caitlyn drew on her high school classroom experiences, describing structured debates and discussions related to controversial topics. Her listening in these settings changed from compliance, defining her childhood, to "organic conversations where students had the opportunity to respond to their peers and ask questions." Leah described her listening education at the same chronological period of her life, yet her orientation was situated in more nuanced fashion:

> By junior and senior year I was starting to come into my own. Yes, some people would label me as the social butterfly. I was friendly with many groups of people. In the yearbook, I won the "nicest to different people" award. This is the same time academically I flourished in the classroom with my grades and participation. Teachers recognized this change in me, too. I began to realize that I spoke and listened with *confidence*, and I attribute both occurring at the same time as contributing to my academic and social advancement.

Like Caitlyn, who credited increased involvement in classroom dialogues both in the speaking and listening realm, Leah went a step further by classifying both acts in concert with one another and, notably, with confidence. Most individuals can place words to the phrase "speaking with confidence," but what does it mean to "listen with

confidence"? Listening with confidence will be explored conceptually at a later point; however, Leah's brief description taken from her high school recollections reveals this notion as an openness and willingness to accept other ideas, weigh these conflicting ideas against one another, and respond to what is spoken. More importantly, Leah's reflections demonstrate that attaining a fuller conception of listening corresponded to her participation in classroom dialogue.

> I considered myself the model student from first grade literally through the early stages of college. Teachers would talk at me. I would sit there politely and take notes without ever considering intervening. It was not in my mindset or character to behave differently. It wasn't until college that I started to feel a bit more confident or comfortable seeing people in smaller classes after becoming an anthropology major. There was a kid, in particular, I noticed who would continuously interrupt or what would be viewed as talking over the teacher. I thought, "Wow, he's really rude, why would he even do that?" Surprisingly, the teacher did not react. She just kept engaging him in conversation. I, on the other hand, never interrupted. I'd just wait for someone to finish speaking. The teacher permitting the student to behave this way showed me a different type of listening I never considered. It was the give-and-take type of listening, not evident in school but part of everyday life that I never experienced.

Hope's recognition of the multifaceted dimensions of listening occurred at a similar age and context, but her listening arousal was spurred on by witnessing modeling from a teacher. Her listening conceptualization changed based on thinking about the nature of interruption. Studying classrooms and Socratic dialogues, Hartounian-Gordon and Meadows (2009) explored the role of speaking and listening interruptions as integral for true listening to take place in fulfilling and enriching conversations. Specifically, she believed listening attunes when interrupted by an idea, a process that prompts one to formulate a question. Interruption, this way, is not viewed as an act of defiance or disrespect, which is typically a behavior not sanctioned in schools. Instead, the student Hope referenced was interrupted in thought, thereby provoking a question or response at

a particular moment in dialogue. Seeing vastly different behavior exhibited provoked Hope to rethink her conception of listening, and it led her to introspection of her own participation. She went on:

> That experience impacted me tremendously as a person. The role of the listener was just to listen; you don't interrupt, you don't talk over someone, you're clearly taking everything in, processing it. Then, you respond when spoken to or prompted to. Seeing this boy in college affected me because he was really smart and wound up being in most of my classes. But, it was in this food and culture class, my favorite class of all that caused me to really think about listening. And, that fact she [the professor] was fine with it and he kept doing it. I would notice later that other professors really didn't mind if students did it [interrupted]. There was just something in me telling me, "no, that's not your role. You're not supposed to be doing that."

The internal strife Hope underwent in college clearly influenced her thinking about listening. Though she did not actively seek a different behavior as a listener—she maintained a conventional stance on speaking and listening—her conception of listening did grow.

Our listening conceptions are not fixed due to the various contexts, relationships, and space of time we experience as humans. Interpreting elementary teachers' early remembrances demonstrates how reflective inquiry draws attention to a more complicated notion of listening. For Jamie, this education was brought on by a seminal life event, movement toward and realization about her deep affection for the teaching profession. Other teachers expressed social and academic moments when their listening, or conception of listening, altered in concert with these developments. In all, the journeys each person took toward a path of conceiving listening only registers that our attunement to it is a mystery.

Summary: Listening's Mysteries

> For, as I have argued, our hearing is a gift that we can cultivate and develop. Our hearing can always become more responsive, more caring, more compassionate. We can become more concerned about—or take more of an interest in—a more extensive world, extending the reach and range of our listening, making this extension a practice.
>
> Then we would hear things we have never heard before. And we would begin communicating with people we had never listened to before. We would find ourselves affected by these people, these strangers very near and very far, and our lives might be correspondingly changed. When we make our way through city streets, we would gather up into our ears all the sounds of city life: beautiful sounds, ugly sounds, painful sounds, joyful sounds, threatening sounds, peaceful sounds, sounds of human kindness, sounds of evil—people conversing, crying, shouting, fighting, greeting, and parting; the sounds of fire trucks and ambulances; the engines of cars, taxis, buses; truck loading and unloading; doors opening and closing; the sounds of radios and television sets. . . . The sounds of human life, a song of mortal existence, gathering all sounds, without exception, without passing judgment. (Levin, 1989, p. 256)

Robust listening requires openness demonstrated by the listener that for many people is arduous even before words or sounds enter the ears. I refer to David Michael Levin's extended discourse in the statements above in order to begin summarizing my first chapter, because he captures the prism of listening often left hidden deep beneath the surface of dialogue and human interaction. Ultimately, Levin's analysis ought to be viewed as a whole instead of dissected from its parts, but I will examine a few specific points he made in order to conclude this chapter. First, we must awaken a reflective awareness to nurture and advance listening across a dialogic culture that does not necessarily prize attuned listening. Levin characterized hearing as a "gift," something we should value and privilege. Our ability to work cooperatively toward a better society suffers without close attention to the listening process. Social studies educators seeking democratic goals, particularly teachers enacting classroom discussions, can orient and

conceptualize learning around these aims. Serious conceptual attention to listening lacks the firm grip needed in these discourses, in part because of its mysterious dimensions.

In this first chapter, I explored aspects of listening's mysterious elements by conceptually exploring phenomenology of sound in which sight is privileged over hearing due to our inability to see or perceive what we hear. This is the second key point generated from Levin's text. He richly described listening within a typical cityscape. That portrayal contributes important language for individuals looking to appreciate how listening closely to sounds of this world creates understanding and meaning typically subjugated in its sensory relation to sight. His assertion that "we would hear things we have never heard before" (p. 256) bears an important consideration to a study seeking to reveal teachers' listening conceptions.

Levin's statements encompass a listening attitude, a listening sensibility, and a listening openness that are all addressed as integral to a listening conception. Ending this first chapter with Levin's words offers insight, hope, and inspiration for my phenomenological hermeneutic study of the mysterious phenomenon of listening. The teachers in my study described moments of wonder about listening from a different angle, but they were complemented with equally powerful reflections of its complexity and uneasiness. Together, these ideas disclose listening's mysterious qualities which, while revealed, may never be fully understood.

The rest of my writing follows a similar structure and hermeneutic approach, though I will move away from these initial broad conceptions to a close examination of the unique and wondrous conceptions the teachers shared over the course of one year. I bring this chapter to close in full circle to its origins with a line from the lyrics of "Scarlet

Begonias" that particularly captures the phenomenological spirit and my interest in studying conceptions of listening in classroom dialogue:

> Once in a while you get shown the light
> In the strangest of places if you look at it right.
> (Garcia & Hunter, 1974, *From the Mars Hotel*, Track 5)

Chapter II

THIN LISTENING CONCEPTIONS

> Many "active listening" seminars are, in actuality, little more than a shallow theatrical exercise in appearing like you're paying attention to another person. The requirements: Lean forward, make eye contact, nod, grunt, or murmur to demonstrate you're awake and paying attention, and paraphrase something back every 30 seconds or so. As one executive I know wryly observed, many inhabitants of the local zoo could be trained to go through these motions, minus the paraphrasing. (Cooper & Sawaf, 1998, p. 73)

Introduction: A Zoo Metaphor

Taken from an unlikely source, this rumination draws attention to numerous conceptions we hold as listeners. Leah recounted reading the following statement, which she found innocently situated within a pile of popular magazines at her doctor's office. "Lean forward, make eye contact," Leah asserted, are the two most conventional listening behaviors promoted in elementary schools. This means a person must move her body into an acceptable position and shift her eyes in direct line with the person who is speaking. According to many educators teaching young children to participate in dialogue, listening cannot occur without these dual, simultaneously occurring movements. The juxtaposition of these universally sanctioned institutional norms with a "nod, grunt, or murmur" may signal caution to the reader of this statement. Then, "demonstrate you're awake and paying attention" implies a mechanical activity that bears no resemblance to the type of listening undertaken in this research project.

Countless examples in today's classrooms teach listening from the stance described in these corporate leaders' words. Leah was incredibly moved, however, by the sharp tone and language present in this account, leading her to an acutely critical position about her own school's treatment of listening. The "inhabitants of the local zoo" metaphor is the defining listening conception upon which Cooper and Sawaf drew, which they did in order to startle and haunt the reader. A person reading the zoo metaphor may derive agitated meanings when considering the implication of the relationship between animal, zookeeper, and the onlookers at this site. Animals residing in a zoo are captured and denied freedom. They are trained to behave in ways that evoke images of enslavement rather than self-determination, growth, and contentment. Even casual observers might acknowledge this anthropocentric view of the world is highly problematic. Reading the text closely, one is pushed to apply the same meanings of the zoo metaphor to listening. Do we conceive of listening in such narrow behavioral terms, as if moving the body and eyes in concert with one another will actually lead one to listen well?

The zoo metaphor is intended to compel the reader toward a particular listening conception. My research investigation explored conceptions five elementary teachers were able to convey in interviews, which were then interpreted through my own lens. The phenomenological approach was designed to reveal what may exist deep within these teachers' inner thoughts, as well as my own. Encountering potent language to characterize listening, such as the zoo metaphor, helps disclose teachers' conceptions. The first chapter of this dissertation included a conceptual and personal look at the mysteries associated with listening. My writing shows that in many cases, listening can

be challenging to conceive of in its nature. While an individual can undergo changes to adjust her mindset or perspective on listening, one emerging theme, established in this first chapter, is that listening may at times remain a mystery, despite the attempt to reveal its dimensions through phenomenological inquiry.

A Framework for Classifying Listening Conceptions

The second and third chapters take a different angle on listening, shifting from mystery to a closer examination of a variety of listening conceptions. As shown in the first chapter, we have more than one conception of listening that transforms when our reflective awareness to dialogue is educated. Individual identity, context and aims of listening, the institutions surrounding us, and our relationships are all critical forces that influence our listening conceptions. I have adopted a framework with these considerations in mind, formulating a listening taxonomy into broad categories of "thin" and "thick." The terms *thin* and *thick* are used in such fields as cultural anthropology, ethnography, and qualitative research to highlight different shades of descriptive analysis (Denzin, 1989; Geertz, 1973). Thin ideas are often characterized by sparse description and limited attention to the context and purpose of what is being studied. Alternatively, thick conceptions have depth, "capturing thought[s], emotion[s], and a web of social interaction" (Ponterotto, 2006, p. 542).

Thin and thick categories are used as an organizational structure to consider an array of listening conceptions. Each conception, regardless of its "thin" or "thick" labeling, does warrant exploration since it is a listening conception elementary teachers experienced and described. My defining and locating of each conception into a thin or

thick domain indicates a certain hierarchy I ascribe to the nature and process of listening. These issues are germane to the interpretation and analyses of teachers' notions of listening.

The second chapter will examine thin conceptions of listening: obedient and attentive listening. These conceptions will be investigated at two levels. First, I will draw on teachers' reflections and classrooms experiences to situate obedient listening, infusing some analysis of writing from scholarship and classroom artifacts. Second, I will analyze thin conceptions through a careful and more extensive review of social studies educational scholarship I briefly introduced in the first chapter. These two very different layers of discourse establish a need to consider how these listening conceptions are engaged during classroom dialogue. Figure 1 below provides a visual schematic of thin listening conceptions that are surrounded by factors sometimes ignored, making its "thinness" prevail in teachers' conceptions.

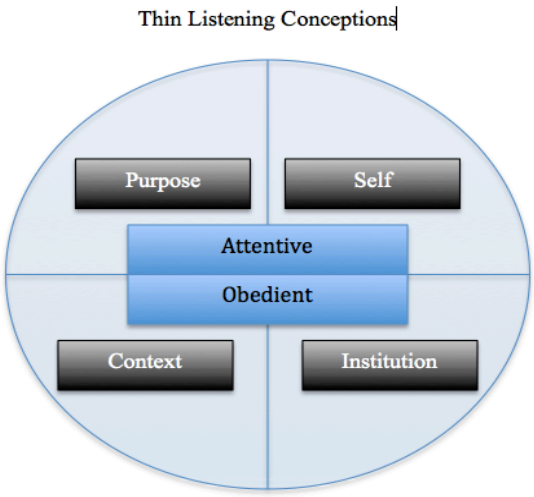

Figure 1. Thin listening conceptions

Navigating the Obedient and Attentive Listener Prototypes

Teachers in my research study identified a passive, strictly behavioral notion of listening, obedience, which was investigated through self-assessment and reflection on their own educational experiences from childhood through the present. Conceptually, *obedience* is a term with an association to listening that demands attention. Teachers disapprovingly described the prevalence of obedient listening in schools. Yet why do teachers seeking release from obedient listening knowingly enact this form in their classrooms? Can or should a different path be pursued? Or, how is listening socialized within a context, like school, that priotizes order and control?

"Me being quiet was the right thing in the classroom," Leah admitted when considering her own listening conceived as an elementary student. She equated not speaking with listening, when in fact they are two different acts. Nonetheless, this was a common conception the teachers in the study expressed. Childhood listening is depicted as obeying, nothing more. Lipari (2014) traced ancient Sanskrit writing and Latin etymological roots—*obedire*—drawing on the idea that *to listen* translates *to obey*. Despite this literal translation, the teachers struggled with the notion that obedience and listening are defined under synonymous terms. Yet they still had trouble recalling memories that provided evidence of a different experience. Caitlyn described childhood listening like this: "my attention was demanded; I did it because I was told to do it without thinking otherwise."

The prominent characterization of listening as obedience is uniform for teachers in this study, perhaps due to being ill equipped cognitively, emotionally, or psychologically to enter beyond a particularly one-sided behavior. The obedient

conception, as I interpret it, emerges from a restrictive listening stance entrenched in unbending institutions established through the prominent culture and norms of school, family, and society. While obedient listening forms take shape in their collective memories, the teachers realized the implications of confining childhood listening to obedience—student to teacher, child to parent, subject to object.

When asked to think about listening through various life stages, Jamie captured an important sentiment: "We ask kids to listen all day long—they sit obediently in their seats through countless lessons in every subject then go home and listen to their parents." This is an authoritative, simple, and narrow rendering of listening's meaning. Jamie's condemnation of obedient listening demonstrates her reflective awareness of a culture to which she contributes. What are the implications for an elementary teacher awakened to an obedient listener condition? Jamie, thinking again about her own childhood listening experiences, wondered with concern whether she promoted an atmosphere and a process of listening beyond the obedient archetype. In the end, her beliefs shift and sway between the idea that young children need the space to experience listening free from a sense of obligation and the reality that schools and curricula inescapably place on her demands as an educator.

The obedient childhood listener was difficult to define, describe, or impart insight into its meaning, beyond projecting a "this is how we did it" explanation. Hope, a second generation immigrant from Greece, was the only teacher in the study who spoke about cultural relevancy when reflecting on her childhood listening. The obedient listener conception transcends but is not divorced from her elementary education experience. She stated:

> The teacher talked to us. I looked at the person speaking, sat there quietly and nodded as a sign that the teacher knows I am listening in search for her approval. All throughout, I may or may not be in tune with what she was saying, but my upbringing instilled such a strong expectation of what listeners do, that thinking beyond that realm was never possible.

Hope, even as a young child, had the situational awareness and sophisticated understanding of the human condition to recognize that this listening relationship was worth self-assessment. Little Hope, as she often critically referred to herself in the third person, would never present a different orientation for fear of losing her cultural identity.

Reflecting on their childhood schooling, the teachers conceptualized and characterized their listening as obedient. This type of listening experience transcended ethnicity, age, family structure, and geographic location. The teachers' responses to institutionalized obedient listening ranged from acceptance to discouragement. While at times necessary and crucial in education, obedient listening is assigned the thinnest value on my listening taxonomy because it treats the process of hearing as a duty, paying respect to an authority or figure deemed to be an expert without calling into question the contents or purpose communicated in dialogue. I will later explore obedient listening's thin ally, attentive listening, as a framework for a review of social studies educational literature. At this point, I will provide deeper analysis of obedient listening gathered from teachers' anecdotes and other related sources of instructional knowledge.

Crisscross Applesauce: The Listening Message to Today's Teachers

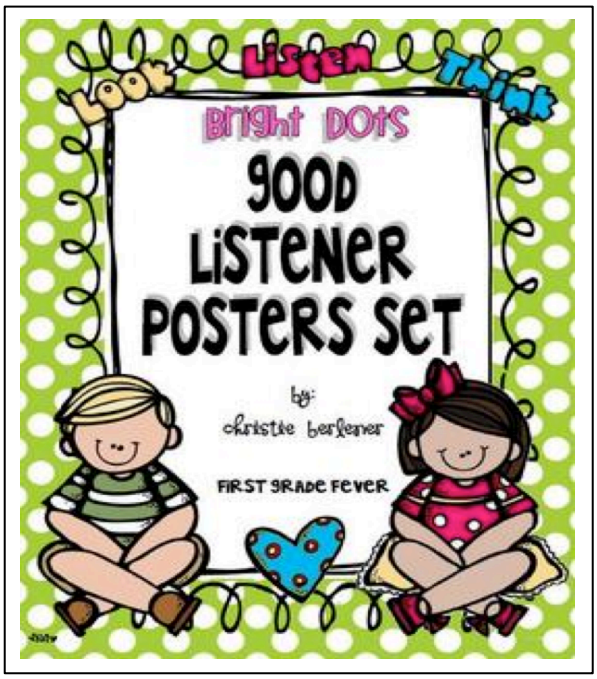

Figure 2. Bright Dots good listener posters

"Hope your room is filled with super listeners!!" *Bright Dots* publishes a poster series for elementary educators annotated with comments as seen in the above Figure 2. In an interview with Hope, she referred directly to this document as one source, among many, that seeks to illustrate what good listening means, what it looks like, and how to create an environment for it to occur. The phrase "crisscross applesauce" is applied to the listening that primary-age students perform on a daily basis. Hope spoke to this topic as a standard listening conception reinforced in elementary schools:

> Have you ever seen a boy in a cartoon poster sitting crisscross applesauce with different body parts labeled? What do teachers think when they see these posters? I know teachers even in this school who have that poster displayed in their classrooms. This is a big problem for me, and I don't use these posters because I

> often wonder, "How can doing these things mean I am listening?" For all I know students can be sitting crisscross applesauce and be thinking about the tiramisu they had for dessert last night rather than what we are talking about in class.

My interviews with Hope revealed a very different conception of listening than what appears at the surface of educators' experience. As I continue to probe teachers' conceptions about listening, I will use her short anecdote, and the accompanying visual reference that is widely displayed in classrooms, to consider which institutional forces and literature influence teachers. Together, they create a superficial, narrow, and possibly competing conception of listening's meanings. Teachers are bombarded with information about listening that is presented as a desirable set of behaviors in classrooms and skills that can be taught to students under a thin conception.

Katherine Schultz (2003) constructed a framework for listening across difference that interrogates the manner in which listening is conceived and enacted by teachers. Central to her listening critique is the notion of listening treated in classrooms as "passively absorbing information" (p. 8). She stated: "A ubiquitous phrase in classrooms is 'Listen up.' Students are dubbed good listeners if they obediently follow directions without thinking" (p. 8). This superficial, essentially unquestioned conception of listening dominates the field of education both explicitly, as in the visual displays seen in the above posters, and through routine communication expressed by teachers. Again, the predominant listening conception is obedience. The obedient listener creates a one-sided relationship that places the student in the position of remaining silent, devoid of a response in face of a commanding figure or institutional authority. This same conception of listening is often transferred when exchanges among students in dialogue are constructed.

Efforts to simplify, objectify, or reduce listening in the obedient conception—thin ideas—lead to a dubious notion that listening is teachable or attainable through uncomplicated pedagogical interventions. I will take two representations of similar instructional moves essentially with the same meaning to garner a listening classroom. These references are drawn from my interview with Caitlyn, a fifth grade teacher, and through a peer-reviewed teacher education journal article widely read by teachers in the field. The instructional move to which Caitlyn refers is *SLANT* (Sit up, Listen, Answer questions, Nod, and Track the speaker), which is an acronym I have encountered several times when observing classrooms. Fifth grade students are presented with this formula to listen, and by performing these bodily and expressive acts, listening is considered to be achieved when demonstrated to the teacher. Caitlyn expounded on her use of SLANT:

> If students ask questions, it is obvious they are attentive. I actually model nodding my head to students as acknowledgment attention is paid to the speaker, making sure not to appear like a "bobble-head" doll flailing. I also show students nodding their heads can signal a different connotation, such as confusion or disagreement. At different points, I ask students to practice these [SLANT] responses with partners before they engage in discussion. Taking these steps, I realize, does not necessarily mean students listen but I still expect them to do it so at least I know they are with me.

Many notions of listening are embedded in SLANT. To start, the "bobble-head doll" reference was a conscious analogy Caitlyn used to illustrate listening, even though it was not sanctioned in her classroom. Similar meanings may be elicited between bobble-head dolls and animals in the zoo. A bobble-head doll remains motionless until its owner manipulates its parts, creating a constant, rhythmic back-and-forth motion. Taken at large, does the enactment of SLANT involve a switch students activate in their bodies to become a listener? Moreover, the step-by-step process, beginning with sitting up and ending with tracking the speaker, may signal listening occurs in linear terms with

a sequence that must be followed in order. In her interview, Caitlyn admitted students might not be listening even if SLANT is being followed, yet it remains a part of her listening pedagogy because she has not operationalized a different conception.

Caitlyn's use of SLANT is powerful evidence that elementary teachers carry and cultivate thin listening conceptions because instructional routines become institutionalized school practices year to year without reflective attention to the nature of listening demands in thicker conceptions. Many educators seek avenues toward simplicity, especially in the elementary schools where students' minds and bodies are younger developmentally. Adoption of formulaic methods, presented in the form of acronyms, prevails for many teachers seeking ways to achieve a particular setting or outcome.

In looking at broad educational scholarship, other thin, strictly behavioral, and formulaic conceptions of listening arise. Swaine, Freihe, and Harrington (2004) published an article in *Intervention in School and Clinic* about teaching listening strategies in special education inclusion classrooms. The authors presented a multitude of methods teachers ought to incorporate in order to aid students at risk with disability. One approach, "Give Me Five," is displayed visually on an outlined hand and posits that listening occurs when students are: hands free, ears listening, body still, mouth quiet, and eyes on the speaker. The authors wrote:

> Initially, the strategy is explicitly introduced, explained, and modeled. Follow-up activities to reinforce applying the strategy are presented within the context of the curriculum. For example, role-playing Give Me Five with a peer partner and working with a puppet would help demonstrate what each part of Give Me Five looks like. This allows students to practice the strategy with guidance from the teacher. Using a Give Me Five handheld sign and having a poster in the classroom are further reminders for students to apply this strategy throughout the day. Mnemonic devices reinforce the value placed on application of the strategy.

> To further promote independent strategy use, students may benefit from having a Give Me Five cue card taped to their desks. (p. 51)

The linear, successive movement of bodily actions suggests, similarly to SLANT, that listening can be achieved if these measures are done fully and in order. Particular to the actions proposed here, one must also question the soundness of listening conceived through an orientation that essentially eliminates all bodily motions except for the sense of hearing. This is a listening conception taken up later in my research study when closer analysis of teachers' notions takes place, yet this illustration is relevant at this point because it reinforces the obedient prototype that commands examination of listening's conceptions. Taking this academic excerpt further, the authors advocated for several diverse instructional and organizational moves to ensure "Give Me Five" is implanted in students' minds. The role-play experience incorporates kinesthetic learning, mnemonic devices are designed to increase cognitive capacity and memory, and cue cards on the desk are used as visual reminders. Listening occurs when particular bodily movements take place, and these actions must be supported with ample pedagogical reinforcement.

Classroom artifacts, such as educational posters and anchor charts, are visual reminders of how members of the school-community potentially create and fortify thin listening conceptions. Instructional interventions described in one example from educational scholarship and by a participant in my interviews demonstrate how listening may be conceived in narrow, simple, and behavioral terms. However, both sets of listening conceptions occur in discrete manners, extracted from the wholeness of discourse occurring all together in what is a complex tradeoff of dialogue among students and the teacher. There is no way to measure or evaluate the impact of particular instructional interventions or classroom documents on teachers' listening conceptions,

nor is that the aim of this research project. Nonetheless, looking closely at these isolated moments from different angles discloses how listening may be conceived without fullness or attention to its dynamic forces in classroom dialogue.

One brief reflection from Jamie, a second grade teacher, does reveal a broader interpretation of thin listening conceptions. The excerpt culminates "crisscross applesauce" with another dimension on what I classify as obedient listening.

> It was a bad listening day. *What do you mean? (from Interviewer)* It happens a lot. I mean a lot! *What do you mean? (from Interviewer)* All day, I give directions multiple times, and there is a student or group of students who continually do their own thing as if they did not hear a word of what I asked them to do. *Do you have any examples? (from Interviewer)* There are so many I can't even begin. We were doing word sorts earlier in the day. Students had twenty-four words they had to cut out and paste in columns: ee/ea/e. Have you ever seen second graders cut out paper into twenty-four parts? So, I told them to cut out each square first before doing any sorting and pasting. Wouldn't you know, the first group I visited had all twenty-four words pasted together in one column? I said, what is wrong with you? What did you learn about long "e" by doing it this way? They all just looked at me with blank stares. I am a real good direction giver probably to a fault, so thorough to a fault. Seventeen times, it drives me insane. The bright kids are probably like, okay lady, you have said it seventeen times. Where do I write my name? What color paper do I use? This type of experience occurs all day long. I know I should be more patient.

Jamie was clearly frustrated by the students' lack of listening. Her listening conception, described in this reflection, is thin. Each teacher disclosed a similar notion of listening through story or reflection, but this one stands out as particularly conspicuous due to the use of hyperbole by the teacher. When asked to share non-listening moments in classroom dialogue or areas to improve student listening, the teachers consistently referenced lack of attentiveness in teacher-directed discourse (e.g., having to repeat instructions). Obedient and attentive listening is necessary, at times, in order for schools to function, teachers to teach, students to learn, and peers to interact with each other in a

particular classroom setting. Referenced earlier, the context, purpose, institutions, and relationships all govern listening and the conceptions we form.

It is the obedient listener Jamie seeks from her second grade students when beginning her lesson. Following directions is certainly related to listening. But, when a teacher does not question or think of alternative conceptions alongside of the obedient notion, a fuller understanding of students' listening purpose and process is obscured. For example, the inability to perform the task did not necessarily mean students were not listening; it showed they might not have been paying attention or they possibly chose to disobey or ignore the teacher. Paying attention is an action associated with obedient listening. To obey, again, does not cultivate a dialogic climate of mutuality, openness, and reflective inquiry. It connotes an action conducted without thought, introspection, or response. The obedient listening Jamie revealed may actually impede or distort the fuller conception of listening that philosophers seek to cultivate across human interactions.

Fully capturing listening conceptions present in school classrooms is impractical, nor is it desired as a chief aim of this research project. Nevertheless, I situated a few resounding examples springing from teachers and close review of typical classroom artifacts and instructional literature as substantiation for thin conceptions that are widely observable. When viewed in isolation, these conceptions might appear reversible with subtle tweaking of language, refinement of anchor charts, or a different stance taken by schools and teachers. Conversely, the ubiquitous nature of these discourses, which are undisputed and even warmly invited, makes embracement of a different listening conception an uphill battle, to say the least. Again, my objective in this research project is not explicitly tilted toward recasting listening conceptions; it is instead looking at it

through phenomenological inquiry to reveal its many concealed dimensions so that the reader can begin to think about its dynamic attributes. Thin conceptions existing in schools, namely obedience, are one dimension warranting investigation, especially since they appear extensively and implicitly in the teachers' lives I have entered.

Thin Listening Conceptions in Social Studies Educational Scholarship

> Teachers can employ many questioning techniques to encourage students to participate, including probing students' initial responses, redirecting questions to several students, and calling on non-volunteering students. During discussions, students sometimes lack the skill and confidence to express themselves at the higher cognitive levels. (Wilen, 2004, p. 35)

This recommendation aimed at improving instruction indicates a turn now from the elementary teachers in my study to direct engagement with research and writing in social studies education. The statement cited above reflects the spirit, methods, and content of discourse about classroom discussions that is evident in current social studies educational research. How can teachers get students to participate more frequently? Ostensibly, this is the overarching direction William Wilen explored in studying classroom discussions, yet there are important conceptions about the nature of participation inherent in his statements. While providing tips to help teachers avoid "non-participants," Wilen suggested students might be incapable of meeting these participatory expectations for cognitive and social reasons. These broad assumptions underlying the social studies field, if left undisputed, lead to thin conceptions about listening and its relation to classroom dialogue. Wilen, in this statement, assumed speaking is a preferred expression in dialogue to listening and that remaining attentive is the only conception associated with listening. Could "non-participating" students

actually be enacting high levels of cognitive and social functioning when listening is conceived in thicker terms?

The last 20 years of research in social studies education has produced numerous investigations into classroom discussions. Two themes emerged when analyzing various studies: engagement with the nature and process of listening is largely absent, and it is characterized in thin terms. Obedient listening was the thin category predominately used to describe teachers' conceptions in elementary schools. The "obedient" labeling in the previous section was in part due to the context, aims, relationships, and institution of elementary schooling and family upbringing during this period of the students' lives.

In this section, analysis of social studies educational scholarship mostly resides in secondary education. Obedient listening conceptions prevail here in environments where knowledge and authorities (teachers and text) who dispense knowledge go unquestioned. Adding another layer to thin conceptions, though, I differentiate and move between obedient and attentive listening. Obedient listening has a singular, directed purpose: hearing out of obligation. That conception is present, but not always explicit in the social studies literature. I use a slightly thicker conception, attentive listening, distinguished from obedience in that here, listening's sole purpose is not conceived with subservient aims. Attentive listening resembles obedient listening in many ways, seeking the same physical expressions. In essence, paying attention is the primary purpose of attentive listening, and that is certainly necessary in thicker conceptions. In reviewing social studies educational literature, paying attention appears as the only goal of listening without any contextualization or critical attention to conceiving of the nature of listening in dialogic encounters.

In the field of social studies education, teacher educators, researchers, and classroom practitioners with progressive aims seek opportunities for students to acquire important knowledge and, more importantly, to assume the role of participating citizen in learning experiences through classroom dialogue. There is a strong foundation of educational research in civic education that emanates from the same Greek intellectual traditions that Heidegger and Fiumara critiqued as misapprehending *logos*. Over time, the assertive discourse connected to *logos* has been woven throughout the relatively short history of social studies education by key thinkers, empirical researchers, and classroom practitioners. This factor, and its broader implications for the role of participation in a democratic society, serves as a chief purpose for examining listening conceptions in this research study.

In *Listening—in a Democratic Society* (2003), Sophie Haroutunian-Gordon characterized the wide range of inquiries about dialogue that are prevalent in educational discourse: "We have looked at such things as patterns of discourse, the content of classroom conversation in which dialogue takes place, types of dialogue, the place of dialogue in teaching and learning, and in society—all the time thinking about the speaking aspect of the conversation—the talking" (p. 4). From here she wondered: "What about the listening?" (p. 4). Taking a broad survey, and at times a close look, at social studies education, I will apply Haroutunian-Gordon's position on listening. Specifically, these studies implicate particular curricular contexts, attributes of the classroom environment, and pedagogies for cultivating what is characterized as *good* participation, either treating listening thinly, as merely attentive, or ignoring it altogether. Analyses of these literatures demonstrate the undertheorized role of listening in

structured, social studies classroom dialogues. The curious omission of deep engagement with listening in classroom dialogue offers sufficient grounds to locate social studies academic research in my study, potentially drawing more attention to the various conceptions teachers carry and present to students. Another angle crucial to the literature reviewed is that widely accepted research and findings of social studies teacher educators may actually thwart efforts toward engaging thicker conceptions of listening significant to human interactions.

Social studies researchers pursue inquiries by looking closely at the discussion's curricular context and instructional approaches. The current educational literature on classroom discussion is commonly grounded in the Structured Academic Controversy (SAC) format (Johnson & Johnson, 1979, 2009). SACs, by name, connote a particular structure for discussion in which students examine two sides of an issue, engage in small group discussions in which they take both sides of an issue at different points, and then reconvene as a class to see how their opinions change as a result of the discussion (Avery, Levy, & Simmons, 2013).

Hess, who researches controversial public issues (CPI) discussions—an outgrowth of SACs, asserted these discussions are democratic and must involve current, public, and controversial issues. Following this groundwork, several other researchers have remained focused on similar contexts for discussions, including scored discussions (Rossi, 2006), discussions involving historical dissent (McMurray, 2007), and controversial public issues (Hess, 2002; Hess & Posselt, 2002). Taking a closer look at the latter study, Hess and Posselt took readers through a comprehensive methodological study about students' perceptions of classroom participation in structured CPI discussions

about a diverse range of topics, such as Title IX and Free Speech (2002). Following their data analyses, the authors discussed students' attitudes about oral participation, disagreement over consequential public issues, and views about peers' influence on discussion. This study was filled with robust qualitative and quantitative data about student participation in which the term *listening* appeared many times. However, upon reading it from a different perspective, the study also revealed that an attentive listening conception was the only one examined, and this conception was assumed and unquestioned. For students to assess their views on oral participation or peers' influence on discussion, their listening stance and habits ought to be examined from many angles commensurate with a focus on the speaking.

Hess and Posselt (2001) claimed that students are strongly influenced to participate based on peer perceptions and social pressures, and they asserted "the need to teach adolescents how to engage in discussions with people they do not know or even like" (p. 312). This principle and characteristic observed in classrooms could have provided opportunities for Hess and Posselt to investigate students' listening conceptions, with specific inquiries into what listening means, its nature and aims, and the importance of being listened to in classroom dialogue. Avoiding listening or lack of explicit inquiry beyond attentiveness in CPI discussions may foster thin conceptions. Namely, attentiveness merely exists or does not exist, but exploration of it is not constructive within the scope of the inquiry. This listening conception is not much different from the "listen up" reference Katherine Schultz exclaimed at the start of her "teaching listening across difference" framework.

A review of these studies reveals commonalities in how the context of classroom discussion is situated. The studies all follow a particular formula, which involves a step-by-step procedure for organizing and facilitating an effective classroom discussion. For instance, Rossi (2006) declared that teachers need to: set the stage, select roles, research an issue, debate the issue, debrief the debate, and assess the activity. By following this blueprint, Rossi suggested students' participation in discussion can work only when certain methods are employed in the correct sequence. These formulaic approaches assume that classroom dialogue occurs when the teacher situates the instructional activities in an order following a conventional pedagogical path. At what point does a formulaic approach to discussion miss out on overarching elements of dialogue, such as listening? These studies are limited in context because they only focus on the steps for creating successful instructional experiences, which favors an attentive (thin) conception of listening. Certainly, preparing to assume roles in debates can lead to lively discourse and empathy, but the contexts drawn from these studies assume or ignore the value of teaching students to listen carefully, empathetically, and critically. Drawing parallels to the "crisscross applesauce" section of this chapter reveals a strikingly similar, consistent, and basic formula to listening success. For instance, "Give Me Five" suggests putting the body into specific motion in a particular way and order that renders the "good listener." Each example, regardless of its context, may be a powerful force in creating thin listening conceptions that are short-sighted and lacking critical attention to its fullness and complexity.

Social studies researchers are interested in the composition of a classroom and efforts taken by teachers to form a community as a key dimension of classroom dialogue

with a requisite assumption that attentive listening occurs without investigation of its context, purpose, or institutional association. Parker (2003) recognized, foremost, the value of diversity and heterogeneity in cultivating democratic communities using classroom discussion. However, the dialogue that occurs through a classroom community is viewed in terms of who talks and who does not talk, with a goal of expanding the voices in the classroom. Several social studies researchers interested in the classroom community, such as Larson (2000b) and Banks (2008), are concerned about social justice-oriented aims of bringing marginalized voices to the foreground. For instance, Larson asserted that teachers, through their pedagogy, need to account for the fact that girls and students with limited English proficiency are more withdrawn, even intimidated, in discussions.

The makeup and dynamics of a classroom community are vital to classroom dialogue. Studies grounded in social studies settings are set on promoting multiculturalism and equality, assuming that teachers must invite, encourage, and create space for participation as the means by which speaking occurs. This condition prioritizes speaking over listening in a classroom. Silence, as theorized by educational philosophers, can be a means of asserting power and expression in dialogue (Burbules & Rice, 1991; Schultz, 2010). As social studies researchers examine who is speaking and who is not speaking in dialogue, looking at forces of power, parallel inquiries should examine who is listening and who is not listening. What does a listening stance mean in terms of students' participation in classroom dialogue that is comprised of diverse voices, ideologies, and cultural backgrounds? Attention to diversity in classroom discourse is warranted at many levels. The literature is full of inquiries, as seen in the above

references, where speaking across difference is abundant with unique factors that influence students' participation in classroom dialogue. Exclusion of my parallel question may cause readers to formulate thin listening conceptions across difference, such that all individuals, regardless of their ideological or cultural position, are assumed to listen the same way with concentration on maintaining attention.

Many people view classroom dialogue as both the curricular means and ends to serve aims of civic education. It is important, however, to examine closely what social studies researchers have defined as the meaning of participation in classroom discussions. To what extent does their work account for listening in dialogue when defining participation? And, in some respect, does their meaning of participation foreclose a listening stance? Diana Hess (2002, 2009) has studied and promoted specific qualities of classroom discussion, determining what *good* participation means for students. Looking at skillful teachers' classrooms, Hess asserted that students participate well in discussions that have open forums, involve a topic related to personal choice, and are designed with assessments providing students with clear feedback on their discussion skills. In a parallel study, Hess and Posselt (2001) found that students' participation in classroom discussions is enhanced when a probing question is asked, when students transition effectively between different points, and when nonparticipants are invited to join the discourse.

Extending from these studies, researchers in social studies have focused their attention pedagogically on how to improve student participation in discussion. For example, Wilen (2004) asserted that asking fewer questions, directing questions to the entire class, and withdrawing the teacher from the discourse can broaden participation in

classroom dialogue, particularly for groups perceived to be at the margins in classrooms. Larson (2003) and Flynn (2009) even explored online forums for discussion, seeking a space where students can express their views in a time and place that might be less threatening.

These studies reveal a common interest in increasing participation, whether through the classroom structures (i.e., full class or online), instructional methods (i.e., questioning strategies), teacher facilitation (i.e., encouraging non-participants), and/or assessment approaches (i.e., using rubrics for scored discussions). Larson (2000b) summarized this perspective:

> During discussions, teachers must be aware of who is talking as well as what is being said. As teachers monitor the classroom discussion, their goal is to provide an atmosphere that encourages participation from all students and to promote a discussion that is content rich. (p. 675)

Implied in this statement, as well as the overall thrust of these studies, is the notion that speaking equates to participation. Writing from educational philosophers, however, asserts that listening and speaking are complementary in dialogue.

Where does listening fit into the broad meaning of participation, as defined by many researchers in, social studies? First, the absence of listening in defining discussion participation indicates a hierarchy where speaking is viewed to be a superior expression to listening. Thus, listening has limited value, making it nonexistent in the classroom culture or rubric constructed by a teacher, for example. Second, limited investigation of listening in studies about classroom discussions overlooks core democratic principles, such as deliberation, requiring students to move constantly between a speaking and a listening stance. Are students listening carefully, adopting different conceptions, when pedagogical efforts are narrowly designed to increase students' speaking? Students may

in fact attend to and reflect upon their listening less—in frequency, variety, and quality—in classrooms where active participation is defined by speaking.

Lastly, robust listening requires courage, deep commitment, and even detachment from oneself that involves a highly sophisticated set of cognitive skills and moral development. These ideals are translated through thicker listening conceptions. On one hand, researchers in social studies believe open-mindedness and respect for diverse points of view are consequential for cultivating democratic communities. Alternatively, analysis of social studies research on classroom discussion reveals thin notions of listening when more robust conceptions could bring the classroom community closer to the democratic aims sought. Listening, as a means for participation, must therefore be on equal footing with speaking if students are ever going to approach views different from their own in-classroom dialogues or consider listening beyond attentiveness or obedience.

I return to the interpretation of *logos* and its implications on Western discourse as the broad layer of meaning I ascribe to thin listening conceptions. As presented earlier, Fiumara (1990) suggested our collective tendency toward rigidity and assertive discourse where the intent of the speaker is to strongly defend and reassert her positions with more evidence. This is the widespread culture of *logos* taking a one-sided approach to academic argument. From reading studies about controversial public issues, simulated town hall meetings, scored discussions on hot-button social issues, and historical debates, the assertive discourse culture appears in the efforts by educational researchers in the field to promote student participation discussion. This conception of discussion leaves out or limits the possibilities of the role listening plays in how students participate, and ultimately may create a view that listening is not an equal partner to its dialogic partner.

To take a sharper tone and revisit some language associated with listening in this study: does the research in social studies education on classroom discussion frame listening any differently than the metaphor of an animal in the zoo or the bobble-head doll nodding when manipulated by its owner?

While the study of listening as an orientation of classroom dialogue in social studies settings is sparse or reduced to mere attentiveness, some researchers in civic education have theorized richer listening conceptions as a core principle of democratic education. Steven Preskill (1997) framed democratic dispositions of dialogue, such as hospitality, participating and efficacy, mutuality, mindfulness, appreciation, and hope, as a means to "sharpen our awareness, increase our sensitivity, and heighten our appreciation for ambiguity and complexity" (p. 342.). Here, listening becomes elevated in classroom dialogue, and thicker conceptions are necessary to interpret its nature and meaning. Foremost in scholarship connected to social studies and classroom discussion is the work of Walter Parker (2006, 2010). He (2006) suggested: "Listening across difference requires more than time, multiple discourse structures, and multiple settings. It requires curriculum and instruction" (p. 16). He specifically called for teacher education programs to consider the role of "*humility* (undermines the listener's arrogance), *caution* (undermines the listener's discursive speed and recklessness), and *reciprocity* (ventilates the listener's ego)" as "beyond simply providing more opportunities for discussion" but "ways of being in those opportunities" (p. 16).

These attributes demonstrate why classroom dialogue could be enriched with heightened awareness toward listening and pedagogical exploration. Students enacting a cautious listening stance, for example, might be less inclined to feed into the assertive

discourse (rapid-fire talk) taking place in a scored discussion of a controversial issue. In social studies, some researchers appreciate the value of listening in dialogue, while many other investigations cited in the literature ignore it entirely beyond assumptions of attentiveness or obedience. Building on the ideas of Preskill (1997) and Parker (2006), I will interpret the various thin and thick conceptions elementary teachers have about listening in dialogue. Situating these conceptions through teachers and their reflections and experiences about the classroom can add a layer of meaning to discourse that is widely absent in current social studies educational discourse.

Chapter III

THICK LISTENING CONCEPTIONS

Conceiving a Fuller Meaning of *Logos*

In a study seeking insight into teachers' conceptions of listening, various often-intersecting arenas of educational research reveal both a strong foundation to build upon and striking gaps prompting fertile ground for inquiry. My earlier exploration of *logos* in Chapter I suggested we ought to consider perspectives that move full listening into a state of partnership with dialogue. Diverse writings on listening influence my own listening notions, which are examined in this chapter to ground my entire conceptual framework.

My analysis here shifts from thin to thick conceptions. Thin listening conceptions were characterized by teachers' and researchers' limited reflection and inquiry into the nature of listening. They were conceptions—obedient and attentive—defined as passive, strictly behavioral, and lower on a hierarchy ranging from superficial to robust examination. In contrast, thick conceptions involve dimensions listeners embody when probing the intellectual, social, and moral interests of dialogue. I offer a visual schematic (see Figure 3), illustrating four thick listening conceptions in corresponding fashion to the graphic introduced in Chapter II. Certain conceptions of listening are identified, but they exist and are enacted differently based on the context, purpose, institution, and relationships in which dialogue occurs.

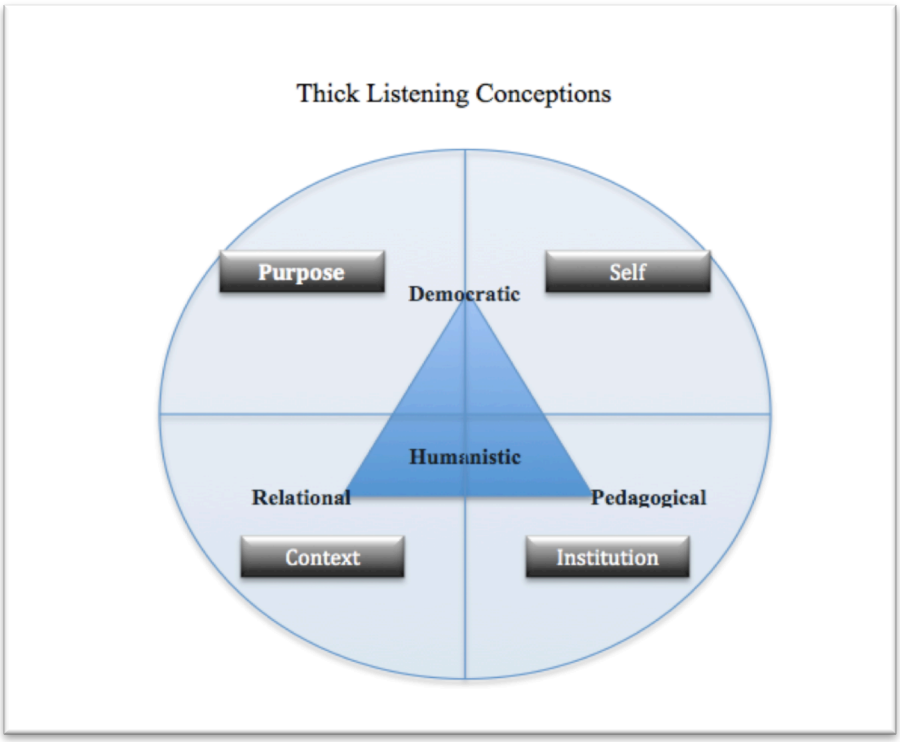

Figure 3. Thick listening conceptions

I place a humanistic listening conception at the nucleus of my triangle to represent overarching ideas present across multiple disciplines of educational inquiry. I will assert that humanistic listening conceptions are the core foundation of three distinct listening conceptions: democratic, relational, and pedagogical listening. Together, the four thick listening conceptions have a tradition of salient discourses relevant to teachers who seek to foster constructive dialogue in classrooms. I will analyze pertinent literature related to each listening conception for the purpose of framing interpretations of teachers' notions about listening in my study. These lenses will provide readers with a rich and diverse theoretical roadmap upon which to base future studies about classroom dialogue, attending to an absence particularly evident in social studies education.

Humanistic Conceptions of Listening

> Contemporary culture has failed to grasp the need to begin to understand and abide by the listening process, as a primary and indispensable requirement for coexistence. (Fiumara, 1990, p. 31)

Fiumara's decisive statement suggests we, as a global society, have not embraced the purpose of listening for *coexistence*, nor have we fully comprehended its meaning or used it to guide our interactions. This assertion takes the condition of listening to every level of human interaction, from individual relationships to schools and across society. Contrasting this transformational outlook to an obedient conception of listening is important for teachers working with students and families in schools. Like many other theorists, Fiumara interpreted the writing of Martin Heidegger to form listening conceptions, and I will conduct a brief examination of his writing that has established a humanistic conception of listening.

Heidegger wrote profoundly about the nature of listening in his seminal book, *Being and Time* (1962). *Daesin* is the term Heidegger (1962) used to define his ultimate ontological state, being-in-the-world.

> Indeed, hearing constitutes the primary and authentic way in which the Daesin is open for its ownmost potentiality-for-Being—as in hearing the voice of the friend whom every Dasein carries with it. Daesin hears, because it understands. As a Being-in-the-world with Others, a Being which understands, Daesin is in thrall to Daesin—with and to itself; and in this thralldom it belongs to these. (Heidegger, 1962, p. 206)

I start with the foundation and meaning that when we listen well, we are "being-in-the-world." *Daesin*, Heidegger's term for existence, is used to describe a presence humans uniquely possess that places one in a constant relationship to the world. He argued that listening is central to humans' Being. Extending this ontological claim, Heidegger

(1975) offered a key statement about the relationship between listening, the self, and the world: "When you have listened, not merely to me, but rather when you maintain yourselves in hearkening attunement, then there is proper hearing" (p. 66). This declaration is preceded in *Early Greek Thinking* (1975) with elucidation of *proper hearing*:

> We wrongly think that the activation of the body's audio equipment is hearing proper. But then hearing in the sense of hearkening and heeding is supposed to be a transposition of hearing proper into the realm of the spiritual. (p. 65)

The words *hearkening* and *heeding* have significance when thinking about listening and being-in-the-world. The moral and intellectual dimensions of hearing proper, thus, translate into a sophisticated response, "the realm of the spiritual," compared to the mere biological instruments of our ears.

Central to Heidegger's listening conception is the notion that hearing is the bridge between ignorance and understanding, stated in *Being and Time*: "If we have not heard 'aright,' it is not by accident that we say we have not 'understood'" (p. 206). Heidegger claimed hearing is "constitutive to discourse" much in the same ways as speaking, though with different bodily organs. This setting of hearing at equal footing to speaking has considerable meaning to subsequent writing about listening. In what he identified as proper hearing in attunement, Heidegger applied the term *hearkening* to mean a person who hears with understanding (Stassen, 2003). This is the listening conception Heidegger contributed, which exists as part of *Dasein*, or Being-in-the-World.

Heidegger's writing has indelibly influenced other philosophers, and philosophers of education, in the humanistic tradition. Each author is deeply concerned about the state of the world that continues to remain closed to the fullness involved with listening

intently. Gemma Corradi Fiumara, in *The Other Side of Language* (1990), embodies a philosophy of listening based on writing from Heidegger that is instructive for humans living in today's world. She eloquently positioned listening, an act requiring tremendous patience, persistence, concentration, and strength, to counter the logocentric culture of Western society. Fiumara cited issues of global importance, for example, to demonstrate how inept we are in listening to news involving environmental harm to the earth: "There must be some problem of listening if we only hear from earth when it is so seriously endangered that we cannot help paying heed" (p. 6). Whether it is current events, problems at home, or difficult questions at schoolwork, one may aspire to listen well by responding to the matter at hand from the hearkening attunement Heidegger (1975) contextualized for us.

Fiumara (1990) pointe out that this is an area for growth we all ought to seek as part of human development. To counter these forces, Fiumara suggested, " . . . sufficient silence [is needed] to allow ourselves to at least hear the incessant rumbling of our cultural world—a machinery of thought that seems to have lost its original vitality as a result of its enormous success" (p. 25). A full hearing in these terms gets lost in schools, as evident in the teachers' experience and my analysis of social studies scholarship on classroom discussion. Fiumara worried about our collective listening in the world in the terms Heidegger framed, as it is so consequential to translation and interpretation of meaning, yet "alien to us that we do not even consider it worthy of our philosophical attention" (p. 39). Fiumara's contribution to listening conceptions is a key text, serving as an intermediary between Heidegger and more contemporary philosophical writing.

David Michael Levin's *The Listening Self* (1989) was written at the same time as Fiumara's book, and it frames an equally provocative conception of listening grounded in Heidegger's ideas. He stated: "When we lend our ears to such a recollection of Being, our listening becomes properly tuned, properly thoughtful: it becomes an authentic hearing. And this is the achievement of hearkening" (p. 207). Philosophers are deeply concerned by the failures of our culture and society to listen with such respect, attention, and precision to matters running deep into the human and worldly spirit. Levin artfully contrasted sound and sight, showing how hearing is "intimate and participatory," while seeing is "detached" (p. 32). His writing, like that of many of his peers, sought to uplift listening in human interaction. Like Fiumara, Levin conceptualized listening's presence in a state where other "noise" is silenced. He stated: "Our listening needs to return to the intertwining of the self and other, subject and object; for it is there that the roots of communicativeness take hold and thrive—and it is there that a non-ecological listening-self is sleeping, embedded in the matrix of melodious energies" (p. 223). Here, Levin called for a listening that is responsive, approachable, and attended to with care, and these habits are processes that must be learned.

The third major piece of writing springing from Heidegger's core listening conceptions was recently published by Lisbeth Lipari (2014) in *Listening, Thinking, Being: An Ethics of Attunement*. In addition to Heidegger, Lipari drew on ancient Indian studies of the Vedas through Sanskrit grammarians to examine the roots of listening in language. Her central focus was a crossing between speaking, listening, and thinking as a means for understanding what one hears, which she defined as interlistening. This concept of listening will be introduced at later points of my hermeneutic analysis, in

relation to the interpretation of the teachers' conceptions. Lipari framed the importance of listening in dire state of seeking a better society: "Beyond the intellectual mysteries of listening, at heart this book centers on an ethical concern: what are the social, political, and cultural implications of our failure to listen for the other—that is, listening without stealing our interlocutor's possibilities and horizons of meaning?" (p. 203). In summation, the three philosophers have contributed thick ideas about listening's conception from a humanistic angle, and each one has interpreted Heidegger's writing in raising listening's position in dialogue as fundamental to understanding. Taken from a different angle, these writings have particular significance to social studies education and related fields as I establish humanistic ideals as grounds for my conceptual framework.

Lastly, Joseph Beatty's (1999) essay, "Good Listening," is an important work to examine here because of its deftness in describing listening's humanistic intricacies and rare connection to pedagogical interventions. He described a listening orientation and the internal monitoring process that delves deep beyond the surface one experiences in order to listen. Beatty's central premise was based on a type of detachment "focused on the particular other's meaning" (p. 287). Concerning the humanistic condition, Beatty attributed listening well to meta-virtues when one has a strong sense of the self and others. For instance, Beatty claimed a good listener's response to an aggressive act "will likely involve the engagement of moral habits of kindness and patience and intellectual habits of honesty, self-knowledge, and curiosity" (p. 291). Beatty asserted that balancing all of these virtues—sometimes enacting some of these habits while deactivating others—in a world filled with inner and external conflicts is very difficult, but crucial to humanistic listening conceptions.

Democratic Conceptions of Listening

Humanistic conceptions of listening broadly frame my analytical categories of thick ideas. At this point, I will review literature from three branches comprising my thick conception triangle, presented earlier in the chapter.

I will begin with a field germane to social studies education: democratic listening. Listening is a subject of interest for educators, political scientists, and philosophers seeking engaged democratic communities. Advanced ideas about the nature of democracy require citizens to view themselves beyond the protection and establishment of their own rights. Living in a pluralistic society is in fact hard work, and it involves deep commitment to participation in difficult dialogue about a wide range of issues. Thus, conceptions about listening are appropriately situated within studies about democracy. In educational research, John Dewey (1916) is the theorist referenced universally in relation to how democratic education should be constituted in schools, as he took problems and issues of society as the basis for "social intercourse" (p. 295). Dewey's values on civil discourse and democratic engagement are not subject for analysis in my research; however, his stance on listening is worth investigation.

Contemporary educational philosopher Leonard Waks interpreted several of Dewey's writings that tacitly or directly pertained to the subject of listening in the realm of democratic education. At first, Waks (2011) acknowledged a "lifeless" form of listening evident in Dewey's *The School and Society*. Here, listening is conceived as a passive process of absorbing information that Dewey critiqued as the epidemic plaguing schools. Viewed in this light, Dewey conceived of listening in thin terms. Alternatively, Waks pointed out that Dewey's conception of listening matures in later works with more

subtle and nuanced references. Waks, reading Dewey, described this democratic form of listening as *transactional* listening, wherein "the participants, the contents of their communications, and even the very vocabularies they adopt are all constructed or reconstructed through the conversational give-and-take" (p. 195). The role of communication with transactional listening becomes vital when considering the democratic communities Dewey envisioned where communication becomes "inherently transactional; it means participation through the interpenetration of meanings between speakers and listeners in communication" (p. 199).

Other theorists have studied Dewey's writing to interpret meanings associated with listening in the realm of democratic education. Most prominently, Jim Garrison's (1996) essay wedded the discourse of intellectual theorists Dewey and Gadamer. He drew on hermeneutics to explain the impossibility of impartial listening, as "dangerous and alienating because it invites us to understand others using our own interpretive fore-structures, while ignoring the need to examine how those structures affect our ability or inability to imagine another's stories" (p. 433). Gadamer, Garrison contended, offered important insights about the need to open horizons of meaning through listening, but he did not connect any pathways for this conception in education or democracy. As a result, Garrison explored Dewey's ideals on social institutions sustaining growth in a pluralistic society as the gateway between listening and democracy. In any community, varied degrees of difference are disruptive forces to dialogue that might inhibit a person from listening, but Garrison asserted that we must persevere through these obstacles. Taking Dewey's conceptions of democracy, education, and creativity together, he suggested:

> To listen is to participate in an open and democratic conversation [and] to commit ourselves to creating new understandings among people, and this implies a willingness to change one's own understanding and ways of being in the face of new challenges and insights. Listening cultivates growth. (p. 446)

This listening conception strikes a chord for democratic educators such as Benjamin Barber (1989), who concluded: "[I will listen] means I will put myself in his place, I will try to understand, I will strain to hear what makes us alike" (p. 356). There is an important relationship, as a result, between a deep and open listening created in democratic communities for individuals with divergent views to foster the deliberation, participation, and civil discourse that enable personal growth for the well-being of a society.

Democratic listening with the intent of bringing together groups of individuals with varied interests occurs in classrooms in many forms, or at least it has the potential to enrich discourse between students if enacted with the conception that Dewey and others have proclaimed. A broad survey of the social studies education scholarship, however, reveals limited engagement of democratic listening in classroom discussion. Parker and Preskill are two researchers aligned with this field who have raised readers' attention to the need to listen in discussion with some characterization of listening's complexities. In a recent essay published in a listening series from *Teachers College Record*, Parker (2011) articulated how listening plays a crucial role in academic seminars and deliberations, adding more texture to the discourse. He described students as strangers in that, though they are sometimes acquaintances, school administrators determine the mixing and makeup of classrooms randomly. This composition is, in some respects, a mirror of the democratic communities existing outside of the school environment that must hash out real problems. Parker likened peer relationships in schools to a political

friendship that rests on principles of equity and political trust. For "oneness" or "wholeness" to exist within a democratic community, Parker (2010) asserted: "Equitable and trustworthy conjoint living is not only a matter of being heard but also hearing others" (p. 2827). This listening conception was based on his advocacy for seminars and deliberations being the curricular path toward the democratic engagement. Even more, he believed that conscious attention toward "capacious and genuine hearing" elevates the "role of agency in listening," a recognition that the "listener needs to actually *do* something" (p. 2828). Drawing a relationship between political ideals that govern the nature and direction of civil discourse in a democratic community, and the curricular arrangements of classroom discussions, adds an important dimension to the listening conception examined in this section. Parker stands alone in the social studies education field in making listening an elevated counterpart to speaking, with distinct democratic associations for educators seeking constructive dialogue.

Relational Conceptions of Listening

Educational theorist Nel Noddings (2012) claimed: "We should listen because another addresses us" (p. 21). This statement underscores the core purpose of interpersonal relationships in school, society, and life. Relational listening is grounded in the concept of empathy. A listener seeks to understand another person by gaining access into his or her life, standing in his or her shoes. Relational listening is paramount to vocations where interpersonal bonds are at the nexus of counseling, nursing, social work, and teaching. From a different angle, though, relational listening cannot be reduced to a particular career; rather, it is an overarching aspect of personal relationships.

My direct exploration of relational listening conceptions begins with the forefather of counseling in the 20th century, Carl Ransom Rogers. Rogers (1980) suggests listening requires " . . . entering the private perceptual world of the other and becoming thoroughly at home in it" (p. 142). This conception draws parallels to the hermeneutic stance Heidegger, Garrison, and Beatty take toward listening in a humanistic condition with openness and detachment.

Taking a closer look at Rogers' contributions to listening requires analysis of two terms, often used interchangeably: *reflective listening* and *active listening*. Rogers (1951) characterized reflective listening as a complex process of reconstruction. It suggests listening demands careful interpretation and meaning making that exists within a complicated set of communicative elements of interpersonal relationships.

An analysis of his broader conception, active listening, will aid the reader in understanding this notion from Rogers' perspective. The generative qualities of active listening are most significant in uplifting its place in relation to listening's dialogic counterpart, speaking. Rogers and Farson (2007) believed active listening demands that "we get inside of the speaker, that we grasp, from his point of view, just what it is he is communicating to us" (p. 4). This is not the only obligation of the active listener, according to Rogers. Indeed, the active listener has the responsibility to "convey to the speaker that we are seeing things from his point of view" (p. 4). Rogers' contribution to listening conceptions at the relational level becomes very apparent through his writing and examples common to therapeutic experiences. Listening for total meaning, for instance, requires a person to seek understanding beyond the contents of the message, responding to tone, voice inflection, pauses, expressions, posture, and breathing. If done

well, relational listening involves attention to the wholeness of human senses. In addition to building a rapport, Rogers posited that this conception of listening can improve a speaker's self-worth, cause the listener and speaker to grow in the process, and even become contagious. From this standpoint, Rogers' contributions to listening discourse are significant because he ascribed active listening as reproductive.

To come back to educational philosophy, I return to Waks, who was both influenced by Rogers and original in his own right as he formed relational conceptions of listening. Waks (2010) theorized interpersonal listening as "listening to and interact[ing] with another [speaker]" (p. 2745). He inquired further about interpersonal listening, empathic listening, by classifying listeners as *interested* or *disinterested*, though the meanings are different compared to their customarily literal interpretations. Waks described the disinterested listening of a teacher, for example, as having the practical pursuits of obtaining specific information. He characterized disinterested listeners as cataphic listeners who separate what they hear into categories. Waks used an example of a teacher listening for students' reading fluency, and then placing the pupils into high, medium, and low categories of performance to disclose this conception. This cataphic listening is consequential to the relations between the speaker and listener, "thus an instrument for both practical effectiveness and identity maintenance" (p. 2752).

Alternatively, Waks condoned *laying aside* these categories, a phrase borrowed from Rogers, to engage a deeper and fuller meaning of relational listening. Apophatic listening is a-categorical and, in the case of the same teacher, involves listening to the fullness of students' reading beyond the classification of fluency. Like Rogers, Waks (2010) connected apophatic listening to a generative process articulated beautifully in the

statement: “The speaker is taken in not merely as the empirically presented self but a potentially inexhaustible soul, and listening is a binding or unification of souls” (p. 2754). This type of listening occurs in an interaction with another that opens new horizons of meanings, growth, and learning that do not happen when treated at the practical and categorical level. Waks’ contributions to relational listening again reveal its generative qualities beyond the basic conception that it is important to attend to the speaker merely because it is a human obligation.

Entering a relationship with another individual, whether it is in a clinical setting or personal situation, compels the listener to be with the speaker in a way that is both difficult to describe and hard to achieve. At this point, I will establish that relational listening, seen through the writing of Rogers and Waks, means a great deal more than directing one’s attention to another person when they speak. Being with another person means that the listener can sense the tone and movements associated with speech and be able to express the meanings that might be implicated in the complex process of communication across human interaction. Moreover, relational listening can be generative when the listener’s disposition is open and truly hospitable to another person because it creates the opportunity for new and different ideas to emerge as well as for personal growth.

Pedagogical Conceptions of Listening

> When my intention was limited to announcing my own point of view, communication came to a halt. My voice drowned out the children's. However, when they said things that surprised me, exposing ideas I did not imagine they held, my excitement mounted. I kept the children talking, savoring the uniqueness of responses so singularly different from mine. The rules of teaching had changed; I now wanted to hear answers I could not myself invent. Indeed, the inventions tumbled out as if they had been simply waiting for me to stop talking and begin listening. (Paley, 1986, p. 125)

In this brief excerpt, former kindergarten teacher and theorist Vivian Gussin Paley described the extraordinary introspection and profound impact of a teacher listening to her children. Her listening pursuits were governed by intense curiosity, which she believed led her to respect and honor a child's capacity in the highest regard.

This closing section explores thick pedagogical conceptions of listening, with sharp focus on habits, approaches, and methods teachers are encouraged to consider. Put differently, my analysis of listening demonstrates that actions taken by teachers have the potential to be instructive when listening's diverse, multilayered attributes are nurtured. It stands in stark contrast to the thin conceptions described in Chapter II by which listening is commonly taught, overtly pursued, or unconsciously imbued—that is, where listening is narrow, behavioral, and obedient in nature.

My literature review in this section begins with educational philosopher Nel Noddings, who has contributed numerous ideas about teaching. In her essay, *The Caring Relation in Teaching*, Noddings (2012) located listening in relation to care ethics. She asserted the carer must distinguish what the cared wants as opposed to what the carer assumes the cared wants. This very important discrepancy establishes, again, the basis for listening empathetically in all human relationships. Noddings applied her care ethics

to listening that teachers enact with students. Noddings believed using a simple phrase "let me hear you think" allows children to know "that their thinking will be respected, [and] they enter a spirit of dialogue" (p. 774). Stepping away from dialogue is the important pedagogical move that Noddings declared teachers must make in order to actually hear and understand what students have to say. Going further, Noddings suggested teachers ought to "become absorbed, fascinated" in order to listen receptively to their students in a way that believing becomes a powerful strategy for teaching as a carer (p. 775).

Noddings contributed a broad conception of pedagogical listening that is aimed at teachers and grounded in care ethics. From here, I will move to two completely different but equally integral frameworks on pedagogical listening. The first ideas are drawn from a book by Katherine Schultz (2003), *Listening: A Framework for Teaching Across Difference*. This work is primarily situated in secondary education classroom settings with diverse racial and ethnic compositions. My second arena of pedagogical listening analysis is embodied within the philosophy and pedagogy of the Reggio Emilia schools.

In embarking on this research inquiry, I take what Schultz identified as a "listening stance." A teacher's listening is not merely hearing her students; " . . . it suggests how a teacher attends to individuals, the classroom as a group, the broader social context, and cutting across all of these, to silence and acts of silencing" (Schultz, 2003, p. 8). This statement grounded her framework in listening across difference, which constantly shifts listening between students, groups, the environment, and issues surrounding the school. When listening to particular students, Schultz claimed the teacher must be able to interpret knowledge that exists across multiple cultural

boundaries and experiences. She posited: "teachers must listen for specificity of who students are" (p. 35). This idea, Schultz argued, is unfortunately thinly treated as part of culturally relevant pedagogy often through a set of activities rather than a teacher's disposition and awareness.

In later sections, Schultz examined the nature of rhythm in particular classrooms where discussion is abundant, seeking a balance between student and teacher talk. Further, she maintained that social and academic listening must be balanced, with greater emphasis on the former. Through structured activities and routines in which the teacher listens to students, Schultz showed how a teacher's listening stance can be achieved pedagogically. Lastly, Schultz investigated silence evident across classroom discourses through many forms, including institutional acts of exclusion, hierarchies established between social or racial groups, and reflective inquiry or metacognitive exercises. Schultz articulated, in various contexts, how listening is sometimes heightened or arrested in periods of classroom silence.

This framework for listening across difference adds marginally to the conceptions already presented in this chapter; however, that is not my purpose in placing Schultz in this section. At every level, Schultz addressed the pedagogical nature of listening—which actions or ideas to use instructionally with students. She believed that teachers can teach listening. Beyond the nature of listening Schultz characterized, the conception of whether listening is teachable or pedagogical was addressed later through teachers' stories, reflections, and beliefs.

> We should listen to the children, so that they can express their fears but also for them to give us the courage to face our fears, for them and with them. We should listen to the children so that their wisdom gives us comfort, so that their "whys" orient our search for the reasons and give us the strength to find non-

> violent, honest, and responsible answers. We should listen to the children so that their words give us the courage for the future and help us to find a new way to dialogue with the children and with ourselves. (Rinaldi, 2001, p. 2)

This author is one of the lead experts of the Reggio Emilia approach to education, and these words were written following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attack on the United States as a reminder that listening should not be reactive or one-way from teacher to student. Similar to Vivian Paley, Rinaldi is interested in the mutuality listening brings to a relationship between student and teacher as means for personal growth. Pedagogical listening is salient within a broader Reggio Emilia philosophy of students making meaning of their education through the interpretation of vast languages and documentation of their thinking. Many of the Reggio Emilia practices are well situated, in general, to the listening conceptions I articulated. For example, Reggio Emilia educators place themselves at the same level as their students, and they see students as having the capacity to generate new knowledge through direct engagement with their physical environment and social interactions among peers.

This philosophy sets listening as a habit and act that is in direct opposition to the obedient conception often engrained in public schools today. From Rinaldi (2001), we learn Reggio Emilia "listening is generated by curiosity, desire, doubt, and uncertainty" (p. 2). It is active, relational, and multidimensional in the Reggio Emilia childhood centers, as Schultz and many others have ascribed listening's conceptions. Interestingly, proponents of the Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education believe listening is not necessarily taught, as they think children are born as social beings that listen inherently. Advocates of this educational methodology contend students experience a great deal of "internal listening" because they are constantly barraged with media,

images, and language that must be processed, or as they characterize, listened to. The pedagogical role of teachers in Reggio Emilia childhood centers must enable "a context of multiple listening," which Rinaldi acknowledged becomes very difficult for students who come from traditional schooling (p. 3). Further, she stated: "Documentation can be seen as visible listening: it ensures listening and being listened to by others" (p. 4). Students can document their listening, and the internal listening Rinaldi described, through a range of medium, forms of expression, and metacognitive processes, and this is the essential instructional move teachers must make in Reggio Emilia childhood centers. My review of writing from these diverse discourses reveals particular instructional acts teachers must make in order to cultivate a learning environment for students where they are encouraged to listen intently, relationally, and critically.

Summary of *Thin* and *Thick* Listening Conceptions

The Italian writer and linguist Niccolo Tommaseo remarked over a century ago: "Even when many people hear criticism, few listen to it, very few understand it and even fewer feel it" (quoted in Fiumara, 1990, p. 29). This provocative statement is insightful when probing listening conceptions. It suggests that listening has myriad layers to uncover beginning with sensory input of receiving sound and words to the affective realm of an emotional response. Following Tommaseo's line of thinking, our failure as humans to listen starts at the moment of critique or difference. Fiumara believed that a culture of assertive discourse hardens individuals' stances, impeding listening and resulting in inelasticity that prevails in the logocentric world in which we reside. Other theorists have attributed the misreading of *logos* as the fundamental reason why listening with openness

and hospitality rarely occurs in dialogue, while we remain focused on out-speaking our partners in conversation.

The assertive nature of public discourse is one of many factors influencing our conceptions about listening articulated in these two chapters. For teachers and schools, several institutional and culture norms of school render an obedient listener. This conception, characterized as strictly behavioral, narrow, and inactive, was revealed through my analysis of interviews and artifacts and writing prominent in schools. I then examined research on classroom discussion that is influential to readers of social studies educational scholarship to show that limited attention, unchallenged assumptions, and misguided beliefs about listening need to be explored further to understand classroom discussion and participation.

Shifting to thicker listening conceptions, I conducted a broad analysis of varied theoretical writings to offer an alternative, deeper compendium of listening ideas. The literature reviewed was classified into four categories, with democratic, relational, and pedagogical listening all branching off from humanistic listening conceptions. No one listening conception described in these sections wholly captures my conception. Collectively, these discourses offer insight into the intellectual, participatory, and interpersonal possibilities listening has to enhance human interaction. Bringing a complicated notion of listening to my research and interpretations of elementary teachers' conceptions in the chapters that follow establishes a useful context for the reader.

Chapter IV

LISTENING WITH HERMENEUTIC PHENOMENOLOGY

Introduction: The Other Way to Listen

> And later on when she was eighty-three she heard a cactus blooming in the dark. At first she didn't know what she was hearing. She found it by just following the sound. There were twenty flowers on one cactus and they were all white as the moon. The old man said, "Most people never hear those things at all." I said, "I wonder why." He said, "They just don't take the time you need for something that important." I said, "I'll take the time. But first you have to teach me." "I'd like to if I could," he said, "but the thing is . . . you have to learn it from the hills and ants and lizards and weeds and things like that. They do the teaching around here." (Baylor & Parnall, 1978, para. 27-33)

Taken from a little-known children's tale, *The Other Way to Listen* suggests attending distinctly to the sounds and sights of nature can render hearing that one could not ever imagine. In this story, an old man gives sage advice to a young child, an interested but neophyte listener, on ways to hear "corn singing in the cornfield" (Baylor & Parnall, 1978, para. 1). He suggests: "Start with one seed pod or one dry weed or one horned toad or one handful of dirt or one sandy wash" (para. 38). Living in a world filled with a cacophony of sound makes listening an overwhelming endeavor, yet one worth undertaking. This story adds texture and meaning to the complicated, mysterious, and misconceived directions of listening described in the first three chapters of my research study. Shifting focus, the excerpt from this beautiful and powerful fable reveals many of the dimensions I seek to uncover about listening viewed in parallel terms to the research

methodology I adopted. Attuned listening requires patience, openness, and discipline, which are all displayed prominently in the themes this story presents as paramount to humans connecting with nature. Phenomenology is the broad philosophical approach I apply in this study, with deliberate attention to hermeneutic dimensions. As a researcher, these same attributes principally and practically demand my approach to this study, aptly captured by a major contributor to phenomenological research, Max van Manen (2014): "Phenomenology is about wonder, words, and world" (p. 13).

Engaged listening and hermeneutic phenomenology share many characteristics in their aims, registers, methods, and constructions of meaning. To this point, I have articulated conceptions of listening that guide my philosophical and research inquiry. This chapter clarifies and elucidates my specific research methodology by first grounding my work theoretically, and then systematically moving from my selection of the research participants to the methods utilized to elicit ideas from elementary teachers in hermeneutic interviews and ways of conducting hermeneutic analyses. I will provide the reader with a glimpse into the lifeworld of each research participant, focusing on the individual registers and forms of listening each person adopted throughout my study. Along the way, I share intersecting personal anecdotes and insights about my own methods of listening. Interpretation of meaning is the core philosophical division between phenomenology and hermeneutics. I will draw on writing that leans toward hermeneutics in this chapter, to show how my construction of meaning can occur without relinquishing core phenomenological principles.

The novice listener in the children's story described above becomes frustrated when he futilely enacts methods told by the wise old man. Yet he remains committed to the project of listening, and eventually his listening takes a turn:

> I stood at the top where I always stand looking down. HELLO HILLS. HELLO HILLS. HELLO HILLS. HELLO. All I know is suddenly I wasn't the only one singing. The hills were signing too. I stopped. I didn't move for maybe an hour. I never listened so hard in my life. Of course their kind of singing isn't loud. It isn't any sound you can explain. It isn't made with words. You couldn't write it down. All I can say is it came straight up from those dark shiny lava rocks humming. It moved around like wind. It seemed to be the oldest sound in the world. (Baylor & Parnall, 1978, para. 66-80)

I encountered numerous obstacles and moments of vexation in taking a phenomenological hermeneutic research approach in the nearly two years following my dissertation proposal. However, like the young boy from the story, I remain devoted to the rigorous philosophical and methodological teachings of van Manen and others to uncover meanings of the subject of listening I seek to understand. And throughout this time, "I never listened so hard in my life" (Baylor & Parnall, 1978, para. 74).

My Path to a Research Question

> An important reminder for all phenomenological research, in all its stages, is to be constantly mindful of one's original question and thus to be steadfastly oriented to the lived experience that makes it possible to ask the "what it is like" question in the first place. (van Manen, 1990, p. 42)

Every twist and turn of academic research can undoubtedly distract the person conducting inquiry from the core question initially pursued. Van Manen, in the above statement, described the importance of constantly reframing and rethinking ideas that revolve around a research question, which leads me to begin with a brief summary of its origin for me. The research question in this dissertation, "*What are elementary teachers'*

conceptions of listening?", was influenced by a confluence of personal and professional experiences in the field of education beginning in the early stages of my career as a high school teacher nearly 20 years ago. I was fascinated by the raw content young people shared during classroom discussions without warning of how moving or informative these words could be. Questions like: *Why do the heartfelt statements from a 17-year-old girl proclaiming a deep commitment to a pro-life stance resonate in my mind even though, to this day, I take a completely oppositional stance on the issue of abortion?* and *How is it possible that a 10-year-old boy articulated the most cogent explanation of communism I ever heard despite my myriad political science courses taken as an undergraduate major?* were constantly in my thoughts. These two reflections underscore a mere few of the countless exchanges that occurred in my presence during classroom dialogue. Referring back to Paley's (1986) words, "I now wanted hear answers I could not myself invent" (p. 125), these mystifying experiences drew me toward an intense interest in the field of social studies education and democratic classrooms. They pushed me to study the pedagogies of classroom discussions, leading me to experiment with Socratic seminars, deliberations, structured academic controversies, and public issue discussions. As I referenced in the social studies literature, facilitating constructive classroom dialogue is challenging and often frustrating given curriculum and institutional constraints, pressure for seeking and measuring accountability, management of diverse learners' needs, and regulation of often contrived discourse entrapped in the high school classroom. Nevertheless, I stood resolute in my belief that classroom discussion was the pathway to educated citizenship, personal growth, and lifelong learning.

Persistence with classroom discussion as a chief curricular and instructional aim eventually led me to focus less on achieving "success" with the product sought through student-to-student dialogue. Instead, as I entered into a doctoral program and read widely from the fields of critical, poststructuralist, and hermeneutic writing, my interest shifted away from refining my pedagogy and finding a formula to constitute better social studies instruction to interrogating notions of classroom discourse at all levels. Important questions from these angles entered my thinking, such as: "Who has a voice in my classroom and who does not have a voice?" and "What does the absence of speaking mean?"

My sharp focus on listening in classroom dialogue emerged from a series of experiences occurring at the same time, as I first began to realize classroom discussion is even more complex than the literature in social studies research suggests. First, as a professional, my switch from teacher to administrator upended the relationship I previously had with students, teachers, and the classroom. As an observer seeking knowledge about learning in a wide range of classrooms, my "listening" senses became attuned in sight, hearing, and perception. Evaluating teaching and learning guided my listening in the classroom, however. I grappled with listening dispositions, such as empathy, mindfulness, and reciprocity with hopes that opening my mind would enable me to serve students and teachers better. Having seen over 1,000 classrooms different from my own, my lens and horizons of meaning are greatly expanded. Second and simultaneously, I encountered social studies educational writing by Parker (2006) and Preskill (1997) inviting researchers and educators to consider listening as a core dimension of the democratic classroom. Parker and Preskill engaged listening with

democratic, moral, and intellectual rigor concealed beneath the surface of the robust social studies education literature classroom discussion, yet this promising discourse remains scant compared to the assertive discourse prevalently published in educational writing, as discussed earlier.

Together, my reading and professional experiences have led me on a series of listening inquiries in classrooms that were reflective, intellectual, and ongoing. In the classroom, I facilitated professional learning experiences for elementary teachers to examine pedagogically how third and fourth grade students listen. We approached our studies with an understanding that listening entails more than the act of hearing or behaving in compliance with school norms. Listening, as an act of empathizing and critical thinking, led me to formulate new questions around the meaning of participation in classrooms.

More recently, my pilot research study, initiated in a suburban public school district in northern New Jersey with three teachers in different buildings, investigated how elementary students participated in social studies classroom discussions while being explicitly taught nuances of listening. We co-constructed lessons in which the teachers explained and modeled listening dispositions and subsequently observed students' participation in small group discussions and reviewed students' personal writing about their own listening. This metacognitive experience resulted in students questioning their listening stances, yet what remained most intriguing all throughout the pilot study was teachers wrestling with notions of listening.

My attention to the elementary classroom, teachers, and students was heightened at this time. Many institutional barriers and thorny social dynamics of the high school

setting, a place formerly comfortable for me, became less appealing when concentrating my studies on classroom discourse. Working with educators across the continuum of public education, I expanded my curricular lens and mindset, and I began to see the elementary classroom as a wondrous place of intellectual curiosity, hospitality, and hope often absent in secondary education. The shift in my research interest to elementary education is not a clean or absolute cessation from social studies or secondary education. Instead, my rerouting is an attempt to see angles, perspectives, and educators from a wider view while maintaining the chief principles of social studies education that have guided my practice throughout my career.

Moreover, situating my research interest in the discourse and conceptions of teachers in elementary classrooms has the potential to offer educational insights *for* secondary educators interested in classroom discussion *from* an individual who has lived in both worlds. My experience working with elementary teachers has cast a different outlook on the nature and purpose of classroom dialogue. While the field of social studies education has relegated classroom discussion to occasional events in the forms of SACs, elementary teachers view classroom dialogue as a continuous, constant, and vibrant dimension related to students' education. The broad and full scope of classroom dialogic experience is not likely absent from secondary social studies classrooms featured in scholarship. Thus, my attention to the many facets of dialogue in elementary classrooms could expand the lens of secondary classrooms where speaking and listening occur in dynamic fashion.

Live experience in the classroom is, at times, a window to the larger world of how individuals interact across society and in their personal lives. Indeed, listening is

ubiquitous in every sense. My professional commitment to inquire about listening in classroom dialogue, as such, is often viewed in parallel terms to my relationships outside of schools. *How can a father listen compassionately and responsively to a young child often unable to communicate her own feelings and thoughts in speech? How can an adult in a lifelong relationship listen carefully to the emotions of a partner when the complexity of life circumstances changes swiftly?*

These types of questions were a presence in my mind as I undertook a hermeneutic phenomenological study of teachers' conceptions of listening, serving to enrich a full rendering of the act we often take for granted every day. The central question attempts to arrive at the essence of listening in classroom dialogue from the perceptions and explanations of elementary teachers in a particular setting. The subsidiary questions are designed to inform the core question by looking more closely at the individual motivations, dispositions, experiences, and pedagogies of these teachers with a larger inquiry into the meaning of participation in classrooms.

Aims of Hermeneutic Phenomenology

> Because phenomenon in the phenomenological understanding is always just what constitutes Being, and furthermore because Being is always the Being of beings, we must first of all bring beings themselves forward in the right way if we are to have any prospect of exposing Being. These beings must likewise show themselves in the way of access that genuinely belongs to them. (Heidegger, 1962/1993, p. 84)

Heidegger's complicated description of conducting phenomenological inquiry has guided contemporary researchers for many years. Before delving into my specific research methods and analyses, I will provide the reader with the philosophical underpinnings of my chosen research methodology. In many ways, phenomenology and

hermeneutics complement each other philosophically, while also standing against one another in stark contrast. Phenomenologists study experience as "it is lived and is structured through consciousness" in a way that things just "happen to us" (Henriksson & Friesen, 2012, p. 1). Edmund Husserl, foremost, theorized research adopting a phenomenological framework in the 20th century. Husserl believed one could study a pure phenomenon as a reality of human consciousness, and that could in turn shed deep insight into the study of human behavior (Groenewald, 2004). Hermeneutic phenomenology rejects "the idea of suspending personal opinions" and is "focused on the subjective experience of individuals and groups" (Kafle, 2011, p. 186). Intense investigation of the *lifeworld*, the essence of things we experience, nonetheless remains at the core of phenomenological research inquiries.

The same openness phenomenologists believe is the essential character of studying experience is the context by which hermeneutics is grounded. However, hermeneutics focuses on the meanings associated with experiences, requiring a complex art of interpretation. A listener, for example, interprets meaning from a speaker's words, which depends on his or her place within the world. Separation from the ontological nature of the two philosophies, being from a hermeneutical lens, cannot exist without recognizing the historical and cultural position of individuals and the interaction between beings and the world (Heidegger, 1962). "Ontological interpretation," Heidegger (1962) asserted, "is a possible kind of interpreting, which we have described as the working-out and appropriation of an understanding" (p. 275).

Applying a hermeneutic principle to phenomenology draws upon the interpretation and meaning making of multiple layers of texts. Henricksson and Friesen

(2012) stated, "hermeneutic phenomenology is as much a disposition and attitude as it is a distinct method or program of inquiry" (p. 4). Findlay (2009), in her essay, sought to articulate compromises in how various researchers can adopt a phenomenological methodology under broad principles while incorporating hermeneutic methods. These compromises require that the researcher assume a "phenomenological attitude," understand description and interpretation are conjoined (i.e., interpretation is not an added step to methods), and take explicit measures to acknowledge subjectivities and pre-existing beliefs. Findlay's attempt to bridge philosophical conflicts inherent between phenomenology and hermeneutics was helpful in guiding my research methodology.

Hermeneutic phenomenology is most aptly situated through the work of Max van Manen as a theoretical roadmap for my own work. Stated simply: "Phenomenological text succeeds when it lets us see what which shines through, that which tends to hide itself" (van Manen, 1990, p. 130). Two of his texts are consequential to my research methodology: *Researching Lived Experience* (1990) and *Phenomenology of Practice* (2014). The former book is foundational for contemporary researchers adopting hermeneutic phenomenology as a methodology, especially for educational research due to van Manen's rich and ample pedagogical references. His more current writing, the latter reference, was recently published as comprehensive "textbook" on phenomenology broadening the historical, philosophical, and practical ranges of knowledge on this subject.

Van Manen (1990) suggested the chief impulse of phenomenological investigations remains focused on study of the lifeworld. He posited, " . . . good phenomenological description is collected by lived experience and recollects lived

experience—is validated by lived experience and it validates lived experience" (p. 27). This quality is known as the validating circles of inquiry, which provide researchers with a desired fullness and reciprocity to orient one's methodology. That means a researcher studying some element of lived experience is always seeking knowledge to shed insight into something that is generally known, but that collection of experience leads to a crystallization of the phenomenon that is informing to both the researcher and the participants in a different, clearer way. According to van Manen (2014), "What makes phenomenology so fascinating is that ordinary experience tends to become quite extraordinary when we lift it up from our daily existence and hold it with our phenomenological gaze" (p. 38). Elevating the ordinary to the extraordinary through inquiry is necessary when a subject—in this case, listening—is disregarded, assumed, or superficially engaged. My review of social studies educational research, in addition to the brief snapshots of instructional practices and artifacts from classrooms, suggest the "phenomenological gaze" to which van Manen referred is warranted in investigating teachers' conceptions of listening.

The Nature of Hermeneutic Phenomenology

The level of commitment, depth, and care individuals must abide by when conducting hermeneutic phenomenological research involves a great deal of self-discipline. In this section, I seek to articulate the nature of hermeneutic phenomenological methodology, narrowing my focus even further to a hermeneutic lens. This examination of phenomenology underscores why hermeneutic phenomenology is a

suitable methodology underpinning my own research inquiries involving listening and teachers' related conceptions in the classroom.

In delving more deeply into hermeneutic phenomenological methodology, one sees there are many dimensions of this field offering researchers a unique and constructive perspective on human science research. First, hermeneutic phenomenology considers the wholeness of experience and looks at it from multiple angles and perspectives (Moustakas, 1994). This comprehensive undertaking is described in greater detail through the examination of research methods and dispositions. Second, characterization of hermeneutic phenomenological research is often most pertinently labeled as *thoughtfulness*. This term is borrowed from Heidegger with a connotation of *attunement* or *heeding* that van Manen defined as the preeminent notion embodied in phenomenological research (Pinar et al., 2006, p. 407).

Third, the purpose behind hermeneutic phenomenological research, as defined by van Manen (1990), is to describe the essence of something in the lifeworld in a way that was previously unexamined. A certain disposition and set of methods are embodied in this methodology, but also a subject that is universally experienced by a particular group in a way that invites unraveling and reassembling layers of meaning through listening, observation, analysis, and construction. The person reading a hermeneutic phenomenological research study, therefore, should come away with a reflective understanding of what it means to experience that phenomenon from a particular lens (Creswell, 2013).

Hermeneutic phenomenology, akin to its human science research counterparts, is represented by a systematic and ideologically coherent set of principles guiding

researchers' work. These main beliefs and actions include: reduction/bracketing, horizontalization, imaginative variation, and thematic analysis. Hermeneutic phenomenology involves fluid and complicated intersections between the researcher and participants and research and writing.

In educational research, the researcher brings a personal experience influenced by culture, society, education, family, and a wide array of other institutions that are inextricably tied to the conception of a researchable idea and the methods undertaken for inquiry. Capturing essences of experience, the lifeworld requires a process known as bracketing, which seeks to engage directly with the researcher's prejudgments by setting them aside. While even pure phenomenologists acknowledge this is an impossible feat, van Manen (1990) noted, "our common-sense pre-understandings, our suppositions, assumptions, and the existing bodies of scientific knowledge predispose us to interpret the nature of the phenomenon before we have even come to grips with the significance of the phenomenological question" (p. 46). Bracketing, at its core, is a source of conflict between phenomenology and hermeneutics, since phenomenologists seek to set aside experiences from any contextual meaning. From a hermeneutic perspective, bracketing can best be described metaphorically as a set of parentheses used in writing to a separate a text whereby our assumptions as researchers can be temporarily located (van Manen, 2014). Van Manen (2002, 2014) suggested adopting an approach of *wonder*, as a form of bracketing, for researchers seeking to clear their minds from the "clutter" when they encounter an experience on its own. Creswell (2013) suggested that bracketing mitigates against this precondition van Manen described by discussing personal experience with research participants and through reflective phenomenological writing. This reduction

must take place as the researcher continually re-examines data in sharp alignment with the research question, analyzes the data, and writes about the essences of the lifeworld experienced by participants. I will return to this subject when the specific methods of the study are described.

Related to bracketing, an approach of horizontalization of the collected data implies an attitude in which the researcher considers every statement as holding equal value, initially, and the possibility of opening new horizons of meaning (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). Van Manen (1990) built on this hermeneutic perspective by adding that interpretation is never complete and simple enough to render truth. This attitude, assumed by the researcher, enables horizontalization to occur through a process that Creswell (2013) identified as the development of clusters of meaning.

The next phase of hermeneutic phenomenology involves the researcher engaging in introspection of the data and potential new horizons of meaning through imaginative variation. This intellectual and creative exercise "seeks possible meanings through the utilization of imagination, varying the frames of reference, employing polarities and reversals, and approaching the phenomenon from divergent perspectives, different positions, roles, or functions" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 97). Running parallel to imaginative variation, hermeneutic phenomenology requires researchers to cast their textual descriptions of lived experiences together to organize and analyze emerging themes. Van Manen (1990) suggested these processes lead to theme analysis, which is the experience of meaning one seeks to capture on the way to understanding a phenomenon. Hermeneutic phenomenology, in practice, should result in the researcher encapsulating

the essence of something by the various textual descriptions in a way that universalizes experience for a particular group.

In hermeneutic phenomenological research, the relationship between the researcher, participants, and writing is complex and salient to methodology. Van Manen (1990) posited that a certain level of intimacy and connection is required by the researcher and participants in order to arrive at meanings where interviews are more like conversations and writing is exchanged, critiqued, and revised between the author and reader over various iterations of the inquiry. Findlay (2009) suggested "shift[ing] back and forth" between the researcher's personal experience and the participants' textual descriptions through phenomenological research writing. Guiding phenomenological writing, van Manen (1990) characterized a process of *borrowing* that takes place, wherein the researcher temporarily takes the ideas, experiences, and reflections of the participants to capture the lifeworld, yet also elements of mutuality present in this exchange.

Interviewing is a hallmark of hermeneutic phenomenology, specifically unstructured interviews. Phenomenological interviews are typically organized into periods where participants are given ample time to explore their lifeworld through various stages. Open-ended questions frame phenomenological interviews for participants to drive the discourse into numerous directions. Noted earlier, a researcher should portray the phenomenological interview as a conversation gathering ideas and reflections reciprocally (van Manen, 1990, 2014). Kvale (1996) defined the phenomenological interview in literal terms, an *inter view* between two persons speaking about a topic that is mutually engaging. Van Manen (1990) recounted interviews as

having a hermeneutic thrust, in which "sense making and interpreting of the notion that drives or stimulates the conversation" (p. 98).

Phenomenological researchers vary slightly on the number of participants recommended for studies, but a consensus view states that between 4 and 25 individuals with a common thread provide a rich, manageable number to generate themes taken from the educators' lifeworld (Creswell, 2013). Though not required, researchers employing hermeneutic phenomenological methods can collect and analyze a wide range of qualitative data, including journals, observations, artifacts, and creative writing/art works (Creswell, 2013). These data serve to enrich the meaning of the studied phenomenon in appropriate contexts if used appropriately. Groenewald (2004) recommended phenomenological researchers take observational, theoretical, methodological, and analytical notes to complement the original descriptions. Interviews must continually be revisited, reread, and reconsidered in phenomenological studies, as well as exchanged with the participants, to keep the value of reflection and reciprocity at the heart of the inquiry.

Van Manen (1990) described hermeneutic phenomenological writing in the most concise terms: transforming lived experience into textual expression. However, the transformational process is not fixed, nor is it easy. To start, van Manen (1990) stated hermeneutical writing "is closely fused into the research activity and reflection itself" (p. 125). Writing makes a phenomenon visible, but at the same time "shows the limits or boundaries of our sightedness" (p. 130). Hermeneutic writing, thus, can have creative and narrative qualities very different from many fields of qualitative research. Van Manen (2014) wrote, " . . . phenomenology, not unlike poetry, is a vocative project; it

tries an incantative, evocative speaking, a primal telling" (p. 241). This can be achieved by "anecdotes, stories, fragments, aphorisms, metaphors, memories, riddles, and saying" (p. 248). The data, researcher, and participants are often intertwined in a way that makes creative outlets for expression possible. Pinar et al. (2006) described this process as an "aesthetic rendering of experience" (p. 406). In the end, descriptive passages are designed to capture the essence of a phenomenon, but the construction of the product is brought forth through deep reflection and rewriting in order to honor the fullness and ambiguity of a particular phenomenon.

Hermeneutic Phenomenology: The "Right" Methodology for My Study

Listening conceptions appear in my role as a father, spouse, sibling, son, friend, and educator. My listening horizons are never static, always studied and critiqued. Hermeneutic phenomenology requires this type of attitude, making my research interest a suitable match, methodologically.

Listening, as a subject of pedagogical inquiry, aligns appropriately with hermeneutic phenomenological methodology. Researchers seeking this methodology must consider whether the subject studied is universally experienced. Classroom dialogue is present in so many forms where listening is always occurring (or not). For an act and disposition transcending every interaction between students, we care and know so little about it (Rice, 2007). Hermeneutic phenomenology seeks to uncover the essence of something in the lifeworld, which can be entirely common to experience, but still mystifying in its manifestation. Listening meets this condition, and the stories, experiences, and ideas contributed by elementary teachers—described and interpreted

with various meanings—have the possibility of exposing new understandings for all teachers.

Designed to learn about teachers' conceptions of listening in classroom dialogue, this research requires the researcher and participants to form a more intimate relationship than is common in many qualitative research methodologies. Long, unstructured interviews, arranged more like conversations, are more likely to garner stories told from the lifeworld of teachers. These methods are essential for conducting hermeneutic phenomenological research, and pursuing an inquiry of listening conceptions works best with these methods.

Selection of the Research Participants

A desired closeness between the researcher and study participants makes selection a significant decision in hermeneutic phenomenological studies. Thus, my approach involved purposeful sampling with intensity—"information-rich cases that manifest the phenomenon intensely but not extremely" (Creswell, 2013, p. 158). I sought participants who had similar notions of inquiry around the central question of listening, as well as interest in qualitative interviewing. Moustakas (1994) asserted research participants in phenomenology ought to have understanding of the subject prior it taking place. Certainly, listening is a disposition and skill elementary teachers intuitively enact in relation to their practice. The research participants pursued in this study have additionally struggled with listening in the context of classroom dialogue and student participation, having expressed their thoughts openly in numerous venues. Furthermore, I made a careful decision to recruit elementary teachers as the participants for this study

instead of secondary teachers. Secondary classrooms have been the primary locations for empirical studies undertaken in social studies, as demonstrated in the literature review. For my inquiry on conceptions of listening, the elementary context is crucial in investigating the listening habits and skills students demonstrate, and the methodology employed works better in an elementary environment where teachers have deep and intimate relations with their students. To study the lifeworld of a teacher, the mere contact time elementary teachers have with their students is better suited for a phenomenological inquiry.

I enlisted the participation of five elementary classroom teachers with the following teaching assignments: (1) first grade, (1) second grade, (2) third grade, and (1) fifth grade. Remaining consistent with the goals of purposeful sampling, these teachers had prior experience working with me through inservice professional and curriculum development. The teachers were employed in different schools and districts located in northern New Jersey. Specifically, the teachers were currently employed in four different school districts, with two people working in two different elementary schools in the same district, and the rest working in three separate districts. The three latter participants, while working in different districts, were part of a regional curriculum consortium in which I was the current K-12 Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment. I was previously the K-12 Social Studies Supervisor in the district of the other two participants.

In terms of experience, the five individuals have been employed as full-time classroom teachers from 3 to 20 years. Each one has an advanced degree—Master's level—and has pursued classrooms grounded in constructivist aims and methodologies. Demographically, the participants were all female and employed in school districts with

middle-high or high socioeconomic status, as determined by state-level classifications. Pseudonyms are used in my writing to preserve the anonymity of the participants and schools where they teach.

Accessing teachers' conceptions of listening through a hermeneutic phenomenological study is an effort to generalize, to some degree, an ever-present experience faced by individuals in the lifeworld of education. At no point can a researcher seek to universalize listening for all educators, nor should that ever be the phenomenological researcher's aims. Nevertheless, the research participants selected for this dissertation study were drawn from relatively homogeneous backgrounds, which made this inquiry suitable and aligned methodologically with the research questions (Creswell, 2013). Pre-study interviews were conducted individually prior to the pursuit of Institutional Review Board (IRB) consent in November, 2013 to outline the study questions and methodologies, as well as to establish a stronger bond with the participants (see Appendix A for official IRB form and participant's rights).

Characterizing Participants' Listening

At the surface, demographic and biographical information may essentialize the teachers participating in my research unfairly, if taken alone as central and exclusive characterizing qualities. These brief snapshots are necessary in drawing meaning about the five participants' conceptions of listening, though they are sorely insufficient in capturing the essence of notions they shared in hermeneutic interviews. The text taken directly from the research methods, along with my interpretations and various

expressions of their meaning, taken as a whole, provide deeper insights into the participants of the study.

To complement my biographical description, I will present a listening profile for each participant, discursively weaving together my interpretations taken from the text of our conversations. This analysis will be engaged from two angles. First, I will return to the listening conceptions broadly categorized in the first two chapters: humanistic, democratic, relational, and pedagogical listening. Philosophically, these varied lenses inform the reader about how each participant entered into the aims and nature of listening. Second, and more subtly, I will apply different registers of listening to depict the communicative, linguistic, and situational tendencies each participant exhibited throughout the nearly one-year duration of this research project. Registers refer to the "individual differences in using language varieties" (Modi, 1991, p. 50). This term is often applied to speaking when an individual, saying the same words, switches registers based on the audience and setting. This different use of registers ultimately impacts the meaning of the words spoken in close proximity to the words uttered. In general, two chief classifications of registers are used for speech: colloquial and polite, though there are infinite registers that fall somewhere within these categories (Modi, 1991).

Listeners adopt different registers to hear, process, and internalize meaning of what is spoken depending on the person, setting, or type of medium used for expression. These registers played a role in how I approached listening to "Scarlet Begonias" while meeting perfunctory tasks at Starbucks and observing the responses of other patrons. The same music played elsewhere at a different time would adopt unique communicative and linguistic dimensions and carry different meaning. This consideration of listening

registers is significant and relevant to characterizing teacher participants' listening profiles because examples of switching (or not) registers was revealed over the course of the interviews specific to the individual and her approach.

Caitlyn

The local Panera Bread was Caitlyn's and my routine meeting place to conduct interviews. Our conversations were accompanied by impromptu blasts of drinks in the blender and small children running around the restaurant. The store's uncertain flow of noise, reverting from points of near silence to unpredictable loud sounds, was emblematic of the rhythm of our discussions about listening. Caitlyn shifted between periods of obvious cognitive discomfort when considering the broader meaning of listening to occasions of intellectual cogency. Her uneasiness was suggestive of a teacher who is cautiously emerging from the novice to more advanced stages of her career. After spending her first three years in education as a fifth grade teacher under the wings of a large cohort of more experienced entrants, Caitlyn was questioning her training, pedagogical intuition, and experience when faced with the prospect of self-inquiry.

Contemplation of the broad dimensions of listening in dialogue appeared to flummox Caitlyn, as made evident by facial discomfort, murmuring, retracing thoughts, and, at times, awkward pauses and hesitance.

> Not listening to my students is very difficult because I feel like it's my job. Being able to kind of summarize and restate what that person said. And I think I'm doing it. I mean if I . . . well, I guess now that I think about it, I don't know. One of my students just told me what he did yesterday and mind was somewhere else. Maybe I wasn't really listening (laughs). I don't know; it's real hard.

She acknowledged, at several points, that a project probing how we listen, while interesting, was a frightening prospect.

Caitlyn's listening conceptions were derived mainly in pedagogical terms. She is a teacher problem solver who is adept at identifying classroom characteristics needing remediation. She then orchestrates methods to seek instructional pathways toward improvement and measures success through conventional educational systems for evaluation. Our conversations, from Caitlyn's point of view, were opportunities to brainstorm problems of classroom dialogue. She reported on specific interventions taken in the classroom informed by academic research or our informal discussions in an effort to demonstrate to me, a perceived authority on the subject, that she was cultivating good listening. For instance, a reoccurring subject of our interviews involved giving students "brain breaks" from listening. Caitlyn believed the rigor and extent of students' academic listening were being put to the extreme test, thereby leading her to incorporate kinesthetic experiences and information processing strategies to mitigate against this problem.

As a pedagogical listener, the teacher is acutely focused on her students, their needs, and the dynamics of the classroom. Subsequently, these initial assessments demand instructional interventions. Caitlyn, as an illustration of this profile, recognized and empathized with the needs of her students, applied emerging brain-based research to her problem, and converted her theories into practices. This internal processing cycle was representative of Caitlyn's listening conceptions at its core. To teach listening was not challengeable in nature; instead, Caitlyn viewed the questions of how she could do it, and do it well. In simple terms, when asked if listening is teachable, Caitlyn responded: "Why would I ever spend time thinking about it if I did not believe it was teachable?" Caitlyn's listening registers were stimulated through the standard teacher mode.

Regardless of the context or setting, her listening angle was registered through: What can I use for my classroom? How can I use this information to help my student? What will make me a better teacher?

Christine

In many ways, Christine was the prototypical listener most people would identify if asked to describe what that looked like. Visibly, one can observe how Christine calmly absorbed the speaker's message without interruption or question, even going long periods in silence without giving a response. Uncommonly seen in elementary education, one might even characterize Christine as an introvert. In the classroom, Christine was also soft-spoken, undemonstrative, and patient. She has taught third grade for eight years in the same building, working with the same grade-level colleagues for the duration of her assignment. There was an aura of comfort and contentment when engaging Christine, the participant I have known for the longest and worked with most collaboratively on professional endeavors, compared to the other participants.

Getting to know Christine, I did see a different side socially where her communicative registers shifted from caution to risk taking. Christine was also the only participant who was involved in my dissertation pilot study, which examined listening conceptions from the student perspective. She knew my listening stance as well as my philosophical views on teaching and learning. With this context, Christine's tendency to refer back to the pilot study, a Japanese lesson study, or conversation with a colleague from long ago, was a common register she employed when challenged with articulating an idea to which she did not feel qualified or prepared to respond. While the historical

framing of her text did add a useful angle to my hermeneutic analysis, I often deliberated with some frustration about her lack of current, unfettered thinking in the moment.

Currently, our relationship is somewhere between former colleagues, acquaintances, and friends. I supported her during a period of personal trauma and met socially on occasion outside of a professional setting. Characterizing her listening profile as relational could be, in part, due to these interpersonal dynamics. However, Christine's references to her small but cohesive personal network and her charitable work involving considerable global service endeavors demonstrated a person who was interested in genuine and deep human connection. Labeling herself as the "go-to" person in various facets of her life, she coolly accepted the tag, knowing what responsibilities it carries in the fullest listening sense. Christine treated listening as a therapeutic experience in which the speaker's needs are met emotionally, socially, and psychologically. The generative qualities embodied in relational listening, such as listening to improve self-worth, were evident in my time spent with Christine during our interviews and outside of this research experience.

Hope

Passengers on a New York City subway experience cultural immersion every day. How a person approaches diverse languages, cultures, and communication influences the meanings carried away from this culturally rich experience. Hope, a lifetime resident of a New York City suburb, is enchanted by the different languages and multiculturalism of urban scenes. She recounted several examples of listening in this venue, a place she considered representative of life's classroom. Hope offered a listening stance learned

from sitting on New York City subways that was both unique and indicative of her attunement:

> Most people are indifferent or closed to learning new languages heard on the train. They go about their business reading the paper or listening to music clearing out the chaos of unfamiliarity. I am fluent in three languages: English, Spanish, and Greek. Every time I hear another language spoken, even if only a different dialect, I have to know what language people are speaking. I listen closely to hear if the origins of language are Eastern Europe or Southeast Asia. After eavesdropping for several minutes, I might even ask people on the train to tell me what language they are speaking—I need to know. Most times my ear for languages and affinity learning different cultures leads to an educated guess, but sometimes I have no idea. Afterward, I thank the people for sharing an important part of their lives with me. This seems like an odd way to engage complete strangers; however, I find it comforting.

Following Hope's musing, I reflected on and responded in an extended conversation about listening to language—its origins, nuances, and complex features. Hope's intent listening to passengers' dialogic exchanges revealed a humanistic approach to listening with a distinct cultural lens. Like Fiumara and Lipari, Hope viewed listening beyond its intellectual virtues, recognizing the local and global impact of hearing our collective, diverse backgrounds as moral grounds for human relations. The linguistic intricacies embedded in foreign languages can allow deep meaning to surround the words uttered in dialogue. These subtle and often tacitly explored qualities of listening were central to Hope's listening approach, creating a state of wonder and beautiful fascination that hold much promise I and many others ought to consider when confronting linguistic difference.

Hope is the younger sibling of a close-knit Greek immigrant family. Throughout her life, she interacted and formed relationships with people who are both entrenched in their ethnic and linguistic roots and others who come from vastly different worlds. Her closeness to Greek traditions is not lost when she broadens her cultural horizons, and this

makes her different from her family members. Hope's capacity to deeply engage the linguistic attributes of foreign languages with openness and intense interest disclosed a particular register she adopts in dialogue. Hope tunes in to unfamiliar languages when many tune out due to confusion or ascribed insignificance. The subway is a medium for various exchanges. When others opt out, Hope's listening antenna is extended with a probing mechanism that questions and wonders. From here, she chooses to invite conversation around the nature of language and diversity, unfulfilled with merely receiving the language.

Working with students, Hope's listening approach and registers transfer communicatively and transcend beyond the boundaries of linguistic difference. She made a profound statement representative of her listening philosophy during our interview: "You have to let them [students] into your world and you have to be able to let yourself *be* in their world." This strikingly simple comment is missing in many teacher-student relations, according to Hope. Teachers often believe there are artificial limits separating the person from what she is trying to communicate. Referring to the ill-conceived motto, "You can't smile until Christmas," Hope explained that while teachers distance academic and social interactions, she considered it vital to find ways to *be* in students' lives, and that occurs through deep, humanistic listening. This statement was distinctly representative of Heidegger's conception of *Daesin*, being-in-the-world.

Related to listening registers, Hope also sought to champion listening causes of the marginalized or seemingly disempowered student. The earlier reference to "Little Hope" emphasized two distinctly paternalistic cultures influences on her listening registers. Through our interviews, Hope shared numerous accounts where students who

might have appeared distant or disengaged in classroom dialogue were elevated in perceived silence. She challenged the one-dimensional speaking-listening relationship where assertive discourse is prized—with parents, administrators, or other teachers—seeking meaning as young listeners who might one day emerge with more authority to stand next to their peers in classroom discourse.

Jamie

> I used to think that the room had to be silent for them to listen, but a little roar is okay.

This one sentence carries multiple meanings about Jamie's listening conceptions and registers. First, she is very concise in her thinking and communication. People appreciate her candid, sometimes blunt, communication. At times, she sees ideas or people in dichotomous terms—either or, never somewhere in-between. However, that same condition relates to the second key element taken from the statement. Jamie repeatedly uttered a strong stance on a particular element of listening. Then, at a later interview, she returned to an idea without provocation and explained how she had reflected on our conversation, looked at an idea from a different point of view, and changed her stance.

Jamie was most comfortable with, and interested in, extending our discussions about classroom dialogue and listening to her own personal relationships. For instance, when describing her listening conceptions, she habitually referenced interactions with her husband, demonstrated in the excerpt below.

> For students, I think they need to shut out the noise in their heads to listen in class. Me, I am always multitasking. Things have to be always moving in my life. I can't be the type of listener my husband wants me to be. While people perceive this as a trait I need to change, it is the multitasking that actually helps

> me listen better. I can be watching television, preparing dinner, and listening to my husband tell me about his day without stopping everything I'm doing.

Jamie's approach to listening is best characterized as relational. In fact, she avoided and even derided an intellectual conversation around the act of listening as "theoretical nonsense." She was attuned to the empathetic value of listening to others—her partner, students, colleagues, and members of the community. Clear evidence of Jamie's empathetic inclinations emerged from our interview in one vivid example: "I know why this kid did not do his homework for the third straight night. His mom is a hot mess, and I feel bad because he is not getting the support at home." Additionally, Jamie consistently discussed listening conceptions in terms of what it is like for others to feel (or not) they are listened to. This subject is taken up later in the thematic analysis, but is appropriately cited as a central feature of Jamie's listening profile.

Listening, for Jamie, is the opportunity to get closer relationally to her students and the various individuals in her life. She wears numerous "hats" in her current teaching role of nearly 20 years, moving between grades, buildings, and teaching responsibilities. For a number of years, Jamie was the teachers' association president, which she often referenced as a role that challenged her listening as she supported and guided her peers. As I witnessed her everyday relations, I found Jamie to be the person at her building people go to with a problem, an idea, or even casual conversation. She used humor often to endear others or divert attention away from a difficult circumstance. A therapeutic quality of listening in relation with others remained consistent across all of her relationships. In the words of Rogers and Farson (2007), Jamie can "reconstruct what the client is thinking and feeling and relay this understanding back to the client" (p. 4) without merely parroting back what the person stated.

Leah

> The only way to make good decisions is to learn by making decisions. I need to get them [students] to a place where they can have input into making real decisions. That occurs through an ongoing cycle of speaking, reflecting, and listening. For me, less speaking might be a good thing, and that's something I am working on. The less I talk the more that can happen for the kids.

Leah demonstrated a capacity to listen from multiple angles, conceptions, and registers that was far beyond any person I have interacted with in a social or professional setting. Her ability to articulate her ideas produced a waterfall of information about what goes on in the mind of an educator. Various anecdotes and reflections could have been chosen to represent Leah's listening profile, but her democratic tendencies stood out uniquely when compared to the rest of the participants. Preparation for citizenship in a democratic society was a vision Leah routinely referenced regarding the nature of listening in her classroom. Her democratic conceptions went beyond the core civic ideals and practices customarily taught in elementary schools (e.g., take a stand on community issues). Instead, Leah sees classrooms as a conjoined community where individuals with different ideas must come together in deliberation and movement toward growth. At one point of our second interview, Leah explained:

> My students [fourth grade] need preparation to enter society, encountering people with ideas very different from their own. In some ways, I cannot replicate that experience. Hobart school is tiny and has a homogeneous population. But, within my own classroom, I have twenty-two individuals with twenty-two different sets of ideas, and these ideas might change from day to day. I need to recognize that. Creating an environment for them to have the opportunity to express and engage with those ideas still gets them closer to that end goal.

Where many teachers, at the surface, seek to replicate the democratic processes through pedagogical activities and simulations involving civics, Leah has created a culture for her

students to experience decision making every day. Interestingly, Leah has not formally studied in a social studies education program or one concentrated in related areas.

At a recent professional workshop, a master elementary teacher sought me out, unsolicited, to rave about a session Leah had led teaching adult learners: "I don't know how someone so young with only a few years of teaching could push my thinking about teaching reading after I've been doing this for twenty years," she told me. Leah has taught second, third, and fourth grades, respectively, in each year of her brief four-year career. At each level, she uplifted her colleagues—regardless of who surrounded her—to think about teaching and learning. Her leadership is best characterized in democratic terms, as Leah is someone who motivates and inspires others, leads by example, pushes others' thinking, considers alternative perspectives, and takes calculated risks. Leah's listening conceptions and registers regulate how she operates in her career.

The transfer of Leah's listening conceptions to her classroom and work with students as aligned with core civic and social studies principles is subject for a closer study in my concluding chapter. Her democratic listening is referenced later as well, when it was evident she grappled with the openness and detachment listening requires for truly hearing another in dialogue. I attribute Leah's democratic views of listening to a few guiding principles and personal qualities. Borrowing from Preskill's democratic qualities of effective discussion, Leah is humble, patient, hospitable, and optimistic when engaging with others. She has a keen sense of seeing the global view from small ideas and, alternatively, the tiny bits from a broader spectrum. This characteristic was evident during our interviews when Leah easily moved from her classroom to her own life, from her own education and family upbringing to an event that occurred that day, from an

encounter with a difficult student to an argument with a loved one. Lastly, her intellectual curiosity and focus on inquiry exuded radiantly across every word of text in my interview transcriptions. Again, this exceptional concentration of movement toward inquiry will be explored in the concluding chapter as a separate subject.

The Researcher

> Thus the listener is not simply "open to what the other means" so that he or she can reproduce it; instead, the listener is open to the meanings that are being developed between oneself and one's partner. These meanings, moreover, are also open—fluid, and continuously context-dependent. Rather than simply being brought to the conversation, they are, to a significant degree, a product of the person's meeting. (Stewart, 1983, p. 384)

By taking a strong hermeneutic position, I assert that my stance and role in listening are paramount to the interpretations of teachers' listening conceptions for many reasons. Notably, our interviews took the form of give-and-take conversations, with me often submitting ideas and expressing nascent interpretations and extensions to listening to the reflections the teachers shared with me. In turn, I coveted their feedback both on the spot and later on when my attention turned to extended interpretations of the texts. Thus, to assume my listening profile should be distinct from that of my participants or absent from the process of interpretation would not accurately represent the approach I undertook, nor would it abide by a hermeneutic principle critical to my research methodology.

How do I interpret my own listening in relation to my participants and the primary research question? Borrowing from Kimball and Garrison (1996), I ascribe to a hermeneutic listening stance, which fits in the middle of a wide spectrum bookended by passive and empathetic listening. Passive listening might be an appropriate stance to a

researcher seeking neutral grounds or listening that has not endured self-reflection. Oppositely, empathetic listening seeks understanding fully from the point of view of another person. Knowing the complexity of one's particular experience, I listened to my participants with the intent of interpreting meaning from our shared texts, recognizing that my understanding is partial, even tenuous, and always open to revision. This is the basis for characterizing my listening as hermeneutic, and it represents the position Stewart (1983) illuminated in the statements referenced above.

I approached my listening to/with participants as an occasion for "produc[ing] new understandings or interpretations for both conversants" (Kimball & Garrison, 1996, p. 52). Each teacher brought a wealth of instructional and personal knowledge to our conversations about listening. At the same time, I did carry certain prejudgments about teachers' knowledge of listening based on our prior interpersonal and professional relationships. According to Hultgren (1994), "Hermeneutics does not seek to translate one's own subjectivity out of the picture, but rather take it up with a new sense of responsibility" (p. 12). This balance mediating openness and humility with acknowledgment of my subjectivities was crucial to my listening stance during interviews. Hulgren (1994), who has conducted extensive research on preservice teachers using hermeneutic phenomenology, appreciated a "conversational relation" with her participants and treats them as "co-participants in inquiry" (p. 15). This depiction represents the precise approach I took with teachers in my study, and it further defines my listening as hermeneutic.

I will summarize my profile with a few broad notions associated with the habits of hermeneutic listening. First, I sought *fullness* in my listening to participants. It was not

confined to a particular place or time; domain, event, discipline, or form of expression. Second, I sought *caution* in listening to my participants. This attribute was marked by attending to the speaker's needs, involving the participants in the process of interpretation to pursue understanding of their ideas, and actively balancing judgment and openness when prejudices entered my consciousness. Last, I sought *focus* and *interest* in listening to my participants. Though difficult, I took measures to exercise the mental and physical concentration necessary to attend to my speaker. This process included establishing a suitable physical environment, seeking departures from everyday distractions, tapping into my inner listening, and constantly testing my listening capacities in other settings.

Data Collection Methods: Hermeneutic Interviews

Interviews create opportunities for extrapolating rich, narrative knowledge to understand a particular phenomenon, while also drawing the researcher closer to his participants (van Manen, 1990, 2014). Heidegger (1971) captured the interpretive essence of hermeneutic conversation I sought in my interviews:

> To speak to one another means to say something to one another; it implies a mutual showing of something, each person in turn devoting himself or herself to what is shown. To speak with one another means that together we say something about something, showing one another the sorts of things that are suggested by what is addressed in our discussion, showing one another what the addressed allows to radiate of itself. (pp. 408-409)

Multiple qualitative methods were conceived in this study, but interviews were the primary link between the researcher and teachers' lifeworlds. Hermeneutic interviews require close attention to the environmental and interpersonal conditions necessary to make the participants feel comfortable in sharing their experiences openly (Moustakas, 1994). Our interviews occurred at coffee shops, public libraries, and a

teacher's apartment. Each site was located in close proximity to the teacher's workplace, but intentionally outside of the classroom and school space. Interviews were scheduled in the late afternoon after the school day, as a metaphorical bridge between teachers' professional and personal worlds. I drew on prior associations with the participants and shared experiences in a conversational mode to signal the colloquial nature of the interview, as already referenced. Greenwalt and Holohan (2011) articulated this notion as "invite(ing) participants to dwell in their concretely embodied lifeworlds" (p. 65). This situated experience, considered crucial for contextualizing the interview for the research participants, was more likely to garner responses in narrative form that are distinctly felt by the teachers in their classrooms and lives.

Van Manen (2014) posited, "The hermeneutic interview serves very different purposes from the phenomenological interview . . . it aims for exploring the ways that fundamental phenomenological notions and methods can be understood" (p. 317). In his more recent writing, van Manen systematically examined the nature and method of hermeneutic interviews, which guided my approach with the participants as well as my interpretations. For me, seeking understanding of broad and specific meanings of teachers' conceptions of listening was a chosen stance methodologically. This is the crucial division between hermeneutics and other phenomenological methodologies defining my research experience. Further classifying my hermeneutic interviews, I opted for data-interpreting interviews as opposed to methodology-interpreting interviews. The former approach involves asking teachers for their interpretive insights about a particular phenomenon, while the latter approach seeks understanding of the interpretive insights contributed through the writing or discourse of phenomenologists who have explored a

phenomenon (van Manen, 2014). My mindset when entering into these interviews was to always keep the major research question at the foreground of my questions and interpretations about listening conceptions.

In summary of the data collection methods, five teachers participated in three unstructured interviews over the course of an eight-month period. The schedule was composed in a way to move with the general ebb and flow of the typical school year, with the first interview occurring in November, the second interview in January, and the third interview concluding in May (see Appendix B for list of interview questions for three sessions). I posed questions about the nature and aims of listening at each phase. Similarly, I asked recurring questions about topics that appeared complex or continually evolving for teachers in their thinking about the subject. In some respects, my questions transformed and became more focused on conceptions of listening that emerged from the initial interviews and my subsequent analyses. Before launching the second and third interviews, I created a window for teachers to drive the flow of ideas by asking them if they had any new thoughts or considerations about listening stemming from our prior session. In addition, I encouraged the participants to read an excerpt from the previous transcript and snapshots of my preliminary writing, particularly anecdotes, to see if they believed it accurately represented their own beliefs at that moment. This move left the door open for the teachers to reflect on their thinking at a given time and revise or elaborate on what had been stated earlier. The mutual engagement of these methods, hermeneutically, created a setting where the participants were co-constructing interpretations of listening conceptions (van Manen, 2014). At times, the participants

"corrected" information or rearticulated a point of view they felt did not adequately capture the essence of listening or their conceptions.

All interviews were audio-recorded on a MP4 device and transcribed in order to accommodate hermeneutic analysis at multiple levels. The written transcriptions were shared with the research participants for further refinement, clarification, and elucidation of meanings, as noted earlier. Informal discussions occurred through phone, e-mail, and face-to-face communication, a component about the interview van Manen (1990) described as a hermeneutic necessity in the research.

Additional data collection methods were used to inform my interpretations and analyses. The first supplementary data collection method was a *teacher listening journal*, a place for the participants to store thoughts and actions over time. The teacher participants were asked to maintain a journal of sorts to track their motivations, experiences, and pedagogies when moments of classroom dialogue or unrelated events in their life elicited thinking about the core research questions. This storehouse of information was not formally or systematically evaluated, though the teachers drew from informal notes, student documents assembled, and even ideas kept on their phones as sources for more ideas. A guiding question to frame the teachers in this exercise was: What does good listening sound and look in dialogue? The nature of listening is something that always exists, yet we rarely think about (in concrete terms), and this serves as a purpose for written record. Furthermore, the elementary classroom is a frenzied environment. Having a place for teachers to save their thoughts functioned as efficient means of retrieval. Phenomenological studies rely on the anecdotes,

recollections, and seminal events relevant to a particular element of a person's lifeworld, making the *teacher listening journal* integral in data collection.

Journal writing, in parallel terms, is a vital data collection method for the researcher leading a hermeneutic phenomenological study. I set forth with a reflective journal as a multilayered dimension informing my research and writing. Methodologically, a researcher's journal can help navigate somewhat contradictory terrain between the hermeneutic direction of interpretation and the phenomenological requirement of reduction (Creswell, 2013; Findlay, 2009). For me, journal writing both separated and united my own experiences about/with listening to the descriptions provided by the teachers during interviews. The researcher journal interlaced data collection and writing, a process van Manen (1990) defined as essential.

How an individual listens in a dialogic exchange is the central inquiry of this study coming from elementary teachers' experiences. At the same time, how do I listen as a researcher seeking knowledge in the field of human science? How do the participants listen in phenomenological interviews and other related interactions? These questions, already explored in depth, are key factors in describing the data collection methods as I move into the analytical and writing elements.

Methods of Hermeneutic Analysis and Writing

Data collection in hermeneutical phenomenological studies follows a similar path compared to other qualitative methodologies, with the interview at the foundation of data. It is at the analytical stages where hermeneutic phenomenology establishes a unique set of conditions and processes turning lived experience into textual form using systematic

and creative writing devices. From the start, research, analysis, and writing were viewed as a fluid process rather than placed into separate compartments (van Manen, 1990, 2014). This approach supports the hermeneutic notion of reinterpretation, never seeking a fixed notion of understanding. Structurally, my research process is presented differently compared to other dissertations that follow a clearer distinction between identification of a problem, establishment of a conceptual framework and research questions, review of relevant literature, description of methodology and analyses, articulation of findings, and discussion about emergent themes. While some of these structures are clearly evident, a hermeneutic methodology involves a nonlinear path toward writing that infuses pieces of each research element at points where it holds significance and relevance in the moment. To inform my research structure, I closely reviewed van Manen's method of conceptualizing, analyzing, and writing about subjects he phenomenologically studied. His pedagogical dimensions, as a parent and teacher, served as a suitable model for my work. Moreover, I reviewed the structure of other studies based in hermeneutic phenomenological methodologies gathering ideas from fledgling researchers with similar aims, audiences, and levels of experiences (Dean, 2009; Larrison, 2009; Packard, 2004; Schultz, 2010).

As has been cited numerous times, phenomenology requires bracketing in a way that sets aside "data" from other experiences of the researcher. In hermeneutics, not only is this viewed as implausible (as the phenomenologists even acknowledge), but it is antithetical to its core aims. Nevertheless, to interpret and make meaning of the data involves a reflective openness to an experience. Heidegger (1962) stated: "In every case [this] interpretation is grounded in something we have in advance—in a fore-having"

(p. 151). I accepted and appreciated this hermeneutic principle as a disposition when approaching my data. Further, I adopted a sense of *wonder* van Manen (2002) conceptualized to counteract the forces of my own consciousness competing against the phenomenological attitude of viewing the data on their own. He (2014) stated: "In wonder we see the unusual in the usual, extraordinary in the ordinary" (p. 223). Methodologically, van Manen explained a heuristic epoch reduction key to bracketing, as " . . . the attitude of taken for grantedness, awakening a profound sense of wonder," which "requires discovering the miraculous moment of wonder, and in this moment a question may emerge that both addresses us and is addressed by us" (p. 223). Here, bracketing transcends the typical setting aside of personal beliefs and biases toward a fuller sense of a subject worthy of phenomenological inquiry, listening. My interpretation of the data, thus, required me to engage in moments of wonder when otherwise ordinary experiences would be left unquestioned. For me, this approach to examining the data with an intense spirit of wonder occurred in the car between visits to schools on a busy day, listening repeatedly to the teachers' transcripts while running on the treadmill, or interacting on Skype with my children at a professional conference.

My reflective engagement with the data, reinforced with philosophical readings and hermeneutical conversations, was a crucial step to achieve bracketing. Shifting analytical lenses, I adopted a disciplined approach to bracketing using horizontalization of the data. My reflective journal became a storehouse for thoughts, feelings, and experiences surrounding my own conceptions of listening, which were initially cast away, bracketed, and then reintroduced into the interpretation of meaning. Additionally, I listened to and read all transcript data in their entirety and, while rereading, I separated

statements into different ideas generated from data collection. During horizontalization, I recorded methodological, observational, and theoretical notes. Drafting and rewriting interpretations of the teachers' conceptions of listening brought forth during the hermeneutic interviews contributed heavily to my horizontalization.

Writing is a discursive exercise aimed at cultivating the wonder necessary for horizontalization, which cannot be divorced from the process of reading and analyzing texts (van Manen, 1990, 2014). Interpreting meaning from hermeneutic interviews took many forms through reflections, musings, and direct quotes by the participants. However, the primary "empirical data drawn from life" I use here are personal anecdotes (van Manen, 2014, p. 248). Van Manen offered readers a thorough explication of anecdotes applicable to hermeneutic analysis in his more recent writing. It is, by nature, a "narrative device" that is a "simple story, describing a single incident begin[ning] close to the central moment of the experience" (p. 252). In writing anecdotes, a process closely associated with horizonatalization, van Manen provided strategies for researchers, such as reading them over in the context of the research question, "deleting extraneous or redundant material," and "fictionalizing a factual, empirical, or already fictional account to arrive at a more plausible description of a possible human experience" (p. 256). Numerous personal and teacher anecdotes are interwoven with the intention of rich textual description of listening conceptions. These examples highlight methods I used to induce a state of wonder for myself while simultaneously creating a sense of wonder for the reader about listening.

The shift from isolating the data and identifying common themes to capturing the essence of teachers' listening conceptions is where the particularities of my participants

and experiences meet the universalizing of a phenomenon all teachers experience. How can a reader arrive at new meanings about listening in dialogue through the lens of these five teachers? It is through thematic analyses where a phenomenologist conveys the essence of something in the lifeworld. Creswell (2013) and Moustakas (1994) suggested separating the thematic analysis into textual descriptions (participants' texts) and structural descriptions (imaginative variation), whereas van Manen (1990) saw this process as more fluid and organic:

> A phenomenological description describes the original of which the description is only an example. To say it differently, a phenomenological description is an example composed of examples. If the description is phenomenologically powerful, then it acquires a significance, or meaning structures, of the lived experience it describes. (p. 122)

Van Manen stands in contrast with other contemporary theorists in phenomenology in his assertion that writing should be organized, from the start, more thematically and organically (i.e., working in more of the dialogue) (Creswell, 2013).

Additional Methodological Considerations

Following van Manen's path toward hermeneutic phenomenological research methodology, I described my route to the research question, a characterization of participants' listening conceptions, and my data collection methods and analyses. Along the way, I discovered useful methodological considerations that did not fit neatly into any of these categories, yet were influential to my methodology. These ideas were generated through my extensive philosophical readings in an attempt to model subtle practices I have adopted into my own work. Furthermore, I present aspects of doing hermeneutic phenomenology that are intimately connected to the subject of listening, namely

detachment and mis(interpretation). I place these ideas in my methodology to demonstrate how closely the subject and method are linked, but they certainly could fall into other sections of this dissertation.

Engaging in hermeneutic analysis is an uncertain proposition, as the researcher seeks to understand a text through rigorous interpretation. Acknowledging the endless ideas that shape my meaning making of texts is reason enough why a phenomenological inquiry casting aside prior knowledge was not an option. However, I am caught in a difficult conceptual space where my articulation of meaning cannot be asserted as *right* or *true* without taking steps to mediate this intellectual and ethical dilemma. As such, I adopted a subtle phrase educational philosopher Haroutunian-Gordon used frequently in her writing. When analyzing texts hermeneutically, she used the term *may mean* rather than *mean* in interpretation. Adding *may* to *mean* presents a completely different position of understanding that recognizes a potential gap between what I think the text is saying compared to what others think the text is saying. I try to incorporate this phrase in my writing, especially when asserting a strong position or idea that can strikingly render multiple meanings. Regardless, the adoption of *may mean*" is in the spirit of my methodological analysis.

Another strategy Haroutunian-Gordon and other researchers used as a methodological note pertains to the form of analysis. Anecdotes and other textual descriptions of listening conceptions are often presented in full form—the textual excerpt either precedes or follows conceptual analysis. In certain places, Haroutunian-Gordon did hermeneutic analysis point-by-point, breaking apart the individual sentences of a text and injecting analysis at each intersection. For readers, this might appear choppy or

unnecessary, but there are certain texts, such as Haroutunian-Gordon's (2003) hermeneutic analysis of a Socratic dialogue, where specific and immediate attention must be given to the particular meaning of each statement. I did not follow this analytical pattern frequently in order to maintain a coherent flow of ideas. The reader will notice a few examples in Chapter V, though, where I adopted this form of analysis with intentionality. Methodologically, this approach is warranted as a phenomenological practice of bracketing and horizontalization.

Listening and Hermeneutic Phenomenology: Detachment and Mis(interpretation)

> It's hard to have a conversation you're passionate about. You need to think not only about your own thoughts, detaching from what you want to say and attune to what they are saying first. (Leah)
>
> Playground mishaps are the most common time I find it difficult to listen. Before entering a conversation, I condemn the guilty kid, the liar, the conniver, the smooth talker. Giving everyone a fair shot to their story without judgment is impossible. (Jamie)
>
> I am working on jumping the gun allowing someone to finish what they are saying. Yet, setting forth not to assume what they are saying as opposed to really understanding what they are saying are two different things. (Christine)

Salient bonds prevailed throughout my research inquiry between the subject of listening and the methodologies I enlisted to study about the subject of listening. Recurrently, these themes become clear in my writing; however, I make direct reference to a few notions in this section to illuminate their meaning in concert with methodological considerations. The above references provide multiple accounts of the teacher participants reflecting on intellectual tests and personal struggles to listen without judgment. Though efforts were made to abate judgment when entering listening in dialogue, the teachers conceded these mind-opening endeavors often failed in their

attempt to listen wholly to their dialogic counterpart. The notion of detachment is a process democratic theorists, such as Garrison, offered to philosophical writing on listening. Beatty (1999) built on Garrison, defining detachment "as the reflective distantiation from whatever threatens to distort the understanding of what is there" (p. 286). He distinguished this form of detachment from other connotations of aloofness and disinterest. The teachers, on numerous occasions, explained listening as a process of a cognitive clearing of their minds propelled by reflective inquiry.

Detachment as a listening mechanism is paramount to my methodological approach. I employed caution and took measures to expand my own horizons of meaning during the research process. Many of these steps were referenced tacitly as bracketing, but other instances were more hermeneutic and deeply embedded in my particular interview habits. For instance, I typically respond to a compelling idea posed to me in conversation with a complementary account. This response might send mixed messages to my dialogic partner of potentially seeking to compete against or "one-up" her. For me, that level of response is often a way for me to clarify understanding of a particular notion. Here, adopting detachment or reflective distantiation from what was stated allowed me to let those words lie and engage in a deeper hearing. This strategy was one way to appropriate an intellectual process of detachment my participants referenced and philosophers conceptualize in their writing as an underlying dimension of my research methodology.

> In short, misunderstanding opens the doorway to the ethical relation by inspiring (or frustrating) us to listen more closely to others, to inquire more deeply into their differences, and to question our own already well-formed understanding of the world. (Lipari, 2014, p. 8)

The relationship between understanding and misunderstanding is not dichotomous when looking closely at the interpretive processes, and listening plays a crucial part in this notion. As readers seek knowledge of a text through whatever interpretive devices were employed, moments of misunderstanding disturb understanding, but can cause a listener to become more attuned to the text. Lipari pushed our thinking in a direction that sought to embrace misunderstanding as crucial to intent listening. Two examples already presented in this dissertation illustrate precisely how misunderstanding is actually a vehicle for listening. First, Hope described the powerful and simple act of removing listening from her first grade student vocabulary because of the gross misunderstanding associated with "listening up!" Her students conceived of listening in the narrow obedient terms widely valued and practiced in schools. In reflecting on her own actions, Hope's misunderstandings of listening caused her, in effect, to listen closely to how her students listen. The misunderstanding inspired a different way of listening in the terms Lipari explained in the above statement.

The second epiphany, referenced multiple times, occurred in my own interactions with a colleague, the school leader with conflicting views on social studies assessments. My misunderstanding of him had nothing to do with the subject or content of his message. In fact, the communicative registers he employed—seeking documentary evidence for his claims, forging unusual alliances with colleagues in our building, and speaking to me in the third person when flustered—were where my misunderstanding occurred. Realizing the subject was not most germane to our interactions, I turned to listen in a different way to navigate my misunderstanding. Even today, I listen more to

this individual's tone, body language, and other nonverbal devices to clarify understanding in ways that I rarely engage others.

The role of listening in recognizing misunderstanding of a text, subsequently leading to a different angle to elucidate meaning of an idea, holds relevance as a methodological consideration. I encountered this close understanding-misunderstanding relationship listening to the transcripts from the hermeneutic interviews. I followed a rigorous and systematic process for interpretation, as described in my methodology. However, a point of heightening or redirecting my listening occurred when switching between the print and audio transcripts. For example, when reading a transcript, I often wrote questions seeking knowledge from one angle. Yet, I encountered moments of belief where misunderstanding occurred, which led me to listen repeatedly to the audio transcript of the text. Listening, as a result, with acceptance of the notion of misunderstanding enabled me to see things differently. My process of listening was a key hermeneutic principle of interpretation, essential to the misunderstanding-understanding state that all interpretations are tentative and fragile.

Many facets of the hermeneutic phenomenological methodology were crucial to this research study. Situating my work in van Manen's approach to research was informative and necessary for readers as I delved extensively into the chief themes emerging from my methodology. In this section, I added a more nuanced perspective of the methodological considerations I encountered while immersed in the prescribed methods and systems of analysis of hermeneutic phenomenology. Moreover, my partiality toward hermeneutic interpretation was underscored by the methodological considerations of exploring listening, the subject of this research, in close relation to my

methodology. Closing this segment, I offer one final excerpt from van Manen (2014) as a culminating notion:

> From a phenomenological point of view, we are not primarily interested in the experiences of our so-called subjects or informants for the sake of being able to report on how this or that person experiences or perceives something. Rather, the aim is to collect examples of possible experiences in order to reflect on the meanings they may inhere in them. (p. 313)

Undisputed and clean descriptions of the phenomenon of listening were absolutely not the aim of my research process. Instead, I demonstrated how adopting a complex and highly reflective approach to interpretation of meaning honored the essence of what van Manen and others affirm in the hermeneutic tradition.

Limitations and Significance of This Research Study

Articulating limitations surrounding my hermeneutic phenomenological study of teachers' conceptions of listening is crucial, in spite of my persistence to alleviate them in my inquiry. Three central elements of the methodology disclose legitimate, almost unavoidable, shortcomings: bracketing, interviewing, and hermeneutical writing. First, though I embarked with measures to set aside my prejudgments and experiences, carrying through with these practices in a way that leaves me in a constant state of wonder is highly unlikely. Entering a state of intellectual wonder is implausible for any person who is constantly distracted by his own thoughts, experiences, and everyday relations. For me, allocating long periods of uninterrupted, sustained thinking toward this research enterprise was even more difficult, given the multiple and prominent demands of my life. Yet, I "practiced" bracketing, or achieving states of wonder, in other interests outside of my research to ingrain these metacognitive habits into my own thinking. Mitigating the

inevitable imperfections transcending my research study in this dimension does cultivate the hermeneutic demands of analysis, but I do recognize this is a methodological limitation.

Second, while interviewing in multiple forums—students and adults—was an experience less foreign to me, I grappled with challenges in formulating the appropriate question or building on a participant's comments in a way that sought knowledge from the teacher's lifeworld. Hermeneutic phenomenological interviewing relies on the ability for the participant to speak in narrative terms (stories from the classroom), and specifically with regard to listening, for the participant to undertake the listening stance advanced in this study. How do I know if participants took a listening stance or provided data that were aligned to my research question? Put differently, what unanticipated paths could I have explored through questioning, listening, reflection, and response? The two methodological limitations described herein are inherent to hermeneutic phenomenology, and they are the most distinctive qualities.

Personally, I feel hermeneutical writing is a limitation of the study due to the arduous craft of doing phenomenology. Van Manen (1990) posited:

> The methodology of phenomenology requires a dialectical back-and-forth among various levels of questioning. To be able to do justice to the fullness and ambiguity of the experience of the lifeworld, writing may turn into a complex process or rewriting (re-thinking, re-flecting, re-cognizing). (p. 131)

Using van Manen as the exemplar, along with the other studies referenced in this dissertation, hermeneutical phenomenological writing requires a sophisticated and creative approach far different from other qualitative studies. However, this style of writing—blending dialogue, personal experience, research, and data—has the potential to bring light to a subject—teachers' conceptions of listening—that is right now not even in

most educators' consciousness while being right in their space every day. Capturing teachers' lifeworlds through a writing process combining narrative elements with traditional research dimensions is a delicate balance regardless of a researcher's experiences. Rarely do texts induce the type of wonder van Manen described from phenomenology, and that is the particular feat I am seeking.

Chapter V

ANALYZING *THICKER* DIMENSIONS OF TEACHERS' LISTENING CONCEPTIONS

Dr. Herbert enters the patient waiting room without an answer. It is news I've grown accustomed to hearing from doctors spanning an array of specialties. Cassandra's adenoids are not the source of her sleep disturbances. "I've looked closely at the MRI. Her swelling is not too severe. Anyway, kids come in here all of the time, and I take one look and listen to their breathing knowing right away those suckers are going to be taken out. Cassandra is not one of those children. I can tell you even without looking at the imaging. She has other *issues*—you should consult with her neurologist to get a sleep study. I am sorry. Taking out a child's adenoids is the easiest way to solve a sleep problem."

Sitting quietly, head down, playing with the Velcro on a handbag, Cassandra yells out, "I am not wearing *shoes*, I've got boots." At first, I could not locate meaning in my daughter's words. The doctor chuckled and acknowledged her stern proclamation, looking at me curiously for clues. I think, *What is she saying? Why is she talking about her boots?* Cassandra is developmentally delayed. She is in the preschool disabled public school program without any diagnosis other than epilepsy. Before school, Cassandra received years of in-home therapies for basic cognitive and motor skill development she struggles mightily to perform.

I exit the specialist's office again without answers. It is a wet, foggy Wednesday night. We are the last patients to leave the facility. Pigtails wagging, Cassandra bops down the staircase knowing her doctor's visit has concluded. For her, going from doctor to doctor is normal, but I know she prefers to be elsewhere. I am lost in thought as I open the car door to let Cassandra in while simultaneously shutting the umbrella. When Dr. Herbert said, "Cassandra has other *issues,*" she heard *shoes* in *is-s[h]ues*. That is why she told him she is wearing boots. I text my wife details of this story before leaving the vacant parking lot in excitement.

Introduction: Listening *Issues*

The mysteries and conceptions of listening are intricately woven into the dialogue between parent and child, teacher and student, and adult and peer. For me, the wonder of listening explodes due to Cassandra's communicative difficulties. Limitations to her receptive and expressive speech often create barriers to our communication that frustrate a father seeking understanding of treasured insights, feelings, and hopes that many parents access from children at a much earlier age. This condition, worth inquiry, is part of the taken-for-granted quality that defines listening as a phenomenon transcending human dialogue. Cassandra's cogent and clever retort to Dr. Herbert, "I'm not wearing shoes, I've got boots," represents a minute slice of unsolicited speech uncommonly heard from her. Instead, other thoughts and feelings are veiled beneath the surface of a wide spectrum of screams and cries, difficult to hear because language eludes my daughter, at least in terms I am able to grasp.

Like a broken record, my standard reaction to Cassandra in moments of communicative frustration is: "Use your words." Telling a three-year-old to do something she clearly cannot perform does not embody the type of listening approach necessary to bridge hearing and understanding. Rather, I must be attuned to her often wandering, glazed eyes or the characteristic drool that accompanies her speech. Generic low-tone neurological dysfunction inhibits speech when Cassandra gets excited or confused. She frequently clenches objects—most often her tattered, yellowed stuffed cat or a person's legs—a communicative mechanism demonstrating sensory overload. Listening to these movements and atypical three-year-old responses requires an all-body hearing mechanism filled with openness, patience, and persistence. The glimpse of

coherent articulation expressed at the doctor's office, a setting and context where my listening traverses between the doctor and Cassandra, is a scarce example of how I am able to listen to my daughter.

Heidegger theorized that listening, being-in-the-world, occurs when one has achieved hearkening attunement. Hearkening implies a heightened understanding resulting from deep and open hearing. Listening to children speak—seeking hearkening attunement—presents complex communicative and relational dimensions to understanding. We often dismiss the peculiar, surprising sayings that children utter as simply "three-year-old speak." At the earliest stages of childhood, a parent's attention to a young one's communicative desires and interests is occasionally elevated, yet these often go unnoticed because of cacophonous sounds blaring in our ears and countless thoughts penetrating our heads at any given moment. Consistently listening with hearkening attunement is a virtual impossibility. Rare opportunities that activate mental processing, necessary to hear in Heidegger's listening conception, however, stir us to pause and reflect on our listening to children. What ideas and messages might a three-year-old child be telling us that we routinely miss? What can we learn from erratic yet poignant instances of hearkening attunement?

Cassandra's developmental delays indeed widen the horizons of listening's meaning in special and important ways. Levin (1989) offered language appropriate for the type of hearing I enact relationally with my daughter:

> Until we have learned to listen, once again, with a hearing open to enchantment; until we have learned to let these sonorous beings transport us into the dimensionality from out which they draw their great resonance, we shall not be able to belong. We belong to them when we gather up, into our hearing, our presently felt—bodily felt—sense of natal bonding we "once" enjoyed. (p. 211)

Levin's (1989) statements resemble Heidegger's precise language and ideas about listening. While many people avoid thinking about the listening process, these educational philosophers have raised important ethical and social dimensions that can enable one "to belong" as we "hear and gather" in dialogue. Thinking carefully about these crucial dimensions influenced my own hearing while interacting with my young daughter. With an open mind about listening's varied meanings, new doors open for communication, and a sense of "belonging" is shared.

Similarly, the elementary teachers participating in my research study expanded their horizons of the nature and meaning of listening. The central research question of my dissertation study, "What are elementary teachers' listening conceptions?" will be analyzed from many angles in this chapter. Four broad sections are arranged as categories to organize my analyses of the teachers' listening conceptions. I will begin with an examination of listening to very specific people who caused the teachers to take a robust listening conception, often leading to a changed response during dialogic encounters. Next, I will analyze the teachers' conceptions involving the close affinity between listening and being listened to. This section taps into the depths of human interaction valued by the elementary teachers in student relations. Shifting to intellectual themes, I will take a relatively new conception theorized by Lipari (2014), "interlistening," to analyze the interconnectedness of speaking, thinking, and listening conceived by elementary teachers in reflecting on their dialogic encounters. My final analysis will explore numerous listening subjects, such as (mis)understanding, argument, pretending to listen, and silence, all situated within a broad category titled "Disturbed listening."

The second and third chapters of my dissertation classified listening conceptions into categories of thinness and thickness, respectively. By identifying different types of listening that are oriented around these groupings, I assert thick listening conceptions are attained through reflective inquiry and consideration of the moral, intellectual, and social dimensions embodied in the listening process. My analysis in this chapter focuses on the nuances of thick listening conceptions teachers formulated when reflecting on their own experience and how they translate in classroom dialogue, while still acknowledging there are times when thin listening conceptions prevail. As my opening vignette demonstrated, the context and purpose of listening influence how we conceive of listening, as well as the relationships, identities, and institutions in which they occur. These factors will be discussed later, in the next chapter, parallel to the ideas disclosed in our interviews. In general, these insights into listening conceptions are integral to educational researchers' investigations into classroom discussion, particularly in social studies education.

Educating Our Listening Through Specific Students

> I wish students could shut out things happening in their lives when they come to school. The outside world impacts their ability to listen. One boy in my class, Daniel [fifth grade], was adopted after birth. He lived with his adoptive father and stepmother in Texas for many years before moving to New Jersey. It is clear that his parents, especially his stepmother, don't like him. She literally called him a burden at our last parent conference.
>
> I can see that Daniel's poor relationship and difficult family circumstances affect him in the classroom. These factors intrude on his ability to listen and learn much differently than other students in my class. He does not have the same kind of home life other fifth grade students in our community experience. How can you expect a kid to listen to you when he is being called a burden by his own parents?
>
> Sometimes, I wish I could just remove the troubles in Daniel's mind when he's at school. A short time ago, I began using journaling as a mind

> release. I can see when Daniel had a bad night as soon as he enters the classroom. Before class starts I tell him to write everything down that is on his mind—get his thoughts out on the paper. Letting go momentarily of his unsettling family life becomes a concrete act performed through journaling. For Daniel, this intervention has at least temporarily aided his listening over the course of a difficult day. I wonder if journaling for all of my students—letting it all out—would help them listen. There are so many things we must do that prohibit me from having my students' journal every day, but I try to squeeze it in as much as possible.

Caitlyn's anecdote about Daniel reveals significant and interrelated notions about her listening conceptions. First, she enacted a relational approach in her interactions with Daniel based in reflective listening, being able to demonstrate she understands him. To listen for understanding, Caitlyn believed she must situate knowledge of his family life, which requires a hearing that is different from other students in her class. Second, Caitlyn chose a pedagogical device, journaling, as an intervention aimed at attuning Daniel's school and academic listening. She believed that family problems inhibit Daniel's capacity to listen for understanding in an academic and social setting at school. Taken further, Caitlyn presumed young children today have unique and complicated distractions away from school, leading her to think that allotting time for free written expression might aid *all* her students in being more present and attuned listeners during classroom dialogue. Educational researchers and teachers investigating student participation in classroom discussion should view circumstances associated with Daniel's listening as an occasion to consider how young people are prepared to listen in academic discourse. Caitlyn's listening to Daniel, lastly, triggered reflective attention to her conceptions of listening that might not have occurred without this specific introspection. Her listening to Daniel led to the development of thick listening conceptions.

Caitlyn's listening to Daniel caused her to reconsider the nature and process of listening. In classrooms, dialogue breeds in a wide array of distinctive instructional contexts and diverse mix of personalities, aptitudes, and interests. Banks (2007) invited researchers to broaden the scope of diversity education beyond adding content or modifying pedagogies to honor teaching students who arrive in classrooms from distinct cultures. Listening to specific students and their particular communicative tendencies, thus, offers a unique lens through which to widen discourse related to diversity education.

A communicative experience with one individual can be substantial in the overall schema a person develops about listening. Cognitive scientist, George Lakoff's (1987) writing about prototype theory is relevant to my analysis of the listening conceptions the teachers described. Extending largely from Eleanor Rosch's work in the 1970s, Lackoff (1987) investigated the complexities and subtleties in which the mind activity of categorization functions in linguistics, politics, and media. He suggested our emotional, cognitive, social, and imaginative capacities contribute to examples, prototypes, we create in our minds.

Prototype theory is pertinent when considering how we conceive of listening, particularly involving student interactions in classroom dialogue. Lackoff (1987) believed we construct typical prototypes in our minds, which he further defined as *idealized cognitive models.* These prototypes are the basis for cognitive categorization. Recognizing the problems in this thinking, Lackoff (1987) asserted:

> This idealized model, however, does not fit the world very precisely. It is oversimplified in its background assumptions. There are some segments of society where the idealized model fits reasonably well. An idealized cognitive model may fit one's understanding of the world either perfectly, very well, pretty well, somewhat well, pretty badly, badly, or not at all. (p. 70)

This description is apt for my phenomenological inquiry into listening. Our expansive dialogic reservoir of experience contributes to *idealized cognitive models* of listening. In schools, these prototypes tend to fix narrowly on thin conceptions in which students are passive and obedient. Actions associated with listening are strictly behavioral, and they are often fixed due to limited critical attention to listening's nature and complex processes. The typical prototype of a listener works "pretty badly" when an *idealized cognitive model* is applied to Daniel. Reflecting on her listening, Caitlyn realized she must adjust thinking due to this specific communicative experience.

Listening to certain individuals does awaken our consciousness to a notion that ordinarily goes unquestioned. Over the course of my dissertation study, the teachers listened to students who prompted reflection and reconsideration about their listening conceptions. The teachers were consequently educated about their listening. These moments of reflective awareness were stirred by the circumstances surrounding listening to a specific student, which led the teacher to a particular response designed to improve dialogue and the relationship with an individual.

My daughter, Cassandra, is the person in my own life who challenges the *idealized cognitive model* of listening. She is the person who causes me to attend to the listening process with a different sensibility that had not entered my consciousness prior to my study of listening. I had never thought about the complexities of communication in a relationship where my dialogic partner has serious limitations with verbal articulation and language. Speech is a crutch to my interpretation of other forms of unspoken expression, and that is where my listening is focused. Listening to a child who has sophisticated intellectual, emotional, and social capacities, beyond what is present in her

speech, demands a different listening stance. "Use your words" is a feeble gesture at hearkening attunement I learned over the course of my study, especially when there are many ways to listen capable of generating understanding and relational closeness without words.

How does distinct communication with one individual influence teachers' listening conceptions? During my interviews, Caitlyn reported a somewhat parallel experience to my relationship with Cassandra in anecdotes about listening to an autistic student, Jeffrey. This fifth grade student was classified as nonverbal. The boy had numerous emotional outbursts in class, making him a social recluse. Students, according to Caitlyn, viewed him as an incapacitated listener unable to attend to the focusing qualities listening demands. Caitlyn did not conceive of Jeffrey's listening differently because he did not display overt physical movements customarily labeled as school listening. This is the behavior she cognitively assigned to a typical listener prototype. Her reflective awareness involved in listening to a disabled child, much like my experience with my three-year-old daughter, was aroused by dialogic experiences that were obstructed by communicative walls. Speech limited by social or cognitive delays led to a presumption that listening was also deficient.

Caitlyn employed a communicative intervention, assistive technology and Rapid Prompting Method. These devices were integrated according to Jeffrey's Individual Education Plan (IEP) during the school year. Caitlyn described the "doors opening" once communicative mechanisms were integrated into Jeffrey's instructional experiences. Assistive technology enabled Jeffrey to communicate what he was thinking, as represented by the inspirational statement he uttered to Caitlyn: "I love when you

understand me." Caitlyn admitted, prior to the interventions, she did not believe Jeffrey listened at all in class. Jeffrey's communication was hindered by a disability. Yet a student may not speak in classroom dialogue because of acquired cultural mores, for example. That does not necessarily mean a student is not an attuned listener. This disclosure is significant when broadly conceiving of listening in the panoply of discourses, interactions, and expressions entrenched in classroom dialogue.

This example demonstrates a thick listening conception built on the relational ideals Rogers (1951) espoused. Reflecting on her relationship with Jeffrey, Caitlyn understood that his listening was not impeded previous to assistive technology. Her ideas shifted toward a realization that Jeffrey was not incapable of listening. The interventions opened the door for dialogue, but most relevant here is the manner in which her conception of listening was educated through reflective inquiry and the context and relationship with Jeffrey.

The teachers in my research study shared numerous stories related to classroom dialogue about listening to specific individuals outside the realm of students facing personal turmoil or having classified disabilities. Jamie's retelling of a parent correspondence captures the meaning of a student who changed her thinking about a typical listener prototype in classroom dialogue:

> I notice students' listening more in their writing rather than observing their behavior. They often share details about things happening in class I would have no idea they gathered from discussion. Just a few days ago a parent sent me an email with the subject line: "You are really getting through to them, lol."
>
> This mom is a parent of one of my lower functioning students. The boy [second grade] has a low reading level and seems generally disinterested participating in class. He went home from school one day excited to give his mom a multiple-choice quiz on Harriet Tubman and the Underground Railroad. In the email, the mom sent me some of the creative questions the boy wrote

> demonstrating a wide range of knowledge we explored in class. I was in disbelief. I responded to the mom: "Did Kevin *Google* Harriet Tubman after he got home? Where did he get this information?" The mom responded, "Absolutely not." She said he was creating the questions aloud before he could get home on a computer.
>
> I didn't notice anything Kevin's mom explained in this email message. This is the boy I thought was never paying attention. He is one of those "come back to my table, let's re-do it" kids. I always need to explain it again for him.

Jamie's notion of listening is ensconced within a thin conception: that the child who diligently pays attentions, sitting erect and eyes forward, raising his hand to participate is listening. Kevin did not overtly display these bodily expressions; therefore, Jamie did not peg him as a listener. Moreover, she believed a child with a history of academic struggles, namely difficulty in gathering information when listening during classroom discussions, could not attain understanding, even on occasion. Instructional reinforcement is necessary in a small group or individual setting for the failures she believed inhibited Kevin's understanding through listening in whole class dialogue.

Reflecting on Kevin transformed Jamie's *idealized cognitive model* of certain behaviors and attitudes student listeners exhibit. Through her reflections, Jamie revealed movement away from a thin listening conception. Receiving constructive parent feedback from the angle of disbelief unlocked her narrow conception that listening was only displayed by conventional and particular behaviors, fixed regardless of the experience or context in which the listening takes place. Acknowledging she might misinterpret students' listening on other dialogic occasions, Jamie located another expressive forum, writing, to access knowledge into her students' listening capacities and aptitudes. Similar to Caitlyn, Jamie's decision to seek another forum for expression, as means for accessing knowledge about students' listening, is a reflective device that

teachers should consider in conjunction with classroom discussions. What are the limits to our understanding of a student's capacity or willingness to listen fully while interacting with others? How do teachers' perceptions of individuals morph when they are awakened to a condition that is different from the categories of meaning we assign to students?

The other teachers in my study provided similar dialogic and relational experiences, and they described how listening to a specific student changed their conceptions. To conclude this section, I shift from individual teachers' listening conceptions to a global idea. Educators interested in cultivating rich discussions ought to consider how listening to particular students can change their conceptions of classroom dialogue. The unpredictable arrangement of "political friends" in classrooms, to use Parker's (2010) terms, includes students who enter our worlds with complicated backgrounds and mixed identities. They may have distractions away from school, exhibit disabilities impeding their physical expression of conventional listening cues, or present as social recluses. These factors can change a teacher's conception of listening when attention is placed on this chief component of dialogue. I presented these examples gathered from the reflections of the teachers in my study, but how many other directions could listening to specific students take when looking closely at the makeup, context, and relationships existing for other teachers and classrooms?

Being Listened to: "Don't You Feel Better When You've Been Heard?"

> Leading professional learning—teaching adults—can be humbling for educators. I am the chairperson of the district professional development committee. We recently shifted our formerly top-down model to a teachers-teaching-teachers approach. Having sat through countless

> examples of boring, needless workshops led by consultants or administrators was viewed as useless. Launching this model I agreed to facilitate several workshops with my own colleagues on subjects such as blogging or guided reading. I was struck earlier this week when I noticed my closest peers behaving the same way as they did before in PD sessions—on Facebook, *Googling*, whispering to friends with their back to me. It was so frustrating because we were giving people what they asked for, but their response was the same.
>
> This behavior should not be surprising because I do it on other occasions. My eyes are on the computer when others are talking to me. While I believe I can listen to a person speaking to me and engage in other activities, **I do not like it** when it happens to me. That might seem like a double standard. Yet, it still bothers me. In turn, I've tried to change my behavior, multitasking, because feeling like I am being listened to changes how I perceive the listener and the act of listening. Don't you feel better when you've been heard? (Jamie)

Attuned listening is at the heart of human interactions. To this point, the emotional soul of dialogue has been touched upon from relational and humanistic angles in a web of discourse that is often reduced to thin listening conceptions and our collective failure to engage as listeners. Jamie's reflection upon an ordinary experience reveals the perceived disaffectedness of valued colleagues translated into the nature of listening. Her spiraling event originates from a familiar place of disenfranchisement—that of sitting passively in front of a person labeled as an authority or expert, but who has no close connection to the experience of teaching. Jamie may be seeking deeper exploration of which actions and dispositions are associated with listening, as she shifts from being the listener multitasking or remaining inattentive to a speaker to feeling conflicted when the roles are switched. The elementary teachers shared parallel stories marked by dismay or confusion in instances of not being listened to. Hope and optimism alternatively characterized moments when the teachers conveyed occasions of feeling listening to. A common theme emerged within the vast emotional spectrum of the perception of being

listened to. That is, the elementary teachers' listening conceptions were educated when they reflected on what it felt like to be listened to.

Notably, Jamie assigned meaning to the experience of being listened to by drawing it from one context to another. The elementary teachers participating in this study admitted that listening to students in dialogue, with a sense of hearkening attunement, is a responsibility beyond the scope of their immediate job duties that other professions are not obligated to perform. Jamie's fluid transition from her professional dialogic listening experience to her students' experience was a natural and prevalent mindset adopted by other teachers in the study. Her subsequent reflection follows.

> Listening is a motivational technique. If I am listening to them [students], and they feel like they are being listened to, they feel safe and free from judgment. This is especially true for little kids. For our profession, someone coming to speak with you is looking for safeness and nurturing. Kids need to feel emotional connection to you in order to be motivated to learn. Feeling like you are being listened to is a big part of this experience.

Jamie reveals a principal listening conception associated with the experience of being listened to. The complementary, dual dimensions of speaking and listening in dialogue, in my interpretation, are fueled powerfully by the cultivation of an environment where being listened to is ostensibly felt. Jamie characterized this notion as motivation. As humans, we are motivated to listen more astutely when we believe that a person interacting on the other side of dialogue shows interest in receiving our message as well. Jamie relocated a moving example from another world into the classroom, believing that her listening stance with students needs refinement in order for students to advance and grow as learners.

As in the previous section, teachers described "being listened to" as a context that reveals particular listening conceptions. These considerations prompted teachers to think

differently about their listening conceptions and sometimes even created a response in their interactions with students and other people. Being listened to, or the perception of being listened to, is an experience that creates intense emotional attachment and important reflections about the nature of listening. My analysis of this notion is examined through analogous musings and thinking that the elementary teachers described during our interviews.

Feelings associated with being listened to have lingering effects on how elementary teachers conceive listening in their own classrooms. For example, I will take the reader systematically through one of Hope's extended interview excerpts. Hermeneutically, this approach demonstrates careful attention to the precise language and textual meaning present in the discourse. Paralleling Jamie's reflection, Hope's analysis reinforces emerging patterns evident in teachers' thinking and adds texture to the essence of listening conceptions. Hope disclosed an upsetting dialogic phenomenon that accompanied conversations with her mother. While contextualized discretely in a personal relationship, I will examine later how it transfers over to her thinking about classroom dialogue.

> We speak every day after work. It is our routine. My mom, I love her dearly, annoys me constantly on the phone. Most people talk on the phone exchanging stories, engaging naturally in back-and-forth talk. Not her. Every conversation begins with a long spiel about my niece and nephew who she watches—what they ate for lunch, their naps, funny moments from the day, who fell and hurt their knee. I love them to death and want to hear about their every move, but I have needs, too.

Conflicted emotionally, Hope relayed a sense of duty to her mother and the experiences of her brother's children. Identifying their daily phone conversations as a *routine*, though, signaled the rote, emotionless sentiment present in activities that did not carry

significance. In thinking aloud "I have needs, too," Hope may be frustrated that her mother is myopically in tune with the experience of attending to family members while remaining absent from her own child's similarly challenging and fulfilling lifeworld. The two participants in dialogue—Hope and her mother—have context for "back-and-forth talk" characteristic of conversations. My interpretation is that Hope is let down not only by her mother's absence of demonstrating listening, but also by the fact that the opportunity to listen has not been considered or valued from the start. Hope explained how her approach, recognizing this phenomenon, has changed.

> I tried an experiment one day in a phone conversation with my mother. After calling her, I immediately put the phone down, on speaker, and proceeded to my bedroom. I got dressed, organized my school belongings, ironed a shirt, turned the stove on to cook dinner, and then returned to the phone. Turning off the speaker button, I put the phone to my ear acting as if I'd been there the whole time. My mother had no idea what happened. Most times, people talking look for minimal response throughout a long period of talk. She did not even notice the Greek thing—aha,aha,aha,aha—missing from the other side. I decided to tell her, "Okay, mom, I can see you are busy, I will let you go" to this quote, unquote "conversation."

Hope concluded, "I talk to my mother because I want something from her." Being listened to never enters the mindset of the person speaking on the other side—in this case, Hope's most beloved family member. Hope may have contrived a scenario for the purpose of mustering enough courage to cease further conversation, thereby sending her mother a message that providing the feeling of being listened to is something that she, as a mother, must take seriously as a parenting imperative. From here, Hope moved directly to reflections about her listening approach with students.

> I make students feel like they are listened to even if I might not be fully engaged. I know I am a really good listener because no one really listened to me when I was a child. There were four kids in my household. Both of my parents worked, and they did not have time to listen to me. When students speak to me, I

> will hear, process, and go back to everything they told me. Sometimes, when I do this, I could be a more attentive listener to their needs.
>
> One time, students were working on a project, and I snuck to my computer to write, Mrs. Vogel [the principal] an email that was time-sensitive. She was waiting for my response on a pressing matter. This little girl came up to me with a question. I dismissed her, saying I need a few minutes to send an email to the principal. The girl turned around quietly, head down, and walked back to her seat. I thought, "Wow, that must be what Little Hope felt." I try never to shut out kids. These deserve to be listened to.

Hope affirmed her listening stance with students stemming from reflections of being listened to by her mother, and she distinguished between two types of listening with the varying degrees of thickness she assigned. This is a key conception drawn from the experience of being listened to. The first type of listening involves acquiring information from one's dialogic counterpart, and as Hope framed the experience, "being able to use it." It is focused on collecting and dispersing important information into categories in our heads, yet still relationally (Waks, 2010). Indeed, several teachers pinpointed listening this way in terms of temporality—retrieving ideas at different intervals of time—as evidence that listening has occurred. Hope positioned her own experience of not being listened to by her mother with a bare minimum expectation she set in her student listening relationships, being able to recapture the words uttered in conversation into the appropriate domain of knowledge.

Interestingly, Hope attributed experiences, such as the conversational "experiment" with her mother, as factors that awakened her listening attunement, the type of listening she preferred. Waks (2010) classified this interpersonal listening as " . . . allow[ing] others to come alive, grow, and change in unexpected ways" (p. 2755). Her particular upbringing and family circumstances led to a heightened listening sensibility that transcended all dialogic relations. The closeness between Hope's personal

and professional listening relationship was evident when she described the first grade girl, momentarily shunned, as appearing and feeling like "Little Hope." For Hope, being listened to was the basis for listening with hearkening attunement. She explained in our interview that the former type of listening she enacted, in which the bare minimum was to repeat the student's words directly, might be considered adequate because she received a message, processed it, and could go back to it later. Many individuals feel this description satisfies listening's requirements. I wonder if this conception is the expectation teachers routinely ascribe to their own listening and students' listening to each other in classroom dialogue. Alternatively, Hope revealed that listening demands a human connection that is generative and involves a deeper understanding, in totality, by the listener. How might students "come alive, grow, and change" during a classroom discussion if they believe they are being listened to by their peers and teacher in classroom discourse?

Perceptions and feelings of being listened to are important dimensions of the elementary teachers' listening conceptions, as explored in this section. The thick humanistic and relational aspects of listening shine through the teachers' thoughts, emotions, and commitments. Prior to this study, the teachers had not given much thought to the nature of listening beyond its thin features and perceived mandate of working with children in public schools. The teachers developed richer meaning about listening as they thought about what it is like being listened to in personal and professional settings. Being given the opportunity to engage in reflective inquiry enabled this growth to occur. How might this idea of being listened to translate to other spaces where classroom dialogue occurs? What do researchers investigating social studies discussions stand to learn by

conducting inquiries oriented around these humanistic and relational angles? I will discuss and consider the implications of these questions in the final chapter.

Interlistening: "I Was Born with One Mouth . . . and Two Ears"

> When one talks and one listens two talk and two listen. When one talks and thousands listen, thousands talk and thousands listen. When one talks and there is no one to listen, one still listens. (Lipari, 2014, p. 159)

> Kids constantly change their thoughts when they speak. Often, this occurs during math lessons when students are explaining how they tackled a problem and then realize aloud what they are saying is not consistent, right, or what they intended. I can see the "wheels start to turn" in their heads, thinking: 'Wait, does that make sense?' (Christine)

Listening, while complementary to speaking and thinking in dialogue, is still often viewed as a separate act. Words are spoken or written; received and processed; and, at times, responded to in the same manner in which they were originally communicated. This is a standard dialogic cycle conceived where two or more people exchange ideas. Classroom discussions operate functionally, in linearity, under these entrenched assumptions, which have not been investigated or challenged in the extant scholarship on classroom discussion. Even the most astute listeners often humbly proclaim: "I will not *stand* and speak; instead, I will *sit* and listen," as if the two in combination are not possible. Christine's reflections about students' listening suggest a different conception about the relationship between core elements of dialogue. Indeed, she believed in the possibility that space and time do not divide speaking, thinking, and listening. They are not phenomenologically distinct acts or expressions, but "an integrated plural" that are "nested and interpenetrating aspects of communication" (Lipari, 2014, p. 157).

Christine's ideas about her own students' complicated acts of listening—"wheels turn in their heads"—arrived from personal reflections about her participation in a religious book club. She joined a social group of like-minded adults to read novels with biblical overtones aimed at "getting to life's meaning." Book discussions involving adults with similar interests and motivations can elicit back-and-forth dialogue where people speak, think, and listen, all at the same time. Revealing this important notion about listening, Christine reflected on the various dialogic intersections occurring during conversations with her book club peers.

> When you are speaking, sometimes you're thinking even though you are giving, not getting information. It goes both ways though. When you are speaking you are also thinking. You are learning while you're speaking, wrestling with your own thoughts or ideas, thinking about information.

> I decided to join a church discussion group for the first time. I find myself listening to my own ideas, considering what I want to give back or change, all while I am speaking. We discuss heavy topics, things that don't have a correct answer. I often change what I'm saying when I speak because I am listening to myself as I speak and considering the ideas other people contribute. Speaking sometimes allows me to think about ideas differently. A lot happens internally when I have these kinds of discussions, and it has made me consider how listening to my own thoughts influences me and the discussion.

Educational philosophers posit we have barely scratched the surface in understanding the listening process. The depth, meaning, and implications of this statement surface when considering Christine's ideas about the relationship between speaking, thinking, and listening. Lipari (2014) theorized *interlistening* as "communicative interactions transcend[ing] boundaries around time, place, and person" (p. 157). She further asserted that listening and speaking in dialogue are unduly "confined" to a "cage of spatiality" (p. 157). We think about these two expressions as having a beginning, middle, and end; located inside or outside an individual, one

speaking, one listening; occurring at a particular time in direct relation to the past, present, or future. Is it possible for speaking, thinking, and listening to occur neatly and compartmentally into these forms? An analysis of Christine's reflections about her own discussions and the dialogic patterns represented in her students' expressions would suggest that interlistening is a dynamic experience that occurs whether we seek it or not.

Whereas empathetic or critical listening are aims all "good" listeners seek and refine in their dialogic relationships, interlistening exists without any particular attention to its meaning. This factor alone makes it worth a phenomenological investigation. Christine, and the other participants in my research study, described experiences and reflective awareness of the notion that speaking, thinking, and listening occur simultaneously. These ideas both stimulated elucidation of listening's nature and meaning, and conversely flummoxed teachers about their listening conceptions, previously unchallenged and rarely considered in everyday thinking. I use Lipari's notions of interlistening as a theoretical conception drawn broadly from humanistic fields, to analyze elementary teachers' ideas in this section.

Christine's untangling of the speaking, thinking, and listening interdependence is difficult to put into words. The experience is often subconscious and implanted in our communicative experiences. The arena of music offers us a plethora of metaphors and terminologies to illuminate interlistening's meaning. Lipari (2014) wrote: "Just as musical instruments and other objects can resonate sympathetically in response to vibrations produced by external bodies, interlisteners too can hum in and out of rhythm, harmony, and time in dialogic interaction" (p. 159). This statement is heaped with references to create meaning.

Dialogue is revealed here in terms of its rhythm, harmony, flow, and physical resonance. Caitlyn characterized this state of "hum[ming] in and out" of classroom conversations, as the *buzz*. This climax of interlistening occurred in Caitlyn's classrooms during book talks, even though she used a different vocabulary to describe recognition of a phenomenon. Caitlyn explained multiple levels of noise and silence in her classroom. There is loud, "speak over your partner's voice" talk that "hurts your ears" when sounds echo out of sync. Caitlyn labeled this unproductive talk as "crisscrossing" between peers, moving in and out of focus like a camera adjusting its resolution. On the other side of the sound spectrum, Caitlyn shared examples of uncomfortable, sustained silence. Caitlyn was drawn to these empty conversations where it appeared that speaking, thinking, and listening cease if it is not the case. Heads are hovering close to the notebook, according to Caitlyn, with students hoping enough time passes before another stimuli or redirection is created.

This may or may not be a sign that the speaking, thinking, listening process has ceased. However, the desired state, a *buzz*, represented to Caitlyn a dialogic rhythm with students moving between ideas in a gratifying simultaneity of speaking, thinking, and listening. Collectively, Caitlyn described her students' book talks in terms parallel to Lipari's musical ones—she is the "conductor of the symphony's orchestra" who occasionally "directs" her small groups back into the *buzz*. Similarly, Christine likened the same flow of dialogue described phenomenologically, in terms of sound: "There is a beat in the room. The volume control *murmur* is the setting I am looking for."

Lipari (2014) invited readers to ponder characteristics of interlistening in the "con-fused multiplicity of dialogue" (p. 158). Caitlyn's and Christine's anecdotes

addressed many dialogic convergences in motion. Bodily expressions and gestures flowed in a synchronous movement when there was a *buzz* in the classroom, and these behaviors ceased when one or more of the dialogic expressions were interrupted. Another feature Lipari explored in her analysis of interlistening is temporality. She compared synchronic time, a slice or recognizable moment when past, present, and future become one (pastpresentfuture time), to diachronic time. This latter representation of time is customarily chronological, an order and sequence in linear terms, related but separate periods. Lipari's assessment that speaking, thinking, and listening happen concurrently is a controversial and unfathomable union of actions that are routinely viewed as separate. Yet because of careful inquiry into their own thinking and dialogic experiences, Christine and Caitlyn were able to describe moments when synchronous time was embodied within interlistening.

Each teacher in my research study wrestled with Lipari's (2014) notion of interlistening. Some recalled instances from vibrant classroom discussions or intimate conversations with friends and family that involved the integration of speaking, listening, and thinking. Prior to our interviews, each teacher admitted she did not consider the nature of listening in relation to speaking and thinking with any intentionality.

In further exposing interlistening, I offer one more account from Hope's experiences to disclose her listening conception.

> They [students] talk to me when I'm multitasking. Speaking to another student, one inevitably approaches me to ask a question. They expect me to be staring at them. I don't always have time to be looking at them. I can help another child and respond: "Yeah, you can go to the bathroom," but they are waiting for me to look at them, to give them my full attention.
>
> I don't know what they [students] are thinking about when they look at me with blank stares. I always tell them my stupid saying: "I was born with one

> mouth." I can see really well and hear really well because I have two eyes and two ears. I can nod at you and be speaking to another person and be telling you something while I am speaking to that other person. If I had two mouths, I would be able to speak to you while I was talking to someone else, but I am still listening to everything you are saying. Then, the student would say, "How do I know?" and I spit back everything she said to me. So, they can see that I am taking in, processing everything they say to me even when I am working with other students.

Hope demonstrated her capacity to interlisten—speak, think, and listen—when engaging in multiple dialogues at the same time. Other teachers in my study lauded their capacities to listen to their own speech when communicating. In this anecdote from the classroom, Hope described her ability to communicate to one student while simultaneously being able to speak to another. Clearly, Hope was listening and processing information along the way, and she proved it to her students by "spit[ting] back everything" uttered. Lipari's (2014) analysis of interlistening provides important conceptual grounding for the intricate relationship between speaking, thinking, and listening in dialogue. Hope's phrase, "I have only one mouth," creates a simple illustration that is helpful for first graders and adults alike to understand the possibility and meaning of interlistening.

Interlistening is a phenomenological subtext of a broader listening conception that the teachers in my research study reflectively appraised. Specific triggers can drift the speaking, thinking, and listening process in dialogic interactions to unexpected places where space and time are no longer viewed as boundaries. Hope's ability to reflect and translate this conception into a vernacular understandable to first graders is unique. Nonetheless, we do interlisten regularly throughout the course of our dialogues. Considering the implications of reflective attention to interlistening, Lipari (2014) asserted: "Listening to interlistening can thus involve an exercise of intentional agency—one pays careful attention, willing oneself to focus on what is occurring and letting it

reverberate with one's inner voice" (p. 173). This statement signals the possibility of interlistening's meaning beyond acknowledgment of its mere existence. Inherently, there is value gained when we attune ourselves to the complex relationship between speaking, thinking, and listening. Put differently, Leah stated: "[When listening] there is a lot of work going on in our head we are not thinking about that can tell us more about ourselves." I will revisit the implications of attunement toward interlistening in the concluding sections of this research study. At this point, I assert the teachers reflecting on the nature of listening educated themselves toward thicker notions of the interdependency that speaking, thinking, and listening play in dialogue. Attention toward interlistening, furthermore, bears important consideration for educators and researchers investigating social studies classroom discussions.

Disturbed Listening: Snubbed

To this point, my analysis of elementary teachers' listening conceptions has explored people who push our thinking about listening, the close relationship between listening and being listened to, and the interplay between speaking, thinking, and listening. The teachers' conceptions of these listening subjects gravitated to similar places as they shared many notions and experiences in common. My final hermeneutic analysis stands in stark contrast to the preceding sections. The subtitle of "Disturbed listening" should be interpreted from multiple angles. Instead of taking a negative and potentially damaging connotation from the word "disturbing," the reader should apply the *Google* dictionary definition, "interfere with the normal arrangement or functioning of," as the closest literal meaning here.

"Disturbed listening" is a broad umbrella encompassing myriad thin and thick listening conceptions that elementary teachers revealed over the course of three interviews. Caitlyn, a novice teacher, admitted with embarrassment that "she never thought so much about listening in her life." Seeing discomfort on her face, I must have responded apologetically because she added to her reflection: "No, this is good for me." In general, each teacher in my research study—to varying degrees—faced a disturbed state of cognition when pondering questions about the philosophical, ethical, and social dimensions of listening. Once again, this factor demonstrates listening's value for phenomenological inquiry.

To return to the specific meanings of "disturbed listening" in relation to the ideas these elementary teachers shared, this section will include analysis of: the relationship between listening and understanding-misunderstanding, listening in argument, pretending to listen, and listening in silence. While qualitatively each conception offers unique insights into teachers' listening ideas, they are organized with a few defining characteristics shared across subjects. First, "disturbed" represents a listening conception that was seemingly interrupted or reversed when prompted to reflect or engage in self-analysis of an idea for the first time. Second, the teachers offered insights and listening experiences that potentially "disturb(ed)" school institutional practices or conventional stances, such as the obedient listening conception introduced earlier in my writing. Lastly, "disturbed" listening signaled tensions, even competing ideas between the teachers' conceptions. At times, I juxtapose these opposing ideas by demonstrating that multiple interpretations of particular listening conceptions warrant further consideration for readers in terms of reflecting on their own listening stances.

Misunderstanding: The Bridge to Understanding?

> When we mistake understanding for something fixed and final, something out "there" rather than something accomplished between and within a situation, we create a wall around the possibility and limit the living creativity of our learning and being. For the myth of perfect understanding, and its high-handed renunciation of misunderstanding, deafens us to the ongoing birth of understanding. (Lipari, 2014, p. 138)

Lipari's assertions preceded her analysis of interlistening, serving as a broad foundation for readers considering the interdependency of speaking, thinking, and listening. As listeners, we have a moral and social obligation to seek understanding in a speaker's content and nonverbal communication. Heidegger characterized this journey to understanding as hearkening attunement, a sophisticated and desired state of listening rarely attained. Through Fiumara, we are confronted with the cultural forces that impede the listening process. The elementary teachers in my research study all cited pursuit of understanding as the overarching aim to listening. This goal was expressed from numerous angles, such as processing information, acquiring knowledge, or meeting the speaker's needs.

Lipari (2014) invited readers to "disturb" their understanding of *misunderstanding*. Where misunderstanding often connotes a particular meaning, which is incorrect or incomplete, Lipari suggested misunderstanding can indicate movement toward understanding. This conceptual shift is particularly resonant when a person believes understanding is neither fixed nor final, which suggests a thick listening conception. Caitlyn was one of several teachers who embraced an outlook that understanding was in constant flux, and that listening was a central device for feeding and reshaping understanding. Demonstrating a global outlook, she expressed: "Listening is a way to learn . . . not just for them [students] to listen to me, but to each other and the

world around them." With listening viewed as the intermediary between misunderstanding and understanding, elementary teachers moved alongside Lipari, but not all the way.

Leah was one teacher attuned to the numerous misunderstandings resulting from dialogue when the speaker and listener seek understanding together. Rather than accept that misunderstanding is one stop along the way toward understanding, Leah sought corrective actions in her own listening approach. She provided the following reflection at our first interview:

> The hardest thing for me to accomplish in dialogue is separating the speaker's message from my own ideas. This becomes most difficult when I am speaking to a friend in a conversation about an important topic we passionately care about, but I even see it with my students.

Here, Leah was disrupting, or seeking to unpack, the thinking-listening relationship. She was seeking release from her inner thoughts, in my interpretation. This becomes particularly challenging when entering dialogue involving topics of personal significance.

Can a listener stand far enough away to distance his or her own beliefs from ideas offered by a dialogic partner? Lipari's (2014) analysis of interlistening establishes serious doubt that listening and thinking can be unwound from one another as a persistent stitch present in dialogue. Leah added another layer to her reflections about the understanding-misunderstanding association involved with listening: "You want to detach yourself from what you want to say and attune to what they are saying first." As I explored earlier, Garrison (1996) and Beatty (1999) theorized detachment as effective distantiation created by listeners between our own prejudices, thoughts, and beliefs and the message delivered by the speaker. Navigating this cognitive space is demanding.

While accepting complete detachment is impossible and not necessarily desired, it still remains a crucial intellectual exercise for becoming an attuned listener.

I introduced Leah as educating her listening conception earlier when she listened with *confidence*. This took place during her adolescence. When pushed to define what listening with *confidence* means (many people describe speaking with confidence), it was her efforts to negotiate misunderstanding and understanding associated with dialogue that led her toward a confident listening stance. She described developing the capacity "to take on that one message," putting emotions, ideology, and prior relations with individuals aside. Listening confidently, according to Leah, means reducing the possibility of misunderstanding. At the same time, she did admit falling into "emotional traps" of misinterpretation where detachment is not possible. Posing questions to the speaker in these situations, Leah believed, reduces the likelihood of misunderstanding. Her discomfort (disturbedness) with misunderstanding, relationally and intellectually, is demonstrated in these reflections and actions.

Other teachers participating in my research study similarly grappled with the role listening plays in governing (mis)understanding present in dialogue. Christine reminisced: "I have my father's voice ingrained in my head about not *jumping the gun.*" Christine referred to this recollection because she often used it as a benchmark to evaluate her listening in classrooms, advice she valued. The anecdote below exemplifies Christine's internal struggle with this listening conception.

> Third grade students are antsy by the end of the day. They are eager for dismissal, the time when we go through our homework routines and pack up our belongings. The afternoon is also a time when we wrap up a science investigation or social studies project. I often find myself racing against the clock because we don't have enough time in our schedule to delve into these academic subjects.

> I could see the clock winding down close to three p.m. This is when I began to lose my students. One kid, in particular, has no sense of what we are doing, and he gets off track easily. I see his hand raised in the air as others are speaking about conclusions related to an ecosystem lesson. Right away, I have serious doubts about his interest and participation. I talk to students about not raising their hands while others are speaking. It distracts them from thinking and processing what a peer might be saying, but I can see that he disregards my suggestion. Feeling defeated, I finally call on this boy after seeing his frustration bubble and whole body seemingly burst from anticipation. It took me a full hour after school to realize that the boy was providing new information, a point of view different from his peers, but clearly related to what we were doing.

Christine, this time, lost sight of the cognitive restraint that was not able to detach her prejudices about a student from the content he offered in classroom dialogue. Several teachers admitted carrying preconceived notions about students—their aptitudes, dispositions, and life stories—into a listening experience that ultimately created misunderstanding.

On its own, this fairly typical elementary school listening scenario does not warrant significant analysis. However, Christine's reflections following this anecdote revealed an explicit attempt to regulate her thinking about listening in a direction that seeks to reduce misunderstandings present in dialogue.

> In my classroom, I teach my students that every thought or idea has value. I am fighting against a school culture that begins at an early age—a student is programmed to think the teacher is the only source of knowledge. For that reason, I often hold back my own ideas so they can figure out what they think on their own. However, there are times when I try to get myself in their little heads without saying anything directly. Me, being a voice in their head, can help guide them when someone says something this is just plain wrong or damaging to their education.

Christine's notions about the listening-(mis)understanding relationship were clearly disturbed. In one respect, she removed a physical constraint from dialogue, her presence and authority. This removal encouraged students to take in every idea or thought generated in class discourse. While seeking to preserve the integrity of listening's

processing, Christine also distrusted students' capacity to filter an idea to a state of understanding. Her skepticism is powerfully illustrated when she imagined a mini-version of herself residing inside students' brains.

Elementary teachers disclosed listening conceptions of navigating the relationship between the listening process and understanding aligned with Heidegger's aim of hearkening attunement. Seeking understanding is at the heart of the listening project. When unpacking the various and complicated associations of interlistening—in this case, listening and thinking, the teachers' notions and their actions did not follow a coherent path toward attaining understanding. Leah and Christine revealed these disturbed listening conceptions.

Argument: Would You Rather _____ or _____?

> *Morning Meeting* is the place where our best discussions occur. One day I was reading a teacher's blog and discovered a discussion prompt she used with her students. The questions always started the same way: "Would you rather _____, or would you rather _____?" These mini-debates involved simple topics, such as "Would you rather ice skate or snowboard?" Or, they included serious topics, like "Would you rather never celebrate your birthday or Christmas/Hanukkah?"
>
> This is the coolest part of my day because it is the only time when I really get to hear what students are thinking. I see who is selfish and who is heartfelt. I learn new and interesting ideas about their lives. At first, I overly directed these mini-debates with time marks, structures, and prompts. I asked them to recall what their partner said at our full class *Morning Meeting*. This took a whole lot of modeling on my part, but they were really bad at it. They could not remember what their partner said or they reported not being able hear the full message.
>
> The majority of the kids raise their hand now when I ask them who has to work on their listening. They have a greater sense of what they need to do in order to listen with the partners. At Back-to-School Night, I show parents video clips of these mini-debates during Morning Meeting. They are amazed about the sophistication of what their kids are doing.

Classroom structures, routines, and contexts influence the type and quality of listening students enact. The mini-debate Jamie described to demonstrate her second grade students' listening progress is a pedagogical practice social studies teacher educators promote in their research in the form of structured academic controversies (Johnson & Johnson, 2006; Larson, 2001a; Wilen, 2004). Most social studies teacher educators would laud Jamie's teaching *with* and *for* discussion, and they would be excited by developmental advancements young students acquire while participating in her civil discourse. Yet a question remains: Does argument promote good listening?

Jamie created a structured forum for students to participate in an academic argument. Students were presented with a question to elicit multiple perspectives. Then they were guided to formulate their own ideas, provide reasoned evidence for their claim, and consider a peer's perspective before ultimately arriving at a judgment. Jamie was moved by her students' authentic expressions, focused interest in the topics, and enhanced dialogue where speaking and listening were complementary features. By proudly exhibiting student work at Back-to-School Night, Jamie reinforced her conception that argument was an appropriate and effective structure for cultivating student listening.

A supervised, guided academic argument involving personally meaningful topics can be a useful way to promote listening. Do the same listening habits and practices transfer, however, when we get into *real* arguments? When prompted to consider this possibility, Jamie paused before responding. Her portrayal of students' *Morning Meeting* mini-debates was disrupted. Jamie switched contexts from the classroom to the playground. This is the place where *real* arguments occur. Jamie referenced witnessing

two students who had engaged in civil mini-debates during *Morning Meeting* as they ignored the listening element of dialogue during playground disagreements on the same day. Knowing whether or how the students listened on this occasion is uncertain without delving further into this playground dispute. Perhaps the students were even more attuned listeners at the playground compared to *Morning Meeting*. Regardless, Jamie's perception of the listening that occurred was substantively different, and the whole experienced forced her to reexamine her position.

My analysis of Jamie's experience teaching listening through argument is not aimed at affirming or rebuking this classroom structure. Many teachers base their listening anecdotes and reflections in similar classroom contexts. Following a widely-accepted blueprint in civic education, students who are taught and given the opportunity to engage in civil discourse from a young age are on a pathway toward informed, active citizenship. Structured arguments certainly create, even push, consideration of different perspectives, which can attune students' listening in dialogue. Nevertheless, Jamie's reflections about her students' arguments outside of the classroom represented one of several disrupted listening conceptions the elementary teachers revealed in our interviews.

Fiumara (1990) raised attention to the culture of assertive discourse present in our global society. One attribute about Fiumara's framing of argument is relevant to my analysis here. In a competitive culture prizing individual achievement, she asserted we are not set up for the "radical reciprocal openness" that listening to difference demands (p. 8). Instead, participants in a dialogic argument remain immobile, straying further away from a listening stance and toward reinforcement of our solidified positions. In

contrast to Jamie's parallel dialogic references, the structured classroom mini-debate goes against Fiumara's assertion, but her candid reflections about playground antics uphold the philosophers' bold declarations.

Hope's candid and personal reflection about her listening experience while participating in arguments with loved ones was telling, viewed in light of Fiumara's (1990) assertive discourse claims.

> The whole listening things goes out the window sometimes. My culture does not accept this behavior when speaking to elders, especially your parents. So, I always wait my turn when speaking to ma-ma. You can see though when the siblings get together everyone is speaking over each other, and no one is really listening.
>
> It is even worse with my husband. He is an attorney, and I always feel like I'm on the stand trying to defend myself. My strategy is to talk over him because I know he is preparing a counterargument. That gives him less time to think, take everything in, and analyze the situation.

Do arguments, by nature, interfere with the listening process? Or, do we possibly listen differently in arguments based on their context? In other discussions, Hope expressed having to feel calm and stress-free to listen well. Clearly, when arguing with her husband, Hope did not enter a dialogic interaction physically or emotionally prepared to listen. In her words, this was a point when "listening goes out the window." Further, Hope's references to the field of law, courtrooms, and cross-hearings provide the reader with a vivid image of settings where arguments are central to discourse. Hope acknowledged feeding into the culture of assertive discourse, in which "radical reciprocal openness" does not lead to attuned listening. The culture and process of argument are not presented as opportunities to listen.

Following Hope's reflection about listening in argument, I posed a different listening perspective from the one she had considered. I asked: *Is it possible that your*

*listening is **more** attuned during arguments with your husband?* This potential conception, vastly different than the one she considered, takes into account the role speaking, thinking, and listening play interdependently, as we learned from Lipari (2014). Hope may indeed have the ability to acutely hear a message delivered by her husband both verbally and nonverbally, process it while she is speaking, and skillfully respond without having the conscious awareness of the depth and type of listening performed.

Dialogue in the legal profession may be uncharacteristically bent toward argument, but linguists and scholars have considered the possibility that every dialogic encounter is potentially an argument in the making (Lansford & Ruszkiewicz, 2012). Public schools endorse classroom discussions that are situated and structured as arguments, whether they are academic controversies, simulation of historical debates, or a simple "Would you rather do A or B?" Preparation and engagement in argument, some believe, can help students widen their perspectives and become critical thinkers through the cultivation of artful listening. Alternatively, Fiumara (1990) believed that argument, by its very nature, pushes attuned listening even further away from a culture uninterested in truly hearing others who have different ideas to express.

Jamie and Leah contributed important conceptions about listening in argument. Disturbed notions emerged when Jamie believed the two kids who performed listening in *Morning Meeting* could not transfer listening stances in a *real* playground argument. For Hope, when presented with a possibility when she was listening more fully than she ever considered when she believed her "listening went out the window," her notion of listening in argument was disturbed. Overall, universalizing a particular listening

conception in argument becomes challenging when opening up our horizons to their multifaceted contexts and meanings.

Pretending to Listen

> Caitlyn: I can't not listen to my students. I feel even with everything else going on…even when I am conferring with a student and my job is to focus on that student, I can still hear tidbits of information going on around me. That's my job. I have to; it's my job to listen to students. It's just me.
>
> Interviewer: Is what you're doing hearing or listening?
>
> Caitlyn: Well, I guess sometimes it is really hearing. I find myself getting distracted when I am having a writing conference with a student and have to bring myself back. I guess I am constantly moving back-and-forth between hearing and listening, between the student I'm conferencing with and the students around me.

Caitlyn, in this interview excerpt, reflected on her hearing and listening behaviors with students. She was shocked, almost offended, when asked if she ever tuned out her students. The other elementary teachers participating in my research study offered similar perspectives. In my interpretation, the idea floating in their minds was: "Is someone going to revoke my teaching certificate if I confess not listening to my students?" Caitlyn's association between "I must listen . . . " and "because I am a teacher" was a standard response. In fact, each person in my study admitted teachers have an extra-ordinary moral and professional obligation to listen to their students, something not inherently compulsory to other careers. Some people provided examples of why and how youngsters need a listening teacher in order to experience social and academic growth. Others, like Caitlyn, blindly accepted its truth as a basic and simple contract.

Even remotely weighing the possibility of "not listening" to students thrust elementary teachers into a zone where their conceptions were disturbed. Yet over the course of our interviews, I recast questions and encouraged the teachers to reflect on the idea of "not listening" from different angles. As a result, ambiguities and complexities emerged from the discourse surrounding "not listening" to students. For example, the subtlety of distinguishing hearing from listening caused Caitlyn to reevaluate her stance of the implications of "not listening" to her students.

Nicholas and Rice (2010) wrote an essay in *Teachers College Record*, "On Pretending to Listen." Their central thesis is that there is a place between listening and not listening in dialogue, and "pretending" to listen is a rarely explored way to contextualize this condition. The authors posited: "Pretending to listen is often useful, sometimes indispensable, and in one sense inevitable in the practice of 'good listening'" (p. 2875). The term *good listening* here is borrowed from Beatty (1999) and has been referenced several times in my writing. When "not listening" was reframed to "pretending to listen," the elementary teachers in this study provided more nuance in their reflections and descriptions.

The inevitability factor of pretending to listen that Burbules and Rice (2010) cited became evident to Caitlyn when she revisited what she labeled as multitasking. Her listening was intermittent, going in and out of heightened attentiveness. As humans, we do not have the capacity to pay attention with the same focus and intensity all of the time. Things happen within us and around us, distracting our listening attentiveness. Burbules and Rice (2010) used the term coasting to represent the listening Caitlin called multitasking (p. 2877).

To analyze pretending to listen at a deeper level, Burbules and Rice (2010) discussed the many ways we "portray" listening. The appearance of listening can be a conscious or unconscious act people exhibit through the bodily expressions widely sanctioned as listening behaviors, such as making eye contact, a head nod, or any movement that signals the listener is in sync with the speaker. Burbules and Rice suggested this act can be on "sheer pretense" or one that naturally occurs through years of modeling (p. 2876). Christine provided a concrete example from her classroom when she often "portrays" listening, but she is really just pretending.

> Do you know the kid who is so excited to tell you a story about his family's trip to an aquarium? Third graders are not exactly succinct with their storytelling, and their timing is not always good. Quite often, they miss a detail, go back, add to what they already stated, and then lose track of where they were. I will *hear these kids out* and *let them think they are being listened to*.

Christine was one of the teachers who believed listening to her students is a professional and personal commitment, except in cases when a student was being "disruptive" or "distracting" to others' learning. At the same time, she easily located an experience common to elementary classrooms when she "pretended" to listen. Christine "portrayed" listening by not stopping the boy's story about his family aquarium trip, "hearing him out." The absence of intervention alone, Christine believed, sends the student a message that he is being listened to.

The teachers were more comfortable accepting a "pretending to listen" approach with their students in cases where they were disinterested or unavailable to students. Pretending to listen, though not necessarily different qualitatively from not listening to students, was a preferred listening conception because the teachers were sensitive to students' relational needs. This dimension was fully explored in earlier analyses.

Pretending to listen has one more facet warranting analysis of elementary teachers' listening conceptions theorized by Burbules and Rice (2010). This subject is germane, too, to my previous analysis of the relationship between listening and mis(understanding). Leah posed the following hypothetical scenario at one of our interviews:

> Have you ever seen a student give a lengthy reading response [verbal] and have no idea what he is trying to communicate? Sometimes, I get into these situations. The right thing to do is probe his thinking, seeking clarity in his explanation. Depending on the child, I know that is not always possible, and I don't want to take away class time to work this student through his ideas. So, I may just give a nod and "hmmm . . . that's interesting, Johnny," and move forward.

Attuned listening is a central process moving from misunderstanding to understanding. Despite listening attentively, Leah disclosed a misunderstanding of a student who has difficulty articulating his thoughts. She chose to portray listening by pretending because she was uninterested in asking a question to seek understanding. Burbules and Rice (2010) described this phenomenon as "deceiving the listener and potentially ourselves" (p. 2877). Clearly, the misunderstood student may also take away a misunderstanding that his thoughts were received and processed by the listeners. Leah acknowledged particular students display patterns of communicating ineffectively. In many of these situations, she felt the rest of the class followed the same pretending to listen approach, even imitating the behaviors we demonstrate when portraying listening. Burbules and Rice believed that deception of this variety can cause a subconscious pretending to listen that eventually causes the listener to deceive herself.

Leah was forthright in her admission of pretending to listen. Building on the hypothetical scenario involving the misunderstood boy, Leah examined her listening

conception further. She reflected on the behavior of students in her class, and was able to classify misunderstood students into two categories: students who are unaware when a person pretends to listen and students who have the situational awareness to see through pretending to listen. This difference surfaced, Leah posited, when certain students were "persistent," "asked a question to the speaker to check their understanding," or "restated an idea forcefully."

Snubbed: Listening in Silence

> Sometimes I see kids ignoring other kids. They'll say their name like, "Brad, Brad, Brad, Brad, Brad, Brad, Brad, Brad," and the kids doing whatever it is that they're doing, like working, and there's like nothing there. No response.
>
> And then, I'll go over and ask you know, "Brad, so-and-so said your name five times." "Oh, really?" And, and I'm like, "Were you listening? Did you hear your name being said five times?" "Um, no." I was like, "What were you doing?" And, I know what they were doing. They were just doing their work, coloring, whatever it is that they're doing.
>
> Total snub, like they're snubbed completely. I try to tell them, "Well, next time that happens and you want to get Brad's attention, I would like for you to make sure that the person's actually acknowledges that you were there, that sees you visibly there. They might be looking down and not knowing, and might be really focused in on what they're doing that they don't think of anything that's around them."
>
> It's meditating. I don't even know how to explain it to like, a first grader. "You know, you're going to go down, you're going to squat to their level, you're going to try to get their eye contact. . . . Tap them, make sure they respond before you say their name four more times."

Hope delved into a thorough description of mere seconds of time theoretically taking place in her classroom when describing one student *snubbing* another. Her use of the term *snub* was a powerful way to culminate my final analysis of disturbed listening. The broader conception explored here, however, is listening in silence. Schultz (2003)

has based many of her studies on listening in silence. She posited: "Listening for silence includes listening for missing conversations and overlooked perspectives, and also listening for moments when students are actively silenced by individuals and institutions" (p. 109). The elementary teachers shared listening conceptions related to silence. I will take two of Hope's descriptions of snubbing to illustrate the two points Schultz (2003) offered in the above statement. The first situation involved Hope intervening in a "missing conversation," and the second one involved active silencing. Interspersed within this discourse, I will draw on other examples and reflections the elementary teachers expressed about notions of silence.

Hope was both attuned and sensitive to the snubbing she referenced in her hypothetical scenario. First grade students, when focused on a task, can be unaware of their surroundings. Hope viewed the snubbing as a missed opportunity for fruitful conversation. How many times in the course of a classroom discussion are teachers and students snubbing each other in the terms Hope described? Here, she responded pedagogically by questioning, modeling, and directing the student seeking interaction with his peer. From Hope's experience, many students are not persistent or direct with their attempt at peer dialogue, which she believed was her responsibility to foster. Many teachers might not take such active measures to rescue dialogue from failed communicative attempts. More importantly, few teachers have such sharp awareness of the silence present in classrooms. Hope's reflections and response in this snubbing event are educative to teachers routinely orchestrating classroom discussions for two reasons. First, snubbing can be both widespread and undetectable without a teacher's awareness of its existence, yet critical to meaning making. Second, Hope's thick listening conception

in this case resulted in her "rescuing" fruitful dialogue from occasions that might never occur.

Schultz (2010) suggested silence is rarely investigated in schools. Many people view students who are silent, for example, as being bored or incompetent. Schulz believed that silence can be a "sign of power" and "form of protection" (p. 2835). Between these two expressions are many other forms of silence Schultz (2003, 2010) believed teachers must listen to. For example, Christine and Leah believed silence in dialogue is created when new perspectives are offered that were not considered or push the limits of present understanding of a given topic. Fiumara (1990), quoting Heidegger (1962), affirmed this listening conception of silence: "In talking with one another, the person who keeps silent can make one understood (that is, he can develop an understanding), and he can do so more authentically than the person who is never short of word" (p. 99). This was a prevalent listening conception related to silence the elementary teachers described during our interviews.

Listening to silence was commonly described as an absence of speech that was unintended or appropriately given during elementary classroom *think* time. Silence, despite the lack of sound, can also be absolutely deafening for many reasons. This is the type of silence Schultz (2003, 2010) believed gives the listener power in a dialogic relationship. The teachers shared few examples of students or adults appropriating silence as means for power, yet one remains glaring. Hope continued her earlier description of snubbing with a listening conception that followed her original idea soon after.

> The other day I was standing over in a corner. Girls were drawing in a group and one girl is like, "I don't like your snowman." And the girl usually is a crier, so I was like, "Oh, great." But she did something unbelievable. First, she just stood there for what seemed like minutes, and then she goes, "You know what? You don't have to like my snowman." She continued doing her work not making any eye contact, because that was her way to suppress crying. . . . And I went over to her later and said, "You know what? That was a great thing that you just did."

> They [students] find different ways to interact with one another in times of conflict or trouble. They *snub* each other just like adults do. If they don't care for you, they're not going to pay attention to you. That's how they interact.

The girl Hope labeled as a "crier" enacted multiple communicative devices to *snub* the student who intentionally *snubbed* her. In this situation, the prolonged absence of speech was an opportunity to craft a witty response and present a veil of disaffectedness to the girl who was guilty of *snubbing*. In turn, she was *snubbed* back.

Juxtaposing two distinct dialogic events—one real, one imagined—Hope revealed disturbed listening conceptions involving silence. Her unique and compelling vocabulary of choice, snub, carries phenomenological meaning when placing the term next to the rather ordinary incidents from her classroom. Silence is a dimension of dialogue that is present with or without talk. Many students spend a great deal of their day in silence (Schultz, 2003). Elementary teachers thickened their conceptions about the relationship between listening and silence during our interviews, and they appeared more inclined to attune to the myriad meanings silence brings as a result of their reflective attention to the subject.

Summary: Analyzing Thicker Dimensions of Teachers' Listening Conceptions

I did ABCs. I did numbers. I hit Mason. (Cassandra)

My daughter comes home from preschool each day repeating these three sentences when I ask her: what did you do today? There is no variation, clarification, or elaboration to these words. Interpreting meaning from these responses, I deduce that the first two statements are standard academic activities preschool students experience to acquire letter and number recognition. They go unquestioned. The third statement, also, may be a fairly typical preschool behavior I envision my daughter initiating based on her sibling rivalry and social encounters with neighborhood children. The first few times I heard "I hit Mason" did not register a reflective response other than "That is cute. She has a crush on a little boy" and "I may need to call Cassandra's teacher."

Cassandra's capacity to communicate her ideas articulately is emerging due to the various therapies she receives in her public school education. Yet an examination of various listening conceptions, studied in depth through this project, causes me to wonder about the statement "I hit Mason" from many angles. What causes Cassandra to utter the identical daily response every time I ask about her day? What enters her consciousness, if anything, in the course of speaking, thinking, and listening when presented with the question? Has our dialogue become so mundane, in the same way as it appears to my older son, that Cassandra seeks to give me what she thinks I want?

In some respects, I accept that listening to "I hit Mason" every day will not lead to a state where understanding is achieved through our conversations, at least at this stage of her life. The listening process will be an uncertain and inconsistent bridge between misunderstanding and understanding. I seek a relational approach, nonetheless, that

values dynamic elements of listening teachers in my study revealed. For instance, do I "portray" listening to Cassandra when she confidently exclaims "I hit Mason"? And if so, what is that doing for her relationally and cognitively?

Launching inquiries into the nature of listening cultivated robust and diverse notions of listening's meanings for elementary teachers participating in my study. The same condition resulted for me, as evidenced by reflections of dialogic experiences with my three-year-old daughter. My analyses of listening conceptions in this chapter demonstrated movement between thin and thick ideas. These findings will be explored globally in the final chapter to offer readers grounds to consider the tensions, possibilities, and intersections between listening and classroom dialogue at various levels.

Chapter VI

PROBLEMS AND POSSIBILITIES OF/FOR

THICK LISTENING CONCEPTIONS

> Freedom, dignity, and confidence—that is the nature of it [listening]. When students make a commitment that discussion is meaningful and everyone has a small voice within a room of larger voices; these three attributes have become part of the classroom culture.
>
> Just recently we were having a lively discussion about the ethics of cloning. Students read different articles and were given the opportunity to share their views. Things got heated when considering the implications of cloning. One boy wished he could clone his dog that recently passed away. Another student believed we must allow nature to take its course. She suggested that "messing with science" in this way was dangerous because people might abuse cloning.
>
> Observing this [dialogue] closely, I witnessed students branching off naturally into small groups, where pods of listening and discussion occurred. Listening was evident in their [students'] body language. Students scooted closer to hear. They got fidgety. There is no particular rhythm when students are listening actively. The discussion might be bouncing…students talking over each other and in different directions. But, when the boy talked about cloning his dog, there was silence for a few seconds. (Leah)

Introduction: Cloning Listening and Discussion

Leah suggested three attributes are necessary in a classroom culture that values listening: freedom, dignity, and confidence. This is the meaning she interpreted from my question: *What is the nature of listening in dialogue?* First, Leah believed students must have *freedom* to navigate dialogue openly ("a sense of comfortableness"), without

unyielding structures and excessive teacher intervention or guidance. Removing these institutional elements that are often present in dialogue, she asserted, can enable students to listen freely. Second, Leah honored the *dignity* of each child in her classroom. She believed students' self-worth and reciprocity toward others must be preserved in a spirit of dialogue. Third, Leah valued *confidence*. It is not just a confidence to speak, but a *confidence to listen*. As was discussed earlier, Leah thought students *listen with confidence* when they are truly open to accepting an idea from a peer, even if it causes cognitive or ideological tensions. Thick conceptions of listening—humanistic, democratic, relational, and pedagogical—were all embodied in Leah's description of her third grade students' discussion.

Leah was educated about her listening, which is signified by numerous conceptions encapsulated in this short anecdote. First, the choice of vocabulary Leah used to describe the nature of listening is significant. She cited actions such as "scoot[ing]," "getting fidgety," "pods of listening [forming]," and "bouncing" to describe students' responses as listeners in classroom dialogue. These terms, often guided by thin listening conceptions, signal a "non-listening" student to many elementary teachers. Leah's explanation using this vocabulary, though, suggested the students' movement was reflective of a commitment to careful and full listening. Second, in thinking about patterns of discourse, Leah proclaimed listening occurs when silence followed a boy's wish to clone his deceased dog. Interpreting her explanation, silence is a product of caution, deliberation, and respect to the speaker's ideas (Parker, 2006; Schultz, 2003, 2010). Conversely, Leah also recognized listening was heightened when "students talk over each other and in different directions."

Listening is deeply interwoven into human interactions and relationships to such an extent that we often ignore its presence, avoid its challenges, and fear its complexity. In dialogue, listening is a phenomenon upon which few people have made a personal commitment to reflect as part of their moral, social, and intellectual education. The paucity of educational inquiry exploring the nature of listening in classroom dialogue led me to the primary research question: What are elementary teachers' conceptions of listening? The teachers participating in my dissertation study were awakened by reflection involved with engaging conceptions of listening. This broad interpretation is a key point for the reader of this study contextualizing speaking and listening in classroom discussions.

The variety and intricacies of listening conceptions generated from this study are also notable to the reader pursuing explorations into classroom dialogue. Using two broad categories of thin and thick, I interpreted the teachers' ideas about listening and organized their notions into hierarchical categories based on the aim, context, and depth of inquiry related to each one. Thin conceptions—obedient and attentive, for example—were characterized by sparse attention to factors that are pervasive, yet relatively unprobed when listening occurs during classroom dialgoue. When a listening consciousness was stimulated, though, the teachers "maintained [themselves] in hearkening attunement" and "then there [wa]s proper hearing" (Heidegger, 1975, p. 66). This humanistic conception of listening represents a key movement the teachers demonstrated over the course of my dissertation study.

Leah's description of the nature of dialogue in her cloning discussion has important connections to researchers and teachers in the field of social studies education.

The subject and context of this dialogic exchange represents a typical academic conversation taking place in social studies classrooms. Yet Leah was alert to the nuances of listening, a subject that many others have overlooked in the course of similar dialogic experiences. Her comprehensive explanation of students' listening was packed succintly into a few remarks. In this anecdote, Leah identified one key moment when students in her class balanced a relational awareness of a single person's sensitivity with the critical examination a controversial subject requires. Leah articulated the process of listening by describing body movement, social dynamics, classroom norms, and patterns of discourse. These are all areas researchers on classroom discusssion have patently overlooked.

Social studies educational researchers should thoroughly examine listening conceptions in classroom dialogue in a manner that is parallel to extant studies on speaking. While this element of dialogue represents a crucial gap in current studies, my research contributes to the literature by revealing possibilities of broadening our horizons to listening's meanings with more robust conceptions. My phenomenological inquiry explored teachers' listening conceptions without directly studying classrooms or students' listening in dialogue. However, this initial investigation has promise and possibililties for research extending from the conceptual analysis embodied in my work. This concluding chapter will sharpen two salient dimensions: appreciation for and possibilities of teachers' listening education, and the opportunity to diversify social studies educational scholarship on classroom dialogue. Seeking thicker listening conceptions, I will raise discussion about possible angles and interpretations researchers could take in future investigations.

Listening does not occur within a vacuum, nor is it fixed or final. This factor was revealed through a phenomenological inquiry of five teachers' elementary listening conceptions. To this point, I have acknowledged that context, purpose, identity, relationships, and institutions in which listening takes place are all crucial to understanding what it means to listen well. I will orient my discussion of studying possible meanings of listening in classroom dialogue with these conditions at the forefront of my analysis. Further, I will extend my discussion within a common framework in social studies educational scholarship: *Structured Academic Controversies* (SACs). Situating thick listening conceptions in SACs reveal both the problems and possibilities of this standard discussion vehicle that researchers in the field ought to consider.

I chose to profile Leah (as the research participant) in my final chapter for specific reasons. Every teacher demonstrated movement from thin to thick listening conceptions over the course of my study, but Leah was especially apt in articulating an extraordinary sensibility of her ideas about this subject and the place and people (mainly students) who participated in dialogue with her daily. Leah's ideas, too, exhibited the closest likeness in subject and method to perspectives abundant in social studies educational literature. Therefore, I will conclude my discussion chapter with three possibilities for enacting thicker listening conceptions that are inspired and generated from broad interpretations of my interviews with Leah: accountability, inducing a state of wonder, and fulfillment. These notions will leave the reader with a hopeful outlook and conceptual basis for studying listening's meanings in classroom dialogue.

Discussion: Conditions Competing Against Thick Listening Conceptions

Context and Purpose

I begin this discussion with a restatement of Heidegger's (1962) claims: "If we have not heard 'aright,' it is not by accident that we say we have not 'understood'" (p. 206). Listening is crucial to the way we understand in dialogue. Each teacher described this connection as the central aim of listening when interacting with others. Over the course of this study, I found that the teachers described the nature of understanding as variable, depending on the context, setting, and specific objective of dialogue. Students pursue understanding through dialogic interactions when acquiring new knowledge in an academic setting, such as in the example Jamie described about Kevin listening intently to class discussion involving Harriet Tubman and the Underground Railroad. This context was a common place the teachers depicted in schools where students exchanged ideas through discussion. Educational researchers studying and situating classroom discourse through SACs have not articulated a purpose of listening for understanding beyond the curricular contexts in which classroom discussions take place.

My research suggests listening for understanding does involve a richer conception of the nature of participation in classroom discourse. In Leah's cloning discussion, for instance, relational and democratic listening notions were enacted when the students listened carefully to a boy's sentiment about his departed pet, and the ethical dilemma associated with implications of "messing with science." In this respect, Leah's reflective attention to thick listening conceptions enabled her to educate herself about the students' participation in classroom discussions.

The analyses of elementary teachers' instructional experience suggest that a more complex relationship between listening and understanding is not always conceptualized, particularly when thin, obedient notions are featured through pedagogies and artifacts in the classrooms. No study I reviewed explored the purpose of listening in these dialogic experiences beyond its means for comprehension and the ends of educating students for specific disciplinary curricular goals. These studies have sought methodologies aimed at clarifying and advancing the purpose of speaking in a democratic classroom community (Hess & Posselt, 2001; Johnson & Johnson, 2006; Larsen, 2001). Parallel inquiries into the purpose of listening could foster thicker conceptions like those formed by the teachers in my study.

The purpose of listening is closely tied to the context in which listening takes place. Classroom discussions studied in the cited literature are highly structured academic experiences that are primarily facilitated as a whole class with a prescribed set of protocols and guidelines. For instance, Hess (2001) suggested discussions should be framed through controversial public issues with a particular emphasis on instructional moves and assessments that enable students to formulate informed positions on these issues. In many ways, Leah's class discussion on cloning meets Hess' formula. A closer look at her classroom context, though, reveals that listening for the purpose of understanding has important dimensions Hess did not consider. How does our conception of listening change when a boy injects an upsetting personal experience into an academic discussion? The context of discussing cloning may have similar subjects appear over the course of extended dialogue, yet the listening experience is unique to the people, place, time, and space in which it occurs. In these cases, close examination of the

nature of listening occurring within even small moments can lead to the thicker conceptions Leah formulated.

The context of students' dialogic experiences is significant when exploring the purpose of listening. Studies in the referenced literature have largely missed contexts outside of SACs. This absence is problematic. It implies that school dialogue is only necessary and present when the teacher facilitates these instructional experiences. On the contrary, there are limitless opportunities to study listening and speaking when students engage in dialogue. In fact, the omnipresence of dialogue and the interdependency between speaking, thinking, and listening are potentially reasons why listening is a phenomenon rarely investigated (Garrison, 1996; Haroutunian-Gordon, 2003; Lipari, 2014). Given these listening conditions, researchers embarking on educational studies involving SACs should not abandon a constructive framework in promoting civic education. Instead, researchers should take notice of the small listening moments contained within SACs and the dialogic experineces—informal talk and academic conversations—surrounding the structured event. For example, classroom discussion research could expand meanings associated with speaking and listening if small groups of students preparing for a SAC were studied alongside the staged event.

Given the opportunity to reflect on conceptions of listening, the elementary teachers in my study identified contexts outside of the settings and circumstances associated with the referenced literature. One particular example from this study underscores a need to investigate diverse contexts of listening in dialogue. Jamie described heightened listening ("back-and-forth discussion") when her students argued two sides of a question in their *Morning Meetings*. Again, this experience resembles the

classroom discussions pursued in social studies literature. Jamie wondered if the same two students were listening when arguing in a context outside of *Morning Meeting*, the playground.

Whether the students were really listening or not during a playground dispute is less important here than the juxtaposition of these two parallel listening experiences in distinct contexts. Regardless, our conception of listening is thicker when we appreciate that students engage in dialogue worth considering in contexts outside of structured academic experiences. Looking myopically at SACs can indeed lead to a thin conception of listening. Compared to the playground dispute, which surfaces organically in the context of social intercourse, the academic discussion can appear contrived and meaningless. This social dynamic is a factor in determining why a thin listening conception may not be raised beyond attentiveness, which is evident in the cited studies.

The broad purpose of listening advanced in my research study is to attain understanding throughout the course of dialogic experiences. This humanistic conception is grounded in the writings of Heidegger, Fiumara, Levin, and Lipari, but each philosopher asserted that many factors impede our hearing from achieving this global aim. In schools, we must situate the context of classroom discussions before honing our listening purpose for understanding. Examining the context closely can enable us to tap into appropriate and necessary thick listening conceptions for the purpose of understanding, such as relational, democratic, and pedagogical conceptions.

Self and Relations With Others

Five elementary teachers with relatively homogeneous backgrounds and educational experiences contributed an eclectic continuum of ideas germane to the central

research question: How divergent might listening conceptions of teachers be if they came from more heterogeneous circumstances? I open this section, "Self and Relations With Others," with a reference to the possibilities of teacher heterogeneity because investigations orchestrated in these terms ought to be undertaken when studying about classroom dialogue. Have social studies educational researchers considered that teachers and students carry very different meanings associated with classroom dialogue—both speaking and listening—due to their unique identities?

I begin discussion about the role of teachers' individual identities in formulating their listening conceptions with a return to childhood listening experiences. Each teacher described school listening in the literal terms Lipari (2014) translated: to obey. While generally referring to the same type of listening, each teacher responded to this condition differently. Caitlyn and Christine accepted this form of listening as an unavoidable stage of educational development. Jamie revealed tensions in her own recollections. She wondered if a different conception might be possible or desired when working with students today as a result of her consternation about obedient listening.

Hope engaged childhood obedient listening from numerous positions. First, she navigated a cultural practice in which obedient listening was essential when interacting with elder family members. This conception traveled with her to college, where she was educated by watching a college professor appear to condone what she characterized as disobedient listening. Reflecting on her dialogic experiences with students, these notions of obedience were reassessed, yet clearly situated within her own identity. Hope was personally committed to reducing obedient listening conceptions in her first grade classroom.

An individual's identity is shaped by myriad cultural, social, emotional, psychological, and intellectual conditions. Examining listening conceptions enacted during childhood was not done here to reassert that obedience is a thin conception prevailing in elementary classrooms. Instead, I reference this notion with the intent of revealing how one's identity can stir a different response to a fairly consistent conception.

Studies about classroom discussion have confronted the role diversity plays in classroom makeup and students' participation (Banks, 2006; Larson, 2001a). Researchers in social studies education should consider the diverse identities of individuals participating as listeners in discussions. How does one's identity influence how he or she thinks about listening, and what is the impact of this conception on the nature of classroom dialogue? Hope was the one teacher in my study interested in connecting identity and cultural experience to her listening conception. In a classroom comprised of students and teachers with distinct and mixed cultural, social, and gender identities, how might these factors influence their thinking about listening? The occasion to reflect on the role identity plays in one's ideas about listening is another way teachers revealed their conceptions were educated in thicker terms.

Hearing can be "constitutive to discourse" (Heidegger, 1962, p. 262). This stance contextualizes listening as active in dialogue, a feature rarely considered in educational literature. The generative nature of listening is especially crucial to relational listening in which the listener demonstrates understanding of the speaker's needs (Rogers, 1951, 1987; Waks, 2010). When it was linked to individual identity, the teachers disclosed a particularly strong association between their conceptions of listening and the relationships in which listening occurred.

In Chapter V, I created two broad themes, situated within teachers' relationships, that emerged from analyses of their listening conceptions. I will briefly revisit ideas about "listening to specific students" and "being listened to" because they have significant implications for educators interested in fostering constructive classroom dialogue. From Lackoff (1987), I applied prototype theory as a paradigm to show how examples of typical listeners often define our conceptions. Listening to specific students provoked reflective consciousness that caused teachers to reexamine the typical prototypes in classroom dialogue. For instance, Caitlyn once believed a nonverbal autistic child was also an incapable listener because he could not express language with speech. Her capacity to listen relationally, combined with the spirit to engage in reflective inquiry, changed how Caitlyn perceived listening to prototypical students with communicative difficulties.

Our attention to listening carefully to specific students is demanded in many ways beyond (dis)ability. Listening to these individuals and reflecting on relationships with them can potentially enrich one's conception of listening in classroom dialogue. I return to a question posed in Chapter IV about my own listening education: *Why do the heartfelt statements of a 17-year-old girl proclaiming a deep commitment to a pro-life stance resonate in my mind even though, to this day, I take a completely oppositional stance on the issue of abortion?* This young woman, who rarely voiced her perspective, challenged the typical prototype. She was a social conservative in a classroom comprised primarily of liberal boys. Though the contents of her message did not alter my perspective on the topic, listening to her body language, rhetorical approach, and confident speech caused a

profound reflection about the individual, the subject discussed, and political ideologies present in the classroom.

The contrast between Caitlyn's fifth grade student and my high school senior government student is notable when thinking about listening astutely to specific students. They come in all forms and varieties. Sometimes teachers' listening to a student occurs unexpectedly, but only if the individual possesses the openness to invite reflective inquiry into the intricacies of classroom dialogue. I offered an explanation of my listening to a high school student on the subject of abortion because of the nearness this instance has to the extant social studies literature on classroom discussion. Whether social or political, in SACs or ordinary conversations, listening carefully and openly to specific students in classrooms has the possibility of enriching one's conception of listening in dialogue. In my study, teachers' relational and humanistic conceptions were thickened as a result of their reflective attention to the listening when a typical prototype (student) was contested.

Noddings' (2012) assertion that "We should listen because another addresses us" (p. 21) is the heart of the teachers' relational stance as revealed in the many anecdotes they shared in my study. Reflecting on personal and professional relationships, teachers believed that "being listened to" causes the speaker to enter into a spirit of classroom dialogue that is enriched. Robust listening conceptions emerged across teachers' dialogic experiences as a result. The implications of this finding are consequential for researchers across disciplinary fields, but especially for social studies education. In studies seeking civic participation, the subject of "being listened to" has been conspicuously omitted as an orientation in investigating classroom discussions. Yet again, this might be due to listening's mysterious or undertheorized condition. Nonetheless, civic educators might

not take seriously the relational significance of listening in dialogue compared to the concrete and visible acts of doing performed in service-oriented work, legislative advocacy, or other community projects.

Examining how teachers and students perceive, feel, and experience "being listened to" has the potential to foster civil discourse essential to democratic communities. How does the boy stricken with loss over his dog feel when listened to in classroom discussion about cloning? Does that change the nature of his participation? The same question could be framed to the adolescent social conservative, a minority in my classroom, who took a discussion risk revealing her ideological viewpoint on a subject of intense personal meaning. Establishing an environment where "being listened to" is valued can motivate speakers and listeners to engage dialogue in a fashion that reaps democratic profits, such as fostering cooperation, interest, and achieving consensus on decisions through discussion. Numerous studies seek aims of reflecting these democratic principles and communities (Hess, 2001, 2002, 2009). Failure to account for the impact that "being listened to" has on controversial public issue discussions misses a key opportunity to study the nature of dialogue in classrooms.

While positing "being listened to" is an obligation of an elementary teacher, less definitive beliefs emerged from examination of pretending to listen. Each teacher disclosed occasions when she portrayed listening either intentionally (e.g., not seeking clarity on misunderstandings) or subconsciously (e.g., being incapable of sustaining full attention to the speaker all of the time). Reflective attention to the act of portraying listening led teachers to thicker conceptions. For example, Leah reevaluated the implications of not following up a student's incoherent remark in discussion with a

question because she admitted that some students can sense when someone is pretending to listen.

Individuals participating in classroom discussions should not be characterized as listening or non-listening. Without any reference in scholarship to the nature of students' listening in classroom discussions, such as SACs, I posit nuanced positions on this topic are ignored and assumptions prevail—right or wrong—that a student is a listener or a non-listener in these settings. My analyses of teachers' ideas about listening demonstrate listening is not a switch that is turned on and off, nor is it clearly happening (or not) without dialogic inquiry. Future studies about sentiments associated with "being listened to" and pretending to listen would necessarily complicate the dialogue social studies investigations contextualized to this point in educational research.

Role of Institutions

Structures, norms, and practices inculcated in schools are the most significant factors inhibiting thicker listening conceptions. A school is an organization that exists based on its ability to maintain social order. Schools are designed to educate large masses of students maintaining a consistent pattern of behaviors explicitly and implicitly instructed. In educational writing, critical theorists have raised attention to the detrimental effects institutional practices have on school culture, reforms, and progressive ideas (Cuban, 1992; McNeil, 1986).

Social order is an institutional property engendering the thinnest conception, obedient listening, in schools. Elementary teachers referenced notable institutional forces as obstructions to thicker listening conceptions. For instance, mass-produced commercial posters permanently displayed in classrooms illustrate a passive and strictly behavioral

(obedient) portrayal of the appearance of listening. Implanting acronyms like SLANT in students' minds, moreover, advances conformity and compliance that the school-institution inherently values.

The rarely interrogated concrete practices I named are overt clues that school institutions endorse obedient listening, especially in elementary schools. The elementary teachers questioned institutional norms of hand raising, turn taking, and refraining from interruption—all evidence of obedience—when specifically exploring listening in classroom discussion. As the teachers became more educated about their listening, intellectual and moral tensions surfaced when they realized many of the practices tacitly undertaken inhibit listening conceived under thicker terms. The teachers acknowledged certain school rituals and practices require adoption of an obedient listening conception. Yet, through reflective inquiry, they sought pathways to unravel the obedience that is tightly wound into the school institution.

Leah's attempt to mitigate the institutional effects constraining thicker listening conceptions is a significant action. Keeping the classroom poster as an institutional symbol, Leah encouraged her students to co-construct their own active listening anchor chart for book clubs (see Figure 4). The movement from commercially-produced to student-developed artifact signifies a key shift in Leah cultivating thicker listening conceptions. More importantly, Leah asked students to revise the anchor chart periodically based on their experience participating in classroom discussions. Her ongoing engagement with students about the meaning of active listening, while appearing subtle on the surface, revealed movement away from a fixed mindset supported by institutional practices.

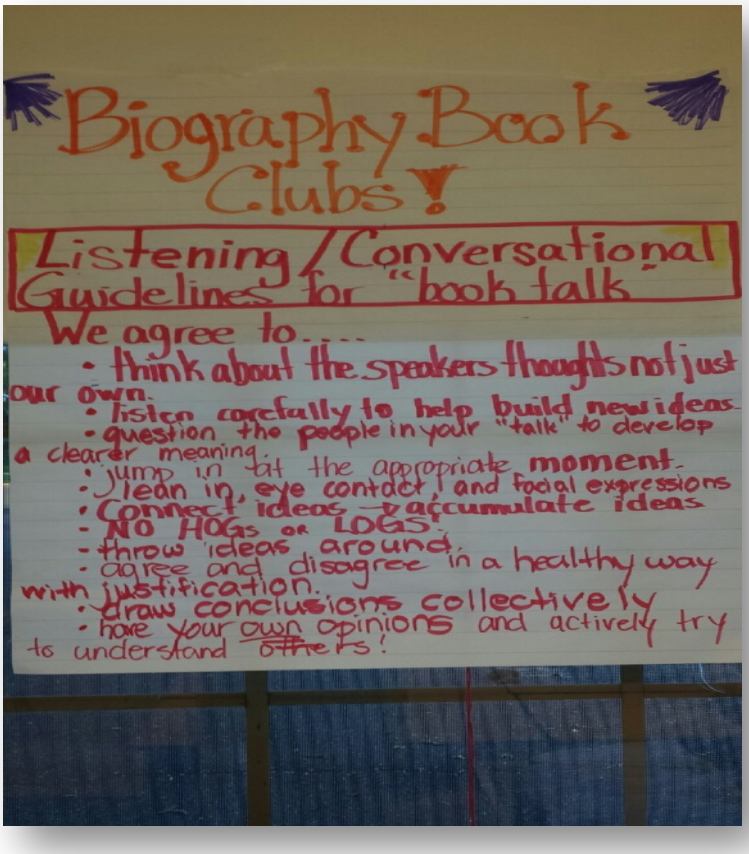

Figure 4. Listening anchor chart

In this brief example, I demonstrated how the elementary teachers' reflective attention to their listening conceptions caused them to rethink school-institutional influences on listening conceptions. These conditions often cement a secure, obedient listening stance that is difficult to escape when richer listening processes are elemental to students' understanding in dialogue. I will orient my remaining discussion about institutions and listening around three large categories: structures and routines, speed and efficiency, and the culture of assertive discourse. This section will present the difficult terrain teachers navigate when evading institutional constraints to listening. Further, I

will suggest possibilities educational researchers should consider when contextualizing classroom discussion studies within school-institutional boundaries.

Structures and routines are endemic to institutions valuing social order. At one interview, Hope explained a conflict between her adherence to school routines and her desire to avoid an environment that prizes obedience: "I remember a student looking puzzled at me when he was asked by another teacher to give the 'school-listening look.'" The "school-listening look" is a school-wide norm taught from preschool, which is similar to the "listen up" (Schultz, 2003) stance cited earlier. Hope followed this statement with an important comment: "Students now understand their listening can look different in my classroom compared to other school settings." Hope's listening intercession is significant and representative of a group of teachers seeking approaches to classroom dialogue that honor the full meaning of listening while still assimilating into the school-institutional culture.

Routines are administrative practices imposed in schools and then repeated with identical action to a point where they become mindless activity. By nature, a listening routine diverges from thicker conceptions, such as interlistening, because it seeks to separate listening from its complementary dialogic partner, speaking. And once a listening routine is firmly ingrained in classroom practice, the activity of thinking is disengaged from listening even though listening theorists contend that is implausible (Garrison, 1996; Lipari, 2014). Elementary teachers in my study, as a result of their reflection to this matter, sought to reconsider firm commitment to dialogic routines, such as "Think-Pair-Share" and "raising hands before speaking," that inhibit thicker conceptions.

Educators interested in cultivating deeper listening conceptions in their classrooms ought to be careful about instituting routines that may inadvertently lead to passive listening. Researchers in elementary and social studies educational discourses should frame inquiries around the role played by structures and routines when seeking fruitful student discussions. For example, what are students' perceptions of listening in SACs that utilize dialogic routines (e.g., raising hands) and authoritative structures governing discussion, compared to classrooms where dialogue is free-flowing? Would thicker conceptions of listening result in a classroom that was less structured? In social studies educational literature, the extant studies ground their research in classroom discussions that are organized and facilitated with sanctioned academic structures. These practices are necessary and important, at times, to maintain social order and prepare students for the practices that transcend into institutions outside of school. Nevertheless, the elementary teachers in my dissertation revealed that reassessment of school routines and practices can lead to the development of thicker listening conceptions.

Increasing academic expectations and an overly packed curriculum create an institutional environment characterized by speed and efficiency (Beane, 2013). Each teacher wrestled with this condition when reflecting on her conceptions of listening. For instance, Christine earlier referenced a worthwhile science discussion on ecosystems that was tucked into a 15-minute window at the culmination of the school day. Can a classroom community properly engage speaking and listening under these conditions?

Elementary teachers wished they could "slow down" the classroom discourse to enable more robust listening to occur. Their hope and motivation, however, were deterred by a realization that the efficiency-conscious nature of school today prevents the

necessary time for speaking, thinking, and listening to nourish deliberation (Lipari, 2014; Parker, 2006; Preskill, 1997). Journaling and other writing practices, adopted as pedagogical interventions and cited in my study, were engineered around the goal of fostering fuller listening. But teachers remained dubious about their capacity to fight against an institutional model of efficiency in an era where speed over deliberation is becoming even more strident.

An efficiency model in education has adverse effects on a key democratic principle, deliberation, which is necessary for classroom discussions to honor a thick listening conception for shared understanding sought in dialogue (Gutmann, 1999; Parker, 2003; Preskill, 1997). Empirical investigations in social studies have failed to contextualize or account for the efficiency-based systems instituted in schools. These studies examined a particular classroom event and the direct curricula and pedagogies surrounding a discussion. There are numerous dialogic experiences surrounding a staged debate, town hall meeting, or scored discussion. What is the nature of speaking and listening conceived within and across these experiences? Does an efficiency-oriented school system acculturate a habit of speed to the point where students and teachers are unable to attend to the full listening that deliberation deserves in classroom dialogue? The elementary teachers frequently alluded to the ways in which the presence of speed and efficiency in schools reduced listening to a thin conception.

My discussion about how institutional forces influence listening conceptions concludes with a reexamination of Fiumara's (1990) proclamation: "we remain anchored to assertive discourse" (p. 7). "Assertive discourse" prominently exists within the institution of school, as competition, individualism, and a narrow focus on achievement

define the culture of learning (Wagner, 2010). Fiumara lamented that the ethos of "assertive discourse" pervades society across institutions. Yet these characteristics are promoted specifically in the academic environments contextualized in literature about social studies classroom discussions. For example, students' performance—attached to a grade or extrinsic reward—is a featured source of motivation in structured academic dialogue, such as scored discussions or debates.

The cycle of "assertive discourse," Fiumara (1990) argued, is perpetuated when individuals engage others with these principles at the core of dialogue. As a result, we are inclined not to listen fully, openly, or carefully to others with these conditions. I wonder if listening conceptions vary in school cultures where grades, competition, and individual advancement do not seep into classrooms with the same force as they do in many public school settings today. Nevertheless, I suggest the possibility of learning about how this institutional principle influences our listening has not, at this point, been seriously considered by educational researchers investigating classroom discussions.

Conclusion: Possibilities for Thicker Listening Conceptions

> High school juniors opened their three-ring binders to the page where they left off the day before. Peering over one girl's shoulder, I gathered today's lesson would involve a lecture about the Mexican-American War (1846-48), culminating with the *Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo* (1848). Students' body language suggested a similar curricular fate.
>
> Moving at a snail's pace, students ruffled pages in their binders and seemingly pretended to be lost in an abyss of white paper. Mrs. Bittman (the teacher), however, chose a different path. She asked: "Did anyone watch the *State of the Union* last night?" Three students hesitantly raised their hands after a few moments of silence. Other students looked away from their binders, surprised by the unpredictable direction Mrs. Bittman took. "I know you were not assigned to watch Obama's speech, but I'm curious to hear what you thought," declared Mrs. Bittman. One student

> avowed: "I don't think my comments about the speech are appropriate for school." Essentially ignoring this remark, Mrs. Bittman pushed ahead to her discussion agenda filled with a long list of prepared questions: "Why do we have a State of the Union? What was President Obama's main theme of the speech? Which cabinet members were and were not in attendance?"
>
> Ten grueling minutes passed before Mrs. Bittman returned to a comfortable pedagogical place: dispensing information about early American history. In the brief dialogue I carefully observed students' withdrawal from contemporary political discourse and national issues. I was unmoved by the tepid classroom reaction until one student's comment raised my antennas. When Mrs. Bittman asked what students should do to contribute [civically], a girl stated: "we should listen." I was perplexed, at the moment, wondering what "we should listen" means to her.
>
> *Should students listen to Obama give the State of the Union? Does that mean we should listen out of respect to our national leader, or does it mean we ought to listen with the intent of expanding our perspectives? Is this type of listening, regardless of the subject, conceived through a notion of obedience? Or, is she trying to seek a thicker listening conception that involves entering a spirit of dialogue with an openness and fullness humanistic listening demands?*

The intent behind the high school student's declaration, "we should listen," remains a mystery without a specific inquiry into her listening conceptualization. Neither the teacher, nor the peers situated in the classroom sought to unpack the meaning behind the student's words. Fiumara's (1990) terms *banal* and *incomprehensible* are appropriate to this anecdote because these are the words she applied to people who are not open to a fuller meaning of *logos* that invite a listening stance. How often do teachers and students exclaim "we should listen," without any consideration for the nature and process of listening?

Stark differences are present in this high school social studies classroom I recently witnessed when compared to the environment described in Leah's discussion with students about cloning. The contrast between the context, purpose, relationships, and

institutional forces surrounding the two distinct dialogic encounters represent two poles apart. In the high school classroom, the teacher encouraged students to discuss President Obama's *State of the Union* speech, but this opportunity for open dialogue was situated within a teacher-directed climate where inquiry and discussion rarely occurred. Leah invited and explicitly instructed a curriculum where speaking and listening happen all of the time, every day. She constructed dialogic experiences that honored "back-and-forth" conversations prior to participation in my dissertation study. Yet reflective awareness to nuances associated with listening, particularly the nature of listening, educated her teaching philosophy and curricular stance on classroom discussions. This intellectual movement was evident in Leah's description of just one moment from student discussion about cloning. For other teachers in this study, their listening education ensued as a result of ongoing engagement with thicker listening conceptions—namely democratic, relational, and pedagogical notions theorized, categorized, and exemplified in the stories, reflections, and musings teachers shared.

My final anecdote illustrating a listless high school discussion on the *State of the Union* and absence of any inquiry to the listening process is common to dialogic experiences occurring in social studies classrooms. Nonetheless, researchers have framed educational studies on classroom dialogue, which have aims of cultivating more "successful" discussions than the one I illustrated. My depiction of listening in classroom discussion has even broader dimensions, though. The history of social studies education is marked by an ongoing debate about the purpose of citizenship education: the traditional branch favoring transmission of knowledge and values versus a progressive branch honoring the practice of students doing/experiencing civic participation.

Preferring the latter orientation, Parker (2003) claimed even the progressive branch of civic education has "minimized social and cultural heterogeneity" (p. 20). He encapsulated his ideal vision of civic education in *Teaching Democracy*: "Viewed as a creative, constitutive process, democracy is not already accomplished, in which case citizens today need only celebrate and protect, but a trek that citizens in a pluralist society make together" (p. 21).

The current proliferation of educational writing on classroom discussions in social studies has, in some respects, missed out on the overarching aims of civic education in Parker's vision. SACs and other similar iterations of structured discussions are presented as ideal constructs to teach democratically. However, these discussions are presented in narrow contexts detached from classroom dialogue outside of the staged event. Researchers have failed to engage the role of individual identities, relationships, and institutional forces influencing discussion. Most importantly, speaking has been situated as the superior, and at times the only, expression of dialogue worth inquiry. Truly valuing the pluralistic and creative dimensions of democracy requires a broader conceptualization of dialogue with listening on equal footing to speaking.

I conclude my writing with three key ideas related to listening in classroom dialogue that educators ought to adopt into philosophy and practice. Researchers should also consider grounding future studies in these central listening ideals. They are broadly interpreted through my specific analysis of Leah's conceptions of listening.

Accountability

> Now, we are all [teacher and students] holding each other *accountable* to certain things when we are talking and listening. (Leah)

The term *accountability* in education often has connotations introduced in this chapter that appear to compete against a culture of attuned listening. Leah was not suggesting we grade or evaluate students on their listening akin to the way classroom discussion is often academically assessed. Rather, accountability exists in a classroom community, Leah asserted, when students believe it is their obligation to seek understanding through dialogue. The speaker aims to be understood, while the listener's goal is to enter discussion with an open mind and willingness to accept another person's ideas upon hearing. Classroom discussions premised on these grounds are unusual and hard to imagine due to the thin conceptions we often bring to dialogue and institutional forces present in schools today.

Why are the cohabitants of Leah's classroom community obliged to be accountable to one another? Even more, how can this sophisticated civic principle emerge in a setting of young students? How might a classroom SAC be different if students are accountable to their peers as speakers and listeners? Leah's reflective attention to listening's thicker dimensions and her capacity to teach, coach, and encourage students toward a similar conception remarkably transformed the culture of discussion in her classroom where listening was not attached to extrinsic reward or artificial exercise.

Wonder

> A magnificent part of the young person's mind and body is curiosity. Curious students listen in a state of wonder when we talk together. (Leah)

Van Manen (2014) stated, "In wonder we see the unusual in the usual, extraordinary in the ordinary" (p. 223). This state of wonder, which van Manen and

Leah characterized, is not whimsical, abstract, or far-fetched. Instead, inducing a state of wonder is a useful theoretical mediation between detachment and acquiescence to bias and prejudgment associated with listening. Teaching elementary students, Leah marveled at the wonder engendered in attuned listening that occurs\red during classroom discussions. Young students, to some extent, enter educational settings in a natural state of wonder. But Leah explained how she sought listening in a state of wonder by modeling her own inquisitive thinking, welcoming difference and unconventional ideas, and teaching students to adopt a mindset that is not fixed.

What are the educational possibilities for students who enter listening in a state of wonder, even if only for a fraction of classroom discourse? Leah's description of students' listening when discussing cloning, and other examples from this study, suggest the tenor of her classroom dialogue is unique due to educational efforts aimed at inducing wonder. Listening in a state of wonder, moreover, can move students closer to overarching goal of listening for understanding.

Fulfillment

> Bringing them [students] to acknowledge the way that speaking and listening could go when taking part in natural conversations never entered into students' minds as a real source of enjoyment. (Leah)

Leah characterized students' dialogic experiences as enjoyable, which is very different from the characterization of high school students discussing the *State of the Union* Address. This depiction is not reduced exclusively to a material form of entertainment like other people seek in life. For example, listening intently to the musical harmony of electric guitar in "Scarlet Begonias" is an enjoyable experience for me. But enjoyment does not fully capture the listening experience I encountered at Starbucks.

Fulfillment is a more sophisticated and comprehensive way to describe the all-body listening that occurred as a result of my intense hearing (Lipari, 2014). In dialogue, people describe a feeling of fulfillment when speaking and listening transpire in a conversation that is touching, edifying, or provocative. We can experience fulfillment in listening when understanding is rescued from misunderstanding; when relational closeness is achieved through communication; and when decisions are made deliberatively and collectively. Leah thought her students now listen in fulfillment due to the amount of talk about speaking and listening she initiated. Can we teach students to enter a classroom dialogue from a stance that embodies listening for fulfillment?

These ideal notions Leah attached to listening—accountability, wonder, and fulfillment—are elevated ideas that surpass and interlock the thickest listening conceptions. While we might only witness the fullness of listening on the scarcest of occasions, the analysis of Leah's conceptions in this concluding section does at least indicate the possibility of attaining a state of civic discourse that is rich, authentic, and meaningful to students. Research on classroom discussion and the experiences shared by teachers revealed a wide range of listening conceptions along a continuum of thin to thick. The thickest conception of listening in dialogue validates what is possible and real when an inquisitive spirit, open mind, and reflective awareness to listening's dimensions are embodied in our teaching.

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Appendix A: Glossary

Book Talks: The phrase, "book talks," was a term participants used in this study to describe an instructional activity commonly featuring students in small groups discussing topics based on a shared reading.

Democratic Listening: "Democratic listening" is a category of thick listening I use to synthesize and classify various philosophical and educational writings. The specific term was taken from an essay by Jim Garrison (1996). In the context of my writing, I define "democratic listening" as a critical and open stance oriented in classroom dialogue with aims of achieving deliberation and decision-making.

Hermeneutic Phenomenology: Hermeneutic phenomenology is the research methodology undertaken in this study. Guided by phenomenologist, van Manen, I define these two terms, as: "Phenomenology becomes hermeneutic when its method is taken to be essentially interpretive and primarily oriented in the explication of texts." (2014, p. 132).

Humanistic Listening: "Humanistic listening" is a category of thick listening I use to synthesize and classify various philosophical and educational writings. In this study, "humanistic listening" embodies three branches of thick listening: democratic, pedagogical, and relational listening, and it is broadly defined as listening to promote understanding of the human condition across dialogic interactions.

Individualized Education Program (IEP): This U.S. legal term was referenced in this study in relation to a student with disabilities. IEPs are documents school district officials author with parents and consultants to outline individualized learning objectives and classroom accommodations.

Interlistening: This term is used to frame my analysis of teachers' listening conceptions, specifically the intersections between speaking, thinking, and listening. It is taken from Lipari (2014) and defined as: "The idea of interlistening thus aims to describe how listening is itself a form of speaking that resonates with echoes of everything we have ever heard, thought, seen, touched, said, and read throughout our lives." (p. 9).

Lifeworld: van Manen (1990, 2014) and many other phenomenologists use "lifeworld" to encompass the various experiential and ontological presences in an individual's life. I apply meaning to "lifeworld" in context to the broad nature of experience for teachers inside and outside of the classroom.

Morning Meeting: This phrase was used several times by participants generally as a community-building exercise conducted in the morning for students to share personal information or discuss important classroom issues. The "Morning Meeting" referenced is a construct influenced, but not taken directly from *The Responsive Classroom*.

Pedagogical Listening: "Pedagogical listening" is a category of thick listening I use to synthesize and classify diverse literature on listening from theorists researching teacher education. I created this term as a broad umbrella to imply full, careful, and critical listening distinct to teachers, students, and classrooms.

Peripheral Listening: This is a term I created and used to define listening that is not immediately or overtly accessible in classroom discourse. For example, "peripheral listening" occurs when a teacher can hear individual student murmurs amongst a classroom full of noise and talk.

Phenomenon: "Phenomenon" is a term used often in this study in reference to conceptions, experiences, processes, and the nature of listening. I argue listening is a "phenomenon" because it is all around us, yet difficult to define and often under-theorized. The term, "phenomenon," should not be confused with "phenomenology," which is part of the methodology and approach undertaken in this study.

Phenomenological Inquiry: "Phenomenological inquiry" is the broad method of questioning, interpreting, analyzing, and revealing of the "phenomenon" of listening embarked in this study.

Relational Listening: "Relational listening" is a category of thick listening I use to synthesize and classify various philosophical and counseling writings. This term is taken directly from Rogers (1951) in his work with client-centered counseling to signal listening that is therapeutic and reconstructive in dialogue.

Thick Listening: The term, "thick," is taken from cultural anthropologists to imply deep and thorough analysis of research. I attach "thick" to "listening" as a broad category of meaning in my classification and analyses of teachers' listening conceptions. "Thick listening" connotes careful, robust, and open listening.

Thin Listening: The term, "thin," is taken from cultural anthropologists to imply superficial analysis of research. I attach "thin" to "listening" as a broad category of meaning in my classification and analyses of teachers' listening conceptions. "Thin listening" connotes listening absent of reflection or critical inquiry.

Appendix B: IRB Informed Consent and Participant's Rights

Teachers College, Columbia University
525 West 120th Street
New York NY 10027
212 678 3000
www.tc.edu

INFORMED CONSENT

DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH: You are invited to participate in a research study on listening in classroom dialogue. The purpose of the study is for the researcher to learn more about the phenomenon of listening, as it pertains to classroom dialogue. As a practicing elementary teacher, you have intimate knowledge and experiences of the nature of listening and classroom dialogue. You will be asked to participate in 1-1.5 hour interviews and reflective journal writing. The interviews will be audiotaped and transcribed as a source of data for the research, but all identifying information will be excluded. Audio taping is critical to the research methodology of this study, as it is likely to garner accurate and valid data. Pseudonyms will be used in place of your real name in any published documents related to the research study. The principal investigator will conduct the research in a public place chosen mutually by the two parties.

RISKS AND BENEFITS: The risks and possible benefits associated with this study are minimal. Minimal risks include the imposition of time to participate in the research study and sharing of personal information you might be asked during the interviews. However, you will receive the interview questions in advance of the interview and have the opportunity to decline a response. If you choose to consent to participate and then ask decline participation for any reason, there will be no consequences to discontinue participation.

PAYMENTS: You will receive a modest award, in the form of a $75.00 gift card, for participation in the research study.

DATA STORAGE TO PROTECT CONFIDENTIALITY: The principal investigator will take every effort to ensure confidentiality by using pseudonyms in place of your real identity in any published documents. Audio tapes will be stored on digital voice recorders and a password protected hard drive on a personal computer secured in the researcher's office. After transcription and completion of the doctoral study, the audio tapes will be destroyed. Further, no identifying information will be associated with this study that could potentially jeopardize your confidentiality. All data collected from the research will be stored securely on the principal investigator's personal computer hard drive with password protected access, and hard copies of the documents will be stored in locked file cabinets.

TIME INVOLVEMENT: Your participation will include three interviews. Each interview will take approximately 1 - 1.5 hours. The three interviews will occur in the span of eight-ten months with relatively equal time gaps between interviews. Interviews will occur at a mutual time for both the subject and researcher.

HOW WILL RESULTS BE USED: The results of the study will be used for the principal investigator's doctoral dissertation at Teachers College, Columbia University. Beyond the dissertation, the data and findings from the study could lead to published articles or presentations at scholarly conferences.

Participant's signature: _____ Date:____/____/____

Name: _____

TEACHERS COLLEGE, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
Protocol # 14-013
Consent form approved until 11/13/2014
IRB Signature SH-KC

Teachers College, Columbia University
525 West 120th Street
New York NY 10027
212 678 3000
www.tc.edu

PARTICIPANT'S RIGHTS

Principal Investigator: **Mr. Bradley Siegel**

Research Title: **Teachers' Conceptions of Listening in Classroom Dialogue**

- I have read and discussed the Research Description with the researcher. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the purposes and procedures regarding this study.
- My participation in research is voluntary. I may refuse to participate or withdraw from participation at any time without jeopardy to future employment status or other entitlements.
- The researcher may withdraw me from the research at his/her professional discretion.
- If, during the course of the study, significant new information that has been developed becomes available which may relate to my willingness to continue to participate, the investigator will provide this information to me.
- If at any time I have any questions regarding the research or my participation, I can contact the investigator, who will answer my questions. The investigator's phone number is (908) 268-3020.
- If at any time I have comments, or concerns regarding the conduct of the research or questions about my rights as a research subject, I should contact the Teachers College, Columbia University Institutional Review Board /IRB. The phone number for the IRB is (212) 678-4105. Or, I can write to the IRB at Teachers College, Columbia University, 525 W. 120th Street, New York, NY, 10027, Box 151.
- I should receive a copy of the Research Description and this Participant's Rights document.
- If video and/or audio taping is part of this research, I ( ) consent to be audio/video taped. I ( ) do NOT consent to being video/audio taped. The written, video and/or audio taped materials will be viewed only by the principal investigator.

My signature means that I agree to participate in this study.

Participant's signature: _____ Date:____/____/____

Name: _____

Appendix C: Interview Questions

Interview Questions (First Round)

1. What do you think is the aim(s) of listening?
2. What do you think is the nature of listening?
3. What is the role of the listener?
4. What is the relationship between the listener and the speaker?
5. What does "good" listening mean to you? What do you do to take a listening stance? What could you do better?
6. Describe your listening experience, as a student, at multiple periods of your educational career.
7. Can you discern when you are being listened to?
8. Can you discern when you are not being listened to?
9. What does it feel like not to be listened to and does the listening feel qualitatively different with different students?
10. Do you ever try not listen to your students?
11. Under what conditions do you find it difficult or impossible to listen to your students?
12. Do you think that listening is teachable?
13. What are your hopes and wishes with regard to student listening this school year?

Interview Questions (Second Round)

1. Do you have any opening thoughts or experiences about listening since we met last?

2. What do you think is the aim(s) and nature of listening?

3. What is the role of the listener?

4. What is the relationship between the listener and the speaker?

5. What does "good" listening mean to you? What do you do to take a listening stance? What could you do better?

6. Can you discern when you are being listened to or not listened to?

7. When students really listen to a person or text, how does that look/sound compared to when they are not listening?

8. What does it feel like not to be listened to and does the listening feel qualitatively different with different students?

9. Do you ever try not listen to your students?

10. When students really listen to a person or text, how does that look/sound compared to when they are not listening?

11. Do you think that listening is teachable?

12. What are your hopes and wishes with regard to student listening this school year?

Interview Questions (Third Round)

1. Summarize key ideas from previous interviews: Are these accurate depictions of your ideas about listening? Do you view these notions differently? Have any of your thoughts changed over the course of this year about _____?

2. Is there something distinct about listening in education and classroom that is different from other facets of society? Do you see the school as a certain place of listening?

3. Do you ever pretend to listen? Is that adequate?

4. If listening is so pervasive and significant to human interaction, why do you think it is not studied or researched heavily in education?

5. What conditions in education do you believe are essential for listening to occur?

6. What evidence of good listening do you witness during the height of classroom dialogue?

7. What are your students' strengths and weaknesses as listeners?

8. Is listening teachable? What are you doing/plan to do to teach listening? If not, is constructive dialogue possible in the classroom if you can't teach listening?