



## **Love Is Bad for You: Parables and Practical Fictions in the Romantic Primary Classroom**

**By Sally Campbell Galman**

### **Introduction**

This article will present tentative findings from an ongoing study of female pre-service teachers' stories about love, gender, and work in primary level (K-6) teacher preparation. Analyses of data from 26 phenomenological interviews with White, female pre-service teachers enrolled in teacher preparation programs frames one sample participant "love story" that illustrates the overall pattern of found in data analysis. While the young women in the study romanticized early years teaching as the work of love, and a gendered, biological imperative, I suggest that the casual discourse of love in teaching may be a mechanism of control with potentially limiting outcomes for new teachers. Further, I suggest that love, as a form of control, generates very little resistance for the simple reason that popular love is considered an absolute good and teacher educators are unprepared or unwilling to deconstruct such shibboleths. The following analyses contest and question the sacred and dogmatic, as well as the pedagogical uses to which love stories as "practical fictions" have been put. The article begins with a brief review of theories of love and control. This is followed by an overview of study methodology and a participant narrative illustrating study findings. Discussion and recommendations conclude the article.

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## Love

It has long been asserted that teaching is the work of love. It is emotional in nature, and one eventual product should be children and young people who experience love and care, and teachers who find themselves deeply fulfilled by the act of caring and relating to others. Much scholarship recognizes that this is asking a lot of teachers, but in no way questions that this is what the job is really about (Fried, 2001; Intrator, 2002; Palmer, 1996). Furthermore, definitions of love itself are widely divergent, and not all of them benign. As Dale (2004) writes, love can be a form of resistance to the business-model, cost-effectiveness vocabulary that shapes the contemporary educational landscape—but this does not always make it an absolute good in and of itself. As Liston and Garrison (2004) suggest, love must be retrieved from the “ontological basement” (p. 5) and part of that retrieval is its critical use—holding it up to the light.

Liston (2000) describes two distinct kinds of love at work in teachers' experience: a “spurned, romantic love” and a “transformative enlarged love” (p. 83). The former can be a result of being disappointed in students' unreciprocated love for teaching and learning, and is part of burnout and vocational despair. The latter is a reinvented love, one that focuses less on one's own disappointment and instead on the other. Like Liston's “enlarged love,” “*cariño*” (Duncan-Andrade, 2006; Valenzuela, 1997) is a sense of authentic, critical caring that is reciprocal instead of self-focused, instilling “a sense of hope and promise, one that is directly tied to individuals' sense of themselves as capable change agents” (Duncan-Andrade, 2006, p. 455). “*Cariño*” is a kind of critical care, or “authentic caring.” It is unlike “aesthetic caring,” which is a kind of pro-forma, self-centered love that is, effectively, a culture of “false caring, one where the most powerful members of the relationship define themselves as caring despite the fact that the recipients of their so-called caring do not perceive it as such” (Duncan-Andrade, 2006, p. 451). Aesthetic caring is about the salvation of the care-er. In other words, the person who is doing the “caring” is using the act of caring as a vehicle for his or her own enhanced social or moral value without as much regard for the cared-for. For many pre-service teachers, for whom performing the valued gendered and teacherly identity in the intensely public teaching arena means appearing to love and care for one's students unconditionally, aesthetic caring (followed by spurned romantic love, and possibly also professional attrition) may be inevitable.

Teacher preparation also has a hand in promoting such love stories. As Liston (1995) writes, schools of education are often seen as the academic sites for women's intensely deskilled, surveilled and poorly remunerated domestic labor when compared with the high-status, high-reward, high-autonomy work of other academics who position themselves as primarily writers and researchers and do not have to answer to the externally-orchestrated mandates of deprofessionalizing accountability machines (Ravitch, 2012). This is further intensified for faculty who do primary

grade pre-service teacher preparation, as theirs is an even lower-status, “messy, student-centered and labor-intensive endeavor” (pp. 91-93) than experienced by licensure workers at the secondary level in the same academic units.

Not unsurprisingly, Cole (1999) found teacher educators' professional experiences in primary licensure are also mediated by love. As the work of a female cadre of early education teachers and teacher educators alike is gendered in much of the U.S., those workers may conflate valued feminine and teacherly identities with archaic gender norms of obedience, niceness, self-sacrifice and filial piety (Mahalik et al, 2005)—emphasizing and valorizing a moral career that may not favor critical examinations of the structural factors contributing to inequitable conditions in higher education (deMarrais & LeCompte, 1998). Similarly, the seemingly innocent discourses of love and vocation in teacher preparation and among pre-service teachers can become mechanisms for reinforcing the status quo in educational work. In particular, “vocation” has long been used to describe the poorly compensated work of low-status members of society, including but not limited to women in general and teachers and teacher educators specifically. The logic here is that because the work can be emotionally meaningful—and, in some contexts, these meanings are associated with activism and social change in addition to love and care—it needn't be as well-compensated as less “meaningful” occupations. As Brannon (1993) writes, the ideal woman, and teacher at the pre-service and university level,

...offers service, dedication, patience, and love as the dominant trope for teaching, making teaching fully women's work, work that needs no financial compensation or reduced loads for the time that is spent. To ask for money or fewer students or "a life" only evokes the crass masculinist values of power and self-interestedness. The nurturer, then, must remain silent and thereby deny the contributions of and reinscribe the invisibility of women's work. (p. 460)

The subtext here is also that such meaningful work is somehow less intellectually rigorous than other work, and therefore less deserving of appropriate remuneration. For women, the assumption that they have a gendered, biological advantage in caring types of work, serves to further undermine teacher professionalism. When combined with the abstract reward of love, the pattern of control and exploitation is obfuscated and rendered irrefutable by the language of love and feminine aptitude.

## **Control**

Implicit in such an interpretation and use of love is control. Schutz (2004) writes that control in the contemporary progressive classroom is pastoral, rather than disciplinary, and relies on illusions of freedom and benignity. To illustrate the difference between disciplinary and pastoral control forms, Schutz compares traditional versus progressive classrooms:

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The traditional classroom is generally set up in rows. All students face the teacher, who directs classroom activity, distributes pre-established collections of knowledge, and sanctions those who do not follow the rules (through demerits, visits to the principal, bad grades, etc.). Progressive classrooms, in contrast, are often set up in a circle where students can creatively and critically interact with knowledge and each other. Thus, they seem to allow more freedom. From a postmodern perspective, however, the key difference between the two approaches resides largely in how they control. In the circle, the students and the teacher collectively monitor each other. Through apparently free and empowering interactions, they teach each other the correct way to participate. (p. 1)

The vast majority of study participants came from school backgrounds with progressive, pastoral control structures, and given the literature on pre-service teachers and the primacy of experience, it is not unlikely that they will attempt to recreate these structures in their own classrooms (Pajares, 1992). Several participants in this study would later become frustrated in practicum settings where disciplinary control was the norm and where they were unable to replicate their pastoral fantasies. Finally, as in the classroom, the language of love and care are deployed to channel and make use of many young female teachers' (and, on another level, male teachers as well) anxieties about their moral careers as women (Galman, 2012). Gee, Hull, and Lankshear (1997) define this as a postmodern process of by which "workers are asked to invest their hearts, minds, and bodies fully in their work. They are asked to think and act critically, reflectively, and creatively" (p. 7) and to consider power and responsibility as shared. Unlike disciplinary control, which is brutal, physical, demeaning and obvious, pastoral control conscripts the worker into collusion with authority, distributing the source of authoritarian control and rendering any definable locus of oppression as invisible. As Schutz (2004) writes,

Unlike traditional settings that tend to sanction divergences from a static norm, then, pastoral settings foster particular forms of creativity, often harnessing them to serve the (loosely coupled) systems in which participants are enmeshed. And because control in progressive [setting] is distributed throughout the environment instead of located in (apparently) identifiable figures or systems, it is extremely difficult for participants to detect or resist. (p. 15)

Pre-service teachers in open-discussion format classes, brown bag lunch discussions, and other progressive class structures had the messages love and the value of intrinsic reward over material remuneration repeated until they, too, began to participate in the discourse in ways that modeled the "right" way to behave to others. Other elements of correct performance came to be highly gendered, and the few men in the programs were typically exempt from the associated expectations, set apart or above (Mallozzi & Galman, 2014). As Weinstein (1989) found, when pre-service teachers are asked to describe a "good" teacher, the top five categories of consensus echo Mahalik et al's (2005) Western Feminine Norms: being caring, understanding, warm, friendly, and relating to or liking children. Intelligence,

pedagogical knowledge or abilities, political acumen, and similar did not appear in Weinstein's top categories. This certainly corresponds with many of my pre-service study participants' beliefs that while teacher education programs can teach almost anyone to write a lesson plan, good teachers are in fact born, not made. The vast majority asserted that good teachers' most important skills are innate and gendered: they had to love their students and be able to attend to the children's affective needs in a sweet, caring way, and that these skills came most easily to women. They similarly asserted that though such aptitudes are certainly possible for men, they are unique to women and rare in men.

## **Methods**

The power of qualitative methods for descriptive research has been well documented (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Peshkin, 1993; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This study included 26 in-depth, open-ended interviews based on Seidman's (1998) phenomenological interview structure as well as some supplementary observations of participants in their teacher education courses. Seidman's (1998) tripartite interview structure encourages participants to provide rich narratives of their own experience and then to reflect on that experience, the narrative they have created and the meaning of the narrative and experience. Interviews were each approximately one hour in length for a total of three hours and were audio recorded by the researcher for transcription and analysis. Field notes from observations (approximately 22 hours in total) were similarly transcribed and analyzed.

The participants in this study were 26 White, female pre-service teachers under the age of 27 who self-identified as originating from middle/upper class socio-economic status families. They were selected based on the following criteria: They must be teacher education students enrolled in a primary (K-6) program, they must not be second career or non-traditional students, and they must be female. A small number of men were interviewed as part of a larger study, but those data are not analyzed in this article. Selecting an homogeneous White, middle class participant pool was not part of study design, but does reflect the overwhelming class, Whiteness, and so-called "feminization" of both many teacher education programs and the early education context in the U.S. (Galman, 2012; Galman & Mallozzi, 2012; Galman, Pica-Smith, & Rosenberger, 2010; Griffiths, 2006; Ingersoll & Merrill, 2010; Zumwalt & Craig, 2005). Nonetheless, one significant limitation of the study is that it does not include more diverse voices, especially from women of Color and the Black Womanist theoretical tradition in research and teaching (Galman & Mallozzi, 2012).

The participants were recruited from two primary (K-6) teacher education programs at two comparable, large public universities in the western and northeastern U.S., respectively. Data were collected over three years from 2007 to 2010. The unit of analysis in this case is the participant story itself (Bruner, 1991; Liston & Gar-

rison, 2004), and, influenced by a “portraiture” approach (Merriam, 1998; Seidman, 1998) data collection and analysis focus on such stories as narratives of enacted moral careers or constructed autobiographies (Bruner, 1991; Goffman, 1964). Stories were bracketed in the data as location for fine-grained micro-analytic technique. A modified grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) approach to qualitative data analysis was used to analyze the participant stories, and the codes generated from that process were later used to frame the parable, or “teaching story” from the one representative participant whose story is the centerpiece of this article.

I chose to frame Ashleigh’s (pseudonym) story as what I call a “parable” rather than a vignette or “tale” (Van Maanen, 1988) because, while Van Maanen’s tales are by turns realist, confessional, and impressionistic, the parable, derived from the Greek for illustration or exemplar, is read or told for instructive meaning. As Gowler (2000) writes, “the parable is an extended metaphor in which meaning is found only within the story itself although it is not exhausted by the story . . . and the metaphor shocks us into new awareness” (144). Considering that as a teacher, and teacher educator, I have observed myself casually using “love” to describe my work and vocational motivation, I look to the Ashleigh’s parable in the sections that follow to shock myself, and others, into new awareness of the underlying topography of this discursive habit.

Data analysis procedures were as follows: In the first pass over the transcribed interview data, I looked at the transcripts with a “chunk by chunk” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 120) level of focus, emphasizing whole paragraphs and even whole pages of data. After this initial analysis, I made notes related to the themes, patterns, or other aspects of the data that stood out as noteworthy or that resonated with my initial codebook based on concepts from the theoretical framework developed around love and control. These “memos” were put aside for the moment. Next, I returned for a closer, micro-analysis of the story data, focusing on a “line by line” open coding process (p. 119), generating a wide array of codes, both related to and discordant with the first chunk-by-chunk analysis. These codes were used to generate a group of central categories and sub-categories that were then subject to axial coding to further flesh out relationships within the categories themselves. As a last step, the initial memos developed during the first pass of coding are brought back to facilitate selective coding and the selection and development of the representative parable. Further, unlike a composite tale or vignette, this parable is not fictionalized. It is representative of the group trend that was striking in its uniformity, even across the research sites.

Traditional interpretations of standards of rigor are not always appropriate for qualitative work, but I sought to maintain authenticity, truthfulness, and perspective as forms of “validity and reliability” per se (LaBoskey, 2004). Therefore, standards of authenticity and truthfulness are maintained by (1) being clear about researcher role and relationships, (2) triangulation of findings, and (3) using systematic procedures to examine and analyze data. Finally, I was mindful of Feldman’s (2003) definition of trustworthiness as it applies to social science inquiry, which is that

it must be clear about the moral and political weight of the work at hand and be transparent with regard to method.

At both of the data collection sites I had been involved in the work of teacher education, as an instructor and program faculty member. However, I was not directly involved in teaching study participants at the time of data collection. My programmatic involvement, as well as my own location as a White, middle class woman who was herself a former primary school teacher created the necessity of some vigilance as these familiar positions were equally informative as well as risky; I maintained careful vigilance over subjectivity and unacknowledged assumptions. As such, I endeavored throughout the data collection and analysis process to “make strange” both the context and my work in it (Wolcott, 1994, p. 178), usually by the practice of “reading widely” (Delamont, 2002, p. 4) to maintain fresh eyes, fresh perspectives, and to avoid context fatigue. This was also useful as I was consistently seeking disconfirming data to support or potentially refute my tentative claims. The use of a single teaching story, or parable, also requires clarity of representation. To wit: I do not here attempt to characterize all pre-service teachers, programs, or teacher educators. Rather, these analyses are site-specific and speak only to this project. However, I hope that the parable and discussion I provide in the following paragraphs might inform other teacher educators’ and researchers’ study design and exploration in these areas, and perhaps contribute to illuminating these issues as experienced in other contexts.

### **Findings: Ashleigh**

Analyses tentatively suggest that (1) Pre-service participants’ theories of love are relatively undeveloped and contradictory despite the frequency of talk about the work of “loving children,” and (2) The impact of these “love stories” on the pedagogical work and self are tied to a moral career that hinges on the performance of loving and being loved. What follows is a parable intended to illustrate the way in which stories about love and work appeared among the pre-service teachers in this study.

Ashleigh was 21 years old at the time of data collection and self-identified as a White, middle class female. Cheerful and animated, she said she was becoming a teacher because she wanted to emulate one of her own early grades teachers who made “an impact on children and the world.” Like many other pre-service early grades teachers, she had wanted to be a teacher since she was a very young child, but as she grew older she toyed with other possibilities. She eventually returned to her self-described first love, classroom teaching:

First, I wanted to be a lawyer and then I figured out that you have to be in school forever. So I would play teacher . . . and that was great—and [her school] was the greatest elementary school. I loved it. I had the best teachers. I had an awesome school experience. I loved every one of my teachers.

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But this is not entirely accurate. By her own admission, this Kindergarten teacher was quite unlikeable and traumatizing. Ashleigh knew that despite her discomfort she was still expected to love this teacher. Paradoxically, she “hated it” but she “still loved,” possibly because this was the expected performance of a good female student.

My Kindergarten teacher would do this thing where she would stand by the door at the end of the day, she would make us line up and give us all hugs before we left. That was traumatizing, too. I hated it. I was like, “I have my parents. I don’t want to hug you. Don’t make me hug you.” But it was like a ticket to leave, like you give her a hug and you can go. That wasn’t the best practice. But then—but I still had a very good experience. I still loved kindergarten, I learned a lot.

She loved all her other teachers as well. When asked about what in particular she loved, she says:

I remember Mrs. Greene did a lot of fun activities. She had such a positive spirit. She was like, “Hello, kids, let’s learn!” She just loved—she was just so happy and she had such a great spirit. And then third grade I had Mrs. Jackson, I don’t know if she’s still there. But she was the greatest, I loved her, too.

While she had high praise for most of her teachers, the best of these were positive, energetic, and engaging. It is no surprise that Ashleigh decided to become a teacher because she also had and wished to highlight these desirable qualities, however the thickly agentive “turning point” (Bruner, 1994, p. 42) of her love story manifested as an epiphany of love:

I think it was just like—“Oh, my God, I love kids, I love to hang out with kids and play with kids, they’re so cute.” But then it really switched kids into, like, “You can influence children.” At first it was like, “Oh, wow, this is great, I love playing with kids.” And you are playing with kids all day. But then, once I started—once I was in the preschool, I was like, “Oh, my God, these kids came in at this level and now they’re doing this, they couldn’t do that months ago.” And really I was beginning to acknowledge developmental growth, which was exciting to me. I love kids and babysitting and doing that too, “Oh, my God, I’m teaching these kids, this is so cool.” Little things like that. And I’m still like that, I’m amazed.

That love begins to give way to loves of seeing children learn, but even this was followed by ambivalence. Like settling uneasily into a premature marriage, Ashleigh isn’t quite sure she’s ready to become a teacher. Love may not be enough. As many others also did, she uses the language of “settling down” to describe entering the teaching profession. She says she wants to “do something” before she becomes a staid teacher. This might be interpreted as wanting to have some fun before fully assuming adult responsibilities, but entering other forms of work does not qualify as “settling down.” She remains unsure, haltingly describing her vacillation and eventual resignation:

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When I graduated, there still was no question that I would teach [eventually]. I looked into other schools. I looked into—there's no—I actually didn't really think I was gonna do [this University] so much, I wanted to be out in [large urban center], I wanted to get a job, I wanted to do graduate school. It was a perfect opportunity to get out of [small town] and try something like that. But I stayed here.

When asked why she stayed, she said that she decided that becoming a teacher was her inescapable destiny, not unrelated to her natural abilities to nurture and care for children. However, she admits continued uncertainty, even fear:

I think that there's a time—and I mean, I'm not gonna lie—still now I feel like there's so many career paths I want to go down. I love teaching, and I can't wait to be in the classroom and I can't wait to be with children and develop my own curriculum and be my own teacher, but at the same time, I've had so much work experience outside of education . . . that I feel like I am passionate about as well. I just love hospitality, tourism, and communications. Because I was a communications major [because there was no undergraduate major offered in Education] so since I have to choose another major, I might as well do something that interests me next. So that's why the communications . . . I don't think I'll change careers—I think that maybe one day—I just, like—my whole life, the fact of settling into one thing has always scared me . . . I don't want to just—I'm scared that I'm gonna be 30 and I'm gonna be in this kindergarten classroom and develop this curriculum and—it's so sad, because it excites me so much to graduate and have my own classroom and be the teacher and have my class . . . But then—what if I want to try something else? What if I want to do something else for a little while, just because . . . there's so many opportunities out there, and, like, I had some really awesome summer jobs. Maybe there's something I can do. My mom, my dad, my boyfriend—they all love that I'm going to be a teacher; they all said “yeah, that's perfect for you” . . . my mom says, that when I was growing up I was always so good with children, and our dogs when they were puppies, and all the neighborhood kids wanted me to babysit and they all loved me. So maybe I'm just supposed to do this, like destiny.

Ashleigh employs love, as well as mysticism, to silence, or stave off, a fear of being trapped. She is clearly uncomfortable with becoming a teacher. She may also simply not fully understand the adult world of work and be responding to those feelings. She continues with additional contingency plans and other, more ideal, trajectories, in fits and starts:

But . . . I just don't want to get trapped in a career for so long. In an ideal world I would like to study and live the city life and even work in a PR firm or advertising or something corporate for a little while and then be a teacher and have my classroom. I don't want to end up there forever, fighting to fit in and climb the corporate ladder but still . . . But I'm too excited to teach . . . I feel extremely fortunate, because there's so much I want to do. I'm so torn because I don't—I don't know. I don't know, really. What I'm probably going to do is have a classroom, teach a classroom and love it, but I just don't want to—I don't want to regret anything. Up

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until now . . . how I lived my life and who I am and where I'm going and where I've been, and I don't want to be 50 years old and [ask myself] "Did I trap myself in a classroom for too long? Did I not pursue what I wanted to do because I just went along the course that I was supposed to go?" So that's why I always have to take account of myself and reassess and [ask myself], "Is this where I want to go? Is this where I want to be?" But I love it, I love teaching.

The thought that she became a teacher because "I did not pursue what I wanted to do because I just went along in the course that I was supposed to go" is quickly quelled with frantic backpedaling: "But I love, it, I love teaching." She repeats that she both doesn't know, and also "doesn't want to" over and over again.

I believe that Ashleigh does love teaching, but that some part of her lacks confidence in committing. She claims to love teachers who mistreated her. She loves her teacher preparation experiences, but feels constrained by them. She will eventually become a teacher—abandoning other thoughts about working in the city—because she wants her work to be about love, even though the realities of that life and work do not suit her. When asked about the constraints of teaching, the low pay, the difficult schedule and the low autonomy of the elementary school, the professional isolation and the constant threat of layoffs for novice teachers, she insists that she "loves teaching" and "that makes it all worthwhile." It is possible that she is reluctant to admit the importance of external motivators like money and comfort, as teacher education contexts and pop culture alike emphasize self-sacrificial femininities (Mallozzi & Galman, 2014).

When asked where her ideas about teaching and love came from, she said that she remembers it mostly from teacher education, and from her own teachers.

I know my teachers loved me. In my [teacher education classes] we all talk about how we are so lucky to have a job where we get to be with all the cute little kids, where we get hugs and kisses every day, where we get to do a job we really, really love. I mean, you could never have these kinds of intrinsic rewards in a business firm. We all feel this way. We're so lucky. I love kids. Looove them. I've always had a kind of nurturing thing—everyone says it is so natural for me—and I feel like I really want to reach out to kids. You don't get paid a lot of money but in the end the reward is ten times better. I think it's also good if I want to have a family.

The intrinsic seems to be tied to the pragmatic. Similarly, for Ashleigh and others it was imperative that teachers "love" their job, and love all the children (and are, ostensibly, loved in return). Forever young and in love, they avoid embodying an "old and burned out" alternative, who does the work but does not love:

I don't want to become one of those old, burned-out teachers who hates everything and is mean to the kids. I don't want to just complain about everything. I want to go to work every day and be like, "hey, kids! let's learn!" and they can have that experience. If I feel myself going that way, I'll do something, I'll leave. And I just think that if I were to do that for so many years, I would lose the passion, which is what scares me also the most, because I have seen it happen to so many teachers,

like, the spark's not there anymore. I've been in classrooms with teachers where they're just going along and they're doing it because it's their career and this is what they know and it's what they've done for so long, but, like, they don't love being there. I don't want to burn out like they do. That's what scares me, I think. I just want to be the teacher that everyone loves.

Being the teacher that everyone loves, like being a person everyone loves, is a difficult aspiration, as loving and being loved in return are never mutual guarantees. The work of love, then, is a fragile occupation dependent on unreliable others, and exhausting with its requirement for constant reactive self-definition. It may be that Ashleigh does not want to be a teacher or a worker, that she wants to work in a profession with better salary and more freedom, but does still want to be loved and validated as a nurturing presence in children's lives. She may be telling these stories as an attempt to give muffled voice to feelings that have become too taboo in teacher education contexts.

## **Discussion**

Research suggests that very few students who begin pre-service elementary teacher education opt out before completing the program, due in part to the permissive subjective warrant and wide decision range the profession affords (Lortie, 1975/2002). Meanwhile, the rates of attrition for individuals who do begin teaching is staggering (Ingersoll & Merrill, 2010). Some studies suggest attrition rates as high as 40-50% of new teachers leave the classroom before their third year (Ingersoll, 2012; Zumwalt & Craig, 2005) So, love may be a *raison d'être* with a limited shelf life.

Alternatively, it could be the inverse: We as teacher educators may not be paying adequate attention to the love stories we hear so often. I found myself wondering why pre-service teachers in this sample, like Ashleigh, did not tell me stories of Dale's (2004) critical love (stories that would align with my own vision of the "right answer"). Similarly, I caught myself bristling at their narratives of aesthetic rather than authentic care (Duncan-Andrade, 2006). I was effectively asking Ashleigh and the others why they couldn't tell me a better story, one more aligned with my own beliefs and therefore more comfortable for me. Such a story would be less reminiscent of my own, old love stories of which I am somewhat ashamed. However, teacher education is not about getting pre-service teachers to tell the proper stories that make teacher educators feel good about themselves.

While this work is not framed from a psychoanalytic perspective, the work of Pagano (1990) and Grumet (1988) may be employed to better understand some of the complicated underpinnings of gender, teaching, and stories. Both affirm the interconnectedness and mutual complication of women's gendered lives, identities and experiences and their work in teaching. Ashleigh's, and others', "love stories" in this view become less about the facile "lure of the normative" (Grumet, 1990, p. x) and easy discourse than an opportunity to uncover shadow truths. Grumet

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observes that the historical transformation of early years teaching from men's work to women's "both promoted and sabotaged the interests of women in our culture" (p. 32) by holding up professionalism as the bait for a henceforth fragmented and surveilled work and life worlds. Our stories then, like Ashleigh's, might lie in the perpetual task of working out that schism. Similarly, while primarily about secondary and college-level teaching, Pagano's thesis of difference is a valuable one, as is her treatment of stories as "practical fictions" serving a distinct purpose "an enabling construction, a metaphor for the reality it then constructs . . . an inscription, through my practice, of my reading of the world" (p. 88). Such stories warrant a generative, instructive interpretation, as, in their convenience, they might be profoundly instructive. As Pagano suggests, we must read ourselves in their stories and our reactions to them, such that "the shadows of ourselves take on substance" (p. 93). In this way the stories—even the stock stories of love—may take on an instructive quality for us, and for our students. Ashleigh's story was, at least in part, alarming to me because it was so like the stories I once told. As Grumet (1989) writes in her foreword to Pagano's work, old ideas are powerful and we might tap into that power if we only allow ourselves to see it.

[Pagano] shows us what we must do as feminist educators. The show must go on, and we sell the tickets, hawk the cotton candy, wriggle into the sequined satin and dance with the bears. But from Madison Square Garden to Peoria we work to transform the performance and performers. We work to make new meanings out of old words. (p. x)

As a feminist educator I must make new meanings from these old ideas and allow myself to be instructed by Ashleigh's and others' stock stories as tacit apologia and desperate confessions. So, while I do affirm the potential evils of love, I still suggest that we should not simply outlaw, silence, or discard love stories. Rather, though it might be uncomfortable, I suggest that a closer reading of these stories might open windows into a deeper understanding of our work, especially as it is gendered work. After all, the true parable is meant to shock, not to offer platitudes and pat conclusions, and teacher educators like myself might need to be shocked into really hearing Ashleigh's staccato worries: "I don't know. I am scared. I don't want to. I feel trapped. But I still love."

#### ***Dangerous Angels: The Work of Love***

But hearing stories does not forego their brisk interrogation. Love has been, by turns, untouchable dogma employed to control, as well as an engine for transformation, activism and human connection. It is never inert, but is instead, as Francesca Lia Block writes, "a dangerous angel" that may be both completely sustaining and totally abnegating (1989). For all her love of children, there will inevitably be those in Ashleigh's classroom who either do not love her back, or whose love takes on a difficult-to-recognize form. Her own story implied that just as the good teacher

should love children, so also good students should love the teacher. She may be left with spurned, romantic love (Liston, 2000) that may not sustain her work as a teacher.

Similarly, I wonder if love can retain its power in the face of work. In Ashleigh's story, as in the others, the idea of work is contradictory: it is vocational but not arduous. It takes on mystical qualities, such that if it is the "right" work it will prove to be effortless, rather like the beginning of a courtship or early in a romance where love is romantic, easy and "feels right."

So also love might make Ashleigh and others easier to control, as the love story reifies mysticism and natural abilities. Particularly compelling throughout all participants' stories was the way young pre-service women talked about how their families and friends praised their aptitude for and connection with young children (and in Ashleigh's case and others this extends to small animals and other cute, vulnerable beings), how these abilities were "natural" and indicative of the young woman's correctly realized destiny in teaching. In this way, carework economies sustain devoted workers in poorly paid, intensified, low-status work environments. As Folbre (2006) writes, carework is the work of caring for dependent others (e.g., young children) that has historically been done by women and which "involves close personal or emotional interaction" (p.186). Carework is marketed as "'natural' for females, and motivated by 'feminine' feelings of love and care rather than pursuit of money, status or personal advancement" (Mallozzi & Galman, 2014, p. 23). Finally, carework economies cash in on the biological imperative of selfless love, wherein women's search for better pay or higher status is negatively reinforced as an unnatural, un-feminine rejection of love.

### ***Denying Destiny in Contemporary Contexts***

Several young women in the larger sample, including Ashleigh, initially resisted becoming teachers, having seen in their own apprenticeships of observation that teaching involved grinding, isolated, low-status work. However, after a lifetime of being praised as "natural" caregivers, the emotional weight of denying the desirability of the work of love and their biological aptitude for it rendered resistance difficult. Denying destiny is tantamount to rejecting the very things for which these young women have been praised—as if the biological, inherently feminine aptitude they possess may be the only one.

Notably, denying destiny also took the form of embracing a more critical consciousness. Few participants in this study critiqued the NCLB policy landscape or other aspects of teachers' work conditions. The only critiques intimated to me seemed to be focused on teacher education, which was routinely charged as inadequate, excessively theoretical, or flawed in its priorities. It is possible this might be because teacher educators did not want to hear pre-service teachers' love stories, or hoped to transform them. Though, at the same time, teacher educators also talked about love. As Ashleigh says,

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In my [classes] we all talk about how we are so lucky to have a job where we get to be with all the cute little kids, where we get hugs and kisses every day, where we get to do a job we really, really love. I mean, you could never have these kinds of intrinsic rewards in a business firm. We all feel this way. We're so lucky.

As I reflect on these analyses, I think about my own discursive habits in the teacher education classroom, and whether I, too, tell love stories to soften the deprofessionalizing contemporary teaching environment. This may be the case, as Cole (1999) found in her study of teacher educators that the choice to work in teacher education often meant taking a drastic step down: a choice to take a lower salary, with little status, little support, and no voice in the institutional hierarchy. As one of her participants said, "I gave up money. I gave up status. I gave up all my security . . . but you see, I love the work. I love teaching. I love writing. I love the flexibility" (p. 283). Love, it seems, makes what sounds like a generally miserable experience worthwhile, or at least endurable. It is no wonder that most pre-service teachers also firmly believe that they not only can but also should tolerate a host of ills as long as love is there to sustain them. Love makes it all okay, like morning-after hearts and flowers in the landscape of ongoing abuse. Finally, Love also deflects responsibility for educational outcomes and professional happiness away from structural problems and onto the individual teacher. For example, Ashleigh constructs becoming old and burned-out not as a function of working in an alienating, sexist, and deskilling institutional structure but rather a personal failure to always stay young and in love. American popular presses consistently construct primary school teachers according to this binary: the "good" teachers who work tirelessly out of love for their students are vastly preferable to the "bad" teachers who, burned out, do not "love" their students enough to work for substandard salaries or stay off the picket lines (Mallozzi & Galman, 2014). Love has the power to transform structural injustices into personal shortcomings.

As Schutz (2004) writes, one key feature of pastoral control is that its inmates internally enforce it. Participants themselves controlled the acceptable discourses in teacher education settings; they occasionally mentioned fellow students in teacher preparation who had more critical, even activist, orientations toward teaching. These students (also female) were characterized negatively: as strident, aggressive, of suspect femininity (ugly, masculine, etc.) and transgressive sexualities. While participants were not overt, they rolled their eyes when these other students spoke up in class and sighed with relief when that student (only two were mentioned at one site and none participated in this study) transferred to the secondary program to teach middle school. "She'll be happier there," said one participant, "middle school isn't so much about the little guys and needing to focus on being tender."

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Many female pre-service early education teachers are deeply invested in the

preservation of the valued feminine identity, the avoidance of stigma and the successfully charted moral career (as a teacher, and as a White, middle class female, which for them are profoundly intertwined). It is no surprise that they may be invested in the status quo and unlikely to rock the proverbial boat when it comes to questioning structural evils or bad policies (Galman, 2006).

On another level, the vast majority of pre-service teachers are White, young, middle/upper SES females (Zumwalt & Craig, 2005). Over 90% of the cadre of novice teachers in elementary schools fit this profile, and most of them will teach in classroom and schools where most of the students are children of Color. Their interpretations of what it means to be a good teacher, and to love their students, have significant implications for those children. The wages of aesthetic love (Valenzuela, 1999) enacted by a spurned lover (Liston, 2002) could create classrooms that are sites of alienation at best and colonization at worst. This is why it is of crucial importance that teacher educators investigate and actively work to interrogate White, middle class conceptualizations of teaching as the work of love—which is most frequently an aesthetic, and therefore easily spurned, romantic love. In addition to this, teacher educators should be cautious in their own discursive carelessness and casual claims of love, while also taking care to not silence their students' and others' practical fictions. Instead, we must all recognize that these old ideas are powerful and deserve full resonance if they are to realize their instructive potential.

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