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Investigating Reflective Practice in Course Content: A Co-operative Inquiry

by

Gayle Sawatzky ©

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science

in

Family Ecology and Practice

Department of Human Ecology

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled **Investigating Reflective Practice in Course Content: A Co-operative Inquiry** submitted by Gayle Sawatzky in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Family Ecology and Practice.

.....

Dr. Maryanne Doherty-Poirier, Supervisor

.....

Prof. Linda Capjack

.....

Dr. David G. Smith

Dedicated to

Franklin G. Kane

Without you,
this work would not exist.
May the ideas herein
come to maturity
and bear sweet and plentiful fruit
to enrich your life
as you have enriched mine.

Abstract

A co-operative inquiry method was used to investigate the content of a fourth-year practicum course. Through cycles of action and reflection, an evolving discussion revealed two key topics and the need for a diagram of reflective practice. One topic involved a discussion of the relation of professional practice in general to reflective practice in the field of home economics/human ecology. The second topic concerned the links between the practicum course and the other core courses in the program regarding the inclusion of the concept of reflective practice. These topics are discussed and supported by information from the literature for future integration into course content. Four diagrams lead to the depiction of a final working diagram of reflective practice. The researcher's personal experience of deepening reflective practice was evoked by the inquiry, and her hermeneutically inspired reflections are included.

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Special thanks are extended to the participants who worked with me during this inquiry. Their willingness to experiment and to share their personal beliefs and intentions regarding reflective practice made the inquiry not only possible, but also fruitful.

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CHAPTER 1

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE AND HUMAN ECOLOGY

We are asked to face the challenge
of managing diverse cultural realities
and to conduct research
with people
rather than on or for people.
(Sue McGregor, 1997, p. 35)

Introduction

Reflective practice has been promoted in the field of home economics/human ecology (HMEC)[1] as a means to professional preparation and development (Vaines, 1988, 1992). The undergraduate course that is the focus of this investigation is one of six courses forming the core components of a human ecology program. This preprofessional period provides students with "an array of experiences which expose them to the mission and goals of the profession" (Gentzler, 1995, p. 96). The orientation of reflective practice (Schon, 1983; Vaines, 1988, 1992) is taught in an introductory course in the Department of Human Ecology as part of 'becoming a professional in the field' (Bright-See, 1998).

This orientation to professional practice also informs other courses comprising the required core component in the degree programs. The practicum (fieldwork) course, which takes place during the last semester, is intended to be an opportunity for students to integrate concepts such as reflective practice with experience in the workplace. A practicum may provide a new professional a better start in his or her career (Vaines, 1988).

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[1] I will follow the tradition of Eleanor Vaines (1992, 1994) in using HMEC to refer to home economics and human ecology as interchangeable terms.

The human ecology program came into existence in 1993 with the merging of the Faculties of Home Economics and Agriculture and Forestry on this campus. This reflects changes that are common to many home economics programs in terms of name and place on the campus (McGregor, 1997). These changes have created a certain amount of confusion and concern regarding professional identity.[2] This confusion compounds what Linda Peterat (1997) described as the 'crisis in human service professions' in general:

> The granting of authority to professionals because of some esoteric knowledge they hold has ended; . . . there is a sense at the present time of living at a fundamental turning point where it is urgent to redefine what being a professional might mean for the future and on what authority professional practice can be based. (p. 102)

In the light of these challenges to the defining and forming of professional identity, it is imperative that students receive opportunities to consider an orientation to professional development such as reflective practice. The practicum can be a 'culminating experience' for students who are in a time of transition between university and their work life. It is a chance to 'pull together and apply,' to develop skills, to facilitate an interactive relationship between theory and practice, and to further understanding of one's role in the workplace. The practicum can also "be a catalyst for personal growth" (Sweitzer & King, 1999, p. 4).

The instructor of the practicum considers that she is a reflective practitioner and that she promotes a reflective practice approach during the course seminars. After the completion of the practicum, she reviews the course outline and makes revisions to her plans for the following term. This project began with an intention to expand and deepen her personal reflections by using the procedural guidelines of a research methodology and by involving others. Thus, the approach to the project was to investigate the course

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[2] Recent issues of the Alberta Home Economics Association *Newsletter* carry articles expressing these concerns. See Selene Syvenky's (1999) article "Home Economics and Human Ecology . . . What's in a Name?" and a conversation between Sue McGregor and Linda Peterat (1999) entitled "Where is Home Economics Headed?"

content to determine what factors might facilitate or hinder the development of a reflective practice orientation of students during their practicum experience.

A Place for Reflective Practice in HMEC

What Is Reflective Practice?

For Eleanor Vaines (1988), *reflective practice* means "reflecting on who we are, what we do and our effects as persons in community" (p. 7), and that "thoughtful action is central to practice" (p. 25). Professional development must include ongoing personal growth; she highlighted the importance of 'unpacking assumptions' so professionals may better understand their role in society. This orientation to practice "is grounded in a way of providing services which are moral in nature" (p. 30) and thus is central to assisting individuals and families. Schon (as cited in Vaines, 1992), said that a "reflective problem orientation is essential to providing ethical services because professional practice is complex, uncertain, unstable, unique and full of value conflicts" (p. 7).

McGregor (1997) described this orientation to practice as *critical reflective practice*. This involves serious pondering and deliberation on meanings, norms, and values so that insights may be gained which then inform and direct ethical actions. She said that this demands "a new way of thinking about ourselves in the world":

> If we want to move beyond solving every problem by doing what we have always done, doing the "safe" thing or neglecting to challenge the status quo, we will not be engaging in critical reflective practice. . . . We have to move beyond the "taken for granted" and habitual to the realization that we do have choices and these should be well reasoned and thought out, in full awareness of short- and long-term consequences on ourselves, our communities and the global village. (p. 31)

Reflective practice is of interest to students and educators in HMEC for reasons that are both central and peripheral to our field. The concept can connect us with the core of our philosophy and mission, as well as provide links 'to the borders' in our interdisciplinary endeavors (Welsh, 1997). However, it is important to examine concepts such as reflective

practice critically with regard to their consistency with the principles of the field. Smith (1993) stated:

> Home economics is a moral and an intellectual endeavor. Unfortunately we have been more attentive to instrumental directions than intellectual and moral directions. We must have a clear idea of where we are going and why. This means that we must be prepared to critically examine and expose the theoretical underpinnings of any new education movements, programs, or materials for their consistency with our guiding principle, our mission statement. (p. 25)

The following sections elaborate on the relevance of a reflective practice orientation to the field of HMEC as a connection to core concerns, as a means of addressing challenges to professional action in practice, and as an orientation toward professional practice that is 'common ground' with other disciplines.

Connection to Core Concerns

Vaines (1992) described the core concerns of HMEC as being "about the nature of the field, the study of and services appropriate to the everyday lives of families" (p. 1). Vaines (1988) also said that HMEC has always been a reflective field and that the reflective practice orientation "moves us toward living our mission in community" (p. 7). Linda Peterat (1997) expanded on the historical context:

> Marjorie Brown (1985) interpreted Talbot's participation at the Lake Placid Conferences and her view of home economics "as the means of challenging the existing unfree relations in the family and in society, the development of reflective capacities in individuals through home economics and, necessarily, therefore, home economics as a reflective field of endeavour concerned with the development both of human capacities and of a society which would function in the common interests of its members" (p. 270). (p. 100)

The concept of reflective practice thus has a place in HMEC and is important to the field because of this historical emphasis.

The profession of home economics was born in the climate of intense change brought about by the industrial revolution (Badir, 1988) and continues to evolve in the context of phenomenal change (Bands, 1992; Istre & Self, 1990; Nolen & Clawson, 1992;

Nolen & Stover, 1993; Thompson, 1995; Welsh, 1997). However, core concerns remain constant to improve the quality of life and to promote the empowerment of those we serve. "We are a people-oriented profession, and our fundamental values are humanitarian, altruistic, and service oriented" (Sproles & Sproles, 1992, p. 7).

In the following section these core values are addressed in terms of the consideration of people in context and of an empowerment approach to service.

Context: An ecological viewpoint. *Home economics* was originally defined as having its concern with "the ordering of the 'private life' of individuals and with the interactions across the boundaries between it and the public life" (Badir, 1988, p. 14). Over the years home economics moved strongly into the public realm, with an emphasis on political action, cultural diversity, social goals, and an ecological viewpoint that included "the impact that individuals and families . . . were having on the global ecosystem" (Bright-See, 1998, p. 48). Istre and Self (1990) asserted that the consideration of context was always present, although it has been described in different ways:

> Since the founding of the home economics profession, context always has been regarded as playing an important role in the lives of families. Early reference was made to the "near" environment of families, meaning food, shelter, and clothing needs within the home. More recent literature in home economics has acknowledged the importance of the "far" environment, i.e., the larger sociopolitical context affecting the lives of families. (p. 4)

Recently, there has been a movement in professional preparation and practice toward formally adopting a human ecology perspective (McGregor, 1997). Vaines (1988) described this ecological theme in the field:

> Home Economics, however it is defined, inevitably addresses the relationship between the family as an environment within which people enact the decisions of daily living and the family as a unit of a larger environment (the society). . . . There is, therefore, an ecological theme which informs both the teaching and practice of home economics. It arises out of the understanding of the interrelationship between individuals, family and environment. (p. 3)

This ecological perspective, combined with an intention to improve the quality of daily life, integrates the content of HMEC and creates a 'problem/issue perspective' rather than a field with subject matter at its center (Badir, 1988).

The reflective approach is also integrative. The practitioner uses many kinds of knowing in situations of daily life that are ambiguous and complex (Vaines, 1992). Whether referred to as an *ecological theme* or simply as *context*, the consideration of the interrelationships inherent in the complexity of life is essential. A reflective practice orientation facilitates such considerations (Peterat, 1997).

An empowerment orientation. Vaines (1993) argued that an empowerment orientation is most closely aligned with the values of the field. She described reflective practice as serving to fulfill a professional ethic "which implies a caring relationship with the client, and an orientation to practice which seeks to empower people to take charge of their lives and there by to improve their daily lives in socially responsible ways" (p. 3). McGregor (1997) described the viewpoint of a professional from an empowerment model:

> We see people as victims of problems and conditions created by society but appreciate that these people are able to be active in solving their own needs by building on their energy, networks and strengths. Delivering empowering practice means we build on what they bring to the situation, we incorporate them into the solution, we facilitate participation and collaboration, and we develop interactive interventions. (p. 32)

In this sense, the concept of reflective practice serves as an important guide to professional development with implications for identity as a professional and as a global citizen.

Empowerment must also include more than personal change; experiences involving empowerment processes must "illuminate, challenge, and change social structures that support and maintain injustice and unequal power" (Morgaine, 1993a, p. 15). Engberg (1996) said that "our professional responsibility is to take emancipatory actions which make it possible for individuals and families to gain control over their own lives and

environments" (p. 56). The reflective practice orientation includes and encourages such processes and actions. It promotes the core concerns of the profession and provides a means for professionals to fulfil the mission of the field, both in facilitating change and as a way to meet challenges in practice.

Challenges to Practice

There are challenges in professional practice that impede considerations of context and empowerment. "While it is true that we have a great deal of special knowledge which can be helpful in improving the quality of everyday lives, we must be very careful in assuming the appropriateness of the application of this knowledge" (Badir & Morgaine, 1994, p. 4). The reflective practice orientation can be helpful in determining this appropriateness by addressing challenges to the professional ethic. Badir and Morgaine articulated these challenges as "tensions which are inherent in all of home economists' professional actions" (p. 1), which arise in situations where two or more competing interests, ideologies, values, or hidden issues are exerting influence. They described these challenges as themes: (a) power, (b) culture, and (c) facilitating change.

The professional must constantly be aware of and reflecting upon these tensions in order that change in individuals and families is self-determined and thus consistent with the mission of the field. Reflective practice thus provides a means for professionals in the midst of these tensions to be change agents in an empowering way. In the following sections, these three themes will be discussed in terms of reflective practice and how this professional orientation facilitates an empowerment orientation.

The power theme. Power dynamics in helping relationships are complex and must be considered by those wanting to work from an empowerment perspective (Morgaine, 1993a). Badir and Morgaine (1994) referred to the historical nature of the relationship between professional and client, particularly the power dynamic expressed in the context of helping:

> Historically, as home economists, we have been involved in helping relationships with individuals and families. We have claimed a mission of benevolence towards families. . . . We have assumed that the quality of the lives of individuals and families will improve to the degree that they acquire the resources to maintain health and to participate in a meaningful way in the economy of a society. However, in accepting these assumptions without question . . . we have come to see ourselves as dominant, and able to determine the ideal necessary for helping people acquire the needed skills and resources. In this way, those we work with are viewed as subordinate or deficient in certain skills and resources and needing our help. (p.3)

Thus, it is important to investigate the power dynamics occurring in relationships. This investigation involves reflection upon personal histories and cultural contexts in order to develop an understanding of power dynamics and to find ways to bring equality and mutual respect. Vincenti (1993b) also suggested that understanding power dynamics needs to take place through examination of both inner and outer circumstances:

> If we were to hold the conventional view of power consolidated in the hands of a few, . . . we would conclude that those with the power to make some fundamental changes are unlikely to change unless they themselves are convinced of its necessity. However, if we accept the views of Focault, Freire, Thompson, as well as Brown and Paolucci in our own literature, we would place more emphasis in our professional practice on understanding power and power relations and on empowerment both as an inner state and as an external set of circumstances. (p. 13)

A reflective practice orientation draws attention to our personal 'inner' story and how that story links to 'outer' circumstances. This connection between inner and outer facilitates a growing understanding of how power dynamics are experienced and worked with in relationships.

Vaines (1988) gave examples of questions that can be revealed through knowing our story: "What does it mean to grow up in this place? At this time? With this religion? In this family? In this community?" (p. 19). The personal answers to these questions may provide indications of how a professional may perceive others and interact with them (Morgaine, 1993a). In this view, who we are has a direct effect on how we practice, and we must engage in personal reflection to do the best we can in professional relationships.

The theme of cultural context. The HMEC practitioner using a reflective mode of practice considers the complex problems of everyday life in their cultural context. Vaines (1992) gave the examples of practitioners Ruth Berry in Canada and Charlotte Anokwa in Ghana: "They present principles . . . and relate these to the daily lives of families in Canada and Ghana. Their reflective approach may or may not be appropriate for a practitioner in Brazil or Japan" (p. 4). Of course, this is also pertinent on a local level. The cultural heritage of a professional may differ from that of a client in any situation, and this difference has implications for the professional's approach. Badir and Morgaine (1994) described the manner in which cultural differences influence the situations and perspectives of both professional and client:

> The upheavals in world populations, migrations and immigrations, have resulted in everyday interactions with persons whose experiences are vastly different from our own. . . . It is all too easy to forget that cultural traditions, values and attitudes differ greatly between cultures and subcultures. (p. 4)

These notions are not always addressed, because there is little consciousness about the way they influence professional practice. Professionals must consider culturally determined personal attributes such as attitudes, values, patterns of action, and goals in their attempts to provide service and improved quality of life to others.

Sensitivity to cultural considerations can be expanded to include a global perspective, which Smith (1993) described as *global education*. She examined the aim of global education and the aim of HMEC education in fulfilling the mission of the field, to see if a global perspective was implicit in the mission statement of HMEC. She stated: "There are many commonalities between Brown's conception of home economics education and what I have outlined as Constructivist Global Education" (p. 25). This perspective includes an orientation to personal change, to social change, and to the development of a moral viewpoint. These may all be enhanced through a reflective practice orientation, which approach directs attention to the personal biases inherent in our

actions and broadens the scope of our actions to include considerations of appropriate global citizenship.

The theme of change. Our efforts as change agents must be integrative in nature if they are to be effective and in alignment with an empowerment orientation. Badir and Morgaine (1994) discussed the 'critical perspective' involved in change of this nature:

> To make change that is based on real and 'felt' needs, as well as a critical analysis of the embedded social situations, requires an understanding of how 'what was' became 'what is' and how both are related to 'what should be.' Approaching such a task from a critical perspective involves 'peeling back the layers' to consider all the competing interests and issues that are involved. (p. 5)

A reflective practice approach includes the examination of past values and action, which encourages integration. When people are given ample opportunity to reflect upon an idea or an innovation, they can consider how it may become part of their everyday lives and their established ways of being.

Thus, the link between having an understanding of our personal history and having an understanding of social history is crucial. This understanding links context with change and allows integration to occur. When people become change agents for themselves, the integration of the new into the 'social whole' is fostered; this is the type of change that ultimately is best aligned with the mission of HMEC (Badir & Morgaine, 1994). The roots of the concept of reflective practice are connected to this idea of exploration-reflection-action. Valdez (1990) stated:

> This is consistent with the adult learning principle of praxis which according to Brookfield (1986) is central to adult learning and is commonly associated with Paulo Freire's work in Latin America. The concept of praxis suggests the involvement of learners in exploring new or different ideas and knowledge, and allowing them time to reflect on whether or not to take action. If action is taken, then time and support must be provided for critical reflection once again. The notion of exploration-reflection-action followed by critical reflection is necessary in order that learners can determine if meaning can be assigned to the "new ideas insights, skills and knowledge in the context of their own experiences" (Brookfield, 1986, p. 16). (p. 5)

HMEC professionals should include more reflection in their professional practice (Engberg, 1996). They must interpret everyday events from an understanding of context and an awareness of the dynamics of change through empowerment, rather than from their own past experience, perceptions, and culturally embedded assumptions. Reflective practice 'belongs' to the HMEC profession most profoundly because it encompasses and encourages core values: an ecological view and an 'enlightenment' orientation that enables a strong connection to the 'benevolent philosophy of the field' (Welsh, 1997). Students should have an opportunity to experience reflective practice during their practicum course. The focus of this inquiry is to investigate course content to determine factors which may facilitate and/or hinder the students' learning about reflective practice.

Reflective Practice and Education

Education in the field of HMEC is undergoing a shift. This reflects changes in higher education worldwide (Biggs, 1999). Much of the strength of the HMEC field has evolved through education and practice, rather than research (Welsh, 1997). The following sections articulate how a changing worldview, new approaches to curriculum development, and new forms of inquiry could combine this strength with an approach to research that is embedded in professional education and practice.

A Changing Worldview

Our society is undergoing a change in worldview (Skolimowksi, 1995, 1997). One aspect of this change is a growing understanding of the failure of the dominant technical paradigm to address social conditions. There has been agreement in the literature that an exclusive, narrow focus on technical competence fails to teach students to deal effectively with the complexities and ambiguities of life. Robert Bellah et al. (1991; as cited in Brody & Wallace, 1994) described the gap between technical and moral reason:

> There is a profound gap in our culture between technical reason, the knowledge with which we design computers or analyze the structure of DNA, and the practical or moral reason, the ways we understand how we should live. We often hear that only technical reason can really be taught, and our educational commitments from primary school to university seem to embody that belief. But technical reason alone is insufficient to manage our social difficulties or make sense of our lives. (p. 2)

Vaines (1988) referred to this change as the *evolving Post-Industrial age*, which is creating "a major transformation in the way we think about ourselves in relation to other living systems" (p. 12).

Because of this shifting worldview, there is a need to examine the assumptions guiding education and to continue theory development and conceptual analysis in HMEC education (Hultgren, 1991; Istre & Self, 1990; Morgaine, 1993b; Peterat, 1997; Smith, 1993, 1994). Istre and Self maintained that a more unified, complex worldview could help to guide theory development in home economics, which in turn could contribute to more clarity regarding our beliefs and assumptions about human well-being. They offered a description of three philosophies of science: mechanistic, organismic, and contextual. They stated that a shift toward contextualism is necessary because "contextualism, as a philosophy of science, reflects the importance of the sociohistorical milieu and life events but does not prescribe the approach to achieving the individual and societal goals that Brown and Paolucci advocate" (p. 7). They considered this paradigm to be "ideally suited to the design of our discipline" (p. 8).

This type of paradigm shift then requires a corresponding shift in perspective in education and research (Peterat, 1997). A changing worldview also creates a need to expand our methods of inquiry (Peterat, 1997). Smith (1996) examined orientations to sociological research and considered how they inform education in HMEC. She found that functional sociology has been dominant. She cautioned against adhering to any one orientation and recommended that frames of reference should be re-evaluated on an ongoing basis. Couch and Felstehausen (1994) stated that the discussion of what

constitutes quality in HMEC research, including new modes of inquiry, has been ongoing for over a decade. After an analysis of journal articles covering a five-year period, they recommended that "researchers should continue using the interpretive framework, including qualitative methods of data collection and analysis, and expand the use of critical inquiry" (p. 55).

New forms of inquiry are being used in research and teaching (Peterat & Vaines, 1992). Linda Peterat (1997) described a future possibility:

> Home economics as a field of practice would not ignore current theories as part of existing knowledge; at the same time, theorizing about and from practice would be valued and more central to the research/theory discourse of the field than is now the case. Part of such a shift in vision of home economics would also entail a shift in perspective for new professionals. They would need opportunities to value, understand, and construct their practices, wide awake to the influences which have shaped their autobiographies, beliefs, and desires, and to the consequences of what they do within the mission of home economics. (pp. 103-104)

Virginia Vincenti (1993a) said that "after a long and pervasive tradition of using an instrumental model of teaching, the alternative modes of inquiry are an important breakthrough, one that seems to nurture the soul rather than merely challenge the brain" (p. 63).

However, the basic, underlying assumptions of the dominant worldview can be pervasive. Morgaine (1993b) offered the following caution:

> Many educators may be assuming that alternative paradigms can be learned and applied, as techniques, to students or classroom situations in order to produce selected outcomes. While these outcomes may be perceived by the instructor as promoting the well-being of individuals and the betterment of society, they still are permeated with issues of control and dominance. Thus, the positivistic nature of educators' underlying assumptions [is] revealed. (p. 8)

There is a need to investigate curriculum and teaching in a manner which facilitates coming to an awareness of underlying assumptions. Bright-See (1998) said that the field of HMEC is evolving a more comprehensive philosophy to meet these needs by "more and

more coming to embrace the view that other modes of action (interpretative and critical) benefit the profession and its clients" (p. 219).

Thus a reflective practice orientation creates a bridge from past to present to future, as well as linking the personal life history of the professional to that of the societal context. From the viewpoint of reflective practice, the professional has a moral responsibility to be ever more aware and conscious, so that personal and cultural assumptions do not lead to the misuse of power and position. With increasing awareness of the implications of their actions, professionals are able to act as effective agents for change and as responsible global citizens. Professional practice conducted in this manner is in accord with the mission of our field.

Curriculum

According to Hultgren (1991), "Questions can be raised about the nature of undergraduate programs" (p. 4). HMEC educators have articulated a need for programming and curriculum to address social and cultural conditioning (Bands, 1992).

Strom and Williams (1992) reported that "several scholars have emphasized the importance of critical thinking and reflectivity in adult and professional development" (p. 59). They posed the following questions for the profession: "What should be done about developing critically reflective home economists? About creating a community that fosters critical reflectivity in home economics?" (p. 59). Hultgren (1991) agreed that critical thinking should be promoted and said that undergraduate programs should be investigated. She stated:

> If we would seek to develop a critical orientation which empowers persons to make change, with the kind of freedom that results from knowing who we are and how we have been shaped by our social world, questions can be raised about the nature of undergraduate programs. (p. 4)

HMEC is an interdisciplinary field, and we can draw from multiple sources in the literature. There is now a body of theory based on student learning as it relates to practice,

called *student learning research* (Biggs, 1999). There are two influential strands in this research, constructivism and phenomenology, both of which emphasize that meaning is created by the learner. The classroom is "an interactive system in which student characteristics and the teaching context mutually determine . . . the quality of learning outcomes" (p. 30).

The practicum is the transforming link between student and professional (Sweitzer & King, 1999). Peterat (1996) described the possibility of the practicum experience being mutual learning for student and teacher by incorporating an attitude of ongoing inquiry:

> My questioning has led me to wonder if the student teaching practicum can be a learning experience for all, rather than seeing faculty advising as a time demanding drain on the real obligations of a university professor to write and conduct research. Can faculty advising be an opportunity for reflecting, researching, wondering about, and inquiring into practice, thereby becoming a more engaging, enriching experience? (p. 37)

Undergraduate practicums should be investigated to ensure that there is mutual learning between instructor and student and that there is as much opportunity as possible for the transition from student to professional to take place.

Educating Reflective Practitioners

There is a broad body of literature addressing the education of reflective practitioners. Although a great deal of this work has been done in the field of education, there are also many sources in health, social work, and law. Recently, the launch of a new journal in 2000 entitled *Reflective Practice* exemplifies the scope of the literature. This refereed journal has an international advisory editorial board and "welcomes papers from authors from any profession and any part of the world who have an interest in reflective practice" (Ghaye, 1999, n.p.). This journal is an indication of the expanding interdisciplinary nature of reflective practice.

The knowledge base of HMEC is interdisciplinary. Jennifer Welsh (1997) described the consequences to the field of this diversity:

> There are risks and benefits in our diversity. It means we may not be viewed as discipline specialists but it also means that we can be superb knowledge brokers. We can work "at the edge" in creative ways, but the trick in the future will be to know what is going on in a multitude of sectors. To me, this seems the biggest challenge in educating students and the greatest challenge for continuing education and mentoring. (p. 80)

The concept of reflective practice, although it has strong roots in education through the work of John Dewey and Donald Schon (Yang, 1997), is interdisciplinary in theory and practice. Reflective practice can assist both students and educators in working at the interdisciplinary edges. The literature informing the initial stages of this study draws heavily from the work of Eleanor Vaines and Linda Peterat as educators and researchers in the field of HMEC. They both looked to the writing of Donald Schon to discuss reflective practice. Peterat (1997) described the impact of his book and the interdisciplinary nature of the concept of reflective practice:

> Donald Schon's book *The Reflective Practitioner* (1983) drew the attention of many professionals in education, nursing, social work, and law. It attracted those wishing to understand the world of practice, find new ways of understanding theory/practice linkages, and value the voice and experience of the practitioner. (p. 103)

The literature on professional education also has an interdisciplinary component (Brody & Wallace, 1994). Patricia Cranton (1998) elaborated on common dimensions in professional education: "In all disciplines, we want our students to become aware of themselves, their learning styles, their professional goals, and their own perspectives on what they have learned" (p.11). The concept of reflective practice has been used to facilitate this kind of learning in several disciplines (Ashford, Blake, Knott, Platzer, & Snelling, 1998; Brody & Wallace, 1994), and can be of assistance to HMEC educators and preprofessional students.

Conclusion

Looking to the Future

Morgaine (1993b), looking ahead to the year 2000, said: "I see a new paradigm for home economics. I see teacher educators who are involved in processes which contribute to new awarenesses about themselves, about others, and about hegemonic influences" (p. 11). Sue McGregor (1997) assured us of the relevance of our mission statement and its ability to guide us into the future, "if only we remain open-minded to the necessity for ongoing professional and personal reflection and growth" (p. 26). Eleanor Vaines (1992) asked us to consider these questions:

> What will it mean to be a HMEC practitioner in the 21st century? What is unique to HMEC practice in my setting? What do I have in common with HMEC practitioners in other contexts? What are ways we can work together to shape HMEC to fulfil its mission? (p. 15)

These are the broad future-oriented questions that form the context for this investigation into reflective practice in course content.

Approaching the Inquiry

This research project is intended to investigate the content and applications of reflective practice 'themes' (Vaines, 1988) in a practicum course. Our professional mission makes this type of investigation imperative in preparing students for effective and fulfilling practice as a HMEC professional. This study is also founded on the view that an important function of a practicum is to promote self-understanding as preparation for professional practice in general. Sweitzer and King (1999) stated that "in addition to knowing about clients, about techniques and methods, and about organizations and administration, students need to know something about themselves. We believe this makes them better interns and better practitioners" (p. xvi). Our students need these reflective practice skills to become effective professionals and responsible global citizens.

There can be difficulties with the concept of reflective practice. Smits (1994) described an important difficulty with reflective practice; it "is still caught in the modernist grasp of reason" (p. 8). He said that the root of this problem is found in a movement toward professionalization with emphasis on a 'scientific' knowledge base. Smith (1994) urged us to question further how this type of emphasis on the dominant ideology has shaped what is learned and taught in the field of HMEC.

Yang (1997) surveyed a broad range of literature in teacher education regarding the use of the concept of reflective practice. She argued that reflective teaching, reflective practice, and reflective inquiry may all be taken as goals in varying areas and/or in different programs in teacher education institutions. It is common, for example, that 'reflective exercises' in these various programs means engaging in quite different forms of analysis. Thus, there is much ambiguity in terms of what it means to engage in teaching reflective practice. She considered the development of a theoretical knowledge base to be a prerequisite for reflective practice/teaching/inquiry. She stated that "the different foci of reflection should be brought together into a cohesive and coherent program instead of separate programs each emphasizing something different" (p. 68). Thus, it is recognized that teaching reflective practice may be difficult for teachers, both in terms of process and content.

Teachers are not alone in their struggle to work with the concept of reflective practice in the classroom and fieldwork experiences. Students may also have difficulty with the experience of reflection. Smits (1994) reported that student teachers experienced difficulties and reported negative experiences related to a lack of self-understanding and inadequate support for identity formation. He elaborated this problem as follows:

> Student teachers' experiences of reflection problematized the meaning of reflection, however. The teacher education literature has taken up a notion of reflection as the work of a coherent and autonomous self, a notion of reflection that has strong modernist roots. The idea of a reflective subject has been questioned by hermeneutic and postmodern writers. As was evident in the stories

> of student teachers, self and identity as a teacher, rather than being present prior to experience, emerges through an interpretive appropriation of texts of teaching, both theoretical and practical. (abstract)

In brief, he stated that students "often experience crises of identity which the emphasis on reflection does not help to resolve" (p. 7). The advantages of developing a reflective practice orientation and the difficulties with reflective practice that educators and students encounter make it necessary to investigate the practicum course.

Several HMEC researchers have called for a new approach to research, including the use of participatory action research (Engberg, 1996; McGregor, 1997; Peterat, 1996, 1997). An increasing emphasis on practice from a global perspective and respecting diversity in cultural background requires these new approaches (McGregor, 1997). They include collaborative exchange and dialogue, which can be significant in professional development (Strom & Williams, 1992). They are aligned with HMEC mission because of the potential for advancing learning in key areas of professional practice: 'being, knowing and doing' (Peterat, 1997).

Peterat (1997) articulated the link between reflective practice and action research:

> Reflective practice can be facilitated through action research. Such research may be carried out by an individual alone in her/his office pondering over, wondering, and writing about practice—a kind of action research envisioned by Gauthier (1992). It may include activities of autobiography, journal writing, dialogue with a critical friend, analyses of evidence gathered from students or others we work with. (p. 103)

The co-operative inquiry process in this investigation into teaching reflective practice is part of this new paradigm and of the intention of participants to grow personally and professionally. The participants, co-researchers and co-subjects in this inquiry, considered themselves to be reflective practitioners and felt that they brought a reflective practitioner orientation to the classes they taught. They designed and informed this inquiry in accordance with the tradition of co-operative inquiry. The approach to the

project was to investigate practicum course content to identify factors facilitating and/or hindering students' development of a reflection practice orientation.

Eleanor Vaines (1988) introduced the PIPHE Series by describing the intent of the editors:

> This series presents issues central to the professional practice of home economics. All of the issues have international relevance. The series will be built around a particular concept about the practice of Home Economics—the concept of **Reflective Practice**. . . . The purpose of the series is to promote dialogue about the issues facing home economics in the contemporary world. (p. 3)

Using Vaines' writing as both foundation and starting point, I undertook this project in the same spirit of dialogue.

CHAPTER 2

QUESTIONS AND CONTEXT

I am interested in probing through experience
toward the possible,
and am convinced the tranformative potential of research
can be engaged most directly in the practice setting.
(Linda Peterat, 1996, p. 37)

Questions: Forming the Framework for Inquiry

Is a Qualitative Approach Appropriate?

The question that initiated this research project is, "How are the principles or 'themes' (Vaines, 1988) of reflective practice facilitated and or hindered by course content in the practicum course?" An initial phase of research design considered whether a qualitative study was appropriate in addressing the problem (Creswell, 1998).

Definitions. Denzin and Lincoln (1998) offered the following definition:

> Qualitative research is multimethod in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials—case study, personal experience, introspective, life story, interview, observational, historical, interactional, and visual tests—that describe routing and problematic moments and meaning in individuals' lives. (p. 2)

Core aspects[3] of this definition seem to be broadly accepted in the literature. Creswell (1998) emphasized the 'complex, holistic picture' created by qualitative research due to the exploration of many dimensions of an issue.

[3] Creswell (1998) has surveyed several different leading authors and summarized the key characteristics of qualitative research. (See Creswell, 1998, pp. 16-18.)

> Qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting. (p. 15)

Guidelines. Creswell (1998) suggested guidelines for ensuring that a qualitative approach be appropriate. The topic must be suitable, and researcher's interests need to be connected to the topic. These guidelines are summarized Table 1. The following section discusses the suitability of investigating the incorporation of reflective practice in the practicum course.

Table 1

Reasons for Choosing a Qualitative Approach

The topic	The researcher
1. Needs exploration—theories need development, no easily identified variables.	5. Can tolerate ambiguity and an evolving process of decision making.
2. Need to study individuals in their natural setting; context important.	6. Is interested in writing in a literary style; brings himself or herself into the study.
3. Need to present a detailed view of the topic.	7. Has ample time and resources for extensive data collection and data analysis.
4. Research question is *how* or *what*—initial inquiry describes what is going on.	8. Is an active learner.
9. Both require a receptive audience for topic and researcher.	

(Adapted from Creswell, 1998)

1. The topic required an in-depth exploration. In order to come to a response to this question, there was an initial intention to describe the current course content, the approach of the instructor, and the meaning of the concept of reflective practice to the participants. Although widely used in the literature, the concept of reflective practice has no shared meaning (Yang, 1997). The personal meaning of reflective practice is not easily articulated by a practitioner, nor is it readily translated into curriculum.

2. A qualitative study should follow a natural sequencing of events, in a natural setting. The naturalistic approach was highly conducive to this investigation. Course evaluation usually takes place after the completion of a semester, over a period of a few weeks. The setting for the investigation was the department offices, conducted over the spring and summer months, as the instructor of the course prepared for a new semester.

3. A detailed view of the particular circumstances of the practicum required a qualitative exploration. The application of the concept of reflective practice to a HMEC undergraduate practicum course had not been studied, so another possible dimension of study would be inquiry into possibilities for implementing and integrating this concept with the diverse fieldwork experiences of the students.

4. The research question asked, 'How is reflective practice facilitated or hindered in a practicum course?' This meant that initial investigations explored many different factors: the complexity of the concept of reflective practice, the process of investigating the practicum course content, and possibilities for implementation.

5. A qualitative researcher must be able to tolerate a certain amount of ambiguity. The evolving process of decision making creates uncertainty and necessitates working without clear outcomes in mind from the start. My experiences in earlier coursework projects, and particularly with the collaborative project I completed during my practicum experience, showed that I could work effectively with the ambiguity and evolving process that this study would entail.[4]

6. I feel a strong personal connection to the project. I was inspired as an undergraduate student by Vaines' (1988) article "The Reflective Practitioner," and I completed the practicum five years ago. I think the potential for encouraging reflective

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[4] My own practicum experience involved designing and implementing a project which involved intensive work with two professionals in the community, a family therapist and a family lawyer. The outcome of the project involved writing a booklet on *Parenting After Separation*. This experience gave me a taste of collaborative work, a process-oriented project, and the role of 'scribe' for the team in writing the booklet (Whitmore, 1994).

practice is great, given the expertise of the faculty and the fieldwork opportunity in this human ecology program.

7. The research period was adequate as undertaken in a 'mini-inquiry' approach (Harste & Leland, 1999). I could devote myself to this research over a period of months, attending several meetings and interviews, conducting extensive personal reflection on and analysis of the transcripts of tapes, and reflecting on my personal actions and involvement.

8. As a researcher, my interest in self-reflection and bringing self-reflection into professional life also 'fit' with a qualitative approach to the course revision. A personal need to further integrate my private self-reflection with a professional role makes me an 'active learner' in this situation.

9. There is an audience for qualitative research on the topic of reflective practice. Several scholars and practitioners in HMEC have called for more qualitative research.[5] This work applies and extends the ideas put forward in *People in Practice: International Issues in Home Economics* (Vaines, Kieren, & Badir, 1988), and so will be of interest to educators and practitioners in the HMEC field. Because of the interdisciplinary nature of the concept of reflective practice, it will have audiences in several related fields.

Thus, by following Creswell's (1998) guidelines, I concluded that a qualitative design was appropriate to guide this inquiry into course content.

Why Co-operative Inquiry?

After carefully exploring the suitability of the topic and the researcher for a qualitative investigation, I followed the recommendation of Peterat (1997) to engage in a form of participatory action research; namely, co-operative inquiry. Peterat pointed out that Reason considered action research "an outgrowth of the interest in reflective practice" (p. 120), so it is appropriate to use this approach for an investigation into teaching reflective practice in an undergraduate course.

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[5] See Chapter 1 for a discussion of education and research in HMEC.

Reason (1994) discussed the differences in participatory research approaches: "One might say that participative action research serves the community, cooperative inquiry the group, and action inquiry the individual practitioner" (p. 336). This project entailed the coming together of a small group of people with a common interest in the teaching of reflective practice, although from slightly differing perspectives: one as a sessional instructor and practicum supervisor, the second as a professor who teaches undergraduate HMEC core courses, and the third as a graduate student and research initiator. Therefore, an inquiry that served a collaborative group process fit the project most aptly.

The emphasis on practice in the co-operative inquiry method was also very important to this investigation. Peterat (1997) stated: "In this new paradigm, practice is foregrounded as an essential focus of inquiry and knowledge development" (p. 120). This placement of practice in the foreground is in keeping with our emphasis on investigating the practicum course content in order to improve the instructor's practice.

Denzin and Lincoln's (1998) view of qualitative research highlights the creativity of the researcher in piecing together a variety of techniques to suit the needs of the investigation. Creswell (1998), self-described as a 'research methodologist,' had a stronger focus on design, or procedures, and he strongly advocated using a tradition of inquiry to focus the research project. He defined a *tradition of inquiry* as "an approach to qualitative research that has a distinguished history in one of the disciplines and that has spawned books, journals, and distinct methodologies that characterize its approach" (p. 2). He emphasized the importance of this approach to a beginning researcher:

> We use a tradition of inquiry. This means that the researcher identifies, studies, and employs one or more traditions of inquiry. Certainly, this tradition need not be "pure," and one might mix procedures from several. But for the beginning student of qualitative research, I would recommend staying within one tradition, becoming comfortable with it, learning it, and keeping a study concise and straightforward. (p. 21)

A thorough understanding of the research tradition that provides the general framework for the study can improve clarity, aid in the rigor and sophistication of the design, and provide support for the novice researcher. The following section describes the tradition of co-operative inquiry which formed the framework for the project.

What Is Co-operative Inquiry?

The design of this project is drawn from the co-operative inquiry tradition (Heron, 1996; Reason, 1988, 1994, 1998a, 1998b; Reason & Heron, 1995; Reason & Rowan, 1981). John Heron (1996) presented the idea of co-operative experiential inquiry in 1971 and articulated its philosophy and practice over the following 10 years.[6] He approached a discussion of co-operative inquiry by asserting that "there is no such thing as the account of co-operative inquiry, only an account, including varying degrees of intersubjective agreement and disagreement with others who use the method" (p. 6). As a beginning researcher, I hear his warning to avoid the pitfall of looking for a prescriptive method in his writing:

> However, the more I elaborate and articulate an account, the greater the danger that it will be construed by the beginner in the field as the account, which prescribes how to do a co-operative inquiry properly and correctly. So I here and now disavow that this book is laying down an objective canon of valid inquiry. . . . It develops a personal canon which legitimates, for me, my participation in continuing dialogue. That canon will and must change as the dialogue proceeds. (p. 6)

Co-operative inquiry is one of a variety of participative, or collaborative, experiential inquiries[7] referred to as *human inquiry*, which Reason (1994) described as follows:

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[6] For a description of the evolution of co-operative inquiry, see Heron (1996, pp. 1-6).

[7] These terms are used in different ways to describe this tradition. Treleaven (1994) referred to this tradition as *emancipatory collaborative action research* and listed participatory research, co-operative inquiry, and human inquiry as variations. Reason (1998) referred to participative inquiry as having three approaches, which he saw as "well articulated in both theory and practice and stand[ing] together in quite radical contrast to orthodox scientific method" (p. 262): cooperative inquiry, participatory action research, and action inquiry. Heron (1996) originally referred to this method as *experiential research.*

> I use the term human inquiry to encompass all those forms of search which aim to move beyond the narrow, positivistic and materialist world-view which has come to characterize the latter portion of the twentieth century. While holding on to the scientific ideals of critical self-reflective inquiry and openness to public scrutiny, the practices of human inquiry engage deeply and sensitively with experience, are participative, and aim to integrate action with reflection. (p. 10)

Reason (1988) stated that in co-operative inquiry, all participants contribute to the creativity that is invested in the project, "deciding on what is to be looked at, the methods of the inquiry, and making sense of what is found out—and *also* contribute to the action which is the subject of the research" (p. 1). Reason (1998a) summarized the worldview of this tradition: Human beings co-create their reality through their experience, imagination, intuition, thinking, and action. Heron (1996) described co-operative inquiry as follows:

> Co-operative inquiry involves two or more people researching a topic through their own experience of it, using a series of cycles in which they move between this experience and reflecting together on it. Each person is co-subject in the experience phases and co-researcher in the reflection phases. (p. 1)

Heron became convinced that "only shared experience and shared reflection on it could yield a social science that did justice to the human condition" (p. 2), originally referring to his approach as *experiential research*. Since then, Peter Reason has continued to develop and extend this and related methods. Reason and Heron (1995) described the process of this type of investigation:

> Co-operative inquiry is a fully participatory process in which people engage together in cycles of action and reflection. In doing so they have an opportunity to develop their critical awareness of the theories and ideas they bring to their action in the world, and the extent to which their behaviour and experience are congruent with these theories. Thus in the process of inquiry, both theory and practice are developed. To do this fully, the co-researchers need to develop a particular form of consciousness which we have called critical subjectivity. (p. 124)

Although this elaboration and development of the method has been evolving for over a decade, co-operative inquiry is still considered a 'new orthodoxy.' The method is in an early stage of development, makes considerable demands on human consciousness, and has a relatively small number of studies published.

Although this model of research has affinities with action research and experiential learning work, Heron (1996) stated that the "source, range of application and epistemology—as I have conceived these—are quite distinct, and take it on to a different plane" (p. 1). Because of these differences between co-operative inquiry and the more familiar form of action research, the following sections provide a detailed account of the ideological perspective of this model and elaborate on the philosophical assumptions of the method.

Context: A Participatory Worldview

Vaines (1988) stated that "persons live a particular world view and make their thinking and beliefs visible through their actions. When the world views we are living become more conscious and clear, new questions arise" (p.13). The worldview upon which co-operative inquiry is based is called a *participatory* worldview. Reason (1994) believed that "we are at a critical turning point in our understanding of ourselves in relation to each other and our planet" (p. 1). He saw the practice of human inquiry contributing to the development of a new kind of consciousness, or a transformation of consciousness that is emerging because of a "realization that our existence is based on participation and communion rather than separation and competition" (p. 2). This emerging 'future participative consciousness' requires deep engagement with experience, the use of imagination, and the body (Reason, 1994). This also implies that "the full range of human sensibilities is available as an instrument of inquiry" (Heron, 1996, p. 20). Reason (1998b) summarized this participatory worldview as follows:

> I believe and hope that there is an emerging worldview, more holistic, pluralist, and egalitarian, that is essentially participative. . . . This worldview sees human beings as cocreating their reality through participation: through their experience, their imagination and intuition, their thinking and their action (Heron, 1992). As Skolimowski (1992) puts it, "We always partake of what we describe" (p. 20), so our reality "is a product of the dance between our individual and collective mind and "what is there," the amorphous primordial givenness of the universe. This

> participative worldview is at the heart of inquiry methodologies that emphasize participation as a core strategy." (p. 262)

Thus, the general approach to the study is research as a participative process, *with* people rather than research *on* or *about* people.

These statements build on a vision articulated by John Heron (1996) of "a self-generating culture, . . . a society whose members are in a continuous process of co-operative learning and development, and whose forms are consciously adopted, periodically reviewed and altered in the light of experience, reflection and deeper vision" (p. 4). Because of this new orthodoxy and emerging worldview, it is important to understand the philosophical assumptions and the effects they have on methodology. The following sections discuss the co-operative inquiry tradition by elaborating the underlying philosophical assumptions (Creswell, 1998).

Ontological Assumptions

The ontological issue concerns the nature of reality. In answer to the question 'What is the nature of reality?' Reason (1998b) described *reality* as a process, emerging, becoming, neither subjective nor objective but dialectic. Reason and Heron (1995) said that "human persons are centers of consciousness within a field of universal consciousness, each unfolding a unique perspective within it (Heron, 1992)" (p. 125). Reason pointed out that participative inquiries are all founded on a similar viewpoint:

> The ontological position of all participative approaches to inquiry is well expressed by Paulo Freire (1982): "The concrete reality for many social scientists is a list of particular facts that they would like to capture; for example, the presence or absence of water, problems concerning erosion in the area. For me, the concrete reality is something more than isolated facts. In my view, thinking dialectically, the concrete reality consists not only of concrete facts and (physical) things, but also includes the ways in which the people involved with these facts perceive them. This is the last analysis, for me, the concrete reality is the connection between subjectivity and objectivity, never objectivity isolated for subjectivity" (p. 30). (p. 278)

This was described by Heron (1996) as a mind-shaped reality which is subjective-objective.

Epistemological Assumption

The epistemological question is, 'What is the relationship between the knower and the known?' Reason (1998a) answered that "participation is an epistemological issue, a way of knowing in which knower and known are distinct but not separate" (p. 421). The nature of the researcher/research relationship is interactive (Heron, 1996). Reason and Heron (1995) stated that "there will be as many knowings as there are knowers, and we must accept an epistemological heterogeneity. Truth about reality (or realities) may be more fully revealed in the way these different perspectives overlap and inform each other" (p. 125). Co-operative inquiry is based on three epistemological principles: the person as agent, an extended epistemology, and knowledge in and for action.

Person as agent. Reason (1994) elaborated on the first epistemological principle of personal agency by describing the involvement of people in the research process according to this perspective:

> Persons can only properly study persons when they are in active relationship with each other, where the behavior being researched is self-generated by the researchers in a context of co-operation. This means that all those involved in the research are both co-researchers, who generate ideas about its focus, design and manage it, and draw conclusions from it; and also co-subjects, participating with awareness in the activity that is being researched. (pp. 41-42)

In this sense, participation as an epistemological issue becomes a political one as well. Reason (1998a) argued "that institutions need to enhance human association by an appropriate balance of the principles of hierarchy, collaboration and autonomy: deciding for others, with others, and for oneself" (p. 421). In a co-operative inquiry group, each person's agency is respected and each will make a significant personal contribution, even though the roles members' adopt may be quite different (Reason & Heron, 1995).

Extended epistemology. The second important epistemological principle is an extended epistemology, which includes four kinds of knowledge:

- Experiential knowing, which is gained through direct experience, including feeling and imaging.
- Presentational knowing comes from experiential knowing, which is the first way we order, symbolize, and/or give form and meaning to our experiences. This includes imagery, movement, sound, poetry, etc., which then acts as a link between experience and propositional knowledge.
- Propositional knowing, which refers to concepts, descriptions, theory, statements, and knowing 'about something.'
- Practical knowing, which fulfills the preceding three kinds of knowing, refers to skills, competencies, and 'how-to' experience.

Practical knowledge, in this epistemology, is primary in that it is seen as bringing fulfillment to the former kinds of knowing. "Our action consummates our understanding of our world: the point of human inquiry is to find ways to live our values and purposes in practice" (Reason, 1998a, p. 427).

Emphasis on action. The third epistemological principle is in regard to the relationship between knowledge and action. Co-operative inquiry emphasizes the 'systematic testing of theory in live-action contexts'; thus, knowledge is generated in and for action. The implication of this emphasis on action is that the life experience of participants will change as a result of their involvement in the inquiry. Reason (1998b) identified the priorities of co-operative inquiry as follows:

> Participants are empowered to define their world in the service of what they see as worthwhile interests, and as a consequence they change their world in significant ways, through action—building a road to their village, developing a new form of holistic medical practice—and through experience—developing a sense of empowerment and competence. The articulation of the new forms of knowledge in lectures, articles, and books is a secondary outcome. (p. 279)

In this view, human knowing is not only intellectual, but is also embedded in our experience of the world and given form in the practical action of our lives. According to Heron (1996), "Practical knowledge, knowing how, is the consummation, the fulfillment, of the knowledge quest. . . . It affirms what is intrinsically worthwhile, human flourishing, by manifesting it in action" (p. 34). In this sense, human flourishing is the core value.

Axiological Assumption

The axiological question is, What is the role of values? In co-operative inquiry, the central value is that human flourishing is intrinsically worthwhile: it is valuable as an end in itself (Heron, 1996; Reason, 1998a, 1998b). This flourishing is seen as arising out of the balance of autonomy, co-operation, and hierarchy, and as interdependent with the planetary ecosystem. As a result of this basic stance, there is a strong emphasis on two values: collaboration and emerging self-reflective consciousness (Reason, 1994). These two values are not only acknowledged, but also actively promoted as central to the worldview upon which co-operative inquiry is based.

The value of collaboration expresses the interaction of autonomy and co-operation. Heron (1996) stated: "Autonomy and co-operation are necessary and mutually enhancing values of human life" (p. 3) and explained that co-operative inquiry embraces these values in participant decision making:

> It is essential, in discussing the overlap between co-operative inquiry and other forms of participative research, to distinguish between the democratization of content, which involves all informants in decisions about what the research is seeking to find out and achieve; and the democratization of method, which involves participants in decisions about what operational methods are being used, including those being used to democratize the content. The overlap is usually restricted to democratization of research content. (p. 9)

The value of emergent consciousness refers to the evolution of consciousness seen in this worldview as an aspect of the nature of humanity. Heron (1996) saw the method as a discipline. He looked at all human inquiry methods as disciplines through which

individuals and communities can grow and develop. He felt that the repeating cycles of action and reflection, along with learning "ways of bringing attention to bear in the midst of action" (p. 42), helps to bring about the liberation of people. Thus, this method of inquiry is not a procedure, but a practice. Participants must move toward ever-increasing collaboration and awareness, and it is expected that learning will occur through the 'doing' of co-operative inquiry. "Good heartedness and willingness to learn may be more important than getting it right all the time" (Reason, 1994, p. 199).

Rhetorical Assumption

Creswell (1998) referred to the writing process and structures that authors use, both overall and embedded, in discussing the language of research: "I place emphasis on the terms used by authors in each of the traditions and on the way in which they use encoding of significant passages with these terms to make the text a distinct illustration of a tradition" (p. 9). He included the use of metaphors, stories, and definitions that evolve during the study. Reason (1998a) described the language he used as passionate and committed. Writers of co-operative inquiry have used terms such as *forms of participation, deep engagement*, and *links to action*.

Forms of participation refers to phases of consciousness. Reason (1994) stated: "Participation is not simply a matter of interpersonal skill or political constitution—although these are important—it is also about the foundations of human understanding" (p. 16). He described three phases in human consciousness. The first phase, original participation, is undifferentiated from nature, an unconscious communion with the natural surroundings. This kind of consciousness 'remains at the ground of our being' and makes itself known through dreams and imagination (p. 20). The second phase is one of progressive differentiation; there grows to be a sense of self and community, rationality, and purpose. Consciousness "can range beyond the immediate situation to encompass the universal human and the wider process of the planet: notions of justice, freedom and

human rights are possible from this consciousness" (p. 28). At its extreme, participation in nature (the first phase) is lost, or denied, and people live in an 'alienated consciousness.' The third phase, future participation, is the regaining of participation in a new way that involves intention and awareness, that is "dialectical, always in movement, formed moment to moment in the creative resolutions of the paradox between deep participation and separated consciousness" (Reason, 1994, p. 29). This last phase is considered to be emerging, more potential than realized.

Deep engagement refers to an engagement with issues and with stress and anxiety, and is expressed through storytelling. This can occur when people are swamped by their experiences, and it is difficult to step back and reflect. The experience of deep engagement can also be evoked through immersion in an experience, listening to intuition, imagination, and body sensation.

Links to action refers to the status given practical knowledge and the emphasis on "learning through risk taking in living" (Reason, 1994, p. 196). There is always a comment on the kinds of actions that are taken as a result of the inquiry, and these actions are important outcomes of this type of research.

Methodological Assumption

The methodological question is, What is the process of research? This assumption is based on all the former assumptions. "From these distinctions about reality, the relationship between the researcher and that being researched, the role of values, and the rhetoric of the study emerges the methodological assumption, how one conceptualizes the entire research process" (Creswell, 1998, p. 77). People engaged in a co-operative inquiry project work through cycles of action and reflection until initial questions are answered in practice. These cycles fulfill important functions. Reason (1999) stated:

> It seems to me that one fundamental characteristic of an inquiry group that helps members move toward an attitude of reflective inquiry is the iterative structure of cycles of action and reflection. I would argue that these cycles provide a discipline and a container for the development process. (p. 83).

Cycles lead to congruence, and outcomes of research are validated when a new congruence is apparent between the four kinds of knowing (Reason, 1994). During these cycles, data are generated through experience. Heron (1996) stated:

> Thus I shall speak of the inquirers 'generating data.' What I mean to imply by this is that the inquirers are shaping their experience of the given cosmos. The data does not lie about in ready-made form: it is the fruit of active construing by the mind. (p. 18)

Figure 1 below depicts what Heron (1996) described as the *pyramid of fourfold knowing*. These four kinds of knowing in turn result in the possibility of at least four different kinds of outcomes: experiential, presentational, propositional, and practical. The topic of the inquiry and the type of inquiry will determine which outcomes are most salient.

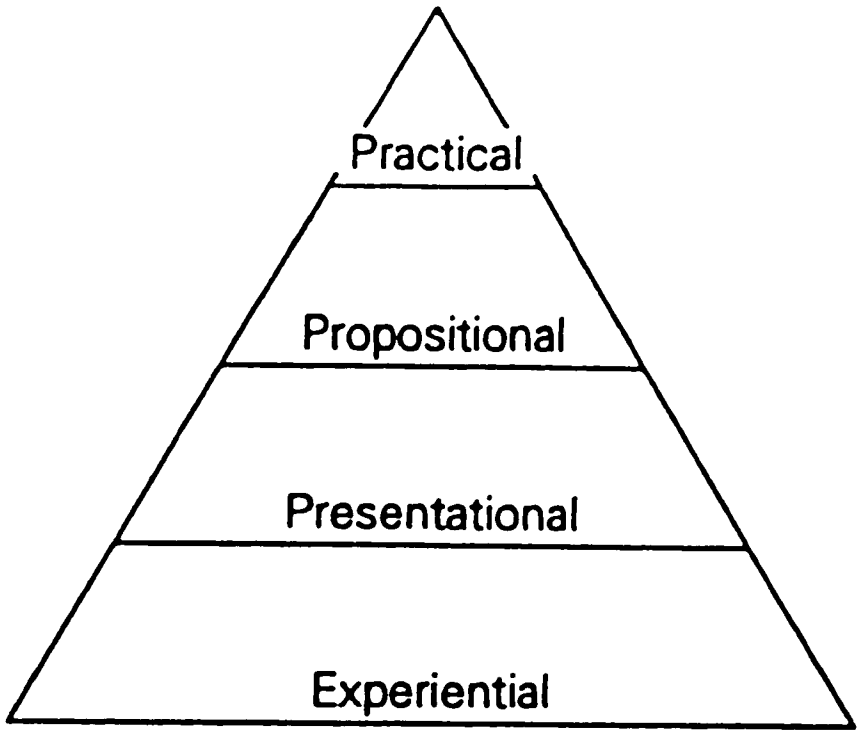

Figure 1. Four kinds of knowing (Heron, 1996).

Reason (1998a) summarized this method and the manner in which the inquiry takes place:

> People work together to define the questions they wish to explore and the methodology for that exploration (propositional knowing); together or separately they apply this methodology in the world of their practice (practical knowing); which leads to new forms of encounter with their world (experiential knowing); and they find ways to represent this experience in significant patterns (presentational knowing) which feeds into a revised propositional understanding of the originating questions. (p. 429)

The participative worldview that forms the foundation for co-operative inquiry and the methodological processes of research create issues that must be considered in a research project. The following section discusses these issues in terms of the relationships of co-operative inquiry to traditional qualitative research, validity, and the academic context.

The Issues Arising out of a New Orthodoxy

Co-operative inquiry is a relatively new discipline of inquiry. In theory, the mutually exclusive roles of researcher and subject completely give way. The inquiry group participates in the thinking that goes into the research, including the framing of questions, the decisions about method, and the sense-making to come of it. Thus, issues of validity[8] come to the fore. This section addresses the issues that arise in terms of this new orthodoxy. First, a discussion about achieving "quality" or "soundness" in the inquiry describes notions of "human flourishing," "critical subjectivity," and "new grounded action." Second, the "audit trail" (Rodgers & Cowles, 1993) used for this investigation is described. The section closes with comments regarding the effect of the academic context on the inquiry.

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[8] Reason (1999) preferred the term *quality*, because *validity* has nuances of meaning that refer to a different worldview. Heron (1996) used the term *soundness*.

Reason and Heron (1995) acknowledged that co-operative inquiry does 'overlap' with qualitative research, yet highlighted central differences. Primarily, co-operative inquiry and qualitative research share a basic approach to research. Creswell (1998) listed five assumptions that he considered central to good qualitative research: "the multiple nature of reality, the close relationship of the researcher to that being researched, the value-laden aspect of inquiry, the personal approach to writing the narrative, and the emerging inductive methodology of the process of research" (p. 73). This basic stance is shared by co-operative inquiry, but there are differences in the articulation of the worldview of co-operative inquiry that lead to different emphasis in research procedures and outcomes.

One difference between co-operative inquiry and qualitative research is that in co-operative inquiry the distinction between researcher and subject is removed (the research group performs both functions), whereas in qualitative research "the researcher tries to minimize the 'distance' or 'objective separateness' [Guba & Lincoln, 1988, p. 94] between himself or herself and those being researched" (Creswell, 1998, p. 78). The inquiry group operates with the following further distinctions:

- An initiating researcher forms a co-operative inquiry group by inviting other people to be full co-inquirers. In mainline qualitative research, informants are not usually involved in method and design of the study.
- People join together in a fully participatory process to co-create knowledge about themselves. Reason and Heron (1995) contrasted this approach with qualitative researchers who attempt to represent their subjects' experience.
- Qualitative research is a social science, whereas co-operative inquiry ranges more widely. An inquiry group may choose to explore any aspect of the human condition through their own experience (Heron, 1996).

These differences between co-operative inquiry and qualitative research mean that validity (or quality, or soundness) must be regarded from a new perspective.

The need to adopt this new perspective compounds what Denzin and Lincoln (1998) referred to as 'a double crisis' when approaching the issue of how to evaluate qualitative research. The first crisis is the *representational crisis*, which refers to the assumption that a researcher can directly, through words, capture experience. "Such experience, it is now argued, is created in the social text written by the researcher" (p. 21). The second, interrelated crisis, the *legitimation crisis*, concerns terms such as *validity* and *generalizability*. Denzin and Lincoln summarized the problem created by this double crisis by stating: "How are qualitative studies to be evaluated in the poststructural moment?"

This problem shapes and defines what is referred to as the *fifth moment* in the history of research. The co-operative inquiry method could be seen as part of this fifth moment. In fact, Heron (1996) stated that the participative reality that is foundational for co-operative inquiry is a "distinct, fifth inquiry paradigm" (p. 10). Denzin and Lincoln (1998) predicted that because of this crisis in evaluation, "the search for grand narratives will be replaced by more local, small-scale theories fitted to specific problems and specific situations (p. 22).

Although the co-operative inquiry method provides for the tailoring of research procedures to accommodate the demands of a particular situation, the collaborative nature of research content and method means that the criteria used to judge the value of research-influenced actions must also be formulated in a collaborative manner. The following section addresses the issue of validity, or quality, in the context of this double crisis.

Validity

A discussion of quality or validity in qualitative research always rests on assumptions of worldview. The participatory worldview forms the foundational assumptions for co-operative inquiry. According to Reason (1994), the meaning of validity from the participatory perspective differs from that of all research "primarily forged in a positivist or modernist perspective, with its deep-rooted assumptions about the separation

of knower from what is known" (p. 1). Reason (as cited in Whitmore, 1994) preferred to use the term *quality*, because "the term validity is too ideologically laden, whereas quality allows more space for us to formulate new standards and to draw on widely different fields of thought" (p. 3). The following three topics elaborate on the way validity is viewed in co-operative inquiry.

Human flourishing. In co-operative inquiry, human flourishing is always the starting criteria for determining validity and outcomes. Personal change is considered the primary outcome of co-operative inquiry. "The quest for validity in terms of well-grounded truth-values is interdependent with another process which transcends it. This is the celebration of being-values in terms of flourishing human practice" (Heron, 1996, p. 12). The concepts or ideas of *Truth* and *validity* have to do with human reason and a logical, intellectual way of knowing. There are other equally important ways of knowing. Thus the challenge after positivism, according to Heron, is to redefine the concepts of truth and validity in order to honor the generative, creative role of the human mind: "Valid knowledge, on the multi-dimensional view, means that each of the four kinds of knowledge is validated by its own internal criteria, and also by its interdependence and congruence with all the others within a systemic whole" (p. 33).

Critical subjectivity. Reason (1998b) addressed validity in co-operative inquiry through the term *critical subjectivity*, which refers to the "high quality, critical, self-aware, discriminating, and informed judgments of the co-researchers" (p. 267). The process inherent in the inquiry approach demands that participants exercise consciousness in a way that acknowledges and makes use of four kinds of knowledge. Critical subjectivity arises out of the integration of the four kinds of knowledge and the new actions that emerge. Reason and Heron (1995) described this as the development of a "critical awareness of the theories and ideas they bring to their action in the world, and the extent to which their behavior and experience are congruent with these theories" (p. 124). Reason (1998b) described this awareness as a critical consciousness about our subjectivity:

> The co-operative inquiry method—the cycling and recycling through phases of action and reflection, and the application of validity procedures—is the discipline through which the co-inquirers are able to critically see through their subjectivity. They are able to articulate the perspective they are taking and begin to see through the distortions that arise through the bias of their personal and class position. Thus the process of inquiry must also always involve the personal development of the co-inquirers as they move from being relatively unreflexively subjective toward a position of critical subjectivity. (p. 281)

New grounded action. In this view, action is a result of and is grounded in other ways of knowing. When action brings about the congruence of the four kinds of knowledge, then one can claim validity in the inquiry (Reason, 1998b). The claim to validity arises out of action in this way because critical subjectivity must be developed through working with the four kinds of knowing and the relationship between and among them. Thus, validity is expressed in the inquiry process itself, with "participants engaging in collaborative inquiry, constructing new understandings that informed their subsequent and thus different actions" (Treleaven, 1994, p. 156). In co-operative inquiry validity indicators are internal to the process of cycling through action and reflection phases and must be judged by the co-researchers, not by external standards.

The Audit Trail

Rodgers and Cowles (1993) described the use of a research 'audit trail,' comprised of four types of documentation. Contextual documentation was intended to ensure interpretability or transferability and was considered "essential to the ultimate establishment of trustworthiness" (p. 221). Methodological documentation involved tracking the evolving methodology, which ensured dependability or the rigor of the investigation. Analytical documentation and personal-response documentation rounded out the audit trail.

The audit trail for this project consisted of *contextual documentation* in the form of fieldnotes. *Methodological documentation* consists of audiotapes of the core-group conversations, where the decisions concerning the method and the focus of inquiry were

made. All audiotapes were transcribed. These transcriptions became the main source of *analytic documentation*; the identification of themes that occurred during conversation are thus recorded and available for further reflection. A second source of analytic documentation was a flipchart used during some conversations. *Personal-response documentation* in this case was included in the fieldnotes, in part, and in the transcripts.

Heron (1996) described this approach to ensuring *trustworthiness, dependability,* and *confirmability* through the use of an audit trail as "nostalgic for positivist criteria" (p. 160) and not applicable to a method arising out of a participative worldview. Therefore in this investigation the use of an audit trail does not resolve issues of quality criteria in this inquiry, but does provide a way to organize material for reporting in an academic context and provides a source of further reflection.

The Academic Context

The academic setting can influence a project in several ways. Reason and Heron (1995) described the implications of this setting for the inquiry:

> As well as universities sustaining a model of authoritarian intellectual control of students in education and subjects in research, they also sustain a strong Aristotelian bias in favor of proposition knowledge, that is, intellectual statements. . . . This bias has a huge influence on both the quantitative and qualitative research coming out of universities. This research rests on the unquestioned assumption that intellectual knowledge is the only valid and respectable outcome of systematic inquiry. (p. 33)

Thus, one concern regarding co-operative inquiry in an academic setting has to do with inquiry outcomes. There are at least four kinds of outcomes that may be reported out of a co-operative inquiry: propositional, presentational, experiential, and practical. Of these four, practical outcomes, or the actions people take in their practice as a result of the inquiry, are seen to be the most important. This "primacy of the practical" can pose a challenge to those who write the inquiry report, "for a skill, knowing how to do something, can never be reduced to written descriptions of doing it" (Heron, 1996, p. 34).

On the other hand, the idea of inquiry as practice has great potential and has been seen by some as being worth the difficulty of reporting it (Peterat, 1997; Reason, 1999). Peterat asserted that we "need to dialogue with each other about our learnings and knowings that arise from different practices, contexts, and experiences" (p. 104).

This approach to reporting outcomes differs from traditional academic research reports, where propositional outcomes are the only outcomes reported. Reason and Heron (1995) stated: "This one-dimensional account of research outcomes offends a fundamental principle of systemic logic, the logic of whole systems, which is that the relative autonomy of the part is interdependent with the mutual interaction of parts within the whole" (p. 33).

Also, an academic setting for a co-operative inquiry may create a conflict in organizational politics. "In some ways these inquiry methods fit quite comfortably within the best of the Western Academic tradition, with its emphasis on creative inquiry; in other ways they confront the rigidities of academia head on" (Reason & Heron, 1995, p. 36). Denzin and Lincoln (1998) described 'political' resistances to qualitative research in general:

> The academic and disciplinary resistances to qualitative research illustrate the politics embedded in this field of discourse. The challenges to qualitative research are many. . . . These resistances reflect an uneasy awareness that the traditions of qualitative research commit the researcher to a critique of the positivist project. . . . The politics of qualitative research creates a tension; . . . this tension itself is constantly being reexamined and interrogated, as qualitative research confronts a changing historical world, new intellectual positions, and its own institutional and academic conditions. (pp. 7-8)

Reason (1998a) stated his purpose as "to contribute to the revision of how we understand and practice research, moving it away from being the primary business of the academy and re-instating it as a central aspect of a well-lived life within a self-reflective community" (p. 419). Ultimately, in co-operative inquiry, outcomes are seen as indications of human flourishing, as discussed earlier. "The co-operative inquiry perspective is that research is always personal, political and spiritual; knowledge is always from a perspective

and for a purpose" (Reason & Heron, 1995, p. 124). In this project, outcomes are reported in terms of the extended epistemology of co-operative inquiry: experiential, practical, propositional, and presentational.

The academic setting influenced this project in several ways. First, all the participants were aware that the outcomes of the inquiry needed to be reported in the form of a thesis, at least in part. Thus, my supervisor and examining committee were acknowledged as an audience. This also resulted in a tendency toward a less-than-complete collaboration. There was a continual tension between the demands of group process and ownership and the initiatives that I felt I needed to take, both as facilitator and as graduate student meeting deadlines and expectations based on traditional qualitative research. Second, the reporting of outcomes took different forms for the inquiry group and the examining committee. This is discussed further in Chapter 4.

Students have been using collaborative inquiry methods in pursuit of academic qualifications for over 14 years under the supervision of Peter Reason and others. However, he stated: "These approaches to inquiry through participation need to be seen as living processes of coming to know rather than as formal academic method" (Reason, 1998b, p. 263).

Conclusion: *Bricoleur* and *Bricolage*

This investigative project was an in-depth inquiry into the teaching of the concept of reflective practice in a practicum setting and the application of the fruits of the inquiry to the structure and content of a practicum course. Thus, from the viewpoint of initiating this project, two objectives were seen as central in the review and revision of the practicum course content. First, students should increase their understanding of what professional practice is in the field of HMEC, even if the concept of reflective practice is not referred to explicitly in the course outline and materials. Second, students should have opportunities to increase self-understanding through exercises and assignments.

This project also became a personal investigation into my becoming as a reflective practitioner and a qualitative researcher. An image that impressed me in graduate school coursework was Denzin and Lincoln's (1998) description of the researcher as *bricoleur*, one who creates "a pieced-together, close-knit set of practices that provide solutions to a problem in a concrete situation" (p. 3). Being a qualitative researcher is learning to piece together elements that are serving a purpose, performing a function, creating a *bricolage*.

Throughout this inquiry, I considered that I was an emerging *bricoleur*. "Becoming a professional is one aspect of a person's journey" (Vaines, 1988, p. 17). As part of my becoming a professional, I was the initiator and co-researcher of a research project. Who I am as a researcher, an emerging *bricoleur*, is part of who I am becoming as a professional; thus, this project became part of my personal journey. In a way I also undertook to create a *bricolage* for myself; a 'piecing together' that was needed for an enhanced sense of wholeness in myself, in how I think of myself, in how I *feel* myself to be as a person and a professional.

Hultgren (1991) said that a critical orientation evolves when one is able to realize the 'gap between what is and what should be.' This study began with an intention to explore 'what is' and articulate 'what should be.' We generated knowledge out of our own experiences, and we drew from an extensive, interdisciplinary literature on reflective practice to inform course content.

CHAPTER 3

THE INQUIRY

We begin
with our own realities
at the site
of our own experience.
(Carol Morgaine, 1993a, p. 20)

Introduction

Denzin and Lincoln (1998) described the multimethod nature of qualitative research as a *bricolage* and the researcher as *bricoleur*, who creates "a pieced-together, close-knit set of practices that provide solutions to a problem in a concrete situation" (p. 3). While a tradition of research forms the frame of the project, the piecing-together of components must be done in a way that suits the unique situation at hand. Reason (1988) advised those who are undertaking collaborative methods to study, to explore, and then to "invent their own form which is suitable for the project they wish to undertake" (p. 201). In co-operative inquiry, the initiating researcher is joined by the other participants, forming the core group in the piecing-together process. This chapter describes the *bricolage* created by participants in this project through a series of conversations. This investigation mainly followed the procedures of co-operative inquiry. A personal reflection that occurred during the inquiry process was also included which draws on hermeneutic methods.

A full-scale cooperative inquiry, which allows ample time for repeated cycling through stages of reflection, can take several months to complete and may include large groups of people. This project is an initial investigation and may be regarded as a *mini-inquiry*, conducted with "the idea of venturing slowly into unknown territory" (Harste &

Leland, 1999, p. 69). It was completed in six months' time and involved a core group consisting of three members moving through four cycles of action and reflection.

According to Reason (1994), the formal methodology of a co-operative inquiry project can be approached in very different ways. Method is important, because it presents a discipline which offers "a tension between the messiness of experiential engagement and the structure offered by cycles of action and reflection" (p. 210). However, the form of each design must be suitable to the project and thus is 'invented' as the investigation proceeds. Heron (1996, pp. 40-48) offered descriptions of types of inquiry. The terms he used as descriptors depicting aspects of this inquiry appear in italics in the following sections.

Launching the Inquiry Group

Heron (1996) described three ways in which an inquiry group can be started: by a research-initiator inviting interested parties, by an already-existing group inviting a researcher, or by a group choosing to be entirely self-initiating. This inquiry was *researcher initiated.*

The research focus of the group was to investigate course content during the period of this academic year when professors typically review and revise course outlines. As a student, I was external to both the culture and practice of university teaching, so this project was *externally initiated.* This external initiation had two direct implications for the inquiry process. First, once the inquiry was launched and the core group formed, I continued as co-researcher "but of a lesser rank than the main group" (Heron, 1996, p. 41). Second, I became an *analogous or partial co-subject* rather than a full co-subject. Heron described this role as follows:

> Their role as analogous or partial co-subjects, gives them only a reduced warrant to contribute relevant data to the descriptions and explanations of the reflection phases. This progression from higher rank as initiating researchers, to lower rank as peer co-researchers, is one they can proclaim at the outset. It affirms the democratization of the research process. (p. 41)

After initiating the project, I participated in reflection phases as a lower-rank peer co-researcher. The resulting inquiry is a *partial form* co-operative inquiry. As an analogous co-subject, I shared an overlapping interest with the other participants in the practicum course due to my previous experience as a student and due to my desire to be a reflective practitioner. This combination of experience and intention created common ground for the reflective phases. During the action phases, I shared a common focus in that all core group members were engaged in reflecting on the past in order to prepare for the future as reflective practitioners.

"The first stage for the initiator is to find or establish his or her group" (Reason & Heron, 1995, p. 134). I approached Sue, the instructor of the practicum course, to ask if she was interested in forming an inquiry group to investigate the practicum course in terms of the topics covered and the activities included during the semester. I proposed that this could be done after classes ended, during the time that she normally reviewed and revised the course outline in preparation for the next term. This initiating invitation was broadly stated for the purpose of allowing the focus of inquiry to be 'co-operatively chosen' after the core group had formed (Heron, 1996, p. 39).

As initiator of the project, I did some preliminary thinking so that I could present ideas to Sue. I anticipated that there would be a need to review the course outline with the concept of reflective practice in mind. I considered the viewpoints of different authors, such as Vaines' (1988) 'guiding themes' and Cranton's (1998) three kinds of learning. The purpose of this reflection would be to review the course curriculum using different authors' viewpoints to determine the extent to which aspects of the course exhibit their central ideas. As part of the process of the cooperative inquiry, I thought that we could also discuss the potential usefulness of the frameworks in helping other educators understand and work with the role and the concept of reflective practice.

Sue had held her current position as instructor for three years, so she was familiar with other educators in the department. The practicum course is one of the human ecology

core requirements in the program, along with five other courses. Sue and I discussed extending invitations to others who instruct core courses, and together we decided on inviting Beth to form a core group with us. This inquiry has a focus on practice that takes place within a social role, that of university teacher. This is a *same role* inquiry because Beth and Sue are both teachers investigating course content. The inquiry cycles through phases of action and reflection. The action phase is focused on practice outside the group meetings, and the group forms for reflection phases "to share data, make sense of it, revise their thinking, and in the light of all this, plan the next action phase" (Heron, 1996, p. 43). Heron referred to this format as an *outside* inquiry.

The Initial Conversations

Initial conversations with the course instructor, Sue, included discussions about my ideas and led to the drawing up of some objectives for the project. The intent of the investigation project is to review a fourth-year course in human ecology to develop an understanding of the course content in relationship to the principles of reflective practice (Vaines, 1988). Reason (1994) stated that in the first phase, co-researchers should "agree on the focus of their inquiry, and develop together a set of questions or propositions they wish to explore" (p. 43).

We set out the following objectives to guide our investigation of the facilitation of reflective practice in the practicum course:

- to describe course content in terms of aspects that are aligned with features of reflective practice,
- to describe aspects of the course that contradict these features, and
- to suggest areas where the course could be changed to facilitate students' understanding and development of a reflective orientation to practice.

Our initial question was "Can the course be improved to better facilitate student's development as reflective practitioners?" Portalupi (1999) explained that

> question posing can at times present a conundrum—many teachers report their ability to frame the question only after they get a glimpse at the answer. Nonetheless, the process of articulating a question is an important one. Not only does it initiate the research but it plays an important part in the research process itself. (p. 32)

As well as guiding the current project, I wanted the research question to be amenable to Sue's teaching inquiry in the future, whether her inquiry was conducted informally in practice or formally in ongoing action research. According to Portalupi (1999), a research question based on inquiry into teaching should fit with both short- and long-term goals that the teacher holds for her students:

> Asking questions of our classrooms is as natural as breathing. Teachers who conduct classroom-based research turn those wonderings into research questions they can systematically pursue. Those who continue to incorporate research into their teaching know two things. They understand research to be an integral and energizing aspect of teaching. They have learned how to streamline their research questions so they fit into both the dailiness of teaching and into the long-term learning goals they hold for their students. (p. 31)

So, in framing the question, I considered the fit of the question with Sue's teaching goals, as much as I knew of them. I also considered the undergraduate students in the practicum. How would the research question impact them? Portalupi (1999) observed that

> students will inevitably pay attention to whatever you're choosing to attend to. . . . Here is where the potential effect of teacher research on student learning is made most visible. Research should not be an appendage to your teaching. When carefully thought through, it can be a teaching strategy that helps you realize the learning goals you and the students have set for the year. (p. 34)

After deliberation on these questions, and discussions with Sue, the framing of the research question seemed in accord with these two considerations. First, the question was posed in a way that was amenable to further work if the impetus for investigation continued after the completion of this project. Second, the impact of the research question on undergraduate students seemed to be favorable if Sue chose to share the results of the project.

Forming the Core Group

The inquiry group envisioned in early conversations between Sue and me was a core group of three. We decided to invite one other instructor who was familiar with the practicum course and interested in reflective practice. I proposed that we also invite other professors in the department to comment on the results of our investigation as we were moving through the conversations, and Sue agreed that other viewpoints would be valuable. We also agreed that I would tape record our reflection meetings and that transcripts of these tapes would provide material for further reflection. This marked the first methodological decisions arising out of our conversations and meant that this inquiry is an *open-boundary* inquiry.

The ideal of a fully collaborative project is rarely accomplished, and as initiator and facilitator of the project, I advanced more suggestions regarding method than any other participant. However, all methodological decisions were made in the full knowledge that they had to 'feel right' to all participants. Peterat (1997) stated: "While one may never be able to claim in any particular research study that these (collaborative) ideals were achieved, it is important that they guide the work and be reflected on explicitly in reporting" (p 122). We agreed that conversations would take place at least one week apart, to allow ample time for immersion in practice during action phases before reflecting on our topic again. Reason (1999) highlighted the importance of structure in the conversation cycles:

> Experience with inquiry groups suggests that the inquiry group needs, certainly in the early stages, a fairly formal structure of inquiry cycles with regularly scheduled meetings for reflection. . . . It is both terribly obvious and simple, almost naive to write about. Yet the cyclical nature of knowing offers a fundamental truth it seems easy not to see. (pp. 83-84)

The cycling through reflective meetings interspersed with action phases began.

The First Cycle

During the first phase, Sue and I decided to conduct at least four reflective conversations; and when the third participant, Beth, was invited to form the core group with us, she was aware of the time demands that this project would make.

Sue and I discussed the practicum course during the first meeting. This conversation provided a beginning focus for the investigation and summarized discussions we had had leading up to the initiating of the project. The following methodological decisions were made:

- to link reflective practice with professional practice by investigating *professionalism*. The human ecology program description refers to professional practice and does not mention reflective practice, so we asked a new question: How does reflective practice fit with professional practice?
- to include the prepracticum course in the inquiry. Sue brought this need forward during our meeting:

Sue: Every week I have a topic related to what we talked about in the prepracticum course. . . . I would like to build a stronger link. If I do talk about reflective practice, which is one of my goals, I'd like to strengthen that link so that the students see the value in it and have an experience with it.

- to create a model of reflective practice for the pre-practicum course. Sue expressed a desire to have a model of reflective practice with which to work:

Sue: You could work within it, knowing . . . you always have objectives, but to have a framework to link with those objectives would be significant; it would help it sit in my mind better. You can see where the course is coming from, where I am coming from.

- to consider the approach of levels of reflective practice. I brought forward Cranton's (1998) writing, and Sue felt that the idea of levels would be helpful:

Sue: I see levels of reflective practice, I see a level for peers, and then going deeper as a level for self as well, because I think that is one of those things that is on that continuum of self-disclosure and privacy. There is a lot of yourself that you will never share with

people, and that is appropriate. Different levels, that will really help me. It will help the students see that they can do this at different levels.

Sue and I considered these ideas during the action phase. During this time I approached Beth, and the three of us then formed the core group to reflect in the second cycle.

The Second Cycle

Initial topics that had been discussed between Sue and me were brought into conversation with Beth, who taught the introductory course that included material on reflective practice, and the writing of Eleanor Vaines in particular:

- How do you create a model of reflective practice?

Beth: I think you are right, that in a sense we need to think about reflective practice as both a concept and a model that we all buy into, that we all speak about with the same kind of language, and that we reinforce it as they go through all our courses and through the program, because I think it is a very, very important concept that is getting a little bit of piecemeal attention. That is how it feels to me.

Sue: Oh, and it feels to the students very much that way, as well. You will find certain instructors just talk that way themselves, more readily integrated into the coursework but not within a framework, not within a model. Like, I'm finding in 480 and you are finding in 380 it's there, but there is no model.

Beth: That is how it comes across for sure.

- How does reflective practice fit with professional practice? Beth commented on the diversity in the field of HMEC.

Beth: It is also the nature of any kind of discipline or field of study in flux, and this comes from many sources: green movement in Europe, home economics in the States, many branches coming together to make a tree, not growing from the roots to form a tree; a multidisciplinary—it's a strength and a weakness. I think we have to live with that, and as a result you have within a department like this many disciplines and focuses and approaches that cannot unify on a definition or professional practice issues. I think the fundamental thing that we all would agree on is basis human values that we cherish, that we would like our students and ourselves to practice, and I think that is the safest ground that we have, is a set of values.

The Third Cycle

This conversation was the third reflective meeting of the inquiry. Beth had reflected on our last conversation and wanted to bring her additional thoughts to the conversation:

Beth: I had some additional thoughts about what we were talking about last time. This whole notion of professional and, I think, the division that I talked about in terms of how people view professional practice in this department and in the field is, I wanted to think about that some more and why is it there and what does it look like? And my thoughts on that are that one is very much a definition that comes from a skill set that you can define, that you can say this person, these skills, has this particular body of knowledge and can be called this kind of professional, is very much a very clear set, and also can get certification because of that. There is a match, right along, to a certification possibility.

The other type of professional practice that is operating, it's not that people don't believe in professional practice, but they believe in something different. And I think that type is the type that says, "Being a professional in any field looks like this." This is how a professional behaves, is able to think about themselves, is able to think about the field, so it's more of a generic, central core kind of notion of professional and is not necessarily attached to a specific skill set or a specific certification process.

Our conversation wove around and elaborated the topic of the fit between reflective practice and professional practice in HMEC:

Beth: It comes from those roots again, home economics model, which was very straightforward, almost deterministic. You entered a home ec. program; you knew exactly what you were going to get, what you were going to come out with. At least that is old home ec. That's where that model comes from initially, and that is what we are moving slowly away from, but it is still there.

Gayle: And as long as there is the option to be certified as a professional home economist.

Beth: It's going to be there. And the other model comes from the rest of the human ecology movement which says there are certain values we espouse in this movement, certain ways of practicing, but beyond that it is pretty open. And there is not one set of skills, there is not one particular way of doing things that we can call *human ecology*. So if we can go back to last week, that is sort of the schizophrenia of the whole movement right now, the whole field.

Gayle: So how then you would integrate reflective practice into the practicum with that diversity among the students becomes a very real concern, a practical concern, because that diversity is there; it is not just a theoretical concern.

Beth: That is the huge, huge challenge, trying to meet the needs of that spectrum: not overemphasizing, not underemphasizing, just trying to hit the right tone. I find it really a challenge in 380, especially because a lot of them haven't had the professional experiences to reflect on. They've had jobs; a lot of them have worked. But they have worked in jobs that are not necessarily in their field, and that is the issue, right there, that they don't really know for sure who they are as a potential professional in the field when we are going through these kinds of concepts.

Sue: Absolutely. And I had one student after I saw her at graduation after she had been out working for a couple of months. So I asked, "How are you doing?" "Oh, great. I am selling clothes at Roots Canada, and, you know, every day I wonder how what I am doing relates to human ecology. How am I making a difference selling clothes? Some days I can see it and some days I can't." And I thought, That's very interesting and very much a reflective practice issue, finding that way that you are making a difference not just to justify it, not to justify it, but to feel it and incorporate it into your everyday practice. But I thought that that was quite interesting, and I think that that is a good example of how some of our students are on the periphery, feeling that this human ecology theory and model and way of practicing, when we get into the more business-oriented or the areas that touch on other disciplines, very much so. I thought it was interesting that she was thinking about it all the time!

Gayle: So that is a place where the language might be different, and the arena of change might be different, discussed in a different way, but the idea that the world isn't as good as it could be and we can do something about that is very much common ground.

Beth: It's common ground.

Sue: Very much so.

During this meeting we felt that the difficulty of fit in the field of HMEC between reflective practice and professional practice had been clarified.

A Shift in Focus

The core group decided to focus the inquiry now on this felt and articulated need to address the diversity and the 'schizophrenia' of the field by attempting to bring a diagram and information from the literature to a group discussion. We also decided to include other professors from the department for single interviews, which I would conduct, for feedback on the diagram. This represents a strong shift in focus away from looking directly at course content and toward finding a way to address this concern about

fit and finding information in the literature to bring to this issue for further reflection. During the action phase, the instructors considered these issues further, and I sought out articles that I felt addressed our concerns. At this time I invited Sarah to join in the next reflection meeting as a one-time guest. This is an example of open boundary in a reflection phase (Heron, 1996, p. 45).

The Fourth Cycle

The last reflection meeting included the core group and Sarah, our guest. The purpose of this meeting was to focus on the creation of a diagram that represented our thinking about reflective practice to this point. We conducted the meeting around a flipchart; I presented and drew the diagram, and the other group members gave comments and extended the conversation. At the conclusion of this meeting the group decided that it would be useful to take this diagram to colleagues for feedback. I was asked to interview two other instructors, Linda and Mae. These instructors also taught core courses in the human ecology program and had expressed an interest in reflective practice.

During the action phase of this last cycle, I conducted these two interviews. The instructors were asked to comment on the model drawing. I made comments on the flipchart drawings to express their views and then reported back to the core group. In this way, the comments of the other professors were brought into the inquiry. This is an example of *open boundary* in the action phase (Heron, 1996, p. 44).

Our final informal conversations were predominantly future planning. The core group decided that the diagrams that had been generated throughout the inquiry should be melded if possible, and the resulting diagrams and main topics identified in our conversations be made into a booklet or a reader along with information from the literature and key articles.

These outcomes were presented for the group members in the form of a reader that Sue will use in her class next term. Sue and I reviewed the course outline, using the

diagrams to reflect on course content. We agreed that nothing hindered the teaching of reflective practice in the course content, but the course needed to include materials regarding the topics that had arisen during the inquiry. The outcomes of the inquiry are presented in Chapter 4, including this series of diagrams and key topics.

A Personal Reflection

I undertook this research into an undergraduate course and, as it turned out, at the same time into myself. It was not until I was in the middle of the inquiry conversations that I realized that the gap between my personal and professional identity was a problem! It was a problem revealed in the emotion in my voice as I listened to the tapes of shared conversation, in the exploring of ideas of who I am in the privacy of my thoughts, and in the hollow feeling in the pit of my stomach when I said "reflective practice" in relation to me. I considered this problem in light of co-operative inquiry and the four ways of knowing. The 'gap' I experience can be seen as an incongruence among these ways of knowing. The concept of self-reflection as a connecting element could be seen as propositional knowing, which is incongruent with experiential, practical, and presentational knowing. I realized that this inquiry had a deep personal meaning for me that I could address through co-operative inquiry, only now used more as a method of discipline than research.

The following sections offer a story of how I came to practice co-operative inquiry as a discipline of integrity, of an attempt to integrate four ways of knowing. In order to do this integrating experiment, hermeneutic insights are brought to bear on an account of self-reflecting and ritual.

Scott (1997) stated that a life event can be a trigger for transformation. The triggering event for me was a moment I experienced while I was transcribing the tapes for this inquiry. I heard myself tell a story of a time when I was an undergraduate student, and

the emotion in my voice resonated within me. I noticed the metaphor I had used and that a colleague had used the same metaphor to show me another possibility:

Gayle: "I felt that the professors did a good job. In both cases they said, 'This is my slant, what I think is important in the world.' This is my view; you will see in the textbook that other people have different orientations. . . . When I give you these exercises, it is as if I am saying, 'This is my coat. I want you to wear this coat.'"
Beth: "I had professors who said, 'This is my coat, and I want you to discover your own coat.' I would have the students make their own coat."

I felt touched by Beth's response, and I knew that this metaphor was pointing to an important issue. I considered my journey of self-reflection and came to the conclusion that 'the gap' I felt between my personal life and public life must now be bridged. I felt compelled to address this split, and I thought the metaphor of 'making a coat' could serve me in some way. The possibility of a bridging seemed imminent, but how could this bridge be built? A dream provided the inspiration to create what I call a *word ritual*, and the experiment began.

"Bearing truthful witness to one's life is a daunting but necessary task. . . . Self-disclosure is more suited to poems, novels, and short stories than to the less emotionally charged genres of textbook and article writing" (Thompson, 1992, p. 21). Acknowledging the challenge of self-disclosure in academic writing, this section weaves together a hermeneutically inspired personal process of reflection and ideas concerning the reflective practice approach to professional development in HMEC.

The following sections provide an account of this experiment: first, a discussion of the way I made use of the hermeneutic tradition to provide a scaffold for the experiment of performing a ritual with words; and second, an account of the conversation, or the internal dialectic that arose as the ritual proceeded.

Drawing Insights From Hermeneutics

How can the insights of the hermeneutic tradition help me with my personal growth? How am I changing, transforming in my self-reflecting? Am I growing as a reflective practitioner? I need to understand my own change in self-reflecting abilities and to encourage the process of healing the gap between personal and professional self-reflection.

'Understand' can be understood hermeneutically, "which means seeing it with Heidegger as the ontological disclosure of what it means to be human, what it means to live as a human being" (Smith, 1983, p. 74). This is not only an understanding between persons, but also an understanding that is held between myself and my reflections of myself.

Smith (1983) stated that "doing research hermeneutically requires a change of attitude from any tradition which would claim to be able to 'know the facts' of a given situation apart from an owning of oneself as inextricably a part of the situation" (p. 75). This stance is quite in accord with the worldview of co-operative inquiry and also strikes a place of accord within me. In hermeneutic research, researcher and subject are reconciled. The desire to find common understanding from two vantage points of my own identity takes the idea of reconciliation one step further. I need the reconciling in my inner world.

Questioning is the means by which human nature comes to know itself. "The hermeneutic search for understanding realizes itself most essentially in questioning, but again, questioning as understood in a way different from that usually found, for example, in behavioral science models for interrogation, interviewing, etc." (Smith, 1983, p. 76). This questioning wants openness, arises from a desire to know, presses through dialogue to be heard. The following account of this inner questioning and dialogue is recorded in the style of "a descriptive narrative," which is not a reproduction of speech or activity, but a representation intended to reveal "the essence" of the speaking and doing (Smith, 1983,

p. 89). In this case, the narrative style is adapted to weave together transcript, thoughts, experiences with text, and experiences with images and dreams.

The ritual enactment in this account of a conversation, an internal dialectic, that arose out of a response to words that struck me as I read articles during the inquiry. The ritual consisted of printing a word, phrase, or quotation on a piece of paper and placing the page on my desk. Each new page covered the previous one, so that the current page was always on top. The pages had this place on the desk and were moved only when I occasionally picked them up to reread the sequence as it evolved.

The Narrative and Pointing

The following text in columns reflects a hermeneutically inspired activity. The first activity is telling the story, or creating a *descriptive narrative*. The first column includes both sides of the conversation. The left-aligned text tells the story of what happens to me in relation to the outer world, and the right-aligned text is the voice of my reflection, the response to the storyteller. The second activity is an identification of *ontological pointings* that are noted in the second column. "What one tells through telling is not captured by the telling itself. . . . The words and the speech merely provide the medium through which the deeper meaning of the narrative reveals itself" (Smith, 1983, p. 90). The second column includes this other level of comment; that of an 'ontological pointing' to the meaning that I discern in the conversation.

As a researcher, one cannot separate oneself from an objective reality. Self-disclosure "speaks of the deep complicity and interest the researcher has in the product and process of research. It is both an admission of self and an attempt to construct self (acknowledging an incomplete self) in relation to others" (Smits, 1994, p. 30). My intention in telling my story within this inquiry is not to foreground myself, but to acknowledge the desires and intentions of which I became aware.

I listened to the tapes, but I was surprised as I heard myself tell stories of experiences as an undergraduate student. As the memories surfaced in our conversation, I noticed the strong emotions within them. One in particular signaled a turning point:	Awakening to my story.
Gayle: I felt that the professors did a good job. In both cases they said, "This is my slant, what I think is important in the world. This is my view; you will see in the text book that other people have different orientations. . . . When I give you these exercises, it is as if I am saying, 'This is my coat. I want you to wear this coat.'"	A metaphor: 'Trying on' a viewpoint like wearing a coat.
I am touched by the response of another, who said:	
Beth: "I had professors who said, 'This is my coat, and I want you to discover your own coat.' I would have the students make their own coat."	A realization: There is another way.
This is what I need to do.	The metaphor
Make my own coat.	becomes my own
I feel myself relax; *the pent-up tension* *begins to drain away.* *Her words have initiated a healing.*	Awareness of a need for change, to become a healer/ tailor.
One night, I had a dream:	
I am holding a sheet of paper with words printed in large type:	
"Goodbye to this place my home no longer"	An ending. The beginning of a grieving process.
I am inserting strawflowers from my garden into all the o's.	
I am moving out of Canada. *I have to leave this home and garden.* *And more.* *I am leaving University* *after many years as a student.* *I can make it a thing of beauty* *And why is the dream showing me the o's?* *The circle, completion, wholeness?*	Separation and grieving. Decorating. A beautiful completion.

One day, while I was reading an article, I burst out laughing. The author said:	
> Rather than concentrate on providing 'expert' advice on the content and methodology, our primary attention is on the student's life energy as they engage with their research. We seek to facilitate the personal learning in research, and so help people realize their potential project which has relevance in their lives. In our view, good research is an expression of a need to learn and change, to shift some aspect of oneself . (Reason, 1995, p. 136)	Humor covers up.
Why is this funny?	Noticing incongruent behavior.
If all else fails, teacher, you can always 'facilitate the personal learning.' I laughed, but I knew it wasn't funny. My emotional response made me curious.	A desire to know.
What if it is like a dream? *I learned to 'speak back' to dreams,* *to the 'dreamworld' that sent me the dream-message* *What if there is a world* *behind a word or a phrase* *that is sending me a message?* *How can I speak back?*	An idea of a way to come to know using a ritual such as active imagination.
How can I speak back to the words? I print out the text, enlarged and bold, on a separate sheet of paper, place it on a place on my desk to begin an exploration of 'dialogue' with words. Every day, I look at this paper with these particular words, until one day, it's time to have coffee together. It's time for the words, and I to have a talk. I take the paper and my journal to the coffee shop, and I look for the place where the words are alive to me, where I can speak to the text?	The beginning of an experiment in self-reflection. The beginning of a new relationship.

I know this laughter, *It comes from the one who tells the truth;* *never straight and to the point,* *but with sarcastic humor.* *There are feelings underneath* *angry, hurt* *but no words.*	Body wisdom speaks; emotions come first.
What is the word? Shift. "Good research is an expression of a need to learn and change, to shift some aspect of oneself." Shift. That's the word. My eyes stop there. It's not funny at all. I don't get it. So I ask the imaginal world for help. I ask for an image.	Intuition knows the word, but it has no relevance.
I see myself in the hospital bed *where I first held my son.* *He was already 16 hours old* *when I first touched him.* *I still ache with sadness,* *my youth, feeling so caught,* *so powerless.* *It was a long time ago.* *25 years ago.* *My birthing story isn't 'neat.'*	The pain of giving birth; feeling caught in a powerful institution. Not allowed to touch.
Shift. How is this about shift?	No connection between image and word. Incongruent.
I followed my instincts. *I knew what do to* *to repair the damage done to us both.* *My body knew what to do.* *And I just did it, without thinking.* *But I knew enough to say* *"please close the curtains"*	Recognizing the wisdom of instinct. Recognizing the need to protect instinct from the institution.

The word pointed to the healing, not the trauma! I thought back to the description of my journey of self-reflection. The feeling of 'the gap *inside myself* between the private and the public areas of my life,' deep, unfathomable, unconnected. Shift. A time to shift.	The intellectual insight.
The next word to 'jump out at me' was fissure. I was reading a thesis about reflective practice, the author's experience of changing the focus of his research:	
> Reflective practice became a question with less certain directions, but one that opened up to the concerns and experiences of my students. That question, more than a theoretical question became a question of practice, a question of practice that grew out of the awareness of an inconsistency and fissure in my own knowledge and actions. (Hans Smits, 1994, p. 43)	A change of focus.
I printed the word large 'FISSURE the awareness of an inconsistency and fissure in my own knowledge and actions.' This page had the spot on my desk now.	A descriptive word for my feeling of a gap.
I speak the word *to myself* *quietly, just in my own mind* *a whisper* *fissure* *I am aware* *of fissure*	A chant. Evoking. Ready to know.
The next jotting words were: 'Writing as inquiry—facing up to the bonds that tie.' This was the title of a Ph.D. dissertation. Gloria Bravette (1997; as cited in Reason, 1998b), a student of Peter Reason, wrote:	
> Finally I am beginning to be released. Finally I can begin to feel the chains falling away as I acknowledge my right to	

anger; and my fear; and learn to use these powerful forces rather than allowing them to incapacitate me, constructively for the rehumanization of myself, my family and my world. (p. 258)	Release gained through acknowledging anger and fear.
This isn't about me *this isn't my story* *it's not release* *not chains* *but something* *"facing up"*	How is this about me? Discernment.
A new page went on my desk: facing up.	Continuing the ritual.
Then I had a dream: I see the title page of Carol Morgaine's article. I had put it aside, for me later, but not for now; I could see no place for it in this writing. Now, in the middle of the night, I know I have to take it out again. I tell the dream, "I'll have another look."	Guidance from a dream.
In the morning as I ate breakfast, I remembered the dream.	The dream images flow into waking life.
I suddenly know where it goes. *In the section on hope and despair.* *I know it first in my body* *A feeling like a little thud* *something hits bottom* *The sensation is right in my heart* *The knowing lands in the bottom of my heart* *I feel it go thud* *then the words are in my mind.*	A body response to a dream image brings words to mind. Congruence.
I told the dream to my partner, Franklin. And the realization— Hope and Despair. I ask him to talk to me about 'Words as Eggs.' I ask him to tell me the Jungian idea of working with words. He says: Embodied in words are historical meanings. Meanings change over the years but the old meaning stays, embedded in the unconscious.	

The historical meaning is attuned to archetypal reality. As we explore the root meaning, lights go on, we come to a fuller meaning of the word for us. The language of dreams is one of symbolism and metaphor. The word is a door through which we can go. We can crack the shell of the egg.	Deepening the work with words.
Crack the shell of 'hegemony' *as Morgaine says,* *crack through the meanings* *emphasized by our culture* *our society* *and find the fuller vitality.*	Tying experience to theory knowledge.
We went to the dictionary.[9] We looked up FISSURE 'fissi' (findre "to split") bheid (Indo-European root): beetle, bitter, bite, bit, bait, boat; connected to biting, eating, hunting We looked up DESPAIR "an absence of hope, a complete lack of hope, discouragement" spe (Indo-European root): to thrive and prosper: connected to speed; prosper; despair.	Going to the root meaning of words.
Part of the meaning of despair *has been split off!* *The connection to thriving and prosperity* *is in the root* *but not in our current* *dictionary definition.* *I have found a split in a word.*	A discovery of cohesiveness in the conscious and unconscious.
I pick up "Facing Up," the page on top of my desk now, and I put it together with Carol Morgaine's article.	Bringing together the word ritual and the dream message.

[9] *The American heritage dictionary* (3rd ed.). Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

This concludes the descriptive narrative and ontological pointing. The third, and final, hermeneutic activity is an interpretive writing intended to "reflect that which brings to fullness what lies silent. . . . All human speaking is finite in such a way that there is within it an infinity of meaning to be elaborated and interpreted" (Smith, 1983, p. 91). A story about a particular experience thus becomes a text, and the attempt is then made "to deepen awareness, explain events, enrich meaning, and inspire new possibilities" (Rehm, 1992, p. 184). The *ontological pointing* "represents an attempt to highlight and strengthen what it is, ontologically, that is spoken through the speech." The conversation can then be heard as containing "identifiable undergirding passions or preoccupations," an "undergirding metaphor," a "mood and direction" for making sense of the story through an *interpretive writing* (Smith, 1983, p. 96).

The Interpretive Writing

I became aware of personal needs during the inquiry process. This awakening to my story was triggered by the experience of listening to my own voice on the tapes used to record conversations with my co-researchers. A metaphor that I originally used to describe my professors' actions when I was an undergraduate student became a metaphor for that which I needed, 'a new coat,' and also for that which I needed to become, 'a tailor.' A dream image became both a signal and an inspiration in this process of self-exploration. The dream announced 'Goodbye' and drew my attention to the letter 'o,' the circles, and made conscious the cycle of separation and grieving within which my thesis writing was embedded. As an inspiration, the dream image became a template for a new word ritual. The thesis writing then began to take on more and more personal relevance. It was not only an indicator of academic completion, but it was also a means for bringing personal closure to a period of my life.

An experience of humor points out the emotional incongruency that I had already recognized intellectually as 'a gap.' The questioning 'Why is this funny?' initiates the

deeper conversation, the deeper self-reflection that expresses a desire to know. But desiring is not enough. Even though I know it is not funny, I do not know what is going on. And this is where the ritual enactment of 'words on my desk' facilitates coming to know. As the ritual proceeded, emotions and intuition brought a new point of focus, which was the need to shift from being in a traumatic situation to moving toward resolution and healing.

The incongruent gradually became resolved through cycles of recognizing the incongruent and then gaining a small increment of insight. The first cycle was recognizing incongruent humor, with the culminating insight that the underlying emotions were anger and hurt. The second cycle was recognizing an incongruent word-image pairing, and then realizing that the focus was 'shift.' The third cycle was an incongruent story, and then the exercise of discernment to come to an understanding that the story for me was a message to 'face up.' Another dream provides a clue and an experience of congruence, when a body response to a dream image brings words to mind. The root meanings of the words *despair* and *fissure* reveal the gap, the split, in a new way; and what began as a feeling of an empty, hollow gap became an articulated paradox, the hope/despair paradox.

This is the fundamental polarity at the heart of this self-reflection process. Looking up the meaning of *fissure* reveals the split, and looking up *despair* reveals that which has been split off in the current meaning of despair—the connection to thriving and prospering. Rather than meaning the complete lack of hope, the deeper meaning of despair shows the inherent wholeness, with hope embedded in the word.

'Facing up' points to my responsibility in reconstructing the fragments into a whole. I must do the work of articulating, for myself, the coming together of two perspectives on self-reflecting, instead of being divided or torn between them.

Conclusion

Over the course of this inquiry a fundamental shift took place. The emphasis in our conversations changed from the particulars of course content to pervasive issues in the field of HMEC. These are described as propositional outcomes in Chapter 4 and elaborated upon as two topics, professional practice and the program core. Heron (1996) made a fundamental distinction between two types of inquiry, *informative* and *transformative*. This inquiry started out with an intention to be informative and changed to being more transformative. Heron stressed that there is an interdependence between the informative and the transformative; in other words. these are not mutually exclusive terms but are used to highlight the change in focus that occurred from an intention to analyze course content to an understanding of a deep conflict in the field of HMEC regarding professional practice and the need to gather information to integrate into course content.

The decision to report the outcomes of research for *the inquiry group* in the form of a reader is a reflection of this new emphasis. The topics and the new information informing them is thus available to the instructors as a tool for their practice. The reader includes pages for reflection during the upcoming year and could be used to report a second phase of action research.

The reader reflects back the essence of our past conversations and adds information from the literature to fuel future conversations. It is intended to offer practical guidance and a means of tracking the process of integrating new material into the course content. Cuban (1993) stated that "we must work to integrate curricular reform with efforts to build the capacity of teachers to create, use, and choose their own materials" (p. 185). The decision to report outcomes in the form of a reader is in accord with this affirmation of teachers' ability to create materials for their own teaching practice.

CHAPTER 4

REPORTING THE OUTCOMES

We are at our best
when we make our lives
and our search for meanings
available as a resource for another's learning.
(Westeroff, 1987, p. 192)

At the beginning of the investigation, two objectives were held in mind regarding curriculum development for the practicum course First, it was felt that students should increase their understanding of what professional practice is in the field of HMEC; and second, exercises and assignments should be included to help students increase self-understanding.

The outcomes for this inquiry were reported in two different formats. The first format acknowledges an academic context; the following sections describe the outcomes according to the extended epistemology of co-operative inquiry. The second format acknowledges the preference of the inquiry group members, who wanted the outcomes of the investigation reported in a reader. This reader portrays the most tangible practical outcome of the research inquiry: a discussion of topics expressing the themes and 'points of interest' of our journey as participants in a co-operative inquiry. The reader was intended to facilitate ongoing exploration into practice, both individually and collectively, and to encourage and inform our efforts to grow in our professional and personal lives.

The topic sections in the reader reflect the addressing of these two objectives, as well as topics that arose during the inquiry process. The reader was produced for the instructor's personal use in the classroom, and the topics follow a logical sequence based on our conversations and the instructor's perception of the topic's applicability to course content.

Propositional Outcomes

Heron (1996) identified propositional outcomes as reports which are informative in that they describe and explain what has been discovered and provide a commentary on the inquiry method. (In this sense, Chapter 3 is also a report because the type of inquiry that emerged is detailed.) In this section, Topic 1 provides a discussion of the meaning of being a professional. Topic 2 addresses the application of the concept of reflective practice at the program level. This arose during the inquiry out of a sense of a need to strengthen the links between the practicum and the other courses making up the program core requirements. These topics meet the first objective by providing information for educators to enable discussion with students about the meaning of the professional practice field of HMEC.

"The ethical challenge facing those of us who educate professionals is to create organizational contexts that encourage us to reframe the questions we ask and answer with our students" (Wallace & Brody, 1994, p. 10). The following discussions include the sharing of the fruits of our conversations and of the literature that we look to for stimulation and inspiration. We then frame new questions and prepare to engage in new learning with others. We begin with a discussion of worldview.

Topic 1: Professional Development

The first theme of our inquiry reflections revolved around the topic of professional practice in HMEC. As a result of our discussions, it became apparent that reflective practice needed to be discussed in relation to professional practice. Therefore, the new proposition arising out of this inquiry is that reflective practice is a kind of professional practice, and this connection should be included in course content. The following information from the literature supports this proposition and provides potential material for the instructors to integrate into their course content.

Professions and the reflective practice model. A consideration of professional development includes thinking about professions and what it means to be a professional. Jones and Joss (1995) stated that "the literature suggests that there are different approaches to the definition of what constitutes 'professions' and what might be their defining features" (p. 15). They characterized these approaches as follows:

- the *trait* approach, which attempts to describe an ideal type of professional;
- the *division of labor* approach, which assumes a 'fit' between a profession and a societal need; and
- an *occupational control* approach, which suggests that a profession is similar in function to a union or a guild.

These definitional approaches "foundered on a lack of agreement about common features of professions" (Jones & Joss, 1995, p. 20). However, a shift toward thinking in terms of professional performance rather than characteristics produced some points of consensus. The professional worker:

- shows an ability to deal with uncertainty in novel situations;
- uses several forms of knowledge, including a theoretical orientation;
- practices under the influence of an ethical code, which may not be formally stated;
- understands a particular process of working with clients;
- develops a self-image through association with the profession; and
- undertakes a method of professional development in accord with the profession.

In a review of the literature, Jones and Joss distinguished three main professional models that differ along these dimensions. These include the practical or craft professions, the technical expert professions (with a variant category for managerial expert), and the reflective practitioner professions. These models are compared using the dimensions described by Jones and Joss (p. 24). These models are not mutually exclusive. At times,

approaches from one model may suit the purposes of a professional working mainly out of a different model. Vaines (1988) pointed out that being able to fit the professional approach to the circumstances can be effective for a HMEC professional:

> When we think about what it means to be a helping professional, we can approach change in a number of different ways. If we want someone to become just like us, an apprenticeship approach can be employed. If we want to show persons that our way or this thing is best, we can persuade them to change. Or we can use emotional appeals to convert a person to think or do what we believe is good for them. All of these means of changing people are appropriate for particular situations. (p. 10)

Currently, there is a strong emphasis on the occupational competency of professionals, which Jones and Joss (1995) attributed to the political and economic climate. The reflective practice model is essentially holistic and thus concerned with values, attitudes, and cognitive processes. This emphasis on competency in terms of measurable outcomes creates problems for those using the reflective practitioner model, because the reflective practitioner approach requires detailed consideration of *process competences*, including interpersonal skills and the ability to integrate experience and reflection. These process competences, although difficult to measure, are "highly appropriate where questions of equity and non-oppressive and non-discriminatory behavior are paramount" (p. 29).

Personal transformation. The worldview that one holds influences the meaning of being a professional. Reason (1998a) stated that "the notion of a paradigm or worldview as an overarching framework which organized our whole approach to being in the world has become commonplace since Thomas Kuhn published *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962)" (p. 422). This is part of the extremely personal nature of the process of coming to be a professional. In the field of HMEC, Sproles and Sproles (1992) described this personal approach to vocation as a state of mind and a lifelong commitment to learning.

One aspect of learning that applies to professional development is personal change and growth. Carol Morgaine (1993b) described this personal transformation as "the

process by which people learn to "see" things differently" (p. 9). One of the most challenging aspects of personal change is reflecting on one's authenticity. A teacher must be engaged with this process of self-reflection in order to encourage it in students.

Teachers may face difficulties in working with a reflective practice model in preprofessional education. Unfortunately, when a rigorous competence approach is applied to an educational program, and even worse, when training is conducted according to measurable outcomes, then "information about, and understanding of, the process necessary to support individuals in their personal development may well not be available" (Jones & Joss, 1995, p. 32).

Another related difficulty with preprofessional training in the reflective practitioner model is the effect of societal values. The ways in which we have been influenced and/or oppressed by the dominant values, beliefs, traditions, and meanings of our society may be carried into our relationships with others, especially those who are subordinate to us. Morgaine (1993b) discussed the way in which preprofessional studies can lead to complacency regarding established patterns of dominance and subordinance:

> Gradually, through carefully sequenced programs designed to teach foundational philosophies and accepted practices, preservice professionals are taught to view the individuals they will be teaching or working with as students or clients. . . . Unnamed and hidden from view are the assumptions of prediction, control and manipulation. To the degree that childhood lessons about conformity have been internalized, preservice students quickly adapt. . . . All too often the language of a standardized curriculum, teaching or management by objectives, and attending to the interests of stake holders motivates new professionals to ignore or minimize the needs of individuals in order to achieve measurable outcomes. (p. 18)

Peterat (1997) stated: "As professionals concerned with the realities of daily life, we are required to re-think the meaning of being a professional. What might constitute professional practice when professionals can no longer claim authority based in possessing knowledge of value to others?" (p. 102).

Reason (1998a) held up the tradition of co-operative inquiry as a discipline of professional practice: "A discipline is a method or a training, a set of rules, exercises or procedures which educate a person toward particular ways of being and doing" (p. 419). Reason (1994) showed how this approach can lead to a mature responsibility in practice:

> A discipline is necessarily self-transcending. While the initiate may productively 'follow the rules,' the mature practitioner uses rules in order to develop a quality of attention and behavior which, while born out of and nurtured by the practice and its rules, moves beyond them. (p. 40)

The discipline of co-operative inquiry provided a procedural support and facilitated an experience of inquiry into reflective practice that felt in keeping with our values and our deepest intentions as practitioners. In Topic 4, exampies are given that describe how co-operative inquiry has been included in professional education in order to facilitate experiences of reflective practice for students.

Topic 2: The Program Core

The second theme of our inquiry reflections concerned the topic of the practicum course in relation to the other core courses in the program. As a result of our discussions, it became apparent that links between the practicum course and the other courses needed to be strengthened. Therefore, the second new proposition arising out of this inquiry is that the concept of reflective practice needs to be addressed throughout the program, and this intention to form connections between the courses needs to be supported by the literature. This is not intended to be brought into class, but supports the instructor's desire to facilitate this linkage. The following information from the literature supports this proposition and provides potential material for the instructors to integrate into their practice and their relationship with their colleagues.

Curriculum design. The 'culture of positivism' can have a tyrannical hold on an educational program which becomes "manifested most clearly in the marginalization of the individuals and ideas that do not match the traits of the dominant culture" (Kempner,

1994, p. 247). In this sense, making changes to curriculum requires a struggle and an escape from the grip of the larger cultural context that defines what knowledge is and what it means to be professional. The essence of this struggle is an ongoing balancing act, between educating the mind and educating for the realities of the workplace.

John Elliott (1991) discussed the following implications of the reflective practitioner model for curriculum design in professional education:

1. Professional learning is experiential, including the acquisition of relevant and useful knowledge.

2. Real practical situations that pose relevant problems provide the best professional learning curriculum. These situations are complex and open to many interpretations.

3. Professional learning should be supported by a pedagogy which intends to provide learning opportunities so that students can develop capacities which are fundamental to competency in reflective practice. This includes empathy with the feelings and concerns of others, reflection about one's own judgements and actions, and an ability to look at a situation from a variety of perspectives.

4. Acquiring new knowledge and reflective practical problem solving should be interactive.

Integrating reflective practice. The following examples show how others have integrated the reflective practice model into professional programs. Fairbanks, Elliott, and Meritt (1995, p. 31) described and implemented a conceptual model for developing reflective practice. This model consists of the following elements:

- *critical observation,* which includes reflecting on concepts, events, and self;
- *reflection-in-action,* which entails reframing events and recounting anecdotes;
- *purposeful change,* meaning new practices, new theories, and new questions; and
- *reflection-on-action,* using portfolios, reading journals, and analyzing lessons.

The summed up their approach by stating that "we believe that (student) abilities to reflect on their practice occurred, because our reformed teacher education program was intentionally structured to teach constructivist principles and to model them" (p. 38).

An important issue in implementing reflective practice concepts into a program is the role of evaluation. John Elliott (1991) emphasized that this integration involves a change in the way competence is understood: "Competence cannot be defined simply in terms of an ability to apply pre-ordained categories of specialist knowledge to produce correct behavioral responses" (p. 313). Within the reflective practice model of professionalism, knowledge must not be applied in a stereotypical way. Any attempt to predetermine correct professional actions, or 'performance indicators,' hinders intelligent practice. There must be a shift to qualitative indicators such as qualities of judgement and decision making. These qualities indicate the capacity to make situationally appropriate decisions and should be seen as intelligent responses in new and unpredictable circumstances.

Elliott (1991) recommended that a modular curriculum interweave observation research, direct practical experience, and vicarious experience through role play and discussion in seminars, and a pedagogy which supports the ongoing reflective consideration of that experience.

Presentational Outcomes

The second form of outcome described in the following sections are presentational outcomes. Heron (1996) described these outcomes as "presentations of insight about the focus of the inquiry through expressive modes such as drawings which provide imaginal symbols of the significant patterns in our realities" (p. 104). This insight requires an *inquiry skill* which Heron called *imaginal openness*. This means being receptive to the inherent meaning in the process of the inquiry. "The skill is about imaginal grasp, the intuition of pattern meaning" (p. 58).

The Diagrams

These diagrams arose out of our conversations, which revolved around the need for a simplified way to present the highly complex notion of reflective practice and the kinds of thinking involved in being a reflective practitioner. Our discussions also included the issue of *validity*. It was felt that, all too often, students viewed the concept of reflective practice as simply the personal preference of the instructor and did not realize the extensive usage of the professional model of reflective practice. We felt that a more formal 'academic' presentation would enhance the presentation of reflective practice in the classroom and in practicum seminar settings. The following series of diagrams represent presentational knowing acquired through the research process.

Figure 2. We started by mapping a diagram (Figure 2) based on Eleanor Vaines' (1988) articulation of guiding themes, which includes an *enlightenment orientation*. This means carefully considering and consciously choosing actions. There is a sense of ongoing striving in this orientation; enlightenment "suggests that as humans we have the capacity and opportunities to become the best we are capable of being" (p. 18).

Reflective practice is embedded in a way of thinking about the world, which is referred to as an ecological viewpoint. We simply describe *ecology* as meaning "seeing everything as interconnected." This is at the core and occupies the central spot in the diagram. Coming out of this core way of seeing the world is enlightenment, here referring to thinking about four different aspects of life: developing critical thinking, knowing our story, considering contradictions that we encounter, and understanding the meaning of transformation. Thus, we divided the circle surrounding the core into four areas. This diagram (Figure 2) then provided a starting point and a framework for discussions with three other educators, who then provided feedback and further information out of their teaching experiences.

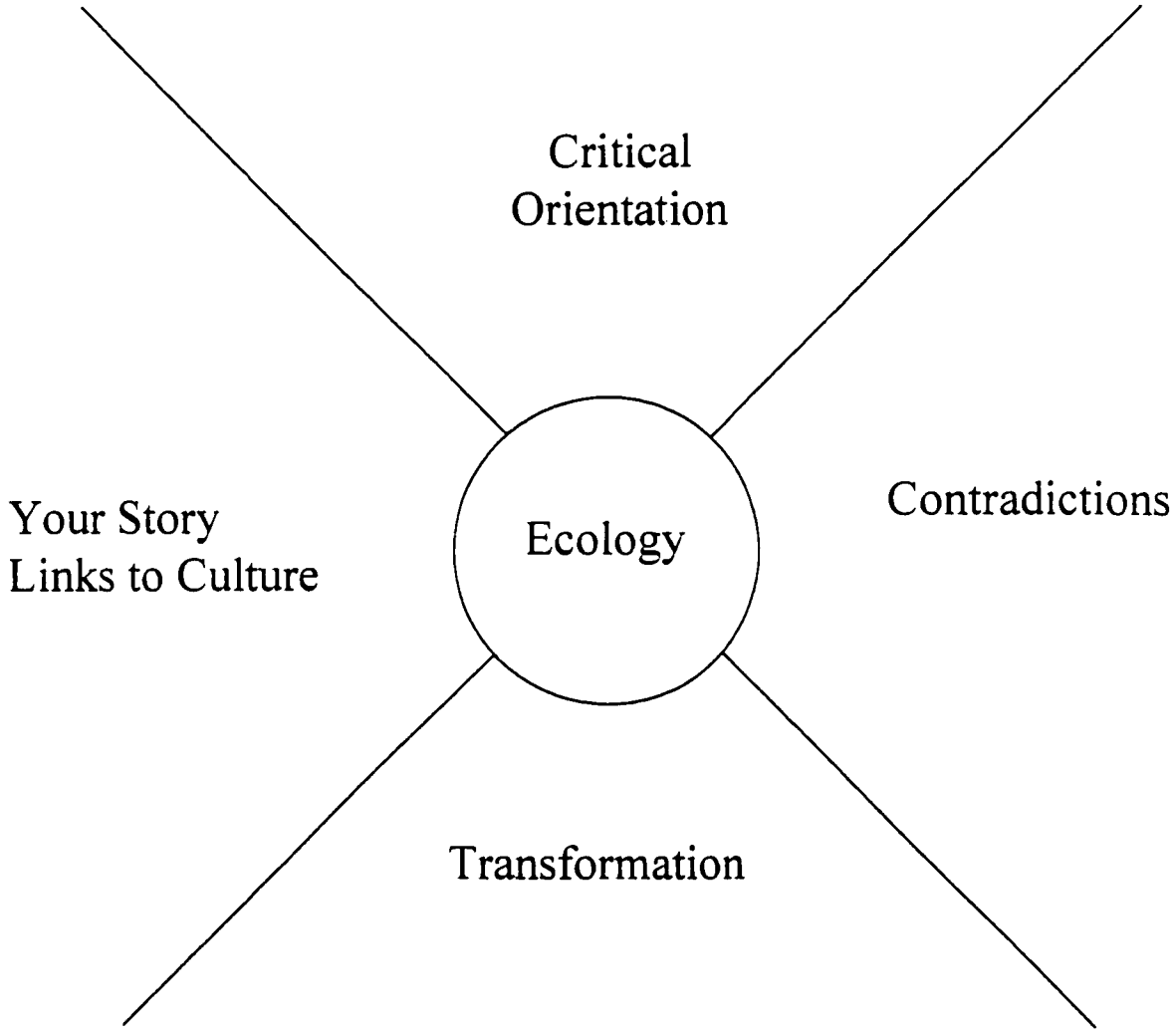

Figure 2. A diagram of reflective practice.

The following discussion elaborates on the four overlapping areas in professional practice which are represented in Figure 2 as four quadrants.

Critical orientation means using critical thinking to call into question and to come to discover the assumptions underlying our habitual thoughts and actions. This critical thinking applies to our inner lives and to considering aspects of our society. "Critical thinking is one of the intellectual functions most characteristic of adult life since adulthood is the time when we begin to doubt the universal truths which govern the conduct of life" (Fast, 1998, p. 79). This involves searching out the assumptions underlying our thoughts and actions, because a great deal of what we think, say, and do is based on underlying, unrecognized assumptions about how the world works and about what is right. Critical thinking is necessary for personal survival because it allows us to interpret our actions and the rationales for our actions in a continuously changing environment" (Fast, 1998, p. 79). Not only is this kind of thinking important to professional conduct and responsible citizenship, but it also facilitates our ability to adapt to new circumstances.

Contradiction refers to thinking about how things are as compared to how they should be. It includes thinking also of what has happened in the past. This historical perspective also refers to personal history; for example, thinking about how you have come to be the way you are and considering if that is what you want for the future. This category also includes dilemmas that are a part of life, situations in which there is no solution or right answer, but 'conflicting moral claims' (Morgan, 1994).

Transformation in reflective practice refers to systemic change, which means addressing basic aspects of our society. It also refers to thinking about long-term consequences of actions in an intergenerational sense and in a global sense. In terms of professional practice, it refers to a process of collaboration with clients. Thinking about transformation involves considering power dynamics between people in a variety of situations and also influences how one thinks of being of service. It also refers to personal

transformation, which means coming to know aspects of yourself of which you have been unaware and, in the process, experiencing learning and growth.

Your story refers to self-understanding, in the context of your family background, cultural context, and experiences. Who you are influences how you see the world and how you perceive other people in their circumstances. This refers to the most personal and often most private aspects of reflective practice. Your story includes how you think about yourself, care for yourself feel emotions, and sense intuitions. There is also a strong personal connection to the way you feel and act in situations of uncertainty or ambiguity, which influences the way you demonstrate professional discretion. A *self-critical capacity* is the ability "to step outside one's own views, or the situational urgencies of the moment, or the dominant organizational and peer-group paradigm" (Morgan, 1994, p. 23).

Brookfield (1997) stated that "teachers have to earn the right to ask students to take critical thinking seriously" (p. 27). He suggested that teachers must model critical thinking, because the modeling provides learners with a supporting 'scaffold' and builds trust between teachers and learners.

Figure 3. The previous figure depicts four topics arising from an ecological viewpoint. Figure 3 portrays levels of reflection. The three concentric circles depict deepening 'levels' of reflection. The framework used to guide this drawing is Cranton's (1998) classification system, which includes content, process, and premise reflection. Content reflection "is a process of considering or musing upon the nature of a problem" (p. 19). We consider this level to represent the surface layer of reflection, a consideration of daily events and encounters. Process reflection looks a little deeper for underlying causes, and premise reflection goes deeper still, to the values, belief system, and deeper meanings.

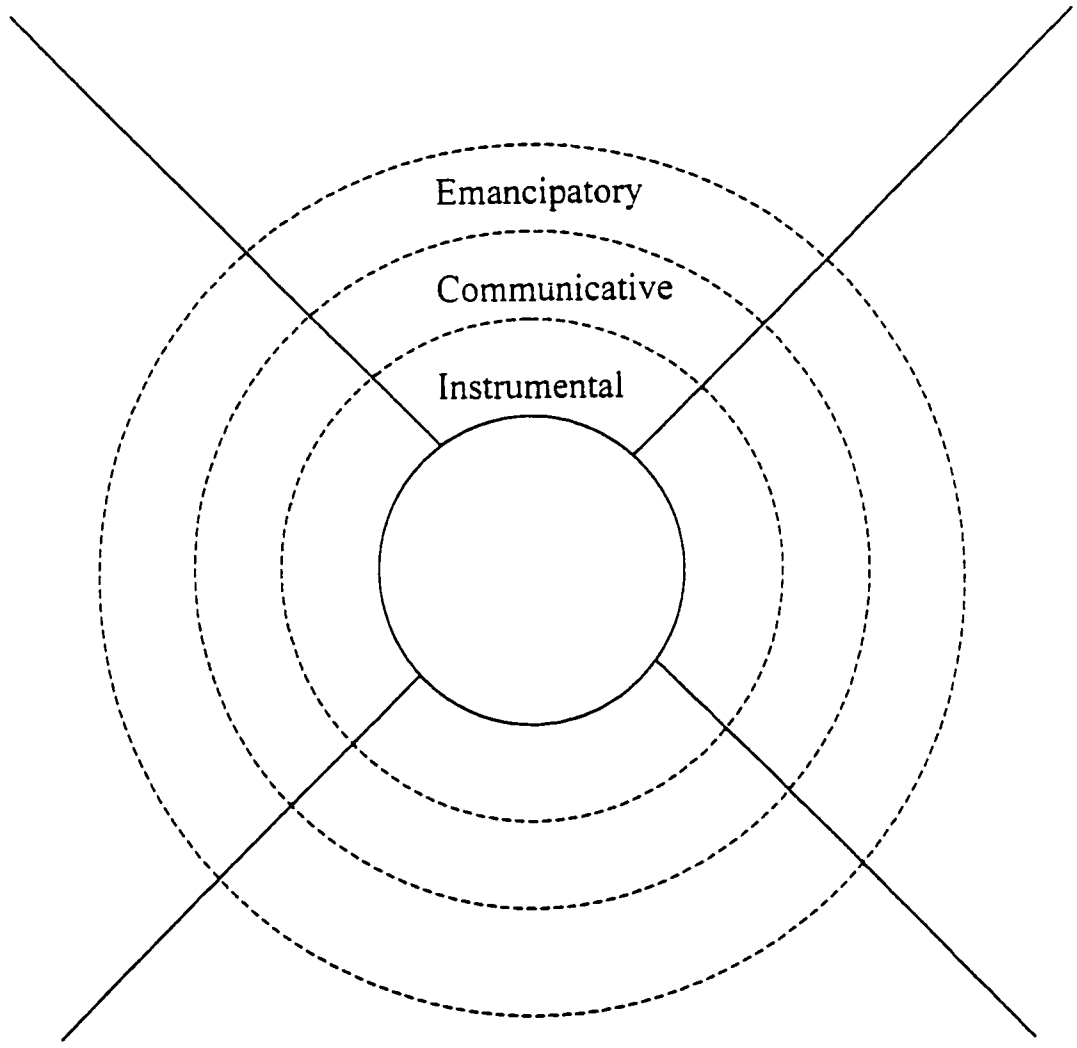

Figure 3. A diagram of reflective practice.

Figure 4. Figure 4 grew out of a desire to depict movement and the idea that the four categories overlap, and thinking about one leads into thinking about another. It also portrays an intention to live with integrity; we therefore call this movement *integrating energy.* The need to include this integrating movement into the diagram was first expressed by Linda, who was interviewed in the last action phase. After the inquiry group reflected upon her comments, the following diagram evolved.

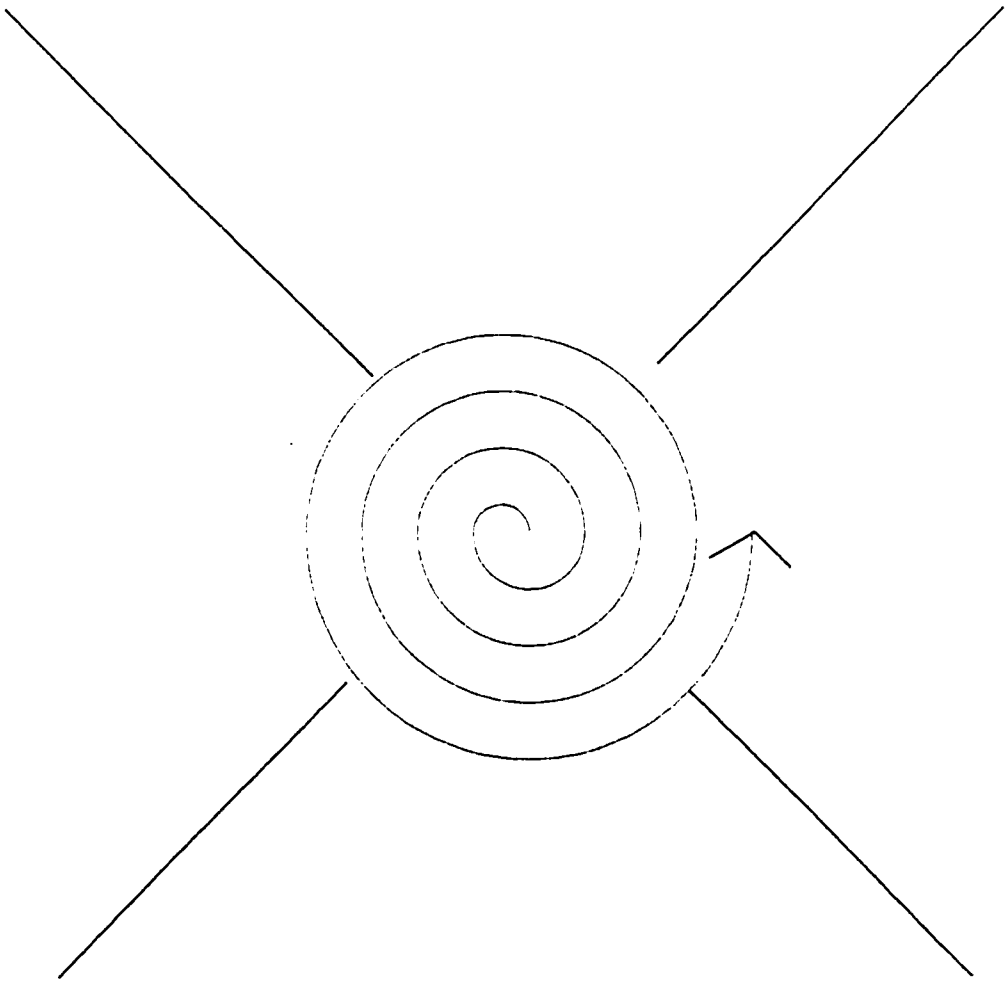

Figure 4. A diagram of reflective practice.

Figure 5. Figure 5 includes aspects of all former diagrams. It is not intended to be fully explanatory in itself, but rather is a diagram of 'summing up' what all three former diagrams expressed. The test of the effectiveness of this diagram will come when Sue uses it in her class. Will the diagram support her practice by making it easier for her to express her understanding of all the different nuances of meaning that reflective practice has for her? The students will provide a critical source of feedback and learning for Sue. In a way, the diagram will continue to evolve with the students' input.

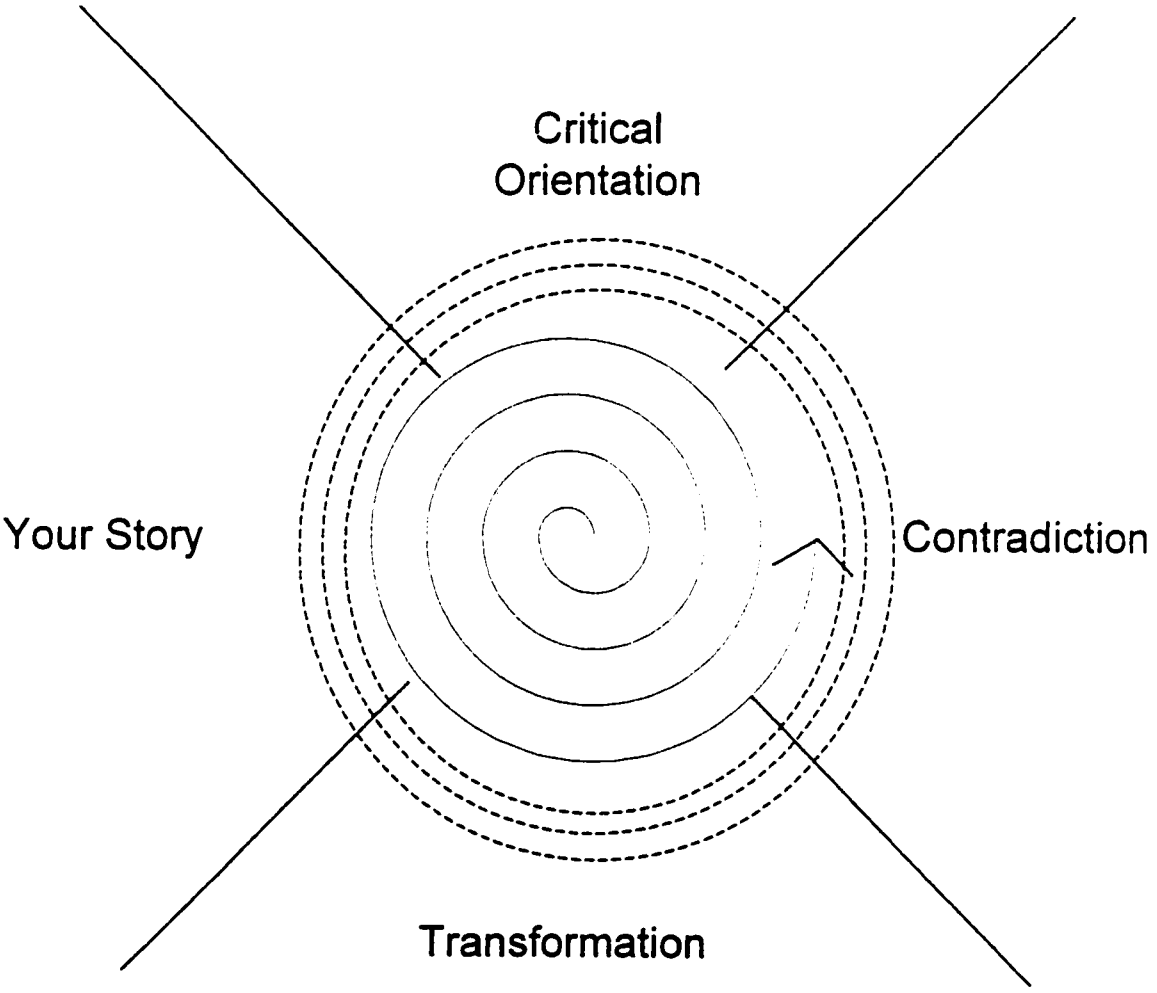

Figure 5. A diagram of reflective practice.

Practical Outcomes

Heron (1996) considered "that practical outcomes have primacy and are the consummation of the inquiry process" (p. 104). The practical skills which were developed in this inquiry process are related most strongly to an increasing ability to combine reflection with practice. This refers to incorporating an inquiry approach to daily practice. Peterat (1997) stated that we "should understand ways of framing reflective practice within action research, and understand participatory action research as a framework for a collaborative and inquiring mode of practice" (p. 103). This would enable us to be effective within different interdisciplinary communities, with differing assumptions of knowledge, in a variety of relationships, and in a constant state of inquiry and professional development. By integrating reflective practice with inquiry types of research such as co-operative inquiry and action research, HMEC professional practice is reconceptualized; "all practicing home economists would be researchers and home economics would be a research-based practice" (Peterat, 1997, p. 103).

Reason (1998a) referred to this shift in thinking as moving from inquiry to discipline. He spoke of co-operative inquiry as a discipline of transformation. Personal transformation refers to "the process of continuing personal and professional change, . . . growth, a building on past experiences and a broadening of the intellect" (Strom & Williams, p. 50). This growth can take the form of stirrings, struggles, seeing the same thing in new ways. The experience of conducting this inquiry enhanced our understanding of how research and practice can combine and enhance both endeavors.

The reader that incorporated the outcomes described in this chapter expresses an effort to link our everyday professional practice to an approach to research that is also a personal discipline. In this regard, we consider it not only an outcome of a research project, but also an expression of our reflective practice.

The most important aspect of what it means to be a reflective practitioner is taking time. This kind of thinking, on different levels and from different perspectives, takes time. Anzul and Ely (1988) stated:

> The reflective practitioner makes a space. And while that space gives no guarantees, it allows us to think again, to do again, and slowly, to breach the stagnant moat between what most of us do and what most of us know we should do. (p. 686)

The most valuable practical outcome that has the potential to continue transforming our practice is an experience of taking time to reflect and realizing the new understandings that result.

Experiential Outcomes

Heron (1996) considered that all four kinds of knowing can be communicated as an inquiry outcome. However, he said that "the inquirers' experiential gains, transformations of inner being, can only be conveyed, at their own level, through personal meeting, through being with the inquirers, in their presence. We need to meet them face to face" (p. 105). Nonetheless, a general feeling that was expressed by the core group members was one of excitement; the prospect of going into a new fall term with new insights and new material was invigorating.

Reason (1998a) described the purpose of human inquiry as "the enhancement of human flourishing—the flourishing of persons as self-directing and sense-making agents located in democratic communities and organizations" (p. 419). We are autonomous beings and inextricably linked; our flourishing, our transforming, takes place both alone and with others. In my opinion, the feeling of inspiration that this inquiry engendered is an indication of the effect of being engaged in a self-directed investigation and of the 'enhancement of human flourishing' to which Reason referred.

CHAPTER 5

FINAL REFLECTIONS

Hultgren (1991) said that a critical orientation evolves when one is able to realize the 'gap between what is and what should be.' This study began with an intention to explore 'what is' and articulate 'what should be.' We generated knowledge out of our own experiences, and we drew from an extensive, interdisciplinary literature on reflective practice to inform course content.

In this co-operative inquiry, we engaged in a participatory process which involved cycling through four phases of action and reflection. In the process, we had the opportunity to develop inquiry skills such as an increasing critical awareness of the ideas we brought to our practice. We also grew to understand how our practice fit with these ideas. In other words, we gained a new sense of congruence between our thoughts about reflective practice and our work. "Thus in the process of inquiry, both theory and practice are developed" (Reason & Heron, 1995, p. 124). We now view co-operative inquiry less as 'research' and more as a personal discipline. We feel a connection to the vision articulated by Reason (1998a): Inquiry becomes "more than the professional activity of academics, and becomes a central characteristic of a well-lived life" (p. 419).

Elijah Anderson, a University of Pennsylvania sociologist, has made this kind of research activity his life's work. A recent article in *Newsweek* (Cose, 1999) highlighted Anderson's new book, *Code of the Street*, and emphasized the importance of his work on the streets. In his article, Ellis Cose described Anderson's impact:

> He demonstrates, time and again, how optimism, ambition and decency can sprout in the most unlikely places, given even the slimmest chance. . . . Indeed, to read Anderson's book or spend time with him is to realize that he is far from a detached observer. He constantly intercedes, finding his sources a lawyer or a job, lending them encouragement and even money. . . . What would happen . . . if sociologists in urban universities across America behaved like Elijah Anderson? (p. 33)

Anderson's work is an example of research that inspires care and concern for others and then stimulates new action in the world. Linda Peterat (1997) described her feelings about this type of research:

> I am continually drawn to action research because of the appeal of linking my research closely to my practices as a teacher and the expectation that an academic in education ought to provide leadership in practice. It is clearly messy and at times exhausting work. It is also exhilarating, and inspires care and concern for others. . . . We can research into and reflect on our everyday professional practices, honor the inextricable connections between theory, research and action. (p. 122)

It is my hope that this new orientation to practice with its added inquiry emphasis continues and becomes a lifelong endeavor. I also hope that others can make use of the inquiry report to inspire their own inquiry into practice.

Revisiting My Personal Reflections

My own interest in self-reflecting has grown gradually throughout my adult life. It has become so much a part of me that I find it difficult to describe. Hubbard and Power (1999) stated: "Without intentional attention, our evolution can go unexamined" (p. 247). It is important to rethink our identities and our roles and thus to illuminate and expand our sense of who we are and what we do. Good practice requires self-knowledge. This self-knowledge can be elusive, and yet obvious, like "a secret hidden in plain sight" (Palmer, 1998; as cited in Hubbard & Power, 1999). My experiences of self-reflection are an evolution that I can think about as a journey. "When a story is told about particular experiences, it becomes a text from which to deepen awareness, explain events, enrich meaning, and inspire new possibilities" (Rehm, 1992, p. 184). I can look back over my journey of learning about and practicing self-reflection and tell a story that spans my adult life.[10]

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[10] Hubbard and Power (1999) described how a teacher reviewed the patterns and interests of her career and mapped out a direction for the future using a "Time Line of Professional Development" (pp. 249-251). Whereas she delineated her time line into early, mid-, current, and future career, I find that the phases of my growth fall into decades.

Three decades ago I was completing high school and choosing a direction for myself. My reflection on my desires and needs, on the one hand, and the circumstances by which I perceived myself surrounded, on the other, was unsupported by any knowledge or practical technique. This made it no less profound for me. The process was lengthy, involved, and carried my precious dreams. It was the most 'careful consideration'[11] I had ever made about my actions and their intended consequences, both for myself and for the others about whom I thought—my parents, my siblings, my imaged future husband and children. My reflective thinking was in what I now refer to as a 'natural' state: a mixture of daydreams and fears, practical decision making, pondering, and seeking information through word and print.

Two decades ago I read a review of Progoff's (1975) *At a Journal Workshop*. I immediately ordered the book. I knew that I needed this guidance for my thinking, for choosing my life's actions. And so I began what I see now, in retrospect, as a new phase in my journey of reflecting. I learned that there were ways to structure reflection, to evoke it, to speak to it, to have an ongoing relationship with it.

One decade ago, digging a little deeper into Progoff's earlier writing, I began to read about depth psychology. Then a time came when I found the images and words of my journal speaking to me: "Go no further alone." So I sought out a Jungian therapist to guide my self-discovery and study.

At the same time, I embarked upon the adventure of leaving my first career as a laboratory technologist to pursue a university education. As much as I had hoped that my personal work in therapy would complement my education, in fact it had the opposite effect. The division between my private work and my public work deepened. The psychology informing my academic coursework was completely different than the psychology I was using to study my life in deepest detail.

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[11] I refer to Vaines' (1988) meaning of *reflective practice*, detailed in the literature review.

I remember the excitement I felt the first time I read Eleanor Vaines' (1988) work in *The Reflective Professional*—to see references to Progoff and Jung in relation to professional practice in HMEC! I was stunned; my previous experience as an undergraduate student had left me with the feeling that I would never be able to find common ground, or connecting ground, between my private life and the public world of the university. Just how this writing would help me find the connection was still quite beyond my ability to imagine, but the possibility was with me from that moment.

I feel the presence of this possibility with me now as I complete my graduate studies. It is clear to me that self-reflection is the central point of connection between my experiences with Progoff's techniques, my forays into depth psychology, reading about reflective practice, and completing a co-operative inquiry project.

A self-narrative, telling the story of how one 'came to be,' can be a way of making sense of one's vocational life (Rehm, 1992). I have been deeply touched and inspired by the work of Elizabeth Heeney (1996). She wrote a paper that showed "how an exploration of autobiographical writing can lead to new insights, to the illumination of a clearer vision of the person one wants to become, and to a sense of empowerment to act intentionally in journeying towards that vision" (p. 98).

I undertook this research out of a concern for future students based on my own experiences as a student. I hoped that a review of course content might further enable instructors to convey the concept of reflective practice, which I felt to be of great value to future practitioners. What I did not realize at the outset was that there were deeper motivations that expressed themselves during the inquiry process. What I have come to realize is that this inquiry has healed the split between the personal and professional aspects of my life in regard to self-reflection.

Heeney (1996) described how the impetus to look deeper into our lived experiences may come about in an indirect manner. She gave an account of this process in her life:

> Learning from our own experience and from the lives of others tends to be taken for granted and under-valued in our busy everyday realities. I have to admit that I never really delved beneath the surface of my career experiences until I recognized that my daughter was struggling through similar situations. (p. 98)

Stories can be a part of personal transformation. These stories are often shaped around a problem or difficulty and include a recounting of the events before and including the resolution (Thomas, 1992). "We need rich stories and accounts, and multiple voices so we can understand our profession and practices in their wholeness" (Peterat, 1997, p. 104). A story, or narrative, is a form of "world making" which expresses knowledge, meanings, choices, and direction in life experience (Rehm, 1992). My experiences in this inquiry became a story of how I am entering a new time of my life as a professional and coming to practice co-operative inquiry as a discipline of integrity. The account of the personal practice of the word ritual is an example of bringing self-reflective practices to bear in the midst of action. I am grateful to Elizabeth Heeney (1996) for her story, which encouraged me to think that others may find it useful. I sincerely hope that proves to be the case.

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