Trauma Pedagogy for Teachers: Another Lesson From Katrina

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I am a weather news addict. Since I grew up in Kansas, summer meant paying attention to the sky, watching for those puffy white clouds to darken into shades of raging purple and menacing green. The color change meant that for a brief while, the still air silenced even the birds. A funnel would emerge from the sky, and then winds raged. Sirens blared and it was time to head for the basement or cellar.

As a child of 7, I lived through the 1959 tornado that destroyed the city of Hickman Mills, Missouri, leveling or carrying away almost everything in its path. Many years later, I retain a healthy respect for sirens and warnings about the weather, because I can still vividly recall the evidence of destruction blowing past our basement window.

Now, when summer weather season approaches each year, I am constantly watching the Weather Channel, keeping track of any named storm’s progress. I am in awe of the huge white swirling mass with the hole in the middle. From such pictures and my experience with tornadoes, I know that I do not want firsthand experience with a hurricane. I was watching the news as Katrina approached on August 29, 2005. I understood about the impending disaster possibilities, but since I had never been to New Orleans, I didn’t really understand in geographic terms how severe the impact of a category 5 hurricane would be on a city situated below sea level. As the days passed and the hurricane disaster was complicated by the levee breaches and the failure of government entities to help, I became angry. What could I do but watch the stream of media pictures exposing the needless human suffering every day? Evacuees in the city, escapees from the city, citizens who stayed at home and needed saving, animals—the constant deluge of news images only began to reveal the magnitude of the geographical and material devastation. Teachers are especially vulnerable under these conditions because of the dual responsibility and caring they feel not only for their own families, but also for the students entrusted to them.

This natural disaster would breed trauma for almost everyone: those who experienced the trauma themselves; those who knew a person from the region or who felt empathy for the larger New Orleans community; and those of us watching from the outside. People develop trauma after they have experienced an unexpected devastating life event. As a result of that event, an individual will feel some psychological wound. The traumatic wound affects an individual’s ability to reason, feel, or focus, followed closely by a permeating numbness. Attending to the present moment becomes a matter of survival; responding to life’s daily irritants and details no longer seems important when one’s personal needs for safety, shelter, clothing, and food are haphazard and unsustainable.

For many teachers in New Orleans, Katrina brought trauma to them at home and at school. Within one month of the disaster, the New Orleans public schools released all their employees, over 7,500 of them. This does not represent the numbers of teachers working in charter and private schools; they were also affected, but many had financial resources to handle minimum damage to well-maintained schools. New Orleans public schools were in the center of the hurricane disaster and the levee breach. The wind and water significantly damaged external and internal property. The hurricane exacerbated years of structural neglect; even inside buildings, computers, books, and other materials do not survive months of mold, heat, and mildew in the New Orleans climate.

In January of 2006, I met Ken Rayes, a University of New Orleans faculty member who was
displaced by Katrina and had found refuge with friends in Delaware. One day he was visiting the English department at the University of Delaware, and I listened to him tell a group of English faculty a harrowing version of his departure from New Orleans and the desperate need he felt to return there. In a later conversation, I asked Ken if there was anything I could do to help, since I had some research background with trauma from violence and abuse. He took me up on my offer several months later with an invitation to create a workshop on trauma for teachers. That was the creative kernel for the workshop described here.

I had been researching the connection between literacy practices and trauma resulting from natural disasters and armed conflict at the Disaster Research Center at the University of Delaware. My previous research focused on adolescents who have experienced violence and abuse, and how these adolescents used writing to cope with surviving. As I sought preparatory materials for the seminar, I found little about assisting teachers, or working with teachers and trauma. Eventually, I found one document from a British journal on disaster management (Dyregrov, 1989); workers who directly dealt with victims of a disaster attended a seminar for “psychological debriefing.” The seminar described in this document was intended to relieve the stress of assistance workers, who are in need of debriefing their own associative stress from natural disasters. In addition, the seminar described by Dyregrov paralleled information I received at an armed conflict and violence seminar at Hofstra University in April of 2006. A group of teachers from Uganda (Annan, Castelli, Devreux, & Locatelli, 2003) wrote a manual that was presented at Hofstra on how armed conflict and trauma first affects the teachers, and then how it will manifest in adolescents engaged in school learning activities and behavior. The program I attended combined information and knowledge about adolescent development and trauma with practical ways in which teachers needed to adapt their teaching styles to accommodate their students.

These two documents (Annan et al., 2003; Dyregrov, 1989) provided the theoretical and empirical base for the three-day seminar for teachers I developed, using writing as the creative agent for debriefing (see Table 1). The use of writing as the mode of creative expression extends from the work of James Pennebaker in “Telling Stories: The Health Benefits of Narrative” (Pennebaker, 2000). Other literature describes the positive effects of encouraging participants to create descriptions of their experiences (Anderson & MacCurdy, 2000; UNICEF, 2004, 2005). As a result, I devised a three-day workshop, which paralleled the psychological debriefing structure and included the knowledge and information about trauma and stress from a natural disaster and its physical and psychological manifestations for adults and adolescents. As a healing tool, I used various authentic writing activities and composing narratives about Katrina to drive the seminar, called Trauma Pedagogy for Teachers: Writing Katrina in the Classroom. I hoped to give the teachers some understanding of how the hurricane and the resulting trauma affected their lives, their teaching, and their students’ ability to learn.

Table 1 shows the evolution of the post-Katrina seminar for teachers. I will explain further the principles as they unfolded for each day of the seminar, and address the intersection of psychological debriefing with the benefits of narrative expression from the course.

Day 1: Acknowledging the Trauma
The design for Day 1 was guided by the principle of “acknowledging the trauma.” In the debriefing, the participants were encouraged and expected to acknowledge what they saw, heard, and felt in terms of the disaster. In any classroom lesson, the first series of activities should build the knowledge of the participants around a central concept, and part of the discovery in this activity is a personal awareness of what participants know about a topic and how they came to know it or experience it. In the case of providing support and assistance to the disaster workers—in this case, teachers—the first task was for them to create a collective knowledge about what happened by remembering or reconstructing the facts surrounding the disaster event from each participant’s perspective.
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<td>Introduce PTSD, literacy and adolescents; Heuristic from hurricane survey and literacy survey; Journaling about the surveys and what you realized or recovered from memory about the disaster.</td>
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<td>Verbal telling of sensory details/impressions</td>
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<td>Day 3: Future planning and coping</td>
<td>Evidence of resiliency after writing has been completed</td>
<td>What have we learned about each other, trauma event we share in common, and writing as narrative? Creating a classroom environment based upon debriefing and trauma information with adolescents; teachers design a yearlong general curriculum to use writing in their classrooms by working with crayons, colored paper, markers and other materials; Present orally to participants about why they created the writing sequence they did; Teacher Action Research and what teachers can do to create project on what can we do to help the adolescents recover by asking questions about effects and writing.</td>
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In this workshop, I incorporated various tools to assist the teachers in creating an open mind for the discovery of ideas. “Invention” in the rhetorical sense means to find or discover. The tool I selected for this endeavor came from the research literature on posttraumatic stress disorder experienced by hurricane victims (Warheit, Zimmerman, Khoury, Vega, & Gail, 1996). I knew that the teachers in the workshop reflected all educational levels, and they would also bring different experiences related to the disaster. These people may or may not have been acquainted with each other as educators prior to the workshop, but they all had a significant commonality: they experienced and survived Katrina. Another important aspect to this PTSD response is that Katrina not only affected each person individually; it affected them communally. New Orleans is a special place, with a unique cultural heritage and history that any New Orleanian was compelled by his or her unique experience within the community. That is not to say that other communities cannot be defined by their historical and cultural heritage, but I found this to be especially true of the teachers in this seminar. Understanding the broad cultural depth of the people as individuals and as part of the whole community remains, for me, an essential element to consider in building programs for healing in the community.

Taking a Survey
The first step in the seminar was to offer the participants an instrument intended to measure the level of PTSD that they might have nine months after Katrina. I used a survey designed and tested in the field by Warheit et al. (1996). The Warheit survey (see Appendix 1) measured whether or not PTSD existed, not the source of it or whether or not any present trauma from Hurricane Katrina was compounded by other critical life events prior to Katrina. Any trauma the teachers were feeling now would be compounded by their past traumas. The stress of the hurricane might trigger PTSD as a compounding of life stresses through the layering, recurrence, and remembrance of traumatic events in a person’s life.

Surveys have a way of creating an objectivity about our experiences through the limited answers the surveys allow, because they channel the responses into specific measures. I expected the surveys to trigger memories of the hurricane and related life events, but I wanted to funnel this recollection into a healthy area for both group analysis and private analysis for the teachers and their teaching. The literature about PTSD suggests that mental processes are affected by stress, and that an individual’s ability to process information is impaired (Lyonso, 1987; Reijneveld, Crone, & Verhulst, 2003; Warheit et al., 1996). If mental processing, such as an individual’s ability to focus, was an effect of PTSD, then I wondered how literacy practices of these same individuals would be affected. I created a literacy survey that asked these teachers to describe certain of their literacy practices, pre- and post-Katrina. However unreliable such recollection is, the literacy survey reshuffled the Hurricane survey responses into an awareness of practices relevant to each teacher as a person and a professional (see Appendix 2).

Writing a Story
Since this seminar was about writing as a process toward healing a trauma, I moved the discussion to an expression of what the surveys had just introduced or allowed the teachers to recall. The survey served as a heuristic or invention strategy for the story I asked the teachers to write: something that might have been sparked by the memories elicited from the surveys. The connection here will not be lost on teachers of language arts and writing instructors. Invention is the beginning of a process for constructing a text—the places or topoi where a writer goes to find ideas. (Topoi are categories of relationships about a given topic that help writers discover what to say about that topic.) For some of the teachers in the workshop, it was a matter of choosing one portion of a long tale; for others, it was facing the events and sharing them. In the psychological debriefing literature, this portion is very important; it allows each individual to recall facts and events and gives him or her the language of expression, not so easy to do when the emotions and stress are fighting to remain in control.
**Telling a Story**

The next step was to have each person narrate a story from their Katrina experiences, either from their writing or one that they just wanted to tell at the time. Their stories may or may not have been generated from the surveys or the writing activities. I asked for permission to videotape these stories, in case someone wanted to use the videotape later to write a story or for me to review the stories in the seminar. This step parallels the debriefing activity of acknowledging the facts: these adults and teachers told their personal stories about a Katrina event. The activity was meant to establish a collective memory, each piece representing one piece of the whole Katrina puzzle. With courage and conviction, each person brought to the group an often harrowing and unspoken Katrina story, which offered the audience a brief but vivid image from the whole trauma the participants had experienced. I didn’t need a PTSD survey to tell me that all of the participants had experienced trauma from the disaster—either their personal trauma, or vicarious trauma through the experience of someone else in the New Orleans community. The voices rolled through tragic events, sorrowful losses, and angry visions of “if onlys.”

This process took most of the morning session of Day 1, and after the narrative collection of facts, we needed a break. In the debriefing model, the role of the facilitator is an important dimension to constructing the seminar. In this model, the facilitator is the guide, the one who presents the rules for the debriefing and sets the agenda clearly. In the seminar’s adapted structure, the presenter has three roles: the debriefing facilitator is the general role, with the writing teacher and the academic instructor exchanging positions throughout the seminar.

My original intent was to provide the teachers with support for their trauma. By providing them with a supportive and assistive workshop, this experience would then give them some emotional cushion for returning to their classrooms, and help them understand the nature and manifestations of trauma in adolescents. What I had not anticipated was the extent to which I would be affected by the trauma the teachers related through the three days, and how affected I was by what had happened. Even though I had prepared the workshop material, and intellectually knew the effects, it wasn’t until I experienced their stories and saw what happened that I knew that my workshop design was beneficial for teachers and trauma; by taking the teachers through the process, I had to take myself through it as well. That reciprocity brought the power of story into the workshop with sharp clarity and direct effect.

In these debriefing workshops, I was dealing with adults, many of whom shared stories, accompanied by tears and anger. In the debriefing seminar, the facilitator remains calm, explaining the steps to the participants, validating their experiences, assisting in ways to gain control and understanding through discussion, but without patronizing or judging their experiences. Sometimes, the discussion reveals pain lying just under the surface. Listening is the best procedure in these circumstances, followed by gently nudging the workshop toward the next stage or phase, while recognizing the vulnerability of what someone just expressed, especially with tearful emotion. I used the oral storytelling responses to introduce the phase of distancing. I guided the participants through a series of research explanations and analyses of trauma, its effects, and how it manifests itself in adults.

In the afternoon session of Day 1, I discussed the role of trauma in a community and the various levels of community affected by a natural disaster. Community may be defined by neighborhood; by city limits or parish divisions; by the various communities within the geographical area of which each person is a member; by each person’s individual life and family members, nuclear and extended; by the school in which the teacher is employed; and by the teacher’s class. The effects of a natural disaster in a geographical area extends beyond any individual, because the community is a system of connections. When one part of the connection is affected, then eventually each connection in the system will be affected: home life, school, religious organization and affiliations, cultural and racial identifications, workplace hierarchies, and responsibilities.
All the activities in Day 1 guided the participants through awareness activities, creative expression, and finally a series of cognitive reference points provided by the facts and information about stress, trauma, and adults. These connections do happen with tears, sadness, and vulnerability in the necessary exercise of debriefing. Even during my presentation of facts about trauma in general, stories continued to emerge, and participants often reflected the factual discussion into a personal relevancy.

The last activity of Day 1 was to have the participants write up one story from the day. The participants went to a computer lab, and I introduced them to the New Orleans blog, which I had created for this seminar. I entered each person into the blog, showed them how to maneuver through the blog to posting and editing, and then allowed them some composing time to write a Katrina story they wanted to tell, whether they had written it down earlier or had a new story to tell.

This last session served as the next phase in the debriefing process. After acknowledgment is expression of the facts, with each individual’s reactions to what happened. This does not exactly reproduce the intended narrow point of debriefing, but using writing to tell the story as expression and as healing was the creative equivalent. The work of James Pennebaker (2003) discusses the application of using writing practice to affect healing—physical and mental healing. In the literature on trauma (Dyregrov, 1989), an individual telling and expressing what happened is a critical step in distancing the event as well as giving language to its impact. Once an individual can tell what happened, there is a release of the power or trauma, which can only happen once the individual tells his or her story. By combining that need to tell with the creative act of expressing the story in written form, where the story can then be revised and edited, the narrative written form acts as a step in the healing process of trauma.

Day 2: Normalization
On the second day of the seminar, I introduced what I call in the classroom QOR (Questions, Observations, and Reflections). This is a reflective feedback discussion focused on the issues that the participants want to address from the previous day’s session. Reflection at this point in the seminar might seem premature, but by beginning with the reflection, the participants had time to review the previous day’s events and provide me, the facilitator, with much-needed information about how the seminar agenda on debriefing was working. A reflective discussion served to focus the agenda, refresh issues, and create distance from the emotional topic of Katrina-related trauma from the previous day.

Just as it is important for the participants to reflect, the facilitator also needs to reflect upon the progress of the group, calling attention to their success in a difficult emotional time, to the realization of the trauma in their own lives, and to the supportive nature of the group. In the debriefing workshop, this phase was called nominalization. The reflective assessments are not falsely given, but in the seminars I have led, the participants have shared such personal vulnerability that they have bonded in their common grief and experience. This is a healthy demonstration of support and understanding that these teachers—these people—needed. This does not suggest that this workshop would provide all the support and ongoing attention needed to address the trauma situations in their lives, but at this moment and in this workshop, we were creating a safe and supportive environment for some healing and trauma alleviation.

Following the QOR session, I became a presenter and began to address the technical aspects of trauma: What causes trauma in natural disasters? How does it occur? Why does it occur? What are the behavioral signs in adolescents? This was a second dose of factual information about adolescents and repetitive information about trauma, its effects, and its stresses.

In some ways, by re-presenting the issues about stress, trauma, and natural disasters with adolescents, my intent was to vary the information and begin to refocus the seminar on additional areas of applicability. In addition to the sources I presented with the workshop, I found different resources that the participants could access after the workshop and use in
their classrooms for information or for sharing with other teachers and parents (Annan et al., 2003; UNICEF, 2004, 2005). I mixed the verbal discussion of the PTSD in adolescents with information about what has happened in recent situations: the tsunami in Indonesia primarily, since that disaster is the most similar to Hurricane Katrina in terms of the catastrophe and displacement of people.

In the afternoon session, I showed the participants a five-day workshop based upon a teaching manual from Uganda (Annan et al., 2003). The workshop outlined in the manual was designed for teachers dealing with students who have faced the brutality of armed conflicts. I used this manual because it was written by teachers who had experienced armed conflict and were now teaching adolescents with similar experiences, and because it echoed the psychological debriefing principles and reiterated the psychological effects of trauma. The workshop addresses information for teachers about what to expect in terms of adolescent behavior and how to structure classroom pedagogy.

Each phase of the informational presentation was accompanied by open discussion and idea exchange. Sometimes the participants took notes and listened; other times, they made comments based upon their agreement or disagreement with the ideas being presented. The idea was to parallel the intent of the Ugandan manual with the activities in this workshop so that the participants could find distance from the topic and yet find relevance in the topic. My intention was to move from understanding of the Uganda model to other information collected by UNICEF after the tsunami.

The purpose of this phase was to discuss healthy recovery methods, establish what adolescents need to be more resilient, and then compare that to what adults need. Adults have established patterns of coping with traumatic events. While these may not be the healthiest patterns, adolescents do not have the same coping strategies as adults do, and so they need to have other avenues of support and direction. This phase of information was supplied by U.S. government websites that advise teachers, parents, and support workers about available community organizations and institutions offering assistance and aid in times of disaster. Many of the participants were not aware of these sources of information, so they seemed interested in those resources. A good sign indeed!

In the late afternoon, many of the participants were ready to discuss resiliency. These teachers were resilient and had already begun the process of establishing a new normalcy in their lives, connecting with other survivors and establishing communication networks to gather information and assist other survivors. One of the most remarkable discoveries I found in this workshop was people’s determination to survive once they realized help wasn’t coming. This fact caused a person-to-person reaction that helped to re-establish a community’s humanity and acceptance of personal responsibility to survive and be resourceful. Although the pain from the hurricane and the trauma was still very much evident, so was the adult participants’ resilience.

The next phase dealt with resiliency in adolescents. Resiliency takes time to develop, and in some ways is dependent upon the support and coping strategies that the family has established when faced with other traumatic events. However, this is not the case for every adolescent. For teachers, this means establishing a more supportive classroom environment with sincere instances and activities that can allow the adolescent to receive positive responses. One of the effects of trauma is a loss of trust in “adult matters,” such as news reports, governmental leaders, and adults in general. The adolescent needs to find a trusted adult again, and re-establish honest communications, to assist in establishing stability and a safe environment in schools, at least. Schools that have experienced violence are especially difficult environments for adolescents who have also faced catastrophic trauma.

In order to establish a mechanism for healing within the parameters of a teacher’s expertise, writing can become the tool for reporting trauma as well as helping to re-establish stability and safety. Students’ experiences can be topics for open discussion and critique in a classroom, while serving a vital function for building resiliency: telling the story of
the trauma and constructing means for appropriate responses to mistrust. Part of what an adolescent internalizes about trauma may establish patterns of response that are built on personal reasoning—not based on facts, but upon the adolescent connecting experiential dots. He/she arrives at a conclusion, and if this line of reasoning were tested, then the information would be found false, in some cases. The pedagogy involved here means that reasoning is also challenged through investigation of the facts, and writing as inquiry and investigation would be a useful pedagogy for this stage of resiliency.

As we discussed these issues in the workshop, I led the teachers to three specific works: that of James Pennebaker (2000), Anderson and MacCurdy (2000), and Harris (2003). I relied most heavily upon James Pennebaker’s work, and provided the participants with copies of his article on writing and healing. In this workshop, at each major shift, I provided the participants with the texts I used to create the workshop agenda.

At the end of Day 2, I returned to writing; specifically, the benefits of writing and healing. In the composition field, this is an area of contention because of the disciplinary credentials necessary for using writing to treat emotional distress or even use writing to heal, which lies in the discipline of psychotherapy. Anderson and MacCurdy (2000) and Harris (2003) clearly point out that writing is a language art and that some students who choose to reveal stories of deep trauma should be allowed to do so. As the reader can see from the outline of this seminar, I used writing with teachers as a tool to tell stories specifically about the trauma they experienced. These teachers elected to take this workshop on trauma, and it was designed to lead them through writing activities for their own journey toward healing, as well as to provide material and information about the nature of trauma, adolescents, and the role that writing can play in the classroom. In times of crisis, teachers sometimes emerge as community leaders to facilitate activities toward rebuilding and reorganizing. For adolescents, the teacher is often the one reliable adult to whom the adolescent relates and communicates with outside of the family unit. Yet, these teachers can be victims of trauma themselves, and they need support and relief in order to provide the necessary support for the students.

It seems to be a logical and reasonable approach to use writing or allow writing in the classroom as a vehicle for students to discuss their trauma. The research points to the healing use of narration: at some point, the victim or survivor needs to tell the story in order to gain control over the event. By converting the story into words, the traumatic event can be manipulated and revised over time. This telling is especially important for children, who will associate events and facts in an illogical pattern and arrive at a conclusion that does not have a real truth. Trauma affects an individual’s ability to focus and to concentrate. This can happen to teachers as well as to students, and can appear as numbness and emotional distance.

At this point in the workshop, I showed the participants a website about the devastating South Asia tsunami (www.unicef.org/voy/) and guided them through the writings of adolescents from all over the world to their peers who survived that disaster. These voices of hope showed a pathway and purpose to writing about the disaster as a way to heal. To encourage a personal healing, I included writing and telling every day of the workshop, usually at the end of the day.

At the end of Day 2, after reviewing Pennebaker’s and other educators’ research on the value of telling and writing, we returned to the computer lab and to the New Orleans blog site, where teachers could write another story, revise, or read someone else’s story. Although some participants resisted this “forced” writing experience—many told me afterward that they hated doing it at the time, because they had to revisit some unpleasant memories—after writing it down, they felt some relief.

As the facilitator, I did not read these stories when participants were writing in the workshop; in fact, I found it important not to read them so that I could continue to encourage the teachers to write more, or different, stories about their experiences. Once the most difficult story was written by an individual, he/she seemed able to move on, or had gained a sense of control and understanding that had not existed before the writing exercise.
The issue in using writing to begin healing is related to reconnecting emotions and ideas. The participants literally need to reconnect their emotions and cognitive abilities to counter the disconnect that so often happens as a survival instinct after trauma. One of the most useful and healthy ways to establish a reconnection is through action, doing something as a result of the experience. Each individual has new skills and knowledge about survival and disasters. This knowledge needs to be used to start the rebuilding and recovery process, which will assist each person in reconnecting his or her emotional and mental faculties.

Day 3: Planning for the Future

This day began with a reference to the “Voices of Hope” report (UNICEF, 2005) from the previous day. One of the important outcomes of the UNICEF report and the psychological debriefing seminar was to direct the traumatic event and the person’s response to it into a course of action. In other words, the debriefing exercises throughout the seminar led to this day, so that these experiences and realizations could be used to empower the participants to do something. To do something was to gain resiliency. My hope for the teachers was for them to do something with writing in their classrooms, some project or change in pedagogy directly related to what they had learned through the workshop.

Since the participants were all writing teachers at various levels, I asked them what we are teaching when we teach writing to our children. In terms of a natural disaster and what they had heard in the workshop, what did that mean for writing in their classrooms in the fall? This heuristic started a discussion about the purpose of writing and different activities that the teachers had already done, in some cases immediately after the natural disaster, when school resumed. Some of these activities included building a vocabulary list of the terms being used in newspapers and media: for example, evacuees, survivors, “been Katrina’ed.” The use of these words developed new connotations and denotations, depending upon the context in a discussion of Katrina.

The teachers told stories and discussed and questioned the role that writing had played and would play in the coming semester, when the students returned to schools. This led to a suggestion for engaging in Teacher Action Research (TAR). I explained what this was and asked participants to plan and design what they were going to do with writing in their classrooms in the new semester.

I began the actual project with the participants by telling them a story about how I became involved in a TAR project. It was a difficult story for me to tell, since it exposed my own failings as a teacher of adolescents and as a college professor. My story covered race issues, inequalities, prejudice, and my own pedagogical inability to reach students. After I finished the story, I felt like I was finally a member of the class—not just the facilitator or presenter. As the participants responded to my story with stories of their own, some told stories with deep anger, some cried, and some became very tense and thoughtful. Their responses concluded the three-day seminar with a visible need to take action, to do something about the injustice in their own teaching practice.

In the participatory seminar model, the facilitator also must address the issues that have controlled the seminar’s agenda. In order to do this, I asked the participants to create a 9-month plan for the next school year. This activity was intended to prompt participants to reconnect their teacher knowledge and the emotional content of their trauma experience with the information and experience gained from the seminar, in order to produce a revised writing plan that would contain a new action plan for the coming school year.

I provided the teachers with all kinds of writing utensils so that they could create this action plan in whatever manner they wished. The plan had to cover September through June, with a separate series of writing concepts for each month. These concepts had to be connected to what the participants had learned about adolescents, trauma, and writing. At this point, I gave the participants time to construct their plans, with the understanding that each participant
would present her or his plan orally to the group, and then we would place the plans on the walls surrounding our classroom for all to see. I called this the Oral Report of Discovery.

After this planning and sharing was finished, I concluded the workshop with a thank you, and a charge to each participant to find something to study in the new school year. Because of a natural disaster, their students will be different and will need different writing activities. Some of the activities of the workshop were intended to show teachers the benefits of such activities, but they needed to adjust these to each set of students. Trauma recovery does not happen in a specific time line, and with each hurricane season or critical life event, the traumatic memories will resurface. I invited each participant to keep a journal of their school year, and chronicle their own teaching road to recovery, as well as that of their students.

I still maintain the blog (www.english.udel.edu/blogs/alvarez), even though few have posted to it since the seminar. My hope is that this blog will again be visited by the participants and may be added to as each one arrives at another point in the healing process, writing and telling about the road to recovery in their classrooms and in their lives. I will keep it alive for them, just in case.

References
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