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Creating a Culture of Inquiry: Student
Teachers' Stories from the World of the
Glass Box

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CREATING A CULTURE OF INQUIRY:
STUDENT TEACHERS' STORIES FROM THE WORLD OF THE GLASS BOX

by

Judith J. Ruskamp

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of
The Graduate College at the University of Nebraska
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of Doctor of Education

Major: Educational Studies
(Teaching, Curriculum, and Learning)

Under the Supervision of Professor Margaret Macintyre Latta

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CREATING A CULTURE OF INQUIRY:
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Judith J. Ruskamp

University of Nebraska, 2009

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This study explores critical reflective practice as a way to study and systematically improve teaching and learning, instilling in teacher candidates a culture of inquiry where they purposefully negotiate the complexities of teaching and learning experiences. Understanding the work of teaching as such, entailing ongoing analysis of the challenges and opportunities teachers face in their classrooms and schools, requires time and space for a deliberate approach to this complex work. The task for teacher educators and for teacher preparation programs is to find ways to enable teacher candidates to successfully navigate the given relational complexities, furthering learning alongside developing strong teaching identities. Teacher educators and teacher education programs must ask what can be done to create a mindset in teacher candidates that encourages exploration and meaning-making as mediums for working with the relational complexities as productive for teaching and learning. Narrative inquiry serves as a medium for documenting and analyzing the perspectives and insights across all participants' self-study. Data is gathered and analyzed from prospective teachers engaging in critical reflective practice via collaborative autobiographies of critical incidents, classroom observations, debriefing interview sessions, a questionnaire, and a follow-up interview over the course of one student teaching semester. Prospective teachers' engagement in critical reflection through narrative inquiry chronicles both the tensions and the possibilities present within teaching and learning

experiences, enlarging everyone's perspectives and understandings regarding learners and learning. Engagement in critical reflection requires trusted and invested collaboration with other(s) manifesting a culture of inquiry. Findings suggest that a culture of inquiry provides prospective teachers with time and space to negotiate self-other relations. The resulting reflective turns foster teaching practices and teaching identities that are nurtured and sustained. The study concludes that teacher educators and teacher education programs should strive to create cultures of inquiry prompting reflective opportunities for discovering what counts as knowledge in specific teaching and learning experiences alongside importantly allowing for the evolution of teaching identities.

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Lovingly dedicated
to my husband, Jerry, and my daughters, Laura and Christine

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Dedication	v
Acknowledgements.....	vi
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Direct Purpose of Study.....	3
Overview of the Conceptual Framework for this Doctoral Dissertation.....	6
Theory’s Role as “Critical Other”	9
Structure Overview	10
Chapter 2.....	10
Chapter 3.....	11
Chapter 4.....	12
Chapter 5.....	14
Chapter 6.....	15
Chapter 2: Conceptual Framework.....	17
Self-Study as a Way to Promote Scholarly Inquiry	19
The “Glass Box” Approach	22
The Relational in the Live Experience of Teaching and Learning through Critical Reflection.....	24
Reflexivity in the Teaching and Learning Experience.....	26
Reflexive Practice for Critical Reflection that Creates Embodied Understandings	31
Negotiating What Teacher Candidates Know with What They are Experiencing: The Work of Teacher Education	33

Autobiography: Teacher Candidates Finding Their Own Voice and Shaping	
Strong Teacher Identities	35
Conclusion	37
Chapter 3: Narrative Inquiry as a Methodological Approach Nested Within Self-Study.....	40
The Tradition of Self-Study.....	42
Multiple Opportunities for Collaborative Inquiry.....	44
Narratives of Lived Experiences: A Methodological Approach.....	46
Meaning-Making, Identity, and Narrative Inquiry.....	49
Participant and Researcher in Narrative Inquiry.....	50
The Participants.....	52
Research Questions	54
Design: Methods and Procedures.....	56
Data Collection.....	56
Data Analysis Process	59
Ethical Considerations	60
Presentation Form	61
Chapter 4: Data Revealed through Critical Reflective Practice: An Educational Experience....	63
An Educational Experience: Black Box vs. Glass Box Approach.....	65
A “Lived Understanding” of Negotiating Knowledge and Perception.....	68
Reflexivity’s Role	69
Revealing the Terrain of the Course	70
Critical Reflective Practice in the World of the Glass Box	71
Autobiographies of Critical Incidents: Spaces of Liberty.....	72
Debriefing Interviews: Spaces of Liberty	91

The Good Work of Mindfully Negotiating the Teaching and Learning Process	101
Chapter 5: Entering the Glass Box and Exiting Out the Other Side: Thriving through Engagement with Critical Reflection	102
A Review of the Analysis Process	103
Creating a Culture of Inquiry through Critical Reflective Practice	107
Conclusion	119
Chapter 6: Enhancing Reflective Practice: “Making Meaning” to Nurture and Sustain Teaching Practices	121
The Glass Box Experience: Qualities that Support Critical Reflective Practice	123
Careful Discernment	124
Heartfelt, Receptive, and Responsive Authenticity	126
Trusted and Invested Collaboration	127
Critical Reflective Practice: Reflecting on Learning to Teach	133
Creating a Culture of Inquiry: Opportunities to Thrive as Teachers	135
Walking the Talk.....	136
Opening Glass Boxes	137
Creating Island Communities.....	138
A Culture of Inquiry.....	139
References	144
Appendix A: Informed Consent Letter	154
Appendix B: Questionnaire.....	156
Appendix C: IRB Compliance Documents	157

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Reflective practice is a vital tool necessary for navigating the complexities, ambiguities, and dilemmas that characterize today's classrooms. More importantly, recognition of teaching as an increasingly complex endeavor necessitates a level of critical thinking and thoughtful reflection that embraces what education is all about. My argument is that the place where "education" really happens does not exist so much in the ideals of what counts as teaching knowledge of subject matter and best practices—but in the recognition of relations to and with oneself, people around us, and the larger environment in which we exist while teaching.

In schools of education today, emphasis is placed on securing proficiency in teaching and discipline specifically related to mastery of subject matter and mastery of classroom management techniques. Dewey (1904) suggests that this "practical work should be pursued primarily with reference to its reaction upon the professional pupil in making him a thoughtful and alert student of education. Teacher candidates who are proficient at managing a classroom, for example, seem to know how to teach but "they are not students of teaching" (p. 15). LePage, Darling-Hammond, Akar, Guitierrez, Jenkins-Gunn, and Rosebrock (2005) concur: "The research illustrates that classroom management relies as much on developing relationships and orchestrating a productive learning community as it does on determining consequences for inappropriate behavior" (p. 332).

While reflective practice is not alien to teacher candidates and teacher education programs that include attention to reflection, perhaps the deliberate approach to the mental activity Dewey speaks of is. The complexities of teaching and the importance of intelligent analysis of the challenges that teachers face in their classrooms and in their schools requires time

and space for such work. Zeichner (1996) contends that schools of education have done little to empower future teachers with the skills and knowledge they need to facilitate critical pedagogy via critical reflective practice. More specifically, following a host of things that are wrong with education today and consequently prevent quality reflective practice from happening, Zeichner delves into “what kind of reflection teachers are engaging in, what it is teachers are reflecting about, and how they are going about it” (p. 207), noting multiple short-comings. A common thread running through all teacher education preparation programs today is that of overlooking or, in some cases, simply ignoring this important meta-cognitive activity that takes place in conjunction with the other normal teaching experiences. This type of meta-cognition requires contemplation and negotiation of the complexities of teaching and learning experience. Simply put there is a distinct lack of a deliberate approach to the provision of time, space, and opportunity to explore this mental activity associated with the complexities of teaching in order to create a culture of critical inquiry because this is no easy task. Darling-Hammond and Bransford (2005) say, “Skillfully enacting this kind of teaching of teachers takes time, effort, and most important, institutional support. . . .” (p. 441). This research is an attempt to take time and make an effort to seek out the stories of student teachers that exemplify the good work of reflective practice as a way to systematically study and improve teaching and learning. It is an effort to call into question what exactly counts as knowledge in order to make meaning of the teaching and learning experience and how the student teachers’ narratives of experience can enlighten that meaning-making and develop strong teaching identities.

Teacher educators and teacher education programs all have a stake in the early success of the pre-service teacher candidates they serve. My own teaching and learning experiences as a teacher educator have made me increasingly more cognizant of a unique dual role that exists for

me when I give thoughtful consideration to the enhancement of the potential in the teacher candidates who are a part of the teacher education program I serve. I am simultaneously a teacher and a student of learning to teach, a messenger and an artist of the teaching and learning experience, at the same time. I also understand that in order to be effective in the classroom, it is critical that I be engaged in this kind of meta-cognitive work, as well. That is, I need to be actively engaged in thinking about my own thinking while I am teaching. As a teacher educator, this complex teaching practice takes on new meaning and heightened importance, and the research reported in this study is an investigation of my own efforts to engage in meaning and purpose—to examine, explore, shape and reshape my own teaching. Thus, this inquiry allowed the student teachers to engage in educational experiences that involved a deliberate approach to critical reflective practice that empowered them to more effectively facilitate study of self in relation to other as a way to promote critical reflection on the teaching experience itself. Concomitantly, it also enabled such stories to provide for new understandings concerning my teacher educator practices and programmatic changes.

Chapter One of this doctoral dissertation provides a delineation of this research beginning with the direct purpose of this study and an overview of the framework of this doctoral dissertation.

Direct Purpose of this Study

As a stakeholder in this process, I conducted research that explored the kind of reflection pre-service teachers are engaging in, what they are reflecting about, and how they are going about it with the intention of examining deliberate approaches to ascertaining student teacher candidates' perceptions of mediating what teaching and learning needs to be for them when they consider the relationship between what they know and what they experience in the classroom. It

encouraged exploration, stimulation, meaning-making, and possibilities in the relational of teaching and learning in a current educational environment ripe with tradition and “magic bullets.”

Carrie Birmingham (2004) states that “the very word reflection is a metaphor that suggests an act of private, personal, and intimate examination of oneself in a mirror” (p. 321). This act of private and personal examination of various experiences that take place in the classroom is an act of self-study that is a viable way to promote meaningful, purposeful reflection. John Dewey (1932) says, “We do not actually learn from experience as much as we learn from reflecting on experience” (p. 19). More importantly, reflective thinking repels convention, tradition, or custom in favor of exploration and experimentation to discover what is new, real, challenging, and meaningful, to allow for reflection as active, receptive, in need of the “other”—other ideas, experiences, perspectives, and so on. Conversely, the current system of teaching is a process of teaching and learning that is based on the input/output model without any serious attention given to that critical “in-between” phase. What takes place in between what goes into the teaching and learning experience and what the results of those efforts are the tensions, the gaps, the challenges, the processing, the new openings and possibilities. However, these important considerations that could provide opportunity for what counts as “knowledge” in the teaching and learning experience remain largely untapped inside a sort of “black box.” Thus, self-study as a way to reveal these qualities speaks to a change in teacher behavior—self-study reflection that is holistic in nature, that provides for deeper insights into the role of the teacher in the classroom to thereby inform their practice, improve it, and as a result, improve education as well.

Few can dispute the value of such an approach to the process of scholarly inquiry into

teaching and learning, particularly with regard to the relationality of the experience as a way to promote critical reflection on teaching and learning. Relational pedagogy is when authentic learning takes place, when growth of experience for all involved happens. It is my conviction that a teacher education program must acknowledge the important work of critical reflection on teaching and learning as relational in nature and make a deliberate curricular commitment to it. Both students and teachers "...must encourage and engage in activities that connect the knowing- and reflection-in-action of competent practitioners to the theories and techniques taught as professional knowledge in academic courses" (Schön, 1987, p. 312). This tenet will empower both teacher educators and pre-service teachers to attend to the relational complexities as the real work of teaching and learning. This is what the practice of teaching is all about.

Alexander Sidorkin and Gert Biesta further inform my thinking on this teaching practice. Sidorkin (2002) says that "Relations cannot belong to one thing; they are the joint property of at least two things. Relations are located, so to speak, in between things" (p. 94), and student teachers need to pay attention to the in-between, "minding the gaps" (Biesta, 2004, p. 11) with an attunement to the other as it is voiced by the self during their lived experience of teaching and learning during the student teaching experience. More importantly, time and space for unpacking their sense of Being in the world, where tensions are respected and accepted, is indeed the "location of education" (p. 11). It is here where the student teacher can be sensitive to other to grow as a student of teaching and learning.

Affording the student teacher the important opportunities to make a commitment to a heightened sense of consciousness in the teaching and learning experience is the direct purpose of this study. Planning for holistic engagement in some action or exploration, the student teacher can "become immersed in the chosen territory" in an embodied way, and then plan for cycles of

rhythmic reflexivity—going along, stepping back, reflecting—asking the important questions of “How?” and “Why?” in order to further learning. This analysis, beginning with self and naturally gravitating toward analysis of self in relation to other, is integral to lived engagement with the teaching and learning experience. Student teachers can engage in a meaningful approach to mediating what they know with what they are experiencing to discover what counts as knowledge in the teaching and learning experience.

Overview of the Conceptual Framework for this Doctoral Dissertation

My argument is for a paradigm shift in current reflective practice on the teaching and learning experience that encourages a “Glass Box” approach where a place for improvisation is possible, where meaningful reflection about teaching and learning experiences takes place. It is here in the critical “in-between” place where the tensions, the gaps, the challenges, the processing, the new openings, meaning-making, the moving forward and the going back, and possibilities in relation to self, other, and subject matter—are illuminated, revealed and explored, come alive, and are tapped into and interacted with by the teacher to gain further insight, to appreciate the experience as an aesthetic one which puzzles, impacts, and yet can improve teaching and learning through possibility. The glass box becomes a sort of prism for inspecting, observing, questioning, and exploring the multiple layers, the folds of interplay, and the connections or relationships that exist in the teaching and learning experience. The teacher has the opportunity to look inside and gain new insights about what is working, what is not, reflexively contemplating concerns and questions about what is happening in relationship to a student or a classroom management issue, or some aspect of subject matter exploration. This is all done complete with all the complexities, considering how he/she actually impacts learning outcomes, exploring teaching practice as a process for furthering learning about teaching.

Focusing on self-study as a way to effectively promote this approach to reflection, the teacher in the world of the glass box appreciates and values the complexities of teaching and learning with the idea of participating in improving teaching, creating new knowledge, and fostering learning. Thus, critical reflective practice through self-study is a way for student teachers to mediate what they know with what they are experiencing to begin the important process of developing their teaching identities. Scholars also understand and advocate for this holistic approach to teaching and learning, as well. Ken Zeichner (1996), Susan Melnick (1996), and Mary Louise Gomez (1996) and Margaret Macintyre Latta (2008) and Susan Wunder (2003) provide examples embracing this heightened consciousness in reflective practice, particularly as it relates to teacher education programs. Todd Dinkelman (2003) and John Loughran and Russell (2002) see self-study as a way to effectively promote this reflection. John Dewey (1904), Belinda Louie (2003), Denise Drevdahl (2003), Jill Purdy (2003), Richard Stackman (2003), and Maxine Greene (1981, 1986) recognize that the “possibilities” inherent in this approach to reflective practice espoused to by the aforementioned scholars remain largely trapped inside a “black box,” laying dormant, ineffective, and untapped. D. Jean Clandinin (1999), Michael Connelly (1999), Lesley Coia (2001), Monica Taylor (2001), Thomas Barone (1993), and K. Carter (1993) all recognize the place of narratives of experience in the study of the teaching and learning experience in teaching and teacher education. These scholars, as well as many others, have situated the intersection of their thoughts and ideas with my own thinking to develop the framework for my work on exploring the possibilities for creating a culture of inquiry as a teacher educator.

Further, the reflexivity of this research process--the unanticipated opportunities, challenges, stops and starts, the looking and then looking again-- the mental activity in teaching

and learning for both myself and my students--the getting started, the coming and the going, the returning to the start, the pressing forward, the acknowledgement of how the relationship of one part of the experience contributes to the whole of the experience is demonstrative of the reflexivity of this process as it progressed. Including critical self-assessment in relation to the “other” resulted in transformations that have led to new openings and possibilities for the sake of student learning. In reconstructing some of the familiar arguments, both my students and I have contemplated what is worthwhile and what is worth striving for in the teaching and learning experience, to think about our own thinking and consciously create new meanings through our stories. “A truly educational experience is likely to possess certain fundamentally aesthetic attributes” (Barone, 1983, p. 23). Without the necessary time and space provided for teachers to find meaning, allow for tensions, and explore possibilities, the “aesthetic” in the educational experience has been sacrificed. These concepts have all come together to frame my position on how most effectively to expound upon the value of the consideration of the uncertainty, the dissonance, the dilemmas, problems, or conflicts—some form of unsettling and contemplative experience as a valuable stimulus in the aesthetic of the teaching and learning experience.

The “enemies of esthetic” as Dewey refers to them—fear, repetition, commonplace, docility, routine, laziness, timidity, tradition, absorption, habit, and doubt (Simpson, Jackson, and Aycock, 2005, p. 92)--need to be addressed with pre-service teachers who are learning and understanding the process of reflective practice in today’s teacher education programs. Emphasis on the “esthetic” is necessary so that pre-service teacher candidates appreciate, perceive, and enjoy the “real experiences” they have when teaching. Consideration of Dewey’s delineation of growth, both conducive and detrimental to the real learning that can take place in reflective practice is paramount. As teacher candidates create teaching and learning experiences,

they must understand that sources both inside and outside of an individual contribute to the experience, and they must understand the value of courage, imagination, creativity, experimentation, and reflection as critical to the an aesthetic experience.

Theory's Role as "Critical Other"

In a conventional dissertation, a detailed overview of the literature used to validate the purpose of the study constitutes the place for theory. A literature review serves the purpose of providing a need for a study, demonstrates that other studies have not adequately addressed the topic, and is an indication of the researcher's depth of knowledge concerning the topic (Creswell, 2002). Theory for my dissertation situates this study and draws upon the professional literature as an operative theoretical construct deliberately interwoven throughout my study, providing intersections that support my thinking, and my discoveries, suggesting language and possibilities.

The professional literature is viewed as relational in nature in this study, as it allows for opportunities and acts as a catalyst or springboard for meaning-making. Consequently, it becomes the "critical other" in this inquiry. Drawing from multiple theories, I am able to make sense of and continue to question emerging discoveries, conclusions, and possibilities yet to be realized. Schon (1992) states the following: "Reflection-in-action has a critical function, questioning the assumption-type structure of knowing-in-action (the sorts of knowledge we reveal in our intelligent action (p. 25). We think opportunity, and we may, in the process, restructure strategies of action, understandings of phenomena, or ways of framing problems. . . ." (p. 28). This sort of reflexivity is a response triggered by engagement with the other, and Schon goes on to suggest that this type of reflection "gives rise to the on-the-spot experiment" (p. 28).

I appreciate Schon's (1992) description of the reflection-in-action process as a "process we can deliver without being able to say what we are doing" (p. 31) because Schon's reflection-

in-action has no rules, no boundaries, no presupposed determining factors. It is the discovery of the possibilities in relationship to the professional literature that is the cornerstone of the theoretical construct of this study.

Structure Overview

Conceptual Framework: Chapter 2

Two main questions form the framework for my dissertation work:

1. What counts as knowledge?
2. How do the teacher candidates navigate or mediate what they know with what they are experiencing to develop strong teaching identities?

Real teaching happens within a wild triangle of relations—among teachers, students, subject—and the points of this triangle shift continuously. What shall I teach amid all that I should teach? How can I grasp it myself so that my grasping might enable theirs? What are they thinking and feeling—toward me, toward each other, toward the thing I am trying to teach? How near should I come, how far off should I stay? How much clutch, how much gas? (McDonald, 1992, p. 28).

As an experienced teacher, J. P. McDonald's reflection on teaching makes sense to me. I can relate to the complexities of this thinking. I know what I know, but I also understand that in order to thrive in the classroom, it is critical that I be engaged in a kind of meta-cognitive work that takes into consideration what I am experiencing and what I think about it. That is, I need to be engaged actively in thinking about my own thinking while I am teaching. As a teacher educator, this complex teaching practice takes on new meaning and heightened importance. The theory is not separate from the practice. In other words, the negotiation of exploration of deliberate approaches to ascertaining student teacher candidates' perceptions of what counts as "knowledge" in the teaching and learning experience and the mediation of that knowledge and the lived experience of teaching and learning is the intent of the conceptual framework for my

research. When student teachers mediate the relationship between what they know and what they experience in the classroom, they begin the important process of making the implicit explicit, which is critical in this process.

Teacher education programs that provide learning opportunities for teacher candidates that include complex analysis of teaching experiences through critical reflection on the relational--with self, with other, and with the environment--provide them with a “conceptual map or schema to understand what they are experiencing” (LePage et al., 2005, p. 354). It does then become my responsibility as a teacher educator to make teaching a critically “reflective and deeply human activity” (Coia and Taylor, 2001, p. 3).

Narrative Inquiry as a Methodological Approach: Chapter 3

Drawing across research traditions, two trends in the field of education have influenced my interest in the use of narrative inquiry: First, more emphasis is being placed on teachers’ knowledge—what they know, how they think, how they develop professionally, and how they make decisions in the classroom. Second, educators seek to bring teachers’ voices to the forefront by empowering teachers to talk about their experiences (Creswell, 2002, p. 522). These threads intersect and inform narrative inquiry.

Narrative inquiry is an effective way to address critical reflective practice on the teaching and learning experience. Additionally, Connelly and Clandinin (1999) explain: “The educational importance of [narrative inquiry] brings theoretical ideas about the nature of human life as lived to bear on educational experience as lived” (p. 134).

Thus, narrative inquiry as a methodological approach for this research study further supports my conceptual framework. Narrative inquiry provides a methodological means by which I am able to capture the richness and challenge of the student teachers’ experiences

through their stories and through their efforts to be critically reflective, acknowledging what the student teacher knows and is experiencing and the complex meaning-making process that is taking place with regard to the teaching and learning experience itself. Narrative inquiry also empowers student teachers to provide a voice that can better inform other teacher educator practices and the teacher education programs they serve. My research will explore these storied accounts, complete with student teacher tensions and perceptions concerning the teaching and learning experience itself in order to make meaning and develop new understandings with regard to creating a culture of inquiry.

My role in this narrative inquiry is that of both inquirer and professor. I am mindful of my role as an inquirer in the “midst of a nested set of stories” (Connelly and Clandinin, 2000, p. 63)—mine and the student teachers’. In short, my role as inquirer will be to make myself as aware as possible of the many layers of story and the attention paid to authenticity and further lived understandings of how teacher candidates are mediating/negotiating their teacher identities.

Data Revealed Through Critical Reflective Practice:

An Educational Experience:

Chapter 4

Mindful of the importance of collecting thick, rich information, the data that was collected for this research study was extensive. I was able to access this kind of data as the instructor for the Spring 2008 EDUC 420 Student Teaching Seminar course. This seminar is designed to provide student teachers with mentorship during the student teaching semester. Therefore, a pre-existing relationship exists wherein I work very closely with the student teachers assigned to my seminar for the purposes of observation, consultation, collaboration, and reflection on their teaching and learning experiences during their student teaching experience

both in the classroom and at the three student teacher callbacks that occur during the semester. Similarly, there is a heightened sense of my role as a researcher as I consider how the student teachers' stories inform my practices as a teacher educator and those of teacher education programs and practices in general.

For this particular study, data was collected via an author designed, open-ended questionnaire, field observations, debriefing interviews, and autobiographies of critical incident entries on the Discussion Board section of a Blackboard platform, as part of the assigned course work. I also collected my own reflections on each of the field observations and debriefing interviews that followed.

In reflection, the most valuable sources of data were the autobiographies of critical incidents and the debriefing interviews that followed the field observations. Five participants in this study provided autobiographies of critical incidents that were rich, thick, and enlightening examples of critical reflective practice and the importance of a trusted "other" in the self-study process. The opportunity to explore the possibilities that presented themselves when the student teacher was mindful of the "gaps," the in-between phase of the teaching and learning experience, was very apparent when these five participants debriefed on the field observation. This afforded the student teachers and me the opportunity to explore those deliberate approaches needed in both teacher educator practices and programmatic changes that can create a culture of critical inquiry that listens to the voices of the student teacher and heeds the knowledge that they bring to the research experience. Chapter Four delineates the data collection and analysis process revealing the important and valuable work of critical reflective practice which frames the narratives found in Chapter 5.

Entering the World of the Glass Box and Exiting Out the Other Side:

Thriving Through Profound Engagement with Critical Reflection:

Chapter 5

Student teachers' stories from the world of the Glass Box come to life in Chapter 5 as a deliberate approach to critical reflective practice reveals the importance of authenticity and trusted and invested collaboration in the "glass-box" approach to the lived experience of self-study as a reflexive, relational, and embodied teaching and learning experience. These stories are supported by the data in Chapter 4 and further refined through the following data analysis process: Initially, questionnaires, Debriefing Interview Notes, and the Autobiographies of Critical Incidents were examined individually for emerging themes via the utilization of a coding process. This coding process required the division of the data into sections whereby a labeling process ensued with attention paid to elimination of overlap of codes and to the narrowing of codes. These codes were then developed into themes. Data was then written in narrative form or restoried. Creswell (2002) describes this process as one in which "the researcher gathers stories, analyzes them for key elements of the story (e.g. time, place, plot, and scene), and then rewrites the story to place it in a chronological sequence (p. 528). The Clandinin and Connelly Three-Dimensional Space Narrative Structure of interaction, continuity, and situation was utilized as I constructed the stories (Creswell, 2002, p. 530). Following individual analysis of the data, a cross narrative analysis identifying themes common to all narratives was completed. Finally, analysis of the data as a whole took place so as to develop a framework that provided valuable insights and next steps.

The stories of three student teachers are reflective of the data collection, analysis, and interpretation as a whole. Their stories tell about the nature of the lived experience of teaching

and learning in its authenticity, when allowed to exit a world of isolation in terms of knowledge, skills, and experience to generate valuable and important insights regarding creating a culture of inquiry. Pedagogical questions are related to self, to other, to subject matter and what the teacher brings to bear on the teaching being done “in-between” what goes in and what comes out.

Enhancing Reflective Practice:

“Making Meaning” to Nurture and Sustain Teaching Practices:

Chapter 6

Chapter Six discusses the nature and role of transformation associated with self and other in relation to creating a culture of inquiry regarding teacher education practices and programmatic changes. It summarizes findings and suggests implications of this research, with an attunement to my initial conceptions, juxtaposed against what interpretations have emerged. Concomitantly, this chapter considers the implications of my findings for the larger professional community related to teacher education programs and practices. Specifically, it addresses theory and practice associated with the nature of teaching and learning and the teacher educator’s responsibility in teacher education.

Student teachers engaged in negotiating what they know with what they are experiencing through meaningful critical reflective practice on their teaching and learning through narratives of experience enlighten a “lived understanding” of the teaching and learning experience. Similarly, the “relational” of that lived experience, self with other, allows for the important process of shaping teacher identity to begin. According to Jenelle Reeves (2009), “In light of the import of teacher identity construction in teachers’ lives, their practice, and their students, teacher education ought to be responsive to how identity may affect teacher learning and change” (p. 40). The aim of this study is to show how the good work of reflective practice is a way to

study and systematically improve teaching and learning for teacher candidates, as they negotiate the complexities of the teaching and learning experience and begin to form their own teaching identities in the process. These meaning-making experiences are vitally important to each teacher candidate and to the teacher education practices and programs that serve them.

CHAPTER 2

Conceptual Framework

In this investigation, I seek to promote important understandings of the complexities of the teaching and learning experience related to what counts as knowledge and how what one knows and is experiencing is directly related to how a teacher candidate mediates them in order to develop a strong teaching identity. Teacher education classrooms and programs currently function more like well-oiled machines where curriculum is set, prescriptions for teaching and learning time and space are detailed and followed, and the “how” of teaching illuminates the teacher candidates’ journey toward learning to teach. No deliberate attunement to the inherent relationality of teaching and learning is seriously practiced, or for that matter emphasized or considered. The reality is that teacher candidates exist in a world where time and space for critical analysis and investigation of the relational in the teaching and learning experience is very limited, and the enemies of this aesthetic experience that I discussed earlier are formidable. Teaching and learning existence is somewhat like that of functioning within a crucible of sorts which seems to melt away all non-conformity to shape teaching that answers to expectations for “magic bullet” answers to what constitutes effective teaching. In considering what really counts as “knowledge” in the teaching and learning experience, this research is an effort to engage in meaning and purpose—that is the call to curriculum—to examine, explore, shape and reshape in teaching to understand the true value of three Dewian concepts—relationship between self and other, consummatory moments that bring new beginnings, and the value of the process to get there.

Teacher educators and theorist, Hugh Munby (1996-1999), Tom Russell (1996-1999), and Andrea Martin (1996-1999) allude to the demands faced by many teacher candidates to

acquire “skills,” while ignoring the craft or art of teaching. Teaching can be so much more than mere day-to-day activities that take place in a classroom where teachers disseminate subject matter and manage their classroom the best way they know how. This approach assumes that this is indeed what counts as knowledge, the “how” of teaching that encompasses replication of best practices in technique regarding subject matter knowledge, instructional effectiveness, and classroom management. Lesley Coia and Monica Taylor (2001) concur, saying “To be an effective educator is not to merely reproduce successful pedagogical techniques acquired during a teacher education program” (p. 3). This approach is missing what counts as knowledge in the teaching and learning experience. Knowledge in the teaching and learning experience transcends replication of best practices to meaning making through participant thinking—thinking about the relational of the experience, significant events and moments that provide for meaning-making, and the process that makes it possible. This theory of the relational in the lived experience of teaching and learning is critical to the teaching and learning experience. Therefore, what counts as knowledge does not exist so much in the fixed ideal of teaching knowledge of subject matter and best practices—but in the recognition of the process of mediating what one knows with what one is experiencing relative to relations to and with oneself, people around us, and the larger environment in which we exist. My experiences tell me that teaching and learning as an object of scholarly inquiry where the interplay of self and other in time, sociality, and place should be acknowledged, respected, and emphasized as the deliberative nature of teaching and learning. This can result in the creation of future exemplary educators. So, what does such an approach to scholarly inquiry entail? How can a teacher education program encourage such inquiry so that teacher candidates engage in the process of mediating what they know and what they are experiencing to develop teacher identities committed to meaning-making?

Self-Study as a Way to Promote Scholarly Inquiry

Described by Louie, Drevdahl, Purdy, and Stackman (2003) as “the world of the teacher”(p.151), “stable and enduring characteristics of ability, propensity, knowledge, or character” of a teacher remain largely a “black box” (Shulman, 1986, p. 7). In other words, the process of teaching and learning is based on the input/output model without any serious attention given to that critical “in-between” phase. Attention is paid only to what goes in to facilitate the teaching/learning process primarily for students and what the results of that input are. However, what takes place in between are the tensions, the gaps, the challenges, the processing, the new openings and possibilities hidden within this black box. Thus, self-study as a way to reveal these qualities speaks to a change in teacher behavior—teachers engaged in a holistic approach to self-study reflection that provides for deeper insights into the role of the teacher in the classroom to thereby inform their practice, improve it, and as a result, improve education as well.

To date, however, something that much of the research on self-study has failed to do is further inform the larger teaching and learning community about the potential self-study holds for reflective teaching and learning practices. Loughran and Russell (2002) contend that “self-study creates opportunities to develop the relationships and understandings in teaching and learning that tend to characterize much of the work of teachers. . . .” (p. 245). This resonates with the commitments that are worthwhile concerning the work of teacher educators.

“The very word reflection is a metaphor that suggests an act of private, personal, and intimate examination of oneself in a mirror” (Birmingham, 2004, p. 321). Self study of teaching practice is a personal examination of various experiences that take place in the classroom as a viable way to promote meaningful, purposeful reflection. John Dewey (1932) says, “We do not actually learn from experience as much as we learn from reflecting on experience” (p. 19). This

is what really counts as knowledge in the teaching and learning experience. More importantly, reflective thinking is further clarified as an act that frees us from mere “impulsivity and routine activity” (Posner, 1985, p. 19), to rebel convention, tradition, or custom in favor of exploration and experimentation to discover what is new, real, challenging, and meaningful, to allow for play in reflection as active, receptive, in need of the “other”—other ideas, experiences, perspectives, and so on.

The knowledge and skills of teachers remain largely untapped in terms of generating valuable insights regarding improvements in teaching. However, the feelings of unease and dissatisfaction many teachers encounter with current imposed and prescribed education practices has resulted in the initiation of self-study. This process is not lost on the teacher candidate as he/she navigates what they know with what they are experiencing either. Through the study of the teaching self, dilemmas, challenges, tensions and frustrations that one faces can be examined and reframed (Schon, 1983). New perspectives result, related to finding new openings and new possibilities to be better informed or address experiences in a different way, furthering student learning. While it is important to focus on the individual, or the “self” in self-study, “self-studies should not be viewed as being confined to an individual. Loughran and Russell (2002) state that self-studies involve collaboration in varying numbers and across a range of participants” (p. 244). Thus, self-studies can be an important voice speaking to individuals, groups, programs, and institutions involved in education and forming communities of learners as they explore teaching about teaching.

Dewey (1997) affords me the opportunity to continue to flesh out this scholarly inquiry more specifically. Focusing on self-study as a way to promote reflection in the teaching and learning experience requires that one begin at the beginning relative to how one thinks about the

experience, what thinking processes are engaged, and what dispositions are necessary for one to effectively study self as a means of reflection on experience. In considering process and product in the act of thinking, Dewey discusses the two types of teachers: those who succeed in training facility, skill, mastery of the technique of subjects and those who succeed in “arousing enthusiasm, in communicating large ideas, in evoking energy. . . .” (p. 220). While he is not critical of the former, he does mention that “enlargement of mental vision, power of increased discrimination of final values, a sense of ideas—for principles—accompanies this training, forms skills ready to be put indifferently to any end” (p. 220). This is the stuff of self-study as a means of promoting reflection for teacher educators. In developing the capacity of teacher candidates to think well, the teacher educator’s aim should be to “secure a balanced interaction of the two types of mental attitude, (concrete and abstract) having sufficient regard to the disposition of the individual not to hamper and cripple whatever powers are naturally strong in him {sic}” (p. 143). In thinking well, Dewey suggests the importance of the imagination and the powers of observation in teaching students how to think well. Specifically, he calls attention to three attitudes that he calls “essential constituents of the general readiness” (p. 34) for reflective thinking: open-mindedness, wholeheartedness, and responsibility, each an element of disposition critical for meaningful, purposeful reflective thinking. Both the logical and the dispositional play a significant role in the process of providing effective education, and the two cannot be separated in the educational experience. Instead they exist together in the thinking process. When teacher educators nurture the thinking of teacher candidates to acknowledge and appreciate the melding of the two together in the act of self-study, this is a way to promote meaningful, purposeful reflective thinking that allows for the important and necessary mediation of what a teacher candidate knows and what the a teacher candidate is experiencing.

The “Glass Box” Approach

The teacher in the world of the “black box” plays the role of a passive participant teaching from a prescribed script oblivious to or devoid of opportunities to examine (to really see) and to genuinely explore important pedagogical questions related to self, to other, and to subject matter and what the teacher brings to bear on the teaching being done in-between, what goes in and what comes out! What is internal, remains internal; the implicit has no opportunity to become an explicit experience. While self-study is a complex activity and a catalyst for “tensions, surprises, confusion, challenges, and dilemmas” (Louie et al., 2003, p. 151), it does allow a teacher to take the important steps of allowing the internal to become external, the implicit to become explicit. The authors of *Encouraging Reflective Practice in Education*, Clift, Houston, and Pugach (1990), also recognize the complexities of reflective practice saying that “reflective practice in teacher education is essentially concerned with how educators make sense of the phenomena of experience that puzzle or perplex them” (p. 20). Nonetheless, self-study in this venue is all about a teacher discovering “ways of being” (Clift et al., 1990, p. 29) in the world, coming to understanding about one’s own existence in terms of what really counts as knowledge in the teaching and learning experience. Self-study can utilize the components of reflective practice in teacher education, and the programmatic efforts dedicated to improving professional practice can be realized through self-study.

The programmatic structures for the preparation of reflective teachers can utilize a “glass box” approach that is aligned closely with how self-study can realize more fully its potential impact on the greater teaching and learning community, particularly related to the development of “fully exposed” strategies that support reflection in process. A paradigm shift suggests a Glass Box Approach where a place for improvisation is possible, where reflection about learning

experiences takes place--the in-between place. It is here where the tensions, the gaps, the challenges, the processing, the new openings, meaning-making, the moving forward and the going back, and possibilities in relation to self, other, and subject matter—ARE illuminated, ARE revealed and ARE explored, come alive, and are tapped into and interacted with by the teacher to gain further insight, to appreciate the experience as an aesthetic one which puzzles, impacts, and yet can improve teaching and learning through possibility. The glass box becomes a sort of prism. The teacher has the opportunity to look inside and gain new insights about what is working, what is not, reflexively consider and contemplate concerns and questions about what is happening in relationship to a student or a classroom management issue, or some aspect of subject matter exploration. This is all done complete with all the complexities, considering how he/she actually impacts learning outcomes, exploring teaching practice as a process for furthering learning about teaching. The teacher in the world of the glass box appreciates and values the complexities of teaching and learning with the idea of participation in improving teaching, creating new knowledge, and fostering learning. Thus, this approach to critical reflective practice as a way to reveal these qualities speaks to a change in behavior—teachers engaged in a holistic approach to reflection that provides for deeper insights into the role of the teacher in the classroom to thereby inform their practice, improve it, and as a result, improve education as well.

Todd Dinkelman (2003) wrote: “Self-study is not the whole of teaching, but it mirrors and systematizes that part of pedagogy that is reflection” (p. 9). It is the non-reflective teacher who gains nothing from experience. Self-study as a way to promote reflection can be a powerful means to an end in that self-study “systematizes, channels, and gives form to reflection” (p. 16). Self-study is purposeful in that there can be an intentional inquiry into a situation that can further

learning, serve learning better when a problem is solved, new understandings are formed, or new possibilities are realized.

The Relational in the Lived Experience of Teaching and Learning through Critical Reflection

The study of teaching and learning as relational, where interactions with self and other are ripe with multiple layers, folds of interplay, and various textures of not only the “how but the “why” the “when” the “what” and the “where” will provide most assuredly for motivation, stimulation, reward, risk, and opportunity for myself and my teacher candidates. Relational pedagogy is when authentic learning takes place, when growth of experience for all involved happens. Teacher educators and the programs within which they function “...must encourage and engage in activities that connect the knowing- and reflection-in-action of competent practitioners to the theories and techniques taught as professional knowledge in academic courses” (Schön, 1987, p. 312). This tenet will empower both teacher educators and pre-service teachers to attend to the relational complexities as the real work of teaching and learning. This is what the practice of teaching is all about.

In teaching and learning, recognition and respect for the relation to “other” and ongoing responding leads to a transformative experience rich with new openings and possibilities for the sake of student learning. These various intricate and interrelated textures of teaching and learning evolve with deliberate attention paid to the time, sociality, and place. The reframing of what was is seen, heard, and/or felt in the interaction of these various expressions of communication with and between self and other incite adaptation and change. The delicate balance that exists between valuing the risks and the opportunities, the tensions and doubt of certainty and uncertainty demand continual negotiation. This an important process in teacher candidates navigating what they know with what they are experiencing and is what teaching and

learning need to be.

Dewey (1926) proposed that “human beings connect with their world via meanings; they do not just undergo ‘events’” (p. 317). Thomas Ryan (2005a) asserts that teaching needs “careful monitoring” (p. 9). When teachers take time and make space within curriculum for a type of careful monitoring that facilitates the meaning-making of the relational in teaching and learning, the results are transformations, recreations, elevations, and expansions in the teaching and learning that become a work of art. Like John Dewey and Elliot Eisner before her, Wanda May (1993) argues that such “teaching is a ‘work of art’ when done well” (p. 210).

What can be done to create a mindset in the teacher candidate that encourages exploration, stimulation, meaning-making, and possibilities in the relational of teaching and learning in a current educational environment ripe with tradition and “magic bullets”? Todd Dinkelman (2003) says all “teachers are reflective in that one cannot perform the activity without thinking about it” (p. 9). In an effort to facilitate deeper learning and understanding for teacher candidates, commitment must be made to placing a high value on the important component of critical thinking in learning and understanding. This critical thinking results in teacher candidates’ understanding and evaluation of the relational in teaching and learning from multiple perspectives, becoming mindful of relational complexities, and envisioning alternative ways of looking at things and solving problems. These elements are essential components of the reflectivity that P.P. Grimmet and A.M. MacKinnon (1992) suggest: “sensibility and reflectivity are essential features of teaching as a craft” (p. 428).

In the Foreword to Vicki LaBoskey’s (1994) work *Development of Reflective Practice: A Study of Pre-service Teachers*, written by Nel Noddings, she acknowledges LaBoskey’s

address of a critical question in reflective practice: “Can we teach people to reflect?” (p. vii). Marjorie Haley and Sabrina Wesley-Nero (2004) argue that the “dominant mode of teacher education still focuses on staff development, that is formal in nature, unconnected to classroom life, and pays little attention to the metaphor of the teacher as a learner” (p. 4). Currently, professional development primarily exists to supplant unit and system-wide technology needs for teaching and assessing. Very little is done in the way of allowing for time and space for the teacher to be a learner. Karl Hostetler, Margaret Macintyre Latta, and Loukia Sarroub (2007) propose that teachers and students should be provided with opportunity to “examine meaning and action within the good work of teaching and learning. . . . to make real sense out of conflict and entanglement and act in a unified way” (p. 231). I have a real sense for this as I commit myself to this inquiry into the relationality of teaching and learning to forward my learning on what really counts as knowledge in the teaching and learning experience. Like my students, I search for, desire, “possibilities” for what makes for good teaching and learning without realizing that it is in the places of uncertainty, during the times of tension, and within the context of risk that I can realize valuable transformations of my understandings of the “effective” in teaching and learning. To explore the important role of the relational in the teaching and learning experience is to examine the process of mediating what I and the teacher candidates I teach know and what we are experiencing during our teaching/learning moments.

Reflexivity in the Teaching and Learning Experience

In teaching and learning, the getting started, the coming and the going, the returning to the start, the pressing forward, the acknowledgement of how the relationship of one part of the experience contributes to the whole of the experience—this results in the “art” of teaching reflexively. Teachers with the dispositional skill of meaning-making in reflection are more likely

to engage in reflective practice that is reflexive--one that includes critical self-assessment in relation to the “other” in order to experience a transformation that leads to new openings and possibilities for the sake of student learning. Maxine Greene’s (1981) belief in the value of “new openings” in teaching and learning supports her posit that teacher candidates need to learn how to “reconstruct some of the familiar arguments, to ponder what is worthwhile and what is worth striving for, to think about their own thinking and consciously to create meanings as they live” (p. 286).

To begin, though, a distinction needs to be made between reflective and reflexive practice. Thomas Ryan (2005b) makes a clear distinction between reflection and reflexivity stating that while reflection is to reflect on actions and “scrutinize what had just happened with a desire to get better,” reflexive practice is deep introspection and inquiry, critical reflection, on interactions with the other that take place in teaching during the moment—“a deep inward gaze into every interaction” (p. 2) during the lived experience of teaching and learning. Reflexivity can happen in both the school and classroom contexts where one allows for reflexivity of teaching and learning moments, as they are immediately impacted by the changes in the environment and the participants involved. To reflect on self as a means of self-development, self-improvement, is a common approach to reflection in schools of education; however, the “careful monitoring” Thomas Ryan speaks of is the methodological reflexivity that requires the teacher to reach a heightened level of attunement, to observe and examine his or her own behavior within the classroom or school as it occurs in relation to the “other”—the self, other people, and the environment itself, and allow it to stretch and grow, start and stop, begin again, gather energies from various arenas of interaction, and transform itself. “Reflexivity implies the ability to reflect inward toward as an inquirer; outward to the cultural, historical, linguistic,

political, and other forces that shape everything about inquiry; and, in between researcher and participant to the social interaction they share” (Sandelowski & Barroso, 2002, p. 222).

Thomas Ryan (2005b) says that “we can do something yet not be aware of how various elements are related, and this lack of awareness can impede immediate understanding and growth” (p. 1). This is what I believe creates the flaw in current reflective practice being done in many schools of education, including my own. In uncovering and examining concerns, Ryan says “being reflexive when you are close to the data, in fact you are the data in many cases,” (p. 3) is vital to a methodological approach to reflexive study where teacher candidates transform themselves, as a result of attention paid to the intricate and complex relationship that exists between the interplay of knowledge with experience during moments of teaching and learning. Diane DuBose Brunner (n.d.) suggests that “The job of reflexive performance is to present rather than represent. It marks a possibility to transform ritual through critical reflection on everyday practice,” (p. 7) and clearly a good starting point for developing this type of reflection is with self in relation to other. Brunner states that reflexive practice, or “reflecting back against the self and other in a relational sense,” (p. 7) provides openings, new meanings, and further informs a critical approach to teaching as an object of study. Jackie Kirk (2005) concurs, stating that starting with one’s own self . . . “reflexivity necessarily engages the self in critical exploration of experience, perceptions, and positions; the insight gained can then be used as a starting point for engaging with others, and for starting to develop shared understandings. . . .” (pp. 239-240).

At the heart of what we are thinking and how we respond to the other is the self, our being. Hostetler et al. (2007) assert that “meaning is part and parcel of Being. . . . constituting the relational experience of self and other in time. . . .” (pp. 231-232). This reflexive approach to critical reflection will result in finding new meanings, possibilities, openings—each disclosing

the self more fully and clearly. Noddings (2003) claims this ever enlarging and deepening of understandings of self in relation to the world, for both the practitioner and for students, holds the goods bestowed on teachers and students through relational practice (p. 251). In beginning with self, the humanness of the experience is more authentic. It is real and true and meaningful because it is where the process of the relational of teaching and learning must begin—with self.

Reflexivity in the lived experience of teaching and learning as critical reflection takes on yet another descriptor with Schon (1992)—“reflection-in-action” (p. 28). Schon states the following: “Reflection-in-action has a critical function, questioning the assumption-type structure of knowing-in-action (the sorts of knowledge we reveal in our intelligent action (p. 25). We think opportunity, and we may, in the process, restructure strategies of action, understandings of phenomena, or ways of framing problems. . . .” (p. 28). This sort of reflexivity is a response triggered by engagement with the other, and Schon goes on to suggest that this type of reflection “gives rise to the on-the-spot experiment” (p. 28). I appreciate Schon’s description of the reflection-in-action process I alluded to in Chapter One as a “process we can deliver without being able to say what we are doing” (p. 31) because Schon’s reflection-in-action has no rules, no boundaries, no presupposed determining factors. It is the discovery of the relational in the lived experience of teaching and learning as integral to teaching and learning with the critical in reflection as its cornerstone.

As a teacher educator, I must discover new ways to allow for the opportunities for teacher candidates to nurture this surrender to the critically reflexive, then responsive moments during the teaching and learning experiences where the integrity of the experience is not jeopardized or sacrificed. It is the important work of teacher education to “engage students in exploring teaching practice, not as a thing, but as a process of transformation, as a catalyst for furthering

questioning and deliberation, inciting new ways of seeing and being a teacher” (Macintyre Latta, 2008). Together, we can deconstruct, reconstruct, transform, find new meanings, create new openings, test new understandings and strategies of action with regard to the teaching experience. Learning by doing—critically reflecting—is Schon’s reflection in action. As Thomas Ryan (2005b) says, “To be reflexive supports critical introspection and can actually nourish reflections to a new level of heightened awareness” (p. 4). Schon (1987) suggests that teacher candidates explore the critical in reflection as they “plunge into the doing, and try to educate themselves before they know what it is they’re trying to learn” (p. 1).

I believe this is all part of the critical process of making what is internal, external in teaching and learning for myself and my students—to explore and examine critically all of the nooks and crannies, the nuances, the patterns, and especially the gaps of the teaching experience so as to respond to them critically. Kerdeman (2003) says this allows for the exploration of the reflexivity of a lived experience in the classroom and how “living through it can awaken us to choices” (p. 298) that teacher educators and teacher candidates could not otherwise have imagined as they forward their learning, gain new understandings, and explore possibilities, even when they feel they are being pulled up just short. This is the stuff of relational reflexivity as critical reflection. Reflexivity adds depth to the understanding of our complex negotiation of what we know and what we are experiencing. Attention paid to the in-between, minding the gaps between self and other during the lived experience of teaching and learning, can result in critical reflection that is meaningful and worthwhile—critical reflection that considers perceived understandings and how they are brought back to bear on one’s self. The result—the ability to respond insightfully, creatively, intuitively--to open new doors, cross new thresholds, explore new spaces, knowing that the possibility for new opportunities exists just beyond.

Reflexive Practice for Critical Reflection that Creates Embodied Understandings

As a teacher educator, I am strongly compelled to move consciously beyond the “dominant rhetoric” (Hutchinson, 1998, p. 138) about critical reflection in teaching and teacher education programs today to practical knowledge about critical reflection that creates a new kind of understanding about the relationality of teaching and learning. Nancy Hutchinson (1998) speaks about the mind and reflexivity that allows for a kind of embodied understanding. She says, “We deal consciously and expressly with the situations in which we find ourselves” (p. 286). This sort of “mindfulness” is required for a reflexive methodology in which teacher candidates develop habits of mindfulness, acquiesce to their senses and intelligences for the purpose of making meaning from their experiences. An approach to reflexivity where moving through the process, making time and space for exploration, experiencing transformations, and moving beyond is a mindset that enables embodied understandings.

There are a myriad of inter-locking, relational variables at play in day-to-day teaching experiences. Specific to teaching, Kirk (2005) mentions that “The praxis of reflexivity in the teaching field includes a sustained attention to the positions in which I place myself and am placed by others, a listening to and acknowledging of inner voices, doubts and concerns as well as pleasures and pride, and a sensing of what my body is feeling. It implies a constant questioning of what I am doing and why” (p. 233). This captures the idea of reflexivity enabling embodied understanding very well. Relational reflexivity is the finding of the teacher’s own voice as a teacher in relation to the “other” around him/her—self, other people, the environment itself. The relational experience of self with “other” assumes “a self within the conflicted and entangled physical and social world into which we are all thrown, Being evokes meaning making, and meaning making evokes Being” (Hostetler et al., 2007, p. 232). Part and parcel of

this unique kind of understanding of relational experiences is that one must consider both environmental and external forces at work to more deeply and fully experience and learn from teaching and seek possibilities for dealing with classroom problems, issues, and challenges with those forces in mind. Judi Marshall (1999) describes this dynamic process of inquiry in this way:

A key notion for me is that of engaging in inner and outer arcs of attention and of moving between these. In my own development as an inquirer I have especially paid attention to the inner arcs, seeking to notice myself perceiving, making meaning, framing issues, choosing how to speak out and so on. I pay attention for assumptions I use, repetitions, patterns, themes, dilemmas, key phrases which are charged with energy or that seem to hold multiple meanings to be puzzled about, and more (p. 433).

Specifically exploring the embodiment of reflexivity, the physicality of it, Marjorie O'Loughlin (2006) captures the essence of that concept for me very well. Encouraging a sort of mind/body symmetry, her argument is the absence of the body in education, with the mind taking precedence. An indispensable part of people's identity is manifested in their bodily dispositions, habits, and abilities or skills. These form a central part of the motor skills, perceptual discriminations and behavioral responses which make a person what she or he is. These are the identity she or he has, which others presumably recognize (p. 65). Marshall (1999) agrees saying that the level of opportunity for inquiry is "physical and intuitive, as much as an intellectual, sensing for me" (p. 436).

For both myself and my students, reflexivity is now even more complex when the teacher candidate is provided with time and space in teacher education program courses for this "creatural existence" where lived experiences of not only the mind, but also the body are explored, not ignored, embedded, not displaced but placed within its environment. The mind and body cannot exist in isolation, but rather exist together in the process of the lived experience and

learn from it, react to it, and transform because of it. Marshall (1999) describes this level of inquiry as a “life process, respecting how inquiring is a core of my being, and that my full (multiple) being is involved in any ‘researching’ I undertake” (p. 438).

Unfortunately, exploring the role of reflexivity in this capacity can lead to very real frustrations with the academic world as it exists in most colleges and universities. Mine is no different. Nonetheless, the tension I experience when working within the system that I hope to transform is part of my lived experience and authentically meaningful. Orner (1992) suggests that “Little or no attention is given to the multiple social positions, multiple voices, conscious and unconscious pleasures, tensions, desires, and contradictions. . . .” (p. 79). While this “work of teaching and learning as a meaning making venture is desired by teachers, the terrain of such ventures is foreign and/or only an occasional encounter” (Hostetler et al., 2007, p. 241) in teacher education programs today.

Likewise, Wanda May’s (1993) comments about the mistakes made while trying to facilitate the process for aesthetic experience—“identifying specific steps and then directing or sequencing these in linear fashion, which simply does not exist in aesthetic expression in the same way” (p. 214) could be similarly applied to enabling embodied understandings of the teaching and learning experience. May says “What happens and when is reflexive, and may not be the same each time” (p. 214).

Negotiating What Teacher Candidates Know with What They are Experiencing:

The Work of Teacher Education

It becomes vitally important, then, that a thriving culture of learning be created in schools of education where reflexivity is a means of critical reflection which develops responsivity to “felt knowledge”—knowledge as a “lived engagement” (O’Loughlin, 2006, p. 6). Frankly,

absent the opportunities to acknowledge and foster a sense of the understanding of the deeply complex relational and embodied experiences my students and I have while teaching and learning, we will be unable to nurture the same kind of understanding of meaning making in our own students' lives. Hostetler et al. (2007) make a critical point: "Meaning provides a ground to teach pre-service and in-service teachers the value of treating students as individuals, of looking beyond impoverished conceptions of meaning in education to make their lives and the lives of their students more complex, complicated, and connected" (p. 237). This is indeed the important work of teacher education that has real merit.

Research studies support various methodological approaches to this kind of critical reflexivity: the portfolio, the case study, the autobiography --each with one critical element required--shared or collaborative experiences. "The success of such professional communities, where teachers have opportunities to consult each other and access professional resources and material, is largely dependent on the local or situational contexts rather than on external mandates or policies" (Hostetler et al., 2007, p. 236). Environments conducive to "adventurous teaching" (p. 237), where teachers explore uncertainty and doubt and ask questions, take risks, and escape the conventional must be a critical element in the curriculum work of any teacher educator and in any teacher education program.

The potential for teacher empowerment as a result of reflexivity as a means of critical reflection is encouraging. An autobiographical analysis, where one begins with self and naturally gravitates toward analysis of self in relation to other, has merit as a worthy methodological approach to facilitating the process of exploration of the relationality of teaching and learning. O'Loughlin (2006) says that "education must involve a recognition of the inherent order of human locatedness. It must create a life world which supports satisfying human

existence grounded in the livable environment” (p. 7). The work of teacher education needs to foster acknowledgement of, engagement with, and responsivity to the relational in the lived experience of teaching and learning as an encounter with the environment.

*Autobiography: Teacher Candidates Finding Their Own Voice
and Shaping Strong Teacher Identities*

Meaning making in the educational experience, for various stakeholders involved in the teaching and learning process, is reflexive and complex. Case study research on teaching that leads to learning is a compelling challenge. Hutchinson (1998) strongly contends that “the knowledge is in the experience” (p. 137). The potential for teacher empowerment as a result of reflexivity as a means of critical reflection is encouraging, and an autobiographical analysis, where one begins with self and naturally gravitates toward analysis of self in relation to other, has merit as a worthy methodological approach to facilitating the process of exploration of the relationality of teaching and learning. Reeves (2009) states that the autobiography, among others, holds “promise” as a way to allow teachers to “interrogate the forces, both internal and external, that shape their identity options” (p. 40).

The important work of teacher education needs to foster acknowledgement of engagement with, and responsivity to the relational in the lived experience of teaching and learning as an encounter with the environment. Effective teachers developed into effective teachers, not because of the staid, undeviating implementation and utilization of instructional and classroom management best practice techniques, but because of the delicate negotiation and mediation of considering what they know and the sensitivity to what they are experiencing and counting that as real knowledge about the teaching and learning experience. They did so by considering the “lived understandings” of both content and context of their experiences, as they

changed, reshaped, and took on new possibilities and meaning. In order for teacher educators to be successful with the autobiography as a reflective tool for negotiating the lived understandings teacher candidates realize, they have to be clear about the nature of an autobiography for both themselves and the teacher candidates. A teacher education program that makes a commitment to planning for engagement in some action or exploration by “becoming immersed in the chosen territory” in an embodied way, and then planning for cycles of rhythmic reflexivity—going along, stepping back, reflecting—can create an environment of knowledge as lived engagement.

These important opportunities for meaning and interaction require time and space, trust, and a paradigm shift that includes a “glass box” approach to reflective practice.

“Spaces of Liberty”

Described as “spaces of liberty” by Jacqueline Grennon Brooks, Andrea S., Libresco, and Irene Plonczak (2007), “a novice teacher exercising choice and autonomy within the curriculum, even when making the inevitable ‘rookie’ mistakes, creates a more dynamic learning environment” (p. 755). It becomes the teacher educator’s responsibility to have the courage to help to create those spaces of liberty for the exercise of the teacher candidate’s freedom and innovation intellectually and pedagogically. Spaces of liberty where shared experiences and collaborative inquiry can result in teacher candidates seeing things from multiple perspectives, considering that the relational element is critical, are the kinds of spaces that need to be created by both teacher educators and within teacher education programs.

“Mission of Trust”

It is also imperative that programmatic change in teacher education programs create a strong foundation built on trust as its mission. It is critically important to develop relationships in teacher education programs that are built on trust between teachers and teacher candidates so

as to more effectively utilize critical reflective practice as a habit of the mind in the educational experience. In a sense, Loughran and Russell (2002) suggest that in the event that teachers are “being pulled up short” in their examination of teaching practice, experiencing tensions as a result of uncertainties and risks, they are driven to reflect critically on the experience to find possibilities to inform practice. Loughran and Russell state that “This sense of unease is not necessarily a negative aspect of practice, for it can also be an impetus for finding ways to be better informed” (p. 242). This “reframing,” (p. 243) as described by these authors, is critical in this process. Loughran and Russell assert that it is “not sufficient to simply view a situation from one perspective. Reframing is seeing a situation through others’ eyes” (p. 243). With this in mind, it becomes clear that relationships between teacher educators and their students demand a certain level of trust in order to make effective use of the reflective practice process.

“Black Box vs. Glass Box Approach”

The teacher in the world of the glass box appreciates and values the complexities of teaching and learning with the idea of participating in improving teaching, creating new knowledge, and fostering learning. Thus, critical reflective practice as a way to reveal these qualities speaks to a change in behavior—teachers engaged in a holistic approach to reflection that provides for deeper insights into the role of the teacher in the classroom to thereby inform their practice, improve it, and as a result, improve education.

Conclusion

Dinkelman (2003) says that when teacher educators study their own practice, they make changes in their pedagogy and can then suggest changes through conversation and collaboration with peers. This process is reflexive (p. 14). Environments in teacher education need to be

learning spaces that incite collaboration and deliberation, conflict and doubt, and new understandings and insights, and teacher educators need to be more receptive to and comfortable in such an environment.

It is clear that shared reflections or collaborative inquiry are imperative in order for the full measure of the value of reflexivity as critical reflection to enabled embodied understanding. Marshall (1999) emphasizes the concept of “communion” in critical reflection that enables embodied understanding, suggesting that “communion is the sense of being ‘at one’ with other organisms or the context, its basis is integration, interdependence, receptivity” (p. 435). This tenet should subsume the work of teacher education and will thus empower both teacher educators and pre-service teachers to attend to the relational complexities as the real work of teaching and learning.

It is my conviction that a teacher education program must acknowledge the important work of critical reflection to enable embodied understanding of teaching and learning as relational in nature and make a deliberate curricular commitment to it, as this is what the practice of teaching is all about. Self-study, emboldened with a critically reflective approach that is reflexive and embodied characterizes the qualities I see most inherent in the teaching and learning process. It is not enough to recognize and prioritize knowledge in teaching and learning without the aspect of experience and how navigating that new found knowledge contributes to a strong teaching identity. Nurturing the internal so that it becomes external in the teaching and learning experience, and characterizing the true nature of the aforementioned regarding what one knows and what one is experiencing in teaching and learning challenges me to articulate this process of developing a teacher identity for the teacher candidates that I serve. This conceptual

framework is intended to provide clarity as the reader moves forward, takes steps back again, contemplates the nuances, searches for new meanings, and considers possibilities.

CHAPTER 3

Narrative Inquiry as a Methodological Approach

Nested Within Self-Study

This research is an attempt to explore opportunities and possibilities for creating a culture of inquiry in the School of Education which I serve. According to Wolk (2008), “A culture of inquiry happens when teachers breathe inquiry as a part of their lives (p. 119)” The years of study leading up to and continuing through my dissertation work have been all about “breathing inquiry” into my life as a teacher educator. Growth in my learning, thinking, reading, and debating upon the importance of the unique approach to critical reflection on the complexities of the teaching and learning experience that promotes the relational of the experience as reflexive and embodied, learning, thinking, reading, are now the foundation of this inquiry. Creating this kind of culture of inquiry in my own life has required time and space for this learning, thinking, reading, and debating. Likewise, then, time and space for such an approach to intelligent analysis or “mental activity” for our teacher candidates demands that schools of education no longer disregard an approach to critical inquiry that takes place in relation to the daily teaching experiences. Few can dispute the value of scholarly inquiry into teaching and learning, particularly in relation to the relationality of self and other as a way to promote critical reflection on teaching and learning. However, there is a distinct lack of a deliberate approach to the provision of time, space, and opportunity to explore this mental activity associated with the complexities of the teaching and learning experience.

Wolk (2008) provides a fair assessment of the status of reflective practice in schools of education today—my own institution is no exception. The question of “how” to develop a deliberative approach in creating a culture of critical inquiry looms large in the minds of teacher

educators in teacher education programs. As a teacher educator, I call into question what exactly is meant by reflective practice in schools of education today. Clift, Houston, and Pugach (1990), recognize these complexities saying that “reflective practice in teacher education is essentially concerned with how educators make sense of the phenomena of experiences that puzzle or perplex them” (p. 20), which still remains for teacher educators a complex goal to attain and a challenge to teach and assess. To date, however, something that much of the research on reflective practice has failed to do is further inform the larger teaching and learning community about the potential critical reflection holds for reflective teaching and learning practices. Zeichner (1996) supports teacher reflection, but states that while “The concept of the teacher as a reflective practitioner appears to acknowledge the wealth of expertise that resides in the practices of teachers. . . .” (p. 200), schools of education have done little to empower future teachers with the skills and knowledge they need to facilitate critical pedagogy via critical reflective practice. More specifically, and as mentioned in Chapter One, Zeichner cites these three shortcomings in the reflective practice being developed in teacher education programs today: “what kind of reflection teachers are engaging in, what it is teachers are reflecting about, and how they are going about it” (p. 207).

Nurturing a mindset in student teachers to be critically reflective by providing spaces of liberty for critical reflection is a step in the right direction. Concomitantly, advocating for an approach to critical reflection that is attuned to the exploration of the relationality of self and other where student teachers “mind the gaps,” is the critical work that needs to be explored and experimented with in teacher education programs. As first mentioned in Chapter One, Sidorkin (2002) explains that “Relations cannot belong to one thing; they are the joint property of at least two things. Relations are located, so to speak, in between things” (p. 94) and student teachers

need to pay attention to the in-between, “minding the gaps” (Biesta, 2004, p. 11) between self and other during their lived experience of teaching and learning during the student teaching experience. More importantly, time and space for unpacking their sense of Being in the world, where tensions are respected and accepted, is indeed the “location of education” (p. 11). It is here where the student teacher can authentically interact with other in an investigative work space to grow as students of teaching and learning. This inquiry will allow the student teacher to nurture an agency to make a commitment to a heightened sense of consciousness in the teaching and learning experience. Planning for engagement in some action or exploration, the student teacher can “become immersed in the chosen territory” in an embodied way, and then plan for cycles of rhythmic reflexivity—going along, stepping back, reflecting—asking the important questions of “How?” and “Why?” in order to further learning.

The Tradition of Self-Study

The teacher educator is in an excellent position to engage in exploration of teaching and learning practices, while at the same time serving as a purposeful role model for teacher candidates to do the same thing. Chapter Two devotes a section to acknowledging self-study as a way to promote scholarly inquiry. So, in this narrative inquiry I position myself to carefully consider my self-understandings of the nature of teaching about teaching, by engaging in self-study to “provoke, challenge, and illuminate” my teaching practices (LaBoskey, 2004, p. 818) so as to address this commitment to nurturing that heightened sense of consciousness in the teaching and learning experience that this inquiry explores. According to Macintyre Latta, et al. (2007), the “tradition of self-study holds much potential as a vehicle for educator professional development (p. 190). As a teacher of teaching, I purposely serve as a powerful role model for

my students in this inquiry, and this study of self is not an internal, solo act. Russell (1998)

states:

Self-study is about the learning from experience that is embedded within teachers' creating new experiences for themselves and those whom they teach. . . . Our goal may well be the reinvention of learning to teach, enabling others to understand learning from experience by showing them how we do it ourselves (p. 6).

All the conditions for this inquiry are designed to enable the study of self in relation to other. A variety of spaces have been created wherein prospective teachers and I can interactively explore classroom experiences where broadening discussions inform teaching and learning, developing confidence in the process along the way. LaBoskey (2004) states that "self-study is interactive at one or more stages in the process" (p. 821). The interaction of this study is with prospective teachers in a variety of both direct and indirect ways that constantly inform teaching and learning practices. Through the autobiographies of critical incidents, I may not be visible, but I am always there, involved in the process itself, considering their stories, their voices, and then bringing those considerations, as well as others, back to bear on their debriefing interviews, responding with affirmation, responsiveness, and attentiveness, validating the questions being asked in our honest pursuit of negotiating the complexities of the teaching and learning experience. These approaches to informing teaching and learning practices demonstrate that they are doing in practice precisely what I am doing, living what I am asking my student teachers to do. That is, in this study, together, we attend to the "experiences and understandings of others, bringing this thinking back to ourselves, inciting an individual-collective movement that is always in the making, forming and reforming, transforming self and others" (Macintyre Latta, et al., 2007, pp. 191-192). This narrative inquiry makes the considerations and possibilities of self-

study more visible. Chapters Four and Five more fully reveal and expound upon the particular possibilities and considerations.

Multiple Opportunities for Collaborative Inquiry

It has been determined by researchers that pre-service teachers must learn how to adapt to change, and teacher education programs should provide for allowing multiple opportunities for collaborative inquiry based on critical reflection on the various situations their teacher candidates encounter. Larrivee (2009) states that “teachers really can influence their practice much more than they think by engaging in systematic reflection about their work (p. 9). She adds that “An individual teacher’s thinking needs to be confirmed, modified, or stimulated to deeper levels of understanding by reflecting ‘aloud’” (p. 16). Dewey’s call for open-mindedness is an essential attitude of reflective practitioners, which includes being “open to other points of view” (Cooper and Larrivee, 2006, p. 9). It requires hearing different views as valid ways of thinking, according to Zeichner and Liston (1996). Beginning teachers are not really prepared for the complex world of teaching. Nonetheless, “successful teaching relies on teachers making intelligent meaning of complex classroom events” (Kasten & Write, 1996, p. 6). Multiple opportunities for collaborative inquiry based on critical reflection will provide the reflective process that is needed in order to deal with the uncertainties, tensions, ambiguities, and dilemmas that are a part of today’s classrooms.

Unfortunately, this is not easily done, nor is time and space easily accessible to the pre-service teachers as they progress through this difficult transferring process” (Jin, 1996, p. 1). Regardless, it is imperative that teacher education acknowledge and provide for experiences and opportunities such as the “careful monitoring” that Ryan (2005a, p. 9) suggested earlier, monitoring that provokes substantive thoughts and interpretations within the lived experience of

teaching and learning. When teachers take time and make space within curriculum for a type of careful monitoring that facilitates the meaning-making of the relational in teaching and learning, the result is transformations, recreations, elevations, and expansions in the teaching and learning that become a work of art.

Zeichner (1996) says that “all teachers are reflective in some sense. There is no such thing as an unreflective teacher (207). However, the kind of “systematic, purposeful inquiry, and critical reflection” Darling-Hammond and Bransford (2005, p. 437) speak of is very different from what Zeichner is describing. Zeichner calls it “uncritical teacher reflection” (p. 207). Preparing teachers to learn from teaching requires “a set of tools that develop the skills and practices” (Darling-Hammond and Bransford, 2005, p. 437) of critical thinking that result in students’ understanding and evaluation of the relational in teaching and learning from multiple perspectives. In critically reflecting, the teacher becomes mindful of relational complexities, envisions alternative ways of looking at things and solving problems, and focuses on the development or awakening of that aspiration or dispositional skill that may lie dormant within them to “restore meaning” as an aim that can guide educational practice” (Hostetler et al., 2007, p. 233).

The authors Pamela LePage et al. (2005) speak to the importance of critical reflective practice as a dispositional skill necessary for successful classroom management experiences. Teacher education programs that provide for learning opportunities for teacher candidates that include complex analysis of teaching experiences through critical reflection on the relational--with self, with other, and with the environment--provide them with a “conceptual map or schema to understand what they are experiencing” (p. 354). Pre-service teachers will face many different and difficult situations while teaching a diverse student population. This requires that

pre-service teachers be prepared to separate “pertinent facts from less significant and insignificant ones to identify a variety of acceptable decisions” (Kasten & Write, 1996, p. 1).

It does then become my responsibility as a teacher educator to make teaching a critically reflective and human activity. More specifically, according to Macintyre Latta (2008), I need to be concerned with the preparation of the prospective teacher for the “ever more demanding kinds of teaching/learning experiences. . . . given the essential difficulty that teachers encounter in the classroom, a phenomenon [called] relational complexity. . . . an uncertain and risky process that entails building relationships across self, others, and subject matter through dialogic inquiry” (p. 2).

The intent of this study is to examine deliberate approaches to ascertaining student teacher candidates’ perceptions of what teaching and learning needs to be for them when they consider the relationship between what they know and what they experience in the classroom to develop strong identities as teachers. It will encourage exploration, stimulation, meaning-making, and possibilities in the relational of teaching and learning in a current educational environment ripe with tradition and “magic bullets.” The research will focus specifically on the communications from and observations of student teachers for the purpose of understanding how this deliberate approach to critical reflective practice affects the relational intersections of teaching and learning, considering the “educational puzzles and problems.” . . . moving back and forth between the personal, the social, and the relational (Connelly and Clandinin, 2000, p.2).

Narratives of Lived Experiences: A Methodological Approach

This analysis, beginning with self and naturally gravitating toward analysis of self in relation to other, can create autobiographical knowledge as lived engagement with the teaching and learning experience. As teacher candidates begin the process of navigating through their

teaching and learning experience, mediating what they know with what they are experiencing autobiographically, a culture of inquiry can begin to exist and eventually thrive, and it is through the teacher candidate's stories, their narratives of experience, that the teacher candidate is enlightened.

According to Jackie Kirk (2005), the opportunity that the autobiography presents to report the "physicality" and reflexivity of the experience is worth further consideration. That said, the theoretical foundations of narrative inquiry develop as a result of the study of meaningful approaches to critical reflection in order to create a culture of inquiry. This narrative inquiry specifically examines student teacher' stories to enlighten the student teachers,' as well as my own understanding and awareness of what they need to do to become thoughtful and alert students of teaching and learning who are aware of the complexities of classrooms and respond to differences of all kinds as productive for learners and learning on the way toward developing their teaching identities. In short, this inquiry will attempt to seek out the stories, the "narratives of experience," of student teachers that exemplify that good work of reflective practice as a way to systematically study and improve teaching and learning, while at the same time making me more conscious of my own teaching and learning as a teacher educator. Verhesschen (2003) maintains that the construction of narratives of personal and professional experience generally lies at the heart of the various versions of what it is to be a reflective practitioner. Similarly, the student teacher's story of what he/she is doing can be an important catalyst for advancing a teacher educator's understanding of their students' needs as they prepare for the classroom. These narratives of experience, then, demand a particular scrutiny. I hope to explore deliberate approaches in both teacher educator practices and programmatic changes in these stories that can create a culture of critical inquiry that "respects the voices" of these student teachers "and the

knowledge that they bring to the research experience” (Zeichner, 2001, p. 279).

The nature of the student teachers’ experiences, personal and social and relational, places an emphasis on the “experience” itself, emphasizing the significant relationships among narratives and life. According to Connelly and Clandinin (2000), the term “experience” becomes an inquiry term that “permits better understandings of educational life” (p. 2). Experience happens narratively, and narrative inquiry is a form of narrative experience. In fact, MacIntyre (1985) subscribes to the view that “there is a tight relationship between narrative and life because narrative form or structure is already inherent in events themselves.” Therefore, educational experience should be studied “narratively” (p. 19). Carr (1986) specifies that “stories are told in being lived and lived in being told” (p. 61). This inquiry will allow these student teachers to tell their stories as narratives of experience, engaging in educational experiences that involve a deliberate approach to critical reflective practice that empowers them to more effectively facilitate study of self in relation to other as a way to promote critical reflection on the teaching experience itself. Concomitantly, the narrative inquiry I propose will enable such stories to provide for new understandings concerning teacher educator practices and programmatic changes in addressing these questions: How do the teacher candidates navigate/mediate what they know with what they are experiencing? What really counts as knowledge in the teaching and learning experience? How do narratives of experience enlighten teacher candidates regarding the negotiating of what they know and what they are experiencing to develop strong teaching identities?

Carter (1993) states that in “creating stories, we are able, therefore, to impose order and coherence on the stream of experience and work out the meaning of incidents and events in the real world” (p. 7). Narrative inquiry as a methodological approach does just that—captures the

“richness and indeterminacy” (p. 5) of the student teaching experience through critical reflective practice, acknowledges what the student teacher knows and is experiencing and the complex meaning-making process that is taking place with regard to the teaching and learning experience itself, and empowers student teachers to provide a voice that can better inform other teacher educator practices and the teacher education programs they serve.

Meaning-Making, Identity, and Narrative Inquiry

“Human beings think, perceive, imagine, and make moral choices according to narrative structures” (Carter, 1993, p. 7). Connelly and Clandinin (2000) concur, stating that “life . . . is filled with narrative fragments, enacted in storied moments of time and space, and reflected upon and understood in terms of narrative unities and discontinuities” (p. 17). However, in narrative experience a researcher should be cautious of equating life with a story. There still remains the complex mediation and negotiation between narrative and life, which is so critical to the narrative inquiry approach in terms of its ability to make allowances for exploring questions that remain unanswered. Verhesschen (2003) emphasizes that according to Ricoeur, several different stories can be told that “suit the same set of events (p. 454)” Second, the transformative actions and experiences that occur during the “life story” will call for narration in narrative inquiry and this will lead to different narratives. Finally, out of the fusion of different kinds of narratives, a concept of narrative identity emerges (Verhesschen, 2003). Thus, through the complex mediation and negotiation between narrative and life, the result is a narrative that tells us more about who we are, begins the process of developing strong identities as teachers.

This narrative inquiry will ask student teachers to tell their stories, to reflect critically upon their teaching and learning experiences, and the research process will live out the narrative. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) say that narrative is both the phenomenon and the method with

which to study it: “Narrative names the structured quality of experience to be studied, and it names the patterns of inquiry for its study” (p. 2). My research will explore these storied accounts, complete with student teacher tensions and perceptions as they negotiate the teaching and learning experience itself in relation to self and other in order to make meaning, develop new understandings with regard to creating a culture of inquiry, and construct teaching identities. “Identity construction is a negotiation with self, with others, and within the discourses present in one’s life” (Reeves, 2009, p. 35).

Hostetler et al. (2007) state that “teachers and students deserve to experience [the good work of teaching and learning], the meaning attained when they can make real sense out of ‘conflict and entanglement’ (p. 231); and through narrative, meaning is created. According to Ricoeur “narrative offers a view of the world from the point of view of human acting” (Verhesschen, 2003, p. 545). Thus, the narratives of experience shared by the student teachers in this study will provide discourse that is deeply rooted in their lived experiences of teaching and learning.

As the lived understanding of how teacher candidates navigate and mediate what they know with what they are experiencing become part of their own self-narration, they begin to shape their own identity, or self-knowledge about themselves as teachers. Ricoeur says that “self-knowledge is an interpretation, self interpretation, in its turn, finds in narrative, among other signs and symbols, a privileged mediation. . . . a condition for self-understanding” (Verhesschen, 2003, p. 460).

Participant and Researcher in Narrative Inquiry

The narrative experience that the student tells about classroom events is always significant and should not be discounted as ineffectual in terms of impacting the direction a study

takes (Loughran, 2004) and as importantly, informing teacher education programs and practices. Clandinin describes teacher education as a “collaborative inquiry” and the relationships among the participants in this “ongoing narrative of experience is characterized as a ‘trusting relationship’” (Verhesschen, 2003, p. 462). This collaborative inquiry involves storytelling and re-storying as the research proceeds. Three trends in the field of education have influenced the development of narrative inquiry:

First, there is currently an increased emphasis on teacher reflection. Second, more emphasis is being placed on teachers’ knowledge—what they know, how they think, how they develop professionally, and how they make decisions in the classroom. And third, educators seek to bring teachers’ voices to the forefront by empowering teachers to talk about their experiences (Creswell, 2002, p. 522).

Therefore, this narrative inquiry, where participants’ narratives are relevant to meaning-making for this inquiry, is an effective way to address the aforementioned concerns regarding critical reflective practice as it is being addressed currently in schools of education.

The literature on narrative inquiry does acknowledge potential weaknesses in the design. Connelly and Clandinin (2000) state that one of the criticisms of narrative inquiry is that it is “essentially a linguistic form of inquiry” (p. 77) that of story recording and telling. Carter (1993) acknowledges problems with veracity and fallibility relative to the re-storying that takes place where distortions of the “story” can occur, and authenticity of the story can be called into question. Similarly, Creswell (2002) cites “ownership” of the story as another concern in narrative inquiry.

Other tensions are very real, as well, and must be acknowledged: establishing trust, balancing involvement, maintaining objectivity. “How to experience the experience,” according to Connelly and Clandinin (2000) is a tension that is always present for the narrative inquirer because the narrative inquiry is relational, and the reflexivity of moving back and forth in the act

of balancing and maintaining trust, involvement, and objectivity is a part of the narrative inquiry process.

Nonetheless, Creswell (2002) emphasizes that the collaborative relationship in narrative inquiry can be a strength. It will give voice and empowerment to those whose stories are being told, and “telling a story helps individuals understand topics that they may need to process and understand (p. 531). Finally, telling stories comes naturally to people who want to share their experiences, and narrative inquiry captures a normal “form of data that is familiar to individuals” (p. 531). Connelly and Clandinin (2000) state that “the narrative inquirer may note stories but more often record actions, doings, and happenings, all of which are narrative expressions” (p. 79).

I propose that giving voice to student teachers so that they have the opportunities to tell their stories is appropriate and worthwhile and can provide insight and create new understandings relative to creating a culture of critical inquiry in teacher educator practices and teacher education programs. Exploration of possibilities related to these questions through “retelling . . . is to offer possibilities for reliving, for new directions, and new ways of doing things” (Connelly and Clandinin, 2000, p. 189).

The Participants

My Role as Researcher in this Narrative Inquiry

My role in this narrative inquiry will be that of both inquirer and professor. As an inquirer, my principal interest is in the teaching and learning experiences themselves and in the important task of retelling those stories so as to allow for growth and change. I will give voice and identity to the student teachers in this narrative inquiry. As I re-story (Creswell, 2002, p.

528) or construct the student teachers' stories, I will fulfill the role of retelling their stories so as to help them process and understand their teaching and learning experiences and allow their stories to transcend time and space to educate others.

As an inquirer, I must also be mindful of my role as an inquirer about my practice in the “midst of a nested set of stories”(Connelly and Clandinin, 2000, p. 63)—mine and the student teachers.' I will be mindful of exploring my own stories of experience as an inquirer, focusing on experience and following where it leads, paying attention to moments of tension in the midst of inquiry relative to temporality and place as an inquirer. In short, my role as inquirer will be to make myself as aware as possible of the “many, layered narratives at work in the inquiry space” (p. 70) and to acknowledge the reflexivity of the experience at work, pointing me forward and backward and inward and outward.

In my role as professor, I will model the study of the teaching self, conducting a systematic inquiry into the course that I am teaching. I will assume proactively the responsibility of purposefully engaging student teachers in playing active roles in monitoring their own learning. This effort will effectively formulate the purposes and ends of their work in the classroom complete with their own voices and insights.

My dual roles as both inquirer and professor allow me to commit to the exploration of programmatic changes and teacher educator practices that more fully realize the significance of facilitation of reflective practice opportunities as a way to promote an enlightened way of thinking reflexively about the relationality of self and other in teaching and learning.

The Student Teachers' Roles as Participants

Fifteen middle grades/secondary student teacher candidates who were enrolled in my section of the EDUC 420 Student Teaching Seminar course were invited to participate in this

study. There were six females and nine males enrolled in the course. The EDUC 420 Seminar is a course that is a corequisite course with the student teaching course. The seminar provides student teachers with mentorship during the student teaching semester. Workshops for portfolio development and completion of the Instructional Analysis Project will be included, as well as the activities that were a part of student teaching call backs (mock interviews, certification paperwork, preparation for the job search, etc.). Additionally, as their seminar instructor, I can conduct classroom visits for the purposes of observation of teaching and consultation opportunities with the student teachers to provide any needed assistance, support, and encouragement as they relate to the teaching and learning experience for the student teacher.

Five student teachers from my seminar agreed to participate in this study at various levels, as per the completion of the Letter of Informed Consent (See Appendix A). One student teacher agreed to participate in the study, but not in the questionnaire and the audio-taped follow-up interview. The remaining four student teachers agreed to participate fully in all phases of the study.

Research Questions

The catalyst for this research comes from doctoral work related to learning, thinking, reading, and debating about critical reflective practice as an approach to self-study that could further enlighten the teacher candidate regarding the relation between a teaching identity that understands the complexities of classrooms and the willingness to see them as productive for learning. This inquiry will give a voice to the student teacher concerning their struggles and their perceptions of their needs, as well as their perceptions of the attempts by schools of education to meet those needs as it addresses these important questions:

1. How do teacher candidates navigate/mediate what they know with what they

are experiencing to develop strong teaching identities?

2. What can be done to create a mindset in the teacher candidate that encourages exploration, stimulation, meaning-making, and possibilities in the relational of teaching and learning in a current educational environment ripe with tradition and “magic bullets?”
3. How do the insights gained from a “lived understanding” of how teacher candidates are mediating/navigating what they know and what they are experiencing to develop strong identities as teachers?

This inquiry also becomes a way to inform my own teacher education practices and those of the teacher education program in the School of Education at Peru State College and beyond. In fact, this inquiry can inform the larger professional community regarding the practice of teacher educators who seek greater success in the development of deliberate approaches to the good work of self-study as a way to promote critical reflection on teaching to systematically study and improve teaching and learning for all stakeholders involved in the teaching and learning process.

It is important to note that the assumption may be made that all teacher candidates experience this conflict between what they know and what they are experiencing in the classroom, but what about those teacher candidates who do not think that they experience this dissonance? Cooper and Larrivee (2006) say, “Today’s classrooms represent increasing diversity among students; therefore, a teacher has to accommodate and adjust to this greater range of differences in ethnicity, socioeconomic status, developmental levels, motivation to learn, and achievement” (p. 1). A responsiveness to this wide variety of students’ needs requires teachers who are reflective and recognize the relational nature of identity, that “identity is co-constructed with interested others. . . . with self, with others and within the discourses present in

one's life.” (Reeves, 2009, p. 34). Teacher educators and teacher education programs must be responsive to growing demands on teachers and heighten awareness of and commitment to critical reflective practice for all teacher candidates as a way for them to reach self-understanding that leads to reflective turns as they share who they are as teachers. Teacher candidates must understand that through a conscious effort for integrity between what they know and what they are experience in the classroom, they can genuinely “influence their practice much more than they think by engaging in systematic reflection about their work” (Cooper and Larrivee, 2006, p. 1). This is integral to the important work of the teacher educator in the educational experience of the teacher candidate.

Design: Methods and Procedures

According to Eisner (1998), there is no codified body of procedures that will tell someone how to produce a perceptive, insightful, or illuminating study of the education world” (p. 169). Flexibility, reflexivity, and attunement are required given the nature of narrative inquiry. While my intent as the researcher is to collect field texts that will provide stories of student teachers’ teaching and learning experiences in the classroom, I have to be cognizant of the need to be flexible, responsive, and attuned to the unanticipated in order to be aware of and acknowledge the opportunities and possibilities that the research may present.

Data Collection

According to Polkinghorne, “the final story must fit the data, while at the same time bringing an order and meaningfulness that is not apparent in the data themselves” (Verhesschen, 2003, p. 461). The participants (student teachers in the EDUC 420 Section B Student Teaching Seminar) will not be required to do anything outside of what is expected of them as student teachers during the student teaching experience itself. Data will be collected from each of the

participants in this study through autobiographies of critical incidents; one non-evaluated field observation and one audio-taped debriefing session following the field observation; an author-designed, open-ended questionnaire (See Appendix B); and an audio-taped open-ended follow-up interview, if needed. During the student teaching experience itself, data will only be collected through two methods: the autobiographies of critical incidents entries submitted on the Discussion Board section of the Black Board platform utilized for the EDUC 420 Section B Student Teaching Seminar, as required by the course and one non-evaluated field observation and debriefing session following the non-evaluated field observation, a practice that is very common for anyone who plays any sort of supervisory/advisory role during the student teaching experience itself. Two additional methods of data collection will be implemented and utilized only after the course has been completed and grades have been issued. After that time, participants in the study will be invited to complete one author-designed, open-ended questionnaire and one follow-up interview, if needed.

A. The autobiographies of critical incidents, both positive and negative, will involve an autobiographical account of a classroom management issue, building positive student-teacher relationships, and/or efforts to provide mastery learning experiences.

B. Debriefing Interviews will be approximately 60 minutes each, following the field observation and at the convenience of the participants. The interviews will be a semi-structured design to prompt conversation and generate personal, lived, storied accounts that will give voice to student teachers. Questions concerning the student teaching experience will encompass experiences related to the complexities of the teaching and learning experience in the classroom, the study of the teaching self in relation to other in the teaching and learning experience, and the use of critical reflection to make sense of

the teaching and learning experiences that take place.

These four data collection methods are intended to provide the “world of the glass box” for the participants in this study so as to gain valuable and enriching insights into the student teachers’ stories of their teaching and learning experiences. Chapter 5 of this study delineates the process whereby I considered each piece of data as it built upon the other, autobiography of critical incidents to debriefing interviews to questionnaires to follow-up interviews so as to identify themes in each and then begin the process of cross and group analysis among data sources to narrow down the main themes of this study. Conscious of the unanticipated, I was always focused on other possibilities and opportunities that might present themselves through engagement with critical reflective practice that was attuned to the relational in the teaching and learning experience and the embodied understanding of it.

I began my data collection process with the Field Observations and the audio-taped Debriefing Session that followed each observation. Fifteen field observations and debriefing sessions were conducted over the course of March, April, and May of 2008. Field observations were conducted over a 50 minute time period where I observed the student teacher during a class. I made notes on my observation of the teaching and learning experiences of the student teacher in the classroom, as I perceived them and related to classroom planning and preparation, instruction, professionalism, and classroom environment. Following the classroom observation, I conducted an hour semi-structured interviews with student teachers in relation to questions concerning the student teaching observation of their lived experiences in the classroom and the stories they told related to the complexities of the teaching and learning experience in relation to self, self and other, and the use of critical reflection to make sense of the teaching and learning experiences. Upon completion of both the field observation and the debriefing session with the

student teacher, I transcribed the audio taped recording of the classroom visit following the completion of each classroom visit.

Following the completion of the course, and after grades had been posted for the EDUC 420 student teaching seminar, I contacted my advisor, Dr. Margaret MacIntyre Latta regarding receipt of Informed Consent Forms and those student teachers who had consented to participation in the final two phases of the study: the questionnaire and the follow-up interview, if necessary. Five of those student teachers had agreed to participate in the study relative to the field observation, autobiographies of critical incidents, and interview, while three of the five agreed to participate in all five phases of the study: autobiographies of critical incidents, field observation, debriefing session, questionnaire, and follow-up interview (if necessary).

Data Analysis Process

Verhesschen (2003) states that “Since it is in our narratives that we show the meaning of our experiences and it is narratives that give insight into what is meaningful for us, narrative deserves a place in educational research” (p. 562). However, these “stories” must be treated in context as my own interpretations that open up new dimensions, new ways of seeing, and understanding. Initially, Phase One of the data analysis included examination of the questionnaires, Field Observation Notes, Semi-structured Interview Notes, and the Autobiographies of Critical Incidents individually for emerging themes via the utilization of a coding process. This coding process will require the division of the data into sections whereby a labeling process can ensue with attention paid to elimination of overlap of codes and to the narrowing of codes. These codes will then be developed into themes. Data will be written in narrative form or restoried. Creswell (2002) describes this process as one in which “the researcher gathers stories, analyzes them for key elements of the story (e.g. time, place, plot, and

scene), and then rewrites the story to place it in a chronological sequence (p. 528). The Clandinin and Connelly Three-Dimensional Space Narrative Structure of interaction, continuity, and situation will be utilized as I construct the stories (Creswell, 2002, p. 530).

Following individual analysis of the data, Phase Two of the data analysis process involved a cross narrative analysis identifying themes common to all narratives.

Finally, Phase Three of the process involved group analysis of the data so as to develop a framework that provides valuable insights and next steps. Always mindful of the reflexivity in this process, as ongoing analysis continued, critical moments of pause, contemplation, and reflection occurred throughout the data analysis process. Reading and rereading of the data, mindful of what the autobiographies of critical incidents, field observations, debriefing sessions, questionnaires, and interviews enlightened me about regarding the teaching and learning experience, allowed for a reflexive process in the analysis of the data and provided for moments of reframing. This was critical to the process and continually allowed for the reframing of my thinking via attunement to the subtle nuances, opportunities, and possibilities presented by the student teachers' narratives of experience.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were first addressed with the Informed Consent Letter. Clear articulation was made concerning the participants' freedom to withdraw from the study at any time and that there were no risks involved in participation in this study.

In narrative inquiry the potential exists for contaminating the authenticity of the stories being told and then retold again. Therefore, it will be my responsibility to be mindful of and attentive to the authenticity of the "story." Similarly, when restorying takes place, it is possible that the study will "reflect the researcher's story and not the participant's story" (Creswell, 2002,

p. 532). I was attentive to precise language used by the participant and the careful delineation of time and place of the stories. Additionally, at the conclusion of the semester and after grades have been issued, participants in the study will have the opportunity to read my interpretations of their stories, as I check and re-check the comfort level of the participants with the interpretation of their stories along the way.

A delimitation in this study is the fact that the fifteen student teachers are part of my student teaching seminar, I will had full access to these fifteen student teachers as they completed their student teaching experiences. This provided me with the depth of knowledge and experiences of student teachers fully immersed in the student teaching experience that is required for this study.

Presentation Form

This study considers the stories of the student teachers from the world of the glass box, and through the glass box is revealed the lived experience of both the researcher and the participant in this study. The data I have gathered is appropriate for a narrative dissertation, as it tells the stories, the narrative experiences of the participants in this study.

This narrative inquiry gives a voice to the student teachers concerning their struggles and their perceptions of their needs, as well as their perceptions of the attempts by their school of education to meet those needs. Likewise, I cannot ignore the significant benefit for both teachers and their students when the classroom environment and teaching methodology is one that is open to unanticipated opportunities so as to increase insight for all stakeholders in the process of learning. Through narrative research, these life stories can become projects complete with discovery of new options, interpretations, and possibilities through reflective practice. It is through this narrative inquiry that a teacher educator and teacher candidates can authentically

interact to grow as students of teaching and learning “seeking out and seizing back possibilities for teaching and learning again and again” (Macintyre Latta and Buck, 2007, p. 5).

Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1993) noted, “In every classroom where teachers are learners and all learners are teachers, there is a radical but quiet kind of school reform in process” (p. 110). The possibilities connected with this quiet kind of school reform initially begin with a commitment from teacher educators to take responsibility for their own professional development, as well as that of their students, when it comes to teaching and learning. Zeichner (1996) states the following: “When embracing the concept of reflective teaching, there is often a commitment by teacher educators to help prospective teachers internalize during their initial training the disposition and skill to study their teaching and become better at teaching over time” (p. 200). As a teacher educator, reflection, as a quiet reform praxis, calls for my attention. Through narrative inquiry, this study will examine its potential.

CHAPTER 4

Data Revealed Through Critical Reflective Practice:

An Educational Experience

Each person has unique potential to be enhanced by his or her educational experiences. Therefore, as a teacher educator, I acknowledge my role in this enhancement, my own responsibility to be a critically reflective practitioner. As an educator grounded in the knowledge of what I know, it is still important that I am respectful and cognizant of the present cultural context in which I live and highly aware of a future that requires adaptability and critical thinking skills based upon what I am experiencing. The relationship that exists between what I know and what I am experiencing is vigorous and dynamic, and an attunement to the mediation of the two is my responsibility as critical reflective practitioner. This on-going enlightenment, however, is secondary to the important understanding that the teacher candidates that I serve should be provided with just such opportunities to nurture their own mediation of what they know with their perceptions of what they are experiencing in the teaching and learning process through the good work of critical reflective practice. Drawing upon critical and constructivist theory, it is evident that wise decision-making is based upon one's ability to reflect critically upon one's experiences and to acknowledge the "indeterminant zones of practice – uncertainty, uniqueness, and value conflict..." (Schön, 1987, p.6), I posit that, for myself and for my students, a teacher education program that emphasizes critical reflective practice "...must cultivate activities that connect the knowing- and reflection-in-action of competent practitioners to the theories and techniques taught as professional knowledge in academic courses" (p. 312). Developing teacher candidates who are nurturing the knowledge, skills, and dispositions

necessary to become reflective practitioners is the driving force behind the decision-making that impacts teacher education courses, curriculum, programs.

I am reminded of John Dewey's consideration of what teacher, student, and society bring to the classroom. This needs to be considered. The varied experiences of the classroom participants, engaged with the courses, the curriculum, the program, the context of the teaching and learning creates the experience as an educational one. The Conceptual Framework delineated in Chapter Two of this dissertation is intended to provide the reader with the background needed to consider the views provided from the prism of the glass box. Wanda May (1993) approaches it in this way: "Until you've seen a thing other than the way it is, you've not seen it at all" (p. 211). It encourages taking a second look at things, not to "create a sense of anxiety, but a sense of opportunity" (Pateman, 1997, p. 4) where imagination can be exercised in the encounter with its medium. This study is a journey to find consummatory moments that will lead to new beginnings for me, as well as for the teacher candidates that I serve, to make us each better educators in our classrooms.

Several doctoral courses and my participation in a self-study research project led by Dr. Margaret Macintyre Latta, a professor at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, have been the catalyst for this dissertation study. Courses that I completed for my doctoral program of study and the self-study research project focused on reflective practice, particularly in relation to the study of self. I have challenged myself to more adequately address this approach with a goal in mind—that of facilitating a curriculum focused on rigor in order to, as one anonymous source said, ". . . discipline rather than to furnish the mind; to train it to the use of its own powers, rather than to fill it with the accumulations of others" (Barone, 1983, p.1). Maxine Greene (1981) would agree in that the teacher candidates of today's educational world need to be provided with

opportunities to ponder, to think, and to create—to develop the self-knowledge that becomes part of their teaching identity to recognize what really counts as knowledge through the development of those “fully exposed” strategies that support the important work of critical reflective practice.

My research questions have emerged from these experiences and this challenge as a teacher educator who values self-study through critical reflective practice. This is a means by which my students can more meaningfully and purposefully navigate what they know with their perceptions of what they are experiencing to develop strong identities as teachers.

An Educational Experience: Black Box vs. Glass Box Approach

As stated for the first time in Chapter One, schools of education today are ripe with trends that circumvent the educational experience to its most common denominator: effective teaching and successful classroom management broken down into a series of steps. Assumptions are made that if these “steps” are implemented and utilized, students will learn and classrooms will function like well-oiled machines. The educational “experience” itself was trapped inside a black box because I was prone to focusing on covering a prescribed curriculum, successfully transmitting information based on protocol and “how-to’s,” and assessing my performance based on whether my students first secured teaching positions, and then maintained them throughout those first three to five years. As a teacher educator, I was not providing opportunities for what Kant (1952) describes as the “union of imagination and understanding as a catalyst for something new” (p. 31). The black box approach to an educational experience oversimplified and dominated the teaching and learning process.

What I have come to recognize through my course work and research on self-study and critical reflective practice is that teaching and learning is relational in nature, and attention must be paid to what happens inside that black box, as well. It all began with a research experience

that took place as a result of my Curriculum as Aesthetic Text course taught by Dr. Margaret Macintyre Latta. This is an excerpt taken from a draft of that research project:

Thus began my own “educational experience” in terms of what I was doing in my own classroom with my own students. I sought to, as Schubert (1994) would suggest, “strive for meaning and purpose—that is the call to curriculum” (p. 26). Initially, I needed to understand the true value of three Deweyan concepts—relationship between self and other, consummatory moments that bring new beginnings, and the value of the process to get there. My search for insight began with an examination of my diligence in establishing a relationship between the teacher candidates and the subject matter they were immersed in. In order to flesh that out, I relied on Dewey’s *Nature of Inquiry* and Barone’s definition of a “truly educational experience” and his prescription for curriculum as experience for teacher candidate inquiry with the intention of getting some feedback on what William E. Doll (1993) would describe as “rigorous” curriculum. The genuine “spirit” of inquiry, as Hegel (1964) talks about it, is at work in this inquiry process (Ruskamp, 2003, p. 4).

For this research project, I selected a group of teacher candidates who were enrolled in my EDUC 434 course, *Reading and Writing Across the Curriculum*. Their selection was based on the following factors: The curriculum was designed with exploration and possibilities in mind, and the teacher candidates were used to the bi-monthly e-mail journal response process in which we engaged in an “electronic” conversation if you will, in terms of candor, elevated thought, and application regarding their learning experiences and how they impacted thoughts about teaching in the future. They were the perfect group to glean feedback from regarding how aesthetic the EDUC 434 curriculum really was in terms of the reflexive process of reflection with self and other. This research project and the interactions that resulted from it allowed me to begin the preliminary stages of positioning myself and my students in the world of the glass box.

I see my role as that of a teacher “chaperone” with the self-knowledge of my own mind to allow for transformation into the training of teacher candidates to recognize their own self-knowledge concerning an educational experience which will translate to the very same thing happening in their own classrooms someday. In the end, it is critical that the teacher candidates that engage in my curriculum must be exposed to the “language of inquiry” *and* see what it looks like in practice on a consistent basis. Only then will Dewey’s (1934) “rounded out experience” (p. 39) have a chance to make a difference in

multiple classrooms. Wanda May (1993, p. 210) suggests that “In making teaching the act itself is exactly what it is because of how it is done” (p. 216). So, I have “learned from them [my students] so that we [I] may teach well” (Ruskamp, 2003, p. 18).

Drawing upon this initial research experience and additional course work that followed on reflective practice through self-study, I was able to broaden my understanding of self-study through the research work I completed with a self-study cohort group led by Dr. Margaret Macintyre Latta. This research work further revealed the importance of the glass box approach to teaching and learning as we explored the “pull of possibilities.” According to Macintyre Latta et.al. (2007),

Experiencing the pull of possibilities in teaching/learning situations assumes teaching and learning are moving forces to be grappled with through deliberation and interaction. . . . Biesta (2004) states that “It is not about the constituents of this relationship (i.e., the teacher and the learner) but about the relationality of the relationship”(p. 13). Therefore the locus of education lives in-between teacher and learner. Biesta terms such in-betweeness “mind the gap” and argues that this gap is not something to be overcome but indeed what makes education possible (p.13). It is within the gap that the pull of possibilities is first glimpsed and provokes panic to overcome, or, evokes a boldness to proceed with care. And, as Biesta points out the latter venture entails both “risk” and “opportunity” (p.24). It is this concern for the pull’s agentic possibilities within teaching and learning (p. 200).

The process of developing one’s pedagogical identity is much like operating in poetic form where multiple dimensions of one’s being—mind, soul, and body—allow for the pull of possibilities to be experienced (Macintyre Latta et.al., 2007). What follows is an example of the possibilities in the world of the glass box:

The lines of empty pews stand before me, shoulder to shoulder, my audience, for now. The introductory music briefly suspends itself amidst the rafters, dancing from beam to beam before floating downward, searching for a voice to mate itself with. Mine is that voice, and she begins. The moment is captured, the music is absorbed, and the voice sings, line-by-line, verse-by-verse.

The journey of my voice on that day in that church was intimately engaged in a sort of reflexive interpretation at several levels: contact with the language, awareness of the act of interpretation, and connection with the other “voices” providing feedback. My

voice engaged in open play, all the while striving for a rich musical experience embracing sound, rhythm, and emotion-- the levels reflected in one another. Nothing means anything on its own. Meaning comes not from seeing, or even observation alone, for there is no 'alone' of this sort. Neither is meaning lying around in nature waiting to be scooped up by the senses; rather it is constructed. 'Constructed' in this context means produced within acts of interpretation.

The voice of which I have spoken experienced the complex construction of interpretations by valuing the relationship that exists between the process of producing music and the various dimensions of such a process, all the while conscious of the involvement of the voice herself. The reflexive attempt is thus relational. . . . to invite the expression of alternative voices or perspectives into one's activities. As Kirk (2005, p. 233) validates "the praxis of reflexivity . . . includes a sustained attention to the positions in which I place myself and am placed by others, a listening to and acknowledging of inner voices . . ." (Macintyre Latta et al., 2007, p. 200-201).

What my dissertation work now calls for is a greater attunement so that this kind of authentic participation occurs for the teacher candidates that I serve more frequently and thus, influences a fuller bodied response to the humility required of teaching. For reflexivity to become indelibly operational, the educator occupies a state of paradox: a place of being "pulled up short," leading to vulnerability, and at the same time the pull of possibilities, as teacher candidates position themselves in the world of the glass box.

A "Lived Understanding" of Negotiating Knowledge and Perception

As teachers negotiate what they know with what they are experiencing through a critically reflective process regarding what they are seeing, thinking, and feeling, they become engaged in the teaching and learning experience. This is not done so easily. Opportunities that provide for these "glass box" experiences require access to those spaces of liberty and a mission of trust I discussed in Chapter Two. The teacher candidates position themselves in the world of the glass box in order to mediate the complexities of the teaching and learning process.

Thus, how do I prepare teacher candidates to navigate/mediate what they know with what they are experiencing? What can be done by teacher educators and in teacher education

programs to create this mindset in the teacher candidate that encourages this exploration, stimulation, meaning-making, and possibilities in the relational of teaching and learning? Finally, how do the insights gained from a “lived understanding” of how teacher candidates mediating/navigating what they know with what they are experiencing to develop those important strong identities as teachers?

A commitment to curricular and programmatic change which focuses specifically on self-study with an emphasis on critical reflective practice promises just such opportunities in the teaching and learning process. Opposite the black box approach to considering the details of the teaching and learning process--a positioning of the teacher candidate to consider only what goes in and what comes out—a teacher candidate’s participation in and attunement to the teaching and learning process via the multiple prisms of perspective, both within and outside of the glass box can thereby position an educator to consider details within the teaching and learning experience as dynamic, relational, and reflexive in nature.

Reflexivity’s Role

I begin by considering my own perspectives as one who is now more cognizant of the significance of self-study through critical reflective practice, but not as a solo pursuit. Attention paid to the details in the teaching and learning process provide for the relational in the push and pull of possibilities as I move between my own teaching and learning process and that of the teacher candidates that I serve. I am fully engaged in moving back and forth, that is an important part of the process of my qualitative data collection. I become deeply attuned to and then influenced by these new understandings, continued moments of puzzlement, and the pull of possibilities realized in relation to the participants I am working with, the literature that frames my work, the data collection, and the research process itself. The interplay of these multiple

prisms within my glass box approach to the possibilities self-study through critical reflective practice becomes reflexive and relational. The participants, the data, the literature, and the research process--they each require consideration, I explore further, question assumptions, doubt possibilities, reposition myself, move forward, take a step back, reconsider, and then push ahead to transform thinking.

This reflexivity sustained and framed my data collection process. I was then more connected with and felt an attunement to the participants in this study who also questioned themselves, doubted, explored, stepped away, then pushed forward again, repositioning themselves in the lived understanding of negotiating what they know with what they were experiencing in their teaching and learning process.

Revealing the Terrain of the Course

Chapter Three delineated the data collection process for this study. A review of the various sources of data is as follows:

1. Autobiographies of Critical Incidents
2. Field Observations followed by Debriefing Interviews
3. Open-ended Questionnaire
4. Follow-Up Interview (if needed)

These four sources did indeed reveal data on the opportunities the participants' in this study had for critical reflection on their teaching and learning experiences. Similarly, these data sources were constant vehicles for shaping the direction of the course and generating the participants' on-going reflexive data collection for my analysis.

As stated earlier in Chapter Three, the Autobiographies of Critical Incidents and the Debriefing Interviews following field observations proved to be the most beneficial in terms of

revealing possibilities to the questions that frame this study. The reflexive process of data collection and on-going analysis is documented first through the autobiographies of critical incidents and then through the debriefing interviews that followed field observations. Detailing this process first with the autobiographies of critical incidents, and then with the debriefing interviews speaks more clearly to the authenticity of the process as it unfolded, how I was present in it, and how they folded into larger narratives in the course itself. The autobiographies of critical incidents and debriefing interviews also provide vantage points of one as opposed to the other. The Open-ended Questionnaire and the Follow-up Interview data will contribute to the data analysis explored in Chapter Five.

Critical Reflective Practice in the World of the Glass Box

Participants in this study were provided with spaces of liberty to gain a better understanding of their lived experiences. LaBoskey (2004) says, “How we achieve this better understanding of our teaching experience is through critical reflection (p. 824). Invited into the world of the glass box, these participants move from a type of surface reflection to a higher-order level of critical reflection questioning teaching and learning assumptions and practices brought back to bear on their teaching, also conscious of ethical and/or moral and social considerations and implications of practices on students and their learning. Similarly, the critical reflection is reflexive in that participants are moving forward and then returning to the start, experiencing the back and forth in considering how the relational of self to other enlightened the teaching and learning process.

All the participants in this study have ventured inside the glass box and exited on the other side. While small portions of Bill’s and Mary’s stories are included as a part of the dialogical community that follows in Chapter Four, three other student teachers’ stories from the

world of the glass box offer representative accounts across all participants' experiences and will be the focus of my reaction and analysis in Chapter Five. Their narratives of experience enlighten what really counts as knowledge in the teaching and learning process. The first student teacher is Jennifer. She was chosen because she has been a teacher candidate who has been fully invested in the pre-service experience and is representative of those teacher candidates that want to thrive, rather than survive in their classrooms someday. Mike is the second student with a story to tell from within the world of his glass box. Mike is the student teacher who had the most to lose and the most to gain from his student teaching experience. Kurt is the third student teacher whose story should be told. He is a student teacher who was the most confident in his knowledge and skills as a pre-service teacher prior to the student teaching experience.

I now invite the reader in to relive the terrain of my course and explore the dialogical community that existed, including my reactions and considerations intertwined with the student teachers' reflections.

Autobiographies of Critical Incidents: Spaces of Liberty

Participants in this study completed a series of five autobiographies of critical incidents and provided responses to their peers' autobiographies of critical incidents, as well. These postings, provided in the EDUC 420 Student Teaching Seminar Discussion Board section of Black Board, provided spaces of liberty and supported a mission of trust between participants in order to critically reflect from the world of the glass box.

Pat Hutchings (1993) supports the need to have multiple points of view, as "multiple voices raise issues about the relationship between teaching and learning" (p. 48). Meaning making in the educational experience through the autobiography, for various stakeholders involved in the teaching and learning process, is reflexive and complex.

The potential for teacher empowerment as a result of reflexivity as a means of critical reflection is encouraging. An autobiographical analysis, where one begins with self and naturally gravitates toward analysis of self in relation to other facilitates the process of exploration of the relationality of teaching and learning. O'Loughlin (2006) says that "education must involve a recognition of the inherent order of human locatedness. It must create a life world which supports satisfying human existence grounded in the livable environment" (p. 7). The autobiographies of critical incidents fostered acknowledgement of, engagement with, and responsivity to the relational in the lived experience of teaching and learning as an encounter with the environment. I have *italicized* and **bolded the themes** for this data source.

The "Critical" in the Reflection on Teaching for Success Through Collaboration

What follows are components of cases, dilemmas, or issues that served to provide teacher candidates with opportunities for collective and collaborative means of rethinking and meaning-making from multiple perspectives through the "communal aspect" of writing autobiographically. Jennifer wrote this in an autobiography of critical incident associated with consultation with her cooperating teacher about a discipline issue in the classroom:

It feels good to be a contributing member of the teaching team, doesn't it? I often find myself feeling hesitant to interject what I see or think, but when I do it is always well accepted. The truth is that we have fresh eyes and have spent a great deal of time just observing these students. If you feel something may be important you *should* tell someone. This aspect of my student teaching experience has been a real confidence builder. We are making a contribution to our schools (Narrative, February 3, 2008)

Mary discussed her collaborative experiences in her own student teaching experience and how they contributed to her teaching success.

I had a small but very powerful suggestion from two teachers this week. I was preparing to teach my first lesson and needless to say, was extremely nervous. A teacher friend of mine told me to wait until a student answers after I ask a question before I answer it for them. I took his advice, and during my first lesson I did just that. I had to wait for a response for about 10 seconds (which seemed like an eternity), but it takes a while for the question to sink in and for the students to think of a response. I did get a response and it was correct. I talked to my CT after the lesson and he gave me a lot of positive feedback. He said that he was especially impressed that I waited for the students to answer. It seems like a very simple thing. When my CT was student teaching, he said that his CT addressed that problem. He said that his CT told him that he only waited about 1.5 seconds for the students to answer and then just answered the question himself. He said that he had to make a conscious effort to change that (Narrative, January 21, 2008).

Mary sought out advice from her peers as she explored the relational of self to other.

I have a student in one of my classes who is concerning me with her grade. She is very attentive during class, and participates in all activities. When it comes to homework, quizzes, or tests... she does not put forth much effort. I have tried many different instructional strategies with the entire class just to see how the different students learn the best. She definitely learns best by acting out a skit, or something dramatic. It is hard to come up with dramatic things for History, but we have managed to do it. I have given the option of acting something out instead of the work on paper. She is the only one that takes advantage of it. The entire class looks forward to her skits. They are normally very funny, and are always informative. She includes all the facts that I would have included in the notes. I have yet to get her to take the small amounts of notes that I give. I also cannot get her to study for tests or quizzes. Yesterday I had her come in to my room during her study hall to make sure she was updated on her notes. She seemed to be very concerned about her grade and wants to change it. She also seems to like it that I am concerned about grade. Does anyone have any other suggestions that I might try with her? (Narrative, March 4, 2008).

Mike responded to Mary's post:

Yeah, I don't have any advice, I'm about as clueless as anyone, but I feel your pain. I don't understand why students make things that are so easy (taking notes), so difficult! I often agree when students tell me that, "this assignment is pointless."
 "Yes, for the most part it is. I need you to know this information, I need to somehow hold you accountable for learning it (because God knows you can't do it on your own),

and I need some grades in the grade book-- that's why we're doing this assignment." Have you talked with your cooperating teacher?

I had a similar conversation just yesterday. I have 6 students in a class of 17 that have a D- or and F.:(I do create difficult test, because they are reliable and valid! That is not why they are failing. They are failing because they neglect to hand work. Yeah, we watched a movie and it was fun. I gave you expectations for the notes you took on the movie, and you decided to whisper with So-and-so the majority of the film. I decided to give you a zero, it's a crazy and just world at times. Then I have students who are smart! and just don't care enough to hand in study guides. I can't make them complete the study guide. I know they read and they offer up great discussion points in class, but no need to do homework. I like that you're differentiating assessment to try and aid students' learning styles. I think I will make a more concerted effort to do this in my classroom. Good luck, I that your student responds to your comments on her grades. I haven't had a lot of luck going that direction--but, it always makes me feel better to talk with them and see where they're coming from (Narrative, March 5, 2008).

Kurt responded with his own concerns about the relational of self to other.

I too have a lot of trouble with student motivation in my Phys. Ed. classes. The way in which I grade students is on attitude, participation, and dress. At the end of each unit I will give a test. If you ask me, it is pretty easy to get a good grade, but the students find ways to fail. The students are so lazy they won't bring gym clothes to change into. The students who don't dress can only get as high as a "B". This is just the beginning of things. Currently, we are in the Badminton unit and I have students that just sit and watch the other games. It is one thing if the courts are full, but when there are two empty courts it tells me they just don't care. Each and every Monday we have the students do a 12 minute interval run. During this activity they walk for a minute, run for a minute, etc. I have students that choose to walk the entire 12 minutes. Students in today's schools are just plain lazy if you ask me. If their grade won't motivate them to participate I am not sure what will. I don't think the students realize that PE will damage their GPA the same as a math or science class. You are not the only one with student motivation in the classroom. I am sure we will run into these situations as long as we are in the education profession (Narrative, March 16, 2008).

Another series of collaborative autobiographical entries focus on parent-teacher conferences. Kurt, Mike, and Jennifer shared their collective thoughts on the challenges of

teaching successfully and how the parent-teacher conferences enlightened their understanding of their students.

Kurt: On Friday February 8th, Sidney held it's Parent-Teacher conferences. The conferences lasted from 8:00am to 8:00pm. The overall outcome of parents was rather low. As a Physical Educator I visited with a total of three parents. These parents didn't even talk about their son/daughter's grades. The general topic of conversation was that of the girl's basketball game the night before. If you ask me the twelve hour conference was a bit long. I think that the school could get a better turnout of parents if they were to hold two nights of conferences. During the morning hours all the parents were at work, therefore, we didn't accomplish a whole lot. Something must be done differently to try to get the parents more involved. The one thing that I got from the situation was that of linking my students to their guardians. This allowed me to understand why some of my students act the way they do in class (Narrative, February 18, 2008).

Mike replied:

A 12 hour conference--that sounds fun. I wouldn't get too bummed out about only meeting with 3 parents--that is depressing though, you dedicate all that time and parents don't care or appreciate your sacrifice. I hear what you're saying about meeting the parents and understanding why their kids are the way they are. I've found, that if you're having a problem with a kid, some of them don't care about detention, or getting yelled at--but you talk to their parents and you'll see an immediate change (Narrative, February 26, 2008).

Jennifer chimed in:

I enjoyed parent-teacher conferences very much. The school I'm at held the conferences from 4-8 on the first day and 8:30 to 6 the next. Although you feel like you've been in the twilight zone after two very long days like that, it really helped me to understand and identify with my students better. The part I found most challenging was finding a way to approach the parents with the not-so-positive types of things. Most parents were very glad to know what their child was doing (or not doing), but a few parents acted a little defensive -or should I say un-accepting of what I said. All in all, I was ok with this because I knew I had been brave enough to do my part and at least they were aware of the problem. The best part of conferences was when the parents said that their child had talked about me at home. That was exciting and made me feel important in their lives! (Narrative, April 5, 2008).

The reflexivity of the relational element of these postings and responses suggests the importance of providing spaces of liberty for teacher candidates to share their experiences and then rely on each other for support, validation, and new possibilities as the “back and forth” of the conversations takes place.

Each of the narratives frame the “teaching for success through *collaboration*” focus. Jennifer spoke about her experience of collaborating with her cooperating teacher on some classroom issues and feeling like a “contributing member of a teaching team.” She indicated that that collaborative experience had been a real confidence builder for her. Mary shared how the simple but effective teaching tips from a teacher friend of hers and her cooperating teacher contributed to her classroom success, as well. Similarly, Mary and Mike provided each other with support as they struggled with the challenges of finding ways to reach their students to ensure academic success. Mike said this to Mary: “I like that you’re differentiating assessment to try and aid students’ learning styles. I think I will make a more concerted effort to do this in my classroom” (Narrative, March 5, 2008). Finally, the collaborative conversation that frames the student teachers’ insights gained from Parent-Teacher Conferences is best summed up by Jennifer who said this: “It really helped me to understand and identify with my students better” (Narrative, April 5, 2008). Both Mike and Kyle concurred.

The “Critical” in the Reflection on the Relational in Student-Teacher Relationships

Diane Dubose Brunner (n.d.) states that reflexive practice, or “reflecting back against the self and other in a relational sense,” (p. 7) provides openings, new meanings, and further informs a critical approach to teaching as an object of study. Jackie Kirk (2005) concurs, stating that “starting with oneself. . . reflexivity necessarily engages the self in critical exploration of experience, perceptions, and positions; the insight gained can then be used as a starting point for

engaging with others, and for starting to develop shared understandings. . . ." (pp. 239-240).

Mary and Mike demonstrated this process in the following autobiographical excerpts, which consider the relation to the environment:

Mary: I have seen some things with some of the sophomores that I have in class. It started to get significantly worse when the weather got better. Some of them are ready to be out of school right now! There have also been more students challenging me lately. They want to argue any chance they get. I just tell them how things are going to be and there will be no discussion. Half the time it looks as if they are showing off in front of their friends. Normally this works for me. There was a day last week though that my CT witnessed this, and he was not happy! The student got a lot more than he asked for (Narrative, April 21, 2008).

Mike: Yeah, the weather is a big factor on the kid's attitudes and actions. What I've found funny about watching students is how they are catalyst to one another. I have a particular pair of students that are of interest to this point. If one or they other is gone, the one remaining is always placid, agreeable and generally manageable. When together they constantly try to press the limits for they others approval. Luckily, I'm in a school where respect is a mandate. Students get the riot act for not saying "Mr." or "Mrs." I completely agree with you though, respect is a commodity that is slowly going the ways of the buffalo (Narrative, April 21, 2008).

Consider this excerpt from Mary, as well.

I have a student in one of my classes who is Autistic. He is very needy, which I have been able to cope with fine... so far. He also does not like any kind of change. With the neediness, I make sure that I explain things to him one on one after class. With the "not liking change" thing.. well, that has been more of a problem. My CT did things a certain way before I got there and this student was used to that. I started their class and introduced many activities. At first he did not like this, but he got used to it. Today I had a problem that just about put me at the end of my rope. We were reviewing for the test for tomorrow and the autistic student did not like the game that I was playing with them. He wanted me to just straight out read them the answers. I explained that I want them to look for the answers on their own and use their skills they had learned in class. I also explained to him that I was not going to change the entire class for him when the rest of the students loved it. I told him that I have to appeal to the majority of the class. I also let him know that he could chose not to participate and just write down the answers as the other students answered them. He talked with me after class and pretty much told me that he hates me and I am not a good teacher. I told him I enjoy being his teacher and I will run my classroom in the best way I think everyone in the class will benefit from. I left it at that. Any advice?! (Narrative, April 14, 2008).

These postings and responses explore the challenges associated with the relational of self and other in connection with student-teacher relationships. As narratives of experiences, they emphasize the value of spaces of liberty for collaborative opportunities to seek out support, insights, and validation of the “lived understandings” the student teachers are grappling with in their teacher/learning experiences. Students challenge, “respect is a commodity that is slowly going the ways of the buffalo,” according to Mike (Narrative, April 21, 2008), and student teachers find themselves “at the end of my rope,” as Mary would describe it (Narrative, April 21, 2008). I sense these two student teachers’ frustration with the student–teacher relationship they describe. How can I utilize the world of the glass box to more effectively embrace some impetus for collaboration on the *relational* in the teaching and learning experience that creates a keener attunement to these in-between moments? How can I provide spaces for student teachers to more effectively mind the gaps as they have occurred in their day-to-day teaching and learning experiences? I have not provided Mary and Mike with the knowledge and skills to address the challenges these narratives present to explore possibilities, find new openings with the immediacy that the situations demand.

The “Critical” in the Reflection on Negotiating School Policy

Self-reflection, assessment, and analysis are identified as three critical components of reflective practice by M. Serra Goethals, Rose A. Howard, and Marie M. Sanders (2004). These authors further delineate the critical in reflection in that this type of reflection requires

looking back, reviewing goals and priorities, and continually asking questions: What have I learned? How has this learning helped me? What are the implications embedded in the teaching experience? What external or environmental forces are at work helping shape what I do in the classroom? How do I bring about change in the classroom that may benefit student learning when it is not my classroom? (p. 180).

This can be described as a heightened stage of reflection according to these authors:

Critical reflection that enables the learner to engage in self-dialogue more purposefully and analytically to reveal the holistic nature of teaching and learning by examining, questioning, and investigating. What was taught, how it is taught. Why it is taught, and possibility for teaching it differently (p. 181).

Here, they say, is where a teacher begins to interact more deeply with the “other” to find meaning, to “fully experience and learn from teaching” (p. 181). I believe this is all part of the critical process of making what is implicit, explicit in teaching and learning for myself and my students—to critically explore and examine all of the nooks and crannies, the nuances, the patterns, and especially the gaps of the teaching experience so as to respond to them critically. What follows is a series of autobiographical excerpts where four of the participants in the study engaged in making the implicit, explicit in their teaching and learning experiences.

Jennifer.: My Cooperating Teacher and I have, for the past several weeks, been implementing a plan to get students to turn in their daily work. Once the work is checked and placed in the grade book, I make a list of missing grades, figure out who is/was absent or just didn't turn in the work. If they simply didn't turn in the work they must stay after school till the work is finished. This works wonderfully for the most part, but the system hinges on having the time to audit the grades every period. Some days you just don't have the time. My cooperating teacher says that it would be very difficult to implement if there were not two of us. However, there are a handful of students that this system does not work with. They skip their after-school detention with us, and then they are given office detention. The problem with this is that they still never turn in the work. We have discussed Ken O'Connor's concept of no 0's while in team meetings, but how do you give a grade to these types of students? Don't they “deserve” the zero? I do believe that zeros skew the student's grade and do not accurately represent what the student has learned, but now that I'm in the classroom I don't really know what the alternative should be. It is a never ending battle and takes away from time that could be better spent so many other ways – it's frustrating. What do other teachers do? Please share (Narrative, February 17, 2008).

Mike: I hear you, Jennifer. One, yeah it seems impossible some days to keep up with grading all the stinking papers. True, zeros are skewing the students grades, but they do deserve the zero! Do you have students that are bright, and do well in discussions and quizzes, but just don't hand in study guides? I find this so frustrating. I know they are smart kids, but they're lazy, and it's going to end up costing them their diplomas in so cases. In my school, if a student doesn't hand in an assignment that they were not absent for, its a zero. I'm open to docking points for late work, zeros seem so extreme to me. There has to be a happy medium between what your working with and what I'm working

with. I really applaud you for your after school program, I think that's a great idea-- I hope all your kids start achieving higher because of the interest you're showing. Caring can take you a long way, at least that's what I keep telling myself (Narrative, February 17, 2008).

Mary: I have also had some problems with turning in homework. The system that my CT uses is similar to what you are doing. It does work for us though, and does not take that much time. Once a week (different day every week) we will take a portion of our plan time to do this. My CT has these letters made up that we just insert the students name and missing assignments. The letter says that they have to turn in the assignment by the end of the day or have a morning detention at 7:30. They get this letter from an office aid. If they come in at that time and turn in the assignment, they do not have to stay, or they work on the assignment at that time. If they do not show up, they are referred to the office for a detention. If a student gets 3 office detentions, they have an in-school-suspension in which there is a teacher with them all day to ensure their homework is getting done (Narrative, February 18, 2008).

Kurt: In an ordinary classroom I would have no problems attempting the NO ZERO policy. However; in the PE setting students are graded upon dress and participation. If the students are absent, they are excused for the day. At the high school level many students chose not to dress. Not dressing out is an automatic 5 points off. They get 30 points for the day. I had a group of students who didn't like the indoor soccer unit and chose to stand instead of participate. No participation minus no dress was a zero for the day. I don't hand out very many zeros, but I will take off 15 to 20 points if they decide not to participate. There is really no other way to get high school students motivated in PE. They think that just because it is PE it won't hurt their GPA. Last time I checked they are earning the same credits for English as they are for PE. I have no problem handing out a zero if the students have earned it. It's not like I'm trying to make them figure out rocket science, it's as simple as playing a game (Narrative, February 24, 2008).

The dates for the post and ensuing responses indicate that the critical reflection taking place in this discussion board thread was timely and relevant to each of the participants. Additionally, a theoretical construct was being challenged in the practice of these student teachers—the “no-zero policy.” Clearly, Jennifer alluded to what she “knows” about the no-zero policy in theory—“We have discussed Ken O'Connor’s concept of no 0’s while in team meetings, but how do you give a grade to these types of students? Don’t they “deserve” the zero? . . . I don’t really know what the alternative should be (Narrative, February 17, 2008). All three of the other participants in this discussion board were experiencing the same conundrum:

finding a way to *negotiate* what they know with what they are experiencing. The student teachers were self-reflecting, assessing, and analyzing—three critical components of reflective practice.

The “Critical” in the Reflection on Tensions and Classroom Management

Kerdeman (2003) suggests that the experience of being pulled up short is a “unique experience of disorientation that cannot be taught merely by pedagogical skill, including the modern tools and approaches provided by constructivist learning theory and meta-cognition” (p. 293). There will be the tensions associated with the comings and goings, the returning to the start. Kerdeman says another way of describing this experience is one of “self-questioning and doubt” (p. 294). Following is an example of the attunement to the tensions in classroom management as critical reflection:

Jennifer: After a bumpy first few days, I feel that I’ve been successful at establishing credibility as a teacher by being assertive, yet showing kindness and respect. The way I enforce the rules and deal with behavior problems is feeling more and more natural everyday. I’m enjoying most of the students immensely. A real turning point was when the students realized that I knew what the school’s policies and rules for behavior were. However, there is one student that I’m struggling horribly with. The other teachers say that he has zeroed in on me because I’m new. I’m sorry to say that he has even been able to engage me in a power-struggle in which I raised my voice and showed emotion. A teacher’s show of anger/emotion is what he thrives on and is the anticipated outcome of his behavior. Although I know this much, everything I try with this student fails to work. This student is extremely disrespectful and disruptive anytime my CT steps out of the room. He even drops papers on the floor as I reach to take them from his hand!! My cooperating teacher had a rather heated conversation with him, I’ve talked to him privately, and I have removed him from the classroom. He seems changed for about one day and then he’s back to his old behaviors. I wanted to learn to handle this student by myself, but I have no choice but to send him to the office when/if he becomes disruptive or disrespectful this coming week. With it being so early on in my student teaching placement, my fear is that I will be seen as lacking in classroom management ability (Narrative, January 27, 2008).

Mike and Jennifer shared another anecdote:

I can't believe how different students that are the same age can be so very different. I have two "honors" classes, juniors and seniors. They are both in the morning and I can put almost anything in front of them and they can attack and master it - almost always with little to minimal help. I was trying to teach virtually the same lessons to the non-honors classes--yep, pretty dumb right? I would give more instruction and try to simplify the assignment, but that wasn't working so well. I'm trying every way I know how to differentiate the instruction but it doesn't seem to matter. These kids are not dumb, but like to think they are. They hate trying to achieve because it is far easier to whine: "I don't get it" and "this is stupid" are the mantras. I'm getting so frustrated trying to break things down to a 4th grade level. I made the mistake of complaining about this class to another class. Stupid, I know. I definitely learned a lesson there. I'm going to continue to keep things simple. Also, is anyone having a hard time with excessive talking? I try and politely reinforce that we need to stay quiet, which seems to work for 2 minutes. I'm starting to feel like I'm raising my voice at this class all the time and I know that's not effective. Do you think the administration would be okay with gags, or maybe just mussels (Narrative, March 3, 2008).

Jennifer: Yikes! Yes, I can identify with everything you have said. I share in your frustration with students talking and not doing with they are supposed to be doing. What I find to be most frustrating is the lack of teacher consistency. When other teachers aren't consistent and knowingly let the students get by doing everything except what they are supposed to be doing it makes our success that much more difficult. In addition, I hate to see other teachers suffer and spend so much more time than they need to because they don't address the inattentive students at the time. All the time, I see this going on when teachers have to re-explain or re-teach something 50 times. That is an exaggeration, but it's still a lot of wasted time. There are many teachers stuck in what Harry Wong terms the "survival mode" (Narrative, March 16, 2008).

It is in those moments of critical reflection on the tensions in the teaching experience that my students can feel themselves, as Kerdeman (2003) would say, "challenged, or when our assumptions, expectations, and desires fail to materialize, are thwarted, or reversed" (p. 295) that we experience transformation and an "acknowledgement of boundaries and limits." This is a compelling insight for both teacher educators and teacher candidates to grapple with. However, Kerdeman says being pulled up short allows for the exploration of the reflexivity of a lived experience in the classroom and how "living through it can awaken us to choices" (p. 298) that teacher educators and teacher candidates could not otherwise have imagined as they forward their learning, gain new understandings, and explore possibilities, even when they feel they are

being pulled up just short. So, when the teacher candidate is pulled up short, the narrative of experience can enlighten what really counts as knowledge.

The “Critical” in the Reflection on Embodied Understandings

Nancy Hutchinson (1998) speaks about the mind and reflexivity that allows for a kind of embodied understanding. She reminds us once again that, “we deal consciously and expressly with the situations in which we find ourselves” (p. 286). This sort of “mindfulness” is required for a reflexive methodology in which teacher candidates develop habits of mindfulness, acquiesce to their senses and intelligences for the purpose of making meaning from their experiences. An approach to reflexivity where moving through the process, making time and space for exploration, experiencing transformations, and moving beyond is a mindset that enables embodied understandings. Specific to teaching, Kirk (2005) mentions that “The praxis of reflexivity in the teaching field includes a sustained attention to the positions in which I place myself and am placed by others, a listening to and acknowledging of inner voices, doubts and concerns as well as pleasures and pride, and a sensing of what my body is feeling. It implies a constant questioning of what I am doing and why” (p. 233). This captures the idea of reflexivity enabling embodied understanding very well. For example, consider Mike, Mary, and Jennifer’s struggles with the relational of embodiment for both self and other.

Mike: I do not think about body language very much. It's a topic that is skimmed over. We like to be comfortable and heck with how it looks. My Supervisor got on me about my body language. I like to lean all over my podium and rock it from time to time-- I (much like you I'm sure) didn't even realize that I was doing it until he mentioned it to me. It's good that we have people to tell us all the things we're doing awkwardly or incorrect-- let the constructive feedback fly. One thing brought to mind is how stationary I am in the classroom. I lecture from the same spot, I give notes from the same spot, I do my dance routines from the same spot. I need to mix it up and utilize the entire classroom (Narrative, March 11, 2008).

Mary: That is sooo crazy that you brought this topic up. I have been aware of my body language lately also. I try to stand up straight, which I have never concentrated on before. I actually feel a lot better now that I do that.... more confident. Something that has also come to my attention is that I talk A LOT with my hands/arms. I know that is not a bad thing... just a funny thing for my students and myself to laugh at once in a while... you know when you can't think of a word and you try to get it across with your hands.. We have had a lot of laughs over things like that (Narrative, March 13, 2008).

Jennifer: Great conversation! Although, I haven't really had any problems staying in one spot I definitely had my limits. I would stay at the front of the room and just walk back and forth; I was not utilizing the sides or back of the room. One day I was feeling energetic and confident and in a really positive mood and I walked to the back of the desks and the sides of the room as well as around the front while I was lecturing and asking questions. The interesting thing was that the students were more engaged because my movement kept them on their toes. I didn't have any discipline issues that day at all. In addition, I think that it comes across to the students like you are comfortable and in control of the classroom if you are confident enough to walk all around the room. Please try it!! You'll be pleasantly surprised and confident . . . and smile! (Narrative, March 16, 2008).

These narratives are rich and thick with the implications of *embodied understandings* and how the collaboration between the three participants contributes to “lived understandings” of the experiences they are describing and how those experiences provide enlightenment. Mike reflected on his realization of how stationary he is in the classroom and how he needs to “mix it up.” Mary, acknowledged that standing up straight in the classroom makes a difference, gives it a try, and Jennifer spoke to the realization of the importance of energy and movement around the classroom adding to her positive attitude and confidence as a classroom teacher. All three of these student teachers have reflexively considered where they have placed themselves, acknowledging the inner voices, doubts, and pleasures that Kirk spoke of earlier. They have contemplated what they are doing and why to find new possibilities and opportunities to allow embodied understandings to enlighten their teaching and learning experience.

The "Critical" in the Reflection on Trust

A strong foundation of trust between teacher candidates in those spaces of liberty is critical to more effectively utilize critical reflective practice as a habit of the mind in the educational experience. Jennifer and Mike struck up just such a relationship throughout the course of their completion of their autobiographies of critical incidents. Consider their trusting collaboration in the following series of postings and responses:

Mike's posting subject line was the following: "Making me Sad Inside☹"

There are a couple of things that I'd like to get some feedback on. The first, I have the 8th period blues. I have energy and patience up until the end of the day. I get to that final 50 minutes and my temper is short and I'm not near as enthusiastic about learning. Of course, 8th period is full of students that are argumentative and under achieving. I'm aware of the problem, and I think that's half the battle--but, I just can't seem to find a way to overcome these blues. I've gotten to the point that I dread these kids coming in. Which is part of my second grievance. Got a little static from a couple students last week. I'm getting a little tired of hearing, "that's not how Mrs. Coop Teacher does it." Mike doesn't care! I've talked with my coop. teacher and she agrees that I have the more effective way of teaching, but that doesn't stop them from complaining. I try and let it slide, but the consistency of it is wearing me down. Also, I held a student who was being incredibly talkative after school one day. She came up to me and told me that she was very busy so I better make it quick. I asked her if she was having a bad day, what the deal was, why she was insistent on being so argumentative with me? She told me she was having a bad day and being yelled at for something everyone was doing didn't make it any better--then she walked off before I could mutter another word. I except a certain amount of disrespect, but this incident just remains under my skin. Those are some of the things that I found relevant in my past couple weeks (I hope it's a 100 words). If you have any advice, or would just like to complain about similar situations, I'd love to listen (Narrative, February 17, 2008).

Jennifer: Dear Mike,

I was going to just read all of the posts tonight and then reply this weekend, but I had to get back to you - you inspired me to talk. I too get to feeling this way - sometimes earlier in the day so don't feel badly. Your story about the student walking off before you were even able to finish what you wanted to tell her hurts my heart. I have a couple incidences similar to this one and I was left feeling the same way. Student teaching feels like a roller coaster sometimes; I'll go home some days and feel like the greatest teacher who ever lived, but other days thinking, "What have I done?" I love the "greatest teacher" days; I feel exuberant, energized, and think to myself, "Yes, I am going to change kid's lives like my teachers did mine." (Corny - I know) On the bad days I feel like I have

nothing left to give to the kids or my own family. I'll even count the days until student teaching is over - really. We are going through a very odd time in which we are caught between two worlds - we're responsible for classrooms that were well established, without our own rules and procedures in place. I truly believe that issues with disrespect will be greatly diminished when we are able to begin each new year with our own "game plan", backed by consistency. At the same time we are trying to fulfill our duties with the college, make an excellent impression on our CT and CS, and transition into a completely different role in our lives. Another thing I'm learning is to pace myself, if you give everything you have the first part of the day you're bound to burn-out and get short on patience. Sometimes, when I'm bombarded and starting to feel short, I just tell the kids "I help those who help themselves first" or "Question time is over for a few minutes."

I know I'm getting long-winded, but I just wanted you to know that I am experiencing the same things/feelings you are.....I understand. I'm sure that any of us who works with middle/high school students have had these types of encounters and have felt the same way. Please don't feel isolated in your thoughts/feelings. When I start to feel negative I tell myself, because I know it is true, that everything I say and do does have an effect on them. I can remember my student teachers very well. I also try to concentrate on what Mrs. Smith has taught us about being effective teachers. When I refocus on a specific concept and then implement it the next day it always goes better. What we take personally and think about all day or week was over in the instant for them. Try to start each day brand new. I can tell that you care a lot so I'm sure there are many students you've had an impact on. Telling you all this also helps me, so thank you for sharing (Narrative, February 19, 2008).

Mike's response to Jennifer captured the essence of the value of developing *trust* in the glass box so as to energize and emphasize opportunity to critically reflect collaboratively with both self and other. He said this:

I was not a fan of having to write on a discussion board. I thought to myself, "actually, you're right Mrs. Smith, I don't have enough to do." BUT, like usual I'm wrong again. This is actually pretty helpful. It's nice to know that we are all in the same position more-or-less (Narrative, February 26, 2008).

The spaces of liberty where narratives of experience are the subject of collaboration are a catalyst for generating self reflection, assessment, and analysis with both self and other for the purposes of realizing possibilities and sense-making, sometimes frustrations with stops and starts, but always with a foundation of support, new insights, and validation.

*The "Critical" in the Reflection and **Reflective Turns that Lead to a Stronger Teaching Identity***

It is in those moments of critical reflection on the reflexivity in the teaching experience

that teacher candidates can feel themselves, as Kerdeman (2003) would say, “challenged, or when our assumptions, expectations, and desires fail to materialize, are thwarted, or reversed” (p. 295) that they experience transformation and an “acknowledgement of boundaries and limits.” This is a compelling insight for both teacher educators and teacher candidates to grapple with. However, what can happen as a result of that struggle is the reframing of experiences in the teaching and learning process that develop strong teaching identities. What follows between Mike and Jennifer is that “reflective turn” Jin (1996) has recognized in his work (p. 8).

Mike: It just seems like everything has been coming together lately. All the problems that I was having at the beginning of the semester have disappeared. I have been able to fill up the class periods with the appropriate amount of information/work/instruction. Previously, I had the darndest of times with putting too much in a class period or having 10-20 minutes left with nothing to do. Also, I've seen leaps and bounds in my classroom management abilities. We all know that its hard to come in the middle of the year and deal with someone else's rules and regulations, but the system works if you work it. I've found the right amount of discipline and follow through has really helped. All the students are responding well, maybe just because I've been around for a while and they're use to me now? Grading has also become easier. It was taking me forever! A lot of practice has made me perfect. It's such a good feeling to go through the day and feel like you were really effective--and maybe, just maybe-- the students learned a thing or two! I hope to continue this positive progress by making lesson plans that are more attentive to differentiation (Narrative, April 4, 2008).

Jennifer: I have seven days left and am both happy and sad. I, too, have been reflecting on the whole experience of student teaching. It feels like it is time to move on, but it is so hard to imagine walking out on that last day and not seemy kids again. I want to hug each of my 7th graders and tell them how much they've taught me. It is also hard to walk away from the adult relationships that I've built over the past four months. Even with all the experience's imperfections and hardships, I wouldn't trade my experience for the world. I hope you all feel the same way too. When I look back on how lost and incompetent I felt those first few weeks, I can hardly believe how much I've changed. I'm more confident and feel like I have much to offer. I am sure that I want to be a teacher! On the other hand, I must admit that I'm a little disheartened by some of the things that I've seen and experienced in the world of education. This has developed a strong awareness in me to stay true to what I know is right - what Mrs. Smith has taught us. No, we can't be perfect all the time, but WE CAN DECIDE not to join the teachers on the "dark-side". Finally, It has been a long journey - especially with that IAP!! Just kidding, I meant the entire college experience has been long. These last couple of weeks have flown by, and I find myself forgetting to take it all in. I'm going to

slow down and try to enjoy it. As we finish student teaching and graduate, our lives will never be the same again - don't forget to stop and smell the roses.

Good luck to you all! It has been wonderful having you to talk to (Narrative, April 19, 2008).

Mike: Jennifer, I don't know who these teachers of the "dark side" you speak of are? All the teachers in my school are: constantly positive, always putting the students first, do not make rude/negative comments about students, faculty, administration, happy to be involved, and constantly create valid and reliable everything. It's mind blowing that there are schools out there that don't function on this level! Also, thank you for reminding me of the importance of the adult relationships I've developed here. I have no idea how I'm going to thank my cooperating teacher? She let me take her classroom, always gave me feedback, kept me grounded-- thank you seems a little skimpy (Narrative, April 22, 2008).

Jennifer: Mike, You're welcome. I feel like I owe them so much for all the time and thought they have invested in me. I've had grand thoughts too about what I could do for my cooperating teacher and those who have helped me. I've been telling them that they are on my "lottery list" for when I win the big one. Just an idea for you!! When I speak of the "dark side" I'm speaking of the very few people who can suck you into the cycle of negativity if you let them. I'm glad you didn't encounter any of that. My school has been wonderful too - I didn't mention that, but it is. I hope I didn't make it seem like it wasn't. It has been a lot of fun talking to you. Thanks and good luck (Narrative, April 21, 2008).

Mike: As my student teaching comes to a close I've been taking a lot of time to reflect on how it went and what I could have done better. I've learned a lot--mostly by messing up in some way. It is kind of a bummer that every teacher I talk to states that student teaching is absolutely nothing like having your own classroom. I'm ready for the challenge. The thing that is closest to my heart today is how much I am going to miss all of these students. Through the trials, the learning, the laughter, I've really come to appreciate and admire all of my students personalities (almost all of them). It feels weird that I'm not going to witness them progress any more . . . this is it. I hope that I don't feel this empty every year I teach as I watch the seniors graduate and more on (?). The end of the semester was so much better than the beginning. After the students and I got comfortable with one another everything ran much smoother. Also, I got to go to prom! That was fun. I've spent so much time trying to get everyone learning and on task-- it was nice to watch them have a little fun on their own time.

The most important aspect I learned during student teaching would be that you have to be consistent. Be consistent in how you handle and prepare for students that are absent from class. When I didn't have a method I had students without worksheets or the knowledge that they needed a worksheet and empty spots in my grade book. I always try to be consistent in my attitude. When I came to school grumpy, tired, or poorly prepared - it showed, and ruined my day every time. Relentlessly positive is the key to mastering my classroom. Finally, I screwed up being consistent in my discipline and it bit me in the

butt time after time. I really wanted everyone to behave properly all the time and not have to worry about discipline issues, but that just wasn't the case. Every student is different and each situation can be attacked differently, but I have to figure out how to clear lines of what action is equated to what discipline (Narrative, April 17, 2008).

These narratives of experience enlighten the concept of the reflective turn and how these consummatory moments contribute significantly to the teacher candidate's teaching identity.

The on-going enlightenment these autobiographical incidents have contributed to realizations these teacher candidates could not otherwise have imagined as they forwarded their learning, gained new understandings, and explored possibilities, even when they felt they were being pulled up just short. This is the stuff of relational reflexivity as critical reflection. Attention paid to the in-between, minding the gaps between self and other during the lived experience of teaching and learning can result in critical reflection that is meaningful and worthwhile. The result—the ability to respond insightfully, creatively, intuitively--to open new doors, cross new thresholds, explore new spaces, knowing that the possibility for new opportunities exists just beyond. Schon (1992) has pointed out that “in different ways and to varying degrees, . . . by exploring the understandings revealed by the patterns of spontaneous activity that make up their practice” (p. 5) gaps, puzzles, challenges conjure up that sort of *reflective turn*--a desire for the teacher to discover new opening, new possibilities, even while being pulled up short. Jennifer captured the essence of this journey:

Even with all the experience's imperfections and hardships, I wouldn't trade my experience for the world. I hope you all feel the same way too. When I look back on how lost and incompetent I felt those first few weeks, I can hardly believe how much I've changed. I'm more confident and feel like I have much to offer. I am sure that I want to be a teacher! (Narrative, April 21, 2008).

These reflective turns in the teaching and learning experiences have resulted in moments of self-understanding, a greater attunement to these student teachers' fledging teaching identities.

Debriefing Interviews: Spaces of Liberty

Another vital space of liberty created for the participants in this study was the debriefing interview, which followed the field observation. Like the autobiographies of critical incidents, this was another data source that proved to be most beneficial in terms of revealing possibilities to the questions that frame this study. All five participants in this study participated in a debriefing interview session. These debriefing interview sessions were conducted immediately following the field observation in a quiet location within the school building where the student teacher taught which was conducive to privacy and little to no interruptions or inconveniences. As stated in Chapter Three, the debriefing interviews lasted approximately 60 minutes each. The interviews were semi-structured in design so as to prompt conversation and generate personal, lived, storied accounts that gave voice to the student teachers' experiences. Questions concerning the student teaching experience encompassed experiences related to the complexities of the teaching and learning experience in the classroom, the study of the teaching self in relation to other in the teaching and learning experience, and the use of critical reflection to make sense of the teaching and learning experience.

Thick, rich data was revealed through this data collection approach, as well. Following general conversation related to management of the required seminar expectations, which are a part of the student teaching experience and an overview from the student teacher on the evolution of their student teaching responsibilities in their classroom, together we entered yet another space of liberty to explore the teaching and learning experience. Like the autobiographies of critical incidents, the debriefing interviews provided a space of liberty with a mission of trust that facilitated self-study, assessment, and analysis in order to nurture support,

gain insight, and realize validation. I have *italicized* and **bolded the themes** for this data source, as well.

*The “Critical” in the Reflection on the **Discussion Board Entries as Forums for Frank, Open, and Honest Collaboration***

I asked the following question: “Let’s talk about the Discussion Board entries . . . what do you think of those as an opportunity to collaboratively reflect on your teaching and learning experiences?” Mike shared the following response:

For the most part, they are something I check off and I was aggravated at first because I was like “I’m getting killed! And this is one more thing for me to do and I’m not happy about it.” But as time went by, it was nice to know that a group of people were going through the same things I was, and they could complain with me or offer suggestions whether I wanted to hear them or not and, uh, that’s been the most beneficial part; and also just to get it off your chest to someone who is not associated with you every day, I can just rail on the Discussion Board (Debriefing Interview, April 14, 2008).

This was Kurt’s response to this question:

I like the Discussion Boards because you are able to open up, like I said with Allen, I can talk with him, but what about other schools? Are there other student teachers that are having the same problems I am? It is kind of nice, because the last one [student teacher] actually talked about outdoor activities; it’s getting nice out . . . like my Junior High PE, every chance I get it’s a pit stop (?); whether it be strengths or distance runs a couple blocks . . . we’re outside where we’ve had a couple of instances where we’ve had troubles, and I was able to get on and talk about it. I don’t remember which it was, Science Class or Art Class, she had talked about her problems so I could relate to it. I typed some input that I had gained from my experience. I not only posted my experience, but also hers along the same lines, and I’ve had numerous people that have asked for ideas, and I get stuff coming back (Debriefing Interview, April 9, 2008).

I also asked Jennifer what she thought about the Discussion Board opportunity.

It just feels so good, and it doesn’t hit until about the second or third discussion board when things really get to going, then you realize it is not so different for me. People are going through the same kinds of experiences. I don’t know why, it just helps. At the same time it has been kept from being a griping, grumping session. Several times I have had a pretty big amount of responses. They are beneficial. They have been very constructive and supportive (Debriefing Interview, April 16, 2008).

I was invested in exploration of the usefulness of the Discussion Board for sharing autobiographies of critical incidents in order to facilitate opportunities for critical reflection. This question gave me the opportunity to reflexively engage in this exploration of the value of using the Discussion Board, as I probed the use of this resource as a catalyst for meaningful, sense-making critical reflection. Textual analysis of these responses leads me to conclude that providing the opportunity for multiple student teachers to collaborate in a forum conducive to frank, open, honest discussion about negotiating the teaching and learning experience, which is somewhat different from the conversation they may have with their supervising or cooperating teacher is worthwhile to pursue further. Mike's response bears this conclusion out. I asked him this question: How is it different or how would it be different if you were able to have frank and open discussion with a fellow student teaching peer, how would that be different than you and I talking or you and your supervising teacher talking? Do you think that would benefit you?

I totally love that idea I know that just seeing other student teachers in passing, we'll just sit for 30 minutes and just complain or talk about our successes, it's different with supervisors, or faculty, or your cooperating teachers because generally to my experience, they cannot remember being that far back, they can't adequately relate to the point that you're at in your pursuit and other people just nail it. . . . (Debriefing Interview, April 14, 2008).

The "Critical" in the Reflection on the Relational in the Teaching and Learning Experience

Another question concerned my study's focus on the student teacher's narratives of experience and how they enlightened their knowledge and skills related to critical reflection, particularly with regard to the relational complexities of the teaching and learning experience—with students, with subject matter, with the environment. I wanted to explore their cognizance of the self in relation to other—an important aspect of the critical in reflective practice. Mike is a teacher who infused "humor" and "personal relevancy" into his teaching. It is an important part

of his style of teaching, and his teaching was infused with both during my field observation. I asked Mike the following question: I'm really interested in, as I am going out and visiting the classrooms and working with student teachers in that relational element, that relationship that you have with your students, your subject matter, the environment you find yourself in and your awareness of it and its impact on your teaching and learning experience. Why do you choose to take time to personalize your teaching presentations in the classroom?

I understand, one thing I got bereted for in my interview, (I totally failed my interview) and one of the feedbacks you gave to me was that you might have joked with them too much, you can't switch on and off like that. And to me, I personalize my material in my lesson plans every time because I want to engage every student every time to educate them, and I find that maybe getting off topic and telling a story is how I keep their focus, how I know they are not trolling off to sleep or whatever.

I probed further: Right. Are there other benefits?

I don't know. I wrestle with it a lot at the start whether I needed to tone it down more so we could focus more?? But, I just am who I am, and I can't teach differently, the teacher that inspired me to become a teacher, I got a lot of my philosophies from by how he taught, how he joked around, transcribed into what I do. My Dad is a preacher, and he would do the same thing, he'd bring in those common anecdotes to keep you listening, to keep you going, and it really, I mean, we have a 15 minute attention span, I can't do 45 minute lectures and expect everybody to stick with it the whole time. I got tons of differentiation issues, so I try and play concepts that might be lower level thinking and then also the higher level thinking, just bouncing back and forth.

I continued . . . How would you describe your relationship with the kids? What's your take on your relationship with the kids?

I think they all enjoy me as a person, I also hope they respect my opinions on things and my centenary knowledge of it. I'm not a 100% sure (Debriefing Interview, April 14, 2008).

Jennifer shared her thoughts on this topic, and I challenged her. "When or how do you reflect when things are happening in the classroom? Let's go back to the observation today. What was going through your mind in terms of students, relations with the subject matter?"

Absolutely. I can just tell . . . you know there is a feeling in the room, it's eye contact, it's what I hear, it's the direction that maybe their directions are going. . . .

So, there was a student who asked about why if you're the President, why would you want to eat at McDonalds? I guessed that you were thinking, "How am I going to handle this?" What was going on up here, I mean, as I saw it, that question had the potential to take you down a different road—was it a teachable moment to pursue?

Um, I said, why wouldn't he have eaten at McDonalds? It is also so difficult, when you teach some periods over and over again, you forget what you said.

What about the relationships with the students—I noted students K. and J.

There you go . . . those are the ones.

Okay, so in the moment, how do you reflect on what is happening to ensure that everything goes okay?

One student made the biggest impact on me in terms of relationships with the students - - I learned to treat this student with a special kind of respect and not give a lot of credence to what he does because then he just goes with it. He is a class clown. Another student can be very explosive—he likes to just push me and push me. Sometimes, one day I just have give him a battle. Other days I have to ignore it and then it goes away. Now there is a big story—I have a very special relationship with him. He is wild with intelligence. He will miss for ten days, then he comes back and aces the test. He just doesn't know how to react to people. At first he would get real disrespectful with me, like "lady I am going to mess up your face," after a while he really has responded to me. I tell him how smart he is, I get a lot more out of him now.

I found this very interesting and thought he was a student you had reflected about.

He has so much potential, I really fixated on him right away. Something about his unkept appearance, you know, he is intelligent. Last night it was around 4:30. He was up here with another student. I said, "You have a nice night tonight, -- -- ." Well, he didn't say anything, so I turned around—I don't want him to think I don't care if he addresses me. So, I leaned back over that stairs and said, "Mr. -- -- , I said you have a nice night, do you have nothing to say?" Now eight weeks ago, I would have been afraid to say anything to him . . . he says, "Well, thank you, Mrs. D. . . . you have a good night too." I am sad about leaving the kids, so sad . . . (Debriefing Interview, April 16, 2008).

These critical reflections were relevant, immediate, and real, and I felt compelled to offer assistance in “unpacking” these student teachers’ experiences. This effort attempts to honor the narratives of experience in order to help them discover what really counts as knowledge—a compelling and new opportunity has presented itself in terms of the data revealing a need for the right approach to developing knowledge and skills for critical reflective practice.

The “Critical” in the Reflection on Negotiation of What One Knows and What One is Experiencing

I hear so many of the teacher candidates that I serve, particularly after the classroom management course, as well as other courses that I teach, comment that they feel more prepared for their classroom practicum and student teaching experiences. They feel that they have the knowledge and skills in place to begin to be successful in the classroom. Each time that I read or hear a suggestion of this sentiment in terms of teacher preparation, I must confess that I harbor lingering doubts because I know that they don’t know what the classroom experience is really going to like. Like the participants in this study, I continue to struggle with the starts and stops, the back and forth and continue to celebrate the consummatory moments that bring new meaning and insights that push me forward. So, as I exist in the world of the glass box, along with the participants in this study, I consider this key question: How do teacher candidates mediate what they know with what they are experiencing in the teaching and learning experience? So, I turned to the participants in this study for some insights and asked this question: You have been through your course work at PSC, what is your perception about teaching and learning based on what you knew before you came into a classroom and what you are now experiencing? Mike’s response was as follows:

I felt pretty well prepared, like a lot of the stuff I can reflect on and say, 'You know, I didn't listen to that, and I probably should have' That was my main thought through this whole process, classroom management especially, philosophy I'm glad that we took time to develop it because I knew exactly who I was and who I wanted to be when I came and what was really important to me...kids are just crazy, I don't think without more time in the classroom, like real hours, not just sitting there watching, you can't know and everybody tells me student teaching is nothing like really teaching, and I'm sure they are right because I can tell the difference when subs are there or when she's gone for twenty minutes. I felt prepared (Debriefing Interview, April 14, 2008).

Bill shared this:

I was thinking I was prepared? I'm an EMT, okay I'm prepared to teach health. Well, these kids were not scheduled regularly, he [cooperating teacher] just did whatever he wanted to do, so I was trying to get everything in order and stick with it . . . but at this point in the school year, it is tough to do that. If I would've come here at the beginning of the school year with these kids, things would have been so much different! If I would have had those kids the first day of the year. You know then the 10th grade class would've been able to get use to me, but I stuck with it (Debriefing Interview, April 21, 2008).

Mary added this:

The field experiences help a ton. I don't think you could ever learn any of that in a classroom. Being here and actually doing it is, huge. The Classroom Management class was extremely helpful. But right before you come into the classroom, you are so nervous, it is very nerve-wracking. I was lucky to have a cooperating teacher who had a great classroom management plan put into place. I don't know what I would've done if I didn't have that, but now I know what I have to do. You know you feel like you are doing well, you are doing good, but it is still really all a mystery. You don't really know yet. You are really nervous right before you come in, and then once you get in here, it all just begins to fall together! You don't really get it fully until you are here, and then you draw the connections between classroom and field experience. What I can't do is draw from past teaching experiences to address current classroom needs because I am a brand new teacher. I can't draw upon those past experiences to guide my decisions about current experiences.

I followed up with this question to Mary: There is the awareness, however, of the connections, and the attempt to try something from course work to use in the teaching experience. How confident are you about succeeding as a classroom teacher at this point in your student teaching experience?

Mary said this:

If I was right here in this classroom and had this job, I would be very confident! Thinking about going to another school, another grade, or another subject area kind of brings down your confidence. I just do so much preparing for this class, you know reading and looking up things, preparing for this class . . . and yah, in this classroom, I would feel very confident. I feel good about management and managing my time, but a different school . . . I can do it . . . I think I can (Debriefing Interview, April 2, 2008).

Jennifer said this in response to the same question during her debriefing interview:

Let me start with, um, about half way through the experience I was feeling like I was losing some ideas, some excitement, you know things that I had learned. I think it is highly important that the cooperating teacher is fully engaged and really wants you as a student teacher, that they model that, that they support that experimentation with new ideas. In a perfect world, I would give teachers maybe an eight –week chunk of time, half-way through their ed. classes to implement some of that. I just think that a lot gets lost along the way that is very valuable because you don't get to implement it. And then when you are in there student teaching you're exhausted every day. There aren't enough hours in the day, and then there is a lot work placed on you too, you can't explore those chambers of your mind and have other teachers unlock them, I guess. I've put a lot of thought into this because it has not been what I expected . . . and instead of getting all negative, which I have those days too, you know, I just thought about the fact that I need to stay aware of what I would change! I wouldn't trade my experience for anything, but you need great teachers out there (Debriefing Interview, April 16, 2008).

The "Critical" in the Reflection on Supportive Partnerships

Finally, I have been negotiating the realities of the current student teaching program in the institution that I serve with the new openings and possibilities that this study has revealed to me. In a callback session with student teachers some weeks ago, I recalled my exact words to the student teachers who were there: "You are not on an island." At that particular time, like so many others, I was simply referring to typical resources available to the student teachers such as faculty and staff, seminar instructors, and cooperating and supervising teachers for support, encouragement, and expertise. Even as I said the words, I was critically reflecting on my statement to the student teachers. My study has further enlightened my understanding of this statement and forwarded my learning regarding what I really mean when I say: "You are not on

an island.” The current student teaching experience includes supportive partnerships, that is true. They are all intended to nurture and positively support the student teacher. However, upon giving voice to the student teachers in this study as they tell their stories a single, all-encompassing conclusion has revealed itself. In my glass box, as I have allowed myself to be attuned to the various voices and multiple perspectives, “supportive partnerships” should mean and be so much more as student teachers collaborate and negotiate the multiple prisms of the student teaching experience: the collaboration, the relational, the negotiating, the tensions, the embodied understandings, the trust, and the reflective turns. I explore this partnership concept as I begin to forward my learning on what it may mean to be purposefully and meaningfully supportive in a partnership with a student teacher.

Three of the five participants in this study student taught in a school system where another student teacher was also completing their student teaching experience. Mary said it best when she remarked about the relationship she has with a fellow student teacher in her school:

I can't imagine what it would be like to NOT have someone to go through the experience with! I mean . . . seeing her at lunch time is a happy moment—someone who understands. It is not only the work that we are doing, but our outside life as well, and how we help each other cope with that and student teaching expectations, as well (Debriefing Interview, April 2, 2008).

Jennifer added to this thought, as a student teacher who teaches in the same town with a fellow student teacher:

I guess just knowing there is someone who is going through the same thing you are, and they are so immediately available to you on a daily basis. I found that with one teacher here. I think that means the world when there is one other teacher there who “gets it” (Debriefing Interview, April 16, 2008).

Another supporting partnership that I must consider is that of the cooperating teacher and his/her student teacher. Jennifer's frank, open, and honest narrative on this relationship is compelling and thought-provoking to consider. She said this:

The cooperating teacher should truly sees themselves as a teacher "for you" . . . um . . . I know that you have an abundance of information on cooperating teachers, but my cooperating teacher never took those important steps . . . I just found out on my own, I just fixed my own problems. I think the process requires seeking out . . . I don't know what the answer is.

I responded to Jennifer, sure that an opening had presented itself. I said, I'm hearing this from the other student teachers . . . there isn't a lot of opportunity to explore, experiment . . . but, um, there is the perception that having a student teacher is easy. When I had student teachers, those were the hardest semesters I ever had. . . . what are you thinking?

That is how I thought it was supposed to be . . . because it is supposed to be a rich experience. Several times I have had to remind myself . . . "be careful, Jennifer, you have to remember where you are." But a student teacher is not there to complete duties, they are there to be taught, to learn. You know, to be honest, a little ways through, you start feeling things leave your mind. I am really going to have to work hard this summer to get all that . . . I have everything you have ever given me, and that will be organized to get me going again. But, yes, it is very disappointing when you have learned this, and you don't see it happening. I was told that my cooperating teacher never taught anything until I came here . . . he just used worksheets. You just have to be supported with a teacher, maybe newer teachers, I don't know. Someone who is ready to let you implement ideas. Be my partner (Debriefing Interview, April 16, 2008).

My glass box had just become fully illuminated with this real discovery. This particular debriefing interview session had been a cathartic moment for me. I had been collaborating with my participants in my study. I had been exploring the complex relationships that framed my study as I gave voice to these student teachers and heard their stories. Negotiating the many layers of the experience of narrative inquiry itself had challenged me to consider the tensions surrounding what the student teachers and I knew about the teaching and learning experience theoretically and what we were now experiencing in our journey toward what really counts as

knowledge. I recall those moments of anxiety, exhaustion, and energy as we put our trust in the process and acknowledged reflective turns. This was one such reflective turn when the unanticipated was noticed. The data had not only begun to reveal a lived understanding of how teacher candidates navigate what they know with what they are experiencing, but it had also revealed an attunement to the complexity of this act of navigation that required a different kind, a more engaged kind of support, interaction, and depth of commitment to the teaching and learning process from various entities involved in the student teaching experience. This was my “ah-ha” moment—the relation between a teaching identity that understands the complexities of classrooms and has a willingness to see them as productive for learning. I am getting at an agency for learners and learning that sustains and nurtures teaching practices.

The Good Work of Mindfully Negotiating the Teaching and Learning Process

The mental activity this study evoked was worthwhile and reflexive in nature. Reframing my thinking was a constant, with an attunement to every interaction, as I explored the data. When I considered the dynamic and complex intricacies of the critical reflection embedded in the student teachers’ stories from the world of the glass box, I experienced my own lived understanding of the teaching and learning process as important and meaningful. This is an attitude that calls for action. Chapter Five will provide me with an opportunity to explore the sensibilities of further engaging in this important work through reaction to and analysis of the data with the hope of contributing to an improved process of supporting teacher candidates as they navigate the teaching and learning process to develop strong identities as teachers.

CHAPTER 5

Entering the Glass Box and Exiting Out the Other Side:

Thriving through Engagement with Critical Reflection

Self-understanding is at the heart of this study because it is the root of all learning. In fact, Noddings (2006) says: “Possibly no goal of education is more important—or more neglected—than self-understanding” (p. 10). It was Socrates who said, “Know thyself.” He also added that “the unexamined life is not worth living” (p. 10). So, I challenged myself to seek out self-understanding about what really counts as knowledge in the “education” of the teacher candidates that I serve. This investigation is the result of that challenge.

Palmer (1988) in *The Courage to Teach*, described self-understanding about what really counts as knowledge in “education” as “listening to one’s inner teacher and develop the authority granted to people who author ‘their own words, their own actions, their own lives rather than playing a scripted role at great remove from their own hearts” (p. 33). On-going analysis showed how self-study through critical reflective practice created deeper understanding and insights, formed new openings and alternative possibilities, and generated ideas and action in order to improve teaching practice. The “educational experience” revealed in Chapter Four was an exploration of the critical in reflective practice with attention paid to relationality, negotiation, tensions, embodiment, and reflective turns. Here, the participants explored these complexities in spaces of liberty where collaboration with supportive, critical, and trusted “friends” was encouraged. I now have a greater cognizance of the relation between a teaching identity that understands the complexities of classrooms and the willingness to see them as productive for learning. This chapter focuses on the profundity of the engagement with critical reflection on the complex classroom environment and the redefining of the “education” of teacher candidates.

A Review of the Analysis Process

As stated in Chapter Three, Verhesschen (2003) comments that “Since it is in our narratives that we show the meaning of our experiences and it is narratives that give insight into what is meaningful for us, narrative deserves a place in educational research” (p. 462). These student teachers’ “stories” must be treated in context as my own interpretations that open up new dimensions, new ways of seeing, and understanding. Initially, Phase One of the data analysis included examination of the questionnaires, Field Observation Notes, Semi-structured Interview Notes, and the Autobiographies of Critical Incidents individually for emerging themes via the utilization of a coding process. This coding process required the division of the data into sections whereby a labeling process ensued with attention paid to elimination of overlap of codes and to the narrowing of codes. These codes were then developed into themes.

For example, consider the three autobiographies of critical incidents cited on page 84 - 85 in Chapter Four. Mike’s codes include “body language,” which became a theme for this discussion thread. He focused on his stance at the podium and his lack of movement around the classroom. He makes a connection between those two examples and body language and its impact on his classroom. Mary’s codes include “confidence” associated with body language and how standing up straight contributes to her confidence. Jennifer’s codes include “energy,” “positive mood,” “confidence,” and “movement” around all areas of the classroom and how that seemed to encourage student engagement and minimize discipline issues.

A secondary review of the codes in each student teacher’s story showed an interrelationship across all three student teachers, which led to the development of a larger theme of embodied understandings. This theme is an important complexity worthy of consideration when critically reflecting on the environmental context of the classroom and its impact on the

teaching and learning process. I completed this process with each of the four data resources.

Following individual analysis of the data, Phase Two of the data analysis process involved a cross narrative analysis identifying themes common to all narratives of one group of data. For example, the Discussion Board as a platform for sharing autobiographies of critical incidents was validated as a viable forum for collaborative critical reflection by participants in this study. Consider pages 92 - 93 in Chapter Four. Therefore, the data revealed a theme common to all narratives in one data group: the vigilant attempt to achieve frank, open, and honest collaboration.

Finally, Phase Three of the process involved group analysis of the data so as to develop a framework that provided valuable insights and next steps to inform conclusions and implications for the professional community. An example of this includes participant documentation on collaborative opportunities as noted in the autobiographies of critical incidents on pages 73 - 77 and in the debriefing interviews on pages 92 - 93 of Chapter Four. Additionally, the questionnaire generated that same theme via responses to this question: "In order to effectively and deliberately analyze your reflections on your teaching and learning experiences as a student teacher, what are some of the knowledge, skills, and or other things you think you need?" In fact, Jennifer talked more specifically about collaboration when she said this:

I believe that an extra call-back session would serve the student teachers well. During the last call-back session, we candidly discussed our experiences, which was a great opportunity to learn from others. If 20 minutes of each call-back could be set aside for this purpose, this would allow more candid exploration. I don't mean that this should replace the Black Board discussion . . . this is an excellent tool also, but it isn't the same as face-to-face conversation (Questionnaire, June 16, 2008).

Finally, the follow-up interview included this question: "Who are some people who should be considered as possible "partners" in your examination and exploration of important pedagogical

questions related to the teaching and learning experience in order to further develop meaningful and purposeful reflective practice during your student teaching experience? Mike contributed this:

Obviously, my educators throughout my college experience helped me to solidify my thoughts on pedagogical. Their beliefs led me to agree or disagree on elusive issues. During student teaching I listened to my cooperative teachers' thoughts on everything. I weighed them against what I had been taught, and what I was experiencing in the classroom. I also talked with other teachers in the school. I saw their effectiveness with the students and tried to relate their pedagogical principles to their effectiveness. Even talking to my parents and hearing their opinions helped me (Follow-up Interview, February 12, 2009).

Other qualities came to permeate across data sources, as well, and unify this study around one central idea: creating a culture of inquiry through critical reflective practice. It is a means by which a teaching identity can be developed that recognizes and understands the complexities of classrooms and the willingness to see them as productive for learning. This unifying idea includes these important qualities: authenticity and collaborative opportunities with an “invested” other which redefines the various roles in the “educational experience” of the teacher candidate. The central idea and its associated qualities form the framework for the analysis of this study. Chapter Five will reveal analysis that supports the profundity of engagement in critical reflection and the development of the potential for a thriving culture of inquiry as an integral part of the educational experience for teacher candidates. Important qualities that inform this study’s central idea are bolded and italicized.

I would be remiss if I did not foreground the reflexive nature of data analysis throughout. Both the student teachers and I were engaged in immediate and continued engagement in responsive actions—creating, formulating, or articulating—as a result of these experiences, the reflections, and the observations. This is the reflexive element of the relational in teaching and

learning. The “reflexivity” of the lived experience then exists in the seeing, listening, and or feeling that takes place and acting at the same time by searching, probing for meaning with further questions, recreation, and reformulation of new meanings. The mental activity of the getting started, the coming and the going, the returning to the start, the pressing forward, the acknowledgement of how the relationship of one part of the experience contributes to the whole of the experience—this results in the art of teaching reflexively. Consider Jennifer’s response to this question I asked in the debriefing interview following her field observation: “Let’s go back to a moment I observed in the classroom. What about the relationships with the students—I noted Kevin and Jason. How did you reflect on what was happening to ensure that everything was going okay?”

Absolutely. I can just tell . . . you know, there is a feeling in the room, it’s eye contact, it’s what I hear, it’s the direction that may be their directions are going. One student made the biggest impact on me in terms of relationships with the students - - I learned to treat this student with a special kind of respect and not give a lot of credence to what he does because then he just goes with it. He is a class clown. Another student can be very explosive—he likes to just push me and push me. Sometimes, one day I just have give him a battle. Other days I have to ignore it and then it goes away. -- ----, now there is a big story—I have a very special relationship with him. He is wild with intelligence. He will miss for ten days, then he comes back and aces the test. He just doesn’t know how to react to people. At first he would get real disrespectful with me, like “lady I am going to mess up your face,” after a while he really has responded to me. I tell him how smart he is, I get a lot more out of him now. He has so much potential, I really fixated on him right away. Something about his un-kept appearance, you know, he is intelligent. Last night it was around 4:30. He was up here with another student. I said, “You have a nice night tonight, -- - - .” Well, he didn’t say anything, so I turned around—I don’t want him to think I don’t care if he addresses me. So, I leaned back over that stairs and said, “Mr. -- - - , I said you have a nice night, do you have nothing to say?” Now eight weeks ago, I would have been afraid to say anything to him. . . he says, “Well, thank you, Mrs. D. . . . you have a good night too.” I am sad about leaving the kids, so sad (Debriefing Interview, April 16, 2008).

This moment is an example of a student teacher with the dispositional skill of meaning making in reflection that was reflexive in nature. Jennifer reconstructed, pondered, and thought

about her own thinking in relation to the interactions with the other during the moment to create meaning. The critical self-assessment in relation to the other in order to experience a transformation led to new opening and possibilities for both student teacher and student.

As was stated in Chapter Four, all the participants in this study ventured inside the glass box and exited on the other side. In looking across the data, while Jennifer's, Kurt's, and Mike's stories from the world of the glass box do offer representative accounts across all participants' experiences, they also seemed to gravitate towards each other, allowing the following themes to emerge: authenticity and collaborative opportunities with an invested and trusted other. Their participation in meaningful, supportive collaborative opportunities provided a system of checks and balances and empathy and encouragement for the teacher candidates, and whole-hearted, open-minded, and responsive authenticity of their stories provided valuable insights. This framework suggests a modification of key roles in the educational experience for the teacher candidate.

Creating a Culture of Inquiry through Critical Reflective Practice

Authenticity in the Teacher Candidates' Reflective Practice

The non-reflective teacher reacts without serious, conscious contemplation of alternative solutions or responses to classroom situations and dilemmas. In fact, according to Cooper and Larrivee (2006), the non-reflective teacher "settles too quickly on only one explanation of a behavior or situation," which leads to a "narrow range of potential solutions" (p. 6). It is the non-reflective teacher who gains nothing from the experience. These teachers do not challenge assumptions, question circumstances, or explore alternative possibilities. Reflective teachers, on the other hand, take time to think about their classroom teaching and learning experiences, and an effort at self-understanding through self-study "systematizes, channels and gives form to

reflection” (Dinkelman, 2003, p. 16). Authenticity is an important part of this process of critical reflection. According to Larrivee (2009), “As teachers become more aware of the beliefs and assumptions that drive them, they become aware of the dissonance between what they say and what they do (p. 17). Jennifer stated, “The more time that goes by, the more things I find out I don’t know” (Narrative, 3/9/08). Mike also alluded to this feeling of dissonance: “I wish I had all the answers. I’ve found that the longer I’ve been student teaching the less and less it seems like I know” (Narrative, March 5, 2008). The important thing to note is that with this awareness of the dissonance that they feel concerning what they thought they knew and what they are now experiencing in the classroom, therein lies the capacity for change and becoming more authentic. To be authentic begins with being honest with yourself (Larrivee, 2009, p. 17). All participants in this study shared who they are in critical reflection on their fears concerning their limitations, challenging assumptions and responding to learn and change. Each remains vitally important to the authenticity of the experience. Each requires the open-mindedness, responsibility, and wholeheartedness as habits of the mind that form the foundation of reflective practice.

Facing One’s Fears with Wholeheartedness

In the world of the glass box, each of these student teachers had the opportunity to give voice to the authenticity of the student teaching experience in relation to wholeheartedly facing their fears associated with their limitations, their challenges in the teaching and learning experience. In particular, the Discussion Board where postings of the Autobiographies of Critical Incidents took place became a valued space for these student teachers. Here all defenses could evaporate; they could admit that they may not be in control of the teaching and learning experience at some points during the experience, and the need to “look good” or exude complete confidence melted away. Jennifer’s story demonstrates the authenticity in the facing of one’s

own fears concerning limitations as a student teacher. As I stated earlier, Jennifer was a student teacher who was fully invested in the pre-service experience and is representative of those teacher candidates that want to thrive, rather than survive in their classrooms someday. To that end, Jennifer had always had a history of being honest about her fears concerning the challenges of the classroom. She demonstrated a forthright attitude that consistently recognized her anxieties about teaching. No barriers were ever erected with Jennifer, she remained just as open, honest, sensitive, and realistic in this study as she had as a teacher candidate completing coursework prior to the student teaching experience. Jennifer exemplifies the “wholeheartedness” that Dewey espouses as fundamental to reflective practice. In the *Autobiographies of Critical Incidents*, Jennifer does not deny her fears, but instead has very little to hide and senses a space of trust where she has nothing to lose in critically reflecting on her teaching and learning experiences. She stated:

Student teaching feels like a roller coaster sometimes; I'll go home some days and feel like the greatest teacher who ever lived, but other days thinking, "What have I done?" I love the "greatest teacher" days; I feel exuberant, energized, and think to myself, "Yes, I am going to change kid's lives like my teachers did mine." (Corny - I know) On the bad days I feel like I have nothing left to give to the kids or my own family. I'll even count the days until student teaching is over – really (Narrative, February 19, 2008).

Challenging Assumptions with Open-mindedness

All three participants in this study challenged their assumptions with authenticity. Entering their student teaching experience with an assumption about “how it was going to be,” the glass box provided multiple and varied perspectives which challenged those assumptions and beliefs. They became aware of this dissonance which gave way to tensions and negotiations concerning the relational element of the teaching and learning experience: self with other, self with environment, self with subject matter. Mike captures this dissonance when he says this: “I

found that I had a lot of perceptions of what I thought the student teaching experience was going to be like; they changed rapidly. The longer I was in the classroom the more evolved my thinking became” (Questionnaire, June 16, 2008). The discussion that all three of these student teachers participated in through the Autobiographies of Critical Incidents regarding the No Zero Policy on pages 79 - 82 in Chapter Four is data that speaks to authenticity that is without pretense. These three student teachers demonstrate an “open-mindedness” that recognizes the tensions they are negotiating relative to their willingness to consider that Ken O’ Connor’s “No Zero Policy” cannot be uniformly applied to all students in their classrooms. Jennifer said:

There are a handful of students that this system does not work with. They skip their after-school detention with us, and then they are given office detention. The problem with this is that they still never turn in the work. We have discussed Ken O’Connor’s concept of no 0’s while in team meetings, but how do you give a grade to these types of students? Don’t they “deserve” the zero? I do believe that zeros skew the student’s grade and do not accurately represent what the student has learned, but now that I’m in the classroom I don’t really know what the alternative should be (Narrative, February 17, 2008).

Mike authentically shared what was going on with him without blame or judgment when he said this:

I’m in the “Duh” aspect of teaching right now. Sometimes it feels like I’m saying the exact same thing 4 to 7 times. It’s a good thing that I never get tired of the sound of my own voice. I thought all that jazz about procedures and rules was overkill when Mrs. Smith was idealizing Harry Wong. It turns out she might be on to something. When you tell students what is expected at the beginning of class, they don’t ask you 5 times, weird concept? (Narrative, April 2, 2008).

Consider Kurt’s negotiation of the tensions surrounding classroom management:

After Classroom Management, I thought, “This won’t be so bad,” but I found out it’s not so hot! Yep, we did some stuff in class . . . that was nice . . . we did a lot of text book, videos, and we did a lot of cross curriculum stuff. . . we didn’t get real involved, especially with PE Classroom Management-----we didn’t do the x/s and o’s. . . . I’ve learned a lot, but I’ve actually brought a lot of stuff in too, they’re developing the class curriculum reading, writing technology, so I’ve been able to give out ideas for technology, that sheet

you gave us for our projects...I've used that about strategy, all that stuff, we had training in last year I think. I brought that sheet on it in that it had everything on it here and said, "Here's a text book I used last semester, here's the sheet . . . photo copy . . . make as many copies as you want" . . . and I handed out the worksheets to the teachers and they can research on the internet, so I brought that in....I actually used "Magic Squares"shared it with the Math Class, and they could use that, and they enjoyed it. I've not only learned stuff, but I've also taught the other instructors who have been her for 14 years, especially with the technology stuff, they are really open to that. That was not something I thought would happen (Debriefing Interview, April 9, 2008).

When I probed further concerning challenging assumptions with open-mindedness in the follow-up interviews with the three student teachers, Mike added this observation:

One of my major assumptions was that as a teacher I could reach every child. There are several teachers now or who are ahead of me who say, "That is just not possible, Mike." I still can't say that I believe in that, but I understand where they are coming from. I mean, when you are looking at 20 kids, and there are only 85% who are into it, it's just hard to dedicate yourself, to dedicate all your resources into hoping to enrich them. I'll never say I can't reach a kid. But that definitely changed my assumption, being in the classroom and having that time crunch and having those kids that just don't care. I hope to do better in the future (Follow-Up Interview, February 12, 2009).

Mike's glass box had afforded him another perspective, an important opportunity to critically reflect on an assumption that he had—reaching each and everyone of his students. His authentic assessment of that potential when he was faced with the realities of the classroom was, as he said, "changed," but not disavowed.

All three student teachers' voices tell stories that are reflective of an open-mindedness that accepts the previously held assumptions were challenged in their teaching and learning experience. I can sense the tension in their negotiation of those realities. However, as they experience that dissonance, none of them completely deny what they know, but instead navigate through the complexities of what they know and what they experience to find meaning, explore

new possibilities while allowing the reflexivity of the exploration to unfold through their critical reflection on each of their teaching and learning experiences.

Responding to Learn and Change with Responsibility

According to Dewey, reflective thinking leads to responsibility (Cooper and Larrivee, 2006, p. 9), and authenticity is the result of developing as a reflective practitioner. According to Larrivee (2009), classroom and school practices are not separate from the contextual, social, and environmental realities that exist in the teaching and learning experience. With this in mind, a reflective practitioner becomes critically reflective, striving “to become fully conscious of the range of consequences of their actions” (p. 13). This is the world of the glass box which exposes the relational elements of the teaching and learning experience. While all three student teachers’ stories include conscious critical reflection on responding to learn and change, Mike’s story exemplifies that responsibility most authentically because of the three student teachers’ stories I feature, Mike is the student teacher who had the most to lose and the most to gain from his student teaching experience.

Provided with a space of liberty focused on a mission of trust, Mike authentically shares a classroom experience that required negotiation as a result of the tensions he was experiencing.

His response—learn from it and change because of it.

I had an 8th grade class that I had at the end of the day and I’m usually tired and I have to go to work and they’re not extremely motivated to learn and there are several IEP students, several students who just are concerned about education at all and one day I giving notes on the Great Gatsby, and they were hard notes, lots of concepts, my CT doesn’t explore things like I do, and I don’t explore other things that she loves. So they are trying to get used to how to take my notes, and this one girl is just giving me the hardest time, “Why are we taking these?” Just interrupting me every 5 seconds, and I just snapped at her, and I told her she could stay after school, and we could talk about it. We got through the rest of the time, and I held her after and said, “What is the problem, are

you having a bad day?” And she said, “Yes, I am and you’re telling me, getting after me when everybody else is doing the same thing doesn’t make it any better.” She said something else and just turned and left. For some reason I was there all by myself, so this whole incident, like my CT didn’t get a part of...which isn’t good when she’s gone, they do test me harder ..., when a subs there, you know; so, I carried things with me for days and it was one of the problems I’m trying to get over. Like my CT said, “They forget about it in an hour”...you don’t need to hold on to it. I really try to evaluate the whole situation, I was really aggravated with her for being so disrespectful, “I’m not done talking to you, you can’t leave yet.” But I also realize that I expected them to just know how I want them to take notes, how to do it to my expectations, and I hadn’t given them any prep on that, and then one of my big things that I’ve always got in my other classes, we don’t teach students how to do things, how to take notes how to summarize, how to compare, so I was a little aggravated with myself. That got missed, I missed it. I just flew by it because I teach this same class with honors, and they can do anything! I swear I could spit Faust at them, and they would be fine.

So I just chatted with my CT about it and took a little time to reflect, something I do with any situation I get frustrated about, I have one right now that is a little frustrating to me. I just have to take a little bit of time and try to review myself and think about it and I can come back to it with a clear head to approach it in a different way (Debriefing Interview, April 14, 2008).

I followed with this question for Mike: You say “I’m going to take some time and reflect on this and approach it in a different way.” What do you mean by that?

Well, with myself, what led up to the incident, how I could have dealt alternatively with it, that’s a lot of how I come to grips with I screwed up...because I’m just learning so much (Debriefing Interview, April 14, 2008).

When teachers are faced with a classroom or teaching dilemma or situation, they have options. According to Cooper and Larrivee (2006), they can “change the situation or change the their reaction to the situation (p. 23). The situation is what it is, in most cases, but the teacher can change his/her reaction to the situation by learning to reframe situations and circumstances—view the situation in a different way, from multiple perspectives for the purposes of considering alternative options, new openings and possibilities. This meaning-making is the way to respond

to learn and change, and Mike seized the opportunity to authentically and critically reflect on the situation to recognize the need for a new and different approach.

On pages 89 - 90 in Chapter Four, Mike's final critical incident post on the EDUC 420 Discussion Board, authentically reflects his responsibility to respond to learn and change to benefit his teaching and learning experience.

In Mike's follow-up interview, I validated my conclusions regarding what I felt was Mike's commitment to his responsibly respond to change and learn as a student teacher when I re-checked his story with him. He added these comments:

I think being a student teacher is a learning process. Kids are evolving, and teachers are evolving with them. I am confident that I do not know it all yet, even after the student teaching experience. I think in order to reach everyone that you need to, you need to mix it up a bit, try some new things because not all classes and kids are the same. I think part of that is my responsibility to mixing it up (Follow-Up Interview, February 12, 2009).

This particular student teacher had many reflective turns throughout the course of sharing his story. Chapter Four provides multiple examples of those moments of critical reflection that led to new beginnings, new understandings, and new possibilities for Mike. The opportunity to step inside the world of the glass box was of significant benefit to this particular student teacher because he understood the importance of his presence in the classroom, not only for himself, but also for the students he worked with. Mike exemplifies engagement in critical reflection as a reflexive process. He had made significant strides as a student teacher while coping with the starts and stops along the way that required negotiations with the relational of self with other. Nonetheless, Mike was attuned to those tensions, authentically shared in his spaces of liberty with frank, open, and honest responses, and understood his responsibility to learn from the experiences and change as a result of them.

Collaboration Opportunities With an Invested and Trusted Other

Reflecting “aloud” (p. 16), according to Larrivee (2009), is very important to the teaching and learning process. The complexities of today’s classrooms require a teacher to challenge his/her perceptions, assumptions, biases, and the teacher’s thinking needs to be validated or mediated or energized. Collaborative opportunities that include a commitment to the spaces of liberty with a mission of trust that I framed in Chapter Two provide such an occasion for reflecting aloud. Worthwhile collaborative opportunities function to serve two important needs: provide a checks and balances sort of system for the teacher to address dissonance and faulty thinking and provide for much needed empathy and encouragement.

For novice teachers, these three needs are paramount to their success in the classroom. The inevitable classroom dilemmas and situations that all teachers are faced with in today’s classroom are amplified for the novice teacher, and teacher educators should recognize that reality. In fact, they have. Zeichner (1996) says, “When embracing the concept of reflective teaching, there is often a commitment by teacher educators to help prospective teachers internalize during their initial training the disposition and skill to study their teaching and become better at teaching over time” (p. 200). However, critically reflective practice, as the approach that I have been discussing in this inquiry, requires teachers to authentically probe deeply to come face to face with their limitations, question their assumptions, and find alternative ways to respond so as to learn and change. The collaborative give and take can help “beginning teachers recognize when they may be devaluing information or using self-confirming reasoning” (Cooper and Larrivee, 2006, p. 29). Such assistance can provide much-needed opportunities for a teacher candidate to thrive, rather than survive. However, the types of collaborative opportunities I am talking about cannot happen unless the teacher candidate is part

of a supportive learning community which includes peers, teacher educators, and cooperating teachers that play key roles as invested and trusted co-collaborators.

Checks and Balances in Invested Collaboration

As I stated earlier, Jennifer was a student teacher who has been fully invested in the pre-service experience and is representative of those teacher candidates that want to thrive, rather than survive in their classrooms someday. So, it is no surprise that Jennifer “wanted it all” from the student teaching experience in terms of guidance, feedback, direction, and support. Her story is one of disappointment with regard to these expectations. Jennifer shared this in her debriefing session when I asked her how things were going for her:

I’ve reached that stagnant stage. It is time for me to go for awhile. I’ve just quit growing, I mean the practice was good, I mean the more practice you get dealing with things . . . but I need to overall. . . . It’s just everything . . . I mean for ten weeks I’ve done all the copying all the grading, all the wrangling with students. I started out with two periods I think my second week, I was up to four by my fourth week, and then the all classes, now back to four. And it is just, at a certain point, you feel taken advantage of. I feel like you are missing something if you are so bogged down as a student teacher with grading and everything, that you are missing out, to me it is more about the span of your experience. In fifteen minutes I can pick something up from somebody that I can use. And I am just stagnant right now. About half way through the experience I was feeling like I was losing some ideas, some excitement, you know things that I had learned. I think it is highly important that the cooperating teacher is fully engaged and really wants you as a student teacher, that they model that, that they support that experimentation with new ideas. In a perfect world, I would give teachers maybe an eight –week chunk of time, half-way through their ed. classes to implement some of that. I just think that a lot gets lost along the way that is very valuable because you don’t get to implement it. And then when you are in there student teaching your exhausted every day. There aren’t enough hours in the day, and then there is a lot work placed on you too, you can’t explore those chambers of your mind and have other teachers unlock them, I guess.

I’ve put a lot of thought into this because it has not been what I expected . . . and instead of getting all negative, which I have those days too, you know, I just thought about the

fact that I need to stay aware of what I would change! But I have had to reflect on those changes and respond to what my student teaching experience needs because I am not getting that from my CT. I wouldn't trade my experience for anything, but you need great teachers out there (Debriefing Interview, April 16, 2008).

I then followed up on these thoughts from Jennifer with this question: So, talk about a cooperating teacher that is fully invested in your student teaching experience.

I thought it would be someone who truly sees themselves as a teacher "for you" . . . um . . . I know that you have an abundance of information on cooperating teachers my cooperating teacher never took those important steps . . . I just found out on my own, I just fixed my own problems. I think the process requires seeking out . . . I don't know what the answer is . . . because it is supposed to be a rich experience. Several times I have had to remind myself . . . "Be careful, Jennifer, you have to remember where you are." A student teacher is not there to complete duties, she is there to be taught, to learn (Debriefing Interview, April 16, 2008).

Jennifer is clearly struggling with the absence of a cooperating teach, that in her words, "sees themselves as a teacher "for you." This student teacher's story from inside the world of the glass box was devoid of a perspective from an invested, trusted cooperating teacher who could be her "partner" and provide her with the checks and balances system that she needed as she experienced dissonance in her teaching and learning experience.

Empathy and Encouragement in Invested Collaboration

The student teachers' stories provided rich and thick data that addressed the second function of collaborative opportunities with an invested and trusted other to meet the need of providing empathy and encouragement. While the expectation of a supportive learning community is to provide direction and guidance for a successful teaching and learning experience when tensions occur that require negotiation, it is important that this support system include a "comfort zone" that allows for authentic critical reflection that is met with compassion and understanding. According to Cooper and Larrivee (2006), "collaborative peer support is one

vehicle for supplanting negative attitudes and eroded self-appraisals” (p. 29). Listen to the voices of Jennifer, Mike, and Kurt as they validate the importance of peer support.

Jennifer: Sharing concerns with my peers has been great! It just feels so good, and it doesn't hit until about the second or third discussion board when things really get to going, then you realize it is not so different for me. People are going through the same kinds of experiences. I don't know why, it just helps. At the same time it has been kept from being a griping, grumping session (Debriefing Interview, April 16, 2008).

Mike: For the most part, the DB's are something I check off, and I was aggravated at first because I was like “I'm getting killed! And this is one more thing for me to do and I'm not happy about it.” But as time went by, it was nice to know that a group of people were going through the same things I was, and they could help complain with me or offer suggestions whether I wanted to hear them or not and, uh, that's been the most beneficial part; and also just to get it off your chest to someone who is not associated with you every day, I can just rail on the Discussion Board and who's going to care. I totally love that idea I know that just seeing other student teachers in passing, we'll just sit for 30 minutes and just complain or talk about our successes, it's different with supervisors, or faculty, or your cooperating teachers because generally to my experience, they cannot remember being that far back, they can't adequately relate to the point that you're at in your pursuit and other people just nail it. . . . (Debriefing Interview, April 14, 2008).

In Kurt's Questionnaire he remarked that he

. . . made it a point to communicate with fellow student teachers. They were one of the best possible partners in my learning experience. They provided me with a different kind of support that just helped me to get through some days because I knew I wasn't experiencing this alone (Questionnaire, June 16, 2008).

Mike shared this observation about those spaces of liberty that became his comfort zone in his glass box world:

They really helped because student teaching was such a grueling process, and to sit down and take that time to . . . just the structure of it . . . and . . . there were sometimes when I was thinking, one of my favorite parts was talking with the other student teachers because we are all in this horrible spot right now, and it is making me feel better . . . I'm glad you are making mistakes too. It was nice to have that comradery (Follow-Up Interview, February 12, 2009).

Peer conversation such as this also helps to break down barriers between teacher candidates to ensure that they don't feel isolated as they negotiate the tensions that exists as a

result of the challenges of the teaching and learning experience. Consider Kurt's comments about the peer conversations:

There is stuff you bring up and talk about. We can get it out there and actually go more in-depth instead of just the idea, we actually converse about it. After talking about it, you sit there and think about and then go more in-depth than where you actually were. I think it has really helped to actually see it, hear it, reflect about it, almost out loud (Follow-Up Interview, February 11, 2009).

The three student teachers' stories confirm what Cooper and Larrivee (2006) say about peer conversations breaking down the isolation: Colleagues' perceptions help teachers realize the commonality of their individual experiences. Mike and Jennifer, in particular, allude to the fact that they have much more in common with each other than do that is different. Seeking out advice and feedback on the teaching and learning experience, knowing that there is an invested, trusted other who plays a key role in the collaborative process, can ensure that no teacher candidate is "on an island" mediating the challenges of the teaching and learning process alone.

Conclusion

As a multi-faceted concept, reflective practice is defined in many ways. Hattan & Smith provide a definition that most closely aligns with my study. They describe reflective practice as the use of higher level thinking, such as the critical reflection this study emphasizes, which affords one the opportunity to move beyond the practical to a broader concept for understanding the self in relation to the social, environmental, and contextual factors that are at play (Cooper and Larrivee, 2006, p.6).

Three student teachers' voices were honored and their stories were shared as they entered the world of the glass box and explored the opportunity to thrive through profound engagement with critical reflection before they exited out the other side. My inquiry into what really counts as knowledge in the educational experience was realized through the voices that I listened to and

the stories that I heard. The self-understandings these student teachers gained are found through others. Through ongoing wholehearted open-mindedness and responsibility with self and other, these student teachers acknowledged “the other” in their teaching and learning experiences. The students, the subject matter, the classroom management issues, and self—these were the “other” that the data revealed as an important relational element in their teaching and learning experiences.

My analysis of that data indicates that in order to create a culture of inquiry where teacher candidates have the mindset to engage in this kind of mental activity, critical reflection must be ongoing and include an effort at authenticity to recognize the critical other in the teaching and learning experience and in the reflection and collaboration with a critical other who can be trusted and is invested in the experience, as well. This is challenging but necessary to the good work of teaching and learning.

As teacher candidates continue to face the challenges of negotiating what they know with what they are experiencing in the classroom in relation to other, it becomes vitally important that they understand the value of ongoing critical reflective practice as a meaning-making approach to the teaching and learning process. When this is done authentically and with the support of others who are invested in the experience, they can begin to develop strong teaching identities with an understanding of the complexities of the classroom and with the willingness to see them as productive for learning. This understanding now sustains and nurtures my conclusions and the implications for teaching practices. Chapter Six of this study will frame those important conclusions and implications.

CHAPTER 6

Enhancing Reflective Practice:

“Making Meaning” to Nurture and Sustain Teaching Practices

John Maxwell expounds on the concept of “challenges” in this way: “New challenges will arise. New questions will be asked. New solutions must be sought.” This epithet captures the essence of the motivation behind this study. Indeed, few can dispute that today’s classrooms are full of new and unique challenges and complexities. Therefore, as a teacher educator, I have raised questions in response to that reality in order to seek out those possibilities that will allow for better preparation of the teacher candidates for the inevitable challenges of today’s classrooms. With me on this journey have been the participants in this study, those student teachers who have also faced challenges, probed for meaning, and sought out solutions. The role of critical reflection in this teaching and learning process has been the primary focus of this investigation—critical reflection to discover what really counts as knowledge in the teaching and learning experience. Meaningful and critically reflective moments and experiences have transpired as a result of the participants’ willingness to enter into the world of the glass box. It is there where the participants in this study began to explore the relations across teaching identities understanding the complexities of classrooms with a willingness to see them as productive for learning. Meaning-making, through enhanced reflective practice for self-understanding, is found to sustain and nurture teaching practices.

Self understanding conceptualized who they were as teachers. Facing limitations or weaknesses as student teachers generated heartfelt moments of critical reflection on the teaching and learning experience, specifically in relation to the other. These student teachers were faced with the difficult task of being open-minded concerning challenging their assumptions--what

they knew and then negotiating that with what they were experiencing in the classroom. Finally, these challenges called for a response so that the student teacher would assume the responsibility of learning, growing, and changing because of it. All of these qualities that framed the authenticity of the critical reflections were ripe with the need to be attuned to the relational, the tensions, the negotiations, the embodied understandings in the teaching and learning moments. It was there, in the world of the glass box, where these student teachers had opportunity to explore the value of the negotiation of the knowing and the perceiving of teaching and learning to create meaning to nurture and sustain their teaching practices.

The attempt made to provide the participants in this study with spaces of liberty where trusted and invested collaboration took place, as well, allowed for lived understanding of the kinds of reflection pre-service teachers are engaging in, what they are reflecting about, and how they are going about it in order to ascertain that agency for learners and learning that nurtures and sustains teaching practices. I am a stakeholder in this process. I too have faced my fears about my limitations as a teacher educator. I have challenged some long held assumptions about teaching and learning; and as a result, I more clearly understand that the place where “education” really happens does not exist so much in the ideals of what counts as teaching knowledge of subject matter and best practices—but in the recognition of relations to and with oneself, people around us, and the larger environment in which we exist while teaching.

I feel compelled to respond to what I have learned to provide meaning that enables teacher candidates to enhance their reflective practice with careful discernment; heartfelt, receptive, and responsive authenticity; and trusted and invested collaboration about the relational complexities of classrooms. Attention paid to these sensibilities that are demonstrative of what kinds of reflective practice they are engaging in, what they are reflecting about, and how they are

reflecting, will nurture and sustain teaching practices and further develop the teacher candidate's willingness to understand the potential the teaching and learning experience itself has as productive for learning and developing teaching identities.

The Glass Box Experience: Qualities that Support Critical Reflective Practice

The metaphorical “glass box” has provided a visual for this study that suggests that the teacher candidate inside the world of that glass box has the valuable opportunity to pay attention to the teaching and learning experience in progress, to consider the relational in the teaching and learning experience with an attunement to the critical in-between and what happens there—the tensions, the negotiations, the embodied understandings. Each of these experiences has the potential to generate valuable understandings of self that in turn nurture and sustain teaching practices. To that end, critical reflective practice should be encouraged, enabled, and supported by all teacher educators for all teacher candidates that they serve. Indeed, this approach to the careful monitoring of the teaching and learning process is the responsibility of both the teacher educator and the teacher candidates as an important piece of their ongoing professional development. As previously discussed in Chapter One, all teachers should be wary of the enemies of this type of an aesthetic experience—fear, repetition, commonplace, docility, routine, laziness, timidity, tradition, absorption, habit, and doubt (Simpson et al., 2005, p. 92)--and instead make an effort to engage in a holistic approach to self-study reflection that provides for deeper insights into the role of the teacher in the classroom to thereby inform their practice, improve it, and as a result, improve education as well.

Unlike the black box approach, where a teacher's ability, propensity, knowledge, or character remain unexplored, the glass box experience allows a teacher to understand the complexities of the classroom in a uniquely different way. It allows for critical reflective

practice that includes these important qualities: careful discernment; heartfelt, receptive, and responsive authenticity; and trusted and invested collaboration about the relational complexities of classrooms.

Careful Discernment

The interplay of what we know as teachers with the “lived experience” of teaching should result in a discerning type of “play” that results in critical moments of reflection and learning. Teachers can allow their hearts, their senses, their environment, the self as a whole to become one with the work of teaching, to allow for relationships to form when the work being done in the classroom freely interacts with what the teacher is seeing, feeling, sensing to create masterful moments of learning that result in beautiful “works of artful teaching” that speak to and about the experience itself. Theory and practice, thus, work together as the relational nature of teaching and learning.

An attunement to the intricate and complex relationships that exist between this interplay of knowledge with experience during teaching and learning requires careful discernment and offers opportunity for restructuring and self-understanding. Critical reflective practice entails the careful discerning study of teaching and learning as relational, where interactions with self and other are ripe with multiple layers, folds of interplay, and various textures of not only the “how” but the “why” the “when” the “what” and the “where.” Exploration of these textures in the teaching and learning experience with a discerning “eye” will most assuredly provide for motivation, stimulation, reward, risk, and opportunity.

Careful discernment in reflective practice also requires respecting the relationship between what a teacher knows and what a teacher is experiencing, and allowing for attunement with the complexities and intricacies of the interplay that are relationally constructed and

“directly concerned with the relations in which we all must live” (Noddings, 1988, p. 219). Such discernment requires immediate and continued engagement in responsive actions--creating, formulating, or articulating--as a result of the experiences, the reflections, the observations. This is the reflexive element of the relational in teaching and learning. The “reflexivity” of the lived experience then exists in the seeing, listening, and/or feeling that takes place and acting at the same time by searching, probing for meaning with further questioning, recreation, and reformulation of new meanings. In uncovering and examining concerns, Ryan (2005b) says “being reflexive when you are close to the data, in fact you are the data in many cases,” (p. 3) is vital to a methodological approach to critical reflective practice where teacher candidates change or transform themselves, as a result of attention paid to the intricate and complex relationship that exists between the interplay of knowledge with experience during moments of teaching and learning.

It is my conviction that I must acknowledge the important work of careful discernment in critical reflection on teaching and learning as relational in nature and make a deliberate curricular commitment to it. In fact, both teachers and teacher candidates in any teacher education program “...must encourage and engage in activities that connect the knowing- and reflection-in-action of competent practitioners to the theories and techniques taught as professional knowledge in academic courses” (Schön, 1987, p. 312). This tenet will empower both teacher educators and teacher candidates to attend to the relational complexities as the real work of teaching and learning. This is what the practice of teaching is all about. Relational pedagogy is when authentic learning takes place, when growth of experience for all involved happens.

In teaching and learning, recognition and respect for the relation to “other” and ongoing responding leads to a transformative experience rich with new openings and possibilities for the

sake of student learning. I purport that these various intricate and interrelated textures of teaching and learning evolve with deliberate and discerning attention paid to the time, sociality, and place. The reframing of what was is seen, heard, and/or felt in the interaction of these various expressions of communication with and between self and other incite adaptation and change. The delicate balance that exists between valuing the risks and the opportunities, the tensions and doubt of certainty and uncertainty demand continual negotiation. This is what teaching and learning needs to be in order to sustain and nurture teaching practice.

Heartfelt, Receptive, and Responsive Authenticity

Heartfelt, Receptive, and Responsive. I understand that these elements are essential components of the kind of authentic reflective practice that P.P. Grimmet and A.M. MacKinnon (1992) suggest: “sensibility and reflectivity are essential features of teaching as a craft” (p. 428). This study has provided insight regarding my responsibility as a teacher educator to make teaching an object of study that is a critically “reflective and deeply human activity” (Coia & Taylor, 2001, p. 3).

I reference Dewey (1997) once again who suggests the importance of the imagination and the powers of observation in teaching students how to think well. Specifically, he calls attention to three attitudes that he calls “essential constituents of the general readiness” (p. 34) for reflective thinking: openmindedness, wholeheartedness, and responsibility, each an element of disposition critical for meaningful, purposeful reflective thinking. Both the logical and the dispositional play a significant role in the process of providing effective education, and the two cannot be separated in the educational experience. Instead they exist together in the thinking process. I must nurture this approach to thinking well for the teacher candidates I serve to both

acknowledge and appreciate the melding of the two together in the act of self-understanding, this is a way to promote meaningful, purposeful reflective thinking.

I also realize that this is not only a complex activity, but also a catalyst for “tensions, surprises, confusion, challenges, and dilemmas” (Louie et.al., 2003, p. 151). Specifically, self-understanding in this venue is all about a teacher discovering “ways of being” (Clift et al., 1990, p. 29) in the world, coming to an understanding about one’s own existence. The programmatic structures for the preparation of critically reflective teachers can utilize a “glass box” approach that is closely aligned with these three sensibilities to more fully realize its potential impact on the greater teaching and learning community, particularly related to the development of “fully exposed” strategies that support reflection in process.

Dewey (1938) says “. . . knowledge gives a compass to those who enter on the uncharted seas, but only a stupid insincerity will claim that a compass is a chart. The call is for the creative adventurous mind” (p. 328). As teacher candidates create teaching and learning experiences, they must understand that sources both inside and outside of an individual contribute to the experience, and they must understand the value of courage, imagination, creativity, experimentation, and reflection as critical to the process of self-understanding as an aesthetic experience where heartfelt, receptive, and responsive authenticity in reflective practice will result in new possibilities for growth and change.

Trusted and Invested Collaboration

Reflection begins with a situation, a problem, a dilemma; expands to an exploratory phase; and finally resolves itself when a conclusion is drawn—reflective practice is purposeful in that there can be an intentional inquiry into a situation that can further learning, serve learning better when a problem is solved, new understandings are formed, or new possibilities are

realized. I have established that as a teacher educator, it is critical that I also consider the importance of the teacher candidate's understanding of the "aesthetic" that must be realized in the reflection on the experience. Paying attention to the process itself, the aesthetic in the experience can be more fully realized when attention is paid to the movements of thinking, the nuances of neglected assumptions. Aesthetic experiences shaped by the necessary attributes Thomas Barone (1983) delineates—sense of expectancy, growing élan, and tired satisfaction (p. 23)—are tantamount to the reflection on teaching and learning experiences. John Dewey's "educational experience" is described by Barone (1993) as a "growth-inducing experience that grants the capacity for having even richer experiences in the future" (p. 22). Barone states that the "cultivation of truly educational experiences is . . . the most important mission of the teacher" (p. 22).

Dewey (1934) says:

For only when an organism shares in the ordered relations of its environment does it secure the stability essential to living. And when the participation comes after a phase of disruption and conflict, it bears within itself the germs of a consummation akin to the esthetic (p.15).

In these moments of self-understanding, I now understand that I cannot ignore the important potential of spaces of liberty where shared experiences and collaborative inquiry can result in teacher candidates seeing things from multiple perspectives and considering that the relational elements are critical. In fact, Jennifer described these spaces in this way in her follow-up interview: "Those decompression opportunities and chatting with other people were the most valuable . . . emotionally . . . mentally . . . the whole nine yards . . . the "kit-n-kaboddle" right there" (Follow-Up Interview, February 17, 2009). These are the kinds of spaces that need to be created by both teacher educators and within teacher education programs. Jackie Kirk (2005)

says: “starting with oneself. . . . reflexivity necessarily engages the self in critical exploration of experience, perceptions, and positions; the insight gained can then be used as a starting point for engaging with others, and for starting to develop shared understandings. . . .” (pp. 239-240).

This can happen through commitment to the creation of spaces for activities related to introspection, as well as sharing with peers and other professionals. Suggesting an environment conducive to such critical reflection where thoughtful discussion and writing can take place, and where teacher candidates are required to defend and explain their reflections, begins the development of those critical spaces of liberty for teacher candidates.

Dinkelman (2003) says that when teacher educators study their own practice, they make changes in their pedagogy and can then suggest changes through conversation and collaboration with peers. This process is reflexive (p. 14). This study makes it clear that more deliberate and serious consideration must be given to creating environments in teacher education that are learning spaces specifically designed to incite collaboration and deliberation, conflict and doubt, and new understandings and insights, and I need to be more receptive to and comfortable in such an environment, as well.

As my study progressed, I began to anticipate that shared reflections or collaborative inquiry are imperative in order for the full measure of the value of reflexivity as critical reflection to be realized in the work of teacher education. Teacher candidates should also be encouraged to use careful discernment and authenticity as they express their own ideas and listen to others, gaining insight from multiple perspectives. However, what I did not anticipate was the importance of these kinds of spaces of liberty requiring a strong and significant foundation built on trust as its mission with all stakeholders invested in the teaching and learning experience. Teacher education programs that encourage, enable, and support critical reflective practice must

be focused on building trust between teacher educators, teacher candidates, and field supervisors who are truly invested in the teaching and learning process. This depth of commitment from others involved in critical reflective practice will ensure engaging opportunities to nurture and sustain teaching practices. What do I mean by invested? According to these researchers Osterman and Kottkamp (1993), “reflective practice requires a facilitator, someone who helps to begin the process and assumes responsibility for ensuring the participants’ safety” (p. 45). The investment in the collaboration requires someone who accepts the “credo for reflective practice” that is based on six assumptions:

1. Everyone needs professional growth opportunities.
2. All professionals want to improve.
3. All professional can learn.
4. All professionals are capable of assuming responsibility for their own professional growth and development.
5. People need and want information about their own performance.
6. Collaboration enriches professional development (p. 47).

It was Jennifer who felt that her cooperating teacher should be someone who “is there for you,” as a student teacher. The reverse of that were Mike and Kurt who found their cooperating teachers to be fully invested in the process they were experiencing together. I have learned from this. It sheds important light on the depth of supportive collaboration that is required for teachers who are navigating the complexities of their classrooms and need to reframe the experience to grow and change.

Loughran and Russell (2002) suggest that in the event that teachers are “being pulled up short” in their examination of teaching practice, they are driven to conduct self-study to find

possibilities to inform practice. They state that “This sense of unease is not necessarily a negative aspect of practice though, for it can also be an impetus for finding ways to be better informed” (p. 242). This “reframing,” (p. 243) as described by these authors, is critical to critical reflective practice, stating that it is “not sufficient to simply view a situation from one perspective. Reframing is seeing a situation through others’ eyes” (p. 243). With this in mind, it becomes clear to me that relationships between teacher educators, field supervisors, and the teacher candidates that they serve demand a certain level of trust, an investment in order to make meaningful use of the critical reflective practice during the teaching and learning process.

York-Barr, Sommers, Ghore, & Montie (2001) also suggest that trust plays a significant role in the process of reflective practice. They say, “Trust must be present for individuals to share their thoughts and to be open to expanding their ways of thinking and doing” (p. 23). York-Barr et al. suggest that ways of being trustworthy include the following: being present, being open, listening, seeking understanding, viewing learning as mutual, and honoring the person and the process (pps. 24-26). These would each suggest a level of investment in the teaching and learning experience from the teacher educator or field supervisor serving the teacher candidate. I understand that collaboration and interpretation with a trusted and invested “other” are critical to this process. Through the development of trusting relationships where all stakeholders understand their investment in the process, thinking beyond the experience itself for the purposes of authentic critical reflection on the aesthetic experience can begin to emerge. This necessary quality in collaborative critical reflective practice as both a change in my practice and that of my teacher education program suggests exploration of opportunities to develop trusting relationships in teacher education programs, as well as new understandings about trusting relationships for the larger teaching and learning community. Nurturing and sustaining

trust requires a unique environment where reflective practice can thrive and grow. This approach significantly impacts decisions related to making programmatic changes in teacher education programs and practices.

The participants in this study were student teachers who, as Jennifer said, were “. . .in a hostile land, you don’t belong anywhere, you have no say . . . “ (Follow-up Interview, February 17, 2009), all the while struggling to negotiate the complexities of the teaching and learning process related to what they knew and what they were experiencing in the classroom. I sensed feelings of vulnerability as they struggled to find their identities as teachers, and the data has born that out. Nonetheless, utilizing the glass box, these student teachers took opportunities to collaboratively mediate that fear, frustration, and confusion with an authentic attunement to a discerning eye toward the relational complexities of the teaching and learning experience. Critical reflection, supported with these qualities, allowed student teachers to form new lived understandings about the teaching and learning process re-framing teaching identities with willingness to see the classroom as productive for learning. The data has born this out, as well.

These student teachers’ stories, representative across all participants’ stories, share voices of weakness and fear, frustration with what they know and what they are experiencing, and confusion about how to respond. This is very common during the student teaching experience. Unfortunately, these moments could, and sometimes do, result in a student teacher succumbing to the pressures of the student teaching experience at a loss as to where to turn to, who to go to, or what to do to survive. Opportunities for ongoing enhanced reflective practice, such as have been explored in this study, have the distinct potential to allay those fears, those frustrations, that confusion before it is too late. It allows the student teacher the opportunity to access ways to explore possibilities, rather than to become overwhelmed by defeat and

hopelessness. Therefore, nurturing and sustaining teaching practices becomes vitally important to the overall well-being of the teacher candidate. It can be a means of coping, provide an alternative to giving up, and in fact assist the teacher candidate in thriving in the teaching and learning experience.

The teacher candidate who practices critical reflection with authenticity and in collaboration with other can benefit from a full complement of opportunities for meaning-making and possibilities. In this vein of reflective practice, teacher candidates can begin to explore their teaching identities with the understanding of the classroom as not only complex and challenging, but also ripe with possibilities for providing support of their teaching practices.

Critical Reflective Practice: Reflecting on Learning to Teach

I cannot ignore what my research has indicated are the significant benefits for both teachers and their students when the classroom environment and teaching methodology is one that is open to unanticipated opportunities so as to increase insight for all stakeholders in the process of learning. The work of mindfully negotiating the teaching and learning process is good work to be doing, vital work, in terms of teacher candidates seeking out their own teaching identities, teacher educators exploring better ways to prepare them, and programmatic change that results in stories of teaching self-efficacy and success. The kind of critical reflective practice explored in this study as a way to negotiate that process is a conduit for this kind of learning.

Barone (1993) says “Human beings do not view time as a series of isolated moments, each one disconnected from the other” (p. 238), rather it is the consideration or interpretation of those moments within the context of all other moments within which it finds itself intertwined that human beings view, explore, and seek to understand moments that occur in life. Focusing

on the possibilities and value of the aesthetics of everyday life, Barone asserts that rethinking education with a new mold in mind could be to create an environment that is conducive to nurturing the aesthetic experience in students, including those who are students of teaching,—those life stories that can become projects complete with discovery of new options, interpretations, and possibilities through self-understanding.

Through critical reflective practice for lived understandings, the student teachers in this study were able to reflect on learning to teach. Jennifer continued to commit to thriving while faced with so many days of surviving. Kurt's story made even the most confident student teacher flounder and question upon occasion. Mike's voice was one of resiliency and responsiveness, even in the face of setbacks and disillusionment. "Pedagogy plays an important role in making these engagements more likely to occur," according to Barone (1993, p. 241), and in revisiting the qualities of authenticity and collaboration for critical reflective practice, I have a vision for what reflecting to learn to teach means for me and for the teacher candidates that I serve. I understand more clearly now the kind of reflective practice teacher candidates need to engage in—it must be fundamentally authentic and highly collaborative. I also view what teacher candidates reflect about with the classroom itself in mind. The relational complexities of today's classrooms require reflection that is focused on so much more than the day-to-day classroom activities. It requires reflection on the moral, ethical, social, and contextual implications and consequences of classroom practices on teaching and learning. Finally, the authenticity I spoke of earlier requires a teacher candidate to critically reflect on those classroom complexities with a heartfelt, open-minded responsiveness to what he/she is experiencing during the teaching and learning process with a discerning eye toward the remarkable, as well as the not-so-remarkable.

Therefore, it becomes the work of teacher education to commit to programmatic and teacher educator practices that more fully realize the significance of facilitation of the critical reflective practice opportunities described in this study as a way to promote enlightened, aesthetic reflective thinking. A pedagogy that is employed by a teacher candidate who has already had multiple and varied types of opportunities to engage in critically reflective enterprises rich with the aesthetics of teaching and learning has an important role to play in the classroom where “a greater emphasis on the active role of the students as seekers, generators, and processors of information” (Schunk & Zimmerman, 1998, p. vii) can happen as a result of the teacher’s own quest for possibilities in critical reflective practice. Given this important consideration, my own students can become more responsible for their own learning processes because I also understand the important significance of learning as a work in progress and I provide an environment conducive to critical reflective practice as a way to promote reflection on the aesthetic experiences of classroom life.

Creating a Culture of Inquiry:

Opportunities to Thrive as Teachers

So what is the work of teacher educators and teacher education programs in terms of facilitating critical reflective practice as a way to promote reflection as the aesthetic experience this study explores? Thornton (1991) described teachers as “curricular-instructional gatekeepers who make the day-to-day decisions concerning both the subject matter and the experiences to which students have access and the nature of that subject matter and those experiences” (p. 237). A possible way to address this necessary aesthetically reflective process toward self-understanding is not the addition of another program, course, or standard. Central to Todd Dinkelman’s (2003) rationale is the idea that the promotion of reflective teaching will require

more than just an “additive approach” (p. 6) in teacher education programs. I agree. In fact, the black box approach to reflective practice as a way to promote reflection must give way to a glass box approach which will then be a catalyst for programmatic changes and provide for valuable insights along the way as teacher educators develop new understandings, paying close attention to the process in critically reflective practice as a way to promote meaningful reflection. This is my work, and this is the work of teacher education, to review both teacher educator practices and programmatic changes related to a paradigm shift in reflective practice for the purposes of renewing a commitment to critical reflective practice that promotes the aesthetic in the teaching and learning experience. The implications of this statement suggest that earlier considerations in this chapter require three endeavors on my part: “walking the talk,” “opening glass boxes,” and creating island communities” in order to create a culture of inquiry.

Walking the Talk

Creating a culture of inquiry must first begin with me. Marjorie Haley and Sabrina Wesley – Nero support my contention. It still must begin with the teacher educator’s ability to consider change as part of skills, practice, and theory; to continue his/her own reflexive inquiry; to question assumptions; to take risks in his/her own classroom first. Even as a single teacher educator “on an island,” meaningfully and purposefully immersed in the work of the critical reflection on my own practice through this study, I can be a significant catalyst for change in that my work extends outward and informs my larger teaching and learning community. That has already happened. Sharing my study with my peers, my dean, and even the Director of Field Experiences at my teacher education institution has already started those important conversations. Second, my approach to “reflection” that takes place in my classroom is already changing, growing, and extending itself into meaning-making that has never happened before. I

take opportunities to explore reflective practice in my classrooms with attention paid to those qualities of critical reflective practice in mind: authenticity, reflexivity, and meaningful collaboration. Dinkelman states that “one’s own efforts to promote reflection among beginning teachers yields insights into how an entire program promotes reflective practice” (p. 14). This statement has serious implications for me as continued collaboration among my colleagues can begin to take place when critical reflective practice is brought to bear on inquiry and conversation into self-study practices. I believe that these collaborations can create new understandings that generate programmatic changes related to reflective practice, professional development, and specific program changes.

Opening Glass Boxes

This study has been a narrative inquiry on the lived understandings of how teacher candidates are navigating what they know and what they are experiencing to develop strong teaching identities. The student teachers’ stories have indeed informed my practice. Andrea Mueller and Keith Skamp (2003) support this premise: “As prospective teachers talk about how they learn to teach, they may help teacher educators change and improve their teaching practices, if we listen” (p. 428). I too have stepped into the glass box to listen to their voices, hear their stories, and critically reflect on learning how to teach with future teachers as my own teacher. Like the student teachers in this study, I have engaged in the process of reflexivity--inciting the relational in the lived experience of teaching to and learning from teacher candidates, as a teacher educator, also listening to what it was that was not clearly heard, to really see what it was that was not clearly seen as I interacted with the student teachers, to feel what is not clearly felt. I engaged in starts and stops, beginnings and endings to new beginnings, mindful of what exists “in-between.” I participated and learned to be an author of my own learning.

Now I must continue to open glass boxes for the teacher candidates that I serve. I contend that teaching can and should become an object of scholarly inquiry when further elevated to a level of critical reflection that provides for opportunities to practice reflexivity of one's full being—the physical, as well as the social. It is critical that the exploration of a future teacher's knowledge and understandings of teaching and learning be relational with a holistic approach in mind. Maxine Greene (1986) offers the following: "If the 'doing' of philosophy moves researchers and teachers to do more thinking about their own thinking, it is justified" (p. 499).

That said, how do I, as a teacher educator, actually influence pre-service teachers' beliefs and practices, and then respond to the limitations of my own ability to exert such influence? Opening glass boxes for the purposes of encouraging, enabling, and supporting critical reflective practice is a method of redefining the process of learning to teach. Namely, I intend to utilize critical reflective practice as a way to teach and provide feedback without eliminating the opportunity for the pre-service teacher to find new meanings for themselves. One main way of accomplishing this is to develop habits of the mind in pre-service candidates that include critical reflexive practice on an ongoing basis. This supports the value of critical reflection in that it has the potential to transform thinking, make meaning of something, and create new openings for teaching possibilities throughout the duration of the teaching and learning experiences. This will be a priority for me as I make a commitment to what this study implies, that teacher candidates need and deserve opportunities to redefine reflective practice where reflective tensions can be conducive to the development of a teacher identity.

Creating Island Communities

I contend that no matter what teacher educators or teacher education programs do to eliminate that feeling of isolation that so many teacher candidates feel when they are teaching

and learning, it still remains a difficult challenge to overcome. The implications of this study would suggest that in fact while teachers are “on islands,” during their teaching and learning experience, there is nothing that says that an island community can’t be formed to provide the kind of trusted and invested collaborative support that the experience demands. In fact, pre-service teachers can feel supported in their teaching and learning experience through talking about teaching with their peers, with other teachers whom they personally know, through observing teacher models, and in using the field experiences for opportunities to experiment, each allowing for transformative, meaning-making experiences in relation to the “other” in the lived experience of teaching and learning. This is collaboration beyond the traditional sense of getting into groups and sharing experiences that have the potential to undoubtedly turn negative. The implications of this study would suggest three steps: development and facilitation of on-going and sustainable partnerships between teacher candidates during the practicum and student teaching experience, extended and focused peer collaboration in content areas and grade levels of interest; and at the program level, the thoughtful and wise selection of field supervisors who have a vested interest in “being there for the teacher candidate” during the teaching and learning experience. The island can then be populated by a trusted and invested community of stakeholders in the teaching and learning process.

A Culture of Inquiry

This study has been transformative for me in that it has validated the importance of creating a culture of inquiry with two distinct purposes: to provide for critically reflective opportunities for informing the teaching and learning experience and to allow for the evolution of a teaching identity. Teacher educators and teacher educational programs must consider what

it will take to encourage, engage, and support all teacher candidates in the important work of critically reflective practice.

A culture of inquiry that values critical reflection provides a means by which a teacher candidate can engage in the negotiation of the challenging complexities of today's classroom. This negotiation allows the teacher candidate the opportunity to realize the potential for transforming thinking about the classroom situation, making meaning of classroom complexities, and creating new openings for teaching possibilities. This can significantly nurture teaching practices along, rather than destroying them. What follows then, is the inevitable sustenance of teaching practices that work for a teacher candidate. As a result of critical reflective practice that informs, nurtures, and then sustains the teacher candidate regarding what they need as they negotiate the complex challenges of their classrooms, teacher candidates can begin to thrive in a classroom, rather than simply survive.

As a result of creating this kind of culture of inquiry with an emphasis on critical reflective practice, the teacher candidate's teaching identity is nurtured and sustained, as well. For the teacher candidate, the teaching identity still remains indistinct and theoretical. Therefore, critical reflection that is framed with expectations for authenticity and invested and trusted collaboration for the specific purpose of engagement in meaning-making, exploration of possibilities, and interaction with the other provides a platform for exploring aspects of one's teaching identity. Reeves (2009) states that "this negotiation of identity happens continually in sustained relationships, as well as in brief encounters. . . . These relationships between self and other(s), between internal and external, lay at the heart of identity work (p. 35). In fact, this effort at self-understanding with regard to the relational in critical reflective practice conceptualizes who one is as a teacher. Teacher candidates engaged in the critical reflective

practices discussed in this study are provided with important and valuable opportunities to “assert, and resist identity positions that define them” (Reeves, 2009, p. 35). This is the nurturance and sustenance of teaching identities.

Nurturing a mindset in my own teaching space and that of administrators of teacher education programs to be advocates for spaces of liberty for performance reflexivity as critical reflection is a step in the right direction. Classrooms and programs where the relational pedagogy of the reflexivity of self and other is explored and where stakeholders “mind the gaps” with authenticity is the critical work that needs to be explored and experimented with in teacher education programs in order to address the real concern of teacher attrition.

Throughout my seven years as a teacher educator, I have learned of or been involved with teacher candidates who have determined that they could not or did not want to continue their student teaching experience. A variety of reasons for that choice lead to that decision: classroom management woes, trying relationships with students, supervisors, and cooperating teachers, inability to master content area expectations, as well as the overwhelming demand of time and commitment that the student teaching experience requires. As a result of what I have learned from this study, I am convinced that opportunity for time and space where ongoing authentic and meaningful collaborative critical reflection on negotiating these complexities would have made a difference for these student teachers. In reflecting back on those situations now, I understand how we failed them as a teacher education program in providing them with time and spaces where tensions are respected and accepted. These student teachers who did not complete their student teaching experience were isolated, felt alone, and remained stranded on an island with no way out except quitting. Teacher educators and teacher education programs can successfully address student teacher attrition by creating a culture of inquiry with authentic and

meaningful collaboration in critical reflective practice as its foundation. It is here where teacher educator and teacher candidate can authentically interact to grow as students of teaching and learning “seeking out and seizing back possibilities for teaching and learning again and again” (Macintyre Latta et al., 2007, p. 5).

Chapter One emphasized that affording the teacher candidate the important opportunities to make a commitment to a heightened sense of consciousness in the teaching and learning experience is the direct purpose of this study. According to Wunder (2003), “what seems certain is that students in . . . teacher preparation can and will develop a sense of agency about teaching and learning . . . when given the supporting circumstances” (p. 205). I have listened to the voices from the glass box and heed the call to be an advocate for change that includes a paradigm shift in reflective practice. This includes attention paid to supporting circumstances that value the authentic and the collaborative in critical reflective practice as an approach to nurturing and sustaining teaching practices that are meaningful and enduring for the teacher candidate. Critical reflective practice can illuminate the teaching and learning experience and empower future teachers to successfully negotiate what they know and what they are experiencing in the teaching and learning process. It is here where they can, through critically reflective practices, explore the relations across teaching identities to understand the complexities of their classrooms and view them as productive to learning. This is an agency that addresses the importance of nurturing and sustaining teaching practices to significantly contribute to the development of strong teaching identities.

Teacher quality makes a significant amount of difference in the educational success and opportunities for children. According to Stanulis & Floden (2009), “beginning teachers need targeted support to overcome the many challenges of learning to teach” (p. 112) in order to

develop into successful classroom teachers. The deliberate, systematic approach to improving teaching and learning for teacher candidates I suggest in this study will result in teacher candidates who have the ability to continue to develop the self-efficacy they need as teachers to thrive in their classrooms as effective, difference-making teachers who make an impact on their students, their schools, and the larger community.

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Appendix A



IRB# 2008038747 EX
Date Approved: 03/12/2008
Valid Until: 03/11/2009

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SCIENCES
Department of Teaching, Learning and Teacher Education

*Creating a Culture of Inquiry:
Student Teachers' Stories from the World of the Glass Box*

The purpose of my dissertation research study is to examine how theory and practice come together within the classroom environment. I am interested in being able to articulate to others the importance of developing a culture of inquiry in the Peru State College School of Education by focusing on current student teachers and the student teaching experience. This study is an opportunity for her to help current student teachers participate in a study that highly values student teachers' voices and a student teaching experience that grows student teachers' knowledge and skills, and it is an opportunity for you to grow your knowledge and skills as a future teacher.

You are being invited to participate in this study because you are a student in EDUC 420 Section B Student Teaching Seminar this semester. You must be 19 or older to participate in this study. You will not be required to do anything outside of what is expected of you as a student teacher during the student teaching experience itself, as participation during the student teaching experience itself will include expectations of the student teaching experience common to all students in this seminar. Data will be collected from each of the participants in this study through autobiographies of critical incidents; one non-evaluated field observation and one audio-taped debriefing session following the field observation; an author-designed, open-ended questionnaire; and an audio-taped follow-up interview. During the student teaching experience itself, data will only be collected through two methods: the autobiographies of critical incidents entries submitted on the Discussion Board section of the Black Board platform utilized for the EDUC 420 Section B Student Teaching Seminar, as required by the course and one non-evaluated field observation and debriefing session following the non-evaluated field observation, a practice that is very common for anyone who plays any sort of supervisory/advisory role during the student teaching experience itself. Two additional methods of data collection will be implemented and utilized only after the course has been completed and grades have been issued. After that time, participants in the study will be invited to complete one author-designed, open-ended questionnaire and one audio-taped follow-up interview.

Regarding details specific to the data collection methods and how long your participation in this study will take, the details are as follows:

- A single autobiographical account of a critical incident from your student teaching experience will take from 20 to 30 minutes of your time to complete.
- The non-evaluated field observations will be conducted strictly at the convenience of the student teacher and will last for a regular class period, approximately 50 to 90 minutes. I will be recording observations related to the complexities of the student teacher's teaching and learning experience in the classroom.
- The audio-taped debriefing sessions, which will last approximately 30 minutes to one hour, will follow the field observation and be conducted strictly at the convenience of the participant. This session will allow you to engage in conversation about what occurred during the field observations, questions and/or concerns that you may have related to what happened during the field observation, and questions and/or concerns that you may have about the student teaching experience itself, thus far.
- The author-designed, open-ended questionnaire, which will take approximately 20 to 30 minutes to complete and will be completed in the participant's private residence, will be mailed to the participants in this study after the completion of the course and after grades are issued.
- The audio-taped follow-up interview will take place at an agreed upon location and will take approximately 30 minutes to an hour to complete. It will be conducted strictly at the convenience of the participant in the study after the completion of the course and after grades are issued. Audio-taped follow-up interviews will ask participants to further reflect on theory/practice relations related to reflective practice.

The autobiographies of critical incidents and the non-evaluated field observation and debriefing session will be completed by the participants in the length of time that the course itself lasts (one semester). Those participants in the study who agree to complete the questionnaire and participate in an audio-taped follow-up interview will do so in the two months following the completion of the course and after the grades are issued.

Should you choose to participate, I may use your responses to an autobiography of a critical incident, a non-evaluated field observation and a follow-up debriefing session, a questionnaire, and a follow-up interview as data to inform my research. If excerpts from these materials are published or shared publicly, all identifying marks in data will be removed and your identity disguised utilizing pseudonyms and coding of data. There are no known risks involved in



IRB# 2008038747 EX
Date Approved: 03/12/2008
Valid Until: 03/11/2009

participating in this study. Your participation in this study is voluntary, and you are free to decide not to participate in this study or to withdraw at any time without adversely affecting your relationship with me.

The benefits to participants in this study may come from the deliberate study of scholarship and practice in teaching. Pursuing scholarship while reflecting on one's own teaching often leads to better teaching.

I will not know who has agreed to participate in the study until the end of the semester after grades have been submitted. All information that would identify you as a participant in this study will be sent to and maintained by Dr. Margaret Macintyre Latta, my advisor, until the end of the semester after grades have been submitted. Information obtained during the study will be kept strictly confidential and will not affect your grade for the Student Teaching Seminar. The data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in a secure office. Data gathered from the participants in this study will be only be seen by me during this study and only after the conclusion of the semester after grades have been submitted. All data will be destroyed immediately following transcription.

There will be no compensation for participating in this research.

You may ask any questions concerning this research and have those questions answered before agreeing to participate or during the time of the study. If you have questions concerning this study at any time, please contact Dr. Margaret Macintyre Latta, telephone (402) 472-9958. If you have questions concerning this study at any time following the completion of the course and after grades have been issued, please contact Principal Investigator, Judith Ruskamp, telephone (402) 872-2301. If you have questions concerning your rights as a research subject that have not been answered by Dr. Latta or Mrs. Ruskamp, or to report any concerns about the study, you may contact the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Institutional Review Board, telephone (402) 472-6965.

You are free to decide not to participate in this study or to withdraw at any time without adversely affecting your relationship with your instructor, Peru State College, or the University of Nebraska. Your decision will not result in any loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to participate in this research study. Your signature certifies that you have decided to participate having read and understood the information presented. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

Please check one of the following choices below:

- ☐ I chose not to participate in this study.
☐ I choose to participate in this study but NOT in the questionnaire and the audio-taped follow-up interview.
☐ I choose to participate in this study and am willing to be contacted to complete a questionnaire and an audio taped follow-up interview after the course has ended and grades have been submitted.

Signature of Research Participant

Date

Appendix B



COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SCIENCES
Department of Teaching, Learning and Teacher Education

I appreciate your participation in this study. Your participation is voluntary, and your individual answers will remain anonymous and completely confidential.

Please respond to the following questions.

(If you need to continue your answers on the back of the questionnaire, please number your responses.)

1. What kinds of reflective practices are you using during your teaching and learning experiences as a student teacher?
2. What does it mean to you to be "critically" reflective regarding teaching and learning experiences?
3. How have your teacher educators empowered you to deliberately analyze your teaching and learning experiences as a student teacher when you reflect on them?
4. How has your teacher education program empowered you to deliberately analyze your teaching and learning experiences as a student teacher when you reflect on them?
5. In order to effectively and deliberately analyze your reflections on your teaching and learning experiences as a student teacher, what are some of the knowledge, skills, and/or other things you think you need?
6. How much time, space, and/or opportunities do you need, as a student teacher, to effectively examine and explore important pedagogical questions related to the teaching and learning experience?
7. What is your perception of what teaching and learning needs to be for you when you consider the relationship between what you know and what you are experiencing in the classroom?

Appendix C



March 12, 2008

HUMAN RESEARCH PROTECTIONS
Institutional Review Board

Judith Ruskamp
Dr. Margaret Latta
27 HENZ
(0355)

IRB# 2008-03-8747 EX

TITLE OF PROJECT: Creating a Culture of Inquiry: Student Teachers' Stories from the World of the Glass Box

Dear Judith:

This letter is to officially notify you of the approval of your project by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Subjects. This project has been approved by the Unit Review Committee from your college and sent to the IRB. It is the Board's opinion that you have provided adequate safeguards for the rights and welfare of the participants in this study. Your proposal seems to be in compliance with this institution's Federal Wide Assurance 00002258 and the DHHS Regulations for the Protection of Human Subjects (45 CFR 46) and has been classified as exempt.

Date of EX Review: 02/18/08

You are authorized to implement this study as of the Date of Final Approval: 03/12/08. This approval is Valid Until: 03/11/09.

1. Uploaded on NUgrant is the IRB approved Informed Consent form for this project. Please use this form when making copies to distribute to your participants. If it is necessary to create a new informed consent form, please send us your original so that we may approve and stamp it before it is distributed to participants.

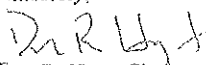
We wish to remind you that the principal investigator is responsible for reporting to this Board any of the following events within 48 hours of the event:

- Any serious event (including on-site and off-site adverse events, injuries, side effects, deaths, or other problems) which in the opinion of the local investigator was unanticipated, involved risk to subjects or others, and was possibly related to the research procedures;
- Any serious accidental or unintentional change to the IRB-approved protocol that involves risk or has the potential to recur;
- Any publication in the literature, safety monitoring report, interim result or other finding that indicates an unexpected change to the risk/benefit ratio of the research;
- Any breach in confidentiality or compromise in data privacy related to the subject or others; or
- Any complaint of a subject that indicates an unanticipated risk or that cannot be resolved by the research staff.

This project should be conducted in full accordance with all applicable sections of the IRB Guidelines and you should notify the IRB immediately of any proposed changes that may affect the exempt status of your research project. You should report any unanticipated problems involving risks to the participants or others to the Board. For projects which continue beyond one year from the starting date, the IRB will request continuing review and update of the research project. Your study will be due for continuing review as indicated above. The investigator must also advise the Board when this study is finished or discontinued by completing the enclosed Protocol Final Report form and returning it to the Institutional Review Board.

If you have any questions, please contact Shirley Horstman, IRB Administrator, at 472-9417 or email at shorstman1@unl.edu.

Sincerely,


Dan R. Hoyt, Chair
for the IRB

From: <nugrant-irb@unl.edu>
To: <mlatta@unlserve.unl.edu>, <jruskamp@oakmail.peru.edu>
Date: 1/21/09 11:17AM
Subject: NUgrant Message - Official Approval Letter for IRB project #8747

January 20, 2009 Judith Ruskamp Teaching, Learning and Teacher Education Margaret Latta Teaching, Learning and Teacher Education 27 HENZ UNL 68588-0355 IRB Number: 2008 03 8747 Project ID: 8747 Project Title: Creating a Culture of Inquiry: Student Teachers' Stories from the World of the Glass Box Dear Judith: This is to officially notify you of the approval of your project's Continuing Review by the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects. It is the committee's opinion that you have provided adequate safeguards for the rights and welfare of the subjects in this study based on the information provided. Your proposal is in compliance with DHHS Regulations for the Protection of Human Subjects (45 CFR 46). We wish to remind you that the principal investigator is responsible for reporting to this Board any of the following events within 48 hours of the event:

- Any serious event (including on-site and off-site adverse events, injuries, side effects, deaths, or other problems) which in the opinion of the local investigator was unanticipated, involved risk to subjects or others, and was possibly related to the research procedures;
- Any serious accidental or unintentional change to the IRB-approved protocol that involves risk or has the potential to recur;
- Any publication in the literature, safety monitoring report, interim result or other finding that indicates an unexpected change to the risk/benefit ratio of the research;
- Any breach in confidentiality or compromise in data privacy related to the subject or others; or
- Any complaint of a subject that indicates an unanticipated risk or that cannot be resolved by the research staff.

It is the responsibility of the principal investigator to provide the Board with a review and update of the research project each year the project is in effect. This approval is valid until 03/10/2010. If you have any questions, please contact the IRB office at 472-6865. Since

I
 ely, Mario Scalora, Ph.D. Chair for the IRB