

DISSERTATION

A QUALITATIVE EXPLORATION OF INTERNAL POWER AND SELF-  
AUTHORSHIP FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS LABELED HIGH-RISK

Submitted by

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In partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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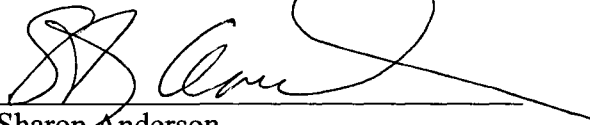
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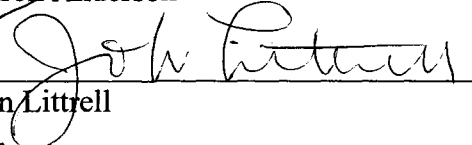
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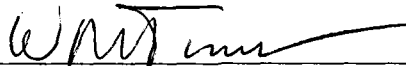
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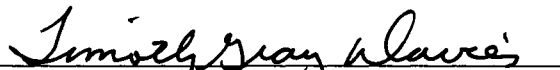
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## ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

### A QUALITATIVE EXPLORATION OF INTERNAL POWER AND SELF-AUTHORSHIP FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS LABELED HIGH-RISK

College students labeled high-risk are often seen in terms of their deficiencies. This study explores the possibility that college students labeled high-risk are able to develop their internal power before college students who are labeled high-privilege. Internal power is defined as the ability to recognize one's power to define one's self and one's world, to create and alter the meaning of one's experiences, attitudes, and values without accepting limits from others or being defined by them. Because students labeled high-risk were found to develop self-authorship—a construct related to internal power—earlier than students considered more privileged (Pizzalato, 2003), it is thought that students labeled high-risk might also recognize their internal power sooner.

Using narrative inquiry I explored the internal power, self-authorship development, and epistemological development in 10 college students labeled high-risk. I found that challenging situations pushed the students into making decisions based on their own attitudes, values, and meanings and most of the participants found that they enjoyed such challenging situations. Through such situations the students learned more about themselves and began finding and developing their voice. I also found that all the students were becoming the authors of their lives and seven of them had developed the internal foundations of self-authorship. However, only three of the 10 students had

developed epistemologically to the contextual knowing stage that is thought to be required for the development of self-authorship (Baxter Magolda, 2001/2004).

I propose that college students labeled high-risk are able to recognize their voice and act on it sooner than college students who are part of the dominant discourse because students labeled high-risk live outside the dominant discourse and already recognize the possibility of multiple discourses. The implications of this proposal for teaching and learning are then discussed.

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this dissertation to my dearest  
Alejandro and Buster B. Brown  
for their undying support, in life and death.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

This study explores high-risk college students' experience of internal power in the classroom and the impact it has on their learning. While there are many experimental and theoretical papers on external or influential power relations among students and teachers in the classroom (Buzzelli & Johnston, 2001; Candela, 1999; Cornelius & Herrenkohl, 2004; Delpit, 1988; Gore, 1998; Manke, 1997; McCroskey & Richmond, 1983; Richmond, McCroskey, Kearney & Plax, 1987; Trier, 2006; Turman & Schrodt, 2006), little research explores internal power in the classroom (Foley, 1999). Foucault's (1977/1984) techniques of influential power (hierarchical observation, normalizing judgment, and examination) are still used in a wide variety of pedagogical contexts (Gore, 1998; Lefstein, 2002) because many teachers believe that it is their role to "regulate the way the world 'enters into' the students" (Freire, 2002, p. 76). In a decades-old landmark series of studies about influential power in the college classroom, Richmond et al. (1987) found that teachers' prosocial power usage, as opposed to teachers' coercive power usage, was associated with higher levels of affective and cognitive learning: How teachers use their influential power impacts student learning; I am interested in how a student's internal power might be associated with learning.

Delpit (1988) notes that students who do not belong to the 'culture of power,' often labeled *outsiders* (Ladson-Billings, 2000), may not understand classroom power dynamics when teachers express external power implicitly or covertly. These outsider

students may then have more difficulty competing for knowledge and power because of their failure to understand the dominant culture's power rules. Thus, they may have a higher risk of failing in school. Another type of power, internal power, may also influence student learning and may be more available to outsider students for reasons described below. This study explores a subgroup of outsider students' experience of internal power amidst classroom power dynamics and how it may affect student learning.

### *Background Information*

Internal power is recognizing one's power to define one's self and one's world, and to create and alter the meaning of one's experiences, attitudes, and values without accepting limits from others or being defined by them. Internal power does not oppose or resist other people's actions or perceptions and it is not about trying to influence or control others (Carse, 1986). This type of power has been little explored despite Epictetus' ancient entreaty, in the *Encheiridion*, (135 A.D., trans. 2004), to focus only on that over which individuals have control.

Internal power is distinctly different from external or influential power, power that is exerted over others. Critical theorists Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987) distinguish between *puissances*, the power of "becoming," and *pouvoir*, the power of "Domination" [sic] (p. 106). Internal power is not empowerment, an external power as described by Freire (2002) or Baxter Magolda (1999a) that seeks to transform society through praxis. Internal power seeks only to initiate one's own actions and does not seek to influence others (Carse, 1986). It arises independently from the individual's own resources. My ideas about internal power have been informed by my experience, the

philosophers mentioned above, and the work of critical theorists as discussed more fully below.

To the degree that an individual recognizes his or her own internal power, the individual does not need to exert external or influential power to feel powerful. Influential power is the “capacity of some persons to produce intended and foreseen effects on others” (Wrong, 1979/1995, p. 2). People are influentially powerful only to the degree that others defer to them (Carse, 1986). Carse introduces the concept of veiling to account for individuals’ failure to recognize their internal power within the social network: Individuals express deference to those perceived as influentially powerful in part because they have been socialized through regulative social discourse training by their parents, teachers, and other authority figures (Buzzelli & Johnston, 2001). As individuals learn the dominant discourse, they begin to veil their internal power when they express social deference to individuals viewed as more powerful.

Recognizing one’s internal power can be a peeling away of the veils put in place through regulative social discourse. With self-veiling, individuals may believe that the powerful rule by virtue of the powerful one’s resources or influential power control. However, once the veil is lifted, individuals can see that the powerful rule because others agree to play by the rules that allow the powerful ones to stay powerful. The veil is our belief that meaning comes externally. Some individuals, such as outsiders, may be able to lift this veil more readily than others. Outsiders have been marginalized and may more easily recognize that the changes they have to make to succeed in mainstream society are their own because the gap between their behaviors and society’s expectations is larger: Outsiders see that they, not others, are responsible for the internal change. Although they

may not know all the power rules as described above by Delpit (1988), they may have some insight into power in general and internal power in particular. Below I offer theoretical and experimental evidence to support this claim.

Ladson-Billings (2000) notes that individuals who are different from the mainstream often have the status of outsider. She asserts that the creation and status of the outsider are socially constructed. Ladson-Billings invokes Du Bois' (1903/1996) notion of double-consciousness as the means by which outsiders perceive and understand "positions of inclusion and exclusion—margins and mainstreams" (p. 260), which are aspects of what I call influential power. Ladson-Billings asserts that those on the margins have a wide-angle view of society that is unavailable to those in the center. This wide-angle view allows them to understand the "corrupting view of the mainstream—its pull to maintain status quo relations of power and inequalities" (p. 263). Because of outsiders' ability to see power's corrupting influence, they "do not seek to move from the margins to the mainstream" (p. 263). Marginalized individuals who do not belong to Delpit's culture of power often have the status of *outsider* in general society and of *high-risk* in our schools and colleges.

High-risk students are students who are more apt to be "socially, financially, or academically underprepared or under supported for mainstream educational institutions" (Vivian, 2005, p. 336). Students who are different from mainstream White students are more likely to be viewed as having a deficit (Ford, 2005), so the application of the label *high-risk* may indicate that a student is different from the mainstream rather than underprepared or under supported. In this paper, following Pizzolato (2003, 2004), I use the term high-risk rather than at-risk indicating that there are different risk levels that

students may overcome and that risk is not a “binding quality that a student unequivocally has or does not have” (Pizzolato, 2004, p. 425). Additionally, at-risk is associated with an assimilationist ideology, which I reject in favor of a multicultural ideology (Banks, 2006).

One advantage college students labeled high-risk have is their ability to develop self-authorship earlier than White high-privileged college students (Baxter Magolda, 1999a; Pizzolato, 2003, 2004). Self-authorship is “a way of making meaning of the world and of oneself” (Baxter Magolda, 1999a, p.6). Based on longitudinal qualitative research, Baxter Magolda (1999a) determined that self-authorship has three components: cognitive, interpersonal, and intrapersonal. Baxter Magolda posits that as individuals develop epistemologically (cognitive component) they move from an external mode of knowing to an internal mode of knowing in which individuals make meaning within themselves. At this more advanced epistemological level, contextual knowing, an individual has “the ability to collect, interpret and analyze information and reflect on one’s own beliefs in order to form judgments” about knowledge rather than accepting an authority’s knowledge as absolute (Baxter Magolda, 1998, p. 143). Baxter Magolda finds that less than 2% of her mainstream students develop enough epistemologically to allow them to develop self-authorship before graduating from college (1999a, 1999b), while most students labeled high-risk in Pizzolato’s study develop self-authorship *before* college (2003, 2004).

Baxter Magolda defines the intrapersonal aspect of self-authorship as the internal capacity to define “one’s own beliefs, identity, and relationship” (Baxter Magolda, 2001/2004, p. *xvi*), which is similar to the internal power definition I use in this study.

Are self-authorship and internal power related? Is the development of self-authorship inextricably linked to epistemological development? Does epistemological development influence the recognition and exercise of internal power? Why are high-risk students in Pizzalato's study (2003) able to develop epistemologically sooner than the White high-privileged students in Baxter Magolda's study (1999a)?

### *Research Problem*

Besides theoretical papers, there are few studies on internal power (Foley, 1999) or self-authorship (Baxter Magolda, 2001; Pizzolato, 2003). Thus, research at this stage is purely exploratory. I am interested in two study areas. First, what are the experiences of internal power for students labeled high-risk? What, if any, are the underlying differences between internal power and self-authorship for students? If these are much the same construct, looking at self-authorship from a power perspective—recognizing veils and power relations—could provide helpful insights for students and me. Do students experience either internal power or self-authorship before they have matured epistemologically by removing or seeing through societal veils? It would be helpful to know at what age students begin to experience internal power or self-authorship to better relate it to epistemological development. Neither Pizzolato nor Baxter Magolda asked students in their studies about any self-authorship experiences when the students were younger. Results from my two pilot studies suggest that individuals experience internal power as early as age ten and possibly younger: if internal power and self-authorship are related, students may report earlier development of self-authorship as well.

Second, if students labeled high-risk are coming into college with internal power or self-authorship development, what factors positively or negatively influence their

experience of internal power? What role do faculty play? What can teachers do to assist students in maintaining their internal power? Should faculty be using their own power, internal and influential, differently? Do students labeled high-risk find faculty's power veiling in covert normalization techniques difficult to deal with? Do covert normalization acts impede students' sense of self? How do students view faculty's power use in the classroom?

### *Research Questions*

My primary research question focuses on increasing my understanding of internal power: What is the nature of internal power and how do individuals learn to recognize and exercise it? How do high-risk students experience their internal power? Does it influence student learning? Of secondary interest are the following questions: What is the relation between high-risk students' internal power and teachers' use of internal and influential power, including regulative discourse and covert power expressions, in the classroom? Is internal power related to epistemological development or self-authorship? Is a student's internal power related to the student's learning process?

### *Theoretical Framework*

While critical theory is concerned with how individuals use influential power (Foucault, 1980), it does not account for internal power. In my experience, individuals discover their internal power and construct their own meanings. Guba and Lincoln (2005) use the term constructivism to describe knowledge that is constructed individually and collectively. Constructivism is a relativist ontology and a transactional and subjectivist epistemology. Constructivism, as used by Guba and Lincoln, provides a flexible

framework for exploring inner power, a largely unexplored construct. I explore these ideas in more detail in chapter 2.

### *Definition of Terms*

*Discourse:* A communication system of social practices, dialog as well as behavior, which exists within particular contexts that constrain what is appropriate to say or do within various parameters. A speaker's ideology can be determined by the constraints of the discourse that the speaker uses (Preece, 1997). Institutions create discourses that determine the knowledge/power structure for the community and that determine the normative social practices (Foucault, 1980; Horrocks & Jevtic, 1997; Preece). Regulative discourse, as used by teachers in a classroom (Buzzelli & Johnston, 2001), is a form of the dominant or hegemonic discourse of an institution that assumes authority in normalizing behavior and identity.

*High-privileged student:* In general, this is a label assigned to students who have better academic preparation for college, more cultural capital in areas required for success in higher education, and fewer financial difficulties in attending college. In particular, Pizzolato (2003) refers to the students in Baxter Magolda's longitudinal study (1992, 2001) as high-privileged because they attended a predominantly White, selective Midwestern college. The only students left in Baxter Magolda's study who attained self-authorship by 2001 were all White.

*High-risk student:* A label assigned to students who are different from mainstream students and who may have academic, financial, and social challenges in completing college (Vivian, 2005). In this study, students are considered high-risk if they are assessed as needing help academically or with their general coping skills (social and

financial support) on the *Noel-Levitz College Student Inventory*™. Students are considered high-risk if their need for assistance is 6 or above on a 9-point scale (1 = low need, 9 = high need).

*Influential Power*: A relational power that is directed externally to affect others' behaviors, and is the capacity or ability to get people to do that which they would otherwise not do (Foucault, 1982/1994; Wrong, 1979/1995). Influential power can be observed in people's interactions with others in the form of domination, submission, and resistance (Carse, 1986; Delph-Janiurek, 2000).

*Internal Power*: A self generated action whereby an individual creates and alters the meaning of one's experiences, attitudes, and values without accepting limits from others or being defined by them.

#### *Delimitations*

In this study I am working with students identified as high-risk who attend a technical and business university in the Southeast. The students' and my exploration of power will apply only to this group of students.

#### *Potential Limitations and Researcher Perspective*

Given that my research is exploratory in nature, I use qualitative research methodology to increase my understanding of internal power. In general, qualitative research cannot be generalized to broader populations (Shank, 2002): I will not be using random selection of study participants nor randomly assigning them to groups. Likewise, qualitative research focuses on trustworthy and authentic data (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, 2005), rather than stable and consistent data (reliability) and representative data (validity) (Creswell, 2005). I will not be able to assess the internal validity of my study, but instead

rely on the credibility and plausibility of my data and my analysis of it (Lincoln, 1995). I will not be able to make predictions or test hypotheses (Josselson, 1995).

Because, as developed below, I will be using narrative inquiry, my personal qualities, beliefs, assumptions, and judgments will influence the questions I ask. Furthermore, in exploring high-risk students' subjective experience of internal power, my experiences as a White, middle-class, professional woman, college professor, and step-mother will influence my assumptions about and interactions with participants and my understanding of their verbalized experience. Furthermore, since I have identified high-risk students as those who may be different from the mainstream and I may look like I represent the mainstream, establishing quality connections with research participants will require that I find bridges to allow connections between our different experiences. Because of our differences, the context of the study, and my focus the participants' responses to my questions may not be transferable to other students.

### *Need for Study*

As reviewed above, most research on power dynamics in the classroom focuses on influential power. Empowerment studies explore power in influential terms, not as an internal capacity, and the distinction between empowerment and internal power is not clear in the literature. To date, no one has looked at students' internal power: How do students recognize and exercise it? What teacher interactions support or detract from students' recognition of their internal power? Does students' internal power impact their learning? I want to understand how individuals experience their internal power. In particular, I am interested in high-risk students' experiences of internal power. What are their stories about their subjective experience of their internal power and what do they

think were inspirations for their recognition of internal power? Do their experiences of life as outsiders provide advantages in seeing power structures as Ladson-Billings (2000) suggests? Have they already developed self-authorship (Pizzalato, 2003) because of the challenges of being an outsider? As a college professor I have noticed that students who seem to have a strong sense of internal power are more successful than students without this sense of internal power to define themselves. How have they recognized and exercised internal power?

I want to enter into dialogue with these students to construct a shared notion of internal power. I need a methodology that can negotiate the multiple dialogical selves that the students and I bring to our dialog. As a White college-educated professional I have a predominantly privileged (Anderson & Middleton, 2005) insider status, but as a poorly educated farm girl among more sophisticated individuals, as a woman previously working in academic fields oriented to men, as a spiritual seeker in a world of people with all the answers or no questions, and as a self-identified outsider, I may share correspondences with the high-risk students I work with. Furthermore, given the position of influential power I have as these students' *interviewer*, I need a methodology that will allow me to share influential power in a meaningful way (Holstein & Gubrium, 2003): They need to be able to ask me questions as we work as a team to uncover the meaning of internal power. A narrative inquiry methodology fulfills these needs.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter I review the theoretical and experimental aspects of power and self-authorship. I include authors who have written extensively about power, about power in education, and those authors whose work elucidates the similarities and differences of internal and influential power. This literature is from critical theorist, social constructionist, and objectivist perspectives.

In the first section, I present my theoretical framework. Next I explore influential power as described in the relevant literature and then present studies in the third section that show how power is enacted in the classroom. In the fourth section I look more closely at internal power, self-authorship and clarify distinctions between internal power, inner power (Foley, 1999) and empowerment. Finally, I explore research on epistemological development that provides difficulties for self-authorship studies and provides a path to my explorations on internal power. I end the chapter with a summary.

#### *Theoretical Framework*

Although critical theory is concerned with power and empowering individuals, empowerment is an influential power type used to describe how individuals can be empowered to transform the world and overturn hegemonic social structures and regulative discourse (Ladson-Billings, 2000). From this perspective, as Foucault (1982/1994) notes, power relations cannot be escaped, they are “rooted deep in the social nexus, not a supplementary structure over and above a society whose radical effacement

one could perhaps dream of” (Foucault, p. 343). These power relations have been institutionalized by hegemonic forces in which the dominant group imposes its worldview and its will on the oppressed, “transforming the consciousness of the person prescribed to into one that conforms with the prescriber’s consciousness” (Freire, 2002, p. 47). The oppressed or outsiders, do not see themselves as Subjects<sup>1</sup> able to influence the world because there is only one legitimate worldview, the oppressors’ (Freire; Ladson-Billings, 2000). The oppressed then think that “*to be is to be like, and to be like is to be like the oppressor*” (Freire, p. 48). And, in identifying with the oppressor, they become an oppressor when they gain any influential power—today’s successful revolutionary becomes tomorrow’s oppressor.

Critical theory focuses on overcoming these hegemonic forces through praxis (Foucault, 1982/1994; Freire, 2002). I am more interested in the internal process, not an external praxis that *intends* the power to be directed toward changing the culture. Of course, as an individual changes internally, one’s outward actions may very likely change, however, there is a difference between choosing to act for one’s self and choosing to act for one’s self *in order to* change the world. Internal power is self-directed. Influential power is other directed.

However, Macedo (2002), in the *Introduction* of Freire’s seminal work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, states that the development of critical consciousness is the means

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<sup>1</sup> Foucault and Freire use the word subject, but with different meanings attributed to the word. Foucault uses the word, subject, as a person placed under authority or control of another, even oneself. Freire uses the word, subject, as one who is an agent or actor in the world as a conscious being. In this paper, I follow Freire’s lead and use a capital S, Subject, when referring to Subject as one who acts. I use a lower case s, subject, when referring to one who is acted upon.

“...by which people discover themselves and their potential as they give names to things around them. As Freire puts it, each individual wins back the right to say his or her own word, to name the world” (p. 33). This sounds like an individual exercising his or her internal power, but Freire discusses it in terms of fighting the hegemonic forces. Naming the world for the self is not the same as naming the world for others. The focus of action is different. When individuals name the world for themselves, others may notice and be interested in the names, but the individuals doing the naming are not proselytizing. When individuals are living authentically, acting from their internally created attitudes, values, and meanings, their actions and ways of seeing the world may give others permission to express their authentic selves.

In short, critical theory cannot allow for the existence of internal power. Critical theorists believe that influential power forces can only be overturned by insurgent influential powers. That is, they believe that the master’s house (Lorde, 1984)—the dominant social structure—can only be taken apart with the master’s tools: influential power. I believe that the master’s house will collapse when people recognize and exercise their internal power.

In my experience internal power is recognized by the individual and does not depend on any outside force for raising one’s consciousness. Exercising internal power is different than expressing influential or external power in which individuals construct power relations through social discourse: Influential power must be recognized by others to be effective, internal power needs only to be recognized by one’s self (Carse, 1986). A constructivist epistemology which focuses on *individuals’* meaning-making activity (Crotty, 1998) could be an ideal theoretical framework for internal power, but this

individual meaning-making does not take place in isolation from the community even though it is independent of it. Two terms, constructivism and constructionism, are often used interchangeably to describe individual or group meaning making, so I explore these concepts more deeply.

*Constructionism*, as defined by Crotty (1998), is the view that meaning is based on human practices and interactions in their world and that meaning is transmitted in a social context. Within *social constructionism* it is believed that the consciousness of people does not determine their social being, rather, their “social being determines [their] consciousness” (Crotty, p.61). Crotty considers constructivism to be an “individualistic understanding” of constructionism (p. 58). My experiences of internal and external power suggest that consciousness can determine being and being can determine consciousness, thus I rule out social constructionism. Guba and Lincoln (2005) use the term *constructivism* as a relativist ontology and a transactional and subjectivist epistemology. In their view knowledge is individually constructed *and* collective reconstructions often bring about a consensus on that meaning.

Analyzing meaning making within the tangle of construction-isms is further complicated because in learning about the world, individuals reify it. As part of the normalization process, “We tend to take ‘the sense we make of things’ to be ‘the way things are’” (Crotty, 1998, p. 59). Ortega y Gasset (as cited in Crotty, 1998) describes these inherited and normalized meanings as screens, which sound similar to the veils I describe above.

Guba and Lincoln’s (2005) use of the term constructivism is more flexible than Crotty’s distinctions between constructionism, social constructionism, and

constructivism. This increased flexibility serves my purposes since I am engaged in initial explorations of a construct whose nature is not well understood. However, it is important to keep in mind that no matter which epistemological foundation I choose, it becomes “self-validating” in the assumptions I make (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 22).

### *Influential Power*

In this section, I present Foucault’s view of power and note how power is related to dominant discourse and cultural capital. Next I explore the disciplinary uses of these types of power. I then explore how individuals’ understanding of influential power and its disciplinary uses can help these individuals empower themselves.

Influential power, like the elusive electron, exists everywhere and nowhere. Individuals infer power’s presence by examining responses to its use. Like the electron, researchers cannot simultaneously identify power’s location and its force. There is no point at which someone can say power is here, but not here. Foucault holds a relational view of power, stating “power exists only as exercised on some by others, only when it is put into action” (1982/1994, p.340).

Foucault saw power relations as being “rooted deep in the social nexus, not a supplementary structure over and above a society whose radical effacement one could perhaps dream of” (Foucault, 1982/1994, p. 343). Foucault viewed power relations as an inherent part of our social fabric that has been institutionalized into state functions. In this perspective, power is an integral part of society unable to be separated from it.

Foucault notes that power cannot be seen other than in action between beings. Power moves through the knowledge and actions of others (Foucault, 1980) and operates on the body, at the microlevel of society. Individuals can wield power, but they cannot

control its effects because of the complex nature of power relations. However, greater knowledge can often provide an upper hand in power relations. Foucault saw knowledge as “both power’s instrument and its condition of possibility” (Beaudoin, 2003, p. 29).

### *Dominant Discourse*

Power is a productive force within society, a necessary part of social interactions, a means of producing “reality, domains of objects, rituals of truth” (Foucault, 1977/1984, p. 204-205). Foucault asserts that “each society has its own regime of truth; that is, the type of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true” (1980, p. 131). This regime of truth is the accepted discourse for that society. The accepted discourse determines the norms, rules, and accepted practices for a particular society or institution. These behavioral and dialogical norms are accepted as common sense ways of being and interacting within social institutions or society (Preece, 1997). Individuals accept that the way things are is how they ought to be (Crotty, 1998). In the college classroom, for example, students from middle-class backgrounds know how to interact in expected ways in the classroom and professors are more likely to see these students as smarter and more knowledgeable about the subject matter because of the students’ knowledge of the accepted discourse (Brookfield, 2001). Bourdieu (1986) refers to this discourse knowledge as cultural capital.

### *Cultural Capital*

Cultural capital, like other forms of capital, takes time to accumulate, has the potential to produce profits, to reproduce, and has a tendency to persist (Bourdieu, 1986). Cultural capital, unlike other forms of capital, cannot be transferred; it must be embodied, assimilated, and inculcated, all of which take time and personal investment (p. 244-245).

However, cultural capital is usually acquired without any conscious effort on the part of the individual: it is transmitted by family members as part of the socialization process. Cultural capital confers on its holder a passport into society to the degree that the individual has mastered the appropriate discourse rules. Individuals who have this knowledge form can use it to assert their power. These individuals perpetuate cultural capital, and thus their power, by continuing to define what is normal and acceptable behavior in particular contexts and denying entrance to those who do not obey these rules. Foucault calls this process of defining the appropriate or normal behaviors as normalization (1980).

### *Discipline*

Normalization is one of Foucault's three *techniques of power* used in discipline: observation, normalization, and examination. Many of Foucault's (1980) ideas on discipline and observation came from Bentham's idea of the Panopticon, the ultimate observation structure in which a single observer can see all prisoners, each in a single cell, unable to see each other. The advantage of the Panopticon is that prisoners never know whether they are being watched or not and begin to accept that they are always being watched. Foucault saw this internalization of observation and discipline as a key feature of observation's success as a disciplinary power. Those who are observing use their observations to identify those individuals who engage in behavior outside the accepted discourse. Those who engage in such behaviors are subjected to normalization.

In Foucault's process of normalization, power is more covertly wielded. By defining what is normal, what is the accepted discourse, society exerts power over those whose behaviors do not fall within the boundaries of normal. Foucault (1977/1984) saw

five distinct operations of normalization: comparison, differentiation, hierarchization (in terms of value), homogenation, and exclusion. A field of individuals is compared, differences from the norm or optimal level of behavior are noted and those that are closest to the optimal behavior are given more value. Individuals are pushed to conform to expected behaviors, and those who don't or are unable to meet the expectations are excluded or marginalized (Foucault, 1977/1984). Those who have accepted the dominant discourse see this marginalization as how things must be. Individuals are inclined to accept the status quo as the way events should transpire (Crotty, 1998).

Examination, the third technique of power in the *art of punishment* and a way of expressing influential power, is a combination of normalizing judgment and the observing hierarchy (Foucault, 1977/1984). Foucault sees examination as the heart of discipline. It establishes truth, imposes power/knowledge relations, and requires extensive rituals. Examinations make visible what was hidden, it requires the subject to be seen. It then documents the findings in archives, and labels them as particular types of "cases," the ultimate objectification or subjection of human beings.

Gore (1998) and Manke (1997) explored Foucault's disciplines in micro-level analyses in the classroom and found that they are an integral part of the education system. Foucault sees the education system as the "political means of maintaining or modifying the appropriateness of discourses with the knowledge and power they bring with them" (1971/1984, p. 96). Freire (2002) sees discipline similarly, as oppressors imposing their will on the oppressed, "transforming the consciousness of the person prescribed to into one that conforms to the prescriber's consciousness" (p. 47). Like Foucault, Freire sees that the oppressed internalize the oppressor's consciousness or discourse and are

subordinated to it: They lose their ability to name the world for themselves. With the loss of their sense of self, the oppressed become fearful of thinking freely. The oppressed think that “*to be is to be like, and to be like is to be like the oppressor*” (Freire, 2002, p. 48). In Foucault’s terms, they realize that they have to learn and adopt the dominant discourse in order to join the culture of power. To pose an alternate discourse is to remain in relation to it as another form of influential power. As noted above, an alternate discourse would still be a part of the social fabric rooted in influential power relations.

Freire (2002) notes that teachers regulate the way that the world “enters into” students (p. 76) in what Freire refers to as the banking method of education: teachers take away students’ normal desire to actively learn information by filling students, as passive vessels, with knowledge that maintains the dominant discourse and helps students adapt to the world created by the oppressors, that is, those who know and use the dominant discourse. Having passively received knowledge, students grow into citizens who do not see themselves as Subjects able to influence the world. They do not see their oppression as a “limiting situation which they can transform” (Freire, p. 49), but rather as a world closed to them.

### *Empowerment*

An important focus of Freire’s (2002) work is empowering the oppressed through liberatory education. Freire believes that the only way that the oppressed can emerge from their oppressed state is to critically examine their reality, confront it, and take action upon it: mere reflection is not enough. Action must be taken in order to transform reality. The oppressed must develop what Freire calls *conscientização* (in English, conscientization or critical consciousness). Freire’s translator, M.B. Ramos, states, in a

translator's note, that *conscientização* refers to “the process of learning to perceive social, political and economic contradictions—and of taking action against the oppressive elements of reality” (Freire, p. 35). This action taking is a form of empowerment, a reclaiming of one's influential power.

People also use the term empowerment to describe one person or group empowering another. Leaders empower their followers by sharing various types of influential power: content knowledge, dominant discourse knowledge, or choices in procedure. For example, a teacher can let students choose what assigned reading section they will discuss in class, what type test they will take, or when they will take their lecture break. Teachers and other education leaders often refer to these acts as empowering students (Frymier, Shulman, & Houser, 1996).

Critical theorists and feminists are concerned with empowering individuals. They want to empower individuals so that these empowered individuals can transform the world and overturn hegemonic social structures. I am more interested in the internal process, not an external praxis that *intends* the power to be directed toward changing the culture. Of course, with any consciousness raising experience, one's outward actions will very likely change, however, there is a difference between choosing to act for one's self and choosing to act for one's self *in order to* change the world. I return to this idea of empowerment and discuss its role in the classroom in my discussion of internal power.

#### *Classroom power enactments*

Wrong, building on Bertrand Russell's oft-quoted power definition, defines power as the “capacity of some persons to produce intended and foreseen effects on others” (1979/1995, p. 2). In this conceptualization of influential power, power is held by

individuals rather than as Foucault describes, being expressed in relationships. Tan (2004) refers to the type of power that can be held as sovereign power. In many classrooms, both the teacher and students view the teacher as the person who has all the power (Delpit, 1988; Tan, 2004), although Tabulawa (2004) argues that students have more power than is commonly thought and Alpert (1991) provides observations on students' expressions of power through passive resistance. Teachers use their sovereign power in the classroom to direct students' attention to curriculum content and processes. In this section I first review how teachers use the sovereign power they hold and then review how they use Foucault's techniques of power. I conclude this section with teachers' implicit power usage.

### *Sovereign Power*

French and Raven (1968) describe five types of power that teachers hold: coercive, reward, legitimate, referent, and expert. McCroskey and Richmond (1983) extend French and Raven's work into the classroom. McCroskey and Richmond define coercive power as the ability to influence other's action with threat of punishment. They note that the strength of a teacher's coercive power is dependent on the student's perception of the teacher's probability of using the power, the extent of the negative consequences expected by the student, and the strength of peer pressure to not comply with the teacher's influence attempt. Reward power is based on the teacher's ability to provide something positive or withdraw something negative. McCroskey and Richmond note that it has constraints similar to that of coercive power. Legitimate power comes from the formal authority given to a particular role, teacher, for example, by a social institution. Authority is a form of legitimate power. Referent power comes from an

individual's personal characteristics. The individual holds referent power over others to the degree that others want to do things for this individual. Finally, expert power is held to the degree that others see an individual as being knowledgeable about the information. Richmond, McCroskey and their colleagues, in an experiment series, show that how teachers use these power types influences students' cognitive and affective learning (McCroskey & Richmond, 1983; Richmond et al., 1987). When students perceive teachers using prosocial power, such as reward power, students have higher levels of affective and cognitive learning: In classes in which students perceive teachers as using more coercive power, students have lower cognitive and affective learning levels (McCroskey & Richmond, 1983; Richmond et al., 1987). How teachers use their power in the classroom impacts students' learning process.

*Transference.* Another way in which teachers hold power or even increase their power is through transference (Baumlin & Weaver, 2000). Baumlin and Weaver contend that students project onto their teachers the students' own ideas about authority figures garnered from their experience with their parents, other teachers, and other authority figures. While transference is commonly talked about within the realm of therapy, it is seldom discussed as a part of classroom power relations. Baumlin and Weaver note that while therapists attempt to help the patient interrupt the transference process, educators use transference to increase their power, often by using teacher immediacy cues.

Immediacy cues are nonverbal behaviors such as leaning towards the student, smiling, making eye contact, and so on that increase psychological closeness. Through teacher immediacy cues, teachers increase their referent power by encouraging students to increase their liking of the teacher (Plax et al., 1986). Baumlin and Weaver contend

that teachers also increase their cloak of expert power through the process of transference by showing themselves as the all-powerful knower, which, as I describe later, may suppress students' epistemological development. Furthermore, the process of transference increases a teacher's legitimate authority because students project their parents' authority onto the teacher. This process encourages students to remain passive learners in the face of authoritative knowers. Baumlin and Weaver, following Freire (2002), suggest that teachers need to be teacher-students and to see the students as student-teachers. With this consciousness teachers are no longer the only holders of knowledge in the classroom; they can empower students-as-teachers by sharing and allowing varieties of knowledge and discourses types.

*Morality of Regulative Discourse.* Buzzelli and Johnston (2001) look at teachers' power usage from a moral perspective in instructional and regulative discourse. Buzzelli and Johnston see regulative discourse as having an inherent moral nature because it tells students what behaviors and attitudes are and are not allowed in the classroom, and thus, society. Through regulative discourse, teachers help students create and regulate their social relations and social identities (Buzzelli & Johnston). Through actively regulating students, teachers hope that students will learn how to regulate themselves. These thought and knowledge normalization systems are governed by social rules that determine what social boundaries are acceptable (Gutting, 2003). Thus, teachers, as "institutional agent[s] invested with authority" (Tan, 2004, p.655) establish hegemony by defining what behaviors, attitudes, beliefs, and values are normal. Delpit (1988, 2006b) refers to this hegemony as a culture of power. Thus the normalization process prepares students for

participation in the dominant culture (Buzzelli & Johnston) and is intended to assure students continued consent to it (Tan).

### *Techniques of Power*

Freire (2002), like Foucault (1977/1984), sees educational systems as regulators of how knowledge about the world is deposited into students. Gore (1998) distinguishes eight different power techniques, based on Foucault's work, that teachers use to determine these discourses: surveillance, normalization, exclusion, classification, distribution, individualization, totalization, and regulation. Gore describes these techniques as follows.

Teachers use *surveillance* when they watch students to determine if students are following the norms or standards of behavior. Even when students are not being watched, there is the threat of observation by those in authority. Students never know when the teacher will step back into the classroom.

In the process called *normalization* students are compared to one another. Norms for behaviors, attitudes, and knowledge have been established and students are observed to see if they comply with the dominant discourse.

Students who don't meet the mark on examinations are often *excluded* by means of tracking programs. Those who are "different" are sent to special education classrooms. Students whose behaviors do not fall within the norm are sent to the hallway, the library, or some other separated space. The information that the teacher chooses to exclude constructs notions about what is accepted as truth.

Through the process of *classifying* student groups or labeling them, teachers often objectify students. Students are also ranked based on grades.

Teachers *distribute* and arrange students in the classroom to optimize the teacher's control. Teachers also determine how much time students can spend on which activities in the classroom. Distribution of space and time are social control forms that can be invisible to those who are controlled and these forms of control are seldom challenged.

Through the process of *individualization* people can be objectified through examination and classification.

Through *totalization*, teachers give groups a collective character and repudiate important differences between individuals.

As noted above, *regulation* by teachers determines what can and cannot be discussed in the classroom.

Gore and Lefstein (2002), contend that teachers still use these methods to control student behavior because classroom power relationships have stayed the same despite changing ideas about pedagogy. For example, teachers still determine the room layout to control student movement and interactions (Manke, 1997), teachers decide which topics students will discuss and the rules for those discussions (Candela, 1999), often the teacher can move freely about the room while students must remain in their seats (Delph-Janiurek, 2000), and, perhaps most importantly to students, teachers determine how they will assess student learning (Tan, 2004).

### *Implicit Influential Power and Veiling*

Delpit states, "Those with power are frequently least aware of—or least willing to acknowledge—its existence. Those with less power are often most aware of its existence" (1988, p.283). Delpit asserts that people who belong to the power culture,

middle-class Whites, are uncomfortable in making “any rules or expectations explicit” (1988, p. 284) because it goes against their freedom and autonomy for all principles. These middle-class Whites, as teachers, will avoid explicitly expressing their own power in the classroom for fear that expressing their power will disempower students (Delpit). Consequently, a White teacher might express his or her power implicitly, asking the children if they wouldn’t all like to sit down, when the teacher wants them to sit down now. Delpit (1988, 2006a, 2006b) notes that Black teachers are much more comfortable owning their power and expressing it explicitly. Black teachers will tell their students to sit down now instead of asking indirectly. Implicit power expressions are more covert, relying on the culture of power’s expectations and normalization techniques (regulatory discourse). Those students who do not hear the implicit demand within the stated request will fail to heed this technique of power. As Tannen (1994) points out, the difference in communication styles works to the disadvantage of those individuals who are “stigmatized” in our society. Teachers in the culture of power perceive this failure to heed as a rejection of the power of culture because the teachers don’t understand the cultural communication style differences.

When individuals don’t know the rules for a culture, when they aren’t clear on how to present themselves, they have more difficulty being powerful and being perceived as powerful (Delpit, 1988, 2006b). When teachers express power implicitly, students who don’t know the rules, and therefore lack cultural capital (Bourdieu (1986) will be confused and find it more difficult to learn the rules. Thus, White middle-class teachers’ implicit influential power expressions make it more difficult for non-White students to learn the rules so that these students can be powerful or successful. These non-White

students are at a disadvantage within the culture of power in which they compete for grades, money, and power.

*Power Hierarchies.* In a hierarchically structured institution or society, those at the hierarchy's top endeavor to exert their power on those below them. In the classrooms, teachers direct students; in schools, administrators direct teachers. Individuals at the hierarchy's top attempt to rule by controlling influential power and shared resources. They control the energy flow and information (Anderson & Carter, 1999) by making rules that allow them to maintain their power, often under the guise of care or protection (Iltan, 1996).

Much regulative discourse and expressions of power are expressed through bodily behavior in the classroom (Delph-Janiurek, 2000). Delph-Janiurek notes that the teacher, not the student, has the right to move around in the classroom. Good students are expected to exhibit listening behavior. Teachers either do or do not call on students or use other body language to restrict the amount of student interaction or contribution to subject discussion. In the classroom, Delph-Janiurek found that teachers often structure power in one of two ways that he characterized as masculine or feminine. He noted that women were more apt to use what he called *feminine polyphonic* modes of discourse and that men were more apt to use what he called *masculine monologic* interactions. Teachers institute more power sharing in polyphonic discourse by allowing more speakers, using less formality in taking turns speaking, and through encouraging more collaboration among speakers. Teachers structure power in a more monologic manner by dominating the speaking time, allowing fewer other speakers, and instituting more formal methods

for student interaction. Delph-Janiurek also notes that monologic interactions are more competitive.

The oppressed, then, believe that dominators rule by the dominator's innate power, resources, or control. However, dominators rule because the oppressed give dominators power when the oppressed assume the submissive role. For example, in order to be a good student and stay in school, an individual must agree to follow the school rules, the dominant discourse. Those who choose not to follow the rules can quit or be expelled (Tan, 2004). Those who agree to play by the rules agree to follow the rules that allow the powerful to remain powerful. People play such games in the hopes that they, too, might some day be among the powerful if they play well enough (Carse, 1986). Individuals may think that they have to agree to the rules in order to live, that they do not have the freedom to do otherwise. Individuals believe that they must do well enough in school or college so they can get a good job, and then they must agree to live by the employment rules so they can have a good life. Carse (1986) believes that individuals remain unaware of their freedom to accept or reject these rules because after individuals have chosen roles and been selected for "play" by others in agreement with the game rules (employment, student, etc), there is an expectation that they will continue playing.

*Veiling.* When college students play the *good student game*, staying up until 3:00 a.m. working on term papers, they often veil (Carse, 1986) from themselves their power to choose. They believe that if they do not finish the paper or write it so well, then life as they know it will be over, that all the time that they have spent on the course would be wasted, and that it is important in life's grand scheme. Individuals attach significance to such events in order to make them meaningful, to maintain their importance. Individuals

veil their power to help themselves be successful in society. If they don't veil their power, they may find it more difficult to follow normalized cultural rules like showing deference to those at the hierarchy's top. People's behavior is construed as improper when they do not follow obligatory, often unconscious, social customs. For example, notice the discomfort many people feel when a person with developmental disorders fails to follow social mores. When individuals don't follow the rules, they are ostracized. When a student gives power to his or her teacher, the individual does so to enable successful play in the education game (Carse). Yet, individuals often become trapped in these veils, forgetting that they have created the veils to motivate themselves to play the school or employment game *seriously* (Carse). When this happens, individuals feel helpless, unable to bring about changes in the system in which they find themselves.

As described above, this normalization process begins at birth, continues in the classroom, and lasts a lifetime. These power relations are an enduring characteristic of classroom interactions. Understanding 'how the world is' is required for success in the world. Looking at these understandings through the critical theorist's lens brings hegemonic power into view. Looking at these understandings beyond that lens brings internal power into view.

### *Internal power*

In this section I review the literature that led to my development of internal power and then compare internal power and self-authorship. I then review the literature on students labeled high-risk and their development of self-authorship. Finally, I explore what role epistemological development may play in these two constructs.

As described in the introduction, internal power is recognizing one's power to define one's self and one's world and to create and alter the meaning of one's experiences, attitudes, values, and meanings without accepting limits from others or being defined by them. Internal power does not oppose or resist other people's actions or perceptions and it is not about trying to influence or control others (Carse, 1986). Internal power's external expressions involve acting authentically, true to one's self. Such actions may inspire others, but its purpose is internally directed. Internal power is the power of my existence, the "I am that I am," which is commonly taken to mean "I am complete unto myself." It is similar to a description Lorde uses to describe erotic power, "the assertion of the life force ... creative energy empowered" (1984, p. 55).

Nietzsche writes about an evolution of the three phases of the expression of the will to power—in master morality power is expressed directly as domination, in slave morality power is exercised indirectly to create values, and in the overman (*übermensch*), power is a process of self-overcoming, revaluation of values, and creative expression (1877/1989). Nietzsche notes that those who are oppressed cannot express their power directly, and so must subvert their power. I believe that this subversion of one's internal power is what I refer to as veiling and that self-overcoming is akin to expressing internal power.

This notion of veiling comes from Carse (1986) who sees the process of self-veiling as "a contradictory act – a free suspension of our freedom" (p. 17). Individuals engage in veiling, says Carse, to maintain a competitive spirit, to test their (influential) power against others' (influential) power. When individuals look at how they have accepted how the world is, and then work on letting these assumptions go to see how the

world really is, they begin to remove their perceptual veils. When individuals remove veils that they have created, such as the importance a situation holds, individuals begin to recognize their internal power in that situation. In the above example, the student can be driven by the paper's importance to forego other needs, sleep for example, to meet the created goals of finishing the paper, completing college with a specific GPA, getting the desired job, and so on. When individuals recognize that at each step they are choosing to move in a specific direction, when they recognize their choices' power each moment, then they begin to realize their internal power. When individuals realize that they can choose to play any particular life game or not, when they begin to realize that social power dynamics are veiled in some manner, they increase their internal power. When individuals recognize or remember that the powers at play in the hierarchy are merely influential powers, then they increase their internal power.

Foucault, as noted above, sees power only as exercised by one person on another. Freire alludes to internal power in his critical consciousness discussions, yet directs this energy to transform society through praxis, empowering others, making it a form of influential power. Only a few philosophers (Epictetus, trans. 2004; Carse, 1986) distinguish between dominating (influential) power (*pouvoir*) and the power of being (*puissances*) (DeLeuze & Guittari, 1980/1987; Lash, 2006), or what I call internal power. From an experimental perspective, only Foley (1999), in her qualitative dissertation, makes distinctions between power-over (like influential power), power-with (like empowerment), power-to (like self-efficacy) and inner power (not quite like internal power).

Foley (1999) initially describes inner power as “the internal sense of strength . . . akin to centering” (p.108). Later, she talks about it as that which “enfolds from the very core of being . . . emanating from an amorphous internal system” (p. 211). Foley compares internal power to spiritual or mystical powers. She clearly views inner power as different from any type of influential power, which she refers to as power-over. Yet, she also writes about how inner power can be used to overcome influential power in the external world, to have strength in the face of adversity and to persevere in unbearable circumstances. Like Freire and others, she recognizes internal power, but then discusses it in terms of influential power as if it could be used to overcome influential power. Carse provides a clear distinction on this point: “I am not strong because I can force others to do what I wish *as a result of my play with them*, but because I can allow them to do what they wish *in the course of my play with them*” (p. 39). Carse states that he uses the word *strong* because he wants to contrast these different types of power. I use the term internal power so as to compare it with externally directed influential power. An expression of my internal power is choosing to act for oneself, not against others. It is not intended to change the world, it is, however, intended to change my world. The world of those around me may change when I am freely living my authentic life. If I refuse to see myself as a slave, no external force can enslave me.

This brings me to Lorde’s famous quote, “For the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house” (1984, p. 112). In her essay of the same name, Lorde uses this quote to express how patriarchal tools are used to divide and conquer. However, I see these words in a different light. I see the main patriarchal tool to be influential power. Influential power will never take down the hegemonic hierarchical house of the master.

The master's house will collapse when there are no slaves to support it, when people are aware of their internal power and act on it.

As Foucault notes, influential power operates on peoples' bodies. Influential power must be continually exerted in order to control the bodies of those it would oppress (Carse, 1986). Influential power cannot control the thoughts, attitudes, beliefs, and values of the body it controls (Epictetus). For example, when Othello wants to know Iago's thoughts, Iago responds that even if Othello held Iago's heart in his hand, Othello would still not know Iago's thoughts. Epictetus clarifies this difference between internal and influential power:

Of things, some are in our power, and others are not. In our power are opinion, movement towards a thing, desire, aversion, turning from a thing; and in a word, whatever are our acts. Not in our power are the body, property, reputation, offices (magisterial power), and in a word, whatever are not our own acts. And the things in our power are by nature free, not subject to restraint or hindrance; but the things not in our power are weak, slavish, subject to restraint, in the power of others. (Epictetus, ¶ 587)

When individuals realize that influential power can only dominate other influential power forms, but not internal power, they experience their internal power.

Carse (1986) acknowledges that many people remain unaware of the freedom and strength of their internal power. He believes that there are three explanations for this:

- After people have chosen roles, such as doctors, graduate students, or generals, and been selected by others in agreement with a particular discourse, there is an expectation that they will continue to play by the rules of that discourse.
- People want to succeed in reaching the highest possible rank or title. Because people become so focused on success, they begin to "believe that every move they make they must make" (p. 13).

- People believe that they must win or else life is meaningless or impossible.

Carse notes that some games are life or death matters, yet he contends that an individual still has choice whether to take up a role or not: “Certainly the price for refusing it is high, but that there is a price at all points to the fact that the oppressors themselves acknowledge that even the weakest of their subjects must *agree* to be oppressed” (1986, p. 14, italics in original). When individuals unveil their internal power, they make choices about how they will act in the world, rather than merely reacting to outside events.

I view internal power as a construction, a self-construction, that does not depend on any outside force for raising one’s consciousness. This is not to say that people form their thoughts in isolation, but rather, that the ability to choose one’s meaning is the ultimate power that provides the ability to live authentically in the world. Several people can experience the same event, but form different meanings of that event. Epictetus’s master saw Epictetus as a Roman slave. Epictetus, however, saw himself as a Greek and a philosopher. Despite the limited influential power that Epictetus had, he chose the meaning of his life. The world is filled with people who choose not to let other people define them, who choose their own meaning of life, who choose their own path, no matter the external influential power situation. I want to know how they found their path to their internal power. The next section briefly discusses constructs that may be related to internal power, but aren’t explored in this study. Then I discuss a construct related to internal power that may shed more light on how individuals learn to recognize their internal power.

### *Other Constructs*

Internal power may be related to constructs other than self-authorship, but time and space limitations preclude my exploration of them beyond the few paragraphs that follow. For example, internal power might be related to *emotional intelligence*, a construct popularized by Goleman (1997), but first explored by Salovey and Mayer in 1990. Salovey and Mayer defined emotional intelligence as “the subset of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one’s own and others’ feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one’s thinking and actions” (1990, p. 189). Self-awareness is a primary foundation for emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1997). Recognition of the veils individuals use in social intercourse requires awareness of self and others. Within the construct of emotional intelligence, the focus of awareness is on emotions. The scope of awareness in recognizing one’s internal power is larger and contains awareness of one’s thought processes, choices, and meaning making. Future research on possible connections here may be fruitful.

Because internal power is directed inward, it might be thought to be similar to McCombs’ (1989) construct, *internal locus of control* or de Charms’ (1977) concept of *origins*, people who are originators of their actions (as opposed to *pawns* who act because others make them). These constructs focus on where individuals’ control is located, inside or outside the person, rather than individuals’ ability to define the meaning of their world. However, individuals who are able to define their own attitudes, values, and meanings are better able to make decisions (internally) so that their actions will support who they are.

Gardner (2006) suggests that instead of one type of intelligence, as measured by traditional IQ tests, there are *multiple intelligences*: linguistic, musical, logical-mathematical, kinesthetic, spatial, intrapersonal and interpersonal. According to Gardner, an “intelligence is a computational capacity” in one of these seven, and perhaps other areas. However, internal power is not a computational capacity. It is a recognition of one’s ability to define one’s self and one’s world, to assign meaning to one’s experiences, attitudes, and values.

Another related concept is self-efficacy (Bandura, 1994, 2000). However, this construct focuses on people’s ability to provide a successful outcome. Internal power has the focus on the inner world of the self, not on consequences in the external world.

#### *Self-Authorship*

A construct similar to internal power is self-authorship. Kegan, who first introduced the self-authorship concept in the literature, sees self-authorship as an internal identity formation “that can coordinate, integrate, act upon, or invent values, beliefs, convictions, generalizations, ideals, abstractions, interpersonal loyalties, and intrapersonal states” (1994, p. 185). Kegan views this ability’s development to be tied to individuals’ cognitive or epistemological development.

In epistemological development’s early stages, individuals see authority figures as the knowledge source (Perry 1968/1999) and that knowledge as absolute (Perry; Baxter Magolda, 1998). They then move towards relativism (Perry; Belenky, Clinchy, Tarule, & Golberger, 1986) and realize that knowledge is not always as clear-cut as they first thought. Finally, they become aware of the context’s importance (Baxter Magolda, 1999a) in forming ideas about the world and are able to maintain a *commitment within*

*relativism* perspective (Perry). At this last stage, individuals construct their world knowledge within themselves. Individuals cannot engage in self-authorship, according to Kegan and Baxter Magolda's definition, until they reach this more advanced reasoning stage in which they construct meaning within themselves.

Self-authorship is not only a level of epistemological development, it is also related to intrapersonal and interpersonal development (Baxter Magolda, 1999a). When individuals rely on external forces as the makers of meaning, their sense of self and others is intertwined with these external forces. As individuals begin to construct their own meanings, they also form and make their own judgments based on their values and meanings (Baxter Magolda, 1999b, 2001). Identities based on internal values will be stronger and more lasting because they are not based on externally changing contexts.

Baxter Magolda states that self-authorship's goal is empowerment, to overcome domination (1999a). At higher epistemological development levels, individuals question and challenge knowledge sources, including knowledge promulgated by the dominant culture. Self-authorship is "inherent in both the process and the intended outcome of this type [critical theory] of education" (p. 19). This self-authorship description is similar to influential power, not internal power. Yet, as individuals in Baxter Magolda's studies develop these internal ways of knowing, self-authorship, they find a sense of their own power, what I call internal power. One respondent in Baxter Magolda's study says, "I believe I am the author of my life. I can make decisions right now that can change it in any direction. [That's a] tremendous amount of power; *external influence pales in comparison*" (Baxter Magolda, 1999a, p.340, italics mine).

Self-authorship and internal power are similar in that both focus on individuals' ability to construct their own meaning and define themselves. While internal power and self-authorship development may lead to individuals taking action, neither construct focuses on agency, as defined by Bandura (2000), as the goal. "Self-authorship differs from agency because it is not about behavior; it differs from self-efficacy because it is not about self-confidence. Self-authorship is about the cognitive process people use to make meaning" (Creamer & Laughlin, 2005, p.14).

Self-authorship, in Kegan and Baxter Magolda's work, is different from internal power in that self-authorship is reliant on achieving certain epistemological development levels. Until individuals are able to be contextual knowers and use reflective thinking, they are not able to self-author. In early reports of Baxter Magolda's longitudinal study, she saw epistemological development as "inextricably linked" (1999a, p. 6) to self-authorship development, but in later reports she turns to a more holistic view and takes into greater consideration the social and individual contexts in which an individual finds him or herself (2004). Internal power is not dependent on reaching epistemological development levels. Self-authorship's goal "is to empower people to overcome domination" (Baxter Magolda, 1999a, p.19), while experiencing one's internal power is based on recognizing power dynamics in society, removing the veils that hide one's own power, and consciously holding one's own choices and strengths within that social structure. Internal power is not an influential power that can be used to overcome another force. Internal power is not other directed; it is self-directed.

### *High-Risk Students, Internal Power, and Self-Authorship*

Pizzolato (2003, 2004) found that high-risk college students were more likely to develop self-authorship at younger ages than were the college students in Baxter Magolda's longitudinal study (1998, 1999b, 2001). Pizzolato found that early *provocative experiences* challenged her students' equilibrium and pushed them towards self-authorship before and during applying to college, while Baxter Magolda found that less than 2% of the college students in her study developed self-authorship before leaving college. Baxter Magolda (2001/2004) points out that students in her study, primarily high-privileged, did not move toward self-authorship until they were at a crossroads in their lives, until they were at a point in their lives in which they could not use externally made formulas for decision making and were pushed hard enough or were unhappy enough that they needed to make changes in their decision-making. Pizzolato (2003) suggests that perhaps students in Baxter Magolda's study were high-privileged students who did not need to develop self-authorship earlier because their privilege protected them from the challenging situations that may spur self-authorship development.

Pizzolato (2003) proposes an alternative epistemological development model to explain these discrepant results between her study and Baxter Magolda's. In her model, there are two epistemological development paths instead of one. One path is for high-privileged individuals as described by Baxter Magolda, and one for low-privileged individuals. This model only describes behavior; it does not provide a mechanism for predicting behavior. However, in a follow up study, Pizzolato (2004) finds that the students in her study were losing their self-authorship abilities as they struggled with marginalizing experiences dealing with their racial identity and academic ability. Her

model doesn't address these differences in epistemological development. It is not clear whether the high-risk students in Pizzolato's studies had exhibited self-authorship or internal power.

Pizzolato (2003) points out that the high-risk students in her study were primarily minority students. Ladson-Billings' (2000) work suggests that minority individuals, like those in Pizzolato's study, have an *outsider* status. Outsiders have the advantage of looking into mainstream society with a *wide-angle* lens because of their outsider perspective. Minority students may have available a perspective that allows them to *see* the social power structure more clearly than their White counterparts as suggested by Ladson-Billings (2000). Outsiders can observe more easily mainstream power dynamics, learn how to work outside or around them, and avoid being seduced by them. Perhaps outsiders are better able to be conscious of their own internal power because the power hierarchy is clearer to them. Alternatively, they have to continually hold a double-consciousness (Ladson-Billings) of outsider and insider identity. Many high-privileged Whites do not need, nor indeed have, this double-consciousness, thus insiders remain unaware of the choices available.

At the same time, as Delpit (1988, 2006b) points out, these outsiders might have difficulty learning mainstream culture's implicit power rules that they need to be successful in that world. Discerning the power structure is different from knowing the rules needed to move through the structure. Does a teacher's covert or implicit power usage in normalization techniques delegitimize high-risk students' internal power or self-authorship? Does a teacher's use of these techniques of power require students to veil

their own power so that the students can adapt to hegemonic influences? Does entry into and success in mainstream culture require veiling?

### *Epistemological Development*

Despite Baxter Magolda's (2004) downplaying the role epistemological development plays in developing self-authorship in her later works, self-authorship, for Baxter Magolda, is based on epistemological development: In 1988 Baxter Magolda and Porterfield developed a Measure of Epistemological Reflection (MER), which she updated in 2001 to reflect a constructivist epistemology (as reported in Baxter Magolda, 2001). She used the 1988 MER to collect data for the longitudinal study that was the basis of most of her later works (1999a, 1999b, 1999c, 2000). The MER consists of open-ended questions asking participants about their decision-making process. Participants' answers to these questions determined Baxter Magolda and Pizzolato's assessments of the participants' epistemological level, and thus, self-authorship development.

Chandler, Hallett, and Sokol (2002) pose serious questions regarding epistemological development studies because multiple studies claim that individuals are going through the same epistemological development stages at various ages: preschool and primary years, pre-adolescent and adolescent years, and during college and post-college years. Clearly, as Chandler et al. point out, not all of these claims can be correct. Chandler and his colleagues offer multiple possibilities for this strange set of epistemological development results based on this research: early onset, late onset, recursion, and suppression. The arguments for suppression are most relevant to this study.

The suppression argument focuses on teachers' failure to support students' epistemological development. In teachers' efforts to maintain authority in the classroom, teachers may support students' view that the teacher is the sole source of objective knowledge. Walton (2000) studied teachers and students' (grades K-4) epistemological expressions and found that teachers used epistemological expressions primarily to issue indirect threats and commands (implicit power expressions). Students also used epistemological expressions to regulate discourse (Walton). Regulative discourse is a form of influential power (Gore, 1998) and part of the hegemonic influence (Tan, 2004) that may be detrimental to students' sense of internal power development.

#### *Summary*

Foucault (1977/1984) describes power as being relational, only evident when it is exercised on some by others. Freire (2002) focused on power's ability to transform the world through empowering individuals through education. Gore (1998), Manke (1997), Delph-Januriek (2000) and others explore power in the classroom and McCroskey, Richmond, and their colleagues (1983) found that how teachers use their influential and sovereign powers affects student learning. Buzzelli and Johnston (2001) directed our attention to the moral nature of teaching students the regulative discourse for their society, while Tan saw this use of power as a way to perpetuate the unequal power positions that people have in our society. Normalization techniques (Gore; Manke), regulatory discourse (Buzzelli & Johnston), transference (Baumlin & Weaver, 2000) and teachers' implicit power use (Delpit, 1988; Walton, 2000) lead students to be passive knowers rather than active knowers.

Against this backdrop of influential power, I seek to explore and clarify the definition of a different power type—internal power—that may help some students integrate information more effectively. Internal power is directed inward and does not seek to close or limit the worlds of others. Some research suggests that students labeled high-risk may have more insights into internal power and self-authorship. I explore, with these students, some of these students' stories about internal power using a narrative inquiry methodology. It is my desire to explore how teachers might help students recognize and exercise their internal power.

There is little research on internal power, thus, initial research on internal power needs to be exploratory in nature. There is also little research on self-authorship (Baxter Magolda, 1999a, 1999b, 2000; Pizzolato, 2003, 2004), which may be related to individuals' sense of internal power. In self-authorship studies there are unexplained differences—between students labeled high-risk as compared to high-privileged—in students' ability to define themselves independently from others' definitions of self (Pizzolato, 2003; Baxter Magolda, 1999a, 1999b). Furthermore, high-risk students' ability for self-authorship decreased during their first year of college (Pizzolato, 2004). How or why might this occur?

The nature of internal power has not been explored. In addition, research on regulative discourse and self-authorship provides an unclear picture of whether there is a relation between self-authorship's intrapersonal dimension, teacher's use of influential power, and internal power. This study would begin to address some of these research areas. Given this research's exploratory nature, grounded theory is an appropriate methodology for developing theories about these constructs. I plan to use narrative

inquiry because I want to hear and understand high-risk students' stories about their internal power and self-authorship experiences.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

I wanted to hear the stories people have about the times that they were able to set aside hegemonic influences and go boldly forth to live their lives. How do people recognize and exercise internal power? How do people become the authorities of their own lives despite the influences of others? How does a person construct this internally powered self that is not directed against the will of others, but chooses actions for itself? How was a Roman slave, like Epictetus, able to develop a sense of his internal power when he was at the mercy of those who controlled his body? How did Harriett Tubman go from slave to abolitionist? How do people throw off the shackles of the dominant discourse? How do they come to trust and listen to their inner voice? How do they find their voices amidst the background noise of everyday life?

Narrative inquiry was an ideal process for learning more about internal power from students labeled high-risk. Narrative inquiry identifies the research participants as the experts. The participants were not passive vessels, from which I could take information, nor could they present to me their experiences as finished information packages (Holstein & Gubrium, 2003). The participants and I constructed meanings about their interpretations of internal power. Listening to their stories with an empathic attitude allowed me to understand their internal power experiences over time and in different contexts. It provided me with an over the shoulder view of how they construct meaning in their lives. Narrative inquiry takes a Platonic perspective to knowing which

seeks to decrease the distance and boundaries between the knower and the known (Josselson, 1995). This is especially important in this study in which I wanted to overcome the possible differences between research participants and myself so that we could find common ground on which to connect through empathic knowing.

Narrative inquiry views individuals as non-unitary (Bloom, 2002) and focuses on connecting with participants' dialogic selves: the dialog within the self and their dialog with the world (Josselson, 1995). One has multiple selves who can relate as agent or target in a multicultural world: I am a mainstream agent, I am an outsider target, I am a White agent, I am a female target, and so on (Middleton & Anderson, 2005). In the same way, research participants have multiple dialogical selves. Narrative inquiry allowed me to collect rich and thick descriptions of internal power from these various selves (Bloom, 2002) and allowed me to give voice to those selves that are usually silenced (Charmaz, 2005; Patton, 2002). I use the term dialog, rather than dialectic, to bring attention to the co-constructed meanings and the shared control of the communication process. Dialectic, as used in traditional philosophy, refers to a search for Truth (Hunnex, 1986), and I was looking for a local and mutual truth created by myself and my co-researchers.

### *Ethical Considerations*

The ethical considerations for qualitative research go beyond a carefully written informed consent form approved by the Human Subjects Review Board (Kleinsasser, 2000) and preserving anonymity (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). I engaged in intimate dialogs with my co-researchers. In the process of working to understand high-risk students' internal power experiences and their perception of college classroom power structures, I was in the midst of "uncovering the complexities of difference—race, class,

gender” (Ladson-Billings, 2000, p. 270). I needed to remain sensitive to these differences, especially since I was in a position of influential power as interviewer, graduate student, and professor. Additionally, most of the students I worked with belonged to ethnic groups different than my own. Most ethnic groups experience oppression rather than the privileges of being White (Anderson & Middleton, 2005). I needed to continually establish my legitimacy: students wanted to know what I had been through, what I had experienced, and looked for evidence that I really did care (Ladson-Billings).

One way to be more sensitive to these issues was to be more aware of my own cultural and experiential background (Anderson & Middleton, 2005; Tuason, 2005) and to make explicit the assumptions I made about the world and people in it (Lichaw & Howell-Carter, 2005). My adolescence as a poor farmer’s daughter gave me both a strong sense of personal responsibility and the perpetual sense of being an outsider. I am aware of the social forces that shape our lives, that shaped my life, but I refused to yield. I believe that other people can find, nurture, and grow their internal power, no matter their situation. These beliefs are from my life of White privilege (Anderson & Middleton, 2005) and from my work to overcome obstacles. I am not as compassionate and understanding as I would like with people who do not have as strong a work ethic as I do. I continue processing in this area and acknowledging the importance of that work ethic in surviving my childhood.

Additionally, Lichaw and Howell-Carter (2005) outline steps for increasing the sense of safety for both supervisor/trainee and therapist/client relationships by being respectful and accepting of and open about cultural identities and backgrounds and being

aware of adaptive components of different cultures. I think that this outline was also helpful for my work with students who have experienced contexts and cultures different from my own.

I wanted to minimize my influential power as I met with students. One way to decrease my influential power was to share it with students by encouraging them to ask questions of me and to view me as a research participant rather than as the one in control (Holstein & Gubrium, 2003). However, mutual sharing of information has its own ethical concerns: Was my sharing mutual in the sense that I shared for our mutual benefit and in a genuine manner, or was it merely to establish intimacy to get them to tell me more? How much should I have shared? How could I avoid the impulse to direct my co-researchers' attention to deeper meanings in what they said (Miller, M.E., 1996), to place my structure of self-definition and meaning-making on them? I continually engaged in a reflexive process to find and maintain my way between the polarities of interviewing and mutual sharing that fit my purposes and the needs of my co-researchers. In addition to my reflexivity—documenting my thoughts and processes for this project—I also relied on colleagues' feedback as a check on my reflexive process for maintaining an appropriate balance.

### *Trustworthiness*

To ensure the trustworthiness of my study, I employed the following practices: engaged in debriefing with peers, provided rich, thick descriptions of my research participants and the information they shared with me, and solicited the participants' feedback (Creswell, 1998) on the credibility of my interpretations (as provided in the participant summaries and commentaries shown in Appendix G). Engaging in debriefing

and soliciting feedback allowed me to establish correspondence and increased the credibility of the narratives I present (Riessman, 1993). In addition, narrative inquiry requires what Clandinin and Connelly (2000) call wakefulness or ongoing reflection about one's intersubjectivity, positionality, identities, and cognitive and emotional processes. I share these reflections in the Discussion section.

### *Data Collection*

I collected data in this study by individually interviewing high-risk college students using open-ended questions about their stories of internal power, their ideas about their inspiration for recognizing their internal power, their stories about their view of power structures in the classroom and outside it, and their decision-making process. This last question allowed me to compare their epistemological development with the high-privileged college students in Baxter Magolda's (1999a) longitudinal study and the high-risk college students in Pizzalato's study (2003, 2004).

I selected and formed the interview questions based on two previous pilot study experiences—one using narrative inquiry and the second using a focus group—and based on Baxter Magolda's (1999a) and Pizzalato's (2003, 2004) work. Based on the work of the two pilot studies (see results sections in Appendices H and I), I chose to use narrative inquiry to explore high-risk students' stories of internal power. In the first pilot study (Appendix H) using narrative inquiry, I interviewed two women, one in her 20s and one in her 50s, on their experience of internal power. I found that these women greatly benefited from role models of internally powered women and that these two women exercised internal power after facing challenges in their lives. In the second pilot study (Appendix I) I moderated a focus group of 11 students who were juniors and seniors in

college with a mean and median age of 32. Nine participants identified as African-American, one participant identified as Jamaican, and one participant identified as White. Four participants were female and seven male. Some of the students in this second pilot study talked about internal power experiences in their childhood—this made sense to me given the work of Pizzolato (2003) who had found early development of self-authorship in high-risk students. These participants also emphasized the importance of role models and challenges in their exercise of internal power. I found, in the focus group, that I had a series of interviews rather than shared comments from the participants, thus my choice of narrative inquiry for this study. These two pilot studies were also useful in developing the questions used in the current study.

*Noel-Levitz Retention Management System™ / College Student Inventory™.*

Students were identified as high-risk through the use of the *Noel-Levitz Retention Management System™ / College Student Inventory™* Form B (CSI-B). The CSI-B measures students' academic motivation, general coping skills (social and financial support), and receptivity to Student Services' resources in a 100-item assessment. Students were considered high-risk if their Dropout Proneness was above 6 on a 9-point scale (1 = low need, 9 = high need). Noel-Levitz reports that the CSI-B's Cronbach alpha coefficient for homogeneity is .80 and the test-retest reliability is .80 (Miller, R.A., 2005; Strahil, n.d.) for four-year programs, which meet the requirement generally set for reliability in the social sciences (Spatz, 2001). Miller found that there was a significant positive relationship between Dropout Proneness and the observed dropout rate:  $\chi^2$  value was 210.5,  $p < .001$ . Chi-Square was used for this validity measure because the dropout variable is dichotomous with a non-normal distribution (Miller, R.A.).

The CSI-B was administered to students seeking a bachelor degree at a technical university within a large city in the Southeastern United States. All students enrolled in a critical thinking course took the CSI-B during their third week of classes. This critical thinking course was required for students in most bachelor degree programs offered at the university. Students took the inventory online and all students' scores were sent to the university advising team when students completed and submitted their inventory. Students considered high-risk were contacted by an advisor and offered extra help in their areas of need. This technical university has two campus locations and four teaching centers within the metropolitan area. While I also work at this university, I only selected students who attend a campus location approximately 29 miles from the campus where I teach. I choose this selection process to avoid any cross over between my teaching and researching relationships with students.

I selected all students labeled as high-risk (scoring 6 or above on a 9-point scale) based on their CSI-B scores and asked them to participate in this study: I called the students, identified myself, told them about this research (following the script in Appendix A adopted from Abri, 2006), and asked them if they would be interested in participating in this study. Only three students agreed to participate and actually showed up for the interview from the initial list of students. After obtaining approval from the Human Subjects Review Board, I offered the remaining students \$5 for the initial interview and \$10 for the follow-up interview as described in the script in Appendix B (the initial three students were then given \$15 when I met them for the second interview). If the student was interested in the study, I suggested that we meet in a private library

meeting room on campus at a time convenient to the student.<sup>2</sup> We then set an appointment for a time convenient for us. I confirmed with them their most commonly used email address and then emailed them the brief description as shown in Appendix C and include a confirmation of our meeting time. In the email I asked the students to reply if they received it, but only one student confirmed receipt. I asked the other students if they had received it, and they said that they don't check their emails.

I initially interviewed 11 students labeled as high-risk by the CSI-B, but only 10 students completed both the first and second interview. I decided on 10 as the participant number based on other qualitative research studies, Creswell's (1998) recommendations, and a recent dissertation from Colorado State University's School of Education (Abri, 2006).

When I met the students, I explained the study again and presented them with a copy of the Human Subjects Review Board Informed Consent form (Revised copy is in Appendix D). After they had a chance to review it, ask any questions, and sign it, I turned on the tape-recorders, after having previously obtained permission, and we proceeded with our dialog.

My first dialog with students were 40-75 minutes. The interviews were semi-structured using the list of questions and prompts in Appendix E as an outline. At the conclusion of the dialog I asked each research participant to fill out a demographic information form as shown in Appendix F. At the end of our discussion I confirmed that I would contact them in about 2 months, thanked them for their participation, and paid

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<sup>2</sup> For the first student I interviewed, I asked if there was a quiet place for our meeting that would allow us privacy: we met in his home. A concerned spouse asked me to meet the rest of students on campus.

them \$5. As soon as possible after the interview, I transcribed each participant's dialog. Since I am a slow typist, I had to listen to the transcripts multiple times. While it took much time, I learned the details, rhythm, tone, and voice of each participant. Months later, I can pick up any transcript and hear the voice of the research participant.

Before the second interview, I reviewed each transcript multiple times, summarized our dialog, and made comments. The summaries averaged 900 words and can be read in Appendix G. The second interview, occurring about 2 months after the first, lasted for 20-40 minutes and was used to offer the participant an opportunity to share other internal power experiences or further reflections and for me to ask them further questions. I asked students to look over my summary of the first interview and to share their thoughts on my perceptions: I asked them what I captured correctly and what needed to be adjusted. In an attempt to replicate Pizzalato's 2004 study, I also asked the students questions on their more recent decision making process. This second visit allowed me to receive feedback on my interpretations of their first interview, to learn more about their thoughts and experiences of internal power, and to note any changes in their decision making process. All the participants enjoyed reading their summary, found them to be accurate, and many of them asked for a copy. At the end of the second interview I again thanked them for their participation and paid them the \$10 remuneration.

As mentioned above, I was an active interviewer, helping participants understand how he or she is "an active maker of meaning" (Holstein & Gubrium, 2003, p. 70). Furthermore, I actively engaged in "inciting" participants' exploration of their meaning making within our dialog. Holstein and Gubrium believe that active interviewers may

suggest perspectives and narrative positions in order to explore narrative linkages as they are relevant to the constructs under exploration. I assisted the participants in exploring the different selves and perspectives beyond the initial presentation of the public self (Lincoln, 1995). Active interviewing required great sensitivity on my part so as not to push respondents into responding in ways that might support preconceived notions of the construct under study: the goal was to explore the meaning making process within the respondents' multiple selves.

### *Data Analysis*

I transcribed each participant's dialogs after each interview and integrated it with comments, observations, and reflections noted during and after the interview. Then I employed grounded theory as an approach to develop inductive theories about internal power and power structures in the classroom as seen from the perspective of students labeled high-risk. Charmaz (2005) notes that grounded theory, as originally described by Glaser in 1967 and later by Strauss and Corbin, is based on objectivist epistemologies within a positivist paradigm. Qualitative researchers have since adapted grounded theory to fit with a constructionist view: that is, what the positivists view as an external reality, the constructionists view as social construction (Charmaz). The inductive process in a constructionist grounded theory is based on interpretations of the text, questions created by an interviewer positioned in the world and framed by his or her experience.

Within this constructionist framework, I followed the grounded theory steps as described by Auerbach and Silverstein (2003) with the exception being the data on self-authorship: There I used themes from Baxter Magolda (2001/2004) and Pizzolato (2003, 2004) for organizing the data on self-authorship and epistemological development. For

the rest of the data, I first reviewed the annotated transcripts for repeated ideas, noted relevant text, and organized them into themes. Of course, participants' answers to specific interview questions also played a role in what themes I found. I repeatedly reviewed the transcripts until I felt that I had processed the interview data sufficiently that no new themes showed up. I then explored the themes and organized them into theoretical constructs and explored how they might fit into a theoretical framework based on my constructivist viewpoint. Finally, I organized these constructs into a theoretical narrative that reconstructs the stories my participants shared with me using a coherent account of themes abstracted from the text. This narrative integrated participants' subjective experience with theoretical constructs. The theoretical narrative obtained was a transparent process and was documented. The theoretical constructs I developed may potentially extend beyond my sample of high-risk students, but the degree of transferability will only be determined by future research (Auerbach & Silverstein).

My data analysis was informed by the active interviewing process (Holstein & Gubrium, 2003). Auerbach and Silverstein's (2003) general process, described above, was easily integrated with narrative sensibilities. I analyzed the text for how the participants and I constructed meaning. I then explored the narratives for how they reflected and embodied "general cultural phenomena" (Chase, 1996). In this post modernist approach I looked at how the students used language and made meaning, while I searched for narrative linkages and expressions of the dialogic moment when students' and my multiple selves and multiple truths were being expressed in the three dimensional space (past, present, and future) of our dialog (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Because I was interested in students' experience of internal power and their ideas about contexts and events that might have inspired their recognition of their internal power, I used two types of narrative inquiry analysis: descriptive and explanatory (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Clandinin and Connelly note that these two narrative inquiry types rely on the same data, but use the data differently. I used descriptive narrative inquiry to describe the participants' narrative accounts of their internal power experience. I used explanatory narrative inquiry to "account for the connection between events in a causal sense" (p. 16).

"Narrative inquiry is a way of understanding experience. It is a collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or in a series of places, and in social interaction with milieus" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p.20). As a qualitative research methodology, it was ideal for exploring the internal power experiences of students labeled high-risk.

### *Summary*

Internal power is the recognition of one's self-defined and self-constructed power regardless of external or influential power dynamics. Internal power is self-directed, not Freire's (2002) praxis of overcoming hegemonic forces in the world, but rather of recognizing and rejecting the acceptance of those forces within. High-risk students, with their outsider status, have been found to develop self-authorship earlier than high-privileged students. Does this difference in self-authorship development reflect differences in internal power? I used narrative inquiry to explore the nature of internal power in high-risk students at a technical university. Narrative inquiry allowed me to explore, with my co-researchers, the nature of internal power.

## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS

The concept of power and its effects on student learning has been explored in a variety of philosophical works (Foucault, 1977/1984; Freire, 2002; Gore, 1998) and research based work (Delpit, 1988; Manke, 1997; Richmond et al., 1987). Although there is a philosophical literature on the concept I call internal power, there is little research on internal power (Foley, 1999). The possibly related concept of self-authorship (Baxter Magolda, 1998, 2001a; Pizzolato, 2003) has been explored, but no research explores the relationship between self-authorship and the exercise of internal power. Research by Pizzolato suggests that students labeled high-risk may develop self-authorship sooner than students labeled high-privilege. The current study seeks to remedy this lack of information by presenting students' experiences of internal power and self-authorship. I also seek to understand the connection there may be between philosophical work on internal power and students descriptions of internal power.

The purpose of this study was to explore students' experience of internal power. I wanted to understand how students experience their internal power, how they recognize it, and the role, if any, of teachers and the education system. I wanted to work with students labeled high-risk for two reasons: first, the work by Baxter Magolda (1998, 2001) found that the students in her study, mostly white and considered high privilege, did not develop self-authorship until they were in their 20s and graduating from college, whereas Pizzolato (2003) found in her study that students considered high-risk were

developing self-authorship before entering college. In a later study, Pizzolato (2004) found that her high-risk students had lost their self-authorship. Given that Keegan (1994) believes self-authorship is developmental and does not reverse itself, I am curious if exploring self-authorship from an internal power perspective might provide insights into this puzzling discrepancy in the work of Baxter Magolda, Keegan, and Pizzolato when examined comprehensively. Secondly, despite my status as a privileged white woman, I have self identified as an outsider much of my life and students considered high-risk are also considered outsiders in our society (Ford, 2005).

Given my desire to understand the connection between internal power and self-authorship and my desire to connect participants' experiences of internal power to some of the philosophical work on power, I organize my findings by my research questions and themes related to internal power. In Section I of Chapter 4, I explore the research participants' expressions of internal power, the importance of teachers as role models of internal power, and veiling of internal power. In Section II, I analyze the research participants' self-authorship and epistemological development. I then compare internal power with self-authorship. I first provide an overview of my research participants.

#### *Research Participants*

The college at which the students are currently enrolled is oriented towards technology and business fields. The Game and Simulation major is popular among entering students, but many switch to other programs when they realize that it requires more math than they are willing to learn. There are multiple campus locations within this southeastern metropolitan area and most students commute back and forth to college.

There are no dorms, although the college does help students connect with various apartment complexes near the college.

For my first interview with research participants I met with 11 participants, but I was only able to complete the interview process with 10 participants. For the remainder of the study I only present information about the 10 participants who completed the interview process. Of the 10 participants, eight of them were male and two were female: At the college, 60% of students are male and 40% are female. Nine of the participants identified as African-American or Black, with one of them also identifying as Hispanic and another one also identifying as White or Caucasian. One research participant identified herself as Eastern European. At the college, 77% of students identified as African American or Black, 13% identified as Caucasian, 2% identified as Hispanic, 2% identified as Asian, .4% identified as Native American, and 5% identified as none or other. Five participants are Game and Simulation majors (learning how to create video games and program simulators), two are Computer Engineering majors, two are Network Systems majors, and one is a Business Administration major. The mean age of the participants is 19.6 with a range from 18-23 years. Four students had previous college experience.

Although my original plan was to meet with students in their home settings, I ended up meeting with all the students but one in a library meeting room on campus that was convenient for the students for our before- or after-class meetings. I did notice that the research participants were a bit nervous at the beginning of our first discussion and that they were much more relaxed by the end of our first discussion. Based on my pilot

studies, I expected more camaraderie and connection in our initial discussions, but found that that did not develop until our second discussion.

I occasionally pressed participants for information and found that all the research participants were comfortable indicating when they had not experienced what I was asking about. Their ability to say, 'No, I didn't experience that' or, 'I never felt that way' reassured me that any questions that might have been considered leading questions did not induce students to say things that were not true for them.

I really enjoyed getting to know the research participants and still savor comments and imagery that they shared with me. For example, one student, when asked about being in power struggles with teachers responded that, "I was usually pretty patient with them." Given my experience of being a teacher and trying to be patient with students, I enjoy the thought that some of them were also being patient with me. A student referred to his mother as a "tour guide" who could provide him with valuable information for his trip through life. He also admitted that he "hangs right up under her," which reminds me of my childhood when I would see baby chicks settling 'up under' the mother hen.

Because I transcribed all the recordings myself, and being an inexperienced typist, I required multiple playbacks to obtain correct transcriptions. In this process, I learned the cadence and voice of each participant. I have noticed, as a teacher, that I am an expert at detecting plagiarism because I quickly learn students' voices and can detect when they write in a voice different from their own. This ability to learn each participant's voice is an asset for this project and you the reader may be able to detect each student's voice in the individual descriptions below.

Below I offer brief details of each of the participants. The *Summaries and Commentaries* that I wrote for each student are in Appendix G. Each summary and commentary was approved by each student at the end of their second interview.

### *Alana*

When I met Alana, two things struck me: she is one of the smallest college students I have ever met, and then, she is as vibrant as she is small. Alana was open with me and told me within the first 5 minutes of our discussion that at age 15 she had been diagnosed with lupus. She feels that her lupus has made her take more risks than most people, but that is because she has faced her death and decided that *Carpe Diem* is the motto to live by. Alana had much to say in response to each question. I sometimes get breathless when I read over her transcripts and hear her effusive response in my mind.

Alana grew up in her mother's home and didn't live with her father until she dropped out of the first college she had attended a few months before she and I met. Her mother has played a central role in Alana's life and Alana appears to be working on separating herself from her mother: Many of Alana's responses centered on how she had focused on making her mother happy and, consequently, herself unhappy. She also discussed how her mother no longer can have any control in Alana's life because Alana is now 18 and out from under her mother's power.

Another theme in my discussion with Alana was the importance of rules: who gets to make rules, whose rules are right, the ability to make her own rules, her mother's rules versus her father's rules, and rules about who you can love. Alana seemed to find comfort in some rules that provide structure and order in her life. Alana also enjoyed getting to make her own rules rather than having to follow rules that her mother enforced.

Alana also reminded me of one of my own teenagers who, when she started seeing the world in a different way, expressed condescending thoughts of those who she thought saw the world in the way that she used to. My teenager and Alana have a know-it-all attitude that can be irritating to me at times, even while I enjoy seeing them in the midst of horizons of possibility opening before them.

I found Alana to be a vibrant, loquacious, young woman who is confident in her academic abilities and life skills. Even though she no longer lives with her mother, her mother plays a large role in Alana's inner world.

### *Bob*

Bob is a young man who only recently turned his life around. Bob's goal had been to "get money by any means necessary." Note the possible reference here to Malcolm X. Bob was afraid that if he stayed at home and socialized with the people with whom he usually did, he was going to keep getting into trouble and might end up in jail or dead. Eventually he did spend a night in jail: he said that that was enough. Because of his police record he had been unable to get any kind of job. He realized he couldn't continue to stay at his mother's house, but Bob was afraid of joining the armed services. Furthermore, Bob said that he was afraid that he "would never do or be anything for myself." He finally sent out applications to a few colleges in February after his July graduation from high school, and he accepted the first offer that he received. Applying to colleges was a challenging endeavor for Bob. Only one person in his extended family had graduated from college and she helped him fill out the applications. Bob thought that he might have been able to do it himself, but he indicated it would have been much more difficult.

Unlike most of the other participants, Bob had difficulty remembering any time in which he held an opinion different from those around him. Towards the end of our first discussion, however, I pointed out to Bob that he and his mother had held quite different opinions about Bob's endeavors to "get money by any means necessary." Bob said that he occasionally reflected on his mother's opinions about this, but that he did not see any merit in her ideas until he spent a night in jail.

Bob is a quiet young man who has made a number of decisions out of fear: fear that he wouldn't do anything or be anything for himself, fear that he would die if he joined the service, fear of getting in trouble. However, those circumstances have also challenged Bob to discover new parts of himself.

### *Christine*

Christine lives with her parents and identifies most with her Eastern European culture and her strict religious beliefs. She and her family moved to the United States when she was a child. Her main focus is on helping others. It is rare, she says for a female with her cultural background to attend college, but she does so in a steadfast manner. She sees her mother as the driving force behind her father giving her permission to attend college. It is her mother's wish that one of her children graduate from college and Christine's older siblings have not. However Christine thinks that her family, especially her parents don't think that she can be successful as a student. Christine is looking forward to proving them wrong.

My first impression of Christine was that she was a very internally powerful young woman. As I listened to her, I thought that she had exercised internal power because she was willing to stand up for her beliefs, to assert her meanings and values to

others. Christine thinks that her view of two different cultures, her Eastern European and now American culture, has made her the open-minded person she is and I initially agreed with her assessment. She sees herself as a person who sees “outside the box” because she lives in two different cultures, she understands how both cultures think and understand things. She thinks she has a better understanding of why people act the way they do because she is able to see each culture through the eyes of the other. She was also willing to stand up to the leader of her church when her belief differed from his. She was willing to stand up to her father and go to college despite her culture and her father’s disapproval against women doing anything besides marrying and taking care of the family. Her father rules the family with an iron fist and I thought that Christine had to be internally strong to oppose his beliefs.

Upon further consideration, I began to think that Christine is an expert at wielding influential power. The concepts of “right” and “wrong” came up repeatedly in our discussion. These are decidedly part of asserting influential power. ‘Who was right?’ ‘Who was wrong?’ ‘She hated to be proved wrong.’ “He needed to admit that she was right and he was wrong.” Christine said that it was a very big deal in her culture to know who is right and who is wrong. I also had to ask myself if Christine’s helping behaviors were a way of increasing her sense of influential power in her own eyes and those of others. Was her sense of self dependent on seeing others as lower than her and in need of her help? An important point here is how much I identified with Christine. I told her that I felt like I was talking to my self of a decade or so ago. Now I remember that in my family of origin, who was right and who was wrong was hotly debated and contested and made a big difference in how we treated each other. I also identified myself as someone

who liked to help other people. Of course, I would want to see her as internally powerful so I could see myself as the same way now and when I was her age.

This is not to say that Christine showed no signs of exercising internal power, but rather that I was mistaken in my initial appraisal and that I learned more about internal and influential power from my research participants. As Guba and Lincoln (1994) assert, constructor's realities "become more informed and sophisticated" (p. 111) over time.

Christine is a powerful young woman. The church and her religion are central to her daily life. She is also concerned with knowing who is right and who is wrong: She wants to be right as often as possible, especially within her family. Her domineering father rules with an iron fist and places many constraints on her decision making.

#### *David*

David's father currently lives in Saudi Arabia and his father's absence during much of his life and many of the events he shared with me has played a role in David's decision making process. A turning point came in David's life when he and his family found themselves in a hotel fire, in which one individual died. They had gone to the hotel to get away from all the stress that Hurricane Katrina brought into their lives. David and his family got out of the hotel fire without getting hurt and they only lost a few personal items, but it was a turning point. David was still in high school, just beginning 11th grade, and he decided to drop out of high school, get his GED and go straight into college. It took a little longer to get into college than he thought, but he is here now and plans to finish his degree. David said, at the beginning of our interview, "I feel like I've almost become... a stronger person ... I guess the most important thing I can say about

myself right now is that I feel a lot more, I guess you could say, mature since that [hurricane and fire] happened.”

David enjoys hanging out with his friends, arguing or debating about almost any topic that appeals to them. David said that no matter what one person says, someone else in the group is going to disagree with it and then they are off on a wonderful argument about the topic. Both of David’s parents went to college and always expected that he would go as well.

David is a determined young man who is willing to work hard to realize his dreams. Writing and his creative life are important themes in his life. David has a subtle intelligence and is quite perceptive.

### *Giovanni*

Giovanni’s family is from Jamaica and his father is a bishop. Giovanni lives with his father and mother and younger sister. Giovanni hungers to be the authority in his life and sees that he is an authority when he leaves his parents home, but he finds it is difficult to think of himself as the authority in his life when his mother still tells him to clean up his room. Like some of the other research participants, Giovanni describes himself as a loner and was in trouble with the law a number of different times. I found out at the end of our first discussion that just the day before Giovanni had “finished up my whole court thing.” Giovanni had gotten caught stealing, again, in his last year in high school. Giovanni said that his coach had been helping him to find himself and build himself up and “all of that just came crashing, like in one second, because my making just one stupid mistake.” After that he had to build himself all over again and had to regain the trust of his family and church members.

In my first discussion with Giovanni, his focus was all on school. However in our follow-up discussion, Giovanni's focus was his current job and the possibility of getting a car if he continued working. Because of a scheduling conflict, Giovanni had dropped the only class he was taking so that he could keep his job. Giovanni recognized that other people were correct when they said he was putting his job before school, yet he rationalized that in the following manner: even though it appears that Giovanni is putting the job before school, it is really similar to a basketball team in which you have a star player, but you also need to support the other team members to keep the game going. Giovanni was merely focusing on the other team members: if he keeps his job he can get a car and then he can get to school more easily and more efficiently. Thus the job helps get the car that keeps him in school. Giovanni was loath to recognize that in fact the job was currently keeping him out of school instead of in it.

Giovanni keeps finding himself in precarious positions (opportunities for growth) in his life in which he tries to take up "the high path." However, he has not been as successful in this as he and his parents want him to be. He struggles to remain true to himself when he is around others.

*Jay*

Jay came breezing into our interview, open and smooth, sliding through the door, sitting, making the chair his own. Jay said that he was outgoing, a jokester, and someone who likes to have fun. Throughout our discussions Jay presented himself as open and free, but I felt that a part of him was far away, alone, and always watching me from another part of himself. Given this, I was not surprised when Jay said that he'd spent time in jail and that his jail time had profoundly changed him. Jay said that he used his time in

jail to think about his life, what he wanted, and where he was going. Based on his jail experience, he says that he spends more time alone than he used to and makes most decisions on his own. He also finds that he is now most comfortable and feels most authentically himself when he is around family.

Jay had plenty to say during our discussions, but upon examining the transcripts I realized that Jay didn't say much about other people in his life and that most of his experiences related to the time he spent in jail and his reflections in jail. He was very protective of his inner life.

The topic Jay and I kept returning to in our interview was the impact that his jail time had had on him. He spends more time alone now than he did before and finds that he prefers to make decisions on his own rather than to talk about them with others. Jay appears friendly and outgoing.

#### *Lamarr*

During our first meeting I can't say that Lamarr and I discussed anything, instead it felt like an interview and it seemed to me that Lamarr's goal was to say as few words as possible. At the time, I realized that I thought of him as not being very cooperative and I'm sure that my belief had a negative impact on our meeting. The second time we met, Lamarr had much more to share with me and I felt as if I really got to know him. I realized then that Lamarr had probably initially seen me as another agent of the dominant discourse who would reinforce his notion that he isn't "college material." Lamarr's willingness to talk more during our second meeting suggests that despite my inner frustrations, I had earned his trust and that he felt comfortable talking with me, yet what he had to say was limited.

Lamarr's belief that he isn't "college material" has a big impact on his interactions with others at college. Lamarr realizes that he interprets things differently than his classmates and he knows that his interpretations aren't helping him to be successful in college, but he doesn't seem to have any way to make changes in how he interprets things, teachers' instructions for example. Lamarr said that his way "wasn't always the correct way, but it always got done." Yet, in group projects, he would rarely turn in any work because he was concerned that it wouldn't be up to par. Lamarr's recipe for being successful in college is being determined, working hard, paying attention, staying awake in class, and getting your work in on time. Despite this belief, Lamarr said he still procrastinates on getting his homework done.

Lamarr continued to affirm that he is "laid back," determined to follow "his own way," apt to see his way as the best for him, and sees himself as "stubborn."

### *Mark*

Mark is a creative individual who knows his own mind. My impression was that he is honest with himself about his weaknesses, and is clear about where he is and where he is going. Most importantly, Mark is comfortable with who he is as I describe in more detail below. Since he was a young child, Mark has been taking things apart and putting things back together in new and interesting ways: Mark would take parts of toys, rubber bands, sticks, AV cords, coaxial cables, plastic curlers, and other objects and form them into new toys. His mother always told him that the way he thought was "way out of the box," but he says that his mother never pursued his creativity by putting him in writing or drawing classes. He said that she just enjoyed hearing his different thoughts and she would push him to go study and make A's. However, he often made F's instead and was

consequently grounded. Mark finds it difficult to take an interest in things that don't fit into his plan for what he wants and needs to do, thus his failures in courses that bore him.

Mark lived with his mother until he was 13, at which time he was sent to live with his father as discussed more fully below. Before coming to this college, Mark attended an art college, but he found that he taught himself more than his teachers did. He transferred to this college so that he could learn the programming skills that he would need to make his artistic creations come alive in video games. Mark is the most articulate research participant in my study.

Mark is a creative force with much to say. It seems as if he has always seen the world differently than those around him. He is open and willing to share what he has learned about developing his internal power.

### *Michael*

Michael describes himself as self-motivated, out-going, and yet more of a loner. Michael says that he doesn't "like to do bad," but he's not perfect and it is just "so easy to get into trouble." To help him stay out of trouble Michael says that he trusts his first instinct and doesn't "go by nobody's trust but mine, unless like somebody is guiding me, you know, the right way." In the classroom Michael has no trouble standing up and sharing his knowledge or telling his classmates about himself. He said that he is constantly asking questions and that he is not one who is scared to raise his hand and ask more.

Michael said that there is a strange thing that happens to him: people are always coming up to him and telling him that some day he's going to be somebody. He wonders why they choose him out of all people. He said that people will come out of nowhere,

especially teachers, but also homeless people and others on the street, and they will tell him how successful he will be someday. He wonders what it is that they see in him. He is determined to never let them down by failing at anything. My own perception of Michael is that he does have qualities associated with being successful, such as intelligence, motivation, excitement about life, and the desire to know, but I am unclear on how strangers would be able to identify these qualities without spending time with him.

Michael has spent much time alone because he has been interested in things that his friends have no interest in. He is comfortable with being alone. He has also worked on staying out of trouble and is now oriented to making decisions for the long run. There have been two constants in his life: his close relationship with his mother and the appearance of people in his life who believe that he can be quite successful in life.

### *Sephiro*

Sephiro's passion is playing and creating video games. The only time Sephiro has gone out while he has been a college is when his roommates pushed him to go to a club one night and got him to go to the mall at another time. When he went to the club, he just stood back and watched people while his roommates danced and socialized. When he went to the mall he made a beeline for the arcade store and spent the whole time there. Sephiro says that he is most comfortable when he is either watching the interaction of a video game or watching the interaction between real people in real life. He makes little distinction between the two and sees them in the same manner. Sephiro said that the only time he talks to anybody is if they ask him a direct question. He did seem willing to answer all my questions, but he rarely elaborated on any points without my prodding. For my question about power struggles between people, the only example Sephiro could

think of was from a TV show. Based on what he told me, Sephiro goes to class, does his homework, and then spends the rest of his time playing or creating video games. He says he is quite content with his life. Sephiro sounds like the males that Sax (2007) describes in his book *Boys Adrift*. Sax asserts that there is an epidemic of young males who spend most of their time playing video games, have no passion for real-world activities, are disengaged from school, and are not concerned about their apathy.

The theme in Sephiro's life is the importance of video games. Sephiro plays video games so much that he views life as a video game to be watched and occasionally interacted with.

## Section I: Research Participants' Experience of Internal Power

In this first section I explore the themes and sub themes of internal power. In Section II, I compare internal power to self-authorship. The organization of themes and sub-themes by section is shown in Table 1.

### *Theme 1—The Nature of Internal Power*

#### *Sub Theme: Our Choices are Powerful*

I describe internal power as the recognition of one's ability to define oneself and one's world and to create and alter the meaning of one's experiences, attitudes, and values without accepting limits from others or being defined by them. When individuals recognize that they and others can choose how they define the world, they have the opportunity to exercise their internal power. In my interview with David, he and I were talking about whether he saw life as a series of choices he got to make or things he had to

Table 1.

Themes and Sub Themes

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Section I: Research Participants' Experience of Internal Power

Theme 1 – Nature of Internal Power

Sub theme – Our Choices are Powerful

Sub theme – Finding One's Voice

Sub theme – Being Different

Sub theme – Challenge

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Theme 2 – Teachers

Sub theme – Strange Attractors

Sub theme – Teachers' Power Usage in the Classroom

Sub themes – Other role models

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Theme 3 – Internal Power Veiled and Unveiled

Sub theme – Internal Power Veiled

Sub theme – Internal Power Unveiled

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Section II: Internal Power and Self-Authorship

Theme 4 – Self-Authorship

Sub theme – Epistemological Development

Sub theme – Self-Authorship

Sub theme – Disappearing Self-Authorship?

do. David said he thought it was more like things you have to do, but he said it was because the choices you make “can have something to do with things you have to do.”

When asked about things he had to do, David responded:

I have to be successful. Like um, I felt like there was a time in my life when nobody really believed in me, even my own parents. And I feel like, even now, they may have some faith in me, I still just feel like I’ve got to do this just so, you know, you never should’ve thought that in the first place. So I, I have to be successful. I mean, private jet type successful. (David)

I asked him if he saw that as a choice he had made because he “really, really” wanted to be successful. David replied, after pausing to think about it, “I kind of made myself have to. I mean maybe, mediocre would probably be fine, but I just made myself say, hey you’ve got to do this, you’ve got to.” I shared an experience with him about how hard I felt I had to work when I was writing a paper because a B or a C was not acceptable. I asked him if this was the kind of “have to” that he was talking about. In acknowledging that it was, David made a sound and appeared to have one of those “Aha” moments that teachers recognize and work for. This led me to believe he might be recognizing his power to define his world.

After a brief digression about his girlfriend, David mentioned his mother as someone whom he saw as internally powerful: “My mother is, well, she’s kind of, she is strict, but at the same time she’s kind of loose. She makes herself straight. I guess it’s one of those things she feels like she has to do.” A little later, I asked David if he was going to stay in college and he responded, “I am going to make myself.” I asked if he was going to make that a “have to” and he acknowledged, with a smile, that it was. In recognizing that he and his mother, like other people, can choose how they present themselves to the

world, how they will interact with others in their worlds provides David with opportunities to recognize the nature of internal power.

David was able to see that he and his mother were choosing to hold particular values and meanings. David recognized that his mother chose to be seen as strict even though she tends to be more relaxed. David had the opportunity to reflect on why she would choose this particular way of interacting with others. These reflections can assist David in not only recognizing that he has made choices about his own values and meanings, but also in consciously recognizing opportunities for choosing his own values and meanings in the future. Because David and I had only just created this recognition, I was unable to discover if he was able to act on this recognition. However, other research participants had exercised their power of choice in choosing their own values and meanings and I was able to discuss their experiences with them.

An opportunity for recognizing their ability to choose their meanings for themselves came when I asked them, “Who is the authority in your life?” Many participants answered that it was their mother, and two referred directly or indirectly to their father, however a few—Alana, Mark, Christine, and Sephiro—immediately recognized that they were their own authorities. When I asked the other participants if they ever thought that they would answer with, “I am,” they responded with pleasant surprise at that thought and smiled as they indicated yes. They were then able to recognize the ways in which they were becoming their own authorities. Like David, they expressed joy in that “Aha” moment of recognition.

Jay also recognized the power of his ability to choose and had lived with the choices he had made. Jay noted that life is a series of choices that you have to make.

“You choose how your life is going to be, you shape your life, you know what I’m saying, through the choices you make.” When I asked him when he had become aware of that, he responded with an uncomfortable laugh that it was about three years ago, reminding me that that was when he had gotten into trouble and spent time in jail. Jay shared with me that he had a lot of time to think when he was in jail and that this “big transition” had made him rethink much about his life. At this point in his life, Jay is trying to maintain his ability to make choices. Even though he is in the game simulation program right now he “might want to turn around and go for a psychology degree... or I might try to go boxing or a golden glove thing because I like to box, you know anything. I’m always switching up.” It makes sense that Jay, after having his choices limited by choosing crime and thus jail (he cannot legally leave the state at this time to go to his first choice colleges), would want to keep his options open right now.

Michael also thought that the choices we get to make determine what we have to do. For example, Michael was trying to make his life more stress-free by staying out of trouble. To follow through on these choices, Michael had to cut certain people out of his life and enroll in college so that he wouldn’t end up like most of the people he went to high school with:

Most of my friends are locked up or they have kids and they’re struggling with either, have some type of sexual life of disease and all this other stuff and they’re on drugs or something and, it’s like out of 30 people that stayed in my neighborhood, it was only two of us that graduated on time, and I’m the only one that still went on to go to school. (Michael)

Other participants like Giovanni and Jay, who also had run-ins with the law, also had to cut certain friends so that they could stay on a path that wasn’t headed for trouble.

Alana has felt most authentically herself since she moved out of her mother's house about six months before our first interview:

I lived with my boyfriend and his roommate and their roommates next door and then was the only time that I was able to say that I was truly happy. Everything wasn't going well, everybody struggled for food because there was a lot of people living in that apartment. Everybody, it was like a freeloader's apartment, but everybody pulled their own. At that point in time, even though there were problems in the apartment, people were backstabbing each other, it was real life in a way because we were like, no one is giving us money. I talked to my mom every so often but she didn't know where I lived.... And she could not believe that the setting that I was in, that I was so happy. And I was like, mom, there are rules here, but we make our rules and, believe it or not, even though we're teenagers and some of them are in their 20s, we know that we have to eat, we know that we can't do stupid stuff to land each other in jail. (Alana)

Her tone of voice revealed that she reveled in being able to make her own choices.

Mark was raised to make his decisions for himself:

I just always had like some sort of dominant leadership about myself that I didn't really care or notice until recently when I was forced to make those decisions about myself. And luckily I was raised to where I had to make my own decisions. ... [My mother] told me to be independent and to think for myself and take my responsibilities. (Mark)

Mark expressed that the last three years, in which he has been living on his own, making his own decisions, has been a "growing period" for him and he noted that he liked it.

Bob, too, said that he felt most internally powerful since he moved out on his own to go to college. He said it's easier to be internally powerful when you are alone, "because nobody is really telling you nothing." Bob said he enjoyed the ability to "make your own decisions."

Giovanni, who still lives at home with his parents, likes to do his chores at midnight or in the morning after everyone has gone to work and school. He said he knows that he has to chores to do, but it is difficult for him to hear his mother tell him

that he has to clean the bathroom and do laundry. He wants to be able to choose to do the chores and when to do them:

Because I feel like I'm not doing it because you tell me to do it. I'm not doing it because you're forcing me to do it. I'm not doing it because it's going to benefit you. I'm doing it because it is going to benefit me, so it helps me to, like, be stronger. (Giovanni)

I asked Giovanni if he was doing chores in the middle of the night so that he could see himself as more independent and he responded that he was, that he wanted his mother to see him as independent. He said he wanted the sense of doing it on his own. It makes sense that amidst the transition from teenager to young adult that these research participants would want to be flexing their internal sense of power.

When Carse (1986) talks about strength, or what I call internal power, he says it does not oppose nor does it resist other people's actions or perceptions and it is not about trying to influence or control others: its external expressions involve acting authentically, true to one's self. When the focus is on being different rather than being one's self, it is not acting authentically. However, it may represent a step towards internal power, in that it is a recognition that there is more than one discourse, and that individuals can choose their own values and meanings.

Sometimes it is not easily discerned if someone is making a choice for themselves or against others. For example, it was difficult for Mark to be his own person when his father still told him to "go clean your room." When Mark's father called Mark a rebel, Mark countered that he wasn't rebelling *against* his father, he was rebelling because "I wanted to be my own person." This is an important distinction. When I asked Bob one of the first times he had felt internally powerful he said, "Well, I guess it's like you just said, like your mama tells you to come home, and I had to stay a little after school just to do it.

I guess I had to be rebellious.” When I asked Bob about this incident, he said he just needed to express that because “it made me feel a little powerful” to choose his own action.

Alana was in a disagreement with one of her teachers in high school because the teacher did not do something she said she would do. Eventually the teacher said, “One more word and I’ll take you to the principal’s [office].” The conversation went downhill from there:

Fine, I’ll go myself. And I’m like all upset. And I turned to walk out the door and she goes, where are you going? And I was like, I just said another word—fine I’ll go myself—I’m going to the principal’s like you just told me to do. And she’s like, I’m going to write you up. I am like, write me up. I’m going to the principal’s so I’ll already be there. (Alana laughing) And she goes, she gets all upset and at me for this and she walks up the classroom and says get back here right now. (Alana)

Alana returned and the teacher did not write her up or send her to the principal’s office. In this situation, it is difficult to know whether Alana was trying to express her own power and her own choices or whether she was trying to influence the teacher with a threat of her own, or both. The two were engaged in an external power struggle and like most power struggles, when looked at from this perspective, both actors can appear childish. What seems clear to me, however, was that the teacher was unable to push Alana around when Alana’s move offered no resistance. When Alana stopped pushing against the teacher’s external power, the teacher could do nothing to Alana. Like Mark and Bob, Alana might not have been rebelling *against* the teacher so much as rebelling *for* herself.

I explore this line between external or influential power and internal power in another situation that Lamarr and I discussed. Lamarr said “I remember sometimes with

me and my sisters and arguing about something and I think I'm right and they think they're right. And they always ended up being right," but Lamarr would never admit it to them. Lamarr said no one in his family would admit being wrong. In my second discussion with Lamarr, I asked Lamarr if he thought that his sisters knew that Lamarr knew he was wrong even when he wouldn't admit it. Lamarr said he thought they did. I asked Lamarr why he didn't want to tell them and he said it was because he "always wanted to have the upper hand in something." I asked him if it occurred to him that he could have the "upper hand" by telling his sisters that indeed they were correct. Lamarr said that he knew that that was so because recently he "changed the roles" on them and admitted that he was wrong and his sisters "get spellbound and go speechless."

According to Nietzsche (1877/1989), those who are less powerful often subvert the dominant paradigm and that which is good for the more powerful becomes evil, and that which was bad becomes good. In this way, Lamarr made not knowing good and knowing evil. In order to do this, Lamarr would have needed to recognize the power game being played by him and his sisters and subvert the dominant paradigm, although he might not have thought of it with these words. According to Nietzsche, this recognition is the first step toward revaluation of values. Did Alana, in the above situation do the same thing: recognize the power game being played and chose to subvert it?

Somehow Lamarr was able to see that he had a choice in how he would interact with his sisters. I asked Lamarr how he had this realization and he said that he just started thinking about it one day. When I asked him if this was before or after our first discussion he responded both, although when we discussed the situation with his sisters extensively

in that first discussion, Lamarr didn't mention this insight or the effect it had on his sisters. However, I find that sometimes I might have an inner realization that I am unable to put into words until I hear someone else talk about it. This may have been what happened with Lamarr.

Making choices about what action to take is an opportunity to reflect on one's identity, desires, and values. Many of the participants were pushed into making these choices when they were young, like Mark making a new home at 13, and Alana needing to rethink her identity at 15.

Lamarr, like the other participants I have been describing, found that when he expressed his freedom to choose how he would interact with the world and how he would see that world, he felt stronger or more internally powerful. And, as Alana, Bob, and Mark said, they were very happy with being able to make their own choices. This point is reinforced from the literature on Nietzsche, when Kaufmann (1974) says, "[Man] wants not freedom from something but freedom to act and realize himself" (p. 186). Kaufmann goes on to say that Nietzsche's will to power is similar to "Hegel's notion of spirit, which was conceived as essentially a striving for freedom" (p. 186). The participants in this research project expressed their joy of being free to choose the terms on which they would interact with their world. Part of their journey is determining who it is they are becoming, which brings us to the next sub theme, finding one's voice.

#### *Sub Theme: Finding One's Voice*

Mark was able to articulate the path for becoming one's self, finding one's voice, when I asked him what it might be useful for others to know about developing their internal power.

You've just got to find meaning and find what's you and what you believe in and what you like doing and what you don't like and it takes a long time, it takes years. I'm still going through it. Just find who you are, learn from everything that you do in life, not just from your lessons, your mistakes, just learn from everything, from other people, from history, because it repeats itself. And just be who you are, because in the end, that's all that really matters. Well, to me that's all that really matters. I don't care how rich you are, how poor you are, what you look like, I don't care anything about that as long as I can relate to you on that personal level, which is being yourself, being comfortable with yourself. You know, you ain't got to be confident in yourself, just comfortable with yourself. You know, not trying to impress me, just be who you are. (Mark)

Mark raises a number of important points here. In order to find your meaning, an individual needs to learn who he or she is and you do that by questioning. Mark learned much about himself by trying a variety of new things. Within his creative purview, he explored all forms of media: "I just learned different aspects of any, every media, whether it be visual or audio or theater. ... And generally I took that concept to everything." Mark explores the world to find what fits him the best. Similarly, when I asked Alana what she has done to help develop her voice, she said, "I've gone out, I've tried new things." She said that she can also learn from other people's experience, but often she has to try things out on her own.

Mark also makes an important distinction between being comfortable with yourself versus being confident in yourself: if you are confident in yourself you believe that you can meet the goals that you set for yourself, you have a sense of self efficacy. Being comfortable with yourself is more connected to knowing who you are and accepting who you are. In Mark, being comfortable with himself did not mean that he no longer strove for excellence or accepted his faults and weaknesses. Mark stated that he enjoyed learning more about himself: he tried new things and thought about what he liked and didn't like.

Giovanni talked about what he's done to find his voice. He said that he used to be:

Real hyper and really aggressive, and I thought everyone was against me... because I was taking things personal ... I'm more independent and independent of others. ... I, being a loner, I have a lot more room for like patience ... I am more able to sit down and think about things ... to build my own inner self up ... By me cutting other people off in my life, and sitting out and taking things more seriously, and really think before I talk ... and pay attention to details, so now I am able to say I developed myself as a person. (Giovanni)

Giovanni used to think that everyone was against him and he reacted to that perception. Once he separated himself from his friends and spent more time alone he was able to think about who he was and who he wanted to be.

However, developing one's voice by learning about one's self is not all that is necessary. In our follow-up discussion, Mark said:

Then, at the same time though, my ability to express my own power, that comes from within yourself, that comes within your own voice and even confidence. If you think something is wrong and what not, that's probably going off-topic, but, if you think something's wrong and you don't speak up then you don't have that inner power. (Mark)

So it is not only important to find one's own voice, but one must also express it in word or deed. Mark had a long discussion with his father and uncles about Mark's friend who is gay. Mark said that he tried to understand where his family was coming from and why they believe what they believed, but he also felt that it was his responsibility to defend this friend. After this conversation Mark said that it "made me realize that there's a lot of people who think like that [share his family's negative beliefs about homosexuality]. And I'm constantly going to have to defend me and what I believe in and I have to defend people I care about." Mark needed to act on his beliefs, not just think about them. For him, acting on them meant, in this case, that he defended those values which he held.

Despite the fact that Giovanni cut out some of his friends, he still had a few that he did not cut out and “I still end up doing the thing I thought I wasn’t, the same stealing thing, I ended back again.” Giovanni listened to his voice enough that he cut some of his friends out, but he was unable to completely do that and he ended up stealing once again. Giovanni was developing his voice, as described above, but it was not yet strong enough that he would listen to it rather than the voices of his friends. Giovanni experiences something similar when he is with other people. Recently he met up with some high school friends. He said, “And the same thing with the old friends started happening with these friends. So it’s like every time I try to be around a group of some other people and I start... being them instead of being me.”

More recently Giovanni found that he was able to change some of his actions to fit in with who he wanted to be: Giovanni used to follow his emotions, but the day before we met, he almost got into a fight with a friend. But this time, he just walked away and focused on his priority, which was school. Giovanni has found that being alone helps strengthen his voice.

I don’t have anyone else to talk to except for myself, so I’m more like, I’m more like, Giovanni let’s do that now.... I’m by myself so I have to, I need someone to push me and I finally found out that’s me. There’s nobody else to push me or to, there’s nobody to push me except for myself. So Giovanni, let’s do this and that’s it. So, I’m my own authority when I’m in school. ... I know there’s going to be a lot of obstacles I’m going to have to face a lot of things I’m going to have to deal with, but as soon as I walk out that door I take up the responsibility of managing my own country, my own world, which is just me and my life. (Giovanni)

Giovanni is able to articulate his process of learning about himself, of hearing and strengthening his inner voice, and has had some opportunities to follow through and listen to his internal voice in challenging circumstances.

In order to act on one's own voice, that voice needs to be strong enough to not be drowned out by peer pressure. Lamarr said that he has no problem just walking away if his friends are doing something that is wrong for him. He said, "I don't pay attention to people like that. I know if it's wrong, and if I ain't supposed to do it, then I won't do it."

Sephiro said when he came to college the second time, to the college of his choice instead of his family's convenience, he felt the most powerful and in charge of his life because "I was the one who knew if it was right for me or not." Acting on his voice, his meanings, felt powerful.

Mark lived with his mother until he was 13 and then he was sent to live with his father and uncles. Mark came to believe that he was "fully raised" by the time he moved into his fathers' house. Mark had the advantage that many outsiders have of being able to see that different people have diverse sets of rules and that these rules can be arbitrary. When Mark was living with his father, his parents often argued over who had the best ideas on how to raise Mark. Mark was quickly able to see that he needed to "interpret my own way and get my own meaning from this." He told them, "I'm beginning to be an adult now, I can take charge of my life, you both taught me what you could. Let me go about and do that." Mark was able to see that his parents each had their opinion on the correct way to raise a son, and Mark was also able to see that he had his own ideas about this that were just as valid. Mark felt comfortable choosing his own meanings because:

I learn from my mistakes. I am a fit social adult. I know consequences when I see them, I know how to think logical. Things don't influence me like how you know anybody else would, I think rationally. I know the consequences of my actions. I am a rational thinker. (Mark)

Writing was found to be one process by which participants found their voice.

Alana said the one thing that she had done purposely to help develop her internal power

is to write. She said, “I ride the train and I sat there and I’ve written about things. I would sit there and I’d just start to write... and I’d write stories.” Alana started writing in the 10th grade when her teacher required students to keep weekly journals. When I asked Mark about things that he did in which he felt most authentically himself, Mark said that he had “always had a creative mind. I do a lot of writing, of course.”

Similarly, one of the first things David told me about feeling authentically himself was when he used to write. He said,

I used to write sometimes, write music, and I used to really feel like it then because I could express everything that I was feeling, without anybody saying anything. And if they did see it, they didn’t know that it was what I was feeling, they just thought that it was something I wrote.... I used to take the writing really seriously and then I just, it was almost like a serious passion and I would do it all the time and then I guess you could say one day I just woke up and stopped. That’s why I said I used to. Now I just, if I think about it I’ll say, oh that was nice I should have written that down, but I never do. (David)

I tried to explore with David why he had stopped writing: was it out of fear as he started thinking about trying to get it published, did he think it might get shot down, did he think maybe it just wasn’t good enough? None of these explanations sparked any sign of recognition for David. Later in our discussion David mentioned a move that he and his family made when he was in the 10th or 11th grade. Intuitively inspired, I asked David if this was when he had stopped writing music and songs.

When I moved to [new city], the move was really unexpected. It was like we’re going out of town for Christmas, but were not coming back. But that was told once I was already down there. I didn’t get to say goodbye to anybody. You know, I’m just going out of town, but things were really rough so... (David)

David’s voice drifted off after he said this.

In our follow-up discussion David said that he tried writing music again but once again he had stopped. He said he still had no problem writing for school assignments.

Mark finds that when he is drawing the rest of the world goes out of focus and he concentrates only on his art. Mark feels that learning to express himself through his art in his own style is beneficial and he really enjoys the process of learning who he is.

David said that another thing he does to help develop his sense of internal power is to use his imagination:

If I pictured doing something before I do it, it's almost like I'll do it better. There is really no way of knowing, but to me it seems like since I've started picturing things and doing, like the [class] presentation for example. If I picture myself doing a good job on it, I will. Before I would just use my imagination for thinking about kung fu fights or something like that, but when I started applying it like that. (David)

David's voice, as he ended his sentence, expressed the power that he found available through this process. Similar to the writing process, imagination allows us to try on different ideas, actions, meanings, values, and attitudes. In this manner, David can reflect on who he is and how he wants to present himself. Mark also noticed that he was using his imagination more lately:

'Cause I generally take things head on as it happens instead of preplanning about it. But, I see myself a lot lately, in the last couple months, just preplanning things. If this happens, you do this; if this happens, you go ahead and do that, or something new happens, deal with it head on. (Mark)

Alana, Mark, and David found writing to be instrumental in helping them find their respective voices. Stanton (1996) says that voice "is related to students' capacity to formulate and air their thoughts, believing they have something worthwhile to say and feeling heard" (p. 41). Writing and imagining can be a powerful way of expressing one's voice. Elbow (1973, 1998) thinks that free-writing exercises can be powerful means of developing one's voice. He has found, in his experience as a writer and teacher of writing, that when students engage in free-writing on a regular basis they are more likely

to develop their voice when the focus for writing is on how they genuinely expressed themselves, instead of on grammatical issues. Elbow finds that when he provides positive feedback on what feels like genuine expressions of a student's voice, the student begins to develop a resonance with his or her voice. Elbow finds that writing, even poorly, in one's own voice can be more powerful than well composed writing with no voice.

Alana attributed the following incident to her journal writing in an English class. One of the first times that Alana chose her own meanings, rather than those of her immediate and extended family, was when she started dating boys who were not of the same race as her. Like Jan in my pilot study, Alana had been raised to not be a racist and yet faced racism when she brought home a boyfriend of a different race. Jan and Alana had internalized a tolerant and open belief system, made it their own, and then faced racism at home. Alana was surprised that even her sisters found it odd and unacceptable that she would have a Caucasian or Mexican boyfriend. Alana told me, "I am an abnormality in the family, it's weird." Her mother, upset with Alana, asked, "What is my child doing?"

Your child is doing the exact same thing that she wanted to do for a very long time, it's just when she was younger she can't. She can't have her **voice**. She doesn't have that voice and now she does. And so this is what she is doing.  
(Alana)

Like most individuals, Alana can perhaps separate or hear her voice when it is different from the voices around her. Being different was a common theme in the research participants' narrations as discussed below.

When Alana moved out of her mother's house, she did not disclose to her mother where she was living:

I talked to my mom every so often but she didn't know where I lived. She did not know that I could walk to her job every day from where I was because I was like, I am not going to tell her where I am. She does not need to know that. Because she was just going to...

Alana did not finish this thought and jumped back to her story about her experience of living on her own. What was her mother going to do? It seems that Alana felt she needed to protect her space from some unarticulated threat from her mother.

After Hurricane Katrina and then a hotel fire, David decided to quit high school, obtain his GED, and go straight to college.

I came to [my mother] very seriously and she kind of brushed me off like he's just kidding but then when she, when she saw that, when she thought that I was serious, she kind of understood. But we didn't actually tell my father, because he is in Saudi Arabia. We actually didn't tell him until probably three months after I had gotten my GED. (David)

Why didn't David and his mother tell his father right away? Were they protecting his father from the stresses of home or were they protecting David and his decision from his father's thoughts and feelings? I think that Alana and David are trying to protect their developing voices from the strong voices or influence of the parent figure who has dominated their lives. They instinctively know that they need time alone to nurture this new voice until it is strong enough to face the person that might very well oppose who they are becoming. I think that David's mother recognized this and supported David's plan.

In the process of finding one's voice, of determining what kind of choices they wanted to make, the participants found it helpful to question themselves, to think things through, to spend time alone so that they could strengthen their voice so that when they are around other voices that might oppose their own they can still hear their voice loudly enough. They also found that acting on their voice, exercising their internal power helped

them clarify their voices. A few participants also found that writing, imagining things, and being caught up in the creative process helped them to find their voice.

*Sub Theme: Being Different*

This need to be oneself, to not be seen as similar to others, is another theme in my discussions with participants. Eight of the ten participants expressed feeling different from other people and enjoyed being different. The two other participants, Bob and Lamarr, did not express joy about being different: Bob had difficulty thinking of times when he felt different than those around him, although he was finally able to remember two situations. One of them had a big impact. When he was 12 and in sixth grade his class was talking about slavery.

I didn't really think or know anything about racial type things, situations, and stuff. We were having, I guess a class discussion. I don't fully remember the whole thing, but remember we had like a brawl, like the whole class got fighting over some racial things. We were talking about slavery as a matter of fact. Some people in class kind of, really got offended. And I was standing to the side, just looking at all this going on. And I was thinking, wow, all this over a discussion? ... Everybody was talking and then somebody just burst out and hit, a black person hit a white person and that kind of started it off. ... That kind of altered my thought on that. I still don't have any racial thoughts, everybody is the same to me skin wise. I mean it shouldn't make a difference. It kind of made me start thinking that other people, that everybody don't think the way I think about it. (Bob)

In our second interview, I brought up this incident and Bob said that it was "a life-changing ordeal." I mentioned that those events can be pretty traumatic and Bob said with deep feeling, "Yeah, that's the word." Bob said that up to that point, "I really thought that everybody, thought that everybody was the same."

Lamarr said that he thinks differently than other people do all the time when he is in class: "When I was in my critical thinking class, people interpreted things differently than I interpret them. And my way wasn't always the correct way, but it always got

done.” Lamarr also noted that, “I procrastinate a lot too. Some people, in the classes that I have, they do work right when they get it.” Lamarr knows that he does his homework differently than his classmates: They do their homework right away. “That’s the right way. They’re going to get it out of the way.” That way is better “because you don’t have to rush later on during the week and try to get finished.” When I asked him if he would continue to do it his way even though he thinks its wrong, he said that he would. Lamarr said that he trusted his attitude about things like this “to the fullest.” When I asked if events ever made him not trust his attitude about things so much he responded, “Whenever I’m wrong, I start thinking on it a little bit.... But then I still think I’m always right.” Lamarr recognized that his way was different than those around him, but he is unable to follow their way even when it would help him.

And when my grandma’s house burned down and we was fixing to rebuild it, I had my own way of like trying to put stuff together, but it wasn’t the right way, but I still wanted to do it.... My way was faster. (Lamarr)

When I asked him if faster was better he said, “You get done quicker, but it ain’t always the best way to go.” When I asked him what other ways might be good he responded, “The traditional way: just doing it piece by piece and doing all the measurements right.” Having worked in construction myself, I give great credence to the old saw, “Measure twice, cut once.” Attempts to do things more quickly do not often translate into good quality and less time spent on the job.

The rest of the participants echoed Christine when she said, “I don’t like being with a crowd, I like to be the opposite.” Jay framed it this way, “I don’t really like to conform, to meet, you know what I’m saying, to make other people, you know, feel better about certain things.”

David, Mark, and Michael remember being perceived as different from a young age:

I had some friends, two brothers, when we were growing up and I used to, I used to um just kind of try to see what they saw, but or see it the way they saw it, but then try to tell them, 'but I saw this, this, and that is different.' I think that's where it started. I was pretty young then, probably 7, 6, something like that I think."  
(David)

Mark said that his mother "always told me that the way how I think was way out of the box. It was always something creative."

I've always been the odd ball well, not the oddball, but I never fit any stereotype that people will try to place me in. I'll never be, I, I will always be another thing, the opposite of what people think of me and every day that's true. (Mark)

Michael said that even in elementary school he "was always by myself and people thought I was like a little freak or whatever." In high school,

I used to run cross country ... all my friends they like to play football and all that other stuff, so, out of all my friends, I was like the square.... I would enjoy my science class, all my friends wouldn't. (Michael)

He says of himself now, "I like to just be different, just think, just think outside the box, you know think of something different, not follow nobody." Mark echoed this sentiment:

I wanted to be my own person and not be like everybody else. I wanted to be an individual. I don't like uniformity. I don't like hiding who I am just to please certain people. I want to be who I am all the time.... I know how to go to people, to be respectful, to be prompt, and to be proper and to be business and I know how to come to people. I know how to react to people. At the same time, I still maintain who I am as a person. (Mark)

Mark knows the rules of the dominant discourse, but he doesn't follow them blindly. He knows who he is and he knows which rules to follow to meet his needs. He knows which rules he can flaunt. He knows how to be different and how to fit in.

Jay said that he always sees things differently than those around him, and he attributes it to his astrological sign, “Cause I’m a Libra, so I always look at things differently.” Jay said that his Libra nature is to be open-minded and to see things from different perspectives, and it sometimes gets him into trouble: A friend of his was talking to Jay about troubles with her boyfriend and “I was trying to like, maybe he was feeling like this, blasy blah, and she kind of looked at me like, you know, I’m supposed to be on her side or whatever...”

In our second interview I questioned Jay about his sense of feeling different, he responded:

I think everybody feels different [laughing]... I never felt like I didn’t fit in or nothing like that, I always felt like I was in a whole `nother level than people around me . . . because I know I’ve been through things that a lot of people I hung out with hadn’t been through. (Jay)

Mark, Christine, and Alana also commented on being open-minded and seeing situations from multiple perspectives. As described above and below, Christine likes helping other people and believes she can do that because she views situations differently than those around her. Mark also saw himself as the type of person who helps others because of his unique abilities, “I am the person who you come to for help.”

Alana also expressed acceptance of other people perceived as different: “I don’t judge anybody. I can [pause], a person can be walking down the street, holes, piercings everywhere, that does not mean that the person is not a kindhearted person.”

David said that when two people give him advice he usually ends up doing something that neither of them advised, even if it’s not what he wants. He said, “even if it’s not what I want, it’s still different.” As mentioned above, this is still reacting to others, not acting on one’s reevaluated meanings. However, Sax (2007) asserts that

Nietzsche's "will to power" shows up just like this: If you tell a person to do one thing, he or she will do the opposite. Sax states that such an individual "needs to know, and he needs you to know, that he's in charge of whether he stands or sits. He doesn't want you to tell him what to do" (p. 57). For an individual with a strong will to power, the need to be in charge of one's own life will be the most important, even the only goal (Sax).

Christine sees the world through two different cultural lenses. Christine said "if someone has a problem I don't see what they see, I see what I get, I see outside the box." Christine perceived that her experience of two different cultures, her Eastern European orthodox religious culture and her American upbringing since the age of six, allowed her to see things that other Americans couldn't see:

If I was in [home country], I don't think I would have changed, but because I'm in America, it is different, so I see the world differently. Everybody sees it bad and I see, and there are people who have problems and I see them not as bad people, but people who do things against our religion. I won't see them as a sinner or a bad person, I see them as a person who needs help.... Because, I mean, if you were born here, if I only spoke [language of home country], I wouldn't know a different culture. Because here, I know it's America, you don't understand that until you know two different cultures. (Christine)

Christine thought that she was better able to understand people because she understood that people in different cultures behave differently in some ways, and yet there are similarities, constancies, that she could see given her outsider status. With the contrast of her two cultural lenses, she can reevaluate values (Nietzsche, 1877/1989) and see the power games played in each culture.

Even Mark found, in moving from his mother's house to his father's house at age 13, that the rules his mother and father set down for him were different and arbitrary: "I moved in with my father, and they'll [father and uncles] have me thinking another way, but in a sense it made me think that mentally I can take care of myself." Mark's mother

has her own business and owns her house. Mark moved from his mother's house to the one in which his father and uncles lived where one uncle was a drug dealer and continually tried to get Mark to do drugs. These two homes were quite different. Mark's outsider status in his father's home may have provided him with a clearer picture of people's intentions and actions, since he could compare and contrast that with the culture of his mother's house and family. Similarly, all the research participants, given their designation as outsiders, presumably had access to two discourses: the dominant discourse through school and the discourse of their families and communities. DuBois (1903/1996) shares an experience when he first realized he was different, a problem. He was attending school in a "wee wooden schoolhouse" in New England:

Something put it into the boys' and girls' heads to buy gorgeous visiting-cards—ten cents a package—and exchange. The exchange was merry, till one girl, a tall newcomer, refused my card,—refused it peremptorily, with a glance. Then it dawned on me with a certain suddenness that I was different from the others; or like, mayhap, in heart and life and longing, but shut out from their world by a vast veil. (Du Bois, 1903/1996)

Do the research participants feel this sense of differentness in a variety of social situations each day? Du Bois goes on to talk about how Negroes in America are gifted with second-sight:

A world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others. (Du Bois (1903/1996)

Individuals who have cultural capital, who belong to the dominant discourse have no need for the double-consciousness. However, those who don't fit in see themselves through the eyes of the other and through their own eyes. Suyemoto (2004), in a survey of 50 Japanese European Americans, found that the multiracial individuals in his study

saw themselves as experiencing feeling different from non-multiracial individuals, as well as being more sensitive to cultural cues and expectations than others. They also appreciated multiple views and understood the importance of tolerance and the acceptance of differences. The research participants in my study, like Suyemoto's multiracial individuals, have exposure to more than one culture, which allows them to see cultural norms with a different eye, with a "wide-angled lens" (Ladson-Billings, 2000) that allows them to see similarities and differences between cultural discourses.

Jay, Alana, Bob, Giovanni, and Christine had run-ins with the law, but neither Alana nor Christine was arrested. Jay, Bob, and Giovanni were willing to go outside the dominant discourse's approved road to riches by stealing. They were clearly willing to be different than mainstream society, but perhaps not different than some of their friends.

Besides feeling different, many of the research participants described themselves as loners:

I have always been by myself. I'm a loner as I said before. So kids these days are mostly going with the crowd or go with what the crowd does. So that leaves a lot of room for growth that they don't have. So they don't really trust themselves as much, because when they're not in the same kind of group area or whatever it's mostly 'them knowledge'... people are more like, they work in groups. [When they say] "I'm going to the mall, let me call my friend up." If I'm going to the mall, I just go to the mall, get what I have to get, and I leave, but people are more in the group area, I think that's why people are not that independent. (Giovanni)

Michael says that he doesn't hang around with others: "most of the time I single myself away." He said that for much of his time in school he was interested in topics that his friends didn't like so he spent a lot of time alone. Sephiro says that he is alone most of the time either playing a video game or watching people interact. Mark said that he is often alone because generally he feels very comfortable choosing his own way in life. Being different from others can lead to doing things by oneself, being alone.

Alana referred to herself as an “abnormality” in the family. Mark saw himself as an oddball and Michael felt that people saw him as a “little freak.” These labels highlight that our society some times frowns upon those who are different, those who are willing to challenge the status quo.

Unlike the other participants, Lamarr and Bob didn’t express any positive feelings associated with being different. For Lamarr, being different from his college classmates might only remind him of his belief that he is not “college material.” When Bob found that he was different from those around him, it was a “traumatic” experience for him. For them, being different may reflect an estrangement from those around them. However, neither expressed a desire to be like those around them, to fit in better.

The other participants in this study were proud of the different perspective they held. They “like to just be different.” They saw things that other people didn’t see, they were interested in activities that others didn’t care for, they had had experiences that other people didn’t have, they held perspectives that others didn’t readily see.

Most of these participants enjoyed being seen as different, wanted to be different, while many individuals who are different in ways that they cannot control (developmental differences, sexual orientation differences, for example), do not enjoy feeling different at all. They are all too aware of their stigma of being different. Sax (2007) asserts that those with a strong will to power assert their power by being different from those around them, however he provides no basis for this assertion other than his years as a pediatrician and a PhD. He studies boys and men with motivational disorders and thus has anecdotal evidence, but he produces no research supporting this point.

*Sub Theme: Challenge*

When I asked participants about when they have felt most authentically themselves, a number of participants responded with a story about a challenge they had faced. Both Bob and Sephiro challenged themselves by playing new video games at the highest difficulty level, while David finds himself drawn to debating his friends to improve his critical thinking and communication skills. Christine chooses to help others and is able to be effective at this because she doesn't see the limitations that they see. Mark's mother said that Mark was taking things apart and putting them together in new and interesting ways ever since he was a child. David said that he "wanted to shoot higher" when he picked the college that he would attend. Similarly, Giovanni said that he enjoys "taking up the high task" whether it be on the job or playing soccer.

I like taking up the high task or something. I know I might not be able to complete it, but when I do and do well by myself and do good in the process of doing it, and I start feeling really good because I see myself really accomplishing a goal.  
(Giovanni)

Giovanni realized after high school that he could move back to New York or move down to Florida and get a job at either place with uncles who lived there:

Or I could stay down here and strive hard, and everything, to get a good job and build myself up and get like a real estate or some kind of other job outside of school. So there's a lot of things outside of what I could've been doing. But I chose the hardest one. To me, that was the hardest one because I had to learn new stuff, I have to pay for stuff out of my pocket, and I have to have my mindset that when I get out, I guess, I have to have enough belief that when I get out of school I'm going to be able to be something more. (Giovanni)

However, other participants had to deal with challenges in their daily lives to survive. Alana was diagnosed with lupus when she was 15.

I live with the fact every day that I know I'm sick because I have an autoimmune disease, its lupus. I was diagnosed when I was 15 and I know that I have to do what I have to do to stay healthy. If I get sick, I'm sick longer and it's just always

been like that. ... I know that at any given moment that I could die, so I am already okay with death and that's what I do. A lot of people don't come to terms with that so early. But when I was like 15, I realized what could happen and I went through my mourning period. I went through my whole depression period. ... I know that at any moment ... the lupus could attack my heart, it could attack my kidneys, it has already messed up my knees, it has already messed up my back.... There are times when I get really sick and when I get really sick I get really depressed. I don't want to take my medicine. I don't want to do this because I am still with the fact that man I am sick and I can't get better. But once I come out of that slump, I'm like, well, if I die at this point in time, I die.

Alana's response to her challenge is *Carpe Diem*—seize the day. She says that it is her favorite motto. Alana also had an important insight into the nature of challenges: “It's not how the situation is, it's the way you handle a situation.” I think this statement sums up an internally powered outlook on challenges: life is what each individual makes of it.

When Michael was in the 11<sup>th</sup> grade he had to work after school to help bring home money for the family. And in the summer, he and his sister ended up working every day, all day:

And this was my first time for doing this in my life, so I had to step up and I had to help my mom pay rent, you know, I pay the light bill, signed my whole check over, you know and I was barely making it back and forth to work. And my body wasn't, um, it wasn't trained for that type of lifestyle, you know. My mom, she's working, also going to school so we really don't have no car, so you know it was real hard and so we had to walk at least, almost a mile to the train station like every day. (Michael)

When Mark graduated from high school,

I was took from being sheltered and helped and, ‘Oh, you don't have a job, you're in high school,’ you know, to being, from being like 17 to 18, but instead, I was 17, graduated and everyone is looking at me like, ‘Oh well what are you going to do now?’ They just tossed me out into this new world, and I was like, I can't stand it. So I was kind of pushed to have to make new decisions, make new priorities, but I adapted to them quickly. And that actually helped me in the long run, because now I can make my own priorities. I know what's more important than the other, when I do it, making decisions, it helped me out a lot, although I didn't like it. (Mark)

Mark found this painful transition to be beneficial for forming himself into the person he is today, able to make effective choices for himself. He is able to make sound decisions because, "I know my limits, excuse me, I know my parameters." Because of this knowledge, Mark says, "I still maintain who I am as a person. I maintain my dignity."

For Michael, going to college is a challenge he took on so that he could, "better himself in the future." Like Michael, Giovanni sees college as a challenge he freely chose instead of taking easier paths that would also get him where he wants to be. In order to stay in college and complete his degree, Michael broke up with his girlfriend and stopped seeing many of his friends so he could be successful in school.

I told my girlfriend I am not going to be able to see her, like that, as much since I'm going to be going back to school again. And she is selfish, and I had to let her go, that's for myself to be better in the future and for me to be happy.... [he told her] you are going to have to work with me and then in the end it will be rewarding or I'm going to have to let you go. We can be friends, so that was it.... She didn't want to go, I just let her go [laughing] because I wasn't going to go through that, but it's a learning experience, you know, I'm glad I'm going through all this while I'm young instead of trying to go through this when I'm older, you know, because in the future I will be able to, you know, I'll be able to make a better decision. (Michael)

Michael sees this experience of re-negotiating his relationships, and other situations, as "bump your head" experiences. He says, "Once you see it coming again and you would know how to avoid it or how to tackle it on out the other way, you know it will be a smoother ride." When I asked Michael how he was able to avoid "bumping his head" when so many other people would bump their head repeatedly, Michael responded,

I'm wise, you know. Cause I like this: stay drama free and stress-free... [other] people lived in certain situations where they'll keep doing it, you know and some people do it just to please others, you know, what that's like: 'I have to go rob a store' and 'I went to jail', you know, and from where I'm from its kind of like

bragging rights, you know. But to me it's not bragging because actually you basically making a paper trail for yourself, so once they get ready to crack down on you then, then you're gone, you know. So I try to keep a clean record. I try to learn from my experiences so I'll be able to tell others because I'm the type of person where I always want to tell others, like from my experience. (Michael)

Mark, too, sees himself as better able than most people to learn from his mistakes because he says he is a rational thinker who reasons through the consequences of his actions. He says, "I'm not close minded, I'm open to everything, I am open to new ideas, new experiences, new things." Mark said that he is also open to learning from other people's mistakes. Mark said, "I learned a lot of what not to do off my father, which is the only thing he has probably ever taught me."

Michael, like other participants, faced challenges from a young age. Michael's mother was always trying to help those who were less fortunate than her family.

She was always helping her friends out, buying, she would actually take food from us and give it to her friend's children. She would buy her friends' children diapers. For Christmas, we would kind of back off and she would buy their kids some stuff for Christmas, you know. And when it was time for us to get stuff and to get a favor we would be left in the ditch, you know. So, so each and every event we just got stronger from it, you know? (Michael)

The most difficult challenge for Michael however was when he and his family got thrown out of their apartment even though his mother had paid the rent two or three months in advance:

And we never got thrown out until like, thrown out of a house until this past December, a few days before Christmas. And, what happened is, um, my mom paid the rent off for like two or three months and the landlord, he was a slumlord, and he lied to the police right in front of our faces and said that we didn't pay anything... And so it was it was just a sad feeling that day but luckily, thank God was on our side because it didn't rain, plus my momma got paid on that day so we went and jumped, we went and found this two bedroom apartment, you know it's not good ... That was like real hard because I can't stand to see my mom sit there and just cry, you know. And so they started throwing our stuff out, breaking glass and everything. I mean, and, they messed up her white [unknown] set ... I mean,

it was, they messed up everything, threw our stuff out.... But now we got back on our feet, so, every situation made me and my mom stronger, you know. (Michael)

Like Michael, David, too, experienced challenges that he felt made him stronger and more mature. His family suffered through Hurricane Katrina and then, when they went out of town to recoup after that experience, found themselves in a hotel fire in which they lost the rest of their belongings. Alana faced multiple challenges when she moved out of her mother's home and decided to live with her boyfriend and his roommates. She said, "everything wasn't going well, everybody struggled for food because there was a lot of people living in that apartment" and there were many problems and much drama, but she felt most like herself and was happier during this period of her life than she had ever been before.

However, not all challenges helped participants develop their internal power. When David's parents led David and his siblings to believe that they were merely going out of town for Christmas, when, in fact, his family was never going to return to what David considered home, David quit his passion, writing, and has been unable to begin writing again. Lamarr, amidst the challenges of high school, came to the conclusion that he was not "college material" and believed that entering the armed services was his only chance for a future. After his first term of college Lamarr again had to make a decision whether to stay in school or join the armed services because he again feared that he was not college material.

When Christine found that she would need to take multiple classes in her major from a professor who she thought was an inordinately deficient teacher, instead of challenging the professor as she had challenged other authority figures in the past, she decided that she would just take online courses rather than talk to the professor or the

professor's dean. I was surprised when Christine shared with me that she was not going to deal with this problem head on. Christine had challenged her father, her cultural heritage, the head of her church, other professors, and fellow students. Yet when faced with this challenge she decided not to take it head-on as she had always done because she was afraid that it would come back on her and she would have to pay for it in all her other classes with this professor. This may have been a wise choice for Christine if, in fact, this professor had poor integrity in addition to poor teaching skills. I explore Christine's situation in more detail when I look at veiling power.

Challenging situations can push participants out of the comfort zone of their inherited belief systems that aren't working into creating new ones either based on their own values or an alternate belief system from the world around them. Forming a belief system based on their own values and meanings provide them an opportunity of acting as internally powered beings in the future. Adopting, without examination, a belief system based on others' values and meanings, such as those from the dominant discourse, does not provide this same opportunity.

It makes sense that the participants in the study, between the ages of 18 and 24, would want to create opportunities for flexing their internal power muscles. Giovanni, like many other young adults, desires to move out of his parents' home and to live on his own. Alana rejoiced in her struggle when she first moved out her mother's house and later enjoyed moving out of her father's home to live with other people her own age. When David was faced with Hurricane Katrina and then a hotel fire, he chose to increase his challenge by dropping out of high school, getting his GED, and going on to college. While Jay didn't necessarily choose the challenge of a prison sentence, he did find that

the challenge provided him with new ways of seeing the world around him, a new perspective on life.

### *Theme 1 Summary*

The research participants in this study talked about the many opportunities they had to define themselves and their worldview, to exercise their internal power. They reflected on the transitions they are going through as they make their way from teenagers more concerned about what everyone else thinks to authentic individuals acting for and true to themselves. Like Alana said, now that she has found her voice she can act like the person she has found herself to be. Part of finding one's own voice for these participants is realizing and relishing how different they are from others. Challenging situations were found to be a significant factor in helping research participants define who they are. Next I look at role that research participants thought teachers played in the participants' development of internal power.

### *Theme 2—Teachers*

#### *Sub Theme: Strange Attractors*

Many of the research participants found that teachers have been valuable in helping them develop their internal power. The most striking example from the participants' stories is from Alana. Alana's 10<sup>th</sup> grade English teacher was "the strangest most down to earth teacher in the whole entire world."

He made us write these weekly journal things. And we could either write on a topic he had posted for the people who couldn't think, he said for the people who weren't imaginative could write on this topic. Or we could write our own topic and he steadily saw my writings getting darker and darker. Because he read them, but he never let like anybody else read them. He read them. And we had to write a poem ... I ended up writing a really good poem. But it was a really dark poem. And he came to me afterwards and he goes what is going on? And so I talked to him. And he goes, 'You're in tenth grade and you have to live your life.' And

when I realized that he wasn't just saying that to a 10th grader, because people would come to his classroom after [they were no longer a student in his class]. I would go back to his classroom and just sit there and chat. He would shoot the breeze with us, he would tell us like it was and he would be like, 'Look the world is big and bad.' And you hear that from your parents, but when your parents are telling it to you they are telling you in a way which is like, 'I'm trying to protect you.' He is just telling you the facts. He tells you more than your parents will tell you. He tells you more than your family will tell you. He goes, 'Look, life is life. Live it. You got to do what you got a do.' And it was in his classroom where we used *Carpe Diem* the most. And, ever since then, *Carpe Diem* has been my like, it was around the same time that I was diagnosed and it just got horrible, it was really bad. And, so this teacher, even now, I graduated and before I left that, before I left and moved, I went and said hey to like my favorite teachers. And I went to his classroom and we actually had an hour talk. Just me and him. Talk. For no apparent reason. And so he is like, 'Look, this is what you've got to do. And you've got to do it for yourself. People are always going to get hurt'. He was like, 'Everyone in every situation, someone is going to get hurt so you have to decide if it's your turn to get hurt or if it's your turn to get the help that you want and someone else has got to get the hurting process.' (Alana)

Alana brought him up later in our discussion and said that he was the kind of teacher who helped students choose their own interpretations about things. He was also a role model for being internally powered: Alana said, "Everybody hated his class, 200 question tests, three times a semester. Gosh we hated that. We hated his class. We hated vocabulary. We hated English altogether." Obviously her teacher was not an individual who was willing to sacrifice his values in order to be liked by his students. This teacher lived his values and meanings and Alana and other students found that they were drawn to visit him long after they were out of his class.

David, also found an English teacher who was supportive of developing students' internal power.

I guess the reason why is because she was unique herself, but she, she would let us be ourselves. I don't know about everybody else, but I know me and some of the other people I talked to in writing and talking to her, she would just let us let our hair down. (David)

When asked how that was helpful David responded:

Because I didn't feel so much like its busy work and I'm being forced to do this. It was kind of like a 'write how you feel,' turn it in. I'm not checking for what you said, if that was wrong or right, but how you feel, and that kind of helped me to open up, not just in the classroom, but as a person. (David)

The way Alana and David describe these writing exercises sounds quite similar to what Elbow (1973, 1998) calls free-writing exercises. In free-writing, the individual writes whatever he or she feels in the moment without editing or being critical of their writing. The teacher does not play the role of teacher, but rather that of student. Elbow states that free-writing exercises work best in the classroom if the teacher also engages in free-writing and also shares his or her writing with the class as a fellow student, a learner. This reminds me of Freire's (2002) concept of the teacher-student, a teacher who approaches learning from a student's perspective and who looks to students to be student-teachers.

Giovanni found that a couple of teachers were instrumental in helping him develop internal power. Giovanni described the first teacher he talked about as a foreigner who had a difficult time speaking English. He said students continually made fun of the teacher and the teacher knew it but,

He would always teach to the benefit of the building, because he didn't care. He would laugh about the jokes... and that taught me that it doesn't matter how different I come off, it doesn't matter how, how, how 'out there' it might seem. As long as I'm making my point and I'm sticking to my point and I'm doing a good job, and what I'm saying that's really basically it. (Giovanni)

When I asked Giovanni if the teacher had been choosing his own meaning of his teaching and not the students meaning that they found so hilarious, Giovanni said that the teacher choosing his own meaning helped Giovanni choose his own meaning. I asked

Giovanni, "So you don't have to be like him, but you could be yourself?" And Giovanni responded, "Exactly."

Another teacher, his English teacher and soccer coach "really taught me how to calm down, to just play it cool, and to chill" because Giovanni always thought other students were laughing at him. And then, when Giovanni broke his hand, Giovanni thought that that was an excuse to not have to write. However, the English teacher "bought a tape recorder for me. He brought it to school" so that Giovanni could record the lectures. The teacher told Giovanni "to study over it and bring it back to school. He liked basically watched me the whole time and asked me every single question about the topic." Giovanni said that normally he would have just let it go,

But seeing as he was trying so hard, like I really... I really saw myself like adopting this kind of thing that I'm more trying to learn in that class than I ever was before. I was trying to learn. I hadn't studied a thing at all, ya know what I'm saying, but him asking me all those questions, *me* seeing myself as really trying to learn, to grab the full whatever he was saying... so basically he pushed me to start thinking before I act. Don't use my hand as being broken as an excuse to not be able to learn. Or in whatever I'm doing, don't use, like me not having a way to get to work as a way of not getting any money. Me not driving is a way, not a way of not getting anything. (Giovanni)

Giovanni had translated a teacher's lesson from long ago into a current story to remind him to not let accidents of life be an excuse not to strive for being the best.

Michael's teacher for first and second grade had a big effect on his life. He was in a special class and he thought then that the class was for children who weren't very smart, but he thinks now that it might have been a gifted class.

But we was hyperactive kids and we was in a special class you know, ... I was like the hyperist one, and they were trying to find help for me and everything ... I just kind drifted off and tried to do the normal thing in this hyper-realm and um, she took time out to actually ... she would come to my house.... I lived in the projects, but that didn't stop her. You know she was like a little old white lady, you know, that was strong-minded, and she loved black people so she would

come to the worst side of town just to come see me. ... They [parents] knew that I was kind of wild, but she just seen in me that if I would calm down, I would be one of the smartest kids in the class. ... but every time I was on punishment I could sit there, if I was forced to study, I would ace everything. And so that's why she figured out that I was real bright. ... And kids would say that I was dumb, but she would always tell me that you are the brightest child that I ever had out of all the years I've ever taught. (Michael)

Michael's teacher let him know that she thought well of him. She saw who he could be and held that space for him until he could see who he could be. When Michael took the standardized tests a couple years later, he scored higher than anybody in that school had ever scored.

Each of these students had teachers who believed in them, helped them believe in themselves, helped them find that they could do more than they had thought that they could, helped them find their respective voices. I found it interesting that each of these teachers was also considered strange in some way by the research participants, strange enough to be, simply, themselves, following their own discourse.

Some of these teachers seem to have moved their students, while others touched them. Carse (1986) makes an important distinction between *touching* and *moving*. Being moved is related to influential power and refers to being pushed from outside oneself toward a point foreseen by another, perhaps in an empowering way. Touching, a non-physical touch, is connected with internal power, or what Carse calls strength:

I am touched only if I respond from my own center—that is, spontaneously, originally. But you do not touch me except from your own center ... When I am touched, I am touched only as the person I am behind all theatrical masks, but at the same time, I am changed from within—and who touches me is touched as well. (Carse, 1986)

A teacher who is authentic to him or herself can touch a student and transform that student in ways that are integral to that student and that teacher. Carse likens this

touch as a healing, to be made whole. Teachers who know themselves can also help students to know themselves, but not in planned and foreseen ways, but spontaneously, in the moment.

*Sub Theme: Teachers' Power Usage in the Classroom*

I was curious how teachers were perceived by the research participants. All the research participants were clear that teachers in the K-12 classroom held all the influential power and that the teachers were clearly in charge. When I asked Jay who was in charge of the classroom, he said, "After 12 years of school... you always know that the teacher is." David said that he had "never really been in a classroom where a teacher would accept very little from a student before they're going to the office." Lamarr said that he is content to let teachers be in power "because they're supposed to be the head over the class. So I let them do their job." A little later Lamarr commented, "In high school, they will just take you out of class and tell you to come back when you're ready to learn." Alana described a teacher's more subtle use of influential power:

In high school, the whole write-up slip thing would be the biggest thing. If the class was being rowdy that day [the teacher] would walk over to her desk and pull out the write-up set of slips and set them on her desk and walk back and just continue to teach the class and then if there was something, well just the effect on the class would be like, "Okay I'm going to be good now." And it was as simple as that: I don't want to get written up. I don't want to have to be in detention. And it wasn't like, [fake screaming] "Be quiet! Stop doing that now! I'm going to write you up!" [It was] walk over to the desk, pull out the slips. For the kids who were watching they would be like, "She just pulled out the slips, ah they got the slips out, let's kind of be quiet." (Alana)

David shared his favorite example of a teacher subtly exerting her power:

I was in a classroom with some of my friends were, um, playing cards in the back and they didn't think that the teacher saw it, it was during a movie. And she wrote a note and passed it through the aisles and it said, "Bring cards up to me or I'll write you up." That was kind of funny to me: she was just sitting there like, "I don't even have to get out of my chair." (David)

Michael said that some students try to assert their own [influential] power by trying to “out talk” the teacher, while Jay said that students can pointedly not pay attention to the teacher, or—a quieter way of rebelling—go to sleep while the teacher is talking. Michael said the teachers respond to students’ challenge to the teachers’ influential power by trying to act

professional like the first, like the first few times around they try to be professional about it and not get ticked off in front of the class because if you show that then the other students, the rest of the class, they will probably try you as a teacher. (Michael)

If the student continues to challenge the teacher’s power, the teacher will kick the student out of class, write the student up and send the student to the principal’s office, or suspend the student. If the teachers get flustered or appear weak, then other students will think the teacher is fair game to be tested. It has been my experience as a student watching other teachers and as a teacher that teachers need a show of strength in front of the students, especially the first few days of class. Students gage a teacher’s strength to find their boundaries, to find how far the teacher can be pushed.

Students occasionally challenge teacher’s influential power when they feel that the teacher has exerted his or her power in an improper manner, as described above regarding Alana’s conflict with her teacher: As Alana told the story, the teacher had made a commitment to Alana and had broken that commitment. When Alana complained, the teacher threatened to write her up, and then Alana co-opted the teacher’s power by beginning to head down to the principal’s office on her own.

Other students also related conflicts they had with their teachers. ‘Bob’ was really Bob’s middle name and every one in high school, including the principal, called him

Bob, except for his ninth grade teacher who insisted on using Bob's first name, Joey, when the teacher called roll each morning.

And all through high school, I didn't want anyone to really call me Joey, I wanted everyone to call me Bob [his middle name] and he just insisted on calling me Joey and it kind of got to me one day and I just called him by his first name in front of everybody. We got into an argument.... He was doing it to be funny, because every time he do it, the class would laugh and giggle, so he was doing it on purpose. (Bob)

The teacher wrote Bob up and sent him to the principal's office. When Bob first went to the principal's office and told the principal what happened, "she laughed at first" and "she really didn't think it was that serious" of a matter. However, when the teacher talked to the principal, the principal supported the teacher who "insisted" that the principal suspend Bob for three days. Despite a visit to the principal by Bob's mother, the three-day suspension remained. When I asked Bob how he felt when the teacher called him by his first name, Bob responded, "I was rather angry when he called me Joey and I felt a lot better when I called him by his [first] name."

Throughout Bob's narrative of the situation Bob was clear that the teacher was in power and that the principal would, of course, support the teacher because "the teacher has to win." In Bob's school, similar to other students' schools, teachers could take candy, gum, cell phones, game boys, do-rags, and other items from students. The teachers would discard the gum and candy, and the students would not get the other items back until the end of the school year. Often his high school was cold so Bob would want to wear a hat, but the teachers would confiscate hats as well. Other research participants were also clear that their teachers, in grades K-12, had "all the power" in the classroom. When students misbehave in the classroom teachers respond by either

Kicking them out or suspending them. It's always right. Even the system says that it's right. If I get in trouble right now, and you're my teacher, and we're arguing, and you take me out down to the office, you're right because you're the adult.  
(Giovanni)

It is interesting that Giovanni sees me as the adult, and that he does not identify as being an adult in this situation. He still sees teachers and people older than him as authorities, and in relation to them, he is not adult, he is a student.

Some of these interactions may be reflecting the *hidden curriculum* (Banks, 2006) of schools, which is defined as what all students learn, but no teacher explicitly teaches. Students learn that their possessions do not have value and can be taken and held by the school. Students learn that teachers can treat students poorly, but the administration will support the teacher. Students learn that adults in the classroom have special powers that students do not have.

Not only did students accept teachers' power in the classroom, but as Giovanni said, students accept the knowledge that teachers and textbooks provide because they have no reason not to. "Well, if she's teaching me something then well you're just basically there to learn, right? So when you're learning, you don't really care about how dominating she is or whatever like that." Giovanni clearly sees the teacher as *the* source of knowledge in the classroom. Lamarr also saw the teacher as the "head over the class." He said that he started to feel like he wasn't "college material" when he would "get my test back and see that I failed it real bad." When students would challenge the teacher's knowledge, Lamarr was convinced that the teacher was right and that the students knew that they were wrong:

They were like trying to debate against the teacher and tell them that they're wrong. I know in their mind that they know they're wrong. And they know the

teacher is right, but they just trying to make it seem like they know more than the teacher. (Lamarr)

Lamarr went on to say that teachers let students know that the teachers are in charge “through discipline, and, I guess their knowledge when they are teaching you.” Based on this comment, Lamarr seemed comfortable with teachers in the role of ultimate knower, however, when I asked him what he would do when he didn’t understand an assignment, Lamarr’s second choice, after asking the teacher, would be to ask a student who had already taken the class. Sephiro also saw fellow students as an alternate source of information: If two teachers disagreed he said, “probably the first thing I would believe is what other students say.”

Michael took a sociology course in two different colleges. Through this experience, he saw that some teachers make the material easier to understand because “she has ranked up here, but she knows how to get on your level and talk to you.” For the first teacher he had to study and memorize, “There was a whole lot of note-taking and studying,” but for the other teacher, the focus “is not that because she is making everything comprehensible.” David noticed that even though the books appeared different at first, they were the same and he said, “The book never lies, you know.”

Bob and I talked about whether or not it was true that Columbus had discovered America. Bob said that Columbus didn’t discover America, “he accidentally found it ... [and] Native Americans discovered it.” Bob explained his reasoning when trying to decide which teacher to believe if one teacher said Columbus discovered it and another teacher said the Native Americans did “because she was giving the grade at that time, so I have to go with whatever she said.” When I asked him what he believed after the test, he responded: “I started believing her. I believe it anyway because it seemed more

reasonable.” When I asked him what he would tell his kids when they came home and said that Columbus discovered America, he responded: “I would probably let them live it out like my parents did me, I guess because I know I remembered running home and saying, ‘Columbus, Columbus!’”

Christine may look to teachers for knowledge, but when a college teacher said in class that a church is the same as a corporation, she challenged him on that. She did some research and found that in some ways, a church is the same as a corporation because they need to make money to support themselves. After doing some research she reported back to her professor that he was correct in what he had said. She did not accept by rote what the teacher said in class. Similarly, Bob, in college, found that he disagreed with an essay in one of his college textbooks and he was willing to question it despite all the research that the author presented.

Many students found that their experience in a college classroom contrasted pleasantly with their experience in high school. Bob said that it was “kind of a shock to me” that teachers treated students like adults in class. He said, “You can just come to class and wear what you want. You can come out if you want, you can come late if you want.”

Giovanni responds to teachers’ respect by trying to act more grown up: “Like my teacher right now. I probably talked to her as best and as intelligently as I can for her not to think I’m stupid. So she won’t try to play me as if I’m stupid.”

The research participants were quite aware of the teachers who hold power and those who don’t. Mark described a particular college teacher who seemed to him to have internal power.

They've kind of like made their power, I guess you can call it that, dominant from the beginning. Like with one of my teachers I have now, I love her, she is a good teacher ... You learned, but she made her presence dominant from her introducing us. She walked into class, "Hey how are you all doing." It was a Monday morning. I hate Monday mornings. And I was like God its going to be one of *those* teachers.... And I was right. She is one of those heavy, strong teachers. (Mark)

Later, when I asked Mark how this teacher asserted her power he said, "You could tell in her voice and her confidence she was one of those teachers and she is." And, "She never did say, 'I'm the teacher, do this, you do that' or, 'I'm just right all the time.' She just made it seem that way, through her voice."

Mark also told me about a professor from the art college Mark had previously attended:

Like we knew that dominance, of, that he was the teacher all the time, but he presented himself as a laid-back professor, or even a student, if you can call him that. But he was like one of those professors, where he was strict, but at the same time he's not going to bash you for this. He's going to learn how you are, learning your art style... he allowed me to express myself a lot more than other teachers have because they always told me, I've always been told, "All that's wrong or you need to do it this way." He let me get more into my art style, he allowed me to do it on my time... he gave us that freedom, but at the same time he was still overseeing us. At the same time he was like walking with us, in our shoes at the same time. It's just he's already done it before; he's doing it again to show that this is who he is. And I appreciate him for that. (Mark)

Freire (2002) talked about the importance of teachers being teacher-students, who recognize students as people and not as objects to be filled with the teachers' knowledge. In this type of teaching the dialogue between the teacher-student and the student-teacher provides a foundation for the development of mutual trust between them because the teacher is not imposing his reality onto the student (Freire). Teachers like Mark's art teacher take the time to learn who his students are so that he can be more effective in guiding his students' artistic development.

Mark made a distinction between these two professors and those professors “who had that dominance present and said it and you just didn’t respect him for it, because they were, they were just like that.” Mark was clear in his mind that some teachers had his respect and others didn’t, although he did say that he shows deference to those who are older or have more power.

When I asked David to remember a power struggle he had seen between a student and the teacher he thought of an example and then said,

I guess it wasn’t really much of a power struggle, because he, the student, was kind of dominating. I used to feel bad for the teacher... it was more like, most of the people in the classroom. They just kind of say whatever and she would say okay, that’s enough but that’s why I say, I guess it wouldn’t really be a power struggle in that case because they were winning. (David)

David realized that the teacher was not even trying to hold her influential power: students recognize which teachers hold sovereign power (Tan, 2004) in the classroom and which teachers have little power, either internal or influential. David said that he felt sorry for this teacher who seemed weak to him and explained to me that he thought it might have been the teacher’s last semester, as if that accounted for how she let the students treat her.

All the participants in this study recognized that teachers are in charge in the classroom and that they hold power. Students continue to test teacher’s power by challenging the teacher and carefully watching the teacher’s response. Students expect that the administration will always back the teacher, even if the teacher is in the wrong. Students noticed that teachers show students more respect in the college classroom and some participants enjoyed that respect and wanted to continue to receive it. Because the participants had seen teachers as having absolute power in the classroom before college,

they were likely to think that teachers did know and hold the information that they, the students, needed. Students like Giovanni and Lamarr still see teachers as the authorized knowers in the classroom—they trust teachers as the providers of knowledge.

*Sub Theme: Other Role Models*

Besides teachers playing significant roles in student's lives, almost all students referred to their mothers when they talked about role models of internal power. They also saw their mothers as holding influential power and modeling that. Of course, Alana responded that her mother is not a power in her life, but most other participants saw their mothers as playing an important role supporting internal power in their lives.

When I asked Mark if there was someone who had helped him to choose his own meanings about things, Mark responded

Just the way I was raised. I was raised with my mother most of my life, I love my mother to death. I put my mother through things, she has put me through a lot of things, but overall, I get the general concept of what she was teaching me and she was raising me, but I just took them to my own ethics and my own morals and meanings ... when I moved in with my father when I was 13 ... I was fully raised by then. (Mark)

In our second interview, Mark said that she “raised two kids on her own, her own business, her own house, nobody else's help.” Mark mentioned his mother a number of times in our discussions and he always talked about her with great affection in his voice.

David said that his mother was one of his role models because

when our house caught on fire in 2001, staying with, you know other people, she just was always, like there for me.... I will be kind of like that person, who being there for them [my children] all the time like my mom was for me.” (David)

Michael felt that besides his first and second grade teacher, his mother had taught him much about internal power. His mother's parents died when his mother was 10 or 12

and Michael said that his mother raised herself from that point on. Then when she was 15,

She went to the streets for love and that's where she met my dad. ... She got pregnant by him, you know, and moved down here. ... It was straight hell, you know. It was still kind of racist down here. ... She and my dad got like a divorce. ... She used to walk 10 to 12 miles everyday to a nursing home to get to work, because people didn't want to, um, give her like a ride home, but she was the kind of person that she would give the coat off her back, you know? She was always helping her friends out, buying, she would actually take food from us and give it to her friends' children. She would buy her friends' children's diapers. ... She would buy their kids some stuff for Christmas. (Michael)

She also set an example by always helping her friends who might have less than she and her family had. Michael said that he still “sticks up under his mom” to get real guidance from her and he sees her as someone who can be a “tour guide” through life. However Michael doesn't only see his mother as a tour guide for him: he said that he thinks he develops his internal power from listening to the advice of other people and then interpreting that advice for use in his life. This is similar to what Mark said about learning from other people's mistakes, not just your own. By listening to the teaching stories of others, Mark and Michael can apply those lessons to their own lives and not have to make the same mistakes that others have made. Alana also noted this possibility, but she said that a lot of times, each person has to touch the stove themselves to see if it is hot or not.

Jay and Lamarr both said that their fathers were role models. Jay said that his father was because his father had been addicted to drugs and had managed to kick his drug habit. “[Now] he don't smoke, don't do nothing. He, you know he lectures me all the time. Yeah, so I look to him and kind of, if he can do it, I can do it, yeah.” My father,

too, served as such a role model for me. I admired the hard work and intense self-examination he underwent to become and maintain his sobriety.

As I did with the research participants in this study, Ankeny (2003) also found that family members, like parents, grandparents and spouses, played a major role in students' lives. Ankeny explored the factors influencing the success at college of another group of students considered at high-risk of dropping out of college, students with learning disabilities (LD). Ankeny found in her narrative inquiry study with four students that family members often played a more significant role than teachers did in helping students with LD be successful in college.

Research participants also found role models for internal power outside of the family. David said that his girlfriend is one of his role models because she stays true to herself and encouraged David to, as well. "She is like, if you don't be yourself around me, I feel like I am with somebody else."

Christine also had a friend who exhibited independence of spirit and mind:

My friend that passed away a couple of years ago. She would go against what we believed in, but she would still come to church, believe in God. She would, you know her hair would be done, her nails would be done and everything that is against our religion to do, but, and if anyone went up to her and, you know, told her it would be wrong, then my friend would actually have a comeback.  
(Christine).

Christine's friend showed that she could believe in God, but do it in her own way, according to her own attitudes, values, and meanings. I don't know if she was acting from internal power, but she does show some flexibility of thinking that could help an individual see things from a different perspective, from a viewpoint chosen by oneself.

Michael said that other role models he had were the hip hop rappers Common and Outkast.

It's like they are all conscious rappers, but they wear anything that they want to wear, they are free, they are free spirits, you know, they have their own religion, but they're not scared to learn somebody else's religion, you know. And I mean they respect anybody. ... I mean they are just real brave. They're not scared to walk out and they're not scared to speak their mind. So that's what I get from them. Plus my mom is like that, too, you know, and my grandmum. Um, both of them is just like that. (Michael)

I know that many music stars sell their recordings by creating an image of an individual who rebels against society. However, what impressed me about Michael's comments was his comparison to his mother and grandmother. Such a comparison made me think that Michael had seen beyond the sales pitch into a more fundamental aspect of these two rappers. In our conversation about them, I brought in Malcolm X because I had been impressed with Malcolm's statement that he "had never been so truly free in my life" as he was when he read voraciously during a long prison sentence. I was impressed that an individual could feel free despite the fact this he was physically imprisoned.

Michael responded: "They couldn't break him" and then:

Something like that: if nobody can break you it seems like everything around you is a big floor. You are in your own world, but you know, you know the rules and stuff, so you abide by them, but still you have your own beliefs and how you see life and everybody else probably don't see something that you see, so I think that person do have a gift.... like if he's a good person then everybody can overcome oppression and all that other stuff is going on right now you know versus being ruled by like a certain race or by your job or something you know. You can be your own person. (Michael)

I think that what Michael describes here fits with Macedo's (2002) description of how Freire (2002) describes the development of critical consciousness: Michael is describing the process of how a person names his world. He also points out that other people can learn from this individual, but he does not say that the individual does it so that he can change the world. He names the world for himself. Others can learn from his example, from his modeling of an internally powered person.

Michael and I also talked about the difference between religion and spirituality at this point and about how a strong spiritual belief can help a person develop internal power, but sometime some religious people don't. Then Michael said,

From what I've seen from some people that are his followers, they tried to be that person or like their God. They tried to get to that status, but they don't know what it took. And they don't know how to think like that, because they're not actually trying to take time out to actually think about how that person got to that level and are just trying to jump up to the top you know. It's like someone just coming on the job trying to be the boss. I've got to work my way up, to understand everything. (Michael)

Here Michael points out the problem with trying to model internal power (or any other quality): people can think that by acting as others act, that they have become like that person. Without doing the real work, however, like reevaluating one's values, an individual does not embody what it means to be internally powerful. Michael sees beyond the glamour to the foundational work required to be a strong, independent thinker.

When I was a graduate student working on my master's degree, I had to give a presentation at the end of the first year to the department regarding my progress. Many of us gave a practice talk to friends a few days before and we all agreed that my presentation was horrible. Despite everyone's advice, I was lost and didn't know what to do about it. The next day a woman came to visit the department for a job talk and interview. Her job talk was a revelation for me. I realized then that in my bachelor's and master's education, I had had only male professors. I had no idea how to be a woman and a professional. When I tried to follow the examples of male professors, I was stilted and awkward. Even though she and I were dissimilar personalities, I "got" something from her that no male had ever been able to provide.

In my first pilot study, I found that the women I interviewed also found that female role models opened up new worlds of possibility to the women. I imagine that a good role model is not only the same gender, but also is the same race or provides another factor of similarity that is especially important to a given individual. As Michael said, individuals in his neighborhood were robbing stores for “bragging rights.” Icons like Common and Outkast appeal to Michael because they represent individuals who have “overcome oppression” and are not “ruled by those of another race.” They are successful and serve as positive role models.

Role models also served as the major influential power source for the research participants. When I asked Bob at the end of our first discussion, who the ultimate authority was in his life, he said that it was his mother. When I asked him if he thought that he would ever be his own authority he said he’d never thought about it like that but that he thought it was a possibility. In our second discussion, I asked Bob who was the most powerful person in his life and again he said that it was his mother.

When I asked Giovanni who was the fundamental authority in his life he responded:

My mom because she basically surrounds the whole concept of my life, right. Me and my mom never gets along for more than two months... and then maybe one day we’re going to have an argument and then another two months we’ll have another argument.... But my mom basically surrounds my whole life. “Get into school, Giovanni.” “Ma, I don’t want to go to school.” “Get into school.” Do you know what I’m saying? Eventually I get into school. “Giovanni, get your driver’s license.” “Mom, I don’t want to get my drivers license.” And eventually I’m going to get that. So basically she tells me in an indirect way or in a direct way, per se to make me do things but I don’t do it. But by the end of the day, I’m going to do it because my mom said so. If my mom is saying that, I know she’s been there for me from day one, so yeah, my mom is fundamental. (Giovanni)

Ilcan (1996) found that those who hold what I call influential power often do so under the guise of protection and support. Then those who are protected and supported are viewed as weak and in need of help. Parents and teachers rightly care for their children and students, but that care can keep individuals in need of more support. In recent studies on helping students with learning disabilities transition to college, researchers are finding that providing help to students with learning disabilities actually leaves them less prepared to take care of themselves in the real world (Hoffman & Field, 1995; Field, Sarver, & Shaw, 2003).

### *Theme 2 Summary*

Besides teachers, parents also served as role models for internal power and served as guides and authorities for the participants. Some parents, like Mark and Michael's mothers, helped to foster internal power by encouraging, modeling, and supporting independence of thought and action. Despite the fact that Michael still seeks advice from his mother and other older people in his life, I think that he is acting wisely, rather than dependently: Michael listens to their stories about life and then interprets them and applies the lessons to his own life. The participants also found role models for internal power among friends and stars. And, some parents, like Giovanni's mother, still serve as foundations of influential power. The more individuals accept that they have to follow the directives of those caring for them, even though these individuals are now adults, the more likely they are to veil their power from themselves.

### *Theme 3—Internal Power Veiled and Unveiled*

#### *Sub Theme: Internal Power Veiled*

Here I describe ways that the research participants veiled their internal power from themselves. As described in Chapter 2, Carse describes self veiling as “a contradictory act—a free suspension of our freedom” (1986, p.17). Individuals choose to forget that they chose to play a particular game because, at the time, they thought that it would best meet their needs. Carse asserts that individuals engage in veiling their ability to exercise their strength, what I call internal power, to maintain a competitive spirit and to test their power against others’ because there is an expectation that once individuals choose to play certain roles, such as students, that they will continue to play by the rules associated with that role. Individuals also veil their internal power because they want to succeed in playing the game associated with that role, such as graduating from college.

David said that life is:

Mostly things you have to do. I feel like the choices you make can have something to do with things you have to do so, um, a little of both I guess. But mostly things you have to do.... Like, um, I felt there was a time in my life when nobody really believed in me, even my own parents. And I feel like, even now they may have some faith in me, I still just feel like I’ve got to do this just so you know, he never should’ve thought that in the first place. So I, I have to be successful. I mean, private jet type successful. I am really going to strive to make it happen. (David)

Later, David said, “I kind of made myself have to. I mean, maybe mediocre would probably be fine, but I just made myself say, ‘hey, you’ve got to do this, you’ve got to.’”

David is veiling his power because he wants to be “private jet type successful.” If he thinks he *has* to do it, then he will strive harder to make that dream come true. David wants to prove to himself and to his parents that he can be successful, partly because his father is not around that much:

[My father] lives in Saudi Arabia, so whenever he comes I'd try to show him how much I've matured and ... hopefully what he sees in me is, is enough to make him say, 'Okay even though I wasn't here, he still made a man out of himself.'  
(David)

David's sense of self, of being a man, is strongly tied to being "private jet type successful." This is a very serious game for him. In order to play seriously, he needs to forget that there is any choice in the matter. Carse notes that having an audience can be especially important in veiling our power because "unless we believe we actually are the losers the audience sees us to be, we will not have the necessary desire to win. ... by proving ... they were wrong, we prove to ourselves the audience was right" (1986, p. 88). When David thinks that he has to prove something to his parents, he sets up a situation that helps him veil his power from himself. By convincing himself that his parents are right, that he does need to prove to them that he is worthy, he sets up the conditions in which he can show himself worthy.

Alana has set up a similar situation with her mother. Alana is still trying to show her mother that she, Alana, is being successful, is meeting her goals, and is acting responsibly:

What are you mad at now? I was out of school for a total of a month. You cannot be mad at me. If you want to be mad at me, go ahead. But whose money was paying for [the previous college]? I got that scholarship, I got those awards. And my mom was like, she goes, I paid for that, and I was like, no you didn't even pay the \$200 down for the room. I did that with all my graduation money. ...I can ask for help if I need it, but if there is a way that I don't have to ask for help, then I won't ask for the help. Because if I can show to myself that I can do this then that shows everybody else that I did it.... I'm here and I'm in college and I've got a job and what that tells my mom, I don't say ha ha I did it. I can just hear it in her voice that she knows that she was wrong. She knows that I'm doing well. She misses me. She understands that I was able to do what I wanted to do. And I've done it. (Alana)

Alana is still trying to show the audience, her mother, that she is not a loser. By replaying and possibly re-creating this dialogue Alana has with her mother, Alana has the opportunity to veil and then unveil her power, at the moment of victory, to herself.

Christine, too, wants to succeed in the college game as she is concerned about her ability to be successful because one of her teachers was not doing a good job at all:

I have this class, I'm not going to mention the teacher, I think she is a really bad teacher. She, the whole class asks her for examples. She says no, we are going to continue. We all looked at her like we're shocked: We're paying you. What we're asking you for, you know, an example.... She talks to us like we are her children. She actually said it, 'I am treating you guys like a four-year-old child.' And we are looking at her like that's not fair, and she was laughing about it too. ... it's just, and she's teaching three of the classes. (Christine)

Christine and I also talked more about this situation after I turned the recorder off.

Christine was really concerned about having to take more classes with this particular professor: She thought that the teacher was incompetent, acted inappropriately, and brought her students more confusion than understanding. Christine realized that she would have to take more classes with this professor so Christine decided not to say anything to the professor or the professor's supervisor regarding the ineffectual teaching. This is the same Christine who stood up in the middle of a church discussion and told the church leader that she thought his plan for a church group excursion was utterly flawed. Christine had also defied her father, albeit with her mother's help, by coming to college. Why has Christine acted so differently in these two situations?

I found one clue in Christine's discussion of her baptism. Most people in Christine's church "get baptized around 15 or 16." Christine waited until she was 19 to get baptized because "around 19 or 20 is when you actually start to know everything." Christine said "it was just a great moment in my life, and my friends and my family were

all there supporting me, and my whole church.” Christine felt that her friends, family, and the church supported her. When Christine chose to disagree with her father and church about going to college she did not have to face possible failure in her role as daughter and church member; she would not get kicked out of her family or church. However, Christine was concerned that if she spoke against this professor, who taught other classes in her major, which she would have to take with this professor, that the professor might treat her harshly and then Christine might fail in her role as student. She could get kicked out of school if her academic performance is not up to par.

Christine may also be veiling her power with her father. Christine found that she has high enough test scores to apply to a prestigious state college that would cost less than her father is now paying. She said in both interviews that she would really like to go to that college, but her father won’t let her switch once she has made a decision: “He’s stubborn. But this time it is pointless. It would be a waste of my time actually talking to him about it.” If Christine were to unveil her power in this situation and attend that college using student loans, it might mean making a total break with her family and her church community.

In my first interview with Giovanni I asked him when he might not trust his inner sense of power. Here is an excerpt of our discussion:

Giovanni: Yeah and I don’t want to do anything and have it be wrong. And so I’m scared of failure. So, if I’m doing this wrong, then I will really start falling off my self-esteem. Even though it might not be that much, but it is going to start falling. Even though I’m not thinking it, I’ll think I can’t do college work.

BR: So, you seem very strong, independent and clear about who you are and so on, but if you ran into a lot of experiences where you didn’t know what was happening in school, what do you think would happen?

Giovanni: I think that I would start wavering, I think I start going crazy like because I wouldn't really know what to do.

BR: But, you trust yourself?

Giovanni: yes, I trust myself, but I don't like failure, when failures comes and I'll start not trusting myself.

Like David and Christine, Giovanni is afraid of losing the student game. In my second interview with Giovanni, it was quickly apparent to me that Giovanni was veiling his internal power from himself in another role, that of employee: he was convincing himself that he had no choice but to drop his only class so that he could stay in college.

It happened like the second week actually, because if it was the first week, and, and then my employer, I didn't tell him. Like I have been trying to get this job for like a year and so when I got it, it was like get to work, you know what I'm saying? And when I saw the schedule I was like, dang what am I going to do? And being that I don't have transportation like that, I have to take the bus stuff like that, so it takes me a minute to get from school to work so I had to pick, like, because I'm trying to move out, you know? So I had to pick from school or the work and at the end of the day I chose work which is a bad choice in all aspects because I need an education to get a higher job, but at the same time I have to think about my life, right now as it is playing out.

He needed to work because "you can't go to school naked, and you have to have clothes on your back." When I countered his statement with the apparent fact that he had plenty of clothes, he asked, "How will I have food?" I didn't point out that he had plenty to eat right now because I didn't think that cornering him with facts was going to open his eyes to the fact that he could make choices to stay in school and to work so that he would have money and an education. The only important game in Giovanni's life, when we met for our second discussion, was the game in which he lived independently, away from his parents, with a car. Perhaps he saw less chance of failure at this new game as compared to the school game. Then, in order to push himself to win this influential power game, Giovanni veiled his internal power.

I also noticed a sense of fatalism in some of the research participants. When asked about getting caught, Jay said, "I guess maybe it was just my time." He clarified later than he had never been an angel, and that he "just got caught." He admitted to "slipping up," but also couched it as "it just caught up to me." When he blames his arrest on fate, rather than on his actions, he is denying responsibility for getting caught and denying his power to make choices that reflect his values. This description also reflects the lowest stage of development in Kohlberg's model of moral development. Jay doesn't see the activity as wrong, but rather sees it as an activity for which you receive punishment if you are caught.

Alana expressed a sense of fatalism in regard to her having lupus. "I'm like well if I die at this point in time, I die. And that's what's going to happen and that what's meant to happen. Whatever." There is nothing Alana could do to avoid getting lupus, but she does have some power regarding the course of the disease. Alana admitted to getting depressed and then failing to take her medications, which can make the situation worse.

Christine also expressed a sense of fatalism: "And I also believe that everything happens for a reason.... So if it's something I'm not meant to do, it won't happen." Christine talked about a car accident she had when she was driving and said, "That happened for a reason. I got my neck sprained, and I wrecked the car totally, just gone, and then my friend's spine got fractured." When I asked her whether anyone can ever escape fate, she said "It's not really fate. Basically, you cannot escape God." As I mentioned above, Christine is a member of an Eastern Orthodox Church. While in Christine I can see that this fatalism can be a reflection of her religious sense of

predestination, I don't think that is the case for Jay or Alana. However, it also makes sense that Christine would not want to accept responsibility for the car accident.

Jay, Alana, and Christine's perception of themselves as not being in control is similar to de Charms' (1977) concept of pawns. Pawns, according to de Charms, are individuals who do not see themselves as being in control of their lives. They sense that someone else calls the shots. People who see themselves as origins, however, see themselves as being in control of their lives. They take pride in positive outcomes and take responsibility for negative ones. People are not always pawns or always origins, but some people feel and act as if they are in control of their lives most of the time, while others feel and act as if they have little control of their lives. Westbrook and Viney (1980) found that individuals' scores measuring their perception of themselves as origins or pawns were not negatively correlated, indicating that they are not polar opposites on a single continuum. Westbrook and Viney also noted that origin and pawn scores are not related to internal-external locus of control scores. The researchers saw locus of control as a personality trait and the origin and pawn scales as indicators of causal perception, a state. It makes sense that Jay, Alana, and Christine would not perceive themselves as origins in the particular situations described here.

*Sub Theme: Internal Power Unveiled*

Most of the research participants said that they saw life as a series of choices they got to make, rather than things they had to do. They saw that they had choices. I examine those choices next.

Bob unveiled his internal power late one night. Bob played the "get money by any means possible" game. "After getting in trouble as many times as I did" and then finding

himself in jail for the night, he was faced with what it meant to lose in this game. At that point, Bob realized that he could play other games that also might meet his needs: getting money by any means possible was not the only game in town. Bob had one night in jail to reflect on the old game: "I had some time to think about it." He said that one night was "long enough." At this point Bob saw the college student game as a possibility. In order to play at this new game successfully, Bob had to cut out those friends who still played the old game, so Bob could face the new game with as much seriousness as possible (Carse, 1986).

When Alana lived with her mother "my priority... was just to make my mom happy. And when I realized that making my mom happy was making me unhappy, I had to go. I had to make myself happy. So I left." As described above, Alana had this realization with the help of her 10<sup>th</sup> grade English teacher. Alana realized that trying to make her mother happy was doing more than just making Alana unhappy, it was making her sick and depressed. However, besides dating boys outside her race, Alana didn't make any big moves until her first year in college:

I moved out of my house . [my mother] had gotten upset at me and I got upset at her and I told her that I wanted to end the conversation. She was like, "don't hang up on me." And I was like, "if I'm telling you that I am hanging up, then I'm not hanging up." It got really heated and I was like you know what, I can't take this. (Alana)

Her mother picked her up from college that weekend and dropped her off at Alana's doctor appointment. "I called my boyfriend of the time and I am like, 'Come pick me up, I am not going back to the house. I am not going back.'" Alana realized that she could make choices about what was important to her and how she wanted to live; she could choose her own attitudes, values, and meanings. She recognized her internal power.

When Giovanni broke his hand when he was younger, he saw it as an excuse not to write.

It was my right hand, my writin' hand was broken. ...So he [the teacher] told me to get a tape recorder. And I'm like, no. I'm not going to do work while my hand is broken....So, when I went home he called me up and told me he bought a tape recorder for me. He brought it to school, and I had it, but I just used it to mess with my friends. ... One day I went to class, he took it from me and he recorded the thing. ... I went home with it then. He told me to study over it and bring it back to school. So when I was back at school. I was sitting in class, and he like basically watched me the whole time and asked me every single question about the topic. Now, normally, I probably would just let it go, whatever like that. But seeing as he was trying so hard, like, I really, [laugh], I really ... don't know what I'm saying anymore. [Laugh]. I really saw myself like adopting this kind of thing that I'm more trying to learn in that class than I ever was before. I was trying to learn. I hadn't studied a thing at all, ya know what I'm saying, but him asking me all those questions, I was seeing myself as really trying to learn, to grab the full whatever he's saying, I don't know. So basically he pushed me, in a way, to start thinking before I act. Don't use my hand as being broken as an excuse to not be able to learn. Or in whatever I'm doing, don't use my, like me not having a way to get to work as a way of not getting any money. Me not driving is a way, not a way of not getting anything. (Giovanni)

What impressed me about this story is that Giovanni was able to recognize, after telling me the story, that the lesson he learned then is applicable today: he knows that not having a way to get to work is an acceptable excuse to not have a job or he can choose to find an alternate means of getting to work. Giovanni recognized that he could choose to play the more difficult game of taking a bus to work rather than accept an alternative meaning and game of not having a job. It is interesting to note here that Giovanni, just a few months later as described above, is totally unaware of his veiling process. Just because we can recognize our veiling of internal power at the beginning of the game, such as when Giovanni first started the complex work and school game, doesn't mean that we remain aware of this veiling. In fact, veiling is crucial to the success in the game as described above, it enables us to sufficiently motivate ourselves.

Jay, after having a long time in jail to reflect on the choices he had made, was aware that he could choose a variety of games:

Right now I'm going for my game simulation programming thing, you know what I'm saying. I might want to turn around and go for a psychology degree, you know what I'm saying, cause I like that, you know or I might try to go boxing or a golden glove thing because I like to box you know. Anything. I'm always switching up.

In my discussion with David about seeing life as a series of choices versus things he had to do, David recognized that the choices you make “can have something to do with the things you have to do.” To the point that David recognized that it was his choice to be “private jet type successful,” was the degree to which he recognized his internal power. In our conversation David was able to see the choices he had made. He was also able to see that his mother may engage in self-veiling: “She is strict, but at the same time she's kind of loose. She makes herself straight. I guess it's one of those things she feels like she has to do.” In our conversation he was able to see, to some extent, how and why he veiled his power.

Mark and Christine articulated the distinct advantage they have in recognizing that they and others veil their internal power: they live, or have lived, in two different cultures. Christine put it this way:

I mean if you were born here, if I only spoke [native language] I wouldn't know a different culture. Because here I know it's America, a lot of cultures, you don't understand that until you know two different cultures. And I think Americans don't understand two cultures, because it's hard to put yourself in another person's shoes unless you've experienced it. ... so I see both [native country] and American. I see the differences; I see how they think and how they act and everything. (Christine)

Mark also commented on growing up in two different cultures: First he lived only with his mother's family and then when he was 13, he moved into his father's family. His

father and his uncles lived quite differently than he did with his mother. “They’ll have me thinking another way.” And later he said, “I’ve lived with my uncle being a drug dealer. He’s trying to get me into it. I stood up on my own. I’ve never done it.”

Mark finds it difficult to veil his power. For example, when he became frustrated with what he saw as a professor’s poor teaching, he was able to see that he didn’t have to limit himself to the obedient student role.

I’m like, Come on why are you teaching? Because I can teach this class better than you. You’re doing nothing but going word by word from the book. You really are not a good teacher. And I said that to a couple of teachers—I need to stop talking to people [said as an aside]—actually, though, there was one case in which I told the teacher that she kind of wasn’t good and she was like, oh well see if you can do it better and do this job. And I did do a better job than her, which was the sad part about it. (Mark)

At the end of the three hour class the teacher complimented him on his teaching. Mark appreciated her acknowledgment.

At work, Mark became aware that he would need a Saturday off so that he could attend a required school event. Mark followed the rules necessary to obtain a day off, but his employer was not willing to give Mark the requested day off, even though he had asked with the required advance notice. When faced with the conflict between his role as student and his role as employee, Mark was given an opportunity to recognize that his job had been a game that he was playing because it met certain needs (as was his student role), and that he could choose to stop playing that game. Mark recognized that his work role was getting in the way of his student role, a game more important to him at the time.

### *Theme 3 Summary*

Unveiling one’s internal power can bring about significant changes in one’s life: Bob went from being a thief to a student. Giovanni went from being a passive student—

with a broken hand unable to write—to an active knower who didn't need to be able to write to learn. Mark went from being an obedient student to teacher and from being employed to being unemployed. Alana not only moved out of her mother's house, but she also changed her relationship with her mother: she no longer accepted her mother as an authority in her life; she no longer accepted her mother's power over her. Sometimes unveiling one's power can mean drastic changes that we are not willing to make: For Christine, transferring to another college might mean rejecting her father's power over her, and in so doing, might break her relationship with him, her family, and the community that supports her father having power over her. Recognition of one's internal power is no small matter.

### *Section I Summary*

The research participants expressed positive feelings around recognizing and exercising their internal power. As Foley asserts, "Awareness of power is a powerful act" (1999, p. 248). I would narrow her statement to "awareness of internal power is a powerful act." There is power in being aware of one's self as a powerful being, in being true to one's self as a powerful being. While individuals can experience their influential power, any expression of influential power can be overwhelmed by a greater force. As Epictetus showed, he could maintain his view of himself as a Greek scholar despite his owner's view of him as a Roman slave.

The participants experienced their internal power in creative and challenging acts. All the research participants recognize their ability to define their own meanings, attitudes, and values and they all had experienced exercising their internal power. Some participants, like Mark, Alana, Michael, and David had spent time learning about

themselves through writing, creating, and questioning about and around their identity. As they learned more about themselves, they were able to act more often on their self defined meanings.

Some of the research participants had developed their voice enough that they could consistently act on their own beliefs rather than follow the crowd. The only one who had trouble doing this reliably was Giovanni. He knew that he was in charge of and responsible for his life, but he had difficulty hearing or remembering his voice when he was with other people. Besides Bob, the rest of the participants experienced their voice as unique and everyone but Lamarr expressed enjoying being different.

When the research participants were pushed by external circumstances into having to make their own decisions, they began to hear their own voice, and began to recognize that the power to choose their own way in life, to choose their own way of living life is a powerful and exhilarating experience.

Voice is a powerful metaphor for a person's point of view (Belenky et al. (1986). One's point of view, of course, is informed by an individual's attitudes, values, and meanings. Finding their voice can be a shorthand way of describing the process by which individuals learn about their point of view, learn about what attitudes, values, and meanings they hold, which ones they are unsure of, and which ones they reject. Participants in this study learned who they were, what their point of view was when they were faced with challenging situations and had to decide how to act in these new situations. Their actions in these challenging situations were informed by the growth process they had gone through up to that point and the degree of their recognition of their ability to make choices. Those who recognized their power to make new choices based

on values, attitudes, and meanings that had been carefully considered and who acted in line with those values, their values, were able to find their voice—exercise their internal power. Some participants were able to act with integrity on a regular basis, while others, like Giovanni, sometimes acted based on other people's values.

Of course each person's voice is unique, thus different from others' voices. Yet, many participants in this study focused on being different than those around them.

Half of the research participants found a teacher or other adult an effective role model for modeling and supporting internal power recognition. Those teachers were perceived as strange and unique individuals. These teachers respected their students, supported their growth as individuals, and pushed them to be fully themselves, to be all that they could be. The research participants also found that their parents could serve as role models for internal power by the way their parents lived their lives, by providing an example of internal power.

In primary school, the research participants accepted teachers' influential power. Teachers were totally in charge in the teachers' classrooms. A few students challenged the teacher's power if they felt that the teacher had used his or her power incorrectly, but generally they accepted teachers as legitimate power holders who also held the knowledge that the students needed.

In my conversations with the research participants I found a few instances in which they veiled their power from themselves, but many more in which they recognized their internal power. I asked many of the research participants if they saw life as a series of choices they got to make or a series of things that they had to do. Of those I asked, all saw life as a series of choices, perhaps with the proviso that if you wanted to survive,

then there were things you had to do. As with David, they recognized the power in their ability to choose what they would do in life.

The research participants recognized their internal power when they faced challenging circumstances in which their old way of doing things no longer worked. At this point, the participants found their voice, their unique way of approaching life, and they changed the way they interact with the world. When individuals exercised their internal power, acted on their voice, they found the strength to be who they are, to act with integrity. Individuals sometimes veiled this power from themselves and did so to increase their competitive edge when they found that they wanted to succeed in a particular area. Role models helped some research participants to recognize their internal power, to find their unique voice, by modeling internal power, being true to their own voice.

## Section II: Internal Power and Self-Authorship

### *Theme 4—Self-Authorship*

As discussed in the literature review in Chapter 2, a concept that might be related to internal power is self-authorship. Self-authorship is “a way of making meaning of the world and of oneself” (Baxter Magolda, 1999a, p.6). Baxter Magolda’s definition is similar to my description of internal power, but there the similarity ends. Baxter Magolda, following Kegan (1994), posits that as individuals develop epistemologically they move from an external mode of knowing to an internal mode of knowing in which individuals make meaning within themselves. At this epistemological level, contextual knowing, an individual has “the ability to collect, interpret and analyze information and

reflect on one's own beliefs in order to form judgments" about knowledge rather than accepting an authority's knowledge as absolute (Baxter Magolda, 1998, p. 143).

Individuals can then self-author their lives when they are able to reflect on beliefs and form their own judgments. Given that epistemological development is foundational for the development of self-authorship according to Baxter Magolda, I first look at the epistemological development of my research participants and then explore the intrapersonal and interpersonal aspects of self-authorship.

For this part of the study, I evaluated each research participant's decision making and placed participants in the appropriate category of epistemological development or level of self-authorship as described by Baxter Magolda (2001/2004), Pizzolato (2003), and West (2004).

#### *Sub Theme: Epistemological Development*

"An epistemology is a 'system of knowing' that has both an internal logic and external validity" (Ladson-Billings, 2000, p. 258). The four stages of epistemological development are absolute knowing, transitional knowing, independent knowing, and contextual knowing (Baxter Magolda, 2001/2004). West (2004) compares these four stages of intellectual development to the stages of epistemological development researched by Perry in 1970; Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule in 1986; and King and Kitchner in 1994. Of these four studies, only Baxter Magolda's study is longitudinal, but when the stages in the four studies are compared there are strong similarities, and West convincingly argues "that they are all describing the same phenomenon" (p. 67).

*Absolute knowing.* Individuals in the first stage of knowing, which Baxter Magolda refers to as absolute knowing, see all the knowledge as coming from an

authority. A couple of research participants did express ways of thinking that aligned themselves, somewhat, to absolute knowing. For example Giovanni said, "I accept their [teachers'] knowledge." And when asked about information in textbooks he said that he did accept their knowledge, and that "I have no other reason not to." Lamarr also saw teachers as the knowers and sources of information: Lamarr said that some students will debate what the teacher says and tell the teacher that he or she is wrong, but "I know in their mind that they know that they're wrong. And they know the teacher is right, but they just try to make it seem like they know more than the teacher." Lamarr believes that other students are not holders of knowledge and he sees the teacher as the authorized information giver.

Absolute knowers focus on taking notes, obtaining knowledge from the teacher and showing the teacher that they learned the material (Baxter Magolda, 2001/2004). This perspective is reflected in Lamarr's recipe for success in school: "You've got to pay attention a lot, you have to stay awake during class, and make sure you get your work in on time."

*Transitional knowers and independent knowers.* Individuals in Baxter Magolda's second and third stage correspond to West's (2004) second stage of knowing, the formal stage. Transitional knowers are in between seeing authorities as the only source of knowledge (absolute knowers) and independent knowers, who see themselves as possible sources of information. While Lamarr and Giovanni, still thought of teachers as *the* holders of knowledge, they also recognize that authorities of knowledge can disagree. Giovanni said, "One person might see it one way and the other person see it another. And an instructor might tell me this way and another instructor might tell me this way." In

fact, that situation had happened to Giovanni. At the first high school Giovanni attended, a teacher imparted a fact and when Giovanni came to the second high school, a teacher contradicted that information.

But, like, I believe'n so bad that I knew I was right, to the point that it was so bad, like where we got in an argument and it carried on into the 12<sup>th</sup> grade, like I still had the same teacher. And we still had the same argument... [The teacher] just went right back with me. Sometimes he would be like, whatever, but most of the time he would be right there with me trying to make it a big debate. I think he liked it because I was trying to get into the learning thing, so I think he liked that. (Giovanni).

Giovanni still argued with the authority figure about the truth value of certain information, and he still thought that there was one right answer, but he saw himself as someone who also could know.

At the independent knowing stage, according to West, "if your thoughts have some support, then they are true" (2004, p. 69). I categorize most of the research participants in this study as independent knowers.

Like most of the research participants, when asked what they would do if two teachers presented them with different explanations for historical events or scientific facts, Michael responded, "I know I'm going to have to end up going and researching it on my own". Some students indicated that they would look it up on the Internet, while one said that he would ask fellow students. These students search for support, from any source, and when they find validation they accept the answer as true or correct.

When Christine was trying to decide which college to attend she considered whether a college was private or public and thought about what kind of degree to get, but when it came down to actually choosing the college, she said, "I just chose it because my brother chose it, and he came here and I was thinking, if my brother chose it, then you

know I can't go too wrong with that, so I just came here." Jay also chose the college because other family members had attended, received degrees, and were doing well. Sephiro chose his first college based on the convenience of transportation to and from the school: If his sister was already driving to and from the college, then that was good enough for him.

Independent knowers recognize that the certainty of knowledge can no longer be considered as a given, so they need to find a way to deal with uncertainty (Baxter Magolda, 2001/2004). As Bob said, "I think everyone has their own opinion. You know you're going to think that your opinion is better than the next person's, so that's how I think of it." Independent knowers do not have a systematic procedure for dealing with uncertainty. For example, when asked how he deals with two instructors providing different explanations, Jay responded,

I guess you can either just believe in one or pick and choose. I guess I kind of... break things down and kind of pick and choose... I guess whichever one goes with more is the one you kind of leaning on, because you don't really know so you can do it based on your professor or whatever, so I mean it's kind of pick and choose information, put it together... (Jay)

Christine noticed that "if I speak out more, I understand better, basically." She also realized that she was uncomfortable with uncertainty:

I would rather listen to my instinct. I would take both of their ideas and see if I could find a conclusion to it. I would either go research or something like that and just, and also, so it doesn't confuse me, because I hate being confused or lost. That is just something that I do not do, so I basically would go figure out by myself [rather] than waiting for them to explain it to me. I mean even if they both explain it to me, though they'll still have their points, so I won't be quite sure which one's right and which one's wrong, so I'll just go figure it out. (Christine)

When Christine disagreed with her professor about whether a church can be seen as a corporation as described above, she checked it out online. When Christine talked

about knowledge that is learned in school she did not exhibit blind faith in authority, however she believes that it is important to accept one's faith and to not question God's power in her life:

There's things that I thought I would never change my mind about, but I have. It's like from religion-wise, you can't tell me, I'll never change my mind about, 'is there God' and then also that my religion is wrong. You know with so many religions and everyone says, you know one is wrong. There's just things like that that I won't ever change my mind." (Christine)

So, I interpreted Christine as being an independent knower and someone who believes that it is important to accept the religious beliefs received through one's parents and church.

Bob realized that he needed to take into consideration the constraints of the classroom when he thought about determining which information is correct. Bob said that he would go with what the teacher in his current class was saying "because she was giving him the grade at that time, so I have to go with whatever she said." He also noticed that "I started believing her. I believe it anyway because it seemed more reasonable." After the test, Bob chose the interpretation of the facts that made the most sense to him. He saw himself as someone who could know.

In a different situation, Bob found himself in a difficult conundrum. He read an essay in his college English class and he disagreed with the author's conclusion. Bob had never thought about the question under discussion, but he felt strongly that his own belief was correct. When I asked Bob if one teacher's or author's opinion could be more correct than another he paused and then said, "I wouldn't. Like I said before, I wouldn't think so because I think everybody has their own opinion about things." When I pushed him further with more questions, he responded

Although he had a lot of research... I was about to say if some more research was done about it, but he had a lot of facts, a lot of researched facts in his article. It just sounded far-fetched to me when I read it. (Bob)

Bob's response indicates that he senses that some knowledge is more reliable than other knowledge: Baxter Magolda's (2001/2004) contextual knowing is based on such a systematic procedure. Bob recognizes that a well researched and referenced article can be a more valid source of knowledge than just one person's opinion. He also recognizes himself as a knower. Bob is becoming a contextual knower.

*Contextual knowers.* As West (2004) states, an individual can conclude that his or her thoughts are true, "if your thoughts follow the system's procedures" (p. 69). At this stage of knowing, individuals, like Bob, recognize that truth is found by following specific rules within a particular context. Alana's reasoning illustrates this point well:

If a teacher interprets it one way and another teacher interprets it another way and there is not a book, a documented book that has been through all the hoops, been through all this stuff, and proven correct, proven. You know how you have law and you have theory. Law has been proven, theory is just a theory. So the teacher's differences are like theories. If there is a book on it, a book that is like law that could prove them both wrong, it would be like, you're teaching wrong. You're telling us what's wrong. Even though some of those laws have been broken, when it is a law, it is a law. And so it comes to be that way. So a teacher can say one thing and another teacher can say another thing and what you have to take from that is that if you really want to know the truth on it, you research it yourself. (Alana)

Alana alludes to the scientific method and perhaps a peer-reviewed process. She understands that some research has enough support that individuals, like scientists, promote that knowledge to the status of a law of nature. However in her last sentence, Alana does not indicate that a person would have to research documents that had been through "all the hoops" in order to know the truth.

In our second discussion, I asked Alana whether one teacher could be more correct than another about an historical event or scientific fact and she responded with a similar answer about “a theory is a theory and the law is a law.” Then she added, “You learn that in science, but you can take it to history and it means the same thing, the same concept.” I mention her comment because individuals often see a domain like science as consisting only of known facts, while seeing other domains of knowledge as more flexible. Alana recognized the different domains had similar systematic processes that could be used to gain new knowledge. She has no way to compare dissimilar domains, which is the purview of a meta-systematic knowing.

*Meta-systematic knowers.* Although Baxter Magolda (2001/2004) does not explore this level of knowing, I think it deserves a short explanation. West (2004) says that thinkers at this stage conclude, “If your thoughts are based on the principle, then they are likely to be true” (p. 69). Meta-systematic knowing is an evaluative process that can be used to compare information from different contexts (West). Mark presented an interesting meta-systematic example.

We were talking about, I don’t know how this came up, but we were talking about music and comic book characters. And, if a certain comic book character had a certain band, or something like that. Who would be better? And we just went off to all sorts of non-existing ideas and theories about how this would be better than that. (Mark)

Mark recognizes that he and his friends are talking about ideas that cross different realities and that evaluating these ideas is difficult, but they used the principle of believability as their standard. Mark also talked about why he defended a friend who was gay: “I was defending my friend because he was my friend.” Mark thought it was important to act on his principles. “You know, from that, I learned a lot about myself,

trying to find out who I am as a person, so I can defend who I am as a person, define why I do what I do.” Mark has taken the time to question himself, to learn his attitudes values and meanings so that he can act consistently on them.

Based on the categorization system of Baxter Magolda (2001/2004) and West (2004), I interpret that two of the participants are absolute or possibly transitional knowers. I think that six of the participants are independent knowers, with one of them becoming a contextual knower. And, I think that one of the participants is solidly a contextual knower, and one is a meta-systematic knower. These categorizations are only based on the interviews with the participants and may not reflect their actual epistemological development.

*Sub Theme: Self-Authorship*

One of the questions that I wanted to explore was whether the students labeled high-risk in my study had their self-authorship “disappear” once they had been in college for a few months as Pizzolato found in her 2004 study. I first explore whether any of the research participants in my study have developed self-authorship and then I delve into the initial and follow-up interviews to see if any moved away from self-authorship once they were in college.

Pizzolato (2003) mapped her students’ behaviors onto the three phases of Baxter Magolda’s (2001/2004) model for self-authorship to determine if they had developed self-authorship or not. The three phases are: *the crossroads*, *becoming the author of one’s own life*, and *internal foundations*. Students at the crossroads were dissatisfied with where they found themselves because they had ignored their needs and wanted more self-definition (Pizzolato, 2003). Their inner voice became strong enough that they were

willing to stop using external formulas to decide who they were and what they would do (Baxter Magolda, 2001/2004).

They began questioning their values and goals (Pizzolato, 2007). Students then decided who they were and how they wanted to interact with others, or became the authors of their own lives (Pizzolato, 2003). They acknowledged the validity of their inner voice and experimented with developing it (Baxter Magolda, 2001/2004), and then they began clarifying their values and goals (Pizzolato, 2007).

Students eventually develop internal foundations that guide them in their lives.

Pizzolato describes fully developed self-authorship:

A relatively enduring way of understanding and orienting oneself to provocative situations in a way that (a) recognizes the contextual nature of knowledge and (b) balances this understanding with the development of one's own internally defined goals and sense of self. (2003, p. 798)

Individuals with internal foundations can withstand external challenges and have a solid sense of self (Baxter Magolda, 2001/2004). They are acting on their values and goals (Pizzolato, 2007).

Pizzolato (2003) noted that her students moved toward self-authorship when “provocative experiences” challenged her students’ epistemology and sense of self. When the students in her study had their equilibrium disturbed they either just thought about changing their course, while continuing to follow their old behaviors, or they committed to new goals and values by acting on them: the greater the disequilibrium the greater degree to which they self-authored these goals and values. While some of these events were traumatic (death of a brother by rival gang), they did not necessarily lead students to change their behaviors. However, for other students in her study, less traumatic

experiences (getting arrested) provoked other students to change their behaviors and commit to new goals or values, such as attending college.

The research participants in the current study also had provocative experiences that motivated them to think about changing their behaviors or actually led them to change their behaviors and to internalize new goals.

Lamarr saw only one option for life after high school: the Air Force. Lamarr didn't think he had other options because he didn't believe that he was college material. Then when this college called him "last year and they told me I could be a student up here, I changed my mind and just came here." Lamarr said that he chose college over the Air Force because "[the college] told me about the programs, and I really like computers and all that. And I really like working with computers." He also stated that he would rather be a student because "I know I'm safe and nothing is really going to happen to me." Lamarr enjoys computers and values safety: when choosing what to do after high school, Lamarr chose the option that would best fit his interests and values. He might not have a fully developed sense of himself, but he acted on what he knows, or he may just be reacting to situations that life presents to him. I am unable to say whether or not he is developing self-authorship.

Christine's parents wanted her to get baptized when she was 16 or 17 since that is when most people in her church get baptized.

I believe that the longer you wait, the more time you have to learn the world. I mean, if you just do it when you're 16 or 17, you can't get baptized right there and then because you haven't gone through the ages that you need to go [through]. (Christine)

Christine waited until she was 19 to get baptized because that is what felt right to her. She said that sometimes you have to be able to ignore people. For example her

“whole family tells me that I’m not college material, that I will fail, that I’m wasting my time” so she works on ignoring them and does what she thinks is the best thing for her. From this perspective it appears that Christine may be becoming the author of her life, however, this is not the whole story. When Christine’s family tells her she is not college material her internal process suggests she still identifies with her family:

I learned to ignore them. I let it go and, and, so, just the thought of proving them wrong in about three or four years, it makes it for me so much better. Especially my family, because they hate being wrong and it will be so much fun pointing it out that they’re wrong.... but and just seeing the grades and how far I’ve gone and nobody else has gone... because I’m making the path. It makes me feel, you know feel good even if people behind me, my family will go on this path and do better. I will still be the one, you know, to go through the hard times when everybody doubts and everything. (Christine)

While Christine has acted on her internal beliefs in choosing when she would get baptized and by going and staying in college, it is difficult to say that she has developed internal foundations of self-authorship because she seems to be reacting to her family rather than acting on her beliefs.

Giovanni moved from Jamaica to New York and was determined to “get really serious” about school, but he found that he didn’t do that:

I started to do the same things I used to do like skip school and everything like that. So when I came, like when I just started school here at [this] University, I cut all my other friends out, all of my high school years I have been messing around and not really taking school seriously. Now that I am at [this] University a whole ‘nother me just come out, but I cut a lot of friends off I didn’t have before. A lot of things have changed. I really started getting my mind together when I started at college, and that’s when I thought my life really sent me 360. (Giovanni)

Giovanni came to a crossroads when he moved from Jamaica to New York, but he was unable to act on his values. Now that he is at college, however, he is acting on his internalized belief system. Recently when he went to his job in a wealthier part of town he said, “I saw all these fine cars and all this racy stuff. I thought I’m going to be like that

someday, so I have to do something to better my life.” From one perspective it would be easy to say that Giovanni saw what he wanted in his life and began to develop a set of attitudes, values, and meanings that he thought would get him there, but he may have just adopted the dominant discourse and its picture of success. It is unclear whether or not he has self-authored his internal foundations.

Sephiro sat at his crossroads for some time: he failed out of the first college he attended, sat at home for over a year playing video games and creating them, and only obtained a job when his father continually pushed him to do so. Then, Sephiro saw an advertisement for another college that specialized in video game design. When he found that that college was too expensive for him, he looked at other colleges and eventually applied to the college he now attends. Sephiro found a path that he could take to fulfill his dreams. Unlike the first time he went to college, Sephiro is excited about his classes here, and he completes homework assignments before sitting down to play video games. Although Sephiro sat at the crossroads for some time before making internal changes, he eventually started on the path to self-authorship and is becoming the author of his life.

Bob had developed a record with the law because his goal had been to “get money by any means necessary.” Even though Bob was arrested a couple of times and his mother repeatedly talked to him about making changes in his life, Bob failed to do so. However, once Bob spent a night in jail, his equilibrium was sufficiently disturbed to provoke him to change his behaviors and develop new values and goals. Bob then made the decision to go to college, after consulting his parents, friends, and an aunt who is the only person in his family who has attended and graduated from college. I asked Bob what the important considerations were in making this decision.

Before I considered if I stayed where I was, I would be in jail or be in trouble. When I considered going to college, get some more school, be able to know some things that I don't know, and have a better chance to get a job than not going to school. (Bob)

Bob considered where he was going and where he wanted to go. Bob consulted the only college expert he knew, his aunt. Bob wanted to become something more in his life and he is taking the steps to do so. He is becoming the author of his life and is developing his internal foundations.

David's crossroads came when he was in a hotel fire with his family, in which one individual died. This fire happened shortly after he and his family suffered the battering of Hurricane Katrina.

I was in a hotel fire and that was right after Katrina and so I decided to stop, I was still in high school at the time and I decided to stop going to high school and just to start college early. So I um decided to take my GED. And that was like, I never thought that I would find myself doing but I did. It took a little longer than I expected to get into college but I made it happen. (David)

David dropped out of school at the beginning of the 11<sup>th</sup> grade. When David first spoke to his mother about his plan, his mother thought he was joking, but she quickly realized how serious he was. She supported David's decision. They did not tell David's father, who was in Saudi Arabia, until three months after David received his GED. David disclosed that he is not sure if he would have made the same decision if his father had been at home. I suspect, however, that some of these traumatic experiences might not have been so difficult for David if his father had been present: David is the oldest male in the home when his father is not there. David's priorities changed from enjoying life as a teenager to showing that he has developed as a man despite his father's absence. He

obtained his GED and got into college so that he can be successful. He internalized this set of values and is self-authoring his life.

Michael faced a number of experiences that could push him towards self-authorship, but the most significant one occurred when he was in 11<sup>th</sup> grade and he had to start working after school to help bring home money for the family.

This was my first time for doing this in my life, so I had to step up and I had to help my mom pay rent, you know, I pay the light bill, signed my whole check over, you know and I was barely making it back and forth to work. And my body wasn't trained for that type of lifestyle.... we didn't have a car, so we had to walk at least a mile to the train station every day. (Michael)

And if that weren't enough, Michael looked around and found that most of his friends were locked up, already had children, were addicted to drugs, or were struggling with "some type of sexual life of disease." Michael moved from the carefree days of being a high school student to being a breadwinner in the family. He learned how to "juggle" the responsibilities of work and school at a young age. When Michael started attending college, he found that he didn't have enough time for work, homework, and friends and a girlfriend. He ended up "cutting out" most of his friends and his girlfriend so that he could stay on the path he had chosen. Michael has internalized self-authorship foundations that keep him on his path.

Jay shows evidence of having developed internal foundations for self-authorship in his continuation of his dream to attend college despite having spent time in jail. Jay planned to go to college, and then found that dream derailed when he was "sent away." When Jay was released from jail he was unable to attend most of his first choice colleges because they were out of state and he couldn't leave the state because of his criminal record and jail time. Because Jay was quite protective about sharing his inner life, it is

difficult to know what experiences pushed him to develop the internal foundations necessary to stay committed to his dream despite major setbacks. Unlike the students in Pizzolato's (2003) study, Jay chose to seek information on his own for the college application process and proceeded to make all decisions on his own. He said that having so much time alone in jail led him to prefer making decisions by himself.

Alana came to her crossroads moment when she was diagnosed with lupus at age 15. Her narrative describing her thoughts about her diagnosis provides insights into her epistemology and self-authorship.

Everybody has their stuff that they go through in life, it's just that everything that I go through, everyone is like how come you always do risky stuff. ... And I was like because I live with the fact every day that I know I'm sick because I have an autoimmune disease, its lupus. I was diagnosed when I was 15 and I know that I have to do what I have to do to stay healthy. If I get sick, I'm sick longer and it's just always been like that.... I really truly do live by 'Carpe Diem', live life to the fullest.... I'm like just because I'm sick doesn't mean that I have to live in a bed and be blah. I know that at any given moment that I could die, so I am already okay with death and that's what I do. A lot of people don't come to terms with that so early. But when I was like 15, I realized what could happen and I went through my mourning period. I went through my whole depression period. Then I was like screw it, I'm still alive so who cares... I know that at any moment ... the lupus could attack my heart, it could attack my kidneys, it has already messed up my knees, it has already messed up my back.... There are times when I get really sick and when I get really sick I get really depressed. I don't want to take my medicine. I don't want to do this because I am still with the fact that man I am sick and I can't get better. But once I come out of that slump, I'm like well if I die at this point in time, I die. And that's what's going to happen and that what's meant to happen. (Alana)

Throughout my discussion with Alana, she demonstrated that she had internalized the phrase *Carpe Diem*. When faced with challenges that might have prevented others from continuing with their college education, Alana found ways to continue her education. In an eight month time period, Alana moved out of her mother's home, lived with her boyfriend and other friends amidst great drama, moved to live with her father

who pushed her out of his home, and eventually moved into an apartment with another group of students and friends. Alana has a commitment to continue her education in college and she apparently has developed the self-authorship internal foundations to make that happen rather than be controlled by these external events.

I think Mark would say that his crossroads occurred when he turned 13 and moved from his mother's home into a house shared by his father and uncles. Mark had been using the external formulas provided to him by his mother and her family. When Mark moved into his father's family, it would make sense that some of these external formulas would no longer work: "I moved in with my father and they'll have me thinking another way." This move pushed Mark into reflecting on who he was: "Living with [my father] made me realize that I was already raised at 13. I was already mature and took responsibility." After Mark moved into his father's home he heard his mother and father argue about how Mark should be raised. Mark decided "I should interpret my own way and get my own meaning from it." Mark decided to "interpret it myself, I'll come to who's right, who's wrong or what I think should be done." When Mark graduated from high school he faced another crossroads.

I was took from being sheltered and helped... [and] they just tossed me out into this new world, and I was like, I can't stand it. So, I was kind of pushed to have to make new decisions, make new priorities, but I adapted to them quickly. And that actually helped me in the long run because now I can make my own priorities. I know what's more important than the other, when I do it, making decisions, it helped me out a lot, although I didn't like it. (Mark)

Mark thought "outside the box" from an early age (age 6), when he started creating new toys out of old ones. He is confident in his ability to make decisions that are well thought out: "I learn from my mistakes... I know consequences when I see them, I know how to think logically. Things don't influence me like how you know anybody else

would. I think rationally.” Mark has thought deeply about who he is and where he is going: “I know how to react to people; At the same time, I still maintain who I am as a person.” Mark has developed the internal foundations for self-authorship.

Like the students in Pizzolato’s (2003) study, the research participants in my study had to develop their own means for success when faced with crossroad experiences. Many participants developed strong internal identities that provide them with a value system that supports their long-term goals, such as finishing college and finding a job in their fields; they have the internal foundations of self-authorship. A few participants are becoming the author of their lives, but have yet to develop the internal foundations that allow them to consistently work towards their goals. A number of research participants commented that they often took the harder path, because they were making decisions for the long run. They are committed to and acting upon specific goals.

*Sub Theme: Disappearing Self-Authorship?*

Pizzolato (2004) found that the students in her study, “through inter-actions suggesting they were less capable than their peers ... began to question their own abilities” (p. 431). In my study, Giovanni shared such a fear in our first discussion. Giovanni said that the teacher assigned college homework for the first time to be completed in class. Giovanni didn’t understand it because the teacher had asked in a way that he didn’t understand and so he didn’t know what to do. He commented:

Maybe college students, how their thinking is way different than how I think, you know? I’m just out of high school. I’m a freshman so it’s way different from how I think. So when she was telling some of those kids, they got it like this, like it was nothing. But I’m in class and I’m like, what? You know? I’m asking a friend next to me and she goes, I don’t know, but she still got it, she still did the assignment by the time it was to turn it in. But I didn’t get the chance to do it because I didn’t know what to do. (Giovanni)

When I asked him about this Giovanni admitted that he was scared of failure. “I think that I would start wavering, I think I start going crazy, like, because I wouldn’t really know what to do.” Giovanni had found a way to get back on his feet after being caught stealing twice. After the last time, Giovanni said that it was a lot of work to rebuild relationships and trust with those around him. This experience suggests that Giovanni was beginning to self-author his life.

However, Giovanni told me about a few different situations in which he had to cut out friends of his life so that he could be his own person. “So it’s like every time I try to be around a group of some other people and I start like... being them instead of being me and I am me, by myself.” Giovanni internalized other people’s expectations even when they were inconsistent with his sense of self. As described above in the epistemology section, Giovanni still sees teachers as the only holders of knowledge, although he recognized that one authority could “have more substantial facts to something” than another. Giovanni is still at a transitional stage of epistemological development and he recognizes that he could be more successful if he changed his behaviors and goals, but he has not experienced sufficient disequilibrium to actually bring about this change in his life. Has his budding self-authorship begun to disappear?

In our second interview, Giovanni’s priorities had changed from “school, school, school,” to work, a car, and independent living:

So I had to pick, like, because I am trying to move out, you know. So I had to pick from school or the work and at the end of the day I chose work, which is a bad choice in all aspects because I need an education to get a higher job.... See, I got this job and now I can get a car, and I can get to school more earlier, I can get to school more efficient ... so actually the job helps me to get a car to get to school. (Giovanni).

Did school present too many challenges to his developing sense of self? Has he changed his priorities to meet his internal goals, or is he still focusing on external formulas for success?

In my second interview with Christine, I asked her when she felt most powerless and she responded “Basically when I started school. I felt really like I was doing the wrong thing basically.... Starting college, going against my parents, actually against my father’s will.... I just kept re-thinking if I made the right choice or not.” I was surprised to hear this because in my first discussion with Christine, a few months earlier, she seemed very proud of the fact that she was going to college and that she might open the same possibility for her niece and nephew. She saw herself as a “trail blazer” then, now she was consumed by doubts. In the second interview Christine also disclosed that she was unwilling to confront a professor whom she thought was a poor teacher. She was reluctant to confront the teacher because she needed to take further classes from this same professor. Given that Christine stood up to her father so she could attend college and her disclosure that she had skipped many of her required nightly church meetings so she could continue attending college, I was surprised that Christine did not talk with this teacher. However, perhaps Christine, like the students in Pizzolato’s (2004) study, had also begun to question her academic abilities since she was having a difficult time in this professor’s class. Her parents had repeatedly told her that she was not college material. When we talked about this in our first interview, Christine was looking forward to proving them wrong. Perhaps she began to think that her parents were correct. Christine often acts as author in her life, yet she has a formidable parent who has convinced Christine that he knows what is best for her.

Lamarr had faced such fears while he was still in high school. He believed that he was not college material, so he saw the military as his only option after high school. Then he received a call from a college admissions office and the representative told Lamarr that he could be a student at this college. However, in between our two interviews Lamarr again faced his fear that he was not college material. He didn't say what had made him wonder again, but he said he talked to an older sister who had dropped out of college. "She told me that I didn't need to drop out because then I'll be working all my life at a job I don't really want to do." Lamarr decided that he would stay in college and complete his degree. In my estimation, Lamarr is still developing his ability to self-author his life. He has changed some behaviors, such as paying more attention in class and working more diligently on his part of group projects, however he says that he still puts off doing homework for too long and takes short cuts in completing many assignments. He does not have a solid sense of who he is, where he wants to go, or what his internal foundations are.

Giovanni, Christine, and Lamarr are still struggling to author their lives. Despite their ability to change their behaviors and begin to author their lives, they have yet to establish any foundations on which they can rely.

Have any of the other research participants who had developed self-authorship and internal foundations moved farther from self-authorship as they faced struggles in college? In our second interview, over eight months after she moved out of her mother's, Alana was still struggling to free herself from her mother's internalized voice, but Alana still trusted herself, lived according to her values, and focused on succeeding at college. Bob had developed such strong foundations for his self-authorship that he viewed math

classes, which he used to dread, as classes he chose to go to because he wants to. Sephiro is choosing to spend more time with other students outside of class, but is still focused on doing well in his classes. Mark, David, Jay, and Michael remain focused on their paths to success.

Using the three phases in the continuum of self-authorship—the crossroads, becoming the author of one’s life, internal foundations—I interpreted that seven of the 10 students were developing strong internal foundations for self-authorship. The other three students are still becoming authors of their lives. However, based on epistemological development, only Alana and Mark had reached the contextual stage of knowing. I explore this discrepancy in the discussion section.

### *Section II Summary*

Besides exploring internal power, I also looked at the research participants’ epistemological development and their degree of self-authorship. Only 3 of the 10 participants had developed to the contextual level of knowing that Baxter Magolda (2001/2004) says is needed for students to self-author. However, using Baxter Magolda’s crossroads metaphor, as used by Pizzolato (2003, 2004), all the research participants developed at least to the becoming the author of one’s life and seven had developed the internal foundations of self-authorship. The three participants who were becoming the authors of their lives did show signs of wavering and perhaps moving away from self-authorship, but there was no consistency in their movement toward or away from self-authorship.

Those participants who exhibited internal foundations of self-authorship were also the ones who recognized their internal power and exercised it the most. Only a few of

those participants, however, had the epistemological development that Baxter Magolda (2001/2004) and Keegan (1994) assert is necessary for self-authorship development. I explore the nature of these two concepts, internal power and self-authorship, in the discussion section.

### *Findings Summary*

As reviewed at the end of Section I, I found that “finding one’s voice” served as a metaphor for the research participants to describe their experience of recognizing their internal power when they were faced with challenging situations. However, if they only recognized their internal power, but didn’t exercise it, as was the case with Giovanni, they remained stuck at the mercy of other people’s influential power. When the participants acted on their attitudes, values, and meanings, they felt powerful and happy. Most of the research participants reported feeling different from others around them. Research participants who found teachers to be role models for internal power described those teachers as strange and unique, different from other teachers.

Research participants reported that teachers held all the power in the typical K-12 classroom and some of the participants talked about the pleasant difference in the college classroom in which students were respected as adults.

Although only a few of the research participants had the epistemological development required by Baxter Magolda’s (2001/2004) model, all them appeared to have developed or were in the process of developing self-authorship. This apparent conflict is explored in the Discussion.

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION

The primary goal of this study is to explore research participants' experience of internal power. I want to understand their perceptions of internal power and how that might relate to their exercise of internal power. And, I want to see what connections there are between internal power as described by philosophers and internal power as experienced by the research participants. Connected to understanding the nature of internal power is exploring what role teachers and other role models play in helping participants recognize and exercise their internal power. How does teachers' use of power, both internal and influential power, effect students perception and exercise of internal power? Also, what effect does students' or teachers' exercise of internal power have on student learning?

A secondary goal of this study is to explore the similarities and differences between internal power and self-authorship. What are the underlying differences between self-authorship and internal power? Furthermore, I want to understand the role of epistemology in self-authorship and understand the degree to which self-authorship is dependent on epistemological development.

I interviewed 10 research participants labeled high-risk according to the Noel Levitz CSI-B survey. Nine participants identified as Black or African American and one identified as Eastern European. Eight participants were males and two were females. I interviewed each participant twice for a total of about 60-90 minutes. I met all but one of

the participants in a library study room on the campus of business and technology college in the Southeastern United States.

To address the goals of this study, I first describe, in Section I, the research participants' experience of internal power following the four sub-themes that I reported in Chapter 4: the power of choice, finding one's voice, being different, and challenges. I then address how teachers and other role models use of power influences students, student learning, and students' power. Then I examine how the research participants veiled and unveiled their internal power.

In Section II of the discussion, I look at the similarities and differences between internal power and self-authorship. To this end, I evaluate students' degree of epistemological development and self-authorship following the methods described by Baxter Magolda (2001/2004) and Pizzolato (2003, 2004). In that evaluation, I explore the foundations for defining (Kegan 1994) and measuring self-authorship (Baxter Magolda, 1999a, 2001/2004, 2007; Pizzolato, 2007) and explore interpretations of the data that may better explain the phenomenon of disappearing self-authorship that Pizzolato describes (2004). Then, I examine the advantages of looking at internal power rather than self-authorship for the impact on student learning.

In Section III, I discuss the limitations of the current study and implications of this study for future research and practice.

Throughout the discussion, I include my reflections that occurred during the interview, the transcription process, or the writing of this report. I think these reflections show the impact of my theoretical sensitivity (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). They are an important part of the research process because they reveal my experiences, theoretical

perspectives, and how the research participants and I negotiated meaning (Kleinsasser, 2000). It is important that readers understand me as the instrument of this study.

### Section I: Research Participants' Experience of Internal Power

I describe internal power as the recognition of one's ability to define oneself and one's world and to create and alter the meaning of one's attitudes, values, and meanings without accepting limits from others or being defined by them. When individuals recognize that they and others can choose how they define the world they have the opportunity to exercise their internal power. I examine how the research participants recognized, exercised, and veiled their internal power and how influential power affected students' recognition of their internal power. I do this by reviewing and summarizing the first three themes introduced in Chapter 4: The nature of internal power, teachers, and veiling and unveiling internal power.

#### *Theme 1: Nature of Internal Power*

The prevalent themes I found across the research participants' descriptions of their experience of internal power were the power of making choices, developing their voice, experiencing their differentness and aloneness, and using challenges as springboards to exercise their internal power.

#### *Sub Theme: Our Choices Are Powerful*

The first step in exercising internal power is recognizing that one has the ability to choose one's own meanings instead of blindly accepting them from the dominant discourse. I presented David's recognition of his internal power first because I was able to observe his process first hand. David and I had constructed our own truth in that

moment and I had the opportunity to check on it a few minutes later when we talked about college. Narrative inquiry provides these opportunities for the interviewer and the respondent to actively collaborate as constructors of knowledge (Holstein & Gubrium, 2003).

What struck me about many of the research participants was the joy they took in recalling the moment or time in their lives when they realized that they had the internal power to choose how they would see and relate to the world. Alana and Mark spoke with fondness of that period of growth in which they learned about themselves and found that they could make their own choices in life. Each of the participants smiled at the thought that they were or could be their own authority.

The recognition of one's ability to choose one's own attitudes, values, and meanings is an important step, but what the research participants noted, and what I have also experienced, is that acting on those choices strengthens that ability. Giovanni was only able to act occasionally on his new set of values and meanings, while others, like Alana, Jay, Michael, and Bob were able to exercise their internal power on a number of occasions. Alana continued to act on her recognition of her values. When one living situation didn't work out, she found a new one, and when that fell through, she moved again, each time managing to follow her intention of staying in and completing college. Jay, Bob, Michael, and sometimes Giovanni, were able to let go of or "cut" those relationships that were connected with their old ways of being. They all used the word *cut* to describe ending these other relationships. Their use of that word may reflect the pain and finality associated with ending relationships that had once been meaningful to them.

That they were willing to end friendships may indicate the strength of their newfound convictions.

From the outside looking in, it can sometimes be difficult to determine if individuals are choosing to act for themselves—internally powered—or against others—externally powered. Mark was clear that he was acting for himself, but it might not have seemed that way to his father at the time. Similarly, Bob, Alana, and Lamarr can appear to be revolting against influential power, but they may have been flexing their newfound ability to choose their own way, which is often different from the way of the authority figures around them. As researchers, we can ask individuals what they were thinking about and probe more deeply about such situations to find out what was happening for them. Then we consider their statements and actions within the context of their stated attitudes, values, and meanings.

When the participants in this study react to situations, perhaps to be different or to assert themselves, they are not expressing their internal power because they are merely responding to events in the world. However, when they reflect on these situations and begin to reevaluate their values, meanings, and attitudes, and then change, in an authentic manner, their values, attitudes, and meanings they create opportunities for seeing the world in new ways in the future. Actions alone are not sufficient evidence of internal power.

The participants recognized not only their ability to make choices, to choose their own meanings, but they also acted on their choices. Many participants in this study expressed joy at being able to make choices about their lives: this makes sense in light of Nietzsche's assertion that individuals strive for freedom.

*Sub Theme: Finding One's Voice*

In order to choose their own attitudes, values, and meanings, the research participants needed to develop them by finding out what they were. The research participants shared various ways that they learned and strengthened their voices: experimenting with the world around them to find what they liked and didn't like, acting on their voice and seeing how that turned out, and being involved in the creative process.

What Mark pointed out first was the need to question oneself and the world around us. This questioning is a method taught to us by Plato through his Socratic dialogues and a foundation of philosophy. Mark's questions may not be those of the great philosophers, but they are focused on knowing himself, as espoused by Socrates and the Oracle at Delphi.

Mark's focus on learning to be comfortable with oneself, rather than confident in oneself is an important point. Confidence focuses on individual's ability to accomplish tasks, while being comfortable with one's self focuses attention on an individual's relationship with him or herself. Being comfortable with one's self focuses attention on the integrity or degree of wholeness that a person has.

When Mark talked to me about his ability to express his own power and how that came from within himself, from his own voice I thought about the challenge, for those who are marginalized, in finding their own voice. Upon further reflection, I thought that there must be an equal struggle for all individuals to find their voice. Why is there only literature about how it is more difficult for those who are marginalized? Could it be that students comfortable with the dominant discourse accept the dominant discourse as their own voice, while those who are marginalized are pushed into finding their own voice

when they are confronted with the dominant discourse? This might explain the different findings of Baxter Magolda (2001/2004) and Pizzolato (2003): Baxter Magolda found that her White students didn't develop self-authorship until after college, in their 20s, while Pizzolato found that her high-risk students developed self-authorship before coming to college. I explore this point more in Section III below. bell hooks says that students at privileged liberal arts colleges "feel they are entitled—that their voices deserve to be heard" (hooks, 1994, p. 149), while working class students assume that they have nothing worth saying, that their voice has no value. To find one's voice when it is not valued by those around us can certainly be a challenge as Belenky et al. (1986) found in their research.

The research participants found that finding and developing their voice took time, often time alone, and practice. They couldn't just listen to their voice; they needed to act on it. In my experience, listening to and acting on my voice strengthens it. However, acting on it does not guarantee anything. Giovanni would act on his inner voice and then lose it, act on it and lose it, again and again. Others, like Mark, found that acting on their voice strengthened it. Still others found that writing, creative activity, and imagination facilitated development and strength of their voice.

Elbow (1973, 1998) and Cameron (1992) recommend free-writing exercises to help individuals develop their voice. Free-writing is an exercise in which the writer writes down whatever comes into one's mind without editing or criticizing. Most free-writing practices recommend writing for a time period on a regular basis, such as an hour every day or three hours every week. By spending this time with one's own voice, an individual can learn the qualities of his or her voice, develop it, find out what sparks it, what makes

it stronger. Elbow (1973) describes the writing process: “Usually it was a matter of a halting or even garbled beginning, but you kept going and your speech finally became coherent, even powerful” (p. 6). It is also a great practice for developing one’s voice. I engaged in a year-long free-writing program developed by Cameron and found that it strengthened my voice, my sense of who I was. Mark and Alana mentioned writing often, spending their time expressing themselves through writing, artistic endeavors, and imagination. This may be why they have such a well developed sense of their internal power.

Elbow (1998) also noted that writing in one’s own voice is a powerful experience. When individuals write or speak in their own voice, the reader or listener, can experience “the liveliness and energy of voice” (Elbow, 1998, p. 295). Elbow notes that often an individual’s true voice emerges in a challenging situation and that individuals “get power into [their] words” (p. 295) when they desperately need to make an impact: When individuals are pushed, they will risk letting others read or hear their real voice so that they can express their internal power. I explore this point more in the sub theme section on challenges.

By David’s own account, writing had been a powerful experience for him, a passion. Had the sudden move, although it may have had loving intentions, been such a powerful act of influential power on the part of his parents that David felt his own sense of internal power had failed him utterly, had been crushed? Foucault states that influential power operates on the body. Epictetus also said that the movement of our bodies is not under our control. Can our sense of internal power be devastated by such actions? Now David’s goal is to be “private jet type successful.” This goal is part of the dominant

discourse of our society. Has David lost his dream? Is the music gone for him or will he find another outlet for his creative force? In our discussion David had the chance to see and experience how individuals create their own values and meanings: will this be enough to help him reclaim his own meanings instead of claiming the meanings given to him by the dominant discourse? In Kaufmann's (1974) book on Nietzsche, Kaufmann states that people conform to social norms because "people behave as if these valuations were their own, too" (p. 190) And then "'it becomes second nature' to accept them as their own" (Kaufmann, 1974). This is similar to Carse's (1986) idea that once individuals start to play a particular finite game, such as "being private jet type successful," they think that they must do whatever it takes to win that game. This is one way individuals veil their internal power as I discuss below.

Finding one's voice can be a powerful experience, as described by the participants in this study. And, it can be a difficult and frustrating path when individuals lose their voice in the presence of others. Some of the participants found that they strengthened their voice by writing, creating, and imagining. Others found that they could hear their voice better when they were alone. Would meditation be a helpful practice in learning to listen to one's voice, to strengthen one's voice so that it can always be heard, even in the midst of others? Foley (1999) found in her introspective analysis dissertation on personal power that many individuals found meditative practices helped to increase their sense of personal power. Although she talks about personal power somewhat differently than I do, she also finds that the roots of personal power in the literature comes from Nietzsche. Zarathustra wandered alone in the wilderness before he came to teach others.

*Sub Theme: Being Different*

When the research participants talked about feeling different, I notice that there are many strong resonances between their experiences and mine. I discuss my reflections first and then examine this sub theme.

Like David, Mark, and Michael, I have felt different from others from a young age: I always felt like an outsider. And I focused on how I was different. I remember being so intent on being myself that, like Giovanni who did his chores at midnight and David who chose advice different from his goal, I sometimes went out of my way to show that I wasn't influenced by what others said or did. I wouldn't participate in activities that I wanted to if someone else had said I might consider it or that I should do it. And sometimes I would do things that I originally did not want to do because someone else had said I should not do it. It is like having a perverse need to be myself and to not be influenced by others, or even appear to be influenced by others, even when it might be helpful, yet I was reacting to their influence. It was difficult for me, when I was younger, to know who I was when I was in the midst of other people and heard their thoughts or opinions. Like Alana, Bob, Giovanni, Sephiro, and Michael, I found it easier to develop and express my internal power when I was away from those closest to me, when I was alone.

When I thought about the labels that the research participants attached to their differentness—freak, abnormality, oddball - it reminds me that in my 20s, the people I enjoyed being with the most were people who were willing to be different, who were willing to be themselves no matter the consequences of that. My highest compliment in that stage of my life was to tell somebody that they were really strange. I think that even

then, although I didn't have the ability to articulate these thoughts, I recognized that some people had the strength or internal power to be themselves, to define their own attitudes, values, and meanings without accepting limits from others or being defined by them. I wanted to be able to do that, but I had no idea what to do. As I look back now, I imagine that I was as strange as those I admired. It is only recently that I have begun to see myself as a strong, independent woman instead of a small, weak person. Like others, my recognition of my internal power was initiated by challenging circumstances.

Does everyone think that he or she is different like Jay said? A recent article in the *New York Times* reported that individuals who belong to the baby boomer generation think that each of them belong to a unique market segment of one (Duhigg, 2008). Is this part of America's culture of celebrating individuality?

Some people focus on fitting in and seeing how they are the same as others. Bob said that he usually sees the world as others see it. When I moved in with my stepfamily, the 16-year old constantly expressed that she was the normal one in the family, despite her developmental disabilities and, unknown to us at the time, her developing schizophrenia. She has a deep need to be normal, to fit in with other people. Why do some want to fit in while others want to stand out and be different?

Teenagers often express a desire to reject the dominant discourse represented by their parents, so that they can be different and express their individuality. To do this, they think and dress differently, which often means they think and dress just like their friends. For example, Alana said that she doesn't judge people who look strange, but the example she used was a person with multiple piercings on the body, somebody who is different in a way she is comfortable with. She didn't use an example of an older person dressed in a

particularly conservative manner or a mentally ill person who is unable to follow basic social norms. Fitting-in means knowing the rules and being able to follow them, i.e., having the cultural capital of the dominant discourse. Enjoying being different entails knowing the rules, but choosing which ones to follow and when. Being comfortable with yourself, having internal power, is knowing which rules or traditions are important to you, and which ones aren't: it is an independence of mind. I think that this sense of being independent of mind, different, is found in Plato's Gorgias dialogue in which Socrates and others refer to Socrates as strange and different.

It should not be surprising that students labeled high-risk, outsiders, would feel different than others. In her essay on racialized discourses, Ladson-Billings (2000) asserts that this otherness is created by the symbiotic natures of epistemologies: one's worldview is influenced by what one knows, and what one knows is influenced by one's worldview. Those from outside the mainstream can know things that those in the dominant discourse can't know, while those in the dominant discourse see and know things that outsiders don't. Yet, Ladson-Billings asserts that those who hold a worldview outside of the dominant discourse have a "wide-angle" vision of the dominant discourse. Because of this perspective, outsiders are better able to see those in the mainstream than those in the mainstream are able to see them.

However, is this difference they experience, possibly from a young age, from their outsider status? Writing on the experience of double-consciousness, Du Bois (1903/1996) suggests that this sense of feeling different is because of racial differences. The work of Suyemoto (2004) on Japanese European Americans supports this idea as well. Sax (2007) asserts that this sense of being different is found among people who

have a strong will to power. Nietzsche (1877/1989) notes that those who cannot express their power directly must subvert it and in this indirect expression reevaluate their values. Perhaps what Sax calls a strong will to power would be better described, as Nietzsche does, as individuals who have subverted their will to power, and in so doing, turn the dominant paradigm of power upside down. Perhaps those outside the dominant discourse, feeling different and out of place, express their power in a reevaluation of their values, i.e. exercise their internal power by “liberating themselves from internal and external limitations” (Wicks, 2002). Individuals have a chance to recognize this power for themselves when they are faced with challenging circumstances.

*Sub Theme: Challenge*

I was pleasantly surprised to find that the research participants felt most authentically themselves when they were in the midst of a challenging experience: It hadn't occurred to me that others also realized the silver linings of difficult times. The nature of those challenges was different—playing challenging video games, debating with friends, living on one's own, and working to help pay the family's living expenses. Csikszentmihalyi (1991), in his book on creativity and flow, found that people enjoy complex and demanding tasks in their lives and that they can create “a sense of discovery, a creative feeling of transporting the person into a new reality” (p. 74). When tasks are complex and demanding they require individual's full attention, the individual is pushed or taken out of mundane reality in order to meet the goals required by the new situation (Csikszentmihalyi). For example, Alana found a new set of challenges when she moved from her mother's home in which all her basic needs had been met to living with other teenagers and trying to scrape together money for food and other basic needs. Alana

found such an experience to be exhilarating. Similarly, Bob, David, Giovanni, and Sephiro, found the challenges of games and debate to be enlivening.

While learning a new set of skills that is valuable in the world can increase one's sense of efficacy and influential power over the world, it is not the same as learning a new set of skills that is meaningful to the individual. In my narrative inquiry pilot study (see Appendix H), the classes that the participants found to increase their sense of internal power were those classes in which they learned about themselves and the people around them—the social sciences and the humanities. These classes opened their eyes to ways that they could be more authentically themselves. Similarly, the participants in the current study, talked about those activities that reflected who they were, that were meaningful to them, not those that they had to learn.

However, Jay's time in jail and Alana's fight with lupus did not produce a similar effect because an essential ingredient, control, is missing. Sax (2007) states that this desire for control is the will to power, while Csikszentmihalyi (1991) states that individuals need to have a certain sense of control in order to experience this feeling of full involvement and energized excitement that he calls flow. The root of these challenges is that they push the individual to grow beyond their current abilities. A challenge means that old methods of dealing with a situation don't work and the individual is pushed into exploring new ways to operate in order to meet the challenge. Some challenges can be overwhelming and lead to depression, as Alana finds sometimes happens to her as she struggles with lupus. Similarly, when David's family moved him unexpectedly to another state, he was unable to deal with this challenge effectively. He stopped doing the one activity that had previously given him the most joy—writing.

Those challenges that pushed the research participants out of their comfort zone, but were not overwhelming, provided the research participants with the opportunity to develop new living skills that reflected their attitudes, values, and meanings. While Mark and Alana learned how to live on their own, they were also learning *how* they wanted to live on their own. When Michael, Jay, Bob, and Giovanni “cut” their old friends and girlfriends from their lives, they were making adjustments that would fit their new attitudes, values, and meanings.

Michael had gotten stressed out in college because he was working, going to school, and trying to spend time with his girlfriend. Michael knew that he had to cut back in some area of his life and he decided that it was not going to be work or school. Michael had accepted the challenge of going to college because he decided that it was important for his future so he could meet the goals that he had. His actions reflected his changing values and occurred over time or in stages: first he told his girlfriend that he wouldn't be able to see her as often, then he told her that they could just be friends, and finally he “just let her go.” As Michael said, he found this situation to be an excellent learning experience for making similar decisions in the future. Like the other research participants, Michael chose his values, decided what was important to him, and acted on them.

When the research participants were faced with challenges they had the opportunity to get to know themselves better and to think about what it was that they wanted to do, who they wanted to be. As a popular maxim of Nietzsche's expresses, “What does not destroy me, makes me stronger” (1888/1976, p. 467). The participants said that these challenges were often difficult experiences for them, but they also

commented on how much they enjoyed that time of their lives. When participants did not perceive that they had the resources to deal with the challenge they experience being overwhelmed and not feeling a sense of power.

The participants experienced their internal power as a positive experience. They enjoyed the challenges that pushed them in to making choices about their values, attitudes, and meanings. All but one of the research participants experienced thinking of themselves as different from those around them and most of them enjoyed this experience. I next turn to the role that teachers might play in the participants' recognition and exercise of their internal power.

### *Theme 2: Teachers as Role Models*

In one of my pilot studies, I found that role models played a significant role in the development of internal power. Both women in that study found that the presence or absence of appropriate role models in their lives had a big impact on their life paths. Jan, a 50-year-old woman thought that if she had received any guidance in high school or college she would be on the route that she is on now but she would have been there 20 years sooner. Jasmine, a 23-year-old woman, found that one of her professors, whom she found inspiring intelligent, strong, dynamic, and knowledgeable, helped Jasmine articulate the ideas and aspirations that Jasmine had for herself. Jasmine was impressed with the professor's comfortableness with herself and felt that the professor, as role model, gave Jasmine permission to be strong, dynamic, intelligent and comfortable with herself.

Both women stressed that they felt that only a woman could serve as role models for them. My own experience is similar. All the professors teaching the courses in which

I was enrolled for my bachelor and master's degree had been male. It was not until a female professor came to the university for a job talk that I had an example of how I could be female and a scholar. After this initial experience, I sought out a female professor, took a class with her, and found, through getting to know her during the class, that I was able to give myself permission to be my self.

Unlike the pilot study participants and myself, the participants in this study did not mention role models that were similar: Alana's English teacher was male, David's English teacher was female. However, both Giovanni's teachers were males, and one of them was a foreigner, as was Giovanni, but he did not mention this correspondence. Mark said that he wished that he still had the one art teacher as a teacher, so perhaps there were connections there that I could have explored.

*Sub Theme: Strange Attractors*

Before talking about the nature of those teachers that students saw as role models of internal power, I want to distinguish between teachers empowering students and teachers modeling internal power. Teachers can be seen as empowering students when they let the student choose which topic the student will write an essay on, as did Alana and David's teachers. Alana's English teacher may have been empowering students, in Freire's (2002) use of the word empower, when he told Alana that the world is tough and she has to ask herself whether it is her turn to get hurt or someone else's: He was pushing her to critically examine reality, confront it, and take action on it, which is Freire's plan for empowering individuals, for developing their *conscientização*. This is similar to Carse's (1986) concept of being moved. Teachers can move students towards positions of empowerment: they can provide students with the knowledge that will provide students

with the influential power to help the students be successful in the world. This is quite different from internal power.

Teachers model internal power by being themselves, by knowing their own values, attitudes, and meanings, and by being comfortable with themselves, even when their values, attitudes, and meanings are different from those around them. These teachers touch students in meaningful ways, ways that cannot be foreseen by either teacher or student. The spontaneous nature of Carse's (1986) concept of touch reminds me of the concept of grace, a gift for which there is no preparation.

The teachers mentioned as role models by the research participants were described as "strangest," "unique," and as a "foreigner" whom all the students made fun of. Michael had fond memories of the "little old white lady" who would come to the poor and black part of town to help him learn how to read. Like the high-risk students, these teachers are described by the research participants as individuals who were willing to be themselves, who were comfortable with their own values and meanings: Alana said that many students stopped by to speak to the English teacher, so it would seem that he enjoyed these informal student-teacher discussions, yet he was not willing to sacrifice his values, represented by the strict academic requirements, in order to be liked by the students. These teachers encouraged their students to be comfortable with their own values and meanings, to be comfortable with themselves: "She would let us be ourselves." "He would tell us like it was." "She would just let us let our hair down." "That taught me that it doesn't matter how different I come off."

Once individuals are comfortable with who they are, they can serve as role models of this for others (Palmer, 1998; Rogers, 1961). As Palmer (1998) states, "We

teach who we are” (p. 2): Those teachers who know themselves teach much more than just the content of their lessons, they teach how they relate to the subject matter.

Similarly, Rogers states that teachers need to be real: the teacher needs to be the person that he or she is and be aware and accepting of the attitudes he or she holds in order for students to engage in real learning about self, others, and content. Rogers believes that teachers who accept their students, who provide them with unconditional positive regard, free their students to move toward who they really are.

I think that what Rogers (1961) and Palmer (1998) are talking about is something very similar to internal power. They don't use the same language, but they are saying that teachers need to know themselves in order to be effective teachers. This knowing about one's self would include being clear on one's own attitudes, values, and meanings.

Palmer believes “that good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher” (p. 13). Identity is an “intersection” of all the factors influencing an individual's life, while integrity is a quality of discernment that individuals practice in order to be aware of their own weaknesses and strengths as they move toward wholeness and life (Palmer). This discernment process, this recognition of one's own values, attitudes, and meanings, is the foundation of internal power. It is interesting to me that many of the teachers mentioned by the research participants were English teachers, teachers who asked students to engage in this discernment practice by keeping a journal, writing down their thoughts.

Palmer (1998) asserts that teachers need to maintain a conversation with themselves, what he calls the inner teacher, to cultivate their identity and integrity. Palmer says that when teachers maintain this conversation they develop the internal

authority to teach. “Authority is granted to people who are perceived as authoring their own words, their own actions, their own lives” (Palmer, p. 33). When teachers teach from their inner authority, they no longer need to be what Palmer calls the “cops on the corner,” enforcing rules because “power works from the outside in, but authority works from the inside out” (Palmer, p.32). This authority that Palmer describes as something teachers give to themselves is similar to internal power; the power he talks about is what I call influential power. In the next section, I explore teachers’ use of influential power, which is a different type of authority from how Palmer uses the word.

*Sub Theme: Teachers’ Power Usage in the Classroom*

*Influential Power.* McCroskey and Richmond (1983) assert that teachers use power in the classroom to affect students’ behavior and attitudes, that is, to teach them. This use of power is thought to be for the students’ well-being. Parents and students expect teachers to use their power bases to mold students’ behavior and attitudes to prepare them to fit in with (and succeed in) the dominant discourse (Buzzelli and Johnston, 2001). Foucault wrote extensively, as reviewed in Chapter 2, on teachers’ use of influential power in the classroom. Teachers, as agents of social institutions, establish “regimes of truth” in the classroom and these regimes become the accepted discourse in the classrooms (Foucault, 1980). I think that these regimes of truth are part of the hidden curriculum of schools. Students, like most individuals, accept that the way things are is the way that they should be (Crotty, 1998).

All the research participants accepted that K-12 teachers were totally in charge of the classrooms. The students saw teachers as holding power, similar to what Tan (2004) describes as sovereign power. Most of the research participants had taken only a few

college classes, but still, as Jay and Giovanni articulated, the teachers are still in control: What the teacher says goes. However, students did have ways of quietly resisting teachers' powers at both the primary and secondary levels, as described by Alpert (1991). As Jay, said, students can always stop listening and go to sleep. He said that the school could say that he had to be there, but he decided that sometimes he didn't have to listen: They could control his body, but not his mind.

As Foucault writes, power, what I call influential power, operates on the bodies of those being controlled. The research participants said that teachers sent kids out of the classroom, down to the principal's office, to detention, or made them stay home by suspending the student. The teachers or the principal directs the bodies of the students to locations determined by those in charge and the students accepted this: "Kicking them out or suspending them. It's always right. Even the system says that it's right" (Giovanni).

The students accept that they are always being watched. Teachers let students know that they are watching through direct and indirect means. When students were playing cards during a movie, David's teacher sent them a note informing them that she was watching, she knew they had the cards and were playing, and that they needed to bring the cards to her. Alana's teacher, somewhat less directly, just pulled the notebook of detention slips out of her desk, to remind students that she was watching.

*Normalization.* Bob and other participants accepted the teacher's use of what Foucault called the process of normalization (1977/1984): the teacher sets a standard (that may be unknown to the students), compares the student to that standard, and then excludes or marginalizes the student when the student fails to meet this standard. Bob

was compared to the teacher's standard, found lacking in respect, and was excluded from the classroom. The teacher's standard for respect was not something the teacher had to meet: The teacher continually called Bob by the wrong name to get laughs from the students and failed to show the respect for Bob that he demanded for himself. This example also demonstrates how those in power determine the norms of what is cultural capital: students must respect teachers, but teachers do not have to respect students.

*Techniques of power.* Manke (1997) studied how teachers use power in the classroom. Manke observed three elementary classrooms in an ethnographic study. Influenced by the work of Foucault, she explored the eight "techniques of power" that teachers use in the classroom: surveillance, normalization, exclusion, classification, distribution, individualization, totalization, and regulation. Although not asked specifically, the research participants described events that reflected most of these uses of influential power. As described above, Alana and David's teachers let students know that they were always being watched (*surveillance*); Bob's teacher found that Bob did not meet one of the teacher's standards for respect, so he excluded Bob (*normalization* and *exclusion*); Lamarr, through feedback from his teachers on tests accepted his *classification* as "not college material;" as David described, his teacher had decided how the class would spend its time—watching a film—and she determined what activities were allowed during that time (*distribution* of time, *regulation*); Michael told me about his high standing for the standardized tests he (and all students) took in grade school (*individualization*).

*Sovereign power.* Research participants also shared examples of the types of power that McCrosky and Richmond (1983) had described in their study of 2698 students

and 156 teachers: coercive, reward, legitimate, referent, and expert. All the research participants felt that teachers held *legitimate power* in the classroom, and that teachers could express this power by punishing the students (*coercive power*). Mark described two teachers who may have held *referent power*—the teachers who he respected because of each teacher’s personal characteristics. As Giovanni said, as a student he is in school to learn, and the teacher has the knowledge to give to students (*expert power*). When I asked Bob about what classroom structures might be supportive of his learning, he responded that he liked it when teachers gave out candy or extra credit (*reward power*).

*Knowledge.* Some of the research participants saw teachers as the source of knowledge in the classroom. They thought that the teacher had the correct information, that teachers should be “the head over the class,” and they saw no reason not to trust the teachers or the textbooks. They accepted the dominant discourse taught them by their teachers. This finding is not surprising in light of Walton’s (2000) research that teachers use epistemological expressions to increase students’ dependency on teachers as the sole source of knowledge: teachers use language to perpetuate “a belief in ‘Objective Knowledge,’ delivered by ‘True Authorities’” (Walton, p. 126). Students like Giovanni and Lamarr clearly believed that was the correct way to think.

Besides falling asleep/not listening, the participants did not talk about ways that they could reject the dominant discourse, the “oppressor’s knowledge.” They, like other students, know that to get along in this world they need to develop skills to navigate the culture of power. They accepted, until late in high school or early in college, what the teachers said as truth. This blind acceptance of teachers’ knowledge and power could be

intensified by students projecting onto their teachers the authority of the students' parents (Baumlin & Weaver, 2000).

*Internal Power.* Those teachers who have internal power are recognized by students. Mark said that some teachers make their power dominant from the beginning. Mark tried to describe how one teacher did this: Mark talked about her presence, strength, voice, and confidence. Mark also described an art professor who also had that presence, that dominance, and Mark mentioned twice, that this art teacher allowed Mark to express himself. Mark made a distinction between these two professors and those professors who exhibited power, but did not earn his respect. I think that Mark is making a distinction here between teachers who teach from authority and are respected by students and teachers who rely on influential power. Failure to make this distinction may be the cause of much confusion about the nature of internal and influential power.

When a teacher is operating from his or her internal power, students can recognize that and respect the teacher as Mark described above. When individuals grant respect to someone they do not have to veil their own power from themselves. They can interact with this other as equal, with each recognizing the other as a whole person who deserves the respect the other offers. Individuals do not have to veil their internal power from themselves when they follow a direction given by a teacher acting from his or her internal power.

Because individuals grant respect to people who act from authority, who have integrity in regard to their identity, they may not see that this is different from veiling their internal power when they acquiesce in reaction to influential power. When individuals recognize their internal power when someone is trying to dominate them, they

see the power play and then decide whether or not to let the other have the upper hand.

However, often individuals do not recognize or remember their internal power:

individuals often veil it as described in Theme 3: Power Veiled and Unveiled.

*Sub Theme: Other Role Models*

The research participants found that their parents were also significant role models for internal power. The participants described their parents overcoming great odds, not accepting that things could not be accomplished because they were difficult; they believed in themselves, did what they thought was the right thing and followed their own meanings. Mark and Michael thought that their mothers overcame great challenges in raising their children by themselves.

Michael's description of someone whom he saw as internally powerful had shrewd insights into the nature of internal power. In my opinion, he has grasped the essence of internal power: "You are in your own world, but you know the rules and stuff so you abide them, but you still have your own beliefs." Here he has articulated that a person knows the rules of the dominant discourse, so the individual follows those rules, as it suits the person's needs. Yet, the individual still follows his or her own beliefs. "And everybody else probably don't see something that you see." The individual can see situations from a different perspective than most people do. "He's trying to get everybody to open their minds up." This individual realizes that everyone has access to this internal power, so he or she tries to share how to do this with others. Michael ends his description with a powerful statement: "You can be your own person." The sense of complete power in Michael's description is palpable. It is a type of power that has no limits; it is central, internal, to the individual.

In the discussion that followed, Michael pointed out that a person needs to do a lot of inside work in order to get to a powerful level and he describes how many individuals try to jump to the top without doing the work. I was impressed with his ability to intuitively understand the difference between internal power and the appearance of internal power.

Michael's description of someone who is internally powerful and his comments on the problem with people trying to be like someone who is internally powerful speak directly to the problem that other researchers, like Foley (1999), have when trying to describe internal power. Internal power is inner directed. It is learning to name the world for one's self. Others may follow the example, and a person who has internal power may even share descriptions of how he or she obtained that power, but that is not the point. Finding one's voice, one's internal power is very powerful, but internal power cannot be given or shared. Internal power cannot be taken. It can only be temporarily forgotten when individuals veil their internal power from themselves.

### *Theme 3: Internal Power Veiled and Unveiled*

#### *Sub Theme: Internal Power Veiling*

Carse (1986) states that in order to be successful at or in a particular game, whether it is baseball, employment, or being a student, individuals must play the game seriously. Individuals come to believe that they *must* play the game and that they must *win* that game. In order to play successfully, they must forget that they chose the game or that there are other games they could choose to play instead. When individuals begin playing a new game they often obtain props that fit and support this new role: uniforms for one's baseball team, textbooks and notebooks for the student, or suits and dress shoes

for the new employee. To learn how to be successful at this new game individuals watch those around them to see how they should behave. They then model the behavior of their co-players in order to be successful.

David thinks that he must win the “get the money” game in order to show his parents, especially his father, that he grew into a man despite not having a father around while he was growing up. David veils this choice from himself so that he might play more seriously. To a large degree individuals become habituated by the dominant discourse that they have adopted and they forget that they made choices in order that they might play in their new role seriously (Carse). Additionally, as noted by Freire (2002), the oppressed think that “*to be is to be like, and to be like is to be like the oppressor*” (p. 48). Those who belong to the dominant discourse have external or influential power. Individuals then seek to have that same type of power when they buy into the dominant discourse. Has David adopted the dominant discourse dream wholesale without considering his values and meanings?

Each time individuals stumble in playing the new game they either remember that this was a game that they were trying out that they chose, or they push themselves to forget this so that they might make themselves work harder to be successful in this game. The more difficult the challenges of a new game, the harder they work to be successful, and the greater the degree to which they make themselves forget that it’s something they chose instead of something they have to do. Or else, why would they choose to go through so much pain and misery if they don’t have to?

Christine wants to succeed in the college game. One of the reasons that this is so important to her is because her parents don’t think that she has what it takes to complete

her college degree. Christine wants to “prove them wrong.” However there is an obstacle in her path, a teacher who confuses Christine and who is the only professor teaching three other classes that Christine must take in her major. Christine is afraid that this obstacle might prove her undoing. In order to be a better player at this game, Christine veils her power from herself so that she will work harder, so that she would be willing to endure more hardship, and decides not to confront the professor.

Giovanni is afraid of losing the college game. Giovanni is afraid that if he finds he doesn't understand what the teachers tell him if he will start “going crazy.” Giovanni does not let himself see that he could play the college game more easily by taking fewer classes, getting a tutor, or finding a college that is slower paced. Giovanni sees that there is just one game and he must win it or else. By the time we meet for the second interview, however, Giovanni is playing a different game. Now he must buy a car, find an apartment, and when there's time, go to college to be successful. When I try to show Giovanni that there are options to this game he doesn't see them. I believe that he cannot let himself see them and remain a serious player in this game.

Jay, Alana, and Christine expressed a sense of fatalism in regards to the biggest events in their lives: getting locked up, getting lupus, and being responsible for a car wreck and the injury of a friend. Alana did not do something that precipitated her getting lupus. Christine did not say whether she or the other driver was at fault in a car accident. Jay, however, admitted to some degree, that his behaviors led to his arrest. Yet he still wanted to veil that responsibility, his internal power, from himself. These participants veil their internal power to protect their sense of self.

*Sub Theme: Internal Power Unveiling*

As discussed on Chapter 2, individuals learn to veil their internal power when they are socialized by other adults. Foucault (1977/1984) describes this process in his description of normalization. Buzzelli and Johnston (2001) call it regulative discourse. Nietzsche describes it in terms adopting the values of others when individuals conform their behaviors to meet others' expectations: Individuals conform because they fear failing to conform (Kaufmann, 1974). Unveiling requires stepping outside of the game, setting aside social valuations. It is recognizing one's freedom not to conform.

In order to change from one game to another, individuals need to change their values, attitudes, and meanings to fit the new game: for Bob this might have meant going from breaking social rules about property ownership to learning student rules and following them. Alana went from living for her mother to living for herself, and possibly against her mother. Individuals also often adopt some of the attitudes, values, and meanings of those with whom they are playing: they adopt a new persona or mask that fits their new role. Bob "cut off" his old friends so that he wouldn't be drawn back into the old game: they are props associated with different values and attitudes than the ones he has now adopted. To the degree that an individual recognizes these changes in values, attitudes, and meanings as conscious choices, like David did, is the degree to which that individual exercises his or her internal power. It takes constant vigilance to maintain awareness that these decisions are choices not verdicts handed down by life.

Students labeled high-risk are individuals who are considered to be outside the dominant discourse (Ladson-Billings, 2000). When individuals have access to two different cultures they can see that the attitudes, values, and meanings of one group are

different than the attitudes, values, and meanings of another. They can begin to recognize, as described with Christine and Mark, that these different belief systems are somewhat arbitrary and can be accepted or rejected by one's own choices. Outsiders, unlike those who belong to the dominant discourse, need to adopt different attitudes, values, and meanings than they grew up with in order to succeed in a dominant discourse institution such as college. Insiders, who have the cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986), do not need to make such adjustments and thus are less likely to recognize the validity of belief systems outside the dominant discourse.

Outsiders have the advantage, in some respects, of being exposed to more than one discourse. This exposure may allow outsiders to recognize more readily than an insider that they choose their attitudes, values, and meanings and thus they are more cognizant of how they veil and unveil their internal power. Mark and Christine talked about their experience of cultures that contrasted with the dominant discourse that might allow them, like the other outsiders, to see that each discourse has its own value system and that they can choose their discourse, their own voice when they make decisions for themselves.

### *Section I Summary*

In recognizing their internal power, the research participants were getting to know themselves, finding their voices as they made choices about who they wanted to be and how they wanted to live. Challenging situations, like moving away from home, strengthened them, pushed the participants to find out who they would be when they moved away from their parents' influence. At this point in their life they are questioning

their beliefs and trying to find their own truths, a life recommended by Nietzsche (1865/1982). They are finding that there is power in knowing who they are.

Finding their own voice, making choices based on their internal attitudes, values, and meanings allowed the participants to stop acting based on what is approved by external authorities and to begin acting ruled by an ethic of immanence based on their developing personal integrity. Teachers and parents who recognize their own internal power model this ethic of discernment and model how the participants can act with integrity when they know who they are. When the participants unveiled their internal power they could see their own strength and the value of exercising it.

When all students in a class accept and follow the dominant discourse there is more order in the classroom and teachers' "tranquility rests on how well men fit the world the oppressors have created, and how little they question it" (Freire, 2002, p. 76). When students question the dominant discourse, many teachers have difficulty adjusting to the situation because, despite progressive education reform, classroom power relations have stayed the same (Lefstein, 2002).

## Section II. Internal Power and Self-Authorship

### *Theme 4: Self-Authorship*

In this section I take an approach different from that in section I. My goal here is to compare what I found regarding epistemological and self-authorship development with the work of Pizzalatto (2003, 2004), Baxter Magolda (1998, 1999a, 2001/2004) and Kegan (1994). I begin by reviewing some background material that will be important for the discussion of epistemological development and self-authorship. This review and

exploration raises questions about the results of others' research in light of my findings. I then explore alternative explanations for the phenomenon of "disappearing self-authorship" based on my work on internal power and propose possible answers to the questions raised.

*Sub Theme: Epistemological Development*

As reported in her 2001 paper, Baxter Magolda developed the Measure of Epistemological Reflection (MER) in the 1980s and early 1990s. The MER consisted of 6 questions that students answered in writing. In the late 80's, she developed a comprehensive rating manual for the MER based on data from over 1000 students and categorized students to particular levels of development. However, by 2001 Baxter Magolda came to think that the MER was not in keeping with her developing constructivist theoretical approach, and that "informational conversational interviews" (Baxter Magolda, p. 525) better captured the complexity of epistemological development without reducing students to specific developmental stages. Her new approach is to interpret the participants' responses within the context of the participant's narrative. Thus, there is no final interpretation of a participant's epistemological development, but rather an "interpretation that can be introduced into dialogue for further exploration" (p. 526).

Baxter Magolda clearly states that self-authorship development is dependent on epistemological development: In a 1999c paper she states that "self-authorship is not possible" as long as individuals are in the third order of consciousness (using Kegan's 1994 terminology of epistemological development comparable to independent knowing in Baxter Magolda's work). Her 1999a book, *Creating Contexts*, is about how educators

can structure learning in and out of the classroom to support epistemological development and she states that “the shift of knowledge from certain to uncertain is accompanied by a shift from viewing oneself as a receiver of knowledge to a constructor of knowledge, a shift central to the development of self-authorship” (p. 38).

In a 2001 paper, Baxter Magolda, within a historical review of how she has measured epistemological development, asserts that the results from epistemological development studies can provide information for creating the conditions that would support self-authorship. In her 2001/2004 book, she states, “Participants’ journeys through their twenties show that self-authorship requires growth on all three dimensions [epistemological, intrapersonal, and interpersonal]” (p. xix). In a 2007 paper, she again returns to curricular and pedagogical innovations that “introduce complexity and promote self-authorship in intellectual, identity, and relational development” (p. 73). Baxter Magolda continues to describe self-authorship in terms of epistemological, intrapersonal, and interpersonal development.

Kegan’s (1994) work on self-authorship also focuses on epistemological development, or what he calls individual’s development of *orders of consciousness*. He argues that individuals need to develop a fourth order of consciousness in order to develop self-authorship. In a fourth order of consciousness individuals can operate on their values, attitudes, and meanings because they are elements of the system, not the system itself as they were in the third order of consciousness (p. 185). West (2004) describes the epistemological levels explored by Baxter Magolda (1992), Perry (1970), and Belenky et al. (1986) as developmental stages. These stages are comparable to Kegan’s orders of consciousness:

If the orders of consciousness assessed by the study are not developmental but susceptible to being taught or learned in and of themselves, why is there such overwhelming directionality to them over time? Why are the changes so extraordinarily gradual? Why is there no skipping from the third order, for example to the fifth? It seems much more likely that what the data are chronicling is the gradual evolution or unfolding of the mental capacity. (Kegan, 1994, p. 188)

If orders of consciousness and epistemological strategies are developmental and if self-authorship depends on this epistemological development, then how could Pizzolato's (2004) students lose or move away from their self-authorship? Across two interviews with 35 students labeled high-risk, Pizzolato concluded that students lost their self-authorship when they had "marginalizing experiences" (p. 425) in college. Pizzolato states that they entered college "with self-authoring ways of knowing intact ... [then] students moved away from self-authorship as they sought formulas for being successful" (p. 429).

Kegan states that even "relatively privileged, well educated, middle-class adult[s]" have not developed the order of consciousness needed to succeed in modern-day life without feeling "in over [their] heads" (p. 188). Kegan goes on to say of a review of studies that the

resulting composite sample of 282 adults turns out to be a disproportionately *favored* group of Americans who are whiter, wealthier, and better educated than the general population.... Since it is reasonable to assume that being less wealthy, less well educated, and from a discriminated against or racial group might provide fewer supports and opportunities for growth, it is likely that the incident of being in over one's head would be greater for the general population than for this advantaged sample. In other words, if the phenomenon appears to be widespread in this advantaged sample, it is likely to be even more widespread throughout the general population. (Kegan, 1994, p. 191, italics mine)<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Although Kegan goes on to say several pages later that the combination of third and fourth orders of consciousness are nearly identical across all samples and that lack of fourth order consciousness is evident even among more than half of the privileged, he

If self-authorship is dependent on epistemological development, then the work of Pizzolato (2003) and the findings here—that seven of ten students developed internal foundations of self-authorship and that three were becoming authors of their lives—suggest that Kegan may be incorrect in his initial assumption that privileged people are more likely to develop higher orders of consciousness than are outsiders, minorities, and students considered high-risk. Baxter Magolda’s privileged students did not develop self-authorship until they were in their mid to late 20s after they graduated from bachelor degree programs. Many individuals in Pizzolato’s study and the research participants here developed self-authored ways of knowing before entering college. Or, Kegan might be correct that privileged White individuals might develop fourth orders of consciousness sooner than high-risk students or outsiders, or even that they develop it at the same time, which would suggest that the students in Pizzolato’s study and the participants of this study have not developed self-authored ways of knowing. How could this be if Pizzolato and I used the method for determining self-authorship that Baxter Magolda (2001/2004) describes?

*Sub Theme: Self-Authorship*

Pizzolato (2003) assessed her students’ self-authorship development using the method described by Baxter Magolda (2001/2004): This method locates students along a continuum of arriving at the crossroads, becoming the author of one’s own life, and developing internal foundations. Pizzolato (2003) did not mention using specific questions from the MER in her hour-long semi structured interviews with students

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does not correct his initial statement that to be White, wealthy, and more educated is to be “favored.”

considered high-risk when she was exploring self-authorship development. However she states that she did ask questions about her students' experiences and decision-making before college, which might shed some light on epistemological development. Pizzolato found that high-risk students developed self-authorship when their disequilibrium was high enough to push them into becoming the author of one's own life, the second phase on the self-authorship continuum. Pizzolato does not disclose her interpretations of her students' epistemological development, but it seems reasonable to assume that she considered that along with the intrapersonal and interpersonal aspects of self-authorship when interpreting the student interviews.

Pizzolato notes that although all the students in her study were considered high-risk, some students were also considered privileged in terms of admissions to college—most of these privileged students came in on full athletic scholarships. Those privileged students, like the other high-risk students developed some level of self-authorship, but were much less likely to develop the internal foundations of full self-authorship than were those students who had no such college admissions privilege. Pizzolato determined that privilege can temporarily shut down the self-authorship process. The privileged high-risk students did not need to figure out how they were going to get into college: they had coaches and admissions representatives taking care of those concerns, which meant that these students did not have the same challenges for getting into college that the other students in the study did.

Challenges or situations that provoked disequilibrium were found to provide a stimulus for students to develop self-authorship. Pizzolato's students labeled high-risk and high-privilege developed self-authorship before coming to college, presumably

because of the challenges there, and then moved away from it because the privilege—all the help getting into college—somehow shut down the self-authorship process. How does this happen? I turn to how I evaluated epistemological development and self-authorship for the participants in my study to see if I can better understand this phenomenon.

To determine my research participant's level of epistemological development, I used the two questions most focused on epistemological development from Baxter Magolda's (1999a) MER in an open ended format. As noted in the findings, most of my research participants' epistemological development could be interpreted as independent knowers. Some students like Giovanni and Lamarr responded to the questions in such a way that I thought they were absolute or transitional knowers, while Alana clearly recognized the systematic procedure for gaining new knowledge that is typical of contextual knowers. Bob was becoming a contextual knower and Mark was interpreted to be a meta-systematic knower. Thus, only three participants in my study had developed enough epistemologically to be considered to have developed true internal foundations of self-authorship.

I used the method for measuring self-authorship that Baxter Magolda (2001/2004) suggests in her book, *Making Their Own Way*, which is the method that Pizzolato (2003, 2004) used. And, like Pizzolato's (2003) students, all the participants in my study had provocative experiences that pushed them to think about and actually change their behaviors—they found themselves at the crossroads of self-authorship and moved towards self-authorship (Baxter Magolda 2001/2004). Most of the participants became the authors of their own lives by changing the path that they were on, by challenging

themselves to strive farther. Many participants developed the internal foundations of self-authorship.

Part of the problem, then, comes from two different ways of assigning attributes of self-authorship to individuals. Baxter Magolda started her 20+ year longitudinal study of mostly privileged White college students with explorations of epistemological development, and did not look at self-authorship until her participants had graduated with bachelor degrees and were in their mid to late 20's. Not until that point, did they began to develop contextual ways of knowing. At that point Baxter Magolda began talking about self-authorship in terms of the crossroads, becoming the author of one's own life, and developing internal foundations. There was less stress on exploring epistemological development and her participants were then beginning to develop contextual ways of knowing along with self-authorship. I now explore recent research on self-authorship to help clarify some differences between self-authorship and internal power.

Pizzolato (2007) suggests that self-authorship can be difficult to assess because "once a self-authored orientation has been developed, actual public expression of this orientation may be situational" (p. 39). That is, individuals may not always act on their ability to self-author because external circumstances may preclude such actions. Additionally, self-authorship may be expressed in reasoning and in action: for example an individual's reasoning may be consistent with self-authorship, but then the individual does not act on her or his reasoning because of specific situational circumstances. Or an individual's action may be consistent with self-authorship, but the reasoning is not consistent with self-authorship. Pizzolato clarifies that whether or not an individual is categorized as self-authoring depends on that individual's epistemological development:

“if a student wants to do something because it feels right, it is independent knowing. If a student wants to do something because it is most consistent with internally defined goals, it is more likely to be self-authoring” (p. 40). I wonder if perhaps students in her 2003 and 2004 studies were perhaps identified as self-authoring according to the crossroads model even though they were independent knowers as were most participants in my study.

Pizzolato (2004) found that her students lost their self-authorship when these students suspected that they weren't as academically prepared as their fellow students. Pizzolato says that how high-risk students dealt with stress determined the degree to which they lost or resurrected their self-authorship abilities. However, Kegan states that development of self-authorship rests on developing a higher order of consciousness, a further level of epistemological development in Baxter Magolda's terminology, and that the development of a higher order of consciousness only increases in complexity and goes forward, it does not decrease. Yet Pizzolato states that her high-risk students lost their ability to self-authorship. How is this possible if self-authorship is dependent on epistemological development?

*Sub Theme: Disappearing Self-Authorship?*

Similar to the students in Pizzolato's (2003, 2004) study, three participants in my study questioned their ability to be successful in college, although others had had to drop courses because they were failing them, but those other students still had high confidence in their academic abilities. Unlike Pizzolato's (2003, 2004) students, my research participants did not have to face the marginalization associated with minority groups attending predominantly White institutions because the college the research participants

attend has a majority of students that are minorities like themselves. In this study, all the participants were assessed as having self-authoring abilities according to the crossroads assessment method, but only Alana, Bob, and Mark had developed epistemologically to be considered as self-authoring when focusing on the level of epistemological development for determining self-authorship development. Perhaps the crossroads method is not an effective model for assessing self-authorship without also assessing epistemological development specifically.

Giovanni, Lamarr and Christine expressed concerns about not being as academically prepared as their peers and exhibited behaviors suggesting their move away from self-authorship. Based on what these three participants shared with me, I don't interpret any of them as being contextual knowers, the epistemological development level associated with self-authorship. However, all three of these participants did exhibit behaviors associated with the second phase of self-authorship development, becoming the author of one's own life. Giovanni had made changes in his behaviors and dropped many of the friendships associated with his previous life of crime; he had managed to change his behavior when he and a friend started arguing—he was able to walk away rather than engage in an escalating fight. However, he was still unable to listen to his internal voice when he was around others: he clearly had not developed internal foundations.

Similarly, neither Christine nor Lamarr have developed the internal foundations of self-authorship although they have begun to question their values and goals and have acknowledged the validity of their inner voice. Would Pizzolato have categorized these three participants as moving away from self-authorship? Pizzolato (2004) stated in her study that

by the time the participants entered college they had demonstrated their abilities to act in self-authoring ways. Through their commitment to an ultimate achievement of their collegiate aspirations these students developed internal foundations and using these internal foundations, they were able to successfully negotiate between multiple perspectives as they worked toward their internally defined goals of becoming college students. (Pizzolato, 2004, p. 429)

For Pizzolato the development of internal foundations was exhibited by her students becoming college students. Giovanni, Christine, and Lamarr faced challenges in getting into college, but I wouldn't categorize them as having developed the internal foundations of self-authorship because they often fail to act on their internal beliefs: Christine acts in response to her parents, Giovanni loses himself when he is with friends, and Lamarr recognizes that he sometimes does not act on what he knows is in his own best interest.

If individuals are able to appear, by their actions and their stated reasons for acting, to have developed self-authorship, but they haven't developed contextual knowing, then what is the status of self-authorship? Baxter Magolda clearly states that her findings only apply to the group of participants in her longitudinal study, as did Perry (1968/1999) and Belenky et al. (1986). However, as West notes (2004) a variety of studies with varying populations has shown a consistency in epistemological development. I now compare self-authorship with internal power to explore another possible explanation for the phenomenon of disappearing self-authorship.

#### *Internal Power: A Proposition*

In this study, the research participants found the following situations conducive to recognizing and exercising their internal power: time for reflection to find their voice, creative endeavors such as writing that helped them express their voice and find power in that, challenging situations that allowed for individual growth, finding a sense of strength

in being who they really are, and having role models of internal power that demonstrated the ease with which individuals can choose their own discourse, can choose not to conform to the dominant discourse.

As discussed in Chapter 2 and as discovered in Chapter 4, there are similarities between self-authorship and internal power. Both focus on individuals recognizing the importance of including their own meanings, attitudes, and values in decisions about their lives. Challenging circumstances may provoke individuals to exercise their internal power or self-authorship. There are two significant differences between them. First, self-authorship is dependent on epistemological development whereas the recognition and exercise of internal power is not. Second, the ability of an individual to recognize his or her internal power may be dependent on his or her ability to recognize that individuals can create discourses different than the dominant discourse, such as their own voice.

Baxter Magolda has spent the last 10 years developing constructive-developmental pedagogy programs in high schools and colleges to help increase self-authorship by increasing epistemological development (2007). However the work by Pizzolato and the current study suggest that students labeled high-risk are making decisions based on their chosen attitudes, values, and meanings without the “necessary” epistemological development (which opens the possibility that Kegan (1994) is correct that well-educated Whites may develop a fourth order of consciousness sooner than less favored groups).

I propose that while epistemological development is obviously important in the development of the self, the necessary condition for recognizing and exercising one’s internal power is based on the individual’s ability to see the dominant discourse as just

one of many possible discourses. Individuals who live outside the mainstream whether it be because of one's race, lifestyle, or political or social views may have a greater opportunity for having this recognition that they do not have to conform to the dominant discourse. As one of Baxter Magolda's research participants described it: "I believe I am the author of my life. I can make decisions right now that can change it in any direction. [That's a] tremendous amount of power; external influence pales in comparison" (Baxter Magolda, 1999a, p.340). It is powerful to choose one's own discourse rather than conforming to what everyone else is doing. This may be especially true for an individual when what everyone else is doing doesn't work for that individual.

Kegan's description of the Whites as "favored" suggests that Kegan has bought into the idea that the dominant discourse of privileged Whites (Mills & Gale, 2007) is "the only legitimate way to view the world" (Ladson-Billings, 2000, p. 258). Ladson-Billings points out that "how one views the world is influenced by what knowledge one possesses, and what knowledge one is capable of possessing is influenced deeply by one's worldview" (p. 258). People's internal and external environments determine their worldview and their epistemology: individuals internalize the dominant discourse around them. Those raised in the dominant discourse may not be exposed to other discourses for much of their lives, while outsiders, by definition, are raised outside the dominant discourse and can observe that discourse from the outside. Ladson-Billings goes on to say that it takes "active intellectual work" to develop a worldview different from the dominant discourse.

As noted by Buzzelli and Johnston (2001) individuals are socialized through regulative social discourse by their teachers, parents, and other authority figures: they

learn to see the world the way those around them see the world. Those raised within the dominant discourse will have difficulty developing another discourse, which may be the reason that Baxter Magolda's research participants did not begin developing self-authorship until they were older—in their 20's. The individuals in Pizzolato's study and my own were raised outside the dominant discourse, thus giving them exposure to more than one discourse, more than one way of seeing and ordering the world. They are able to develop their own discourse, their own voice, much earlier.

Individuals, like the students labeled high-risk in my study, who have found their own voice within the discourse in which they were raised then moved into a new social institution, college, with its own discourse, which is possibly quite different. These students might face new challenges when their attitudes, values, and meanings they had developed previously don't support the activities required in this new environment: they may lack the cultural capital needed to succeed in this new environment (Mills & Gale, 2007). When these individuals find that they are not doing as well in college as they thought or hoped, they push themselves to try harder and they veil their internal power in an attempt to increase their competitive edge. The individuals in my study, and perhaps Pizzolato's, may find that while they know many of their attitudes, values, and meanings, the new experiences and the knowledge they gain at college may provide them with a host of new questions about what they believe and where they stand.

Baxter Magolda (2001/2004) and Kegan (1994) assert that self-authorship depends on epistemological development. I have shown that the crossroads model for assessing self-authorship may not be sufficient for assessing self-authorship if that is the case. This research study and the work of Pizzolato (2003, 2004) suggest that

epistemological development to the contextual level may not be required for individuals to know their attitudes, values, and meanings and act on them. The phenomenon of students labeled high-risk appearing to develop self-authorship sooner than the individuals in Baxter Magolda's study may be explained by high-risk students' ability to recognize the option of adopting different discourses and thus develop their own. Additionally, the apparent move away from self-authorship by some students labeled high-risk may be better explained by the poor fit of an individual's discourse in a new environment, their lack of cultural capital. I next turn to the questions raised by the current study and its implications.

### Section III

#### *Limitations of Study*

The findings of the current study cannot be generalized to broader populations because of the exploratory nature of this qualitative research study. The findings I relate about the participants in this study are based on the participants' words, thus I deem the findings to be trustworthy. As stated above, the participants expressed opinions and viewpoints that were different from one's I stated to them, so I felt that they were comfortable telling me what was true for them, not what they thought I wanted to hear, thus I believe in the credibility of my findings.

While I have compared my study with those of Pizzolato and contrasted this research with that of Baxter Magolda, I have done that in a speculative manner: I am not generalizing from my research to larger populations, but rather am thinking on the page to form concepts that can be further explored in other research projects.

## *Implications for Future Research and Practice*

### *Implications for Teaching*

The most important findings in my study, as they relate to teaching, is that the students in my study learned to recognize their internal power when they were challenged. They developed their voice through these challenges and, for a few of them, from writing exercises that sound similar to Elbow's (1973, 1998) free-writing exercises. And, teachers who knew themselves and felt comfortable being themselves, were able to serve as role models of internal power for the participants. An advantage that the participants in my study had over the students in Baxter Magolda's longitudinal study is that many of my participants were raised outside the dominant discourse so they may be more able to choose their own discourse, their own voice, as compared to students raised in the dominant discourse.

The participants in this study found that they began to recognize their attitudes, values, and meanings when they were in challenging situations. Research in the area of self-determination programs (for students with learning challenges) shows that when adults limit students' choice making and decision making, students suffer:

Removing the right to make decisions also takes away the right to seek what one desires, to learn how to make decisions, and to anticipate the consequences of decisions and learn from mistakes. When we deny others the right to make choices, we keep them from engaging in the developmental tasks of learning what is important to them, what they want, and how to work to achieve it. (Hoffman & Field, 1995)

The participants in the current study thrived on challenges when they felt that they had the resources to deal with these challenges, even if they found it a painful experience at the time. When teachers and parents try to protect students by removing challenges, by resolving issues without input from the student, the students lose

opportunities to develop their voices and learn about their attitudes, values, and meanings. Teachers could present challenges to students that draw on the resources that the students are developing in their courses. Teaching strategies like problem-based learning provide a teaching approach that increases the creative and discovery components of learning while putting less focus on developing a knowledge base through lectures (Timpson, 1999). As Timpson points out, however students do need the knowledge base, the resources, to benefit from a student-centered process-oriented approach. Additionally, teachers can offer students the opportunities to make choices about their learning, as suggested by de Charms (1977) work on origins and pawns. When students are able to make choices about how they will learn a topic, they have to reflect on their attitudes, values, and meanings. In this way they learn more about themselves, their voices, their preferences.

A few students in this study reported writing or journaling experiences in high school that they felt helped them develop their internal power and the theme of developing one's voice was a common element for many participants. Elbow (1973, 1998) recommends free-writing exercises for helping students find their voice. Elbow notes that the free-writing model helps writers learn their voice, strengthen it, and increase their sense of power. Hubbs and Brand (2005) report that reflective journaling can serve "as a mirror to reflect the student's heart and mind" (p. 61). Such journaling or free-writing can help individuals develop a voice that has coherence and power (Elbow, 1973). The recent popularization of such a writing program can be seen in the Hollywood film, *Freedom Writers* (LaGravenese, 2007) in which the teacher, Erin Gruwell, has students keep daily journals that allow the students to find their voices. In an interview

Gruwell noted that “Once they [the students] saw the power of the pen, there was no stopping them” (“The freedom writers,” 2004, ¶ 8).

Journaling allows students to “mull over ideas, uncover inner secrets, and piece together life’s unconnected threads” (Hubbs & Brand, 2005, p. 62). Such exercises can help students recognize and develop their own attitudes, and meanings, and values so that they can act on them when they choose. Elbow notes that writing in one’s own voice is powerful, more powerful than knowing and following the rules of good composition. An example I thought of is Sojourner Truth’s 1851 speech, *Ain’t I a woman?* I find this speech to be powerful because it is plainspoken, direct, and heartfelt. It would be helpful if more students could find their voice so that they can recognize the internal power available to them.

Participants in this study noted that role models helped them recognize that they could develop their own unique voice. As noted above, Palmer (1998) states that effective teachers need the courage to know themselves, maintain their integrity, and approach students with an open heart. Teachers who know themselves and are comfortable with themselves can relate with students more freely. Teachers who know themselves and are comfortable with themselves are free to express their differentness without shame. The point here is that teachers need to be authentic; they model their beingness. This is different than the implications of self-authorship in which teachers use particular tools to increase epistemological development. Instead, like Giovanni’s teacher who “taught for the benefit of the building,” teachers who are comfortable with themselves can model internal power by recognizing and exercising their personal attitudes, values, and meanings.

Teachers can share tools that open the doors for students to recognize their internal power, such as the writing exercises described above. However, as Michael pointed out, many people just adopt the look of someone who is internally powerful: they choose meanings and values different from those held by the dominant discourse, they act or dress like some artist, refuse to follow particular social customs, or cultivate eccentricities. Such individuals, however, haven't spent the time alone that is constantly required to inquire into one's own identity. As Nietzsche points out, an individual's values need to be constantly questioned and reevaluated.

As noted above, individuals who belong to the dominant discourse, those who are "whiter, wealthier, and better educated than the general population" (Kegan, 1994, p. 188) tend to think of the dominant discourse as the only legitimate discourse. The participants in my study were selected because they were thought to be outsiders, people raised outside the dominant discourse. These students seem to have an advantage in that they may identify their attitudes, values, and meanings earlier than students from the dominant discourse. As Ladson-Billings (2000) asserts, it is difficult for those raised in the dominant discourse to develop an alternative discourse and I would add that it is difficult for those raised in the dominant discourse to recognize alternative discourses as legitimate as demonstrated by Kegan above. The obvious solution here would be to have students live in different cultures and experience different discourses. Foreign exchange programs, travel abroad on a shoestring budget, and multicultural education (Banks, 2006) might provide opportunities for students to recognize alternate discourses and their legitimacy.

### *Future research*

The suggestions above for increasing students' ability to recognize and develop their voice, to recognize and exercise their internal power, need to be explored with further research. The current research findings do not transfer to college students outside of my research participants. The first research project would be an exploration of the internal power of a variety of college student populations. It would be interesting to replicate this study with students labeled high-risk and labeled high-privileged to compare whether or not students labeled high-risk do recognize and exercise their internal power earlier than students labeled high-privilege. Furthermore it would be fruitful to explore if free-writing programs and reflective journaling exercises help students at different developmental stages recognize their internal power sooner than students who do not participate in such writing programs. Do free-writing programs initiate recognition of one's internal power more for some groups, such as high-risk students, than they do for other groups, such as high-privileged students?

Besides modeling internal power, what role can a teacher play to help students recognize and exercise their internal power? As Walton (2000) found, teachers in grades K-4 use epistemological expressions of uncertainty to make commands and threats rather than to indicate that they, the teachers, may be uncertain of their knowledge. Do grade school students need their teachers to be the ultimate authority in what students should be thinking, feeling, and learning? Some teachers are comfortable with having looser control of students, with not asserting the dominant discourse as much.

Does this difference, high-risk versus high-privilege, influence students' ability to recognize the power and legitimacy of their own voice? What would a grade school or

high school classroom of students who recognized their internal power look like? What role would a teacher play in such a classroom? And, as Buzzelli and Johnston asked (2001), what would be the appropriate relationship of power, authority, and morality in such a classroom? As Rosenberg (1999) has pointed out, teachers and parents always need to ask themselves what they want the motivator to be behind a child's behavior: do they want the child to behave in a particular way because the child knows he or she will be punished for not doing it or do they want the child to behave in a particular way because the child sees the sense in it? Should the motivator be fear of the dominant discourse or the strength of the child's own voice?

A different line of research could explore the factors that influence veiling. As Carse (1986) describes it, veiling helps individuals to maintain their competitive spirit in the various roles that they play in the variety of games in which they are engaged. As a graduate student, I veil my choices so that I might push myself to complete my dissertation in a timely manner. I play the role of a "serious" student by writing industriously, editing my work with a critical eye, and bothering my committee members as little as possible. I set deadlines for myself that I "have to" meet and I do meet them. At what age do individuals begin veiling their internal power from themselves? What cognitive processes are needed to veil our internal power from ourselves? What factors influence the ease with which individuals veil and unveil their internal power from themselves?

The above areas of research explore areas that I think I understand, however, there are still gray areas, matters that I don't understand: What role does Christine's father play in her recognition and exercise of her internal power? She describes him as a

domineering man who doesn't allow her to do some things that she would like to do, such as go to a more prestigious state university that would have lower tuition costs. What does she need to do to survive in such a situation where she is not allowed to be who she might want to be? Unless she is prepared to defy her father, which might mean getting kicked out of the home, her community, and church, she cannot unveil her power. Who could be ready to broach such a topic to one's self?

### *Reflections on Methodology*

I learned a great deal about myself and internal power in completing this project. I am comfortable with narrative inquiry and enjoyed the opportunity I had to meet and spend time with the research participants. I perceive that I connected with the two female participants more than I did with the males: I noticed that the two female participants and I "chatted" more than I did with the males. Male interviewers may have been able to find more points of connection with the research participants: they might have felt more comfortable speaking in their authentic voices. However, my experience with and sensitivity to outsider concepts, as described above, helped me to understand the research participants in a way that an insider, no matter the gender or race, may have not been able to do.

Using narrative inquiry did allow me to see the various dialogic selves in my research participants (Josselson, 1995): For example, my interview with Giovanni allowed me to see who he has been, who he is striving to be, and the struggles he has to bring that self forth. After David read my summary and commentary, he said that he thought I must have been a "lifetime friend," which suggests that he shared his inner self with me, the self that only a close lifelong friend would have the privilege to know.

## *Summary*

In this study I explored the concept of internal power and compared and contrasted it with self-authorship by interviewing 10 college students labeled high-risk. The participants in this study recognized their ability to define their own attitudes, values, and meanings and exercised their internal power. Challenging situations pushed the research participants into making decisions based on their own attitudes, values, and meanings and most of the participants found that they enjoyed such challenging situations. Through such situations the participants learned more about themselves and began developing their unique voices. Most of the participants enjoyed feeling different from their peers. Teachers and parents served as role models for modeling and exercising internal power for 5 of the 10 participants.

Using Baxter Magolda's (2001/2004) crossroads metaphor, I found that all my research participants were becoming the authors of their lives and seven of them had developed the internal foundations of self-authorship. In exploring the participants' self-authorship development, I also assessed the research participants' epistemological development and found that only three of the 10 participants developed the contextual knowing that is supposed to be required for the development of self-authorship (Baxter Magolda). This finding raised the question of whether or not epistemological development of contextual knowing is required for the development of self-authorship.

I propose that instead of epistemological development as a precursor to being able to recognize one's own attitudes, values, and meanings, that being able to recognize that there are a variety of discourses and that each individual can develop his or her own discourse is the necessary antecedent. Individuals who are raised outside the dominant

discourse are exposed to more than one discourse and are more likely to be able to recognize that they can create their own discourse, their own voice, sooner than can individuals raised within the dominant discourse. Research is needed to explore this hypothesis.

The findings of this study suggest that problem-based learning strategies that challenge students and draw on their research base might be used in the classroom to help students get to know themselves better and to begin to recognize their own voices and the power of their choices. Also, reflective journaling programs, such as Elbow's free-writing exercises might be helpful to students in developing their voices and recognizing their internal power. Furthermore, teachers can model their own internal power by also engaging in free-writing exercises, exploring their identity, and exercising their internal power in the classroom. Finally, teachers can also expose children to alternate discourses so that students can learn that there are many legitimate discourses, instead of just one. Future research would be useful in studying these claims and exploring which students are recognizing and exercising their internal power.

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## APPENDICES

APPENDIX A  
INITIAL TELEPHONE SCRIPT

## Initial Telephone Script

Hello, is \_\_\_\_\_ there?

My name is BethRené Roepnack. I am a graduate student working on my dissertation and have received permission to contact COLL148 students at DeVry University to see if they are interested in participating in my study. I want to interview students about their experiences of making decisions and how they create or define their own meanings about their experiences, attitudes, beliefs, and values.

If you were interested in participating in this study, you and I would meet twice at times and locations convenient and comfortable for you. The first interview would last about 60-90 minutes. I would ask you to tell me about your experiences of making decisions and creating meaning for yourself. Do you have any questions?

If you are interested in participating, I would like to set a time and location now. Is there a place you would like to meet? It would be best if there was a quiet place we could meet so we wouldn't be disturbed. When would be a good time for you? I would also like to email you a brief description of internal power. Is there an email address at which I can contact you?

When we meet I would go over the interview process with you, answer any questions that you might have, and review the consent process with you.

If you need to contact me, you can reach me on my cell phone at 404-731-5787. You can leave messages for me on this phone. You can also reach me by email. My email address is [beth\\_rene@hotmail.com](mailto:beth_rene@hotmail.com). You can also contact my Colorado State University dissertation advisor, Dr. William Timpson at 1-970-491-7630 or contact him via email at [timpson@cahs.colostate.edu](mailto:timpson@cahs.colostate.edu).

I look forward to meeting with you on \_\_\_\_\_ (day & time) at \_\_\_\_\_ (location).

APPENDIX B  
AMENDED TELEPHONE SCRIPT

## Amended Telephone Script

Hello, is \_\_\_\_\_ there?

My name is BethRené Roepnack. I am a graduate student working on my dissertation and have received permission to contact COLL148 students at DeVry University to see if they are interested in participating in my study on internal power. You will receive \$15 for participating in the full study.

If you were interested in participating in this study, you and I would meet twice at times and locations convenient and comfortable for you. The first interview would last about 60-90 minutes. I would ask you to tell me about your experiences of making decisions and creating meaning for yourself. You would receive \$5 for the first 60-90 minute interview and \$10 for the second 20-30 minutes interview. Do you have any questions? If you choose not to participate in the second interview, you will be removed from the study.

If you are interested in participating, I would like to set a time and location now. Would it be convenient to meet at DeVry? I can reserve a meeting room so that we could have privacy. When would be a good time for you? I would also like to email you a brief description of internal power. Is there an email address at which I can contact you? Please reply to the email I send you when you receive it and read it.

When we meet I would go over the interview process with you, answer any questions that you might have, and review the consent process with you.

If you need to contact me, you can reach me on my cell phone at 404-731-5787. You can leave messages for me on this phone. You can also reach me by email at [Beth.Roepnack@ColoState.EDU](mailto:Beth.Roepnack@ColoState.EDU). If you would like contact information for my Colorado State University dissertation advisor I can give that to you. It is Dr. William Timpson at 1-970-491-7630 or contact him via email at [timpson@cahs.colostate.edu](mailto:timpson@cahs.colostate.edu).

I look forward to meeting with you on \_\_\_\_\_ (day & time) at \_\_\_\_\_ (location).

APPENDIX C  
EMAIL TO PARTICIPANTS

Email sent to participants

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

Thank you for agreeing to be a part of this study. When we meet, I will ask you about how you make decisions and how you create or define your own meanings about your experiences, attitudes, beliefs, and values. Our first of two meetings should take about 60-90 minutes, the second will be 30-40 minutes.

I look forward to meeting you on \_\_\_\_\_ (day of week), \_\_\_\_\_  
(date) at \_\_\_\_\_ o'clock at \_\_\_\_\_ (location address).

Feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

BethRené Roepnack

[Beth\\_rene@hotmail.com](mailto:Beth_rene@hotmail.com)

404-731-5787.

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APPENDIX D  
CONSENT FORM

Informed Consent Form  
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY  
INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

TITLE OF PROJECT: A Qualitative Exploration of Internal Power and Self-Authorship

Development for College Students: Implications for Teaching and Learning

NAME OF PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Dr. William Timpson, 1-970-491-7630,  
[timpson@cahs.colostate.edu](mailto:timpson@cahs.colostate.edu).

NAME OF CO-INVESTIGATOR: BethRené Roepnack, DeVry University, 404-731-5787

CONTACT NAME AND PHONE NUMBER FOR QUESTIONS/PROBLEMS: BethRené  
Roepnack: 404-731-5787

PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH: The purpose of the study is to better understand how students, age 18-24 years, experience, develop, and maintain internal power.

PROCEDURES/METHODS TO BE USED: The researcher, BethRené Roepnack, will ask you a series of open-ended questions about your experiences with feeling and developing your internal source of power. I am interested in how you make decisions and how you create or define your own meanings about your experiences, attitudes, beliefs, and values. Our first interview will be about 60-90 minutes and the second interview will be about 20-30 minutes. If you choose not to participate in the second interview, you will be removed from the study.

RISKS INHERENT IN THE PROCEDURES: There are no known risks associated with participation in this study. It is not possible to identify all potential risks in an experimental procedure, but the researcher(s) have taken reasonable safeguards to minimize any known and potential, but unknown, risks.

BENEFITS: There may be no other specific benefit to you as a participant in this research or you may find benefits from becoming more clear on your sense of your internal power. It is our hope that the information you provide can help use understand how students develop this power so that more students can develop their internal source of power.

COMPENSATION: You will receive \$15 for participation in the complete study. You will receive \$5 for the first interview of 60-90 minutes and \$10 for participation in the second interview of 20-30 minutes.

CONFIDENTIALITY: We will, to the extent allowed by law, keep any research records that identify you secure and confidential.

Your information will be combined with information from other people taking part in the study. When the study is written, information from the participants may be used, however, no information that identifies you personally will be reported.

Page 1 of 2 Subject initials \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**LIABILITY:** The Colorado Governmental Immunity Act determines and may limit Colorado State University's legal responsibility if an injury happens because of this study. Claims against the University must be filed within 180 days of the injury.

**PARTICIPATION:** Your participation in this research is voluntary. If you decide to participate in the study, you may withdraw your consent and stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Before you decide whether to accept this invitation to take part in the study, please ask any questions that you may have now. If, at a later date, you have questions about the study you can contact the investigator, BethRené Roepnack at 404-731-5787. If you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact Janell Meldrem, Human Research Administrator at 970-491-1655. You will be given a copy of this consent form to take with you.

Your signature acknowledges that you have read the information stated and willingly sign this consent form. Your signature also acknowledges that you have received, on the date signed, a copy of this document containing 2 pages.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant name (printed)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Investigator signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Page 2 of 2 Subject initials \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX E  
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

## Interview Questions

1. Tell me a little about yourself and your background. Tell me about who you are and how you see yourself.
  - a. Tell me more about that.
  
2. Tell me about a time when you felt most authentically yourself, in other words, really you.
  - a. Tell me about what sparked that.
  - b. How did that feel?
  - c. Where was your energy focused?
  - d. Are there other similar times?
  - e. What else would you like to tell me about that?
  
3. Tell me about an event in your life in when you felt like your interpretation or understanding of that event was different than someone else's interpretation.
  - a. What sparked you to have a different interpretation?
  - b. What was that like for you?
  - c. Are there people or events that sparked or helped you to create your own meanings or interpretations about things?
  - d. How much do you trust your own meaning or story about what happened?
  - e. When your meaning is quite different than others', to what extent do you continue to trust your own meaning?
  
4. Have there been times in your life in which your life priorities suddenly and significantly changed? Give me an example.
  - a. What was the origin of that?
  - b. At any time after that experience, did you sense that you might have the ability to alter those fundamental priorities at will? If so, how did you experience that?
    - i. After that experience did you feel that you had the power to make this change in other areas of your life?

5. \*\*Think about the last time you had to make a major decision about your life in which you had a number of alternatives, such as going to college or choosing a career. What was the nature of the decision?
  - a. What alternatives were available to you?
  - b. How did you feel about these alternatives? (If it seemed like there were not many alternatives, how did you come to that conclusion?)
  - c. How did you go about choosing from the alternatives?
  - d. At any time did you feel able to create new alternatives that were fundamentally different?
  - e. What things were the most important considerations in your choice? Please give me details.
  
6. \*\*Sometimes different instructors give different explanations for historical events or scientific phenomena. When two instructors explain the same thing differently, can one be more correct than another?
  - a. When two explanations are given for the same situation, how do you go about deciding which explanation to believe?
  - b. Please give some details and examples.
  - c. Can one ever be sure of which explanation to believe? If so, how?
  - d. If one can't be sure of which explanation to believe, why not?
  
7. Tell me about a time in class when you have been in a power struggle with one of your teachers.
  - a. What did the teacher do?
  - b. How did you feel and how did you respond?
  - c. What was that like for you?
  - d. How do teachers and students assert their power in subtle ways?
  - e. What does the power structure look like in the classroom? Is this similar to any power structure you have seen outside of the classroom?
  - f. What things do teachers do, such as how they teach, that might influence your ability to define yourself and to choose your own meanings?
  
8. What experiences have you had during your education that might have influenced your ability to develop your own interpretations about things?
  - a. Where were there any teachers or guides that might have helped?
  - b. What type of classroom structures do you find most supportive to how you learn?
  - c. Can you tell me more about that?

9. Can you tell me about the first time when you made a decision that was based on your own interpretation of an event rather than on the accepted meaning of an event?
  - a. What did that feel like to you?
  - b. Were there people or events that sparked it?
  
10. What have you done purposely to develop your ability to author your life? That is, write your own life story rather than have others write it.
  - a. Can you tell me more about that?
  - b. Where did the strength or inspiration come from to do these things?
  - c. What experiences have gotten in the way of this?
  - d. When teachers or other authority figures express their power indirectly, does that make it difficult for you to continue to trust yourself?
  
11. Who or what is the fundamental authority in your life?
  - a. Can you tell me how that developed for you?
  - b. How did you develop or choose this authority? (Was it a conscious choice?)
  - c. Can you alter or choose a different authority?

\*\* These two questions are adapted from Baxter Magolda (1999)

APPENDIX F  
DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Demographic Information

Pseudonym: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Major and Degree: \_\_\_\_\_

Gender (circle one):

Male      Female

Number of **years** at previous college if any (circle one):

½ 1 2 3 4 5 5 or more

Number of **8-week sessions** [include the current session] at DeVry University (circle one):

1 2 3 4 5 5 or more

Race (circle one or more):

Black

African American

Hispanic

Latino/a

Asian

White or Caucasian

APPENDIX G  
SUMMARIES

## Summaries Given to Research Participants.

### *Alana*

When I met Alana, two things struck me: she is one of the smallest college students I have ever met, and then, she is as strong as she is small. Alana told me about her lupus within the first 5 minutes of our discussion. She feels that her lupus has made her take more risks than most people, but that is because she has faced her death and decided that “Carpe Diem” is the best motto to live by.

Alana said that she has felt most authentically herself since she moved out of her mother’s home six months ago: She had lived with her mother her whole life. She first moved into an apartment with other college kids. They struggled to have enough food and to deal with other problems, but they were their problems and they took care of it. No one took care of them. She said that she felt most authentically herself because she and her friends were making their own rules, she was no longer living to please her mother, she really felt free, finally, to be herself. She also liked the feeling of supporting herself, of taking care of herself. And, when she moved in with her father recently, she felt that he accepted her as an adult and treated her as one.

Alana felt that for a long time she only acted only to please her mother. She saw this acting to please her mother as one of the things that made her sick with mono and strep throat in high school. She really started to live for herself once she moved out of her mother’s house, but I think that even before that, she was starting to challenge her mother’s principles. For example, Alana said she was raised not to be racist, but her family, especially her mother was upset when, in high school, she dated someone of a different race. Alana was did not stop dating him. She just didn’t see any reason to not date him based on his skin color. She was unwilling to let her family interfere in this part of her life by the 11<sup>th</sup> grade.

Alana’s current focus is to finish school. She does not want the difficulties of living off of jobs that don’t require a college education. When she was younger, 16-18, she often had to help her mother pay the bills and take care of her younger sisters and she knows that her father had to file for bankruptcy once. Neither one of her parents finished college—she is determined to do so.

Alana dropped out of college in April. She knew her family would be very upset, but she was back in college by May. Even though she might have lost her NASA \$8000 scholarship and \$5000 summer internship, she thought that it was the best move for her. The last six months have been tumultuous for her: moving out of her mother’s house and into a friend’s apartment, dealing with living on her own for the first time with other friends, dealing with the dramas of many young people living together, and finally having to leave college. Alana sees these changes as good for her and she is glad to be where she is now.

Alana sees different levels of knowledge. Knowledge that can be trusted to be most correct is like a scientific law: Alana refers to some type of process that sounds like peer review that knowledge has to go through before it can be viewed as a law. Below that are theories that are pretty trustworthy, but new research could be found that could make one of them not true. When Alana really wants to know the truth, she will research it herself and then you can figure out which teacher is closest to the truth. Sometimes laws or theories are accepted as truth until someone finds out that it isn't: Then the scientific process is brought to bear until it is all worked out again. Rules of a game, like Yu-Gi-Oh, can be absolutely right: they are a form of truth that you can trust if they are official games rules used for tournaments.

Alana did have a power struggle with a teacher. Alana had received special permission from a teacher regarding drama rehearsal. Then Alana needed some help and the teacher said she would, but that never happened because of a number of things. Alana then confronted the teacher and they had a disagreement in front of the class. The teacher threatened to send Alana to the principal's office and Alana agreed to go so readily that the teacher ended up not writing Alana up. The key point, from my perspective, is that Alana was willing to take responsibility for her part in the disagreement and her quick agreement to go to the principal's office obviated the teacher's influential power to MAKE her go. The teacher couldn't MAKE Alana go because Alana was almost out the door (figuratively speaking). I think this is a close expression of internal power given that internal power usually cannot be seen in its effects.

Alana also recognized the students had influential power with teachers via the students' parents. Students could threaten teachers that they would tell their parents who would then threaten the teacher's livelihood by taking away their teaching license. Alana also noted that teachers express their power in subtle way by exercising their teachers muscles, e.g. taking the write-up slips out of her desk when the class got a little too loud.

One teacher, a Mr. Flemming, who was her 10<sup>th</sup> grade English teacher, helped Alana find a sense of her own power. Mr Flemming was a tough, tough teacher, so kids hated his class, but he spoke to students on their own level. He might say the same things as parents would, but he would say it to them differently, as if the students were adults. Students, like Alana, found themselves visiting Mr. Flemming after 10<sup>th</sup> grade when they needed to talk to someone. Mr. Flemming urged students to be themselves, to take hold of the reins of their lives and do what they needed to do.

Alana sees herself as the authority in her life. It was her mother until she moved out, and she is very glad that it is not her mother any longer. One thing that Alana does to help author her life more is to write. She writes stories, poetry, and kept a journal for Mr. Flemming's class. Her first talk with Mr Flemming was when he was reading her journal and poetry and he noted that it was getting very dark. It is at this time that Alana realized that she needed to live life for herself instead of for her mother.

## Bob

Bob is 18 years old and is an only child. There were some benefits and drawbacks to being an only child: he received more attention, but had to be creative to fill up the lonely times. He is an ECT major.

Bob feels most authentically himself when he is beating a string of people in a video or real game like basketball. He challenges himself in video games by increasing the difficulty and only lowers it if he can't beat it at all. When he plays his energy is focused 50% on the game and 50% on his opponent.

Bob said that he didn't experience holding opinions different than others, but upon further questioning, we found that he had disagreed with his mother for a long time when he was hanging out in the streets with his friends and getting in trouble. He also found that he disagreed with an author whose work he read in English class. In this instance, even though the author had a large number of facts and used logical arguments to back up his claim, Bob disagreed with the author and felt comfortable with holding a different opinion than the author or some of his classmates.

Bob's priorities changed radically when one day he realized that if he kept getting in trouble from "get[ting] money by any means necessary" he was going to end up dead or in jail. Given his legal record he didn't think he could get a job and he was scared to join military service given the perceived likelihood of getting killed in Iraq. He also knew that he couldn't continue living in his mother's house. Bob saw college as his only option.

Bob consulted friends and family in making his decision regarding going to college, but he made the final decision. He felt that only his *real* friends supported his going to college: the others wanted him to continue on the path he was on. Bob had an aunt who graduated from college and she (the only person in his family to graduate from college) helped him with all the application forms. He sent out applications and chose the first college that accepted him. He saw college as a way to improve his future. As a side note, Bob thought that a couple of his friends might choose college now given his attendance.

When asked about whether one teacher could be more correct than another, Bob said he didn't think so because "everyone has their own opinion" and each person will think his opinion is the best. Bob thought that if one person had more research and facts then that opinion was more correct, but then he realized that he disagreed with the author of the essay he read in English class despite the facts and logical arguments. We also talked about whether or not Columbus 'discovered' America or not, and Bob thought that he discovered it for Columbus' country, but not for the Native Americans, so both groups could be right about it even though they disagreed.

Bob found himself in a power struggle with a teacher when the teacher would call him by his first name, not by his middle name, Bob (which everyone in school called him, teachers and principals included). When Bob finally challenged the teacher's power by calling the teacher by his first name, the teacher got him suspended for three days despite the

principal's view that it was not such a serious event. Bob was trying to get his need for respect met and had repeatedly asked the teacher to call him Bob. In Bob's eyes, the teacher just called him Bob to be funny. Bob felt that teachers could make you do anything and that they have absolute power in the classroom. Students can try to assert their power, but it never works out well for them. Bob finds college quite different and is amazed at the respect that professors show students. But, teachers are still in charge regarding assignments and grades.

Bob's first memory of having something in school happen that initiated him thinking for himself was in 6<sup>th</sup> grade when he was 12. A discussion started in class about racial issues and Bob found that not everyone believed that skin color didn't matter. The discussion turned to a brawl when a black student hit a white student. Bob said, "It kind of made me start thinking that other people, that everybody don't think the way that I think about it." Another school influence was a computer teacher who repeatedly told Bob that he should go to a computer school because he could type very fast. Bob found that extra credit and free candy motivated him to do things that homework didn't.

Despite Bob's mother continual efforts to get Bob to stop his life of crime, he didn't listen to her for some time. Then he got arrested and had some time to think about it while he was in a jail cell. He said that the fear of getting in trouble again or never doing anything for himself is the main motivator keeping him in college. Quitting crime and coming to college are direct steps that Bob took so that he could author his life.

Bob saw his mother as his fundamental authority, and when I asked him if he ever would be, he said he never thought about it like that. Upon more consideration Bob decided that he was his own authority. He thought that leaving his parents house was a significant factor in thinking of himself as his own authority.

## *Christine*

Christine identifies most with her Eastern European culture and her strict religious beliefs. She is a strong person who desires to do good for others. It is rare for a female with her cultural background to attend college, but she does so in a steadfast manner. She sees her mother as the driving force behind her being given permission to attend college. It is her mother's wish that one of her children graduate from college and her older siblings have not. Christine lives with her parents and her father pays cash for her tuition to the private college she attends.

Christine says that she feels most like herself when she is helping other people and when she sees other people helping other people. She thinks that she can be helpful to others, to help them solve their problems because she is able to see outside of the box, to see things from a different perspective than most people she knows. She says that her days are filled with helping other people out: tutoring them in a subject, listening to their problems, helping them be better people, and so on.

Christine appears to be able to observe her community culture and American culture from an outsider's perspective. She thinks that her Eastern European cultural background and her strict religious training provide her with a unique perspective on American life. She says that "if I was in Romania I don't think I would have changed, but because I'm in America it is different. So, I see the world differently." And a little later, "If I only spoke Romanian I wouldn't know a different culture. Because here I know it's America, a lot of cultures, you don't understand that until you know two different cultures. And I think Americans don't understand two cultures, because it's hard to put yourself in another person's shoes unless you've experienced it." "So I see both Rumanian and American. I see the differences, I see how they think and how they act and everything."

Christine doesn't accept what people say at face value. She looks at things from a critical thinking perspective. Instead of seeing what she agrees with, Christine looks below the surface to see how an idea is wrong or how it can be improved. She is respectful but not afraid of authority figures. If she thinks anyone is wrong, she will tell the person. She will try to convince them, but if they are "too stubborn to listen" then she just lets it go. She will readily admit when she is wrong and expects others around her to do so as well. Christine is adamant about a few of her beliefs: there is a God, her religion is not wrong or bad, no person can ever truly know another person, and everything that happens, happens for a reason - you can't stop fate. If it is meant to happen it will.

Christine is torn between church and school. There are church events to go to every night of the week. When she has classes to attend, she can't go to church. This causes problems with her family and makes her feel torn. Christine chose the college based on name recognition and the fact that her brother had attended the same school.

Christine's family continually tells her that she is not college material, that she can't pass these classes. At one point Christine signed up for two online classes, but then she had to drop one of them. Her family had, of course, told her that she couldn't do it, but she

signed up for the classes anyway. She admits that they were right and she was wrong, that time. Christine also went against her family's belief regarding her decision to get baptized, but despite what they said, she is happy with her decision.

If a teacher disagrees with another teacher or with her, Christine will confront and question. She is then willing to do research to find out which one is more correct. She said that you can never really know for sure what to believe.

Christine believes that people in authority should be more direct in expressing their authority, instead of trying to make the truth sound pretty, people in authority should tell you what they want you to do so you can do it. Making it sound nice or going around the truth just wastes time.

Christine said that she felt like she had followed her sister's path for a long time, then she had followed her brother's path, but that now she had to follow her own path. She said that she felt like she was the bad seed for some time, but now that she is going to college, her brother is seen as the bad seed. I think that he didn't finish college. "Now there's nobody's path and because I'm making the path it makes me you know feel good even if people behind me, my family will go on this path and do better, I will still be the one you know to go through the hard times when everybody doubts and everything."

When asked what she has done purposely to be the author of her life, she said that she doesn't follow the crowd and that she likes being the opposite. She sees herself as her own person and said that she doesn't follow anybody. I think she means this differently than what she said above about following her sister's or brother's path.

Christine sees herself as her own authority after God. She realizes that her parents should probably be seen as her authority, but she doesn't always do what they tell her even though she is living in her house.

## *David*

A turning point came in David's life when he and his family found themselves in a hotel fire. They had gone to the hotel to get away from all the stress that Hurricane Katrina brought into their lives. David and his family got out of the hotel fire without getting hurt and they only lost a few personal items, but it was a turning point. David was still in high school, in 11th grade, and he decided to drop out of high school, get his GED and go straight into college. It took a little longer to get into college than he thought, but he is here and plans to finish his degree here.

Writing has been an important part of David's life, but he stopped it suddenly and he was unclear why. He liked writing because he was able to "express everything that I was feeling without anybody saying anything." He said it was a serious passion that he did all the time and then one morning he just woke up and didn't write anymore. He realized that he would still write for his classes, but had no more desire to write his songs. He said that he felt that there were a lot of people better than him, and that he might just be left "standing out there were nobody would see me." Later, when I was asking him about teacher influences, he told how, when he moved to a new city, an English teacher at his new school told him, on the second day of class, that she would get him caught up to the level that students at the new school were at. He was impressed by that. I then asked him if he had stopped writing at that time and he said that he had. It had been a sudden and unexpected move: His parents took the family out of town for Christmas, and then they were told that they were never going back.

Besides writing, David feels most authentically himself when he is hanging out with his friends, arguing or debating about almost any topic that appeals to them. David said that no matter what one person says, someone else in the group is going to disagree with it and then they are off on a wonderful argument about the topic. David said that he is usually the odd man out in most conversations, but he eventually has many people convinced about his point of view. David said that he is used to being different than most people. He thinks it is because he often thinks metaphorically about an issue, while everyone else is taking it literally. David said that when he was 6 or 7 he hung with some friends, two brothers, and David really tried to see what they saw. David said that he would first try to tell them how he (David) saw what they saw, but then he would also try to show them how he saw it differently. I think this is an incredibly diplomatic strategy and David sees that time as the beginning of his debating.

As mentioned above, David said that he usually sees things differently than other people, so he has made many decisions on his own that went against what other people said. David said that he trusts his own meaning most of the time, except when he is in the midst of debating and he knows it is all hot air. Away from the debating arena, David will readily admit he is wrong, but not in it.

David chose college based on some commercials he had seen on television. He found that his first choice of major was not going to work for him because it required top math skills

and he was not a friend of math. He had also considered the Job Corps (trade courses) and another college, but he wanted to shoot higher than that, so he chose this college. Both his parents had college degrees and it was always expected that of course David would go to college.

When asked about whether one teacher can be more correct than another, David thought that it depended on whether it is a matter of interpretation and who had the most facts. David would use his own point of view and knowledge to decide which teacher's information made the most sense with what he knew. David thought that one teacher could be more correct if one teacher is way off, and that if he really had to know which one to believe, he would go do the research himself, but he has never done that. David did say that a few times he has done research to check up on a point he had made in the 'debate club.'

When asked if he had ever been in a power struggle with a teacher, he said that he has always "been pretty patient with them." He said that in the only really power push he had seen from a student, the teacher always gave in (because she was leaving soon), so he didn't think that that really counted. He had seen one teacher, when the class was watching a film, send a note back to some students playing cards. The note said bring the cards up to me, or I will write you up. They followed her command. David was impressed with the fact that she didn't even need to get up out of her seat to command their obedience. Students express their power by saying things to create tension, but David said that he has never really thought that students had any power in the classroom. When asked that since students obviously do have power, given the weak teacher he mentioned, did that mean that students always had power, even though they might not express it? David said that that type of power (of the students) didn't work with a strong teacher, so no, students don't really have any power in the classroom.

When asked if there had been a teacher who had been a role model, or who really showed him that he could be uniquely himself, he said that an English teacher had because "she was unique herself, but she would let us be ourselves." She would really "let us let our hair down." Writing for that class didn't feel like busy work. David said that it helped him open up as a person. This was a different English teacher than the one who helped him get caught up when he moved to another school. That one had also had a big effect because she was willing to help him, a student she didn't even know yet, to get caught up to the requirements of the new school.

When asked about events that might have gotten in the way of him authoring his life, he said that being angry with his father for not being there when he wanted him while he was growing up. He finally forgave his father (without ever telling his father about his anger) and felt that then he could move on in his life.

When asked about who is the authority in his life, he said, "If not God, my mother." When asked if he would ever see himself as his own authority in place of his mother, he said that he would be able to see himself standing on his own two feet. I also asked him

about the strength he got from God. He said that he does get strength from God, but it isn't like all troubles immediately go away.

At the end of our interview, David said that he has recently started using his imagination to help himself do better in things like presentations. He used to use his imagination for things like kung fu fighting, but he felt that this was a way that he was developing his internal power. I thought that it was really a great way to do so.

I enjoyed talking with David and found him to be a thoughtful young man.

## *Giovanni*

Giovanni is an intelligent handsome young man who is well on his way of making the transition from youth to adulthood. He wants to be the authority in his life and sees himself as that authority, but he finds it difficult to think of himself like that when his mother still tells him to clean up his room. He admits that he has made some mistakes in life so far, and he has paid the price and was willing to work to earn back the trust of his family. One thing that he did was to cut out friends of his former acquaintance so that he would be less likely to relapse into some past behaviors that got him into trouble with the law.

Giovanni said that he feels most authentically himself when he is excelling at doing something, whether it be at work, sports, or whatever. He likes to set high challenges for himself and puts effort forth to accomplish his goals.

Giovanni trusts himself when he has been paying attention and feels as if he has enough information to stand on that point of view. When he thinks differently than his friends regarding a course of action, he will stick to his own position if the outcome could be negative, but he is willing to go with the flow if the outcome is neutral or positive. He doesn't feel the need to change his views, he is comfortable with his decisions.

He is in the midst of changing how he acts and reacts to things. He found the strength to walk away from a pointless argument with a friend, when earlier he would have stayed and had the fight. He attributes this to his ability to not just follow his emotions—now he is starting to control his emotions instead of them controlling him.

He is willing to allow that other people, like himself, can grow and change and so he is less likely to shut out someone solely based on their past behavior or his past experience. His family gave him a second chance when he lapsed back in to some illegal activities: He gave his girlfriend a second chance when just the day before he would have shut her out.

Giovanni's decision to go to college was based on his desire to be able to provide a better life for himself in the future. He could have gone to live and work with his uncles, but even though that would have been an easier path, he thought that the harder path would be the best in the long run. Going to college is the more difficult task, and he thinks that he can do it. He has felt that way before—this is his second try at college, but he has a clearer picture now of what is required.

Giovanni is ready to accept knowledge from teachers and textbooks. He notes that he doesn't have any reason not to trust them and he doesn't know enough about the topic to question what they say. However, when he did disagree with a teacher, in high school, Giovanni stuck to his point of view because he was convinced, and still is, that he was right.

Giovanni is comfortable to let teachers stay in an authority position: They have knowledge he needs and the teacher wants to maintain his or her dominance, plus, the school structure is set up so that principals or deans will support the teacher's position (in kicking a student out of class or whatever), so he just accepts the power structure for what it is. They are in charge, much like mom and dad were for most of his life. At least in college the professors begin to treat you like you are an adult. It is important to Giovanni to be seen as smart by his teachers.

Giovanni had two different teachers who influenced him strongly. One teacher focused his attention on Giovanni and directly pushed Giovanni to stop making excuses for not learning. This teacher just kept removing excuses until he had Giovanni in a corner, and from that position, Giovanni started learning. Another teacher's influence was less direct: This teacher was just so comfortable being himself that he indirectly gave Giovanni permission to be *himself*. This teacher, a foreigner who didn't speak the language so well, was the butt of many students' jokes. This teacher acknowledged the jokes and then ignored them as he still taught his subject to his best ability. The teacher did not let others' perceptions of himself influence his own perceptions of himself. This was important in that Giovanni felt that no matter how different he might seem to others, if he is being himself, it is OK.

Giovanni sees himself as a loner, as one who doesn't need to always seek advice or companionship from others. When his friends want to go to the mall, they always need to invite someone, but Giovanni just goes by himself. He also finds that his friends seek him out for advice, but he seeks his own counsel. There could be some attribution error going on here: we see ourselves as influenced by a situation, we see others as influenced by their internal characteristics.

Giovanni did acknowledge one aspect of college life that could discourage him and make him lose faith in himself: he is scared of failure. He said that if he kept having situations in which he didn't understand things, or if he did things wrong and kept failing, that his sense of internal power, his sense of being an authority in his life would break down. He would lose faith in himself.

Giovanni has always seen his mother as his fundamental authority, but he is starting to see himself as that authority. When he leaves the house he sees himself as being in charge of his life. He tries to maintain that feeling when he is at home, but he finds it difficult when his mother is telling him to clean his room, take the trash out, and so on. He doesn't mind doing those chores; he just wants to do them on his own initiative in his own time, on his own. He doesn't want anyone to think that he is doing anything because they want him to or because they asked him to, he wants everyone, including his parents, to see him as independent person, but with his parents he has difficulty because he still lives at home.

## *Jay*

Jay feels most himself and most relaxed when he is around family. He also feels most authentic when he is dancing. In both these situations he finds that he can really be himself, express who he is. Jay says that he has always been different than other people and usually has different interpretations about things than do other people. He doesn't like to conform. He is comfortable with his interpretation of things and is content to let people think their own thoughts if they can't hear what he is trying to tell them.

Jay got into trouble with the law and spent some time in jail. This experience had a big effect on him. His priorities changed from enjoying life to trying to get free and he went from many college choices to a few in the state of Georgia. This experience influenced him greatly, but other people, teachers, have had little influence on his life. Since being in prison, he realizes that he is more separated from other people than he used to be. He used to hang out and 'be' with other people, but now he depends on himself more and is more apt to make decisions by himself.

When asked about getting arrested, Jay said that he thinks, that "maybe it was just his time." I was surprised at this fatalistic attitude because Jay seems to take control of his life in some respects. Yet, Jay is aware that he does not yet know himself or what path he will take. He is pretty independent, and tries to do things for himself. He is not quite to the point of seeing himself as the sole authority in his life: he looks to his parents (who he trusts very much), even as they are partially internalized in himself, to help him keep his discipline and stay on track. As he gets older, he feels that he becomes more of an authority in his life than his parents and feels less of a need to rely on his parents to remain disciplined.

In the classroom, Jay says that the teachers really are in charge and that his whole life has led him to accept that the teacher knows what he or she is teaching and is to be accepted as the authority figure in a classroom. He says that as students get older and gain more knowledge on their own, students can politely challenge what a teacher has to say. Besides going to sleep in the classroom, as a quiet rebellion against a teacher's authority, students have little power in the classroom. Jay said that he never was one to get into power struggles with teachers, but he did get into them with his court appointed therapist. When this happened he noticed that he would just want to battle her with everything, but he thinks he grew out of that.

When asked about whether one professor can be more right than another, Jay thought that one of them could be more correct. He says that he picks and chooses when trying to figure out which information is correct. He thinks that both professors can be right, but from different perspectives, when there is an apparent disagreement. Jay does believe that there is an absolute truth that we can know.

## *Lamarr*

Lamarr said that he feels most like himself, most authentically himself when he is going to school. When he is in class he focuses on doing his best.

Lamarr did find that he thought about things in critical thinking class differently than did his classmates, but he felt that even though his way wasn't the right way, it worked and he got it done.

Even though Lamarr admitted that in disagreements with his sisters, they were often right, he still trusts his attitudes about things "to the fullest."

Lamarr learns best from watching other people, more so than from reading about it. He enjoys the smaller classes at this school because he gets more individualized attention.

Lamarr felt that his priorities changed when he found out he could go to college, but he notes that he still procrastinates on doing homework.

In making decisions, Lamarr trusts his instincts. In deciding about college, Lamarr chose DeVry because they told him that he could be a student here. Before that he thought his only choice was joining the armed services, but being a student is much safer. He had looked into going to Miami University, but one look at out-of-state tuitions fees closed that door for him. In general, however, Lamarr just didn't see himself as college material. Even though his friends all went to college and Lamarr's family wanted him to go to college, he, through stubbornness just wasn't going to go because he didn't think he could. When \_\_\_ University told him he could be a student there, he decided to go. He now thinks he is college material.

When teachers present differing interpretations about events or facts, Lamarr does his own research. Two teachers provided conflicting information about which computer was fastest, and Lamar, who was buying a computer found that one computer had been the fastest until the other computer became available. So, both professors were right.

Lamarr sees teachers as authority figures who are supposed to be in charge. Teachers communicate their power through discipline and superior knowledge. Lamarr thinks that although students may sometimes challenge the teacher's knowledge or authority, the students know that the teacher is right and should be in charge.

Lamarr sometimes chooses to do things his way, even if other people think it is wrong. When his ideas about doing work on his grandmother's house was different than others, he just did his part his way. When other people's advice or way doesn't seem right to him, he sticks with his decision. When friends do something that isn't right for him, he just goes his own way. Lamarr said that he doesn't have a difficult time making different choices than his friends: he and his friends have been together since elementary school.

Lamarr sees his father as his authority figures because his father has been taking care of him since he was 13. His father is a good role model for him and he just finds that he listens to his father more and more often.

## *Mark*

Mark is a creative individual who knows his own mind, who seems to be honest with himself about his weaknesses, and who is clear about where he is and where he is going and is comfortable with who he is.

Mark said that he feels most like himself when he is learning about himself and going through a growth process, which has been going on for the last few years. The activity he enjoys most is expressing his creative talents in writing, drawing, or putting things together. He is at \_\_\_ U. to learn the programming aspect of creating video games. Before attending \_\_\_ U., he attended an art school and used that experience to develop his artistic talents. His experiences of being authentic come from expressing himself artistically according to his rubric, not anyone else's.

He seems clear on his priorities now, but says that happened just after he graduated from high school and his parents told him that 'you are on your own, now'. He was really pushed to figure out what he wanted to do and he thinks that it was a good experience in that he learned a lot, but he didn't enjoy going through it. He also found that his priorities changed radically when he decided that school was more important than work. He chose school orientation over a shift at work and, knowing that it would cost him his job: he did it anyways. Once he has carefully considered a situation, he acts on it without any qualms.

Mark makes decisions by considering a number of alternatives, doing research, and considering his options. He used to take things more on the fly, but he now finds himself planning for contingencies and looking ahead to consider options. When two teachers provide conflicting information or when any teacher presents information that Mark disagrees with, he does further research until he finds enough evidence to fully understand the issue. If Mark realizes that the position he had taken in an argument was incorrect, Mark readily admits his error.

When Mark is in a power struggle with an authority figure, he has difficulty following orders from the authority if Mark's own analysis of the situation points to a solution different from that of the authority figure. He is not afraid to speak his mind in such situations, and he notes that this sometimes gets him in trouble, but he shows no signs of being quiet in the future even if that silence would keep him out of trouble. Mark trusts his own assessment when, in his view, he has the knowledge to make such an assessment.

When asked if there were any situations in school that helped him make his own way, intellectually, he responded that bad teachers were the main reasons. Teachers who taught poorly, especially uninspired teachers who read "word by word from the [text] book", were not given any slack. He would challenge those teachers to do their job better and he even taught a class session for a teacher who was, in his opinion, teaching poorly. In his opinion, he taught the class better than the teacher and the teacher admitted as much.

However, from his description of his younger years, Mark always thought independently. His mother found that Marked like taking things apart and building other things more than he enjoyed any toys she might buy. Another factor that seems important to Mark's development of his internal power is that at age 13 he went from living with his mother, who had raised him and went to live with his father, who he described as a good man, but not father material. Mark soon felt that everything he needed to learn from his mother to be mentally equipped to be an adult had taken place and that living with his father prepared him for adulthood only in the sense that Mark soon realized that he thought like an adult, took responsibility like an adult, and that this is what he really needed to know to be an adult. By moving from one home culture to another, he was able to see himself more clearly. Also, he often overheard his parents arguing over what was best for Mark and Mark soon decided that he knew better than his parents. Also, his father called Mark a rebel (age?) and Mark said that he was not rebelling against his father's plan for Mark's life, but rather, "I was rebelling because I wanted to be my own person."

Mark saw that some teachers exerted their power just by the tone of their voice. Some teachers expected to be obeyed, but never had to say so directly. One of his art teachers expressed a sense of being so comfortable with himself, so much so that the Mark felt comfortable expressing himself artistically.

Mark said that he stuck to his own beliefs and went against the beliefs of his father and uncles when Mark defended his friend who was gay. Mark said that he learned a great deal from defending his gay friend and realized that this was going to be a common argument for him: defending some people who are considered less than to those who view them as less than. Mark also had to deal with a family member who was a drug dealer and who tried to get Mark to use drugs or join him in the business.

Mark clearly sees himself as his own authority and believes that this sense of authorship has been firmly in place since he moved out on his own. Mark found it difficult to see himself as his own authority when his parents would still tell him to do this or that task, to clean his room, and so on. Mark also notes that he chooses his own meanings in life because he has HAD to make decisions on his own.

Mark says that he does have strong willpower and that he learned some of that from his mother. However, he differentiates between willpower and his ability to be comfortable with himself, to be comfortable with his own values and meanings. He carefully considers what he wants for himself, what is good for him and what is bad. He has spent time in his life thinking about what he believes in, he learns from his mistakes, he has no need to impress others (to express influential power), he just wants to be who he is.

## *Michael*

When I asked Michael when he felt most authentically himself, Michael said that it is when he is being different. Whether it is running track and field when everyone else is playing football, or enjoying science class when none of his friends did, Michael feels most like himself when he is being true to himself, following his interests. Michael also admits that he likes standing out in a crowd and being seen as different. Michael also notices that complete strangers will walk up to him and tell him that he is going to be somebody some day. Michael doesn't quite know what these people mean and isn't sure what it is that they see in him, but he never wants to let them down. As much as Michael stands out and stands by himself, he still admits that he "hangs right up under her" (his mother) and uses her "for something like a tour guide" through life.

When Michael was younger, in 11<sup>th</sup> grade, he had to go to work to help bring in money to pay the bills at home. Michael often had to walk long distances to the train station and back, and it was a real strain on him at the time because he wasn't used to working all day every day. It was especially challenging because his step-father quit his job and refused to help, and his mother, who was working full time, was also going to college to get her bachelor's degree. Michael felt that he had to 'step up to the plate' at that time and feels that that experience, and other difficult times, changed him and made him stronger.

His mother seems to have had a big influence on him. She and her siblings lost their parents when she was still a girl and ended up raising herself. She became a mother at age 16 and was a single mom of three children at age 20. She started on her degree when her children were all in kindergarten, but she didn't finish college until shortly before Michael graduated from high school. Michael has learned much from her experiences and knows that there is no good reason for not graduating from college himself. He said he doesn't particularly like going to college, but it is a sacrifice that he needs to make to keep him from getting in trouble. Most of his friends are either locked up, have kids of their own, have some type of sexual disease that they have to deal with for life, or they are on drugs. Only he and one other student from his grade graduated from high school on time and he is the only one to go on to college. Michael has cut out friends and girlfriends to ensure that he will move forward towards success rather than fall into the life he is trying to leave behind in which people rob stores to have bragging rights.

Michael said that he is very likely to accept what his instructors tell him because he has put his trust in them to teach him what he needs to know. He sees historical events as stories that are handed down through the ages. In the telling things are likely to be changed, so it makes sense that two teachers might talk about the same event quite differently. If two people do tell him quite different things, then he said that he would probably have to go look it up. However, at one point Michael said that "the book never lies." Does that mean that there is a truth that can be known? When asked what he thinks if two different textbooks provides two different stories, then he said that either one of them has false information or not all the information.

Michael said that he has never been in a power struggle with a teacher, but his girlfriend often did because “she want to be heard and seen.” He said that usually teachers try to be professional about it and not get upset in front of the class. If the teacher does get upset, it is likely that other students will also challenge the teacher’s power to see what response they can get. Michael did have one teacher, for first and second grade that had a big effect on him. He was put into a class with other students who weren’t good at sitting still in class. He felt that he and the other kids were thought of as dumb, but thinks, now, that perhaps it was a class for gifted kids. However, none of the other teachers wanted to teach that class, which is why he had the same teacher for second grade as he did for first grade. This teacher would often come to his home, in the rough part of town, to help him do his schoolwork and to learn how to read. He found that when he did do the work, he could learn, but it was difficult to get himself to do so. However, this teacher’s unrelenting support and absolute belief in him helped him to see that maybe he was very smart and actually gifted. He went on to earn some test scores that were the highest that any student in that school had ever gotten.

Michael has consciously chosen to not hang out with certain individuals, to attend college, and to let some friends go so that he can stay on his current path. He still sees his mother, father, and grandmother as guides, but he is starting to see himself as his own person. He freely seeks advice from others and thinks that he can learn much from listening to the stories of other people’s experiences.

## *Sephiro*

When asked to tell me about himself, Sephiro stated that he is passionate about video games: he plays them, creates them, and is now going to school to learn more about programming them. Sephiro readily admits that he has no social life because he is always in his room playing video games. He used to just focus on playing video games, but he now enjoys creating them just as much. He feels that he is good at creating them because he has played so many and knows what features make playing them enjoyable.

When asked about feeling most authentically himself, however, Sephiro surprised me by saying it is when he is observing and listening to other people talking. He said that is true because it is similar to watching a video game in which he is watching the action take place.

When asked questions concerning his interactions with others (#3, 6, 7, 8), Sephiro had a difficult time thinking of situations in which he interacted with others or was impacted by the actions of others. His roommates constantly tell him he should get out more and socialize, but he would rather stay in and play or create games. He has gone out with them, but if it is a party or a club, he just stands around and watches people, and if it is the mall, he finds the arcade store and plays games.

He knows he is quite different than other people in that he plays video games all the time. He seems comfortable with feeling and being different. Even in the realm of video games, his roommates prefer sports games while Sephiro prefers fighting games.

When asked about a time when his priorities changed, Sephiro said it happened when he found RPG Maker 2000, which allowed him to begin making games rather than just playing them.

Sephiro's last major decision came up when his father asked him whether Sephiro would rather fix up his old Mustang or buy a new car. His father felt Sephiro should have reliable transportation to get him from South Carolina to Atlanta. Sephiro decided that he would rather fix up his old car, so he did so. Another recent decision of Sephiro's was his choice to drop out of his previous college, rather than appeal their decision, when the college notified him that his GPA had fallen below acceptable levels. Sephiro thought that there just weren't any classes there that would interest him.

Sephiro then lived at home for two years. He helped take care of his father for a time and then found a couple jobs to work at. Sephiro then saw an advertisement for Full Sail University, but found the cost too far out of his price range. He then saw ads for his current college choice and felt that he could afford it and it was closer to home.

When faced with conflicting information from professors, Sephiro believes that some information can be more correct than other information depending on its source. To

decide what to think, Sephiro will listen to what other students say, but ultimately, if it is a topic important to him, Sephiro said he would go look it up and do his own research. Sephiro feels that he is the authority in his life. To develop his ability to author his life, Sephiro has pursued game making and ultimately came to college so that he could increase his skills so he can follow his dream. However, I don't think that Sephiro sees the power that he could have in his life because he doesn't act on it in his interactions with others. For example, when he was looking for a job, he said that all he could do was fill out applications and wait for them to call. I, like his father, thinks that there are important things that Sephiro could do, but they aren't actions that can be described.

APPENDIX H  
NARRATIVE INQUIRY PILOT RESULTS

## Exploring women's experiences of existential power

### Data collection and analysis

I interviewed two women who had at least four years of college experience. Both participants were given consent forms to sign that described the interview and confirmed the voluntary nature of their participation in this study. I asked to hear their stories about their experience of existential or internal power. I asked them about some of their first or most recent memories of experiencing their internal power, their experiences of internal power in relation to college, how living in an androcentric world might impact their internal power, what barriers to their internal power they experience, what they have done to purposely develop or increase their personal power, and how their experiences of internal power might be related to creative or passionate energy in their lives (See Appendix A for a list of the questions I tried to cover in each interview). I transcribed each interview, noting paralinguistic utterances (Riessman, 1993) to allow for a multiple levels of analysis, such as micro-, -meso-, and macros-zoom focus (Pamphilon, 1999).

Pamphilon developed a multi-level analysis model to provide more opportunities to discover meanings from life stories. In this project, I use the meso-zoom level to explore the themes in their stories. I use the macro-zoom focus to explore the dominant discourse, the influence of society and culture, in these women's lives. Finally, I use the micro-zoom level to explore the body language of one of the participants.

### *Participants*

Jasmine, a 23-year old white female was a typical college student in that she was still struggling to articulate her thoughts. At the time of the interview, she was 4 weeks away from graduation. She perceived that early challenges in her life formed her into the

person she is today: as a child she helped take care of an alcoholic mother and in her teen years, she worked through an unhealthy love relationship. At college, she found a role model in one of her professors and found her leadership skills through her participation in the sorority she joined. Challenges and standing up for what she believes in have formed who she is today. And, as she says, “I like the person I am today.”

Jan is a white female, perhaps in her mid-fifties and had been a student in one of my classes about eight years ago. It is important to note here that I viewed Jan as timid at that time, but after the interview my opinion has quite changed. Jan struggles with the patterns of thought she learned as a child and tries to reconcile them with her own ideas about life, about being a woman, about having a career that she loves, and most often, with her drive to pursue her education. She found that she became bored easily with jobs throughout her life, but continued to look for challenge and growth until she found it, working for herself as a virtual assistant as a course administrator. When asked about her life now, she stated that she was ‘tickled peaches’ with it.

#### *Themes of empowerment on the meso-zoon level*

On a meso-zoom level I explore the three themes that we found as we talked about existential power: the challenge of making difficult decisions in personal relationships, the importance of role models, and the function of education.

*Relationship tension.* When asked about events or situations that had been empowering for them, both women mentioned their relationships. Gilligan (1982) notes that a woman’s world is a world of relationships governed by an ethic of care and responsibility. Both Jasmine and Jan found their relationships with significant others to

be empowering in similar ways. Both found that a turning point in their lives came when they stood up for themselves in terms of their relationship with their significant other.

Jan was an independent woman in her twenties when she met the man who would become her husband. Over a nine-year period, they dated, lived together, and 'hung out'. Whenever things didn't go smoothly they went through a number of breaks that were initiated when her boyfriend "would just pack his little bag and be out the door." Eventually Jan tired of this on-again, off-again relationship. Although she loved him very much, she eventually told him that he either made a commitment to her or he pack his bags for good. Jan stressed the difficulty of making this decision given her love for him.

I don't want this [situation] anymore. I just don't want this any more. I think that was what was, was my inner strength. I finally had to convince myself I'm tired of this. I deserve better than this. I'm worth more than this. And, if I cannot have this then I'm going to leave. (Jan)

Jasmine, although much younger when she stood up for herself in relationship, voiced similar reasons. In high school and the beginning of college, her boyfriend, Alan, continually broke up with her to date other girls:

I just kept forgiving him ... and then [he] came back and just did this kind of pattern over and over again and finely like I'm not the going to let him do this to me anymore and I guess that was like kind of a sense of empowerment. ...It's the hardest thing I have ever gotten over.... he was my life, he was everything to me. (Jasmine)

Both women stressed repeatedly how difficult this course of action was for them. When asked where they had found the inner strength to commit themselves to such a difficult course of action, both women mentioned their exhaustion. They found themselves tired of the situation and emotionally exhausted by the thought of the pattern continuing for the rest of their lives, with no changes for the better. Choosing to act for themselves, not against these men they loved, but for themselves, was empowering. Both

women also found that this act of inner strength made them more respected and attractive in the eyes of the men they loved. Jan was married within two weeks and her husband said that he had more respect for her now that he knew his 'old ways' weren't going to work anymore. Jasmine found that Alan was courting her with love letters and flowers, begging her to take him back (but she never did). She ran into him nearly a year later when she was at work and she found that she didn't have any sadness left or wishes that they might get back together. She was at peace with the courageous and difficult decision she had made and felt strong because of that.

In addition to their relationships with their significant others, both women found that their families played important roles in helping them find their inner power, but in quite different ways. When asked about her first memories of being empowered, Jasmine mentioned the difficulties of taking care of her mother who struggled with alcoholism until Jasmine was about 13. Jasmine remembered going to her mother after her mother and stepfather had fought after a bout of drinking. She remembers comforting her crying mother and cleaning up afterwards. In looking back, she realized that at the time she didn't feel empowered, she had actually felt pretty lousy, but that she can see now that those experiences, as difficult as they were, were empowering to her. Within this three-dimensional space (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) and dialogic moment, she remembered the painful difficulty of the past and the gift that it provides her now and in the future. When asked about words that elicited thoughts of empowerment, Jasmine mentioned courage and love. Love gave her the courage to do what needed to be done. Love and courage gave her that inner power. Similarly, when she talked about her father,

stepfather, and an aunt who often provided comfort and understanding, she thought that their constant love for her also boosted her inner strength.

Jan talked little about her life as a child or teen. Her acts of courage were acting in opposition to the expectations of her large family as an adult. Her family expected her to get a good job as a hairdresser, nurse, or secretary directly after high school and keep it the rest of her life. In their eyes, a (vocational) education was simply a tool for obtaining a good job. She wanted more from life and eventually earned three degrees up through her masters while on the Dean's list. Her family heaped scorn upon her, jeering that she would soon be receiving social security while still in college. Likewise, a 'good job' was one that offered excellent health benefits, offered stability and security, and paid good money. When Jan walked away from an extraordinarily well paying position that became boring (when she found herself doing filing after being hired, she thought, for managing their computers), she thought she would never hear the end of it from her family. After all that education and making all that money, 'what were you thinking of?' Jan, however, found that experience very empowering. She walked away from a very high salary and a furnished condominium on the beach to follow where her heart led:

And I think that it was the best decision that I ever made. It was a major, a major weight off of my shoulders. And despite what my family or anyone else thought, what are you crazy? [small laugh] No, I wasn't crazy. (Jan)

These two women found empowerment in making difficult and painful decisions within their important relationships. They found meaning in taking difficult and frightening steps. Jan had mentioned how having a boyfriend was a "security blanket." Jasmine shared her fears of being without a boyfriend and wondered if she was

codependent. Yet, each woman found the strength to step away from the security of home, family, and boyfriends in their own time.

*Role models.* The second most important theme, in terms of their empowerment, for both women was the presence or absence of female role models in their lives. Jan noted, as she talked about her transition from high school, that if she had had any guidance at all, even from a guidance counselor in high school, she would have been on the route she eventually took, but twenty years sooner. Without that, she went on to an executive secretary college and took that as far as she could over the next two and a half decades.

Jasmine started the interview talking about a professor she had met in college. After Jasmine's first class with the professor, Jasmine purposely set out to take every class she could with her. Jasmine found that the professor was an inspiring, intelligent, strong, dynamic feminist and knowledgeable about all matters in which Jasmine was interested. Jasmine first mentioned how the information she learned from the professor was powerful because it helped her to articulate ideas about which she was passionate. However, when pressed about whether it was the knowledge that was empowering, Jasmine explained that the professor meant more to her than that, although she did find learning about herself to be empowering as described below. Jasmine said that the way that the professor carried herself and the example she set was more important.

That's the kind of thing, that like you know, like she's happy with who she is without having somebody there and that's something, like I guess I envy, because I wish I had that more. So I wish I didn't have to be in a relationship to be happy, which I don't necessarily...[and a little later in our discussion she said] It's like you said, her 'being'[emphasized] who she is, in the way she educates others, the way she cares about and is so passionate about her beliefs. (Jasmine)

Jasmine is working it out for herself here, in dialogue with herself and me, what it is, that can be so empowering about a role model like her professor. We are constructing our notions of how role models help us. We realize together, that a role model can give us permission to be as we are, or as Jasmine said, “just when you, like, see someone, well, it’s like, I can do it, too, you know?” And in my talk with Jan, she said, “[Back] then, ... I did not realize that it’s OK to do the things that a man does.”

Jan broke into tears as she talked about the women who mentored her almost 30 years after high school, “There were two women, well really three, who gave me the courage and motivation. .... the three ladies, without them I wouldn’t have made it.” As one of the women that she referred to, I felt honored to have been able to make a difference in her life. I have my own memories of a mentor whom I met about fifteen years after I left high school. She showed me, by her example, how I could be powerful, and a woman. I was never quite able to understand how to be both until I saw her, until I was given permission by her example. These women found a way to use their existential power by seeing possibilities in their role models. Neither of them found males able to serve as role models in this respect. One reason that males may not serve as powerful role models for women is that women often use different ways of knowing than males do (Belenky et al., 1985; Clinchy, Belenky, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1985).

*Education.* “In being, um, at college, I developed a sense of a power.” Jan pursued her education against the advice of her family and two different law firms for which she worked. Jan wanted more than just practical, vocational, on-the-job training. College meant so much more to her than preparation for a job. When I asked Jasmine at the end of our dialogue if she would like to share anything else, she said, “I think that

education is so important and it is so empowering.... I cannot imagine the person I would be if I had not come to college.”

Both participants particularly mentioned the importance of their humanities and social science courses in their development. Jasmine found that she learned more about herself in these classes and that that in itself was empowering to her. She did not find knowledge, in general, empowering, but found rather knowledge that helped her define her opinions and clarify her beliefs was empowering. For Jan, these types of courses were the ones that her family found least valuable because they did not offer, in their eyes, direct job training. To stand up to them and assert that these are her favorite courses, took courage and power. Jan found that the humanities and social science courses opened her world to other ways of being: “those are the courses that I’d enjoy the most because I learned things that I never learned growing up.” Of course, the classes in her major also contained information that she ‘didn’t learn growing up’, but it was not relevant in the same way. Perhaps these social science and humanities classes, which are generally thought to offer more opportunities for subjective knowing (Clinchy, 2000), also provide these women with a path to connected knowing, in which they relate to new ideas by connecting it to their life experiences.

#### *Cultural influences on the macro-zoom level*

On a macro-zoom level, I explored the interview transcriptions for cultural influences. What role does culture play concerning empowerment issues for these two women? I briefly note three issues, two by their presence and one by its absence. Both women rejected the cultural standard of the 1950’s ideal of the woman staying home to cook for the husband and raise their children. They both spoke with disdain about

females they knew who wanted just to get married and pregnant: “All she wanted to do was to get married and be a housewife and, ya know, have babies and cook for her husband,” who would be the head of household and the final decision maker. That model limited their potential. They wanted more.

Neither woman could recall experiences in which they were treated poorly because they were women. Jasmine had heard of another women being treated poorly, such as the time when a guidance counselor told a female student that she didn’t need to think about graduate school because she was just going to get married anyway. Jan felt that she didn’t experience it because she had taken a traditional female role for most of her life as an executive secretary. During one interview, though, she was asked if she had moved so much because her husband was in the military. Jan responded that no, her husband had followed her! The interviewer seemed unhappy with her response and Jan was not surprised when she didn’t get the job. Jasmine did view the society as patriarchal, but did not share any examples of this. Is the social order invisible? Having just explored the differences of women’s ways of knowing for myself, I can see as a teacher and student how the typical college classroom supports a male way of knowing more than a female way of knowing. It was invisible to me before this.

Both women found, however, that they had great difficulty dealing with racism in particular and inequalities between people in general. Jasmine said that she often gets into arguments with co-workers and others who express racial prejudices and Jan found that she lost many friends when they found that her husband was African American. Jan was surprised at her family’s prejudicial attitude toward her inter-racial relationship. Jan’s mother had preached to her throughout her childhood about the evils of prejudice,

but then expressed disapproval of Jan's husband's race. When Jan confronted her mother about this, the mother responded that it had been easy to believe that all people should be treated equally all those years because they lived in a primarily white community and she never had her views tested. "that was, I guess, the hardest pill to swallow because growing up, as I said, we were taught that that's not the way, you know?" Jan's mother had served as a role model in this regard. Jan had then internalized it and clearly defined it for herself. She had made it her own and was disappointed when her role model was false to this ideal. Jasmine was also surprised at the racism she saw among people her own age. She thought that people of her generation would not be as racist as her parent's generation. Having found their own power, these women were loathe to accept such inequalities in their world.

*Micro-zoom level analysis – Standing up for one's self.* One metaphor for acknowledging one's power is to 'stand up' for one's self. When I was interviewing Jan, she talked about the challenges of public speaking: she found it highly intimidating, but also loved it. Then, she provided me with more information:

JAN: It's that getting up in front of a class to do a speech or a presentation ... I found that I was, I seem to be more in control of what I say if I were to stand [she stands up and then she sits down and she says] than to sit. I don't know why. Maybe it's because I'm up here [as she gets off the couch again] and everyone else's down, but I don't know why but I know that whenever I stood

BR: yeah

JAN: [as she moves around the room and talks] I seem to be more in control.

BR: Yeah!

JAN: Than if I were I were sitting down [she sits down makes herself very small and she starts laughing wildly]

BR: Wow.

JAN: Or if someone else would constantly over talk you when you're sitting down so finally you just stand up [she stands up].

Jan found, with experience, how to stand up for herself literally and figuratively. She found that she can stand up for herself, whether it is with her family, an impertinent interviewer, or the man she loves. Jan has found her power and it is inside her.

APPENDIX I  
FOCUS GROUP RESULTS

## EXPLORATIONS OF POWER: DEFINING TERMS

### Results

While I was interested in the role that education might play in helping students recognize their existential power, I asked participants an ‘introductory’ question about their experiences of existential power when they were younger. Participants’ responses to this question provided me with a wealth of information on their development of existential power. I explore the emergent themes from this question and then move on to look at teachers’ roles in assisting students’ development of existential power. I then delve into the transcripts for emerging themes related to self-authorship, agency, and self-awareness.

One of the introductory questions I used in the focus group yielded more information about existential power than the key questions I intended to use. I asked participants to tell me about a time, perhaps when they were younger, when they experienced this sense of internal power. A number of participants mentioned that situational factors had pushed them into recognizing their existential power, some at an early age.

Several participants indicated that they experienced existential power in their childhood. These individuals were expected to be adults long before they were teenagers. One student, Mitch<sup>4</sup> told us that by the age of 10 he was expected to write letters for his family and pay the bills. He lived alone with an elderly relative who could not read or

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<sup>4</sup> All names used in this study are pseudonyms to protect the identity of the research participants.

write, so he was called on to handle these adult responsibilities. Marty was similarly called on to be an adult: after his father was done working 12-13 hour shifts at a nearby plant, Marty and his brothers, from the time they could walk, were expected to hang sheetrock and paint at their father's construction jobs. Marty's mother expected him to wash his own laundry, and cook his meals. Another participant, May, said "I was cooking at seven. I was on the chair, cooking dinner for the family, because that is what was the norm for us. That's all I grew up with."

These participants, like others in the group, experienced a sense of existential power from these experiences. Mitch said that if felt good to be relied on and he enjoyed the sense that he was able to be so useful. "I was doing something good." The expectation that they participate in adult chores, and their success in completing these chores, may have increased their self-efficacy. Bandura (1994, 2000) notes that people with a strong sense of self-efficacy have an increased sense of well-being. These participants felt good about their ability to complete tasks. Did that sense of mastery at a young age provide them with their sense of existential power?

Participants also experienced their existential power when they made conscious choices about their life course. May said that she felt the greatest sense of existential power when she graduated from high school without being pregnant.

When I was 18, I looked around and saw females my age, with 2-3 kids. And here I am off to college ... I could be strung-out on drugs right now or have three different baby's fathers. . . It was a sense that I had enough sense to not fall into what they were doing. And, to not fall into that pressure was just like, whoa. Because I didn't feel the peer pressure through high school. You know, because I was just NOT going to go down that route. It just was not an option for me. (May)

She said these last words with long pauses between the words and emphasizing each word.

Another woman, Tina, experienced a sense of existential power when she maintained her virginity until she met the man, when she was 21, who would be her husband. Nicole, who did become pregnant in high school, felt her greatest sense of existential power when she graduated from high school on time. She made this happen despite the fact that she missed two months of school, needed to find care for her child, and needed to find her own ride back and forth to school. She graduated with her class, spoke at graduation, and looks to that experience still as a symbol of her existential power. She refused to accept the community perception of her as another teenage mother who would drop out of school. Another participant, Alexander, was involved with gangs and was repeatedly in and out of jail. He said that in looking back on his life he realized that he found his existential power when he decided to turn himself in to the police – and received a four-year sentence. “Some people called me stupid for doing that, but I think it’s the best thing I ever did.” He used the time he spent in jail on that occasion to take a good look at himself and when he was released on parole after that, he went back to college, this time for himself. When Jason visited a friend at a nearby college, he found himself wanting to go back to college, writing papers and struggling to learn. He realized in that moment that if he didn’t choose his life course, he was going to be just like the park bench he was sitting on – exactly the same in ten years. When participants made conscious choices about their lives, when they chose the next steps, they experienced a sense of existential power. In these experiences, participants defined success for themselves based on the values that they had developed. They decided on what meanings to assign to events in their lives.

Another theme, outside of the educational realm, that developed was following positive influences or role models and avoiding negative peer pressure. Many participants thought that their parents had played an important role in helping them recognize their existential power. Tina said, "I just internally knew better. I was around my mother, my dad, my grandmothers, and aunt. And I kind of mimicked the life they led." Both Marty and May grew up in what they called the 'neighborhood house'. The neighborhood house was where all the kids of the neighborhood spent their free time. Many of the neighborhood kids would call the parents in the neighborhood house, Mom and Dad. These parents modeled a strong moral code to their children and set expectations that the children would behave well on their own accord. "It was because my mom and dad, they showed me that it took a whole lot of effort to do wrong. It's easier to just walk away from it."

They also had to avoid negative peer pressure. When Alexander went back to college after getting out of jail, his old friends and gang members were still around and he found it difficult to stay focused on his studies. "I was [still] with the gangs and all that and I needed to be away from everything. I wanted to stay focused. So I moved myself down here." Participants also found that negative behavior by their peers provided a strong reminder of the need to be true to themselves and the values that they had internalized. May, who managed to graduate from high school without becoming pregnant, mentioned that her observations of women who did become pregnant while still in high school helped her to make the choices she made. She would see her friends unable to go out because they needed to care for their babies and she did not want to become another statistic. Marty saw one of his best friends die. "You heard from my

parents, don't do drugs, but because he went the other route, I watched him die." Others, like Tina, found that she "never got bogged down in peer pressure, because I knew who I was. ... I wasn't going to let anybody determine where they wanted me to be. I was going to determine where I wanted to be." It seems as if this sense of existential power is connected to developing a sense of identity of who they were and what that meant for them.

When asked about educational experiences of their existential power, participants mentioned that teachers played roles in the participants' development. Teachers who took the time to help students move through their confusion were mentioned most. David found that a college instructor, who helped him get through math, was the spark he needed to stay in college: "I really needed something like that. I needed something like that in my 'returning to college' window to help fuel me along. Because if I bombed that math class, I probably wouldn't be here now." Marty had a similar experience with a math professor who helped him learn algebra. Nicole, who had a teacher who helped her graduate on time after the birth of Nicole's baby, thought that that teachers' belief in her made a significant mark on her life. May had an inspirational sixth grade teacher who wouldn't let students be intimidated by anything. He made such an impression on May, that she said that whenever she begins to feel intimidated now, she just remembers that teacher and goes forth believing in herself. Another student, now in his 30's, still hears from his kindergarten teacher; who hovers around him like his conscience. Every time she sees him or calls, she asks him about how he is doing in college. This student found that he was so concerned with disappointing her that he ended up pushing himself to go

back to school. Teachers who pushed students to try harder, learn more, and excel were also mentioned.

You took a double English and you took a double Math your freshman year. And you had no choice. You are going to succeed (pounding on table). We had pregnant girls in school, but because they had such determination for us, they didn't care if you are nine months pregnant or six weeks pregnant. I want my work on time, and I want it in! You're going to graduate with your class and that is that. You could be in labor, and we'll send your homework to the hospital with one of your friends. And that's exactly how they did it. (May)

In general, students thought that teachers who "owned their classroom," who showed their care for their students in their actions and tone of voice, who motivated their students with their own enthusiasm for learning, were the teachers that they thought had helped them develop their existential power. These teachers believed in and inspired students' existential power. These teachers challenged their students to think and provided them with scaffolding until students were able to accomplish task on their own.

When student participants made choices about their lives and felt good about being able to accomplish tasks at a young age, students experienced their existential power. The participants were also developing epistemologically. Both David and Marcus had the experience of being able to learn math suddenly in a way that was never available to them before. Did the teacher provide special help or had they developed to the point at which they could understand the abstract aspects of algebra?

Participants did refer to a certain awareness when they talked about the conscious choices they were making, but they did not talk about other aspects of emotional intelligence such as self-regulation or managing emotions.

I believe that the participants in this study were being authentic and I believe that I can trust what they said. After years of teaching, I have a good ear for learning a

person's voice and am able to tell when they use the voice or words of someone else. I did not detect participants using the voice of the other during the focus group, nor did I detect it in reviewing the transcription.