UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

INTERPRETING REFLECTIVE PRACTICE:
A HERMENEUTICALLY INSPIRED ACTION RESEARCH

BY

HANS SMITS 

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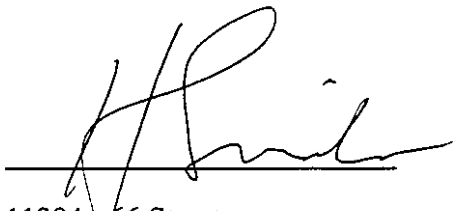

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Development does not mean just getting something out of the mind.
It is a development of experience and into experience that is really wanted.

John Dewey, *The Child and the Curriculum*

Self-understanding can no longer be integrally related to a complete
self-transparency in the sense of a full presence of ourselves to ourselves.
Self-understanding is always on-the-way;
it is on a path whose completion is a clear impossibility.

Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Reason in the Age of Science*

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a Thesis entitled Interpreting Reflective Practice: A Hermeneutically Inspired Action Research submitted by Hans Smits in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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May 18, 1994

DEDICATION

To my mother and father,
who sacrificed a great deal for their strong belief
in the value of their children's education.

ABSTRACT

The interest in reflection in teacher education is a response to the recognition that abstracted and rationalized forms of knowledge do not easily translate into good practice. One of the consequences has been a widening gap between theoretical and practical discourses of teaching. It is within this gap that student teachers are often asked to make sense of teaching.

The study was part of an action research project prompted by the Faculty of Education (University of Alberta) report entitled *Exploring and Mapping the Future: A Focus on Priority Issues* (1989). The report recommended that the Faculty move towards implementing a reflective approach as a preferred model of teacher education. How this was to be implemented was left as a question. As well, what reflective teaching would mean in the practice of learning to teach was an open question.

As originally conceived, action research was primarily interested in improving practice in a narrow and immediate sense. The experience of this study demonstrates that action research can deal more broadly and deeply with normative concerns and questions of meaning and language in particular communities of practice. It is an understanding of action research informed by hermeneutic, postmodern, and pragmatic philosophies.

Action research as an interpretive practice opens to the complexity of experience and the layered quality of understanding. Opening to the lived experiences of student teachers interrupted the taken for grantedness of an instrumental rationality that is embedded in teacher education programs. Participation in the action research study encouraged an awareness that focusing only on immediate technical competencies in the education of teachers ignores more ongoing and deeper questions of value and identity.

The particular question for this study is what the meaning of reflection is in the experiences of learning to become a teacher. The stories of those experiences were derived from a series of interviews with student teachers over the course of a university term, which included an extensive field experiences component in junior or senior high schools. The interviews largely proceeded in an unstructured way, with student teachers relating particular difficulties they were encountering in student teaching experiences.

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. The difficulties and negative experiences of student teachers related in this study point to the problems of practicing reflection in the absence of self-understanding and lack of support for formation of identity in terms of broader and more ethical views of teaching.

Reflection can be provoked by moments of crisis or negativity which offer opportunities for self-understanding. In interpretive terms, reflection can be thought of as narrative experience, one that involves linking personal concerns, histories, and ideologies, with a creative and critical appropriation of the experiences of becoming a teacher. Writing about those experiences encouraged a more interpretive approach to the difficulties experienced by student teachers, guided by selected readings of hermeneutic philosophers like H-G. Gadamer and Paul Ricoeur. The difficulties experienced by student teachers became nodal points for reflective thinking and writing, encouraging the writer's own self-understanding.

While the study is critical of the notion of reflective practice in terms of the way it has been appropriated conceptually in teacher education, the "reflective turn", thought of especially in a more interpretive and narrative way can have meaningful and practical implications for teacher education. As well as building on the understandings offered by hermeneutic and postmodern philosophy, teacher education can find support in the traditions of pragmatism and reflective practice represented in the works of John Dewey, for example. Such approaches can help to provide an understanding of reflection in more narrative and experiential ways.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The following dissertation, a reflection on reflective practice in teacher education, would not have been possible without the support and help of numerous people. The study is in many ways a product of collaboration. It models, I hope, the thesis that reflection is necessarily grounded in and enabled by narrative, conversation, and responsibility to each other in our educational and social practices, which offer possibilities for our own understandings and identities.

I also hope that the study will be read as one that attempts to responsibly give voice to the experiences of student teachers as they struggle to become teachers. Their lived difficulties of learning to teach and their desires to understand teaching and tell stories of self enabled my own reflective journey represented by the study. I am very grateful to all of the student teachers who I have had the privilege to work with over the past several years, and more particularly to those who consented to lend their voices to this study. I thank all those students who are named in the study, but specifically I wish to acknowledge the voices of Karen, Sam, Astrid, Mary, Martin, and Diane. Their conversations with me contributed immensely to my understanding and helped to make the study possible.

The opportunity to do graduate work at university in mid-career has been a great gift. I appreciated very much the combination of academic study with the work of both teaching and teacher education that was afforded to me. Teaching student teachers and working with them in schools provided a practical counterpoint to my theoretical study of reflective practice and that tension was a productive one for my own thinking and practice.

The Department of Secondary Education has been a very hospitable place to work. I sincerely thank the Department and Dr. Ken Jacknicke for the opportunities to teach through sessional appointments and graduate assistantships which provided both material and moral support for my study. I would also like to thank Dr. Jacknicke for his considerate reading of my dissertation and the important questions about teacher education he brought to the oral.

I also appreciated the insightful comments and challenging questions that Dr. Jean Clandinin brought to the final oral. I thank her for her reading of my thesis and the perspectives she offered. I thank as well Dr. Ken Zeichner who was the external examiner for the study. Although Dr. Zeichner was not present in person at the oral, his response to the study was well represented and conveyed and provided an important focus for both the discussion and for the postscript added to the dissertation following the oral.

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During the past two years I have had the good fortune to work as a practicum associate in social studies at the University of Alberta. That position offered the opportunity to enhance my teacher education knowledge and practice, and provided an atmosphere conducive to completing my study. I would like to thank Dr. Andrea Borys, and her successor, Dr. Gordon McIntosh, for providing me some time to complete my writing and for their support of the kind of work that the study hopefully represents.

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Chapter 1

Arriving at a Question of Reflective Practice in Teacher Education

> Practical work should be pursued primarily with reference to its reaction upon the professional pupil in making him a thoughtful and alert student of education, rather than to help him get immediate proficiency.
>
> John Dewey, 1965/1904

The Historical and Current Landscape of Teacher Education

> Did they also stand on an old site? I had no trouble believing that they did. Because the world--in places like this--is never absolutely new; there is always something that has gone before.
>
> Naipaul, 1987, p. 51

a. *Arriving at a question of understanding and practice*

It seems that not a day goes by when stories about education and schools are featured prominently in local newspapers and subject to public interest and debate. Local newspapers, for example, regularly highlight stories about schools and education, both celebatory and alarming. One day there may be articles about whether violence is a growing phenomenon in our school, following a stabbing of a student by another student in a local high school. Yet another story may focus on a successful community project in an elementary school involving young children and senior citizens. A high school is celebrated for its cooperative work program with a neighboring hospital. In the same newspaper on the same day the editorial pages carry letters to editors debating the wisdom and experience of mainstreamed or integrated classrooms. Other stories cover a teachers' strike in a neighboring province. A local school board is raising rate payers' taxes, but cutting a significant number of teaching positions. Education, in its institutionalized form, appears to be a terrain for hotly contested issues and contradictory experiences.

What is to be gleaned from these stories which impart such seemingly incongruous versions of schooling? What does it mean for the work of teaching and preparing future teachers? And what might it all mean to a person who is just learning how to become a teacher? The landscape of teaching and teacher education does not offer clear vantage points to begin to explore such questions. Indeed, it is not clear that we know what the questions are, despite the fact that answers to the perceived problems of education abound.

Yet something draws our attention, brings us up short, and perhaps urges us to accept questions to live with, questions that are perhaps implicit in our practices and thinking even before we are aware of them; in Hans-Georg Gadamer's terms,

> it is more difficult to ask questions than to answer them...But the sudden realization of the question is already a breach in the smooth front of popular opinion. Hence we say that a question too "comes" to us, that it "arises" or "presents itself" more than we raise it or present it. (1975, pp. 326-329)

The incidents briefly recounted at the outset, examples of what Joseph Schwab termed the milieu as one of the four "commonplaces" of education (Schubert, 1986), only enframe other enduring questions and issues inherent in education and the education of teachers. Every teacher education course and practicum experience that I have been involved with in my work cannot escape the questions posed by the contexts for becoming a teacher, and the limits and possibilities implied for teaching. But also, every teacher education program struggles with the questions about how to best educate teachers and what becoming a good teacher means.

As Gadamer's hermeneutics helps us to see, however, "the openness of what is in question consists of the fact that the answer is not settled" (1975, p. 326). To be open to a question is to acknowledge the "negativity" (Palmer, 1969, p. 233) in our experiences--a preliminary glimmering that all of our procedures, methods, and concepts do not quite add up, do not really foreclose on what lies beyond the borders of knowing. The field of teacher education seems to be particularly vexed with the difficulties of finding a harmonious correspondence between what is known in theoretical and conceptual terms, and what is experienced as teaching in schools.

Especially when the experiences of others we work and live with are considered--student teachers in the context of this study for instance--we realize that the work of teaching cannot be merely contained by plan and method. When we turn to the experiences of others--students, teachers, colleagues--we discover a world that is neither neatly packaged nor well understood. Yet teacher education, research on teaching, school improvement initiatives are all forms of discourses that want to encapsulate and guarantee certainties in teaching practice (McDonald, 1992). The enterprise of teacher education acutely feels that tension between the practical contingencies of learning to teach and theoretical knowing. In a sense it is in that gap that teacher education dwells in terms of the responsibility for fostering pedagogical understanding in the education of new teachers.

The literature exploring teacher education suggests that the preparation of teachers has been vexed by enduring and unresolved problems. But perhaps there are also more complicating and challenging difficulties facing the responsibility to prepare teachers in the current era. Set in a particular historical time and buffeted by specific political and

economic agendas in the "restructuring" of state priorities and interests in Western countries, there is not a neat consensus about what schools should do, and what the job of teaching ought to be. What should be the response of teachers and teacher educators to the demand to turn out technologically-proficient students capable of competing in the "global marketplace," in a context that perhaps can be best described as "postmodern?" Maxine Greene asks the question very pertinently:

> What is left for us then in this positivist, media-dominated, and self-centered time? How, with so much acquiescence and so much thoughtlessness around us, are we to open people to the power of possibility? How, given the emphasis on preparing the young for a society of high tech are we to move them to perceive alternatives, to look at things as if they could be otherwise? And why? And to what ends? (1988, p. 55)

The more general and pervasive questions that Greene and others raise are important for an exploration of the landscape of teacher education. If there is a "universal" theme in the literature on teacher education, it is that the "landscape" while vast and varied and traversed by many inhabitants and explorers is poorly understood in terms of its effects and effectiveness in preparing new teachers (Fullan, 1991; Doyle, 1990; 1990; Carr, 1989; Lanier and Little, 1986). In his review of teacher education programs, Seymour Sarason looks back over a quarter of century from a more recent perspective:

> what is the relationship between the preparation of teachers and the realities they experience when they embark on their careers? That question is as unstudied today--as superficially discussed today--as in previous decades when the quality of education was a source of national concern. (1986, p. iv)

Well, judging by media interest and political speeches, education is still a source of national--and provincial and local--concern in Canada. What is not as clear is where teacher education fits into the picture. Public discontent with teachers and teaching is often vented as blame on the perceived inadequacies and irrelevance teacher education programs. Indeed, many practicing and graduating teachers share a generally negative view of their own preservice teacher education. In the estimation of many educators, "It is clear that universities and their faculties of education have not yet 'got it right'," in the words of Michael Fullan (1991, p. 300).

One conclusion which can be drawn from the teacher education literature is that the problems and dilemmas experienced in teacher education have been well known--if not well or fully understood--and enduring over the history of teacher education (Lanier and Little, 1986, p. 527). Lawrence Cremin notes in a preface to a history of teacher education, "a century of debate over the proper preparation of teachers," and ongoing disagreement "about the qualities of good teacher and the best modes of nurturing those qualities" (Borrowman, 1965, p. vii). Whether or not debate can ever be resolved there nonetheless

has been and continues to be an incredible amount of "reform" activity in the field of teacher education. The recent enthusiasm for engendering reflective teaching, for instance, is evidenced in the sheer volume of journal, conference, and other scholarly writing.

However, like many other "innovations" in the education of teachers, it is not immediately evident why a reflective approach to teaching is better, assuming the meaning of reflection is even understood. Nor as many writers in the teacher education field argue, are the effects known on teaching practices. Enthusiasm for certain approaches often runs ahead of understanding the consequences for learning to become a teacher. Conventional research paradigms have done little to edify what a teacher education approach/curriculum means for student teachers and the process of becoming a teacher (Fullan, 1991; Britzman, 1991; Lanier and Little, 1986).

Acknowledging the absences in my own knowledge and practice as a teacher and teacher educator, the meaning of and possibilities for reflective teaching were questions that guided my research at the outset of the project and study with which I was involved. In linking reflective practice and student teaching, however, also involved me in a consideration of wider questions and issues. The traditions, knowledge, and practices of teacher education as a whole constitute an important context for understanding local practices. Of course the landscape of teacher education is complex and diverse. Representing it as a unified whole would be a disservice to historical, cultural, and local differences. There is a danger of painting with large brush strokes and obscuring the texture of knowledge and practices that are different and unique. As well, from the perspective of writing and practicing in Canada, there is a somewhat questionable tendency to view Canadian teacher education through the lenses of American research and experiences.

It is the case however, that there is an existing tradition and culture which allows the possibility for interpretation of practices and ideas. Existing knowledges, practices, and understandings can be acknowledged as "forestructures" for one's own work. Forestructures are places, in a sense, where questions may be found (Crusius, 1991, p. 85). We live within a history that in many ways is also part of us, an "external narrative" from which our own narratives may derive (Kerby, 1991, p.6). Thus an exploration of the landscape of teacher education may be thought of as an intertextual exercise (Rosenau, 1992), whereby meaning may be constructed from intersecting and sometimes seemingly disparate stories. Eschewing the likelihood of finding firm causal explanations, it is nevertheless possible to discover certain positions from which to locate oneself. It is from the traditions and practices that we ourselves are part that allow questions to emerge.

Saying that is also to admit the partiality of any inquiry. Inquiry comes from where we are--and where we might hope to go.

b. *The theory-practice problem in teacher education*

Teaching is often compared--favourably or unfavourably--to other professions in terms of the quality of the professional body of knowledge that undergirds practice. Arguments have been made that the status of teaching in relation to professions such as law and medicine will rise when there is a recognized and undisputed knowledge base out of which teaching can be confidently created. Peter Grimmet (1988), for one, believes that such a body of knowledge now exists which can inform the preparation of teachers.

Putting aside for a moment the questions about the quality of that knowledge, the more pertinent question here is how that knowledge contributes to students becoming teachers. Even acknowledging the value and validity of the knowledge, the question remains how theory can relate practice in ways that will encourage student teachers to become thoughtful, reflective practioners. That "gap" between what is known about teaching in theoretical and propositional terms and its realization as practice in schools and classrooms seems to drive much of the research about teaching and teacher education.

At the same time, the awareness that years of massive research and the presumed refinement of the knowledge base of teaching has yet to guarantee good teaching practice has increased skepticism about teacher education as a "grand" or "meta-narrative", a term which denotes the delegitimation and distance of scientific discourses from everyday life (Lyotard, 1984). More specifically, despite a large body of knowledge about teaching the way that knowledge ought to relate to practice is problematic (Bergen, 1992; Carter, 1990; Doyle, 1990; Floden and Buchmann, 1990; Parker, 1989; Cherryholmes, 1988; Lanier and Little, 1986). Certainly in the stories of student teachers there is not a neat and tidy relationship between the curriculum of teacher education and the experiences of becoming a teacher. The (re)current interest in reflective practice may be a symptom of the remoteness of so-called scientific knowledge from the contingencies of everyday experience and an attempt to give voice and shape to particular ways of knowing appropriate to the practice of teaching.

Much of the work in teacher education and research into teaching has been predicated on the idea that sound knowledge derived from good research would produce an unambiguous and universal curriculum for teacher preparation regardless of local contexts and the subjectivities of practitioners. Indeed, the link between knowledge and practice was assumed to be directive and linear--that good practice could be derived from scientifically derived knowledge (Tom and Valli, 1990; Lanier and Little, 1986). In a

review of the nature of the "knowledge base" for teaching, Alan Tom and Linda Valli describe this orientation well:

> To see the improvement of practice as involving the creation of rule grounded in the findings of scientific research is to see the realm of practice as being derived from knowledge. Knowledge, that is, scientific knowledge, is presumed to be the basis for improving practice, and practice is presumed to be both molded to conform to findings of these studies. (Tom and Valli, 1990, p. 388)

What Tom and Valli also imply is that within the tradition of teacher education they describe, a scientific knowledge is accorded *ontological* priority *over* practice. In other words, what may be considered "real" and correct about teaching is to be found in scientifically accredited knowledge. Moreover, such knowledge is presumed to be beyond normative debate. Prescriptions for practice then, ought to follow logically from a scientifically derived knowledge base. For example, current teacher education programs at the University of Alberta still tend to be stuctured in a way that gives precedence and priority to theoretical knowledge over practice. That is, teacher education programs tend to expect student teachers to be able to translate university education into teaching practice. However, in the experiences of learning to become a teacher, the link between theory and practice is neither linear and causal nor unmediated by other important contextual and personal factors. It should not be surprising when student teachers often experience the university part of their teacher education as being impractical or irrelevant.

What is also missing from the orientation that Tom and Valli describe are questions about purpose and value. As the discussion of student teachers' experiences further on will hope to show, the academic knowledge base for teaching does not help very much when confronted with questions of what to do in concrete situations of practice. Those kinds of questions are deeply normative in quality, intent, and effect (van Manen 1992; Tom and Valli, 1990). They require a kind of situated sense making, a special kind of embodied thoughtfulness van Manen (1991) has described as pedagogical "tact." Van Manen has persuasively made the case that kind of thoughtfull knowing and action he terms pedagogical tact cannot be learned theoretically or apart from extended and reflective experiences working with children in educational situations.

Thus, the question of the relation between knowledge and practice can be asked very differently. Many years before the current discussions of teacher education, John Dewey, for example, emphasized the importance of learning from and in practice. For Dewey, the importance of theoretical knowledge was the degree to which it would enable inquiry and understanding, that is, to the extent to which it would enable experience to be reconstructed so as to deal with real problems of practice (Floden and Buchmann, 1990; Dewey, 1965/1904, 1938, 1933).

Under dominant or "traditional" paradigms of research the question has generally been how theoretical knowledge penetrates (or does not) what people actually do in sites of practice. In teacher education the separation between research/teaching, university/schools, theory/ practice was (and largely still is) experienced as a problem of control over knowledge, that is the power to signify what knowledge and practices are legitimate. The knowledge/control dimension is reflected, for example, in the "effective teaching" movement. Effective teaching is very much related to the interest in administrative control of teaching and the desire and attempt to attain "quality control" through a finite and measurable blueprint of skills (Doyle, 1990). The language of that kind of formal/technical rationality, however, ultimately works to limit understanding of teaching as it is experienced and as it might be, obscuring or denying other, or what Ted Aoki calls "layered voices of teaching" (Aoki, 1991). Those "layered voices" are not given full or rich expression in formal or abstract languages. Teaching practices may be best described as "non-rationalized" in character, which nonetheless are full of tradition, meaning, and practical, normative wisdom (Flyvbjerg, 1990).

As will be shown in further chapters of this study, student teachers experience a great deal of anguish when technical, abstract knowledge, though clothed in intellectual legitimacy, abandons them when confronting what Aoki terms, "the preconceptual, pretheoretical, fleshy, familiar, very concrete world of teachers and students" (1991, p. 2). Reflection also--if conceived as solely an intellectual idea and in methodological terms--is meaningless to student teachers without an excursion through personal and others' stories. In other words, student teachers often experience crises of identity which the emphasis on reflection does not help to resolve.

One of the difficulties I encountered in my practice and research is understanding what might be meant by reflective practice or teaching in a more concrete and practical sense. In much of the literature reflective teaching is presented as another form of rationality that can be implemented within any existing framework and program. Although the turn to reflective practice is on one level an attempt to encourage more concrete and ethical understanding, it is not clear how this can be manifested in teacher education programs. Nor, as much of the teacher education literature admits, do we understand what it means at the level of experience and meaning. Thus the enthusiasm for reflective practice only raises more questions about teaching and teacher education in terms of relating theoretical knowledge and situated practices..

The fervent questioning that has been occurring in the field of teacher education is certainly a context for this study. Although such questioning is not historically novel, during the 1980's there was an explosion of studies of schooling and critiques of teacher

education (Fullan, 1991; Houston, et.al., 1990). A large part of the impetus for this questioning was initiated in the United States (Hrynyk, 1987) where education, and the questionable quality of schooling and teaching in particular (Goodlad, 1984) focussed attention on the function and potential of teacher education in turning out better teachers and improving practice (Holmes Report, 1986). Education, particularly as embodied in the work of teachers, was shouldered with the blame for declining economic and social conditions. The burden of ameliorating that decline is rested on improving the quality of teacher graduates. That burden, however, raises questions about the very nature of teacher enterprise and the foundations that undergird its practices and orientations to knowledge.

c. *Questioning formal/technical rationality as a basis for teacher education*

> "Reason" has had a fortune not unlike "God" and "country:" some of the worst violence is committed in its name.
>
> Caputo, 1987, p. 210

In the late twentieth century there appears to be a growing disenchantment with the "formal rationality and the science of teaching" (Labaree, 1992) or the dominant "technical rationality" (Schon, 1983) characteristic of most university teacher education institutions and practices. The growing awareness that past and existing practices of teacher preparation do not necessarily produce good teaching has allowed questions of both theory and practice to emerge. The interest in reflective teaching is in part a recognition that the education of teachers does not function well as an applied science (Faculty of Education, 1989) However, it is not clear how the turn to "reflective" practice or teaching is an unambiguous turn away from traditional--that is, formal/technical--formats. Many critics of teacher education would argue that much teacher education knowledge and practice--including reflective practice--is still caught in the modernist grasp of reason.

In *Voltaire's Bastards* (1993) John Ralston Saul persuasively argues that current institutional practices, including education, are deeply implicated in what he calls "the dictatorship of reason", a major consequence of the development of modernism since the Enlightenment. Reason, as Saul uses the term, refers to the notion that infallible and substantive knowledge can determine reliable practices. Such knowledge can be realized in an a-priori intellectual manner without reference to experience (Martin, 1991, p. 195). A definition of reason from an encyclopedia of philosophy is telling:

> reason, in contrast with understanding, is an active principle driven by an impossible demand to transcend the limitations of all human experience and arrive at a comprehension of an absolutely unconditional and all-inclusive reality. (Angeles, 1992, p. 255)

Surveying the legacy of modernism, Albert Borgmann refers to rationality as "the true warrant" in terms of how it dominates modern thinking and practices (1992, p. 24)). Referring to a particular connotation of reason as the "the triumph of procedure over substance" (1992, p. 24), Borgmann recognizes that a dominant aspect of modernism is a faith in infallible method to solve problems--without the bother of attending to ethical care. As he says, "method promises order without recourse to orientation" (1992, p.24). Gadamer (1981) also laments the constriction of understanding as the consequence of the ubiquitous application of a narrowly conceived reason as method.

The form or rationality that is criticized in works cited above is experienced in modern life as the application of abstract knowledge as method, universal in scope, and essentially amoral in orientation. According to Saul, reason is embodied as knowledge in the power of ruling elites, particularly modern bureaucratic, technical, and educational decision makers. John Caputo (1987), a philosopher, also writes evocatively about the capture of reason by institutional authority ensuring the normalization and regulation of human activity. Control, manipulation, and the exercise of power become dominant preoccupations (Caputo, 1987, p. 233). Many of the problems of teacher education recounted in the literature reflect, Saul and Caputo would argue, the failure of that kind of reason to guide the work of teaching at the level of the everyday. "Reason, when so abstracted, becomes a series of unrelated assertions bereft of memory" (Saul, 1992, p.139).

The modernist view of reason has become embedded in teacher education as a practice in the late twentieth century. The dominant culture of teacher education has been characterized as being primarily marked by a technical and ameliorative orientation (Zeichner and Tabachnick, 1991; Beyer, 1989, 1987). As Landon Beyer (1987) points out, widely publicized reports on the condition of and recommendations for teacher education, such as that of the *Carnegie Forum* and *Holmes Group* recognize the centrality of teachers' work, but cast improvement in terms of rather individualistic, technical, and ameliorative frameworks. Teacher education is to be seen as a vehicle for improving teacher competence, largely through the application of knowledge gleaned through the behavioural sciences. The dominance of a pervasive technical rationality is not questioned (Beyer, 1987; Giroux and McLaren, 1987). Often in the guise of language that would suggest otherwise, what Donald Schon has termed "technical rationality" continues unabated (Labaree, 1992; Smyth, 1992; Ginsberg and Clift, 1990).

One root of the problem can be located in the movement to professionalize and legitimate the work of teacher education in university settings. Professionalization of teacher education has valorized a "scientific" knowledge base for teaching and the

professional power and control over teaching and teacher education. In an interesting analysis of teacher education, David Labaree links the predominance of a theory into practice orientation in teacher education with the desire to gain status and legitimacy in university environments;

> In short, in a significant way, the teacher professionalization movement of the 1980's is descended from the prior movement to professionalize teacher educators and from the scientific knowledge base that was developed during the latter process. (Labaree, 1992, p. 136)

From that perspective, the growth in theoretical and scientific work in education and teacher education has not solved the perplexing questions about how to educate teachers. In Canada there have been several reports and studies concerning the current state and future of teacher education, and recognizing the limitations of the current practices in teacher education (footnote). Many of these reports have originated within the teacher education community itself, and represent in part a response to crises of education in the field, including demographic, economic, and technological pressures (Fullan, 1991; Hrynyk, 1987). At least until the escalation of recessionary and deficit-reduction policies, for example, teacher shortages were widely anticipated in the 1990's, with the attendant pressures of turning out more teachers. Such pressures on teacher education encourage by necessity a re-thinking of the purposes and effectiveness of teacher education institutions (Fullan, 1991, p. 290).

While the demography of teacher preparation is a challenge for teacher education, raising questions of the adequacy of resources and facilities (or more likely in the short run how to do more with less), more crucial questions still call out for attention. What kinds of teachers should be turned out for schools and classrooms at this juncture in history? And how should teachers be educated? How can and should incoming teachers cope with the kinds of local and global changes and conditions which affect communities, families, and hence children? What sorts of classrooms situations will new teachers encounter?

The questions about teacher education are even more pertinent in the immediate contexts of teaching and schools today. When student teachers go into classrooms and schools they may likely encounter children, teaching conditions, and programs for which their education has not adequately prepared them. For example, the Alberta Teachers' Association recently published a report, *Trying to Teach*, which relates very compellingly and candidly the frustrations and stresses encountered by classroom teachers across Alberta. *Trying to Teach* identified several "trends and innovations" currently extant in Alberta Schools, including for example, integration of special needs children into regular classrooms, continuous progress organization, results-based curricula, and externally-

mandated testing. Many teachers responded very insightfully to questions about how they were experiencing bureaucratically-imposed curricular and organizational approaches.

Trying to Teach helps to illustrate the problem of the paradigm of technical rationality discussed above. The report portrays the breakdown between knowledge *about* teaching practices and the experiences of teaching that are not well understood in practical and normative ways. While many of the ideas and innovations are sound in theory and probably deserve moral support--for instance integration of handicapped children--those same ideas applied thoughtlessly or without reference to how real classroom situations are experienced become oppressive and negligent of both teachers and children.

The report emphasizes the tremendous pressures and stresses experienced by many dedicated teachers in coping with the effects on their work. Perhaps even more significantly, *Trying to Teach* notes that the very identity of teaching--what it means to be a teacher--is being assailed through curricular and classroom teaching innovations. Ironically, the professionalization of teacher education and knowledge production referred to above has resulted in greater intervention in teachers' work lives, legitimating rational and bureaucratic control (Apple, 1989). In many respects the stories of teachers in *Trying to Teach* provide real examples of what Michael Apple has termed the "intensification" of teachers' work. Intensification, according to Apple, does not simply mean the experience of increased quantity of work within the same parameters of time. More fundamentally intensification shifts the locus of control away from the practitioner, the teacher, effecting a "deskilling" or "reskilling" of work (1989, p. 41). The process of deskilling or reskilling, as the stories in *Trying to Teach* illustrate, also submerges teachers' voices under the force of imperatives that have ignored connection to more grounded understandings and needs.

The comments of a teacher cited in the report captures very movingly how teachers may be caught in a matrix of power and knowledge. Referring to being "continually bombarded with new ideas" and the imposition of those ideas by external specialists and legistative decree, a teacher responds,

> Over a period of a year a very good teacher may very well feel like a failure because they have not managed to implement any or all of the above [referring to a list of eight innovations explored in the report]. However, these same good teachers probably had the respect of their students, showed care and concern for their students, as well taught their programs in an innovative and interesting manner. I wonder if we should expect more of any human being. (1993, p. 26)

The technical, rational language of innovation and theoretical prescription is negligent of the very nature of pedagogic work and caring in real situations. The words of the teacher quoted above shows that the context for reflective teaching is, to say the least a difficult

one. Whether it is even possible for teachers to "teach" is a question raised by many teachers quoted in *Trying to Teach.*

Fueling the intensification and control of teachers' work even more is the increasing emphasis on global competitiveness by restructured national economies (Smyth, 1992; Hargreaves, 1991). There has been growing pressure on educational systems to turn out students who will be more "literate," particularly in terms of science, mathematics, and technological competence so that these students will be on par with those in other more industrialized nations. Such a technological emphasis ironically buys into the reproduction theory of education. Being able to compete academically to excel in a finite set of curricular aims in schools will neatly prepare and cultivate students to fit into a restructured economic system. Or so goes the theory.

Certainly teachers and students in schools can fall victim to a rationality that emphasizes narrow economically and technologically defined ends. Such ends do not grow out of real life concerns and pedagogic responsibility for children. Rather, externally-imposed ends are often determined by narrow and idealogically-motivated political and economic agendas. Analysts of post-industrial or postmodern economies often speak of the "restructuring" of modern industrial societies. On the surface that seems like a benign term, but in reality restructuring entails a conscious manipulation of institutions, such as education and schooling for much more rational and instrumental ends, deeply affecting the work and lives of teachers and students.

The irony of what is referred to as the "globalization" of economies is that the range of desirable skills becomes restricted to narrowly defined technological and economic needs. So-called global economies emphasize competition for increasingly scarce jobs. In globally-oriented economies, capital and industry is much more mobile and transient. As a consequence, workers have to be disciplined for systems of "flexible accumulation." Economies require work forces "educated" to fit short term economic goals rather than preparation for long term occupational or vocational roles (Harvey, 1989). Less easily defined, unmeasurable goals for schooling--citizenship, caring, social competence, tolerance for others, global awareness, and critical literacy--also become denigrated as the proper domains of education.

John Smyth argues that the demand on educational systems to produce compliant, but technologically-attuned personnel rehabilitates the "human capital" theory of education. Implications of the human capital approach suggests that instead of mediating social and cultural relationships education should, by design or effect, emphasize a more blatant emphasis on commodity and economic relationships (Smyth, 1992; Donald, 1992). "New right" agendas have opened the way for more direct state intervention in education,

reinforcing a more instrumentalist orientation, and redefining relevance in restrictive, narrowly economic terms (Quicke, 1988). In that kind of macro-context, Smyth argues that "reflective teaching" can be conceived as another interventionist strategy in the work of schooling, especially if the ends or purposes of education and reflection are already predetermined (1992, p. 280).

The effects of social and economic changes on the experiences of daily life means that alternate views of reflection--for instance reflection as understanding experience and developing practical reasoning and competence--become much more difficult to foster. The German social theorist Jurgen Habermas has argued that the penetration of the lifeworld--the world of everyday practice and knowing--by administrative, instrumental, and rationalized forms of conduct and procedure diminishes possibilities for more intuitive ways of knowing and action. Opportunities for reflective thought and action are limited by the dominance of expert knowledge and rationality which increasingly frame social and occupational relationships (Ingram, 1987, p. 176). Understanding and practice oriented to and by experience is delegitimated and obscured as procedural and administrative discipline dominates. However, expert knowledge does not always engender trust and feelings of security, especially when a more general distrust of modernity is evident. Many people do not trust institutional and bureaucratic processes to fulfill their needs (Giddens, 1990).

Teachers do want to work with the confidence that their professional knowledge can carry the day, although that knowledge is resistant to codification. Yet the world that flows beyond the dusty blackboards and underneath scuffed floorboards of the school is perhaps not so solid. The restructuring and the re-experiencing of time and space that mark the "postmodern condition" inalterably changes the way life is experienced, generating uncertainty and anxiety (Borgmann, 1992). Institutions like education increasingly fail to foster trust and feelings of legitimacy in the people they serve, including children, their parents and teachers. Mistrust may often be manifested as "sullen acquisence" as Borgmann provocatively terms a consequence of the loss of faith in modernity. Such loss of faith and mistrust may even turn to resentment and a dismissiveness of efforts to address real problems (Borgmann, 1992, p. 8).

To date the field of teacher education, it may be argued, has been directed primarily by technical-rational and rather narrow ameliorative concerns. In part, the interest in reflective practice recognizes that the technical-rational orientation in teacher education is in fact ideological in nature and open to contesting ideas and views about purpose and process. Like other human activities, education can be understood as a narrative--a text that has been constructed on the basis of historical values and choices. The current emphasis on restructuring education (Hargreaves, 1991) has perhaps brought the ideological qualities

of teacher education into greater focus. While the intention may have been to provide the knowledge base for teaching in a presumed value-free or neutral way, in practice very real normative and political interests are obscured:

> every plan for teacher education is necessarily bounded by existing or proposed patterns of schooling and with the social, economic and political contexts in which schooling is embedded....claims to political neutrality in teacher education are illusory and...the process of teacher education is inherently a political and moral endeavour. (Beyer and Zeichner, 1987, p. 312)

Further, as Giroux and McLaren argue, casting teacher education curriculum as in narrowly-defined service and technical terms divorces it from responsibility to developing understanding in sites of practice:

> [teacher education institutions] continue to define themselves essentially as service institutions generally mandated to provide students with the requisite technical expertise to carry out whatever pedagogical functions are deemed necessary by the various school communities in which students undertake their practicum experiences. (1987, p. 270)

Seeking greater legitimacy and perhaps in resistance to the kinds of social and economic pressures referred to above, many teacher educators are seeking to reconceptualize their work (Grumet, 1989) and to re-explore what the responsibilities of teacher education ought to be. Reconceptualization implies attunement to lives in classrooms and how those lives are constituted as identities and selves. Introducing "reflective practice" as one way to becoming a teacher is to begin to resist or deconstruct a mode of teacher education whereby "student teachers are overwhelmingly taught to view schooling as an ontologically secured or metaphysically guaranteed neutral terrain" (Giroux and McLaren, 1987, p. 273). With a growing awareness that teaching cannot be simply prescribed or conscribed by detached expert knowledge, a turn to "reflective practice" may offer possibilities to explore the complexities of the landscape of teacher education, an exploration that cannot exclude understanding of self and identity as well.

The Postmodern Challenge to Knowledge and Practice in Teacher Education

> No matter how troubling it may be, the landscape of the postmodern surrounds us. It simultaneously delimits and opens our horizons. It's our problem and our hope.
>
> Andreas Huyssen, 1990, p. 271

a. *Postmodernism questions the certainty of teacher education knowledge*

The examination of student teaching and reflective practice related by this work is approached, if somewhat hesitantly and uncomfortably, from the problematic perspective

termed loosely "postmodern." Hestitantly and uncomfortably because there is an ambivalent quality to postmodernism as a set of conjectures about an historical condition and also as the theoretical telling about that condition (Docherty, 1993; Smart, 1993; Rosenau, 1992; Flax, 1990; Huyssen, 1990). It would be difficult, however, to ignore the impact of postmodern thinking, and the historical changes that some have termed postmodern on teacher education.

The renewed interest in reflective practice in teacher preparation programs may be evidence of the desire to make sense at the "local" level, to give credence and voice to what some have called "local theory" (Birmingham, 1989). What this implies is that the interest in reflective practice and the practice of people in the schools as well as universities represents a turn from the spectator, detached form of knowing and engagement, to one that heeds the other often neglected by theoretical and professional discourses. At a practical level understanding the lived experiences and stories of those involved in teacher education becomes a more salient concern. The structures--institutional and knowledge--cannot contain, or even sometimes tolerate difference. It is not simply coincidental that with the turn to reflective practice there is also a growing interest in collaboration with schools and teachers in teacher education as a way of expanding the borders of knowing and practice. Furthermore, some would argue that *understanding* the work of teaching through vivifying experience and practice through narrative ought to be a strong focus of both research and teaching practice in teacher education (Henderson, 1992; Aoki, 1991; Connelly and Clandinin, 1988).

The interest in more narrative approaches are consistent with postmodern critiques of teacher education which imply very strongly that there is not an easy correspondence between the experience of schooling, and the way that experience becomes represented in language and transmitted to others in formal institutions of teacher education. "To write 'postmodern'," argues Patti Lather (1991) is to challenge dominant meaning systems and to begin to open to submerged and other possibilities. Deborah Britzman (1991) illustrates very convincingly the difficulty student teachers experience when their education as teachers fails to help them understand and challenge practice in schools. Postmodern theorists would see that conundrum as evidence of a mistaken belief in false dualisms between theory and practice, knowledge and action. Teacher education, particularly in the universities, has fostered the notion that knowledge--theory--about teaching is a universal and ethically neutral form that can be imprinted on both individual identities and sites of practice. In straining against the boundaries and borders of accepted canons, postmodern thought puts the idea of universality very much into question (Aronwitz and Giroux, 1991, p. 18).

As referred to earlier, theoretical knowledge about teaching, learned in isolation from questions of practice does not automatically lead to practical forms of understanding. Through questioning the duality between experience and the language or theory which attempts to grasp that experience, those of a postmodern persuasian want to dislodge discourses--the talk and writing--of teacher education off the high road of theoretical certainty, dominance, and taken-for-grantedness. As Linda Nicholson writes about the reliance and infallibility of theory for example,

> the postmodern critique has come to focus on philosophy and the very idea of a possible theory of knowledge, justice, or beauty. The claim is that the pursuit itself of such theories rests upon the modernist conception of a transcendant reason able to separate itself from the body and from historical time and place. (1990, p. 4)

At one level, then, postmodernism can help us to understand that knowledge and reflection may need to be grounded in particular experiences and situations. The particularity of experience includes the person and her identity in becoming a teacher, which, as the experiences of student teachers illustrate is something that is not often attended to in the experience of becoming a teacher. The difficulties that are encountered in becoming a teacher are not always soothed by the certainties and universality of theoretical knowledged about teaching.

The "condition of postmodernity" as David Harvey (1989) refers to it, is also an inescapable context for education. The kinds of questioning a postmodern perspective engenders complicates the meaning and hopes we ascribe to teaching. In the "postmodern condition" finding direction and making sense becomes a more problematic endeavour. The very question of what it means to be a teacher where the old presumed certainties of ideology, knowledge, and practice are on shifting and on contested grounds creates difficulty and challenge for teacher education.

The recognition that "the profound uncertainty about what constitutes an adequate description of social 'reality'" (Lather, 1991, p. 21) also throws into doubt the certainty of theoretical prescription. Hence questions about what to do also do not find easy assurance. Education as a science directing practice or even critical theory as a guide for practising a more "emancipatory" or "critical" pedagogy continue to flounder in guaranteeing good practice (Donald, 1992; Ellsworth, 1989). "It is wrong to suppose that we can thus provide a sure ground for our pedagogical action", van Manen counsels (1991, p. 205). But what van Manen also helps us to understand is that living in an uncertain time gives us even more reason to think seriously and concretely about the meaning of teaching and how the future may be fostered in the education of the young.

Postmodernism--as a set of beliefs about both society and knowledge--generates considerable skepticism about certainties couched in universal, abstract, and ahistorical terms, including critical orientations based on universalist norms. However, as Peter Sloterdijk (1987) suggests, the absence and delegitimation of critical understanding often leads to even more reliance on technocratic means as the only solution in cultures already soured by the excesses of modernity. Whether it is even possible then to talk about education and teaching in transformative ways is a very real problem. In a sense, this is the abyss that postmodern thinking reveals.

A postmodern perspective however is not necessarily nihilistic. Rather than falling into nihilism and despair, a postmodern perspective may encourage us to see that theory worded in universals and ahistorical terms hides and denies understandings grounded in everyday life. Recognizing that there is not a neat, predestined relationship between the more formal stories of teaching (for example theoretical, rational, scientific-technical or critical) and the actual experiences of people learning to become teachers, raises difficult pedagogical questions but does not absolve responsibility for fostering understanding.

In subsequent chapters, the reflective experiences of student teachers will be explored as instances of the complex and idiosyncratic relationships between personal narratives and making sense of the narratives of both experience and knowledge. As will be related from the perspective of an action research study I was engaged in, learning to become a teacher is an experience that is often messy, conflictual, filled with emotion, and uncertain. But there is little solace from what might be called the theories of teaching. The difficulties that student teachers experience in living the distance between theory and practice nonetheless demands pedagogical responses from teacher educators and programs.

Reflection, as one response to the difficulties of becoming a teacher, is however often (re)conceived in *modernist* terms, as the function of an autonomous *cogito*. Reflection then becomes another remote, another hyperreal discourse attempting to fill the space of uncertain and indeterminate experience. But likewise, despite its immediate appeal, uncritical practice--the experience of "real" classroom situations--is also a discourse that requires interpretation (Britzman, 1991). The discourses of teacher education and teaching--including reflective practice--are texts of human experience and creation that call for interpretation and understanding. Moreover, a postmodern perspective problematizes the question of ethics in teaching and teacher education. Questions about what to do are not just epistemological issues--that is, knowledge about practice cannot be simply derived and prescribed from an unassailable and neutral source.

b. *Postmodernism challenges teacher educators to think ethically*

One may well question, on the other hand, whether the postmodern *attitude* is appropriate for understanding teaching and education. Postmodern perspectives can prompt an aesthetizing of ideas about teaching and education. With the denial that there is a privileged access to certain truth and unambiguous representation, thus throwing into doubt the relationships between theoretical knowledge and everday practice, postmodernism may saunter into the realm of detached aesthetics and playful but uncommitted theorizing. The messier, earthier questions of value and action may be left behind, ironically parroting the very splits and dualities attributed to modernist discourses (Smart, 1993; Flax, 1990; Harvey, 1990; Huyssen; 1990).

Becoming enamored of theory divorced from understanding and practice forgets about the ethical dilemmas and concerns faced by practioners in the "real" world. Like other "hyperreal" discourses based on the refinement of abstract knowledge and technique, postmodernism can be negligent of experience and responsibility (Borgmann, 1992). As van Manen (1991, 1992) persuasively reminds us such an attitude is alien to teaching, especially teaching considered as relationship to children. The work of teaching is foremost an activity infused and driven by virtue, by ethical responsibility to guide children and young adults into the world.

My own experience as a teacher in junior and senior high school and university classrooms confirms for me that teaching is very much about very concrete and urgent questions of value and responsibility. As a teacher I am confronted unceasingly with what to do in particular situations, working with particular children or older students, and particular units of curriculum and knowledge at particular times and places. Recently, after a hiatus of three years from schools, I returned to full time teaching in a more or less "academic" high school. What struck me rather early on was that stolen moments of respite from the daily schedule were often filled with normative talk. How should something be taught to this particular group of students? What can we do about student absenteeism? How can we protect some students from being harassed by others? Did we realize a certain student was no longer living with her family? More elliptically, what should be done about a certain staff member who is obviously in trouble?

Staff and departmental meetings too revolved around arguments for or against certain testing practises, what textbooks to use, how to interpret a certain curriculum topic, how to deal with student problems and behaviours. Periodically, verbally open conflict ensued about "innovations" being introduced by administration. Resistances to bureaucratic initiatives were also very much about value--what teachers construe as adequate working environments in order to *be* teachers.

I am not attempting to portray teachers as earnest and idealistic moral decision makers. It is likely the case that most teachers, most of the time, do not think that their daily decisions are moral or ethical in nature, at least not in a detached, philosophical sense. Yet most teachers would feel that there is a "right" way to be a teacher. There is an implicit trust and comfort in tacit ways of knowing that appear to work in the classroom. Many teachers somehow know what good teaching is, or when something really works well in the classroom. But few teachers would articulate that in particularly theoretical terms. Successful teaching, something that research about teaching tries to represent and frame, is more elusive in practice. As respresentations of what they do, theoretical explanations often appear remote and unreal to teachers.

Despite the comfort of tacit knowing and sure-handed practice, at times it feels very unsettling to be a teacher. Questions about the right thing to do are always present, always insistent, and it seems, being more frequently asked. Ethical dilemmas constantly interweave with teachers' work and knowledge (Lyons, 1990), creating very real pressures and tensions. The realities and contingencies of working with thirty students in a classroom at any given time on any given day challenges the solidity of knowing what to do. Teacher knowledge is fragile in the face of uncertainty. Can planning for instance really anticipate mood and disposition and alertness? Is it possible to fully anticipate the dispositions of thirty or more students? Or as currently the case, know how to respond to impact of government decisions?

As Joseph McDonald (1992) illustrates convincingly in his stories of teaching, teachers confront vulnerability daily in classrooms as they negotiate the mediations between self, students, and subject matter. The line between feeling successful and feeling like a failure is a thin one. Every year that I have taught I can recall quite vividly moments of exultation at having achieved what felt like a great lesson or equally disheartened when I know I have failed, or when even one or two students were able to upset my applecart of good intentions.

Understanding that teaching is wound up so integrally with ethical questions and demands implies that teaching is more difficult than simply delivering the curricular goods or teaching a "subject." The phenomena of teacher "burn-out" may be related to the uncertainties encountered in the daily life of schools and classrooms. Donald Schon identifies the phenomena of burn-out as a possible consequence of the inadequacy of "knowing-in-action" in relation to the seeming complexity and uncertainty of professional work such as teaching (1983, p. 61). Unfortunately for many teachers feelings of inadequacy are often manifested as self-doubt and self-blaming. As McDonald suggests, "teachers may avoid reflection and collegiality in order to avoid revealing to themselves and

others whether they are good or bad teachers" (1992, p. 21). The hardening of practice is perhaps a symptom of the absence of supportive communities for ethical questioning and practice, revealing the limitations of the way the work of teachers has been individualized and constrained.

It seems less unreasonable to me now, although nonetheless troubling, that many teachers retreat into their own comfortable routines. Many teachers literally retreat to their closed classrooms to find some respite from the unrelenting questions about "what should we do?" or "what is the right thing to do?" Often those questions get lost in the sheer busyness of school work. The demands of beginning the next class, meeting with the next group of students, teaching the next lesson, marking another set of essays, preparing the next report cards, dealing with discipline problems, calling parents, responding to memos, preparing for extra-curricular activities is constantly pressing and ongoing.

But it is not simply that these are tasks to be completed. It is not just the quantity of work but work to be completed in relationships with others, and within expectations not always clearly defined, or as attainable as theories of instruction would have it. Conceding the relational nature of teaching as a profession, that is, that decisions have to made in relation to someone--a child, a colleague, a parent, an other--defines a teacher's work in fundamentally ethical terms. Whether we choose to sense and articulate the call or not, ethics defines the texture of what we do as teachers. And the nature of that ethical work can only be defined relationally.

Yet it seems that it has also become more difficult to frame and support all those ethical choices teachers must make. Teachers' work seems more and more shrouded in ambivalence. In part there is much uncertainty about education as a modern project, and what its purpose ought to be. Education, notably as an ameliorative enterprise, emerged in part out of the Enlightenment ideals of progress, individual self growth, awareness, and virtue (Donald, 1992). But as Sloterdijk (1987) argues, not everyone believes the simple message any more that education will automatically lead to a better life. Current economic and political realities do not encourage faith in education to facilitate continued progress either on a personal or societal level.

Part of the crisis may lie in the nature of the public and the difficulty of building a consensus about the purposes of education. The public to which education nominally responds is not a unified, coherent community of interest and participation. John Dewey (1927) anticipated the problem of diminishing public life much earlier in the century when he worried about the growing absence of democratic decision-making communities. Public education, which necessarily has more broader and universalist aims in a democratic society, can be threatened by the fragmentation engendered by particular and private

interests (Elshstain, 1993). The public, as a body to which education is responsible, is increasingly diminished or fragmented (Borgmann, 1992; Giroux and McLaren, 1987). In the absence of a strong, democratic, responsive public it is difficult to ground purposes and direction for education. As one consequence Dewey warned of the danger of decision making falling into the hands of expert elites and the consequent narrowing of educational purposes to instrumental ends.

In Alberta official curricular documents in social studies for example, prescribe the fostering "responsible citizenship" as a primary goal for education. Yet in the absence of any real and sustained participation in deciding what kind of society that we are educating children for, the goal of citizenship remains abstract and remote (Donald, 1992; Mouffe, 1992; Giddens, 1990; Harvey, 1987). Wasserman (1988) asks "what do we teach our children for" as an example of what a "reflective" teacher would ask. Unless we are content to fall back on the old, assumed certainties, this could also be an empty question, inviting cynical response or "sullen" acquiesence (Borgmann, 1992).

Flax suggests that although our relationship to Enlightenment ideals is ambivalent, it is perhaps a "necessary ambivalence" (1990, p. 9). Necessarily ambivalent because what we value in teaching and teacher education is difficult to ground unambiguously and consensually against the particularities of experience *or* more universally constituted norms. What is good teaching cannot be simply prescribed or conscribed by theory, technological imperative, or political intent. Nor, as is apparent in the stories of student teachers and confirmed in Britzman's (1991) narratives of student teaching, can good practice be defined only by an uncritical acceptance of practice and experience. The basis of values, their origin, and their veracity, and who believes what are open to question given the indeterminacy and contingency of educational work.

My intention here, however, is not to debate the "reality" of *postmodernity* as a condition for teaching and education. Rather, I am using an understanding of postmodernism as an orientation to knowledge. Such an orientation is valuable because it allows a certain "attitude" and encourages a questioning of where we are, where we find ourselves in relation to the ideas, theories, and practices that have helped shape who we are and what we do. As Michel Foucault suggests, such an attitude is not a complete rupture with the modern but is a critically aware relationship to it:

> ...the thread that may connect us with the Enlightenment is not faithfulness to doctrinal elements, but rather the permanent reactivation of an attitude--that is, of a philosophical ethos that could be described as a permanent critique of our historical era. (1984, p. 41)

The problem Foucault raises is what sort of critique is appropriate to our age; what kind of critique can still help us to live better lives without, for example, the imposition of a "technical rationality." Peter Sloterdijk writes that our historical era is one marked by "cynical reason": an age marked by a pessimism and cynicism about the promise that knowledge, especially "critique," can make a difference. "Because everything has become problematic, everything is also somehow a matter of indifference" (Sloterdijk, 1987, p. xxxii). Smyth's (1992) perceptive analysis of the recent enthusiasm for "reflective practice" in teacher education shows how the language of critique can at worst serve cynical ends (as a cover for entrenched ideological interests) and sometimes at best, not make a difference to what really goes on in schools and classrooms: an indifference to genuine understanding and caring about teaching and schools. Hence a kind of cynicism as well.

In turning to a study of the possibilities of reflective practice in working with student teachers, an attempt is made to overcome both cynicism and indifference, attitudes representing what some would consider the negative poles of postmodernism *and* the inevitable outgrowth of modernism careening wildly along. The postmodern "attitude" encourages a certain questioning of certainties and identities, the realities of which cannot be simply assumed and taken for granted. As Lather emphasizes in her embrace of a postmodern perspective to research and pedagogy, "postmodernism demands radical reflection on our interpretive frames" (1991, p. 13). In other words, the postmodern attitude encourages questions about how we can understand both ourselves as teachers and the work that we do so as to engender possibilities for change and improvement. Such questions are not alien to "modern" or "Enlightenment" ideals; nor are they questions bereft of normative intent. A postmodern disposition can be "affirmative," recognizing the need to attend to ethical concerns and building community around issues of concern and need (Rosenau, 1992).

Questioning the universalistic claim to authority embedded in the existing narratives of educational discourse does disrupt the certainty of established approaches to becoming a teacher. Questions can be sought which encourage attention to voices and experiences often discounted in "master" or "grand" narratives of educational discourse. Postmodernism encourages a heeding of voices often submerged by the "knowledge/power" matrices of established institutional interests and practices. A certain kind of questioning fostered by the postmodern attitude can return us, hopefully, to the "ground" of experience: the concrete, contradictory, confusing, sometimes chaotic but tangible lives of teaching and learning. That lived experience can be as Borgmann terms it, a place for "focal realism": "a placeholder for the encounters each of us has with things that of themselves have engaged mind and body and centered our lives" (1992, p. 119).

Critical of postmodernism's inability (as theory or philosophy) to understand the condition of postmodernity in transformative ways, David Harvey nonetheless points to the value of a postmodern perspective as a consideration for exploring current practices and understandings. He echoes Borgmann in the need to see beyond the "meta" stories that sometimes deny more grounded and concrete understandings:

> [In postmodernism's] concern for difference, for the difficulties of communication, for the complexity and nuances of interests, culture, places, and the like, it exercises a positive influence. The meta-languages, meta-theories, and meta-narratives of modernism (particularly in its later manifestations) did tend to gloss over important differences, and failed to pay attention to important disjunctions and details. Postmodernism has been particularly important in acknowledging 'the multiple forms of otherness as they emerge from differences in subjectivity, gender and sexuality, race and class, temporal (configurations of sensibility) and spatial geographic locations and dislocations. (1989, p. 113)

A postmodern perspective enables a questioning of both the ontological and epistemological dimensions of teacher education and research into teacher education. Through my involvement in an action research project, opening to the experiences of student teachers began also to shake the self-certainty of knowledge and practices that have been deeply influenced by instrumental and positivist ways of thinking. Researching the question of reflective practice in teacher education revealed difficulties of understanding. The relationships between knowledge and practices became muddied, encouraging detours through alternative ways of knowing and action, guided nonetheless by a pedagogic concern for fostering future selves as teachers.

Learning and Practicing Research: Action Research Inspired by Hermeneutics

a. *Action research responds to questions of responsibility and practice*

The turn to reflective practice is in part a response by teacher educators to the recognition that there is a "crisis" in the authority of institutions to fulfill their goals, and the realization that knowledge does not easily translate into good practice. Reflective teaching is part of the awareness that teaching and learning to teach is complex, idiosyncratic, and difficult. That awareness creates an opening for thought and reflection in terms of educational practices. As Michael Fullan suggestively writes, "Teacher education is an opportunity and a crisis of enormous proportion" (1991, p. 291). My study is written with that perspective in mind, and an awareness of both the difficulties and opportunities that exist in teacher education.

It is within the questions about what teaching is and ought to be, and by what means teacher educators can encourage students to become "good" teachers that I place my

self and my attempt to make sense of reflection in teaching. That is not to say that I had a privileged access or objective view from which to explore those questions. One of the difficulties I experienced in writing this study was my own struggles to not only understand myself as teacher, but to also help others deal with those ambiguous and difficult questions.

Aware of those kinds of difficulties, my intention in this study was to attempt to consider the meaning of reflective practice for student teachers in the process of becoming teachers through exploring interpretively some of the signposts of their experiences. In so doing, there are a number of intersecting paths: the experiences of being a teacher and teacher educator, action research as a practical and reflective engagement with others, telling the stories of self and other, and an interpretive orientation to one's work.

In attempting to inquire into the possibilities of fostering a reflective approach to teacher education I was invited to participate in an ongoing collaborative action research project. In the following chapter, I will relate in greater detail the form and content of that project. At this point I will briefly outline the purpose of the project. The focus for the action research project was the question of reflective teaching. That is, given the responsibilities for preparing secondary social studies teachers, the participants in the action research project asked the question, "how can we foster a critically reflective approach to becoming a social studies teacher?"

The question was drawn from two sources. One was the Faculty of Education's (University of Alberta) report entitled *Exploring and Mapping the Future: A Focus on Priority Issues* (1989). In particular, the section of the report dealing with models of teacher education recommended that the Faculty move towards implementing a reflective approach in teacher preparation. Of course, how this was to be done was left as a question. As well, what "critical reflection" would mean in practice was an open question. Those questions also focused on the second main source for the action research question, namely the experiences of our students, particularly as they weathered the transition from university classes to school classrooms.

Conceived and practiced as an interpretive knowing (Carson, 1992, 1989; Elliott, 1991), action research encourages participants to explore the nature of the space where reflection may occur, and to listen to the concrete experiences of those who traverse that space. As a form of research primarily interested in improving practice, action research involves primarily normative and practical concerns (Gauthier, 1992; Elliott, 1991). An action researcher engages in research through becoming reflectively involved in practice in order to have an effect on future practices.

Action research is also a process marked with tensions and dilemmas, which forced a questioning of the limits of my own understandings of pedagogy and teaching. As both a teacher and teacher educator, doing action research encouraged an opening to the meaning of becoming a teacher and becoming more attuned to the experiences of student teachers. Adopting an action research approach provided an opportunity to interrupt the taken for grantedness of an instrumental rationality that may be embedded in teacher education programs and the presumed wisdom of practice as it is found in schools.

b. *The difficulties of teacher education call for a hermeneutic orientation*

As was argued above, there can be a forgetting in both the science of education and its practice as found in both university classes and schools if the focus is narrowly instrumental (Aoki, 1991a, 1991b). Francine Hultgren captures the question fostered by my experience of action research, when she asks, "what then is called for if we are to move beyond a doing approach to teaching and give expression to the teacher as person, a *being* in the process of becoming?" (1987, p. 35, italics in original).

Focusing only on doing, only on the *what* of teacher education forgets the experiences of what it *is* like to become a teacher. As a space where people learn to become teachers, we can walk through it as we do often in our lives, not heeding the complexity of the contours of experience, and ignoring the layered quality of understanding and the possibilities for self as teacher. Attending to the self, though, is not necessarily a narrow focus on self in ego-centred terms. Reflection about becoming a teacher necessarily opens to the various "texts" of teaching, and through those texts, the exploration of meanings of what was, what exists, and what might be. "If meaning is not a segment of self-understanding," writes Paul Ricoeur, then "I don't know what it is" (1981a, p. 56).

In *Narrative and the Self* (1991), Anthony Paul Kerby explores the complex relationships between personal identity--how a self may be understood--and other texts of experience. From a narrative perspective, reflection is not simply the action and manipulation of a pre-existing self on other texts and others. Rather, the self--self as student teacher in this study--is only made possible through a reflective engagement with other stories outside of our existing selves. As Kerby suggests,

> In claiming that the self is a product, an implication of action, we are thus removing epistemological priority from the human subject....[what Kerby calls 'external narratives'] will understandably set up expectations and constraints on our personal self-description, and they significantly contribute to the material from which our own narratives are derived. (1991, p. 5-6)

One of the problems with the discourse of reflective teaching or practice is that it can become an advocacy in disguise of the scientific rationality about teaching, and a theory

into practice orientation to learning to teach. Getting caught up solely in the question of whether critical reflection makes a difference, is also to perhaps to be entrapped in the modernist project that transcendental forms of reason, particularly in the form of an individual self directing subjectivity can take responsibility for changing deeply institutionalized practices. Critical reflection, in that guise, can be seen as another "technology," what Michel Foucault termed a "technology of the self":

> ...technologies of the self which permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conducts, and ways of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, immobility. (1988, p. 18)

Deeply embedded in theoretical notions of critical teacher practices--the knowledge "base" of teacher education--are forms of control, and the desire to control the outcome of the educational process, forms of discourse that condemn openness and otherness to impenetrable shadows . Viewed in that manner, reflective teaching may be another "technology of the self," one that actually sets limits for self-awareness, and ultimately discourages an interpretive engagement with the discourses of experience and education. As Smyth (1992) has argued persuasively, reflection may be applied as another technology in the service of instrumental ends which are derived from economic and political imperatives. From Foucault's perspective, that would be another instance in which certain practices are enforced through the illusion of self choice and direction.

On the other hand, Foucault's notion of a "technology of the self" does not preclude possibilities for becoming aware of what discourses constitute self. In Ricoeur's (1981) sense, regimes of knowledge and human practices may be seen as "texts" potentially open for interpretation. Kerby (1991) terms influences on our thinking and practices as "external narratives", stories which may be reconstructed as narratives of self.

Thus, as a theory *and* practice of teacher education, reflective teaching may be understood as a way to encourage students to approach discourses of teaching in an interpretive or hermeneutic fashion. That suggests the construction of a teacher self through understanding, and the resistance of unconscious influences of knowledge and power. Speaking to the question of identity in a Japanese work place, Dorinne Kondo, in *Crafting Selves* writes,

> Identity is not a fixed 'thing', it is negotiated, open, shifting, ambiguous, the result of culturally available meanings and the open-ended power-laden enactments of those meanings in everyday situations. (1990, p. 24)

From a *postmodern* perspective, subjectivity, identity, and transcendental, theorized, assumed universalistic positions are problematic. A postmodern perspective

does call into question what lies beyond the margins or "borders" of dominant discourses and practices. As Aronowitz and Giroux (1991) argue, a postmodern turn involves a critique of representations and meanings which claim transcendental and transhistorical status. In thinking about becoming a teacher, meaning is not to be found in a linear reproduction, and re-representation of theoretically-derived knowledge about teaching. Nor is it to be found in an uncritical celebration of practices as they exist in classrooms and schools. An approach to teacher education which denies the tensionalities of lived experience also denies difference and otherness, a denial of 'memories' constituted in experiences of differences. Such memories, embedded in both selves and situations provide a ground for the building of stories and meaning, providing opportunity for informed action. Characterizing the work of the "hermeneutic imagination", David Smith cogently states that task :

> The hermeneutic imagination constantly asks for what is at work in particular ways of speaking and acting in order to facilitate an ever-deepening appreciation of that wholeness and integrity of the world which must be present for thought and action to be possible at all (1991, p. 197).

The question of reflective practice in teacher education therefore asks if student teachers can be encouraged to address the making of their own subjectivities in becoming teachers, and glimpse in the process "intimations of otherness" in Seyla Benhabib's (1987) suggestive phrase. I have to admit that the question of the meaning of the experiences for student teachers was not a paramount one at the outset of my involvement in an action research project. Perhaps still caught in the seductive grasp of instrumentality, the aim was to implement a critically reflective approach to social studies teacher education, an approach advocated in a faculty report and critique of teacher education programs: a critically reflective approach to teacher education "would try to make explicit its underlying assumptions about knowledge, the purposes of schooling, and the relationship between school and society" (Faculty of Education, 1989).

Embarking on a task to transform our own teaching and program, as I alluded to earlier, was fraught with difficulty and tension. In terms of my own research, I have to admit confusion, doubt, and often, loss of focus. Every time I turned to the literature, I was overwhelmed by the volume of writing on reflective practice in teacher education, about programs of teacher education, about ways to fix teacher education programs, about theories of what reflective practice means. My initial approach focused very much on a "doing" often heedless to the whisperings of need and experiences of students as they struggled to understand teaching, and their own fledgling conceptions of selves as teachers.

The process of action research however, through encouraging others to be "reflective practitioners", begins to open the conversation of what the "project" of teaching is, and to learn dialogically as teacher *with* students. That move in my own thinking did not come easily or quickly. But action research, practiced in a critical-hermeneutic fashion, accepts difficulty as challenge, and "wants to describe the fix we are in, and it tries to be hard-hearted and to work 'from below'" (Caputo, 1987, p. 3).

Orienting to the difficulty of understanding and practice suggests an ethical turn, an openness to otherness. Such a turn calls for a more dialogical and collaborative approach. For example, entering into dialogue through conversation and writing with a "critical friend" in my teaching/research did encourage a re-direction in my work and teaching towards a greater focus on student teachers' experiences; I noted this in a journal entry during the involvement in the action research project; I cite this entry only to show how action research became a kind of reflective process in my own teaching, and encouraged a shift in thinking about the process not only of my research, but also the content and process of teaching about teaching:

> I am beginning to see that attention to the students' experiences of learning to become a teacher, and their experiences of reflection are very valid and important questions, and I intend to pursue them during the practicum. Actually, Gitlin's article on research and community ("Educative Research, Voice and School Change") really spurred some thought, and I want to conduct my research in a way that respects the student teacher's own questions--I want to make my research "pedagogic" in that sense. With that orientation, I am also beginning to see how action research can be a justifiable research approach--working with student teachers to enliven their own questions and reflections in dialogue with my questions about how that can be encouraged...I would really like to show how action research can be a pedagogic form of research, and how reflectivity can grow in encouraging communication about teaching.

Working with student teachers as a central aspect of the action research project became the central concern of my own study. While the initial concern was to implement a reflective approach in teacher education through action research, student teachers experiences changed the focus of my study, and called for a more interpretive approach to understanding experience. In the following chapter, I will relate some of my initial orientations and interests in action research and reflective practice. As well, I will provide an overview of approaches to action research and how my own understanding of its practice evolved over the course of the study.

Chapter 2

Collaborative Action Research as an Attempt to Understand the Question of Reflective Teaching

> To exist means: 'being in the world'. Thus both the character and his world must be understood as possibilities.
>
> Kundera 1986, p. 42-43

> The researcher must recognize...that there is no given, preobjectified state of affairs waiting to be uncovered through inquiry. All research findings are someone's constructions of reality.
>
> Schon, 1991, p. 357

Sources for Concerns and Questions About Reflective Practice and Learning to Teach

a. *Living and working within narratives of education and teaching*

> ...the "I" is an implicate of these practices rather than a cause of them.
>
> Kerby (1991, p. 65)

Kerby (1991) uses the term "external narrative" to describe experiences which may influence a self's narrative. Education can be thought of as such a narrative in our culture, one that connects both cultural and innumberable personal stories. For individuals "education," writes Madeleine Grumet, "emerges as a metaphor for a person's dialogue with the world of his or her experience" (1992, p. 29). For nearly all of us formal education, whether a positive one or not, is a formative experience in our lives. Even if not consciously formative, education can be thought of as a narrative that dominates more or less a good portion of our lives just in terms of time and activity. However, that narrative is not told in a direct and unproblematic way. Meaning from that narrative--education--must still be re-created and re-constructed to move towards understanding. Thomas Popkewitz states that problem well:

> The...narrative of history and structure does not have a necessarily causal relationship to our personal choices: rather, it provides an orientation as we confront the relationships of institutions that make the possibilities of biography and autobiography. (1988, p.397)

Of course we do not usually recognize institutional and other forms of human relationships and practices--discourses--as narrative structures. One of the roadblocks to

reflective practices is that institutional practices, such as education, are experienced as reified entities. A value of the postmodern perspective is that it creates awareness of the fictive nature of discourses that have professed not be. Teacher education, in large part, has been one of those kinds of discourses, particularly in terms of the overemphasis on positivist approaches to research and, to use Schon's term, technical-rational approaches to the professional practice of teaching.

As a postmodern turn, the interest in narrative and autobiography both grows out of and looks to the gaps and absences in dominant and dominating practices and discourses. Supposedly unassailable "objective" fact can be exposed as a kind of fiction. Postmodern and hermeneutic philosophers have helped to "reconceptualize" the work of research (footnote). As a researcher, one does not--indeed cannot--stand apart from an "objective reality." In part then, autobiographical 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.

My interest in reflective practice grows primarily out of my experience as a teacher. As with nearly everyone in modern industrialized societies, that experience is shaped by the considerable time spent in schools. In some respects that kind of ingrained experience is perhaps a deterrent to thinking differently. Britzman (1991) notes the overfamiliarity with schooling that often stands in the way of new teachers becoming critically reflective in their work. The common and pervasive institutional experience of schooling becomes sedimented and objectified as "reality," as a common stock of knowledge (Berger and Luckmann, 1967). Even before entering the classroom we already know, in sense, what teaching is and entails. Education as institutionalized practice--schools and their practices--are taken to be "natural" and not viewed as products of human invention, tradition, and power.

As a consequence, academic knowledge about teaching may be experienced as being at odds with what is already pre-defined as real. Many people view teacher education as a necessary inconvenience--a way to get credentialed, but not the real way to becoming a teacher. When confronting the meaning and challenges of becoming a teacher then, student teachers may experience disharmony in terms of what constitutes the identity of teaching and becoming a teacher.

Understanding of that experience shared with so many others summons inquiry into what forms identity as a teacher. But focusing on identity does not follow easily from the experience of the teacher education curriculum. Working and talking with student teachers in recent years, I was struck by the absence of thinking and discussion (or perhaps

resistance to thinking) for example, about what schools are and what they represent in cultural terms. Hence the possibilities for conceiving teaching--let alone practising it--in different ways is very much constrained. Inevitably a lack of faith is manifested that schools can be anything other than what students experienced themselves, which is frequently remembered as not being very positive. Certainly there is plethora of work, much of it depressing, on the mediocrity of schools and their sameness over time and place (Goodlad, 1984). Moreover, looking over the history of educational reform, it is primarily narrated as a history of failure (footnote).

Yet as Kliebard (1992) perceptively notes, the literature on educational reform often fails to the attend to lived realities of teachers in schools. He focuses notably on the pressure teachers have, for example, to maintain discipline and control in the classroom. The structure of schools in terms of organization and curriculum have not mitigated the central and persisting problem of classroom control as a central concern and the refractory effect that has on curriculum and pedagogic possibilities. The report *Trying to Teach*, referred to in the previous chapter, illustrates as well the burden of bureaucratically mandated curricula and procedures, and how that works to limit teachers' work. James Donald, in his fascinating study of schooling, *Sentimental Education*, shows how the hopes of liberal education--schooling as a source for enlightened thought and action--consistently stumbles on the form of schooling itself, a form remarkably constant over the history of public schooling. The often negative and difficult experiences of student teachers, as will be further explored in this study, parallel, it seems, the floundering of reform efforts on entrenched institutional practices.

b. *Personal narrative as a source for reflection about teaching*

Immersed virtually all of my life in education, writing a research project is an opportunity to begin a dialogue with the experience of education and with others who share, through their own experiences, the meaning of teaching and becoming a teacher. In that sense exploring autobiographical sources for one's work is also to admit of the necessarily dialogical and social relation to both the world and others through their narratives and subjectivities.

In telling my own story within a study of others' experiences of student teaching the aim is not to foreground my "self" as the central concern. On the other hand, it is necessary to acknowledge that research and writing come from somewhere and is driven by certain desires and intentions. My self, my identity as a teacher and researcher, becomes stitched to certain practices and discourses. In that sense, doing a research project is one way of following interwoven strands of self and other, institutional practices, and ways of

talking and writing about those practices. Doing and writing research is an intentional practice--a practice to discover/create meaning (problematic notions, incidentally from a postmodern perspective) that does not simply exist as a pre-aware objective reality. However, doing research does not necessarily lead to a neat story of the fullfilment of our own intentions; the sociologist John O'Neill puts the it nicely:

> Our world is given to us in the hollows between things, as the field of our exploratory senses that polarize objects as the immanent ends of our intentions, in the paths where our experience and that of others intersect and blend together. (1989, p. 41)

As part of the research journey, autobiographical reflection can help to relate our own stories, who and what we are, to the larger narratives of which we are also part. As autobiography our selves are not so much an expression of a sovereign, all-seeing ego. Rather to begin to write about one's self is to admit the self as a possibility engendered by narrative understanding. As Kerby suggests, "the speaking subject [or we could add, the writing subject]...attains selfhood via its expressions" (1991, p. 69). The "I" of this writing, although he has a history as an individual, is in many ways an effect of a history of experience and practice in education. Approaching histories as narrative constructions creates meaning and the possibility for self understanding. The "I" as an implicate of action suggests that meaning does not derive from an isolated human subject, but grows as possibility from engagement with others through language (Kerby, 1991, p. 5). As will be explored further below, the hermeneutic orientation implied by the decentering of subjectivity is an important idea for the practice and understanding of both action research and reflective teaching.

My own experience of schooling, both as a student and as a teacher, has been both relatively continuous though geographically diverse. Continuous, as virtually all of my life, with some respite, I have spent within the institution of schooling and education. That is not to paint it as a seamless chronology that I have simply floated through. Yet, being back in a school recently after an absence from teaching, I was struck by the smells, the look of schools, the rhythm of the day, the tensions, the silences, the hallway noises, the sheer physical fatique after a full day of being in the classroom--all the experiences that have become part of my *bodily* memory as student/teacher.

That bodily memory is not always present consciously. But it does creep into awareness even when you think you are very far away from teaching. Walking through a museum on a small island in Greece a few years ago, the written guide for the exhibits mentioned that the building had once been an important school until early in the twentieth century. One of its graduates had been the novelist Nikos Kazantzakis of *Zorba the Greek*

fame. Reading that the museum had been a school did not surprise me somehow. Despite the many years without students, there was a faintly familiar smell--the musty amalgam of well-used books and expended sweat--that all old schools seem to exude. The layout of the hallways, rooms and windows now filled and surrounded by artifacts and sculptures seemed nonetheless familiar. The creaking floorboards reminded me of old schools I had been in as a student when the silences were only interrupted by a teachers' pacing up down the aisles between the rows.

After any extended absence from schools, teachers will often comment how they feel they have never been away. As Goodlad and others have illustrated through research there is an amazing sameness in schools across time and place. Whether it was in my first teaching job in a remote school in Zambia, or my last one in an older high school in Edmonton, the experiences of being a teacher in those schools were very similar. But my experience of school, on the other hand, has also been marked by discontinuity over time and place. Perhaps that has allowed a development of a more critical and also sometimes a more detached perspective on the experience of being in school.

As a student I started my schooling in Holland. I have some vivid memories of being in grade one--of not being able to sit still and being violently struck over the hand with a ruler, of a teacher who seemed old and witch-like, as she would often scream and pull at her hair in desperation over her pupils' lack of conformity to order. My career in grade one was short-lived, at least in that school. My family emigrated to Canada, and I had to begin over again, in a new grade one classroom, and within a totally new language. Although the new home in a small rural town was very strange and different from the canal-lined streets of Amsterdam along which I had played as a child, the school was somehow quite familiar. That already familiar experience in my young life had travelled across the vast spaces of ocean and land.

Thinking about my educational career as student and teacher, my strongest feeling is one of ambiguity. From my earliest memories I have felt a love-hate relationship with schools. I have memories of schooling as a student that are among my fondest. I loved my two years as a primary student in a rural one room school (admittedly skewed through the refraction of memory and romaticism). As I recall, activities and relationships were more important in that one room school than being in a grade or following a specific timetable or program of studies. What grade you were in did not make a great deal of difference. We were all part of this classroom. When there was a spelling bee, the grade twos were as welcome to participate as the grade sixes. The rhythm of the day seemed to depend more on the weather and season outside then the clock inside. The smells inside the classroom were those of the outside: wood for the stove, the horses on which some

kids rode to school, the wild flowers in the mason jar on the teacher's desk. The hand-held bell was in the teacher's control and it did not always ring at the same time. The teacher rarely "taught" in the sense of what we think of as direct instruction. Yet children in the class had extensive and sustained contact with her throughout the day. And when my family moved into the city and I was enrolled in a regular multi-grade, much larger school, I did not seem to be lagging much in reading, writing, or arithmetic.

But I have some awful memories of being in school too, times when it was the last place I wanted to be. I do not recall teachers who were particularly horrible or uninspiring or abusive, but certainly there were practices that did not make one feel particularly at "home" in a school or classroom. The experience of schooling seemed to revolve around routines. What I remember about being a child in elementary is the emphatic disciplining of the body. I recall being punished--physically--for not sitting properly. Talking with others in class was also not tolerated and resulted in strapping. As I became older it seemed more difficult to relate meaningfully to the curriculum, textbooks, and the endless lectures and note taking. External kinds of motivations--doing well on exams, thinking about future career possibilities, not to mention all the interests and diversions of early and late adolescence--took precedence. School, the experience of having to be there, was something to tolerate. There seemed to be little intrinsic reason to be there.

Perhaps it was those earlier experiences that brought me into teaching--the belief, or hope, that one could work meaningfully with young people (many of the student teachers I have worked with claimed that their motivation for becoming teachers was to make schools better than they themselves remembered). What is interesting to me is that my first teaching job, as a secondary teacher in a remote school in Zambia, replicated my experiences of school as a student. From a negative view, it was difficult to make meaningful connections in the classroom. Students' culture and history was not represented at all in the curriculum. Nor was students' culture and language reflected in the textbooks used. Nor likely was there much recognition conveyed throught the language of the teacher, a cultural and linguistic outsider. Teaching in that context brought into sharp relief how the *form* of schooling is imposed on lives in a way that induces in students a kind of forced amnesia--a denial of their own cultural memories and possibilities (Aronowitz and Giroux, 1991). Given the form and structure of that situation, I did not like teaching very much. After my experience in Zambia I seriously doubted the choice of a career in teaching.

On the other hand, there were aspects of my experience in that first job that did point to possibilities for more transformative and engaging forms of education. Working with students outside the classroom allowed more meaningful pedagogical relations to develop. When teaching and learning was freed to some extent from the restrictions of

mandated curricula, classroom structure, and external assessment, and when learning could be more "hands-on" so to speak, meaningful learning took place, I thought. So for example, working with students in starting a school farm, questions of self-reliance, about the relationships between school and the local community, and about development became much more real and compelling.

c. *Peace education opens to questions of practice*

The tension of my teaching experience in Zambia--that struggle around the form of schooling and the practice of pedagogy was a recurring one for me. Questions about the possibilities for teaching and schooling emerged more explicitly again for me in the early nineteen-eighties while teaching junior high school. Specifically, the questions about teaching and schools was prompted by the interest in peace education, a significant response by teachers and other educators at the time to the tensions keenly felt during what turned out to be the apogee of the cold war. Peace education was a particularly pedagogic response to those tensions, growing out of the concern for children and the anxieties and fears engendered by the possibility of nuclear holocaust.

What was significant for many teachers including myself was the re-focusing on questions of classroom practice and pedagogy. The desire to make the world better for children--and perhaps through children (a criticism of peace education)--led to awareness among many teachers of the both the limitations and possibilities contained with existing practices of teaching and schools. In the face of the kind of nihilism precipitated by nuclear fear, many teachers re-focused on their teaching practices to explore how hopefulness could be engendered (van Manen, 1985).

Reflecting on the conversations of a group of teachers I was involved with in a collaborative action research project to consider the possibilities for peace education, the turn to pedagogical and school issues became quite evident. For example, the teachers in our group raised such questions as: how do we engender hope in concrete pedagogical activities in the classroom? how do we counter administrative practices in schools that marginalize certain students? how do we help students counter violence and alienation in their own lives? what is the nature of the professional teaching community in the school? how can teachers seek support for alternative activities?

For me, peace education as an idea only created more awareness of the immediacies of the school situation I worked in--a school with many difficulties and many children experiencing crises, including interpersonal and family violence, in their lives. It was frustrating to not find an easy correspondence between the idea of peace education and its practice in the actual situation in which I worked. Perhaps part of our struggle as teachers

in the action research group was that we were trying to implement something that we did not fully understand. Peace education was really just a concept, a label perhaps, for a pedagogic hope and caring that was difficult to realize in practice. In a thoughtful interpretation of the group's experience, Terry Carson wrote:

> Despite our slogans, the way to a more peaceful world is far from clear for global politics, or for the more constrained space of the classroom and the school. Teachers of peace education encounter ambiguity and difficulty on a daily basis as they attempt to develop the ideals and understandings of peace. The dimensions of school peace concerns extend through many aspects of school life. This makes it necessary to talk and to regularly engage in thoughtful reflection. (1992, p. 112)

When I returned to university to pursue graduate studies in education my original intention was follow the question of peace education. More specifically I wanted to inquire into questions about the possibilities for teaching, in terms of some of the questions raised in our collaborative action research group. Obviously, that is not quite how it turned out. But in a general sense, the problematic posed by peace education remained as a focus of my work. As Carson suggests in the quote above, the idea of reflection in teaching possibly grew out of reflecting on the possibilities of peace education. As is the case for many other teachers--witness for example the stories of teachers in *Trying to Teach*, cited in the previous chapter--there is a strong desire to understand one's practice, and in the interest of children, a desire to make things better. That interest can be frustrated when teaching is seen as a means of bureaucratic or technical implementation.

d. *Teaching others about teaching provokes reflective experiences*

When I consider my own career as teacher only briefly outlined above or those of many colleagues I have worked with over the years, we can see that becoming a teacher is not a straightforward process of theory into practice. When I returned to university for graduate work at the doctoral level, I think that question, spurred by the original interest in peace education, was at the back of my mind. I was immediately immersed however, with the responsibility of teaching undergraduate students in the secondary social studies program. Teaching education students and working in the practicum during the last four years became a focal experience--a focal reality in Borgmann's terms--for me, something that focused my attention, thought, and practice as teacher/researcher.

Teaching others about teaching not only exposed my own lack of understanding, however, but also the inadequacy of theoretical and abstract approaches which claim to encapsulate the meaning and practice of teaching. Part of my own journey as a teacher educator was to try to understand not only teaching, but also the question of how we could help student teachers understand teaching. That became a pivotal question. Interested in

our own practice as well as our students, action research seemed to offer possibilities for creating both understanding and changing practice. Reflective teaching became the focus for thinking about the problem of learning to become a teacher, both theoretically and practically. Whether it was serendipitous or not, questions about teaching and teacher education, reflective practice, and action research came together as a project in which I was invited to participate. That work took a "reflective turn" in Donald Schon's words, which he describes as:

> a kind of revolution. It turns on its head the problem of constructing an epistemology of practice. It offers, as a first order answer to the question, What do practitioners need to know?, reflection on the understandings already built into the skillful actions of everyday practice. (1991, p. 5)

As will be explored further below the "reflective turn" was not simply oriented to understanding our students concerns and needs. As action research, we were also, to paraphrase Schon, "led to reflect on [our] own understandings of [our] subjects' understandings; in order to discover the sense in someone else's practice, [we] question [our] own" (1991, p. 5). Schon's discussion of the reflective turn in research captures quite well my intention in writing about student teachers' experiences of reflection, which became the focus of my study.

The idea and practice of collaborative action research became an important structure for my research. Collaboration with others--student teachers, fellow graduate students, and instructors--became a way of linking one's own story or autobiography to others recognizing that making sense is an intersubjective task. Pursuing one's own project then is not just an individual act or event, but also a project that recognizes that meaning and possibilities for action are constructed from and within communication with others.

Reflecting on the Question of Reflective Practice Through Collaborative Action Research

a. *Origins of a Question for Action Research*

The study that is reported here grew out of involvement in a collaborative action research project, oriented by the question of how a reflective approach to teacher education could be implemented and practiced. The collaboration occurred within the setting of the Department of Secondary Education, at the University of Alberta. Secondary Education is known as a "teaching department," having major responsibility for directly preparing students for teaching in junior and senior high schools in major and minor subject areas. The majority of the undergraduate courses offered by the department are curriculum and instruction courses related to core subjects in the schools.

The focus for the action research involved in particular the social studies curriculum and instruction course. As part of the "Phase III" secondary program at the university, this course is a major component of a student's program, whether he/she is in a four year education degree program or in an after degree route. The Phase III route is referred to as an "integrated program." It is a full credit term consisting of university class work and an eight week practicum in a secondary school. The university course work--curriculum and instruction in secondary social studies--involves six weeks of on-campus work, three hours every day.

My involvement in the collaborative action research project was as an instructor of one of the sections of that course. Teaching that course was my primary responsibility as a full-time sessional instructor in the department, a position I first assumed in the Fall of 1988. Taking a leave of absence from my junior high school teaching position with Edmonton Public Schools, I also began graduate work at the same time. I entered the program with an interest in action research, and a more vague interest in reflective teaching, as I implied above. So fairly early on, my teaching work became also the focus of my research work in the doctoral program.

I was invited to become involved in the project by a tenured faculty member who was interested in the question of reflective practice and action research, and who had taught the social studies course for a number of years. During the 1989-1990 academic year, the first year of the project, that collaboration was vitally important as we shared planning for the course and dialogued through journal writing and frequent meetings following classes, which facilitated a great deal of reflection on our teaching practices.

As part of our attempts at reflection about our practices, during that first year of the project, two "outside" collaborators, central office consultants from Edmonton Public Schools, were invited to provide insights "from the field" so to speak. That was important in terms of linking our concerns with ideas of teaching as conceived by interests outside of the university. As well, both instructors participated in a year-long "seminar" on the topic of reflective teaching, which was regularly attended by faculty members and graduate students from both secondary and elementary education departments.

During the second year of the action research project--the winter 1991 term more specifically--the collaborative aspects were widened to include persons who would function as "critical friends" for our teaching and reflection on teaching. The two people, both doctoral students in the Department of Secondary Education, each attended the two classes on a regular basis. My critical friend provided written observations on my teaching and other class activities, and was a dialogue partner in journal writing and face-to-face conversations. The four people--two instructors and the respective critical friends--also

met on a regular basis to discuss the progress of our research and teaching. Occasionally other interested instructors would participate in those meetings.

As an outgrowth of the action research project, the collaborative aspect also widened to include some of the students in the courses. As part of my aspect of the action research, I invited six student teachers, two from each of the three sections of the social studies curriculum and instruction course, to participate in conversations with me about their experiences in the course and the practicum. Those conversations became the basis of the research study reported here.

As I indicated at the outset of this section, the action research project derived from the desire to attempt to implement the orientation to teaching and teacher education recommended by the Faculty of Education Report, *Exploring and Mapping the Future*, particularly one of its task force reports titled "Teacher Education Models." This report begins with the question: *"What emerging models or frameworks for organizing teacher preparation programs should be considered for adoption?* The answer, in part, was that "teacher education should be based upon reflection-in-action" (1989, p. 31). The proposal was elaborated as follows:

> Teachers gain a theoretical understanding of practice as they engage in teaching and reflect upon it during and after its occurrence. The first order of business is to deal with student teachers' concerns and preconceptions about teaching. This will better serve to bolster their confidence and bring them to the point where they can reframe their thoughts based on their current knowledge about teaching. The field-based classroom experience becomes as critical as the university lecture/seminar experience (p. 31)...[and further]...Schon's (1983, 1987) argument provides hope for teacher educators to escape from the simplistic outcry to improve teacher education by merely focusing on the technicalities of teaching and becoming pedagogical managers. Teachers need to make informed judgments about their own practice and about the meaning and purpose of education. (1989, p.32)

In discussing alternative models of teacher education the report is aware of the dilemma in *prescribing* a reflective model of teacher education, and at the same time wishing to transcend teacher education as an applied science. The action research project in which I collaborated lived this tension between prescribing and implementing a model of teacher education and working at the level of applied understanding. But the action research approach encouraged living with the questions of what critical reflection might mean in practice, and how the course and the practicum could be structured in ways that would encourage a greater degree of reflectivity in our students thinking about teaching and social studies.

b. *Action research as a response to the difficulties of student teachers*

> In action research, the intention to affect social practice stands shoulder to shoulder with the intention to understand it.
>
> Kemmis, 1988b, p. 33

Although a solely theoretical exploration of the concept of reflection might well be interesting as an inquiry in itself, the study presented here also started from a question of practice. The interest in student teachers' experiences of reflective practice in teacher education grew out of an awareness of a disjuncture or gap between what might be termed a theoretical interest in reflection--concerns for constructing an alternative curriculum for social studies teacher education--and a nascent understanding of the concerns of our students. In other words, while starting from a perceived problem of teacher education, the interest in reflective teaching also brought us to questions of how student teachers construct and understand their experiences of teacher education. For Carr and Kemmis, action research takes its cue from practitioner's awareness that there is a "gap" between his or her theory and practice (1986, p. 112).

The professionalization of teacher education, as outlined in the previous chapter, has framed the way that teacher education has been conducted. The professionalizaton of teacher education in terms of its institutionalization in university contexts has assigned priority to theoretical knowledge abstracted from research (Labaree, 1992). The institutional stucture of teacher education also gives shape to the relationship between theory and practice. The assumption has been that knowledge about teaching and the transmission of that knowledge in university classrooms would be the appropriate model for ensuring correct practice for teachers-to-be. The correctness or goodness of that practice is, however, narrowly defined. Good implies an already established truth--a truth not open to negotiation and interpretation. Good teaching could be guaranteed by a reliable and universal foundation in knowledge. That kind of knowledge--the curriculum of teacher education--can determine unambiguous outcomes. Learning is guided and guaranteed through a bureaucratically organized structure of discrete courses (Doll, 1993; Britzman, 1991).

There is thus an authority and control built into the assumed legitimacy of knowledge. Even "methods" of teaching can become abstract theoretical constructs, reinforcing the idea that learning to teach is simply a matter of theory determining practice. That is a process, however, that often denies an openness to the concerns and voices of student teachers as Britzman notes:

> Methods courses that focus on mechanistic applications and view knowledge as a form of technical rationality implicitly encourage conservatism among student teachers in two ways. First, knowledge is presented as an accomplished fact, separate from discursive practice and the relations of power it supposes. Second, the curriculum and its presentation are not considered in dialogic relationship to the lives of students and teachers. These tensions delay an understanding of how students and teachers create new knowledge during their curricular encounters. (1991, p. 47)

Much research on education and teacher education, as has been argued previously, is structured as research about something and someone from a spectator, detached perspective. That approach to educational research has been characterized as emerging from a *positivist* paradigm (Pinar, 1988; Guba, 1990; Carr and Kemmis, 1986), or what Aoki has termed the empirical analytic orientation (1988), an orientation that has dominated teacher education. That orientation is based on a "realist" ontology that can be known by an "objectivist" epistemology (Guba, 1990). In other words research conducted from that orientation assumes that a relatively fixed and stable "reality" can be apprehended through the correct application of method--a method that has detached observation as the mode of relation between researcher and subject of research. Guba, almost in the language of parody, conveys that property of the positivist approach in research:

> The inquirer, so to speak, must stand behind a thick wall of one-way glass, observing nature as "she does her thing." Objectivity is the "Archimedian point" (Archimedes is said to have boasted that given a long enough lever and a place whereon to stand, he could move the earth) that permits the inquirer to wrest nature's secrets without altering them in any way. (1990, p. 19)

For teachers in schools, university research and researchers have often seemed to be distant activities and figures. What university researchers do seems obscure and often esoteric. Researchers have techniques for gathering information, a privileged way of seeing not accessible by just anyone. Positivist forms of research in particular are guided by a metaphor of powerful and pervasive vision--that the researcher can see things others cannot. That kind of research is characterized by a looking-at stance, as Guba suggests.

It would be easy to dismiss the work of educational research as inconsequential, as many teachers are wont to do over coffee or moments of self-important cynicism. On the other hand, the intent and effect of educational research and theorizing is not so benign. As Aoki reminds us, the positivist orientation is strongly instrumentalist, rooted in interests of control and guided by values of efficiency and certainty (1988, p. 409). Many outcomes for students and schools are derived from concepts alienated from real life experiences. Human subjectivities are "reduced out" (Aoki, 1988, p. 410).

McDonald identifies educational research as one of the "conspirators of certainty" (1992, p. 3). He argues that educational research has tended "to flatten teaching's quirks"

(1992, p. 3). Much research work, which is reductive in nature, cannot characterize the complexity, unpredictability, contingency, and difficultes of teaching, especially in ways that can be helpful to guiding practice in classrooms. Moreover, as McDonald argues, most research about teaching and teachers exclude teachers, their voices, and their understandings of practical knowledge. Writing from the perspective of a classroom teacher, McDonald's argument is convincing. He provides an example of major research documents on teaching which includes everything "we" know about teaching, yet does not include any writing by teachers nor make any direct acknowledgement of teachers' voices.

The point about the kind of research that has dominated teacher education is that it was not simply about gathering knowledge, but also that it was driven by the desire to make things more rational, more certain. That is, research was part of an attempt to re-vision and restructure the world in terms of "proven" propositions and causal connections. Describing what he terms the "logico-scientific" or "paradigmatic" form of thought, Jerome Bruner writes:

> Its language is regulated by requirements of consistency and noncontradiction. Its domain is defined not only by observables to which its basic statements relate, but also by the set of possible worlds that can be logically generated and tested against observables--that is, it driven by principled hypotheses. (1986, p. 13)

The document *Trying to Teach*, referred to earlier, illustrates very well how knowledge about teaching and schools can sound impressive as theory and comforting in its certainty. Several of the innovations are based on "principled hypotheses" about students, schools, and teaching. But when ideas are not realized in practice, it is not the ideas that are questioned, or the institutional and power relations in schools, but the individual teacher and his or her presumed inadequacies. The problem though, is that knowledge conceived in certainty and as prescription often falters in situations that are not quite so determinate, and situations which limit the work of teaching.

Given the way that knowledge has been constructed and the nature of that knowledge and the way that has become implicated in the education of teachers, it is not surprising that student teachers encounter considerable disenchantment. Teacher education wants to make it easy to become a teacher. Problems in "real" classrooms are solvable if only you apply the correct principles of planning or classroom management. When student teachers go out to schools for "real" teaching experiences, however, theoretical knowledge often lets them down. Conformity with the "real" then becomes the only option. University courses are relegated to the distant heights of idealism and impracticality.

Even educational *ideas* that we may think are indeed laudable and ought to be practiced, take on a different texture when student teachers confront real students as

opposed to those described in textbooks. For example, while few would dispute the importance of caring and holistic approaches to dealing with children, those ideas as ideas give little comfort when a student teacher needs to deal with difficulty. Tina, a student teacher I observed several times in a difficult junior high school setting described her experience with trying to make sense of "theory and practice":

> The theory taught to us during our four year degree stresses student success and the necessity for a 'holistic', 'caring' attitude to achieve this success. Because of these ideas, I was taking on too much responsibility for the students. I was spoon feeding them because they claimed not to have the ability. After the workload became too severe, I changed my strategy, stuck to deadlines and encouraged individual research more. I also realized that there are some children who cannot be helped no matter how much caring is involved--unless they want to help themselves.

Teaching about "reflective practice" or teaching students to become reflective may also suffer from that same fate of dismissal. Reflection can be experienced by student teachers as another university theory which has no perceived relevance to real teaching. Presented as theory or technique to ensure good teaching, rather than as a way to begin to broach a dialogue with their concerns and selves, students experience only the remoteness of reflection. "It's a good idea, but....!" Tom, a thoughtful student in my class during the first year of our action research project spoke for many of the students when he wrote:

> I do not debate the fact that critical reflection is important to teaching but if you have no ideas regarding strategies to be utilized in teaching, critical reflection then becomes almost useless because you have little concrete to elaborate upon. It's essential to balance strategies with reflection lest students become confused about the actual utility of the course for their future teaching careers...we are desperate for strategies, both in teaching and behaviour management, which we can employ.

While the interest in implementing a reflective approach was an original, motivating concern for the action research project I was involved with, Tom's words, which spoke for the experiences of many student teachers, began to provide more meaning for that project. In his words there is a strong call for a pedagogic responsibility on the part of the teacher educator: to say it most simply, to help students teach in real situations. The emphasis on reflection appeared hollow in the absence of concrete and practical knowledge of teaching. Privileging reflective reflection in the absence of more grounded approaches created additional difficulties for student teachers

As a consequence the idea of reflection became more fuzzy as well. Reflection could not just be a "thing" that was added to the curriculum of learning how to teach. How to procede to incorporate reflection in a university course also became less determinate. Reflecive 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.

c. *Action research as opening to the uncertainties of theory, practice, and identity*

Action research became a framework for my "reflective" engagement with students and their concerns. The process of research could not stand outside of the responsibilities for practice *and* for fostering my own and my students' understandings. Thus action research appeared to offer a way for both thinking about and improving practice.

That initial and ongoing understanding of action research as a process was largely derived from the work done by Stephen Kemmis, Robin McTaggart and others from Deakin University in Australia. Their *Action Research Planner*, for example, provides a definition of action research that attempts to link action and research in a way that seemed to make good sense when looking at a problem that involved both practice *and* theoretical understanding:

> The linking of terms 'action' and 'research' highlights the essential feature of the approach: trying out ideas in practice as a means of improvement and as a means of increasing knowledge about the curriculum, teaching, and learning. The result is improvement in what happens in the classroom and school, and better articulation and justification of the educational rationale for what goes on. Action research provides a way of working which links theory and practice into the one whole: ideas-in-action. (1988, p. 6).

Reinforcing the multi-dimensionality of action research, Sharon Nodie Oja and Lisa Smulyan emphasize that it is characterized by the "combined goals of improved practice, greater theoretical understanding, and professional development" (1989, p. vii). Certainly the project I became involved with had those goals in mind, although concepts like *theory*, *practice* and *professional* development became less clear and certain. Nonetheless, given the interest in improving practices, there was a conscious turn to the form and content of sites of practice (university curriculum and instruction courses) as a way of developing understanding of ideas such as reflective teaching. However, saying that is also an admission of the complexity that action research encounters.

Firstly, although our inquiry was oriented by the desire to implement reflection as an educational practice, the question of that practice became more complex and layered. We started from the problem of how the curriculum and pedagogy of a social studies curriculum and instruction course might foster a critically reflective approach to becoming a teacher. Underlying that was a larger question, discussed in the previous chapter, of how to link, so to speak, the theory and practice of teacher education. In terms of the question of practice, we were also asking how we could improve the practices of our students as

student teachers. But those questions began also to open to questions about the meaning of those practices for student teachers.

Secondly, our collaborative action research project was oriented also by an interest in theoretical understanding. Namely, what is the meaning of critical reflection in teaching, particularly as applied to the situation in which students are learning to become teachers? When I use the term "theoretical" however, I do not mean that it was a question pursued outside of a practical intent and interest. In some sense, as an action research, the idea of theoretical takes on a broadened meaning--as a sense-making of practice, but retaining its inherently practical intent. Klafki refers to this kind of orientation, where there is pedagogical intent and responsibility, as "the theory of practice" (1988). Reading and conversing about the meaning of reflective teaching was necessary and important. Yet that in itself still did foster understanding in a *practical, pedagogic* sense.

From an action research perspective theoretical understanding and practice are not distinct entities, but two sides of the same coin. Reflecting on practice encourages as well reflection on understandings of those practices and the relationships between words and deeds. The more we entered the action research "cycles" of planning, action, and reflection, the more the inquiry seemed to veer away from a narrow focus on the *concept* of reflective teaching. Questions of curriculum *and* instruction became more crucial. Orienting to the lived experiences of our students and our own responsibilities as teachers began to show that knowledge and action belong together (van Manen, 1990, p. 155).

Thirdly, our project was oriented by a notion of "professional development." Our interest was in better understanding the responsibilities of teacher education in helping our students become reflective teachers. But as part of that, the meaning of "professional" also became a question. What does it mean to be a professional teacher educator? Or a professional teacher? As I tried to outline in the previous chapter, the quality of professionalism in teacher education has been linked to the refinement of theoretical/scientific knowledge legitimated within university settings and norms. Teacher professionalism has been conceived as an extension of that knowledge to practice in schools.

The idea of reflective practice of course attempts to cast the idea of professionalism, or at least professional learning, away from the model implied by current institutional structures. The notion of reflective teaching is also a way to re-conceptualize the meaning of teaching professionalism and practice. Turning the "epistemology of practice" on its head, to use Schon's terms, casts the practices and purposes of teacher education in a different frame. As a form of research, action research, then, seeks a different kind of

relationship between knowing, the construction of knowledge, and pedagogical responsibilities and relationships.

Reflecting on Alternative Approaches to Action Research

a. *Where did action research come from?--cracks in the modernist project*

> Unfortunately there is nothing in social laws and social research which will force the practitioner toward the good. Science gives more freedom and power to both the doctor and the murdered (sic), to democracy and fascism. The social scientist should recognize his responsibility also in respect to this.
>
> Kurt Lewin, 1946

> Scientific knowledge does not represent the totality of knowledge...
>
> Lyotard, 1984, p. 7

Action research has run an interesting and parallel, if minor, road to mainstream educational research. An argument can be made that the interest in action research emerged out of the cracks in modernist faith, particularly after the experiences of the second world war. The end of World War II, and the experiences of the Holocaust and Hiroshima revealed both the awesome and utterly appalling sides of modernism. That science could create objects and practices of incredible technical virtuosity against a backdrop of unprecedented human barbarism brought questions of moral action and responsibility into sharp relief. The condition of modernity was caught by writers like the poet T.S. Eliot, when he described it as a "'dissociation of sensibility': a widening rift between thought and emotion, intellect and sensation, and a general failure to achieve 'unification of sensibility'" (Sass, 1992, p. 357). The cataclysm of war raised grave doubts about the ability of science as a modernist or Enlightenment project to improve human life, at least in social, spiritual, and ethical terms. The gap between objective knowledge and normative demands raised concerns about the social sciences especially (Mills, 1959).

Referring to some of the main ideas of the Enlightenment philosophers, Albert Borgmann defines modernism as "the fusion of the domination of nature with the primacy of method and the sovereignty of the individual" (1992, p. 25). Borgmann's example of the prototype modernist project is the massive expansion of the railway during the 19th century. The invasion of the railway into the American and Canadian frontiers tamed and domesticated distance and territory using the tools of modern engineering and industry, and directed by entreprenurial barons celebrating the power and freedom of unrestrained individualism.

Modern science, including social and educational sciences have been guided by orientations that are not dissimilar. Such ways of thinking and practice can locate their

roots in the "metanarrative" of the Enlightenment (Lyotard, 1984, p. xxiii). As a postmodern critique of that legacy, Flax identifies the following subtexts of the metanarrative of Enlightment thinking, characteristics that can recognized in teacher education practice and research: a privileged access to knowledge through the method of reason; a belief in transcendent and transhistorical foundations or grounds for determining truth; an objectivist view of reality, that is something that exists independently of knowers; an unshakeable belief in the idea of progress--"that utilizing knowledge in the service of legitimate power will assure both freedom and progress" ; this includes the belief that science will make the world better; moreover, this is a view of progess that is teleological in nature--rational knowledge contributes the eventual perfection of human practices; a nominalist view of language, that is, a belief that language corresponds to or respresents unproblematically objects and experiences; science as the "paradigm of all true knowledge" functions as an independent domain from that of the subjects involved (Flax, 1990, p. 30-31).

In the introductory chapter, I attempted to argue that in terms of theory, research, and institutional practices, the field of teacher education has been shaped by modernist thought. The awareness that those practices and knowledges do not have a simple causal or linear relationship to practices in schools nor act as a sure guide for learning about practice, is one of the reasons for growing doubt about modernist approaches. The sense of detachment between scientific knowledge and the demands of practical and ethical decision making in modern life are endemic to modernist approaches (Giddens, 1990).

Action research grew out of the concern about the normativity and practicality of social scientific research. Most accounts of action research begin with the work during and shortly after the war of the social psychologist Kurt Lewin. As a social scientist, Lewin, who was himself a refugee from Nazi Germany, understood quite well the problem of theory and practice as highlighted in the quote above. He recognized that while a considerable body of knowledge existed about society and behaviour, that knowledge was remote and unrelated to the analysis and resolution of social problems. Lewin is credited with creating the term "action research," which, for example, he used in one of his articles dating from 1946. In this article, Lewin adressed the problem of relationships between theory and practice:

> The research needed for social practice can best be characterized as research for social management or social engineering. It is a type of *action-research* on the conditions and effects of various forms of social action, and research leading to social action. Research that produces nothing but books will not suffice. (1988, p. 41; italics added).

Lewin's pioneering work sought to derive social-psychological knowledge through action research in order to solve social problems (Kemmis, 1988a, p.2). He was especially concerned about what he termed "groups processes" in the resolution of problems like inter-ethnic conflict and discrimination. Lewin recognized the importance of action in particular situations as sources of understanding oriented to solving real life problems.

In terms of the process of reflective thought and practice, action research meant that participants engaged in cycles of reconnaisance ("realistic-fact finding and evaluation"), planning, action, and reflection. The ideas of the cycles represented Lewin's attempt to link theory and practice in a complementary way. For Lewin, human problems required sound scientific knowledge for their resolution, but it was human action that provided the ground for that knowledge. The production of social scientific knowledge, "the laws which govern social life" (Lewin, 1988, p. 41), was, however, as important a function of action research as the resolution of the problems studied. Lewin would agree with John Elliott's definition of action research as "the Study of a social situation with a view to improving the quality of action within it" (1991, p. 69). But Lewin would also argue for the importance of improving knowledge through the construction of generalizable laws of behaviour.

In some respects, an analogy for the way Lewin conceived of the relationship between theory and practice in action research is the work of a surgeon, an example he himself used. Lewin distinguished between general laws which deal "with the relation between possible conditions and possible results" (1988, p. 42), which can help make decisions under certain general conditions. However, that kind of knowledge is not sufficient for the work of a surgeon, for example. Knowing the general laws of physiology, while necessary, does not help to understand specific situation and problems. Specific cases or situations require diagnoses and fact-finding--the specific character of a situation, and decisions about what to do, is determined by diagnosis: the job of diagnosis "has to be done locally" (1988, p. 45).

In contrast, Lewin cited the dominant methods of social research--surveys and polls for example--as being inadequate to the task of "diagnosis." In other words, methods of social science did not yield the kind of knowledge that would give groups of people any self-understanding or facilitate the analysis and resolution of problems. Hence, Lewin argued that social sciences ought to become much more like "basic research" (for example, engineering, medicine) which emerged in importance at the time he was writing. The terms that Lewin used, such as "social engineering" and "social management", terms we might recoil in distaste at now, grew out of that orientation and were intended to give more relevance to social science. (add something here from Schon?)

In many respects Lewin, like John Dewey before him, remained firmly rooted in the modernist tradition. Like Dewey, Lewin's belief that science--especially a method--could ensure understanding and progress was central to his conception of action research. The rationality of method was essential: "It seems to be crucial for the progress of social science that the practitioner will understand that through social sciences and only through them can he hope to gain the power necessary to do a good job" (Lewin, 1988, p. 45).

From that perspective action and participants' understandings could be treated quite unproblematically as facts, still allowing researchers to develop nomothetic statements, sometimes in mathematical language, about group processes. Group participation, while considered essential was also a technique by which to conduct research so that participants could be *led* to more democratic forms of life (Carr and Kemmis, 1986, p.164). Lewin surmised that social science method and knowledge applied in the right way could overcome prejudice and misunderstanding. From a contemporary perspective, such a conception of action research perhaps lacked a deeper analyses of the nature of understanding and a notion of a dialogical or collaborative relationship not simply defined or constrained by method. The conditions for developing a form of communication which would help transcend limiting conditions of social or work life were not developed.

Yet while a technical language dominates Lewin's notions of action research, the intent was not necessarily so (Kemmis, 1988a). Lewin emphasized a dialogical model of theory and practice through a conscious attention to the cycles of reconnaissance, planning, action, and reflection. Action research provided a way in which abstract theory and concrete practice could address each other. This was a very different conception from either a linear theory into practice approach, or the celebration of a crude pragmatism. Moreover, as the quote at the outset of this section illustrates, Lewin was very much concerned about both the responsibility of the social scientist and how practitioners could be oriented to the good. Social science knowledge could provide "the power necessary to do a good job" (1988, p. 45) but could not nurture the *good* in that job. Instead, Lewin talked about the requirement for less precise qualities, such as the practice of skill, ingenuity, and building the "self-esteem" of groups of people.

In that sense, action research as Lewin introduced it does represent a crack in the modernist discourse of social science. Science could be a guide, but it does neither satisfy nor exhaust the possibilities for action that is ethically constituted. To that extent Lewin acknowledged the *difficulty* that life presents for understanding and informed action. Scientific knowledge is a tool, but not complete knowledge. From a hermeneutic perspective, John Caputo contends that

> The real obstacle to understanding human affairs lies in the tendency to believe that what we do--whether in building scientific theories or in concrete ethical life--admits of formulation in hard and irrevocable rules. (1987, p. 212)

The practice of action research at least offers an opportunity to engage in forms of understanding that are also oriented to deciding how to live and work better, a strong motif in Lewin's original contribution to social research.

b. *The marginalization of action research as a technical orientation*

Accepting the challenge of the difficulty that the project of action research presents was not, however, taken up in the field of education immediately following Lewin's work. Indeed it was an interpretation of action research as a *technical* process that predominated in educational writing after Lewin (Kemmis, 1988, p. 37). With an emphasis on linear method the action research process was reduced to a "technique." More precisely, Lewin's emphasis on the cycles of action and reflecton and the importance of dialogue between theoretical knowledge and practical concerns was not taken up as a form of socially conscious research.

In educational circles after Lewin, action research took on a much narrower and technical orientation. Action research was conceived as a way to make finite improvements to teaching practice. Indeed in the work of Stephen Corey, an influential teacher educator at Columbia University in the early 1950's, action research is clearly distinquished from "fundamental research," which is the domain of professional, university-based researchers. Fundamental research is only interested in founding general laws of educational practice, and discovering the truth (Corey, 1988, p. 64). While that general, decontextualized knowledge may be of interest to practitioners, it is more probably the case that "the action researcher is interested in the improvement of the educational practices in which he is engaging" (1988, p. 63). The work of the action researcher is context-specific and not generalizable, in contrast to that of fundamental research.

In a way Corey's advocacy for action research recognized the problem of the relation between formal theoretical constructions or understandings, and the actual work of teaching. A reading of Corey's writing about action research conveys a sense that theory and practice are divided by an ultimately unbridgeable gap. That is, general knowledge cannot really determine the quality of practice in schools, although Corey did argue that the theoretically-guided improvement of practice ought to be a long term goal. Corey's work reinforced a kind of dualistic thinking about theory and practice, that these are two very different discourses that run parallel to each other. As a consequence, his work helped to reinforce the idea and practice of action research in narrowly functionalist terms, a way to improve practice with whatever works. In this mode of action research critical reflection is

absent. Questions about interpretation and understanding of action is not raised. There is an avoidance of the need to problematize underlying values and concrete social conditions (McTaggart and Garbutcheon-Singh, 1988).

Following Corey, interest in educational action research diminished considerably. Why this happened is both an interesting and complex question. Perhaps a part of the answer can be attributed to the more general attacks on and demise of progressivism in education, with which action research was identified. Conservative trends in general intertwined with the growth of university faculties of education. The consequent professionalization of teacher education and research doomed more practice-oriented activities and interests.

Within educational circles action research became interpreted as merely an inconsequential "activity"--"easy hobby games for little engineers" as Harold Hodgkinson sarcastically termed action research in critique of the approach in 1957. In part, Hodgkinson's criticism focused on the narrow pragmatism and technical functionalism evident of much of the action research work at the time. But perhaps more so, his argument was for the superiority of formal research and rationality as a foundation for good teaching practice. Compared to formal research--particularly complex statistical analysis characteristic of the empirical analytic orientation--for Hodgkinson action research failed miserably both as adequate method and a way of constructing adequate theory about teaching (1988). Again, Hodgkinson's argument reinforced a dualistic view of theory and practice in education and spoke for the growing institutional separation of theory and practice in education.

Responding to the question of why action research failed, Sanford (1970) traced the waning interest in practice as one result of the growing domination of the "pure" sciences, including the social sciences during the late 1950's and 1960's. The perceived necessity to improve teaching in the schools--to professionalize the teaching force--became linked to strengthening the power of formal educational knowledge. That knowledge was the domain of teacher education institutions, especially those set in universities. Thus the modernist emphasis on formal rationality and a science of teaching became dominating emphases in teacher education, setting up a clear hierarchy of theory over practice (Labaree, 1992). The cracks in modernist research practice that Lewin's work addressed to some extent were papered over with an assertive rationality supported by powerful institutional structures.

c. *Action Research as re-orienting to the practical*

> Most of our questions are practical ones in the art of daily living--questions that can neither be approached by nor await the labors of method, but must be decided now on the basis of common sense and the most plausible interpretation, or the most persuasive argument.
>
> Crusius, 1991, p. 9

> "Understanding"...--which is pragmatic and existential and never primarily a theoretical matter--is the projective sketch of the horizon within which things are set free to be the things which they are. "Interpretation"...is the working out...of understanding.
>
> Caputo, 1987, p. 69

The detour through some of the historical origins of action research was necessary, I believe to show how so much educational practice has been appropriated as modernist practice in the university. A consequence for action research was its reduction to a linear and technical focus on practice, and its marginalization by the dominance of institutionally legitimated research and theorizing. For those working in teacher education institutions the work of educational research assumed a privileged persective--socially and epistemologically. The repercussions for teacher preparation has been the development of structures and programs not very helpful for educating teachers (Fullan, 1991; Sarason, 1993).

In a concrete sense, the experience of being engaged in action research is very much an experience of reflecting on practice. But in so doing, the normative concerns--why we do what we do--come very much into question, throwing into doubt more simple theory into practice orientations. To put it simplistically, students and their subjectivities "got in the way." Or as Carr and Kemmis put it, "educational problems arise when expectations about practical situations are not congruent with the practical reality itself" (1986, p. 112).

As I will explore in the following chapter, the interest in reflective teaching--which is not unambiguous in conception--grew out of concerns about gaps between knowledge and practice, or in other words, a realization that experience often runs counter to theoretical prescription. Donald Schon (1983, 1991) explicitly defines reflective practice as a counter to technical rational approaches in teaching and other professions. Having been an instructor of a course reflecting from the inside of an action research project also led to the realization that there is not a privileged standpoint from which to theorize about reflection: that the problematic is not one of teaching students how to be critically reflective from a position which already assumes that we know what it is. Even if we can theorize about the nature of reflection in teaching, teaching reflectively is a difficult problem; and encouraging others to be reflective is even a more difficult problem.

Encountering an educational problem implied that my own teaching had to be problematized and that the meaning of pedagogy for both myself and my students was open to question. Attempting to understand those questions implied that *interpretation* is central to action research. Figuring out what to do, planning and executing practices is also an interpretation of the intentions and ends of those practices in relation to the subjectivities of others.

At that point, the orientation of the action research that guided our work may be best be described as a kind of *practical* task. A practical orientation--action research as a practical task--became particularly defined in the work of curriculum and teacher education scholars in Britain during the late 1960's and early 1970's. Carr and Kemmis defined practical action research, contrasting to more technical approaches, as follows:

> Such action research may be labelled 'practical' because it develops the practical reasoning of practitioners. It is to be distinguised from technical action research because it treats the criteria by which practices are to be judged as problematic and open to development through self-reflection, rather than treating them as given. (1986, p. 203)

The work of Lawrence Stenhouse was especially pivotal in re-defining the tasks and possibilities of action research. Responding to the massive curricular reform movements that had occurred in the 1960's--a movement that had largely ignored teachers' understandings of their own practices and situations--Stenhouse re-focused curriculum as a problem of teaching practice. That idea differs significantly from the idea of curriculum as a package of sequenced materials and pre-determined outcomes (Stenhouse, 1975, p. 142) which can be simply applied in teaching situations.

The revamping of the "national curriculum" and the opening of new secondary comprehensive schools in Britain in the late 1960's focused on problems of teaching practice and how teachers could be encouraged to change their practices in the face of teaching a diverse group of students and new subjects. In particular, the "Humanities Curriculum Project" raised difficult questions for practice. John Elliott explains Stenhouse's work in this respect:

> Stenhouse's great contribution was to design the Humanities Curriculum Project...as an illustration of the radical contrast between the 'process' and 'objectives' models [of curriculum]. He began, not with the question 'what are the objectives of the curriculum?' but with a problem situation that faced teachers attempting to make secondary-school curriculum of the 60's more relevant to the lives of young adolescents. The problem was 'how do teachers handle value issues in classrooms within a pluralistic democracy'? (1991, p. 136)

Thus Stenhouse, who originated the term *teacher as researcher* to describe the kind of practical action research he advocated, saw in the process of action research a possible

means to explore difficulties of teaching within sites of practice. Especially significant were questions about value--not only about how to teach values, but also how one should relate to students who were being exposed to new curricula.

Elliott, building in part on the work of Stenhouse, has attempted to further action research as a practical and pedagogic activity. He conceives of action research as a concrete form of *reflective practice* as defined by Donald Schon. In particular Elliott sees in action research the reflective awareness of the relatonship between "processes and products". In other words, practices are intrinsically value laden. Practices, if they are indeed pedagogic, cannot be simply applied without reference to value or intrinsic norms. Referring specifically to the work of Gadamer, Elliott proposes that action research is a form of practical reasoning: that sound pedagogical action derives from understanding, and that the action embodies, in a sense, that understanding.

Values cannot be defined very meaningfully prior to practice or idependently of practical concerns. As Elliott suggests, "the practice itself constitutes an interpretation of its ends in a particular practical situation" (1991, p. 51). Defining action research as reflective practice, Elliott explains,

> Improving practice, when viewed as the realization of the values which define its ends into concrete forms of action, necessarily involves a continuing process of reflection on the part of practitioners.....The kind of reflection involved here is quite different to technical means-ends reasoning. It is both ethical and philosophical. Inasmuch as the reflection is about choosing a course of action in a particular set of circumstances, to realize one's values, it is ethical in character. But since ethical choice implies an interpretation of the values to be realized, reflection about means cannot be separated from reflection about ends. (1991, p. 50-51)

In working with student teachers in a course and practicum, my interest was both practical and theoretical in the way Elliott uses these terms. The approach was intrinsically practical because in part I was asking how my own pedagogical practice could foster pedagogical awareness in the learning and practice of student teachers. But the orientation was also theoretical because through investigating practice--my own and that of my students--questions were raised which can then be "re-searched" dialogically, including a dialogue with theoretical notions of reflection and action. In other words, practical action research is premised very much on the hermeneutical notions of interpretation, understanding, and application. To apply knowledge or "know-how" involves the ability to interpet concrete situations and the meaning of more universal ideas for practical situations. Understanding grows out of this sense of "applying" knowledge--when we know better the meaning in terms of ourselves and our work (Gadamer, 1975, p. 289).

Based on my experience in a first phase of an action research project a need for practical understanding became more urgent. I agree with Brennan and Noffke, when they

concluded that "there is not a neat, dividing line between our teaching and our research...we try to improve our teaching as we reflect on our project" (1988, p. 2). As a practical activity, action research,then, encouraged a reflective approach to working with student teachers. As Schon suggests, this "reflective turn is consequential. It makes research into a reflective practice in its own right" (1991, p. 9).

Schon cautions, however, that the reflective turn involves several dilemmas and raises practical and theoretical questions and concerns. For example, he asks, "what is it appropriate to reflect *on* ?" (1991, p. 9; italics in original) This caution proved to be significant in terms of my own work in the action research project. Embarking on an action research project requires an openness to questions: questions are not necessarily evident and clear at the outset. As Gadamer counsels, "we cannot have experiences without asking questions" (1975, p. 324). But questions do not necessarly lead to solid answers or solutions. Indeed from a hermeneutic perspective, a good question is perhaps one that leads to more questions. However, questions do grow out of the limitations of what we understand in the situations in which we are thrown. A hermeneutic awareness helps us understand that we are always already in situations that "prejudice" our thoughts and actions. Gadamer writes,

> To acquire an awareness of a situation is, however, always a task of particular difficulty. The very idea of a situation means that we are not standing outside it, and hence are unable to have any objective knowledge of it. (1975, p. 269)

Thus in a sense we ask questions to understand the limitations of those questions. For example, at the beginning of our action research, the focus was very much on the "curriculum-as-plan" as Aoki has named it (1991b). Considerable energy was focused on the course outline, for instance. Thinking about how to foster reflection, our initial concern was very much on content and materials for the course. With perhaps an excessive focus on planning, we began to note a certain restiveness in our classes. Some students questioned the value of certain activities and assignments, seeing them as more busywork and not all responsive to their concerns and anxieties about teaching.

While our concern for planning grew out of a definite care for the students and their interest in becoming teachers what the students experienced as *overplanning* exposed a strong bias and orientation in our thinking--what might well be termed a "dictatorship of reason" to borrow Saul's suggestive phrase. We were still very much oriented by a logic--really a logocentrism--that ideas and thought could ensure good outcomes. Even with good intentions, the voices of students were drowned out by a logic, not heeding yet the "curriculum-as-lived", Aoki's term for the very real ways in which students and teachers experience learning in classrooms. As the course proceeded, the focus shifted somewhat to

questions about our teaching and pedagogy. Even then, questions were still centred too much on our selves and on techniques. But nonetheless, there was shift--a shift to asking what and who planning was for, and how the space of the classroom could begin to foster learning not dictated by pre-planned techniques and objectives.

The second set of cautionary questions Schon poses deal with the problems of interpretation and understanding. He asks, "what is an appropriate *way* (italics in original) of observing and reflecting on practice? In what sort of activity does reflection consist--or ought it to consist" (1991, p. 9). Schon's questions are interesting and relevant on a couple of levels in the context of the collaborative action research project in which I was involved.

Initially it was not clear at all that we understood (or still do not!) the meaning of reflective practice. Although the Faculty report had termed it a "model" for teacher education, reflection-in-action had very little curricular or pedagogical shape. Initially, oriented somewhat by instrumental thinking, our project tended to fall into very much a plan-means-outcome form. Our observations started with focusing on how plans were manifested in classroom activities.

Cracks began to appear in that kind of thinking. The needs and concerns and experiences of our students began to intrude on our planning, teaching, and reflection. Schon's questions still imply that interpetation, or rather the object of interpretation can be nailed down, fixed in the gaze of the observer/researcher. What is forgotten in that view is the "other", in our case students who each also hold certain interpretations of self and the world. A hermeneutic orientation, on the other hand, helps us to understand that,

> There is not an object of interpretation; interpretation entails more than providing a comment on another text. It is the announcement of the other in the presentation of the self as other. (Ormiston and Scrift, 1990, p. 34)

Approaching understanding hermeneutically implies that there is not a correct method for conducting interpretation outside of relations to others through the language and discourses we employ. From a hermeneutic perspective, "*what* is being investigated itself holds part of the answer concerning *how* it should be investigated", Smith argues (1991, p. 198; italics in original). What is being investigated is *understanding* and how that understanding is expressed in language. But those are not objects outside of ourselves. In a sense, turning to the language we use, how we frame and encapsulate teaching for example, is also to turn to subjectivities--or ourselves and those with whom we work. In terms of the action research then, the focus turned much more to the experiences of our students. That certainly was not an automatic process, however.

Our initial concerns for example, focussed very much how we could have students understand "reflective teaching". I think we saw "reflective teaching" very much as another teaching skill , albeit an important quality for teaching. In many ways, our concern for "implementing" a reflective approach ran ahead of understanding the lived worlds of our students. Somewhat thoughtlessly, the interest was more in the model than the reality. As I noted above, this was manifested in being "overplanned" for the course. In the regular meetings I had with the other instructor, our "reflections" tended to focus, at least initially, on activities for the course, organizational matters, and whether or not certain pedagogic approaches were effective or not.

For me as an instructor, overplanning limited my openness to the experiences of the students, neglecting the classroom as a place where students could participate in creating a curriculum of learning to teach. For students, much of the course was experienced as busywork, with little intrinsic meaning. While many students dedicate time and energy to the work required, including journal writing, that did not completely muffle expressions of discontent. Following a discussion of their concerns in one of my classes, I wrote in my journal:

> The discussion which ensued was quite interesting (and I found it quite tense for me). I was surprised on the one hand, by a kind of negativity towards university courses. However, students are also very concerned, as they ought to be, about their [upcoming] practicum experiences, and about learning to teach. A good comment that was made by one of the students was something as follows: "if we don't just want to see teaching as an innate art or talent, then how can we learn to do it?" A very good question, I thought.

But I didn't really understand the question in the pedagogic terms that the students raised it. I think that I was still thinking of teaching as transmitting certain knowledge--be it critical understanding of schools, or ideas about reflection--as a way to help students understand how to teach. I certainly did not understand what Britzman asked: "what images of theory do prospective teachers hold that makes it appear so untenable" (1991, p. 49)? When I think back to those situations, I see my own lack of understanding, and the desire to forestall difficulty by trying to control the outcome of learning. Rather than really opening up the question "how can we learn to do it?", my response was to try to give even more material, more ideas, more readings about how to teach and the importance of reflective teaching.

That problem can be related to a third concern raised by Schon, one of ethics, or the relationship between the teacher/researcher and his subjects. He asks, "what does the reflective turn imply for the researcher's *stance* (italics in original) toward his enterprise--toward his 'subjects', his research activity and himself" (1991, p. 11). This a problem that

is recognized by the Gadamer in his effort to revitalize a notion of method and action that takes into account the ethical calling of such action. He suggests that

> the knowledge that gives direction to action is essentially called for by concrete situations in which we are to choose the thing to be done...It must arise from practice itself and, with the typical generalizations that it brings to explicit consciousness, be related back to practice. (1981, p. 92)

If Gadamer's argument is related to action research, rather than the stressing the methodological form of conducting research with others, the ethical responsibility of action research, and the "reflective turn" lies in the openness to experience and that understanding cannot be simply imposed on others. In an evocative essay on "the hermenuetic imagination", Smith contends that there is a profoundly ethical aspect to hermeneutic inquiry in a very real, everyday, practical way. From a hermeneutic perspective, action research and reflective practice become ethical practices to the extent that a researcher is prepared to enlarge and deepen his own self-understanding. In Smith's words,

> Pedagogically, the highest priority is in having children and young people gain precisely a sense of the human world as being a narrative construction that can be entered and enjoyed creatively; to have a sense that received understanding can be interpreted and re-interpreted and that human responsibility is fulfilled in precisely a taking up of this task" (1991, p. 23)

The idea of reflective practice as an object of action research, then, functions more as a question, as a guide for exploring possibilities, oriented by pedagogical responsibilites for others. Such an orientation demonstrates as well the dynamics of collaborative action research in practice. There is an attunement to the contexts in which we work, an acknowledgement of the interdependent nature of our work in teacher education, and a commitment to practice and understanding collaboration. Thus rather than becoming simpler or cruder or less thoughtful, re-orienting to the practical reveals layers of complexities and even more questions, questions which may encourage alertness to the responsibilities embedded in educational practices.

d. *Action research as a critical practice--submerging selves and narratives?*

Action research is premised on the the idea that knowledge--including theoretical knowledge--grows reflectively from experience. This knowledge is a continuous process of reconstruction. For exponents of technical and practical action research, that process of reconstruction is bounded by the practice itself. For technical action research problems are finite concerns that can be solved through the correct application of universally-sound principles or rules: action research is a process of implementing known ends. But as has

been discussed previously, this ultimately denies the textures and layers of practitioners' experiences.

Approaching action research from a practical orientation on the other hand is much more complex. The practical is underlined by the problems of interpretation, understanding, and action or application that is ethically constituted. Moreover, the practical occurs in situations which involve relations among subjectivities. To construe experience meaningfully goes beyond an application of technical knowledge. Social and ethical purposes are intrinsic to action. Understanding is therefore integral to action.

Practical action research is a response to technical rationality and promises a possibility for developing practical and situated understandings. The practice of action research may challenge the managerial-technical control of teaching, which constrains possibilities for more critical forms of pedagogy (Misgeld, 1983). Elliott sees the main role of action research as the development of "practical wisdom", that is knowing what is the right thing to do in practical, uncertain, and contingent situations. He emphasizes the centrality and inviolability of practical inquiry:

> I know of no better statement about the nature of practical wisdom than the prayer of St. Francis where he asks God for the patience to accept things he cannot change, the courage to change what is in his power to change and the wisdom to know the difference. If action research consists in the development of this form of practical understanding, it constitutes a form of inquiry which fully acknowledges the 'realities' which face practitioners in all their concreteness and messy complexity. (1991, p. 52)

Elliott's citation of St. Francis' view of practice, however, is precisely the point of the critique of practical action research made by Carr and Kemmis in their proposal for action research as a "critical educational science". Carr and Kemmis consider practical interpretation as a constitutive element of action research. However, they argue that to the extent that action research focuses only on the practitioner's own understandings and fails to address ideological and structural constraints, educational problems will not be resolved (1986, p. 117).

According to Carr and Kemmis, action research as a critical educational practice has an *emancipatory interest* to improve not only understanding and practice, but also the "rationality and justice" of those educational practices. Indeed, critical reflection on values and how those are ideologically constructed is what distinguishes action research from more narrow or limited reflection on practice (McTaggart and Garbutchean-Singh, 1988). Moreover, while participants in action research seek understanding of individual practice, action research is necessarily social in nature; hence the necessity of collaboration between practitioners in sites of practice. Indeed it is collaboration that characterizes action research

most distinctively and is what allows for the possibility of reflection (Oja and Smulyan, 1989). Echoing Paulo Freire's notion of education as cultural action, Kemmis and McTaggart write:

> improving education is not just a matter of *individual action*, it is also a matter of *cultural action*. It means changing both at the individual level and at the level of the culture of the group of which the individual is a member. (1988, p. 34)

By the "culture of the group" Kemmis and McTaggart refer to the language, practices, and patterns of relationships that form educational institutions as we know them. Through collaborative action research, critical reflection on cultural and social constraints and possibilities are given impetus. In attending to the dialectic between structure and individual consciousness, action research strives to the "paradigm of critical social science", which involves exploring the relationships between thought and action, individual and society in "self-critical communities" (Carr and Kemmis, 1986, p. 184).

It may be argued that Carr and Kemmis draw a too restrictive border around the possibilities of an interpretive approach to action research. Although they build their argument on Habermas' ideas about critical social science, there are nonetheless some strong lines of convergence between critical theory and hermeneutics. Both orientations grow out of a critique of objectivist and technical-rational tendencies in the conduct of positivist social science and the institutional practices that spawned. Both seek to "correct instrumentalist delusions" (Misgeld, 1976, p. 172).

Gadamer's work, for example, is in part an effort to redress the alienation of method in modern life; for him,

> the modern social sciences stand in a particularly strained relationship to their object, the social reality, and this relationship especially requires hermeneutical reflection. For the methodical alienation to which the social sciences owe their progress is related here to the human-societal world as a whole. (1976, p. 40)

Gadamer's project is to show how scientific method and technical-rational approaches restrict possibilities for understanding, denying our connection to and knowledge of the worlds in which we live and work. In order to overcome instrumental reason and its effects, Gadamer argues for a rehabilitation of historical experience as the kind of knowledge that can guide the practical and ethical questions of how we should live (Misgeld, 1976, pp. 170-3).

Carr and Kemmis are critical of interpretive approaches to action research because, according to them, the focus on interpretation and practical action avoids a dialectical relationship between objective and subjective constraints (1986, p. 184). Their critique of interpretive work is that it is one-sided. According to Carr and Kemmis, interpretation only involves exploration of the practitioner's own subjective understandings without reference

to external criteria or standards. They would want some way of ensuring a firm answer to a question like, "how do we know that this teaching practice is 'correct' or 'true' for this situation?" For Carr and Kemmis an appeal solely to the traditions of teacher practice would be an inadequate and probably distorted normative standard.

The debate about the adequacy of hermeneutics for coming to understanding hinges on the question of the possibility of critique and reflection. Carr and Kemmis appropriate Habermas's view that hermeneutics lacks a critical perspective. This is only a partial view however. In Gadamer's hermeneutics critique is immanent in the coming to understanding. Critical reflection is a moment in the hermeneutical experience, a moment of transcending the particulars of one's own experience and opening to the horizons of other traditions and experiences. Gadamer emphasizes the historicity of understanding arguing that we cannot stand outside of tradition to apply critical standards of reason to it, since those standards are already part of language and discourse. The language of critique is a "a structure of prejudices" that also requires interpretation. As McCarthy writes of Gadamer's position,

> Hermeneutics does not imply a blind subjection to tradition; we also understand when we see through prejudices that distort reality. 'In fact this is when we understand most of all'. For Gadamer...the question is ...how we become conscious of and evaluate preconceptions and prejudgements. This is not something that can be done in a supreme act of reflection. It is rather precisely in trying to understand other points of view, in trying to come to an understanding with others, that my own, as well as their, 'structure of prejudices' become perceptible. (1978, p.189)

From Gadamer's perspective, critical reflection on one's practice is a possibility, a moment in the hermeneutical process. Gadamer's task for hermeneutics is to distinguish prejudices and their differences building towards a notion of "truth" that is derived communally. But there is not a method or technique for engendering critical reflection. Critical reason is itself a prejudice which must be subjected to hermeneutic reflection in dialogue with others (Hekman, 1986, p. 136; McCarthy, 1978, p. 190).

Gadamer also attacks the self-certainty of an objective approach to understanding which denies the dialectical relationships between an interpreter and the object of interpretation. Application of method has the effect of closing off questions and denying the openess to experience which is characteristic of hermeneutical reflection. Hermeneutics is not a method, but a way of coming to understanding; the hermeneutic experience has the quality of conversation or dialogue, where meaning and understanding emerge in communication between interpreter and interpreted (Gadamer, 1975, p. 345-51).

The differences between Gadamer and Habermas about the place of hermeneutics parallels Carr's and Kemmis's discussion about the difference between interpretive and critical action research in that regard. They find in Habermas a shared concern about the

instrumentalist consequences of objectivist social science. They agree with him that hermeneutics is a corrective to this tendency. Habermas also accepts the intersubjective quality of understanding and the need for a researcher to be a "reflective partner" (Bliecher, 1980, p. 154). Practical questions about life need to be resolved dialogically (McCarthy, 1978, p. 190-91).

However, Habermas does not accept all of Gadamer's methodological conclusions (McCarthy, 1978; Hekman, 1986). Habermas would argue that the problem is not scientific reasoning and application as such, but rather its universalization to all aspects of life, with the effect of limiting the possibilities for a normatively informed social practice (McCarthy, 1978, p. 22). Thus for Habermas, hermeneutics is only a consitutive, albeit essential, element of critical thinking and practice (Hekman, 1986, p. 131).

Habermas argues that distortions in communication have penetrated the language and practices of everyday life requiring "methods"--communicative reason--for distinguishing true from false beliefs. While the model of dialogical understanding in hermeneutics is valid, there must be "theoretical guidance" in order to be able to explain and overcome distortortions (Habermas, 1970, p. 209). Habermas's work in this regard has been characterized as an effort to "define reason in terms of a universal core that structures our ability to communicate" (Hekman, 1986, p. 133). As an "organization of enlightment", this is the way that Carr and Kemmis conceive action research.

Some writers interested in action research have argued that critical action research re-introduces theory as the dominant element--that there is a way to step outside of one's own practices and understandings and apply a critical and normative yardstick to that situation (Elliott, 1987; Gibson, 1985). Elliott (1987), for example, accuses Carr and Kemmis of theorising a reality (e.g., "the organization of enlightenment") without adequately attending to the dialectical tension between that theory and the practical realities of diverse and uncertain teaching situations. Carr and Kemmis are criticized for reifying the emancipatory interest from theory which ought to normatively guide understanding and action. "Knowing" in advance what the goals of action research should be, then, the argument goes, reproduces a dominance of theory over practice, and deflects the commitment to a more interpretative engagement between participants. It could be argued, in fact, that Carr and Kemmis do not attend sufficiently to the importance of building communicative competence--a hermeneutic task.

Paul Smith, in *Discerning the Subject*, discusses the problem critical theories pose for understanding false consciousness, especially when a critical knowledge is counterposed to non-critical practice. He states

> It is remarkable in this context that the following question is seldom asked with any explicitness: 'why some people--those living their relation to their conditions of existence through the categories of a distorted ideology--cannot recognise that it is distorted, while we, with our superior wisdom, or armed with properly formed concepts, can.' (1988, p. 11)

There is an assumption, indeed an assertion, that theory will provide a correct (critical) practice of pedagogy. Peter McLaren, for instance, in justifying a need to theorize about critical pedagogy writes

> ...I hope to illustrate the contradictions embodied in the teaching process itself and to chart out the tension between the perspectives held by the beginning teacher, who is trying to find a larger purpose in the day-to-day *practice* of teaching, and the social theorist, who presumably has better *theoretical* grasp of what should be done and who is calling for practioners to appropriate critical theory into their own work. (1989, p. 157; italics in original)

While the idea of "appropriate" suggests an interpretive relation, McLaren has nonetheless set up a dualism between the truth of theoretical concepts and insight in relation to unreflective practice. His interpretation of critical theory raises the question of whether a critical theory can guide actions without at the same time assuming the dominance of theory over practice, that is, privileging the instrumentalist and totalizing tendencies of a theory *into* practice model of action.

I approached a reading of critical action research with the question in mind of how I might convey a theory and practice of critical reflection to my students--preservice social studies teachers--or practice it myself as a teacher with adolescent students. Critical action research promises to address the question of praxis, that is to transform practice in more reflective ways. In that sense it has a great deal of theoretical appeal.

In my own practice in teacher education I have experienced the difficulty of imposing an alternative language, such as the discourse of critical pedagogy as a way to becoming more critically reflective. For example, I recently used Ken Osborne's *Teaching For Democratic Citizenship* (1991) as a basic text. In part the text is a critique of "transmission" forms of curriculum and instruction, and wants to make teachers and teachers-to-be conscious of the complicity of schools in social reproduction. Osborne is very open about endorsing forms of pedagogy which encourage critical thought and active citizenship. I wanted to use the book to counter the taken-for-granted notions about teaching that many student teachers have, and the politically neutral quality of curricular documents. Osborne's ideas about critical pedagogies would function, I hoped, in the way that McLaren discussed the purpose of theory in relation to practice.

As I earlier suggested, just presenting ideas does not counter deeply held beliefs about schooling. One danger is that the critical language becomes interpreted as just

another "technology", and used in instrumentalist ways; or more benignly, just does not "translate" into practice. In a sense what happens is that the language overlays the language already in use, and prevents a critical interpretive approach to understanding the language which already frames the reality for students. Although the critical language may be anti-dominatory in intent, it may nonetheless take on dominating aspects and deny the dialogical quality of understanding, locating the guarantee of meaning in the mind or consciousness of the subject as speaker or writer (Weedon, 1987, p. 164).

Critical action research still wants to posit an epistemology--a way out of the world as it is experienced to a way of knowing that transcends what we experience. With a notion of critical action research as a key to more enlightened action, theory is set up in opposition to experience and practice, knowing to unknowing, conscious to unconscious. What is subscribed to is a "double reality" view--that ideology is false consciousness, but there is a more true way of seeing things. At one level, this is to reproduce the old binary distinctions, and an embrace of logocentrism. It is also to deny the place of ideologies within Ideology (Smith, 1989, p.15). Or, in other words, to acknowledge the multiplicity of opportunities for expresssion (agency) that are available in the complexities and contradictions of our lives within dominating discourses (although we may not be aware of them necessarily). Speaking to the relation between the "unconscious" and ideology, Smith writes,

> ideology's work in the realm of the unconscious needs to be reckoned with, since resistance involves not just conscious self-constituting acts, but also the agent's individual history, conceived here as a memory which is not negligibly constituted in and as the unconscious. (1989, p. 68).

Smith is saying that the unconscious is more than just a repository of repressed or alternative positions; it is a plane of contradictory and alternative readings of experience. Feminists working with postmodern perspectives have built on this notion of the unconscious to announce possibilities of subjectivity and agency, in conflicting and competing definitions of what constitutes who and what we are (Weedon, 1987). But critical action research wants to predefine the borders of agency and subjectivity. Closure is sought in the unity of theory and practice and definition of a correct consciousness.

Is agency or action possible if subjectivity is "cerned?" Smith (1989) coined the term "cerned" to describe how possibilities for self-understanding are surrounded and produced by dominating discourses which restrict possibilities for alternative identities. Smith claims we need to (re)focus on the subject and the meaning of subjectivity, and the possibilities for human agency. "We have to assume subjectivity in order to make sense of society and ourselves" (Weedon, 1987, p. 173). Again, opening to the experiences of

students as I discussed earlier, shows how critical discourses of action research may alienate the narrative qualities of experience and how they relate to the understanding and construction of selves. Making sense is much more than the refinement of abstract knowing. While acknowledging the value of critical perspectives, working with others--student teachers--also began to show how experiences overflow the categories that are meant to contain them.

e. *Action research from postmodern and hermeneutic perspectives--orienting to narratives and difficulty*

> Still being human beings, not knowing how to talk also means not knowing how to act. That is a major problem. In fact, it is *the* problem of post-modern society. Having replaced normative behaviour with procedural regulation, turning questions of life and death into matters of feasibility, rational decision-making, operational management, the society finds itself at a loss when forced to confront questions that are normative to the core.
>
> Schecter, 1993, p. 35

My experiences with teaching student teachers and attempting to introduce a reflective approach confounded the certainty contained in terms like critical, theory, practice, and reflection. Trying to understand that problem became a focus of my action research. Rather than in the fixity of ideas and techniques, it is when we encounter uncertainty that we realize that ideas do not quite match how others experience the world and their places in it. Working with student teachers, I encountered an experience parallel to Ellsworth's difficulties with critical pedagogy. Ellsworth recognized the peril posed in replacing one dominating discourse with another. Reflecting on her experiences as a teacher educator, she writes,

> As I began to live out and interpret the consequences of how discourses of 'critical reflection', 'empowerment', 'student voice' and 'dialogue' had influenced my conceptualization of the goals of the course and my ability to make sense of my experiences in the class, I found myself struggling against (struggling to unlearn) key assumptions and assertions of current literature on critical pedagogy; and straining to recognize, name, and come to grips with crucial issues of classroom practice that critical pedagogy cannot or will not discuss. (1989, p.303)

Ellsworth sees in the "discourses of the pedagogy of empowerment" a denial of the individual as concrete, historical, and narratively constituted self. Ultimately, modernist discourses, outlined above, as bases for action research deny the need to build understanding based on that concreteness. Even from a critical orientation, difference, intersubjectivity, and reflection are reduced to already defined goals to be realized correctly in practice.

Ellsworth would see them as instances of "restricted rationalism", ultimately dominating and denying difference and openness--contrary impulses to critical reflection as a way of not only being, but also doing, in the classroom. Elliott (1988) also is uneasy about perpetuating a restrictive rationalism in teacher education, and ultimately maintaining structures which privilege certain interests and forms of control. But as Lather (1991) emphasizes, Ellsworth is not arguing against the norms of critical pedagogy and theory as such, but rather against the way they may be used to constrain the space for building understanding. Some feminist theorists, arguing from a postmodern perspective have criticized the universalizing elements of critical discourses and how they erase private and particular experiences (Benhabib, 1987). They argue that it is necessary to allow stories to be told, to begin to open to possibilities that lie between the cracks, so to speak of powerful languages of modernist discourses.

That impulse contains a view of subjectivity that recognizes the importance of the subject's history and context--"the 'subject's' experience in all of its specificity" (Smith, 1989, p. 159-60). There is thus a call to "read" one's "position" in the world, and to articulate and make difference heard. Sarup, citing Jameson, suggests that our experience of the world is in the form of narrative or story, and our lives as stories invite interpretation (1989, p. 141-142). From a pedagogic perspective the question might then be how we can allow alternative stories to share the stage with more dominant discourses. Or as Eagleton puts it, "You may want to stage your own signifying practices to enrich, combat, modify or transform the effects which others' practices produce" (1983, p. 212).

Beginning to look around the edges of the metanarratives of modernism, the focus perhaps changes from "what is said" to "who speaks" (Lather, 1991, p. 47). The focus of action research begins to be thought of differently in relation to this "postmodern" turn. From a concern about whether we grasp correctly in language and represent accurately our experiences, we turn instead to the lives and experiences that go on despite all the talk and writing about it;

> What breaks down in the breakthrough is the spell of conceptuality, the illusion that we have somehow or another managed to close our conceptual fists around the nerve of things, that we have grasped the world round about, circumscribed and encompassed it. (Caputo, 1987, p. 270)

Action research conceived in technical, practical, or critical terms can all be ways of trying to encapsulate the practice of action research, to give us some certainty and guidance in attempting to understand practices and ideas that are far from certain. Those forms of action research discussed above all want to grasp the meaning of theory and the meaning of practice and to close the gap between them. They seek closure and unification. Yet the

"reflective" experiences of student teachers show that they live in the spaces between theory and practice, spaces that need to be filled with understanding. The theories about reflective teaching and the experiences of being in the classroom do not neatly coincide. Understanding falls somewhere in between what theory prescribes, and what real situations demand. Karen, a student teacher looked for confidence from her university preparation. Reflecting on her experience in the classroom, Karen captures the living-in-between theory and practice:

> I wonder if, because texts are so objective, and once you've stepped into the classroom, all of a sudden, yourself, you're pushed to the forefront and you become preoccupied or concerned about yourself and then these objective ideas and stuff somehow don't help you see that a student is going to react in a certain way, and this is how you have to deal with so and so...

The action research project in which I was involved began with the question of how a critically reflective approach could be implemented in a university program. Action research promised a resolution between conception and practice. The experiences of student teachers like Karen began to re-orient my understanding of practice also--away from a kind of instrumentality still embedded in method--towards seeing both action and research as problems for understanding.

That view of action research is guided, if that is still a problematic term, by the kind of awareness postmodernism encourages. From a postmodern perspective, distinctions between theory and practice, or concepts and the real are problematic; those relations cannot be theorized as ones of representation (Smart, 1993, p. 121). As Britzman has argued, theories about teaching are textual constructions or narratives that need to be interpreted and interrogated by student teachers. But equally, "reality" is not simply an objective and inert condition. The realities of schools, entrenched teaching practices and routines are also narrative constructions. But the real also shows the limits of theory, "the point at which theory can do nothing" (Smart, 1993, p. 122).

It would be rather presumptuous to come up with another term, like "postmodern hermeneutic action research". It would be a rather contradictory effort to fix the search for understanding in another method with rules for interpretation. But a postmodern hermeneutics, or a radical hermeneutics as John Caputo names it, "wants to describe the fix we are in" (1987, p. 3). Resisting conceptual and methodological closure, a postmodern hermeneutics want to accept the uncertainties of teaching that McDonald talks about and look for possibilities in the openings between theory and practice. "It is precisely the uncertainty of things", Caputo reminds us, "which links us indissolubly, which commits us to the dispersal of power structures which think they have the final word" (1987, p. 288).

The postmodern turn problematizes the relation between theory and practice because theory does not ever describe reality totally nor provide ethical direction. Because theory is an "ad hoc justification, a generalization of previous practice" (Rosenau, 1992, p. 82) it falters as a guide for practice. Caputo calls theoretical understanding a form of recollection, an attempt to reproduce a prior presence in the face of something that calls for difference. Instead, we should strive for something he terms "repitition", which is a forward looking and creative appropriation of experience and language.

Smith also uses the expression "postmodern hermeneutics" as a way of encountering the difficulties of educational practice. He describes very well the problem for a postmodern hermeneutic practice of action research, which begins from

> a concern for how we shall proceed pedagogically after we have given up the presumption of ever being able to define in unequivocal foundational terms all of the key referents in our professional lexicon. (1991, p. 188)

The strongest impulse behind a postmodern hermeneutic orientation is an ethical one. The practice and interest of action research is oriented to the question of *what to do* in concrete situations (Gauthier, 1992). That is a question that encounters and lives with difficulty. Rather than assuming that knowledge can easily pass into practice, as teacher education has assumed it can, postmodern hermeneutics looks for openings and possibilities for interpretation, tranforming both the object of interpretation and the "self" who is the interpreter (Ormiston and Schrift, p. 9).

The question of what to do for action research looks for possibilities rather than firm answers. As much as understanding, a postmodern hermeneutic approach to action research embraces compassion (Caputo, 1987). It is in the face of suffering, as Caputo--citing the French philosopher Emmanual Levinas--declares, that we turn away from the certainties of our knowledge and techniques to the realities and experiences of others. The suffering and needs of others calls forth an ethical responsibility. But that response must be a response to other; understanding and just actions need to be discovered, which is not just a capitulation to predermined ends and theories (Docherty, 1993, p. 26).

Astrid, a young, very sensitive student teacher, who had strong hopes for encouraging her students' critical thinking as a social studies teacher, felt devastated by her inability to transcend or even cope with the discipline problems she encountered at her junior high school placement. In her journal writing which she shared with me, she wrote,

> I have been to hell, and back.
> Cooperative learning [a strategy encouraged in the university class] has become my worst nightmare. I wasn't prepared enough to implement this in my classroom. Actually, one (out of two) of my grade classes accepted it pretty well and worked out the jigsaw technique. They caught on the idea and it worked. My other grade 8

> class blackballed me and made me feel pretty crappy. There are three girls in this 'bad' class who are giving me a hard time. I have had a horrible power struggle with them and I feel like I lost. Well, I did lose. I don't have the stomach for confrontation of that sort. I lose all concept of control and just become dumbfounded. They think I'm treating them unfairly. I'm picking on them. I don't like them. All I do all day long is think about them. The scary thing is they remind me of me and my best friend, Tracy, during junior high. We were the same way: defiant, bold, daring, rebellious. I put myself in the three girls' shoes: how would I want to be treated? Right now, I'm ignoring their behaviour in class but inside I'm quite shaken up. They defy my authority and it's spreading. I've become just another repressive authority in their lives. I hate it. I hate me. Or rather, I hate the way I treat them. I'm not smart enough to resolve this....

Attempting to *listen* to Astrid's difficulties, I found it difficult to respond with easy answers. She already knew, in some ways, what was supposed to happen in the classroom according to her teacher education. Her anguish was not soothed by theories of teaching, including that of reflective teaching. She was being confronted with questions--questions of not only how to teach, but questions of self, questions of teacher identity and practice, questions of school structure and norms--that resisted easy resolution.

Conversing with student teachers like Astrid began to shake the self-certainty of my knowledge and teaching approaches. Student teachers' experiences could not be simply explained away by explanations about the processes of becoming a teacher. The idea of reflective teaching began to look rather fallible in the face of lived experiences. Theoretical explanations of teaching often failed to guide actual practices of teaching; those explanations also could not explain the experiences of being in a classroom. Experience cried out for understanding. Approaching the question of reflective teaching through action research, rather than an approach to realize something already known, became a way of trying to stay honest to something not known--namely how student teachers experienced a teacher education program, and more specifically, notions like reflection. Beginning to listen to student teachers' experiences also encouraged a dialogue to open with certain ideas about reflective practice. That conversation will be pursued in the next chapter.

Chapter 3

Texts of Reflective Teaching in Theory and Practice

> What enables us to communicate at a distance is thus the *matter of the text*, which belongs neither to its author nor to its reader. This last expression, *the matter of the text*, leads me to the threshold of my own reflection.
>
> Ricoeur, 1981a, p. 62

> It's come to the point now that we don't know very much at all about a practice if it is merely described as something aimed at facilitating the development of reflective teachers.
>
> Zeichner and Tabachnick, 1991, p. 1

Difficulties of Understanding Reflection in Experiences of Teaching

a. *The complexity of reflection in experience and practice*

> I really, really had a tough time with this critical reflection stuff, trying to understand the worth of it. Like I said in this last interview, it seems to me that someone has taken the good teacher bio and found out that they all think a lot about what happens in their classrooms and concluded that, therefore, if people think about what happens in the classrooms, they are good teachers, so we'll just tell them to do that, and then we'll be bringing out a bunch of good teachers.
>
> Sam, a student teacher

Sam sounds a little skeptical about reflection in teaching. But in working with him and other student teachers, I wondered if his comment was in fact quite perceptive about how ideas are appropriated in teacher education. Although there is considerable enthusiasm for reflective teaching, what reflection means in practice is not a question that elicits straightforward answers. As I want to explore in this chapter, living and working with the question of reflective practice in teacher education is to find oneself very much in the middle, in-between theory and practice. Focusing only on theoretical clarity and coherence does not necessarily help understanding in practical terms.

Despite all the talk and writing about the importance of reflection, it is also difficult to define in terms of teaching practice. As Zeichner and Tabachnick suggest in the quote

above, simply saying reflection does not give more understanding of a practice. As a teacher/teacher educator, attempting to practice reflective teaching and also encouraging others to be reflective practitioners is to forego the certainties of theoretical knowing. But nonetheless, it also calls for responsibility for fostering understanding in practice.

Towards the end of the last chapter, I attempted to make a case for thinking about action research in a more hermeneutic way. Action research thought of in those terms orients us to meaning, but not in a straightforward, representational way. Above all a hermeneutic perspective orients us to the language we use and live in. A postmodern--or radical, in Caputo's terms--hermeneutics pushes harder to create awareness of how slippery meaning is. A hermeneutic perspective encourages us to understand that the concepts and categories we use do not clearly or strictly correspond to experience. Words and language never foreclose finitely on experience and possibility. Hence the need for interpretation and understanding is always imminent, always ongoing.

Yet, in many of our pursuits, teacher education being one, language may be used in ways that wants to fully and categorically explain experiences in totalizing fashion. Much of the language in the teacher education literature, for example, has as its intention, the correct description and control of practice. "Struggling to clarify what is and give it all a name. Naming, Defining, Quantifying, Quantumizing" thinks a character in Timothy Findley's recent novel, *Headhunter*, as he reflects on "acadame" from his office perch high above a university (1993, p, 146).

From my experience in an action research project, coming from the question of reflective teaching in that way--theoretically--created problems from both a research and teaching point of view. On the one hand, in the teacher education literature reflection has been accepted almost paradigmatically as a way of conceptualizing teaching. As Zeichner and Tabachnick conclude, "the full range of beliefs within the teacher education community about teaching, schooling, teacher education and the social order has now been incorporated into the discourse about reflective practice" (1991, p. 1). As our student teachers learn very quickly from even their first education courses, teaching cannot be discussed without adding the qualifier, "reflective".

On the other hand, while "reflective" has been appropriated as a way to describe teaching, and has been the stimulus for all kinds of research, writing, and programmatic initiatives across Canada and the United States, what it means--either theoretically or practically--is not at all unequivocal and clear. While a sense is conveyed that there is something better about being a reflective teacher rather than not, the concept of reflection is elusive indeed. As an idea for education, reflection owes its origin to several different theoretical orientations and interests, and therefore has considerable conceptual variation

(Calderhead, 1989, p. 43). Moreover, those orientations may be interpreted very differently, with consequently diverse implications for programs and practice. As an "umbrella" term, attempting to cover so many possible meanings, the idea of reflection becomes almost meaningless (Smyth, 1992).

As I indicated in the last chapter, reflective teaching became a strong motif in my teacher education work, and a question for action research. My action research was initially oriented by a notion of reflection that could be somehow captured in activity and method. Without necessarily understanding what it meant, particularly in more practical terms, it nonetheless became a major focus of a social studies curriculum and instruction course. Students in my courses were forewarned and forearmed with the importance of reflection in teaching. Course assignments were designed intentionally with the idea of provoking reflection about being and becoming a teacher. Reflection was presented as being not only the way to be a teacher, from a theoretical perspective, but reflective teaching carried a kind of moral imperative as well.

Of course I am almost parodying the intentions of the action research somewhat. But working with the idea of reflection in teacher education and attending to the experiences of student teachers shook the foundational qualities of theory into practice. Even though one could read about reflective teaching and feel certain that in theory, a reflective approach made a lot of sense, it was in practice that understanding and meaning lost its certitude. It was difficult to find and work with a language that would describe what the experience of reflection was like for students.

Thus the interpretation of reflective teaching became less certain and more complex, involving not only the interpretation or translation of written texts about reflection, but also the experiences of student teachers as a text for interpretation. But as well as my own experience and understanding of that was implicated. More than just interpreting to achieve conceptual clarity, as Gadamer reminds us, "...all reading involves application, so that a person who is reading a text is himself part of the meaning he apprehends" (1975, p. 304). And as Ricoeur says, "To read is...to conjoin a new discourse to the discourse of the text" (1981b, p. 158).

b. *Making sense of experiences of reflective practices*

Before embarking on a more "academic" interest, as I related in the previous chapter, I had--although not well defined or articulated--an interest in "improving" my own competence as a teacher working with junior high students. That interest became somewhat more urgent if not necessarily more focused when, with other teachers, I began to explore "peace education" and its implications for classroom practice as I explained in the

previous chapter. Thinking about the experience of peace education in retrospect helps to illustrate some significant qualities about the process *and* content of reflection in teaching.

For one, peace education created a greater awareness of the relationships between societal or even global contexts, and the meaning of teaching practices within those broader contexts. Or more precisely, thinking about our responsibilities as teachers within the context of global issues allowed different questions to emerge about the more mundane practices of teaching. Gadamer uses the term "horizon" to stress the importance of historical context, and the way in which our own understandings--indeed our self-understanding--is bounded. Attempting to understand teaching within a broader context, however, did not draw us away from the immediacies of teaching. In a way, peace education made us more aware of our responsibilities as teachers, particularly in terms of our pedagogic responsibility to children. Broadening our horizons as teachers did not mean that difficulty was obviated, but did make us more keenly aware of the difficulties.

That kind of awareness was nonetheless a frustrating experience. Hopes for a more peaceful world could not be simply translated into everyday means for achieving those hopes. The relationships between a life project or what Ricoeur (1992) calls a "life plan" and the more prosaic and immediate details of one's working life become more problematic. Given the institutional and cultural constraints of schooling, the very nature or possibility of teaching sometimes can come under question. While peace education is motivated by hope and the projection of possibilities beyond the present, it also created the possibility of greater disappointment. That feeling of disappointment can also however, motivate one to look further, beyond more immediate horizons. For Gadamer, this cycle of disappointment and hope is a characteristic of experience, and constitutes a possibility for further understanding (Weinsheimer, 1985, p. 202).

Inquiring into the possibilities for ethical action, Ricoeur (1992) has an interesting analysis of the problem of relating means and ends. He raises the question about how our concrete and "partial" (p. 177) actions can contribute to the realization of what he terms "the ethical aim of living well" (p. 176). Ricoeur's question, I think, is relevant to what many of us were struggling with in attempting to understand peace education--understanding our work in ethical ways. As long as teaching--as a practice or profession--was not under question, then as Ricoeur might argue, choices about how to teach could be relatively instrumental. As long as there is agreement about what constitutes teaching as a profession, and assuming agreement more or less on its purposes and ends, its practices--that is what makes up the work of teaching--could be described in means-ends languages. You might argue that the horizons of what constitutes teaching are in that case relatively near--and finite.

Ricoeur uses the example of the medical profession to illustrate the difference between a practice defined as the totality of a professional work, and the many skills and decisions that are parts of that profession's total repertoire. Immersed in busy practice, it is not likely that each decision and each skill that is applied by a practitioner in specific situations involves questions of identity or much thought about the meaning of those decisions and skills in terms of the more existential or social questions about why one is a doctor. Paraphrasing Ricoeur's example of doctor, assuming that one is not questioning his or her *vocation*, a teacher *is* already a teacher in the daily course of life; he or she does not ask whether he or she wishes to remain one; "his [or her] choices are strictly of an instrumental nature" (1992, p. 177): for example, in a teacher's case, whether to use this learning strategy or another, or this text or another, or what classroom management intervention to use for this student, and so on.

But as soon as we begin to question the vocation of teaching as a whole (or in Dwayne Huebner's (1987) terms, "teaching as vocation"), that is, what it means to be a teacher, then means-end thinking is inadequate to that task. Despite the fervid debate about public education, many who question teaching's vocation want to contain it in technical terms and procedures. Global concerns, for example the concern for peace, intrudes on the comfort of means-end thinking; indeed it brings into question the very of *identity* of teaching and teacher. As Ricoeur explains,

> The action-configurations that we are calling life plans stem, then, from our moving back and forth between far-off ideals, which have to be made more precise, and the weighing of the advantages and disadvantages of the choice of a given life plan on the level of practice. (1992, p. 177)

Ricoeur proceeds further to show how this is manifested as a hermeneutic problem of understanding, understanding that is both mediated by and enlarges the self. While what he calls the "internal goods" of a practice, that is all the actions and procedures which are constitutive of a practice or profession, also require interpretation and understanding, it is the reflection on the life plan as a element of self that carries ethical possibilities and hence possibilities for self.

In reflecting on how I began to read and encounter the question of peace education, then, I had some sense and some questions about not just teaching methods, but also questions, admittedly vague, about what teaching meant as a vocation or "life plan". This was an experience that was shared by others in the peace education action research group in which I was a participant. While our discussions frequently started with "how to's" in the classroom, just as often the conversation moved to the frustrations of being a teacher and

the difficulties of containing hopes within limiting structures, including the limiting parameters of a professional practice and school cultures.

My own experience of reflection in teaching did not always take that form. In contrast to the questioning engendered by my involvement with peace education, my experience with "effective teaching" (another qualifier!) was much more oriented to the refinement of means-end thinking. Before becoming involved in exploring peace education, I had participated in an *effective teaching* program sponsored by Edmonton Public Schools for practising teachers. As a program for professional development, effective teaching is based on the work of Madeleine Hunter, who created a program of principles and propositions for effective teaching presumably based on research of good teachers. Such principles were transformed into quite prescriptive criteria for ensuring good teaching.

I did enjoy participating in this program, but probably for reasons that went beyond the application of effective teaching principles. For example, the program offered the opportunity and time to talk about teaching, albeit in limited ways, with colleagues. As well, the program was premised on identifying and reinforcing good teaching, affirming one's competence in the classroom. In retrospect, what was interesting is that although the effective teaching program sought to affirm "good teaching", the nature of that "good" was never questioned. Rather, good--or effective--teaching was defined in terms of the success of implementing various, but finite, means or techniques of teaching as part of one's repertoire as a classroom teacher. To the extent that "reflection" on teaching was encouraged in post-observation conferences, it was very much controlled through a restrictive language about teaching as a practice that gives primacy to techniques and means.

For example, my supervisor and I would talk about "skills" like wait time, using an anticipatory set as an opener, applying preventative discipline strategies, phrasing questions in a certain way, and so forth. The emphasis was very much directed to developing facility in identifying and applying the *means* of teaching. The discussion (facilitators were carefully trained to guide these conferences) always stopped when an instance of a skill and its successful use could be identified. I would be asked to explain why a certain skill worked, but in a way that was referenced only to the skill itself and the way it was defined in the teacher effectiveness literature. Propositions about finite aspects of teaching were to be realized in practice, and in turn, practice confirmed the truth of those propositions.

So rarely, if ever, would the effectiveness of those skills in *totality* be raised. The *good* of teaching was assumed in the practice of the skills, but not in terms of broader questions, such as the purposes of teaching, or the ends of good classroom management,

or the centrality of teacher control. In other words, the *ends* of teaching were not problematized. Moreover, while discussion focused on means and how well one could implement them, the effects were always discussed in terms of outcomes already assumed--ie, effective teaching. Rarely, if ever, did discussion stray to understanding *experience* in the classroom--either that of the students, or a particular student, or my own. That is, experience that could not be explained by effective teaching skills was not a topic for discussion. Surprises or anomalies, if they could not be categorized in the pre-existing language of effective teaching, were ignored.

To the extent that there are classroom skills which have practical utility and can be learned, there is obvious value in learning and applying the principles of effective teaching. But the point I want to make is that effective teaching can be seen as an example of a restricted rationality, one that assumes good teaching derives from the application of empirically verified teaching skills. Thinking about it now, the process of practicing effective teaching skills probably came very close to Schon's notion of "reflection-in-action" to the extent that a "coaching" supervisor was present to encourage a conscious application of certain methods. In Schon's terms, it did create a "stop-and-think" situation (1987, p. 29), although Schon would see effective teaching as a limited form of that. Moreover, from Ricoeur's perspective, as I alluded to above, that did not encourage reflection on the *practice* of teaching or one's identity as a teacher, or on teaching in terms of ethical aims.

The kind of reflection that the interest in peace education encouraged, for instance, was outside the parameters of effective teaching. To that extent the experience of learning and practising effective teaching was *not* an interpretive engagement with one's work. Rather than receiving an enlarged sense of who one is and and understanding of the practice of teaching, effective teaching effectively closed off those questions. The process of effective teaching was not one of enlarging one's language, but rather limiting it.

Although they give no sense of what the actual classroom experiences were like at the time, the accounts presented here from memory can be construed as "reflective" teaching experiences in a general sense. They do help to illustrate two opposing traditions in our cultural traditions. One, that effective teaching and other similar manifestations of scientific and managed approaches to teaching can eliminate ethical doubt and questions through the correct application of method and reason. Or, as Lyons puts it, "the idea that through reason, contingency in practical conflict could be constrained" (1990, p. 177). In parts of the preceding chapters, I attempted to make the case that a good deal of teacher education has been premised on that kind of modernist rationality.

In contrast to that is the view that our daily lives, in our work and otherwise, are much more contingent and uncertain: "that the idea of the good human life is dependent on things that human beings often do not control--not random, chance happenings, but all the things that are part of a human life that can just happen" (Lyons, 1990, p. 177). The concerns for peace, for example, bring into question our abilities to fulfill responsibilities to children. Whereas, through an instrumentalist approach to teaching we may be able to avoid such questions--i.e., good teaching is effective teaching through application of a finite set of skills and techniques--peace education more broadly responds to the problems and predicaments of the human world.

To discover what is good, then, or the right thing to do is much more a question of difficulty--and difference. That is, a concern for children does not stop with good lesson plans, but also summons responsibility to act in ways that can foster hope and understanding. One then requires a much more interpretive engagement with lived situations. Or in Caputo's words, "we act not on the basis of unshakable grounds but in order to do what we can, taking action as seems wise, and not without misgivings" (1987, p. 239).

c. *Problems of understanding reflective practice in teaching*

I thought it important to take this detour through some of my own experiences of "reflection" as a way to place myself in relation to the literature of reflective teaching. When I began to read the literature of reflective practice I did so, first of all, as a classroom teacher, and then as a teacher educator working with student teachers. As I tried to show in the last chapter, I had a practical interest--both to understand better my own teaching, and to help student teachers become teachers. My initial experience of learning about and attempting to understand reflective teaching may be considered a problem of reading, that is how meaning could be derived or constructed from diverse texts--texts of teacher education and educational theory. However, from a hermeneutic perspective reading for understanding is a problematic endeavour. One does not simply appropriate an existing meaning from text, and then apply that as knowledge in one's teaching or life.

I did not read that literature objectively, that is, without already having experience as a teacher, and experiences of reflection in and of teaching. But reading the literature did not necessarily give me greater understanding, either of practice, or of my own experiences. For example, Schon's reflection-in-action, while an appealing notion, was not exactly a representation of my own experiences. Working with that notion of reflection with student teachers also raised questions about practical and theoretical meaning. Gadamer helps us to understand that understanding can neither leave out the self, or the

situations in which we are trying to understand better. Understanding is not simply the application of pre-given theoretical notions to a situation. If we think about theoretical "texts" of reflection for example, "what constitutes the meaning and importance of the text", then,

> In order to understand that, he [the interpreter] must not seek to disregard himself and his particular hermeneutic situation. He must relate the text to this situation, if he want to understand at all. (Gadamer, 1975, p. 289)

The text that was initially offered for understanding was in fact Schon's "reflection-in-action", the proposed "model" for the teacher education program at the University of Alberta as explained in the Faculty report (referred to in the last chapter). Schon describes "reflection-in-action" as the characteristic form of professional work, that is how a practitioner makes continuous sense and adjustments while engaged in practice. He contrasts reflection-in-action to the prevailing model of professional practice, technical rationality. From the perspective of technical rationality, professional work--and the thinking implicit in that work--is conceived as the correct application of scientific knowledge. Thus practitioners are instrumental problem solvers, selecting the best technical means for solving problems that arise in practice (1987, p. 3).

Schon's notion of reflective practice is of course an attempt to show that most instances of professional practice cannot be explained at all by the model of technical rationality. In the everyday world, professional practices do not function in such linear, rational ways. For one thing, most real life problems are resistant to the simple application of pre-determined solutions. The practice of medicine, for instance might be thought of us a paradigm example of technical rationality. Doctors are trained to recognize symptoms and apply appropriate medical strategies and technologies. Although great skill and substantive knowledge is required to be able to identify symptoms and link appropriate cures, those decisions are in theory, bounded by specific guidelines derived from scientific principles. Yet, we hear more and more frequently that medical practitioners are confronted with patients and problems for which their training and experience does not or cannot provide easy solutions.

That is one aspect of Schon's critique of technical rationality. He terms this a "crisis of confidence" (1983) in the professions. Schon argues that despite the burgeoning growth of scientifically-validated knowledge, much professional knowledge and practice is not effective in resolving the problems of practice. Summarizing the assessment of the adequacy of knowledge for professional practice by writers in various professional fields, Schon writes,

> On the whole, their assessment is that professional knowledge is mismatched to the changing character of the situations of practice--the complexity, uncertainty, instability, uniqueness, and value conflicts which are increasingly perceived as central to the world of professional practice. (1983, p. 14)

The other facet of Schon's critique is that in actuality, most professional work is largely not experienced in terms of the model of technical rationality. As one example, Schon describes the work of a skilled physician and the fact that he or she is often able to recognize certain diseases upon first sight of a patient (1987, p. 24). In other words, the work of diagnosis, at least initially, does not proceed in problem-solving fashion at all. Instead, there is considerable application of tacit knowing, a complex phenomena of applying knowledge, experience and interpretation, but in ways that cannot be easily articulated, and by implication, fully learned as a practice prior to experiencing that practice.

Teachers talk about recognizing problems in students in that fashion as well. Many "good" teachers "know" how to respond to situations in the classroom, or how to respond to a particular student who is experiencing or creating difficulty. It still amazes me that teachers I know, who by any standard can be considered to be good teachers, can walk into classrooms without overt and written planning, and teach well, drawing on their knowledge of subject matter and pedagogy. Moreover, those same teachers usually know how to "handle" kids, and maintain good discipline in their classrooms. If you were to observe these same teachers, it would be difficult to discern a method at work, although there may obviously be an implicit structure to the activities and actions. Problems in the classroom are dealt with in ways that defy easy description, however.

van Manen notes that the difficulties of teaching are rarely in the form of problems that are receptive to easy solutions. Whereas many of the examples Schon provides of professional practice may fit a problem-solving model, teachers are often faced with uncertainties and situations that call instead for interpretation and understanding. In other words, in their work, teachers are more likely to be confronted with "problems of meaning" (van Manen,1991, p. 107-108). Problems of meaning are not amenable to method, although as a teacher I may wish to find easy solutions to the unrelenting difficulties of teaching.

I thought about this in relation to my own more recent experience as a school teacher. My recollection about teaching became more pertinent in the context of attempting to relate teaching in a meaningful way to students who are learning to teach. For example, an important part of the university course I teach deals with planning for teaching. Planning for lessons, as it is taught to student teachers, appears to be a fairly unambiguous process. When I plan a lesson for a Social Studies 20 class about the causes of the French Revolution, for example, that would seem to be a fairly straightforward process of

clarifying intentions and learning outcomes, selecting materials, and sequencing some learning activities. That is what student teachers are often asked to do as course assignments.

But remembering my own experience with planning, it is not really like the process that I teach to student teachers. Even while planning in advance of teaching a class, other questions and anxieties begin to creep in from beyond the margins of the lesson plan. There are situations that I encounter as a teacher that would be difficult for the student teacher even to imagine. Or, if certainly imaginable, how could one possibly plan for them? For instance, I note that the reading I want to use for a lesson I am planning has quite small print. How will Martin, a visually-impaired student in my class, be able to read that or get information from it? I will have to provide an alternative form of reading for him. Frank and Chris were very disruptive in class yesterday, calling out and tossing a paper ball across the room. In exasperation, I had asked them to leave. They complied but not before a bit of a spectacle which ruined what productive atmosphere was left in the class. How will they respond tomorrow, I worry?

Lynn has been frequently absent. She lives away from home and is trying to sustain herself with a part time job. She wants to complete Social Studies 20, but is increasingly falling behind. If she is present tomorrow, she will have a difficult time understanding the lesson without the background other students have. Then I remember (with some sense of relief!) that tomorrow is also Friday, and I teach Social Studies in the last block of the day. How receptive will my students be? How many will be absent?

Then, as I am laying in bed trying to go to sleep, I start thinking about how students, who generally come from stable middle class homes will understand the idea of revolution and why at certain points in history people will challenge authority. I try to think of ways I could link the French Revolution to some current events in the world, something students might have some familiarity with. I jump out of bed and retrieve today's newspaper from the re-cycle basket, and skim for some relevant stories. I find a good analysis of the situation in South Africa, something I know quite a few students find interesting. Can I build some links there, I wonder? A colleague had mentioned a video that might be appropriate, but I had already used a video earlier in the week. Two in a week doesn't seem like the right thing to do.

When the last block on Friday finally comes around, I feel pretty worn out, and my students (only three are missing, Lynn actually showed up) are naturally quite restless. I don't want my own lack of energy and fatigue to show. I begin with the story about South Africa. Even Frank and Chris, I notice, are fairly interested. I begin to feel energized by the students' responses and questions. As frequently happens, a debate ensues between a

few of the students in the class, this time about whether or not the use of violence is justified in creating change. Halfway through the eighty minute lesson, I realize we still have not discussed the French Revolution. Although the discussion was worthwhile, if not exactly as I planned, it did begin to falter. Frank and Chris and a few others are becoming distracted. Lynn has her head down on her desk. I should ask her to pay attention, but then I know about her predicament. She works in a restaurant until late every night.

Rather than analyzing the concept of revolution as I had intended, I decide to use the remaining time in class for students to read the relevant passages in their textbook. I also assigned some questions based on the readings. Fern agrees to help Martin read the section quietly in a corner of the room. Most students are content to have some quiet time at this time of the week and day. I know that not all are reading; some I'm sure, are daydreaming, some talking quietly about something, but probably not the French Revolution...I'm not totally happy with the lesson, but then, it is Friday afternoon...

As MacDonald (1992) nicely relates in his examination of teaching, teachers consistently experience uncertainty in negotiating the "triangle" of self, students, and subject matter. The points of the triangle and the lines between them shift constantly. As MacDonald shows, within this experience, rarely does clear evidence or points of reference emerge for deciding what to do. In van Manen's terms, the examples I give from my own experience are not problems as such, but "situations, predicaments, possibilities, and difficulties" (1991, p. 107).

When I reread what I have written above, there are innumerable, complex, intersections of intentions, actions, fortuitous events, misturns, and possibilities. And at each of those intersections you could quite legitimately ask, was that the *right* thing to do? And with all the planning in the world, and all my ability to apply the right techniques or methods, would I still have been able to anticipate and control what would or could happen?

Although I can plan for and anticipate to some extent the class I will be teaching, the students will nonetheless each arrive with their own dispositions and moods. Although I may have an understanding of "revolution", that understanding and the meaning of historical experiences will not translate easily into meaning for students. I don't really have a solution for Lynn's predicament, but I feel compelled to help her stay in my class. Perhaps Frank's and Chris's disruptions are not simply misbehaviours. Chris told me one day that he just doesn't like social studies. "Nothing personal", he added! How can I help Martin, the visually-impaired student feel more a part of the class? I worry about other students keeping their distance from him. Some of the problems I encounter have to do

with the way I interpret and teach my subject, social studies. But many problems can also not be subsumed by teaching social studies in a better way, whatever that might be.

The "problems" of teaching I relate above are not uncommon or exaggerated. They were gleaned from my everyday "real" experiences as a high school social studies teacher. As a teacher, I have experienced more devastating situations. I taught for a year in an elementary-junior high school where a majority of the students were immediate survivors and victims of the tornado that struck and devastated their homes and community. Despite my best intentions and efforts, it was simply impossible at times to just teach social studies and language arts. Although that was a situation of heightened difficulty, it demonstrated even more painfully for me the fragility of professional knowledge and action. Even my confidence in knowing how to "frame" the situation so as to make it amenable to the application of knowledge faltered in that school during that year. My colleagues in that school suffered similar experiences, some to the point of emotional distress. Although that was an extreme situation, more mundane educational problems also are often difficult to understand,and resistant to easy solutions.

Rather than thinking of the situations and difficulties I related above as problems, they may more aptly be considered questions of meaning. Meaning questions are "deeply normative" (van Manen, 1991, p. 108), asking us to understand further and better so that we can act in ways that contain such understanding. Given the same situation and students, another teacher might tell the stories quite differently, and have responded differently to some of the problems I encountered. At almost any point in the lesson, you could rightly ask, "well why didn't you do that", in relation to a discipline problem. Or, "didn't you miss this point about the nature of revolution". And so on, and on. I could respond with all kinds of specific reasons, and it would be difficult to acknowledge those as absolutely right or wrong. But what one hopes as a teacher, I think, is that more than the nature of the specific responses, the actions would hopefully have been motivated by some sense of what is right and good for those children in that class.

But as I argued in the first chapter, the question of what is the right thing to do is vulnerably open and uncertain. Although as teachers we may want to confine our work in certainties, situations of teaching are radically contingent. Part of being a teacher is to be confronted by problems, situations, dilemmas that cannot always be controlled, let alone planned for. Knowing what to do is embodied in a kind of wisdom--a non-rationalized practice that is responsive to particular situations and instances (Flyvbjerg, 1990). Writing about the "dilemmas" of teachers' work and knowledge, Lyons contends "that moral goodness cannot be separated from the world of practice, and that no one can be secure from the vulnerability of ethical risk" (1990, p. 178). Those kinds of situations and the

practices that are required obviously require a thoughtful engagement--reflection if you will--but also something that may not be simply learned or applied.

If there is such a thing as "reflection-in-action", then, it does not take the form of simply applying knowledge to solve a problem. If it was that simple, perhaps learning to teach would not be such a difficult experience for many student teachers. The problem for student teachers is often characterized as a gap between theory and practice, and the role of reflection is in a sense to close this gap, that is, to bring theoretical knowledge to bear on practical problems, that is, that "knowledge [theoretical or research-validated knowledge] provides useful content for the process of reflection that seems to be so critical to the education of teachers" (Grimmet, 1988, p. 48).

But there is a sense of application inherent in that approach that is forgetful not only of the ethical quality of pedagogic knowing and doing, but also who the knower is. In the first place, ethical knowledge requires experience, that is knowledge of a concrete situation; it is not just application of a universal rule (Weinsheimer, 1985, p. 189). But ethical knowledge is not just applied in technical way. Ethical knowledge, knowing what is the right thing to do in practical situations, "is knowledge applied to oneself, self-knowledge" (Weinscheimer, 1985, p. 189). That is a kind of knowing woven into subtle textures of self, knowledge, and actions.

Reflection then calls for more than the ability to be technically proficient. What is the right thing to do, Gadamer helps us to see, "cannot be fully determined independently of the situation that *demands what is right from me*" (1975, p. 283; italics added). Who the teacher is then, is not a question that can be bypassed through the correct application of reason or method, including reflection-in-action. As Dwayne Huebner (1987) tells it, a teacher is a person who has a special calling, a vocation, a *who* who has to respond to others--those in pedagogic relations who "demand what is right from me". For student teachers that kind of response would seem to be particularly difficult, raising questions about the appropriate sources and content for reflection. That content, it would seem, cannot be just theoretical knowledge about teaching. Understanding requires a different route.

Difficulties of Reflection for Student Teachers

a. *The difficulty of recognizing and understanding teaching practices*

Armed with knowledge of planning, theories of classroom management, direct or cooperative teaching strategies, critical theories of schooling, and so on, student teachers experience considerable frustration when, in their student teaching situations, they cannot "see" what it is their cooperating teacher does. A student teacher may be able to observe

problems in the classroom, but lacking knowledge of the complex interactions between many different children, subject matter knowledge, and what it means to be a teacher, it is difficult to "frame" a situation in such a way that their "theoretical" knowledge can be applied.

A student teacher will observe a teacher take control of a rambunctious classroom, or ask the right questions to elicit student responses at seemingly right moments in a lesson. Children in classrooms are obedient and time is used well. There may be enthusiastic involvement in the lesson. Everything just seems to work! Watching this, either the student teacher may be mystified by what happens and/or becomes overwhelmed by the sheer complexity of all the interactions. Or misinterpreting the ease of the teacher's control and poise, assumes that teaching is really much easier than the curriculum and instruction course back at university said it was going to be. The point is that what the experienced teacher really does, or thinks about what he does, is not transparently obvious. Writing about this dilemma for student teachers, Britzman notes:

> Hidden is the pedagogy teachers employ; the ways teachers render content and experience as pedagogical, consciously construct and innovate teaching methods, solicit and negotiate student concerns, and attempt to balance the exigencies of curriculum with both the students' and their own visions of what it means to know. (1991, p. 4)

When a student teacher observes a good lesson, but discovers that the observed teacher does not use written lesson plans, there may be an enthrallment with that teacher's power, invisible as it might be. Teaching, it seems, all flows out of a person's head. There is a kind of magic to it. Correspondingly, there may be a questioning of the value of planning as emphasized in the university curriculum and instruction course. Or, theories about learning, classroom management, alternative teaching strategies seem hopelessly impractical. Where then, does that leave the student teacher?

That question was graphically brought home to me during the first year of the action research project when I was working with one of my students, Bob, during his student teaching practicum. I was also simultaneously reading Deborah Britzman's book, *Practice Makes Practice*. Britzman explores the failure of the theoretical discourses of education to penetrate the discourses of experience, or rather, to engage in dialogue with them, and how student teachers are abandoned, so to speak, to make sense of experience largely on their own. Sometimes as a consequence, and quite tragically, student teachers carry the burden of broken ideals and the closure of possibility. The discourse of reflective teaching does not necessarily help the student teacher achieve understanding. Britzman especially makes the important argument that student teachers are not helped to understand their selves, and

their possible identities as teachers within (and beyond) the discourses of university and schools.

I began to understand later that Bob, the student teacher I was working with in his practicum was struggling with his own identity as teacher, and indeed, as a young person beyond that of being a teacher. Bob was in some respects a difficult and frustrating student. He tended to discount out of hand his university work, doing the minimum amount necessary to pass the course. In his practicum, his perception of teaching was that it was much easier than I had tried to relate it in the class. In my dialogue journal, I described some of my experiences of working with him. I cite this at some length because Bob's experiences were pivotal in terms of affecting my own understanding of being a teacher educator:

> Bob is doing his practicum in a large, Catholic junior high. He is working with a cooperating teacher who has an excellent reputation as a social studies teacher. The first day I went to visit Bob, I stood outside the classroom in which he would be working and listened to his cooperating teacher speaking. What he was saying was interesting, but I was also amazed--a room full of grade nine students absolutely quiet and attentive while the teacher talked on. Were they enthralled? Does the teacher have a particular gift? Perhaps. He can certainly keep a class pacified, and perhaps his talk is an invitation to his kids to think. I didn't want to be critical, but I was worried about how Bob, my student teacher would interpret the meaning of teaching, and what possibilities he would see for himself in that classroom. His cooperating teacher, who is a wonderfully engaging man, and who seems genuinely committed to teaching junior high kids, nonetheless models only one way of being in the classroom, and a way, that on the surface at least, appeals to a student teacher who perhaps cannot see, or does not want to, possibilities for alternative pedagogies.
>
> As it turned out, Bob *was* enthralled by the teacher, in the sense that this teacher of twenty or more years made teaching look so easy. Everything in the room is in place. Worksheets, maps, etc. were filed in neat boxes at the back of the room. There were some interesting displays on the walls, not the kids' work, albeit, but they did demonstrate an interest in the content of social studies, although in a somewhat abstract, disconnected way. I'm sure Bob was impressed with all of that, but mostly it was the control of the kids and the respect and adulation this teacher received. After all the talk of the difficulty of teaching in our university class, I think Bob felt that teaching would be unproblematic.
>
> Bob is an interesting student. I think he is one of the younger people in class. He's fairly outspoken, and was quick to pick up my invitation to be critical of the content and process of our university class. He walks and talks with a kind of patina of hipness; "that's cool" is a common byword and (this frustrates me in my relation to him as instructor, and watching him teach) there a carelessness in his manner and words, as if there is nothing really to get to serious about--including teaching.
>
> The first day I watched Bob teach confirmed some of my earlier worries about what might happen in this practicum. Bob, who likes to "hot dog" it a bit anyway seemed to be in his element, a whirlwind at the front of

> the class, seeming to handle discipline with ease, if in a boisterous, pushy way. I have to admit I was disappointed in what I saw. Even given that Bob is only just beginning his practicum (although it is his Phase III) what he was doing in class was everything we had been critical of in the class back at university. Goodlad's critique of classrooms--their sameness, their unimaginative and stifling processing of students--flashed through my mind. Bob was "going over" questions at the end of a chapter in the "Japan" book with a grade seven class. In some respects, it was a skillful enough demonstration, but what concerned me was the way Bob was attempting to embody a notion of teaching: teacher as controller: controller of information, controller of behaviour, controller of thinking. It was interesting to see some of the kids attempt to cut through that, asking really good questions, attempting to put some meaning into the "knowledge" that was being funnelled through textbook questions onto the pages of their notebooks. Yet because Bob was "caught" so to speak, in a vision of teaching, he was unable to let go. He was afraid to listen to student voices.
>
> It sounds as if I'm being unreasonably critical, but my feeling was more one of powerlessness: how could I help this student teacher see beyond the definition of teaching he was practising? My next visit with Bob only reinforced some of my concerns and feelings, but in a sense there was also an opportunity opening up to challenge Bob's caughtness in his preconceptions about teaching. He was teaching a grade seven class again, and again in a similar manner as previously. The difference this time was that there were quite a few children resisting: talking, being noisy, passing notes, generally being unengaged in the lesson.
>
> The conduct of the class was taking its toll on Bob--he became visibly paler, his body sagging under the weight of tension, his voice escaping conscious control. Understandably, he was worried about my presence in the classroom, and what we would talk about afterwards. What struck me again was the limited sense of options Bob thought he had. The vision of teaching he had seen in his cooperating teacher was not working for him. Bob's own "style", loud, extroverted, belied his self-image of "coolness", and was creating increasing resistance from students. Interestingly, Bob said he felt distressed that he was teaching as he remembered being taught in junior high--in ways that he had disliked. Yet he was unable to see alternatives or other possibilities.

While I attempted to engage Bob in discussion about his teaching experiences and possibilities for alternatives, Bob was also struggling with his own definitions of what he could be as a teacher. In one way, he was enthralled by the seeming ease of his cooperating teacher's presence in the classroom. But not understanding the underlying pedagogy of his cooperating teacher's presence, Bob translated that into an exaggerated, sometimes swaggering performance of teacher-centredness in the classroom. On the other hand, Bob was also implicitly critical of that, as he recalled his own, not very distant experiences in school. Britzman describes the problem quite perceptively in her analysis of a student teaching experience not unlike Bob's:

> student teaching was defined as an act of endurance, a consequence of the pervasive myths of "trial and error", "sink or swim", and "baptism by fire" [Bob's cooperating teacher tended to talk in those kinds of terms]. Such visions of teacher

> education can only deal with doubt through an assertion of will power, and the mistaken assumption that sheer persistency makes a teacher....[the] story implies that once the hurdle is overcome, the student teacher magically moves from being authored to becoming an author. What is missing from this discourse...are practices that can help [him] come to terms with the real conflicts that are wearing [him] down. (1991, p. 89)

Bob's experience certainly help raise questions about the place of reflection in student teaching. As I will go into further below, a reflective engagement with student teaching experience also often forgets the mediation and understanding through a self, a *who* who also requires understanding. As Britzman shows in her examples of student teaching, often the private aspects of one's personhood, *who* rather than *what* the person is are bypassed. Reflective teaching may be interpreted, as reflection-in-action is, for example, as the work of an already fixed and detached subject in control of one's situation. Reflection-in-action forgets that there is a self also requires understanding--as "a social and linguistic construct, a nexus of meaning rather than an unchanging entity" (Kerby, 1991, p. 34). Bob's experiences, not an uncommon one for student teachers show that the self as teacher is not already, omnisciently, in control, a reflecting ego who can make sense of everything around him.

b. *Student teachers experience frustration in the gap between theory and practice*

Frustration for the student teacher also sets in when the cooperating teacher cannot articulate exactly what he or she did. Or if the teacher attempts to provide rules or guidelines for the student teacher based on that observed experience, that never quite works for the student teacher. As Schon argues, the ability to use what he calls knowledge-in-action depends on considerable experience in the profession--and the ability that experience allows for interpretation of situations in ways that calls effectively on applicable knowledge. Schon recognizes the problem of reflection for those learning a profession. Reflection-in-action depends on the ability to recognize and interpret a problem of practice. But such problems of practice cannot be recognized unless one has experienced practice for some time. Even then, as I tried to relate from my own experience, it is often difficult to know what to do, and to feel certain that it is the right thing to do. Theoretical knowledge does not just become practical knowledge. Meaning cannot be simply circumvented.

Because the student teacher lacks the experience of action, it is difficult for her to identify what is it is that ought to be the focus of reflection. Asking student teachers to reflect, for instance, on their knowledge from university courses, does not help to reflect-*in*-action. Diana, a student teacher I had several conversations with could articulate quite well what a good lesson might be like, based on her ability to plan and think about what would be a model or ideal lesson. On the other hand, she found it more difficult and

indeed frustrating to make sense of specific classroom situations, and how she should respond adequately to them. In one of our conversations, she captures the dilemma very well:

> When you're taking a course, you always...role play this whole situation in your mind [the classroom situation]--oh yeah this is just going to work perfectly. *But you don't see* the kid, who's saying, "Ms.____, I don't want to do this", or the other kid who is sleeping in your class or didn't bring his books, or something along that line....I think when people are role playing in their heads, they're always role playing it with a model class: "Yeah, all of my students are just going to love this." Well, it doesn't work that way...and I don't think that's so much the university course, as that's human nature, to think of it in the best way that it would be...because everyone wants all of their lesson plans to work, and *when you're writing it down on paper, it looks great...but, then there's reality*, which (laugh) [I have] been my saying for a month now, (laugh), "but then there's reality..." (italics added for emphasis)

Of course, reality is something an experienced teacher might claim to understand, but perhaps not in explicit, articulate terms. Schon attributes professional confidence to what he calls 'knowing-in-action", which is largely tacit and dynamic (1987, p. 25) and derived from experience as much as propositional knowledge. The phenomena of knowing-in-action allows the practitioner, according to Schon, to recognize or "frame" problem situations, so as to convert tacit knowing into "know*ledge*-in-action" (1987, p. 26; italics in original). The process of moving from tacit knowing to knowing what to do, involving the recognition and framing of uncertain, conflictual, or unique situations (1983, p. 50) is what Schon identifies as "reflection-in-action". In contrast to "reflection-*on*-action" which is a retrospective activity, "thinking back on what we have done in order to discover how our knowing-in-action may have contributed to an unexpected outcome" (1987, p. 26), reflection-in-action is inherent instead,

> in the midst of action without interrupting it. In an *action-present*--a period of time, variable with the context, during which we can still make a difference to the situation at hand--our thinking serves to reshape what we doing while we are doing it. I shall say, in cases like this, that we reflect-in-action. (1987, p. 26; italics in original)

Reflection-in-action as it has been developed in Schon's work has become the primary theoretical basis for identifying reflective teaching. However, as Schon himself recognizes, the idea of reflection is a problematic one for those learning a profession. In that respect ambiguity about the nature, purpose, and appropriateness of reflection in relation to learning to become a teacher is part of the present study. As I wrote in the previous chapter, while the Faculty report recommended "reflection-in-action" as an aspect of the preferred model for teacher education, that recommendation did not also prescribe appropriate pedagogies or curricula.

c. *Understanding reflection as a lived experience of difficulty*

As an action research study, the question about reflective practice derived from a problem of practice--what reflection would mean in practice for student teachers. Experiences, like those of Bob and Diana, quoted above, began to show that theoretical ideas, like reflection-in-action, did not translate easily into practice, or even fully explain those experiences of learning to become a teacher. Whether reflection-in-action is even an suitable one for student teachers is a question that could not be avoided once students' experiences were heeded.

Part of the process for me was therefore to begin to *interpret* the meaning of reflection in teaching. Both Gadamer and Ricoeur help us to understand that interpretation, however, does not stop at translating experience and reading into theoretical concepts. Interpretation cannot just be a willful activity, whereby an interpreting subject stands over that which requires interpretation (Weinsheimer, 1985, p. 254). Initially, I have to admit that I approached the attempt to understand reflection in teaching in that way--as something which I could appropriate in theoretical fashion, and then apply as knowledge for my students to learn.

Much of the writing about reflection, in fact, has a kind realism about it, as something that can be grasped quite accurately in language. For example, the work of Kenneth Zeichner and several of his associates has done much to further the conceptual understanding--and curricular practices--of reflective teaching (1991, 1987, 1986). A primary focus of that work has been to identify--conceptually--forms or levels of reflection. For example, in an earlier work, Zeichner identifies technical, practical, and critical forms of reflection (1987). In a later work, Zeichner, distinguishes reflection in the following "versions": academic, social efficiency, developmental, and social reconstructionist (1991). Each of these levels or types of reflection have correlates in curricular and programmatic practices, but also intends to capture something of the quality of reflection (-in and -on-action).

The idea of levels of reflection does have heuristic value in terms of identifying and planning activities, as the work of Zeichner, et.al. demonstrates. To that extent, a conceptual framework or typology may be useful for an analysis of programs and curricular/pedagogic activities. For example, while "reflective teaching" may be rationalized as a response to more technical modes of teacher training, the implementation of programs have not necessarily escaped a technical and instrumentalist practice. The work of Cruickshank et al. (1981), for instance, has produced a "program" which is designed to encourage reflection about teaching. Teaching is conceptualized as a fairly narrow set of teaching skills which can be taught exclusive of content knowledge, or actual

experience in school classrooms. Gore (1987) is critical of Cruickshank's approach as representative of a rather technocratic approach to teaching, built on a rather diminished understanding of reflection.

Likewise in the enthusiastic embrace of Schon there appears to be a lack of "critical reflection" on whether or not "reflection-in-action" really describes or fits the pedagogic situation of the teacher in the classroom. Moreover, despite Schon's seeming critique of technical rationality, there is still a very strong element of what is essentially a linear form of scientific thinking which characterizes his model. For example, Schon talks about reflection-in-action as a form of "on-the-spot" experimenting, and practice as "testing" understandings (1987, p.28-29). Schon's notion of reflection-in-action, on the surface a critique of technical rationality, can be seen to reintroduce a reconstructed logic of rational deliberation (van Manen, 1991, p. 105).

Even in more "critical" approaches, Schon's notion of reflective practice appears to be accepted as being paradigmatic (e.g., see Smyth, 1987, 1989). "Critical theory as a foundation" (Adler and Goodman, 1989) for fostering critical approaches in reflection and pedagogy also have some instrumentalist implications for teacher education. Critical pedagogy, as this approach is sometimes termed, emphasizes a focus on power relations between the school and society, and within the culture of the school. Education is conceived as "cultural politics", and the nature of teaching as work within the social/economic structure of society is accentuated. In part critical reflection is thought of as the ability to engage in a critical discourse, that is, to be able to make use analytically of critical concepts (Bullough and Gitlin, 1989; McLaren, 1989; Zeichner and Liston, 1987; Adler and Goodman, 1986; Ross and Hannay, 1986; Giroux and McLaren, 1986, 1987).

The point I want to make is that the way that reflection is conceptualized and written about may not at all grasp the reality and complexity of the ways reflection is a lived experience. Student teachers' experiences do not neatly fall into technical, or practical, or critical modes of reflection, although there may be moments when reflection is technical, practical, or critical. But those moments are not always temporally distinct, or necessarily as distinct as conceptual meaning might suggest.

Take Mary's experience, for example. Mary was a "mature" student, returning to university after raising children at home for a number of years. She was a competent and dedicated student teacher whom I shared several conversations with about her classroom experiences. Mary struggled with her own, quite strong views of teaching and classroom discipline, and the simultaneous need to find concrete strategies for maintaining discipline in a junior high school social studies class. From her own parenting experiences she had a strong belief in a "democratic" approach, something she claimed she practiced with her

own children at home. In a good part of our conversations, she was carefully critical about the way she thought discipline was carried out in her school and by teachers she had observed.

At the same time, the pressure of "performing" as a student teacher, in a very difficult junior high school, forced her to look for expedient means to control classroom behaviour. She felt classroom control was the paramount expectation of her cooperating teacher and faculty consultant. She was torn between her own ideals of being a "democratic" teacher, and the need to maintain control in ways that were already prestructured for her in the school.

Achieving and maintaining attention in the grade seven class in which she taught was a dominating preoccupation. In her journal, Mary had written of her decision to use a whistle, which she kept in her pocket, for the purpose of signalling students' attention in various classes. According to her own account, Mary didn't have to use the whistle at all in one class, and only once in another. Putting aside the question of what she actually did to enforce control in the classroom, and her own understanding of that, in writing she nonetheless seemed enamored with her ability to control the class, for which the whistle was a symbol.

In conversation with Mary, I asked her the question about the whistle as a metaphor for control, and her simultaneously ambiguous feelings about the power of the teacher in the classroom. She replied:

> I wish there was another way...I was really concerned with being evaluated and doing well and all that kind of stuff....So anyway, the whistle came from being frustrated. I didn't know what else to do. I had no control, I wasn't going to scream at them, and it was just sort of a short way of saying "Hey!", you know, being louder than them, and it got their attention, so it worked really well. And of course that's the sort of thing that you can't use very often because it loses its effectiveness really fast, so I never actually blew it very often...the democratic approach...that's what I use at home...[Mary is a parent with near-adolescent children] it would probably work the same way. But I guess with the whistle, I didn't know what to do! So it was the end of the rope....I didn't want to yell at the kids; I heard that a lot, and I didn't want to do that.

What Mary allowed me to begin to understand is the complexity of experience for a student teacher. It would be difficult to categorize the quality of her reflective talk and writing as solely technical, practical, or critical. Within the situation she found herself, Mary *had* to act. But the fact that it worked, and that she might even be lauded for her ability to garner classroom control did not satisfy her need to understand and apply her*self* as teacher.

Mary demonstrated a need for a reflective engagement with technique, *and* the ideological dimensions of both personally accredited knowledge, and that approved by the canon of teacher research. On her own strengths as a mother and with a strong sense of how she wanted to be as a teacher, Mary saw in the whistle a way to control the class that appeared to her better than being verbally abusive. Reports from her cooperating teacher and faculty consultant suggested that what Mary actually did in the classroom was sound by the accepted principles of effective teaching. She was able to communicate with her students to maintain a positive form of discipline in the classroom.

Yet even knowing that did not necessarily give Mary comfort. She felt considerable ambiguity about the whole question of teacher control and dominance in the classroom. While her own solutions to discipline problems could probably find support and be explained technically by the teacher effectiveness language, for example, that nonetheless would beg understanding of alternative possibilities for being in the classroom with children. In other words, what worked from a technical point of view--and supported uncritically by her supervisors--still left the Mary in limbo in terms of pedagogical and critical understanding.

Mary's experience helps to show not only the difficulty of student teaching, but also of understanding. Conceptualizing Mary's talk and journal writing as reflective did not necessarily help her resolve those difficulties. Obviously, limiting Mary to reflect only technically on her use of the whistle would have been unsatisfactory for her, since she sought to understand and realize teaching in ways other than her practicum placement offered. But stressing the critical would also not have helped Mary to deal with her situation in an immediate sense, given the demands on her as a student teacher. Mary had a quite critical view of schooling already, but nonetheless like Bob and Diana, she needed to make sense in ways that opened up to possibilities for a self as teacher. That is something that cannot be contained in the comfort of conceptual thinking.

d. *The limitations of cognitive approaches to reflection in teaching*

What probably cannot be shown is that encouraging reflection necessarily translates into good teaching--in other words, that there is a neat relationship between being reflective--however defined--and future competence as a teacher. Despite their enthusiasm for reflective teaching, Zeichner and Liston (1987) admit that little is known about the long term effectiveness of reflection in student teaching programs for ongoing professional teaching. One of the main consequences of the interest in reflective teaching has been the development of reflective teaching programs, curricula, and teaching activities in teacher

education institutions. Such programs are based on the assumption, of course, that a difference in teaching competencies will accrue.

How reflective teaching is reproduced in courses and activities may then obscure the way that student teachers construct their meanings and experiences. A focus on educational research in the past has been to uncover the processes by which teachers work in the classroom--how teachers think for example. Schon's work on reflective practice has been taken up in this way for example. The terms that he uses--knowing-in-action and reflection-in-action--are taken to be more or less accurate representations of inner processes of thought in action. Thus there is whole field of research that has grown up around this notion--i.e., exploring teacher knowledge or cognition in order to uncover processes which can be formulated into principles and ultimately a curricula for teacher education, which in turn will reproduce good teaching.

Reflection as a cognitive act seems to place research emphasis on delineating how teachers think, and how we can encourage similar kinds of thinking in student teachers. For instance, in a review of the relevance of Schon's work for teacher education, Munby and Russell (1989) see the problem of understanding "reflection-in-action" as "linking elements of experience with elements of cognition" (p.74). Their interpretation of the literature on reflective practice is that what is usually characterized as reflection actually constitutes "reflection-on-action", which they consider to be a "weak" form of reflection for changing teaching practice. In their estimation, "There is virtually no elaboration of the psychological realities of reflection-in-action" and recommend an empirical research program which would clarify the cognitive act of reflecting-in-action. Reflection is thus theorized as being an "epistemology of practice" (Munby and Russell, 1989).

This is a view of reflection that is supported by Calderhead as well. From an extensive review of reflective teaching programs, Calderhead concludes that a "precise conceptual grasp" eludes the research on reflective practice in teacher education;

> There is great difficulty in gaining any precise conceptual grasp of what reflection is or might be in teachers' professional development. The only uniting theme in discussions of reflective teaching is the general emphasis on the cognitive, and to some extent moral or affective aspects of learning to teach. The particular cognitive or affective processes involved, however, have frequently been taken for granted. *Definitions of reflective teaching have been analytically derived and are prescriptively oriented.* (1987, p. 45-46; italics added)

While Calderhead agrees that it is important to attend to the experiences of student teachers and the meaning of reflection in practice situations, he also conceives of the cognitive domain as the defining characteristic of reflection. Deriving principles of reflection then ought to be the defining task of a teacher education research agenda.

Weinsheimer, in his reading of Gadamer, describes this kind of project, that is the project of "cognitive remedies" as a way to found the primacy of method:

> The object is disassembled, the rules of its functioning are ascertained, and then it is reconstructed according to those rules; so, also, knowledge is analyzed, its rules are determined, and finally it is redeployed as method. (1985, p. 6)

As a cognitive remedy for what ails the difficulties of learning about teaching can be seen as an attempt to revive and valorize a theoretical and scientific understanding of teaching, putting teaching "within the grasp of reasoned control" (Aoki, 1991, p. 2). Aoki reminds us that such approaches present a danger of forgetting *who* the teacher. The question of who the teacher is, is a question that points to the narrative quality of understanding and learning.

Further, as hermeneutic philosophers like Gadamer and Ricoeur teach us, scientific, cognitive approaches want to bypass the mediation of linguistic experience, where understanding and meaning, in all their complexities, dwell. There is always something that escapes easy conceptualization, "something we cannot avoid running into somewhere along the way and...something we cannot surround, circumscribe, or encompass with our concepts" (Caputo, 1987, p. 270). The emphasis on the cognitive and conceptual wants to avoid asking who is the self that conceptualizes, who is the author of cognition.

e. *Difficulties of subjectivity as a reflective problem for student teachers*

An action research approach encouraged an interpretive engagement with student teachers' experiences. What was required was also to begin to understand reflection *differently*, one that recognized the other beyond theory and concepts. When the experiences of student teachers are considered they bring us to the awareness that there is not a unity between the various experiences they encounter. University courses, for example, do not seem to provide the necessary tools to construct meaning from school experiences, as Diana's experience, noted above showed. "Reflective teaching" rings hollow because students lack real experiences of teaching or being a teacher and often they are not encouraged to question that experience, as Britzman (1991) has convincingly shown in her study of student teaching. Neither does course work necessarily help students "reflect" on their past experiences of schooling. "Give us something to reflect on first" a response of many student teachers refers to both their perceptions of the abstractness of educational knowledge and a certain enforced amnesia about their own stories and selves. The experiences of student teachers tended to heighten my sense of ambiguity about reflection, raising more questions about the meaning of reflection and it pedagogic implications in a teacher education course.

That led me to the question of whether or not reflection could be thought of differently, one that attended to the difficulties of becoming a teacher. I began to wonder if there is something inherently amiss with the idea of reflection as a way to guide the practical work of learning to teach. I think it is possible to argue that the idea of reflection as it is used in teacher education owes much to its modernist heritage: particularly in the way that the act of reflection is centred in the consciousness of the subject, attributing ontological priority of the subject over that which is to be understood. Extreme postmodern views--"skeptical postmodernists" as Rosenau (1992) calls those of that view--are most critical of the "modern subject" and the centering of consciousness and understanding in the work of subjectivity. Almost in caricature, Rosenau describes the modern subject in the following terms:

> a hardworking, personally disciplined, and responsible personality. S/he is constrained by "effort" and has a self-image of "trying hard" and doing his/her "best". S/he has no personal idiosyncracies, or at least s/he does not dwell on such issues. S/he plans ahead, is organized, and defers gratification...S/he searches, in good faith, for truth and expects that ultimately such a quest will not be fruitless. This means the modern subject has confidence in reason, rationality, and science and puts all these ahead of emotion. S/he is optimistic about the future of mankind and the possibility of progress. S/he claims to be knowledgeable human agent, and s/he has distinct, set personal identity. (1992, p. 43)

When I first read Rosenau's characterization of the modern subject, I thought it could stand quite well for a description of the ideal student teacher. But as Britzman (1990) argues it is a view of the subject as self-contained entity which engenders a subjective/objective split--setting the student teacher against or apart from the *situation* to be understood *and* from self-understanding. Reflection may be conceived and practiced in a way that gives priority of a fixed subjectivity in relation to situations that call for understanding through a more dialogical relationship with situations and other persons.

Many of the student teachers I worked with tended to think and write about reflection in a kind of disconnected way. Rather than a way of engaging the world in more meaningful ways, critical reflection was received by many student teachers as another theoretical, abstract notion, or as a kind of method that could lead magically to better understanding or teaching. For those student teachers who did not want to dismiss the importance of reflection (assuming its strong normative mandate--i.e., it's better to be reflective than non-reflective), critical reflection may even have caused more difficulty for them, creating a distancing from the contexts for understanding and engagement. Perhaps that is not so strange, considering how reflection, or a certain way of reflecting, has dominated our thought and culture in modern times.

Although I have been making the argument thus far that the interest in reflection grows out of dissatisfaction with the modernist impulse of teacher education, the idea of reflection in teacher education is not a decisive break from modernist thinking and practices. One of the problems with writing about and understanding reflection as an alternative to modernist practices is that it is in shape and texture a fundamentally modernist notion. Indeed it may be argued that the enthusiasm for reflective teaching in teacher education is a re-affirmation of modernist thinking. Smyth (1992), cited earlier, makes a persuasive case that reflective teaching can be a guise for instrumental and interventionist rationalities, strengthening control over teaching rather than empowering teachers. The appropriation of reflection by teacher education has largely been to put the focus on individual consciousness as the source of change and practice.

Sometimes studying the anomalies in our culture exposes its more dominant characteristics. In the work of Michel Foucault, for instance, the incarceration of madness and deviance shows the workings of Enlightenment reason in producing conformity and "social normativity". In order for reason to legitimize itself, madness has to be identified and excluded as its "Other" (Docherty, 1993, p. 14). The point to be taken from this is that how we view both normal thought and its anomalies are intrinsic to the dominant form of understanding in any historical era, what Foucault has termed an age's "episteme". It is within the *modern* episteme that a form of reflection particularly takes shape. Within this modern episteme, reflection takes on a privileged role.

A recent study, *Modernism and Madness*, by Louis Sass (1992) takes up Foucault's approach in a very interesting inquiry into the nature of "madness"--schizophrenia--in modern society. Sass locates the characteristics of schizophrenia in the modes of thought and action shaped by *modernism*. As much as providing an understanding of "madness" the book can be read as an exploration of modernism, and how that has affected our contemporary thinking and practices. In particular, Sass's study is an exploration of the modern notion of reflection and its manifestations in modern life.

Sass shows that a dominant characteristic of schizophrenia is what he terms "hyperreflexivity", a condition marked "by acute self-consciousness and self-reference, and by alienation from action and experience" (1992, p. 8). However, rather than being a marginal experience, one only manifested in madness, Sass locates hyperreflexivity in modernism, in the cultural dominant of our fairly recent historical times. He characterizes modern thought as consisting of a dualism, the "empirico-transcendental doublet that Foucault sees at the core of the modern mind":

> we find ourselves, much of the time, occupying a transcendental position, in fact an almost solipsistic one--identifying with a narrator who experiences himself as the

> center of the universe (remember: the narrator does not move; the tree trunk slips past him). Yet we also experience the self as alienated and passive; for instead of owning his own experience, the narrator is continually discovering his thoughts and feelings outside himself...(1992, p. 330).

Sass describes a curious dualism of the schizophrenic experience as both a loss of self, as aspects of self are dispersed as objectified elements in one's environment, existing simultaneously with an intense subjectivism, the self as a "god's eye" view of the world, the self as a "solipistic diety" as Sass describes it (1992, p. 325). So the condition of hyperreflexivity is on the one hand a loss of self, where one locates the source of meaning and action not in a governing self but, for instance, in methods and procedures which guide what we do. On the other hand, as Sass suggests, there is also the phenomenon of an all powerful self, manifested as, for example: "My thoughts can influence things"; "this event happens because I think it"; "to keep the world going, I must not stop thinking" (p. 325).

Sass's analysis of reflectivity finds parallels in other critiques of modernist thinking and practices. In *Crossing the Postmodern Divide* (1992), Borgmann gives eloquent expression to the effects of modern consciousness in terms such as " instrumental hyperreality". In a hyperreal world the "realm of abstraction" (p. 83) takes a position of ontological privilege, in which the abstractions and the artifacts that are products of the work of abstraction, are more real than the real. It is a world, where despite the ability to control abstractions through what Borgmann calls hyperactivity, the subject may ultimately feel very disconnected.

Working with student teachers, it is possible to see this "doublet of consciousness" at work. On the one hand, the prevailing notion of reflection in teacher education places an enormous responsibility for the individual student teacher to be in control of her own learning and formation of teacher identity. It is the student teacher's performance that is evaluated. The student teacher's ability to use certain techniques are praised or denigrated. On the other hand, student teachers have to work within situations and within discourses that go beyond the requirements of an individualized consciousness, and for which the structure and content of their preparation leaves them poorly prepared.

Teaching of course requires a certain kind of responsiveness and openness to others. In an informal conversation with a student teacher recently, he mentioned that he really enjoyed the practicum in which we had both been participants. But he wished that somehow, his teacher education had prepared him better able to *listen* to students. That is what he found most difficult in his practicum situation. He was a mature student, he was well educated and very confident in his subject area knowledge. He was more than competent in techniques of planning and classroom management. Yet he felt in other ways very unprepared to be in the classroom, particularly in terms of understanding children in

all their differences and responding to actual situations and children rather than in terms of abstract concepts and theory. "How do you listen to kids", he asked.

For student teachers reflection often means that they must focus on self but in terms of symbols and language that are alien, not yet, if they ever would be, part of who one is. No matter how real we may try to make the abstractions about teaching, for the student teacher there would still be something missing. Teacher preparation may "arm" them, as Karen, a student teacher mentioned to me, with certain attitudes and knowledge, and expected to make sense in terms of that knowledge. Having that knowledge though, including the knowledge of reflection, does not necessarily equip the student teacher to deal with "reality" as Diana, cited above, had put it. Karen tried to explain her struggles with coming to terms with the "reality" of learning to teach:

> It's funny I wanted to talk about this for awhile, but sometimes I feel that our courses and our discussions kind of arm us against the students. Like some of the attitudes we walk in with as student teachers are like we've walked into Vietnam, in junior high. Everybody says, oh!, its junior high and take a step back. Well, you know, I've walked in with attitudes like that, and of course I could have made my own choices there. I didn't have to ascribe to them, but...seeing reality as it was, and that each individual is unique, I had to remind myself about that.

Britzman describes very well the dualisms that haunts the experiences of student teachers when subjectivity and objectivity are set against each other. What Britzman terms "the repressive model" of teacher education, "expects [student] teachers to shed their subjectivity to assume objective persona" (1991, p. 25). The kind of language that student teachers may be required to make sense of their experiences is alien to the kind of understanding that Karen's situation requires. On the one hand, reflection assumes a self in control over that situation, a self who stands outside of experience and transcends it. On the other hand, that means that aspects of self and subjectivity have to be denied. Rather than seeing a dialectical tension between subjective and objective conditions, as Britzman suggests, possibilities for self may be hidden by conformity to existing discourses, whether of theory or practice.

Karen, who was a student in my class during the first year of the action research project, manifested a very thoughtful responsibility to becoming a teacher. Even before beginning her final practicum, eight weeks in a junior high school setting, her "dialogue journal" was full of questions and questioning about teaching approaches, philosophical orientations, and her "self", in the sense of weighing possibilities for herself as teacher. She became very committed to "global education". Her course assignments, for example a major unit plan, reflected her interest and desire to create interesting and relevant learning activities for students oriented towards global concerns and issues. As a class project she

and another student presented a seminar on avoiding stress in teaching and maintaining a sense of healthy personhood.

Karen had already had an inkling--eerily prescient as it turned out--that her teaching experiences would be difficult, stressful, and even devastating to her sense of self. Her pre-disposition for being reflective and how she experienced that in teaching seems to have been implicated very much in how she encountered difficulties in teaching. Especially significant is that she experienced a need to divorce critical reflection from her sense of self; in a conversation with me, she articulated this sense of splitting, the experience of becoming cut off from her self:

> And critical [reflection], sometimes the word has negative connotations but really critical to me implies some objectivity, some degree of professionalism, not so much personal response, and that's what I have to sometimes watch in my own journals [Karen was a committed journal writer during her practicum] because it can become a very personal thing, so I have to keep out of that as well.

And later, recalling her "reflective" experiences, she attributes to that some of the difficulties she had encountered. Karen had experienced problems of classroom management in her junior high practicum. Her approach to discipline was guided by strong ideas, such as caring and respect. She was leery of being thoughtlessly authoritarian. "Kicking students out of the class", something she found herself doing out of "necessity", caused a great deal of disappointment with herself. At the same time, worrying about what the right actions ought to be, weighing those in terms of her own strong normative orientations became almost dysfunctional to "success" in the classroom. She wondered about being too reflective and whether that had caused both an over-questioning of her self as teacher and making it difficult to act as a teacher. She noted that other student teachers seemed to be more realistic and accommodated to their situations;

> Somebody else might have more confidence in the classroom, and they might not have that orientation towards reflecting, because people have different ways of seeing their reality...I often meet people who are very realistic in that situation and they don't seem to be as stressed out about things....perhaps they are not as preoccupied...

Reflection, as Karen had understood it, was primarily a focus on her self as person and as teacher *and* her thinking about the experience of reflection. At the end of her practicum, she wrote,

> I feel battered and exhausted from constant self-bereavement and self-doubt and from this exhaustive focus on self.

Reading this now you might respond, well of course; Karen misunderstood the idea of reflective teaching. Or more pertinently, that the idea of reflection had been misconstrued and mistaught in the course as being too much a focus on self and self-understanding. Rather, you might ask, should reflection instead be construed as a process for dealing with the realities and experiences of being in the classroom and working with young adolescents? Why this incessant preoccupation with self?

That criticism would probably be well placed. It is a criticism I am making about my own practice and understanding, a moment in my action research project, as I have tried to relate in the previous chapter. At the same time I am trying to make the case that reflection in the way that Karen experienced and described it--and the way reflection is defined in teacher education--is intrinsically a form of reflection that has been shaped by modernist and Enlightenment views of subjectivity. That raises questions about where reflection is located. As an action research project that attempted to understand better the idea of reflection, inquiry had to turn to experience and to meaning. But, as Madison, explaining Ricoeur's notion of a "hermeneutics of the subject", suggests,

> Meaning does not originate in the conscious, reflecting subject, but comes to it from outside, from its encounter with certain thought-provoking symbols mediated by its culture. Meaning is the result, not of a work of constitution, but of an effort of appropriation. (1988, p. 93)

Appropriating meaning is nonetheless a difficult task. In the following section, I will explore further particular experiences of difficulty student teachers encounter in their teacher education programs, and my attempt at understanding those difficulties of reflection as part of the action research project in which I was involved.

Chapter 4

Encountering Difficulties of Student Teaching as Reflective Experiences

> The encounter thus becomes a decisive event: Only by standing firm in the encounter does the human being become himself.
> Bollnow, 1987, p. 161

> A view of teaching that takes the teacher's self seriously--in all its commitment, ambivalence, and contrivance--necessarily also takes seriously the sources of this self's construction in the lively uncertainties associated with the teacher's students and subject.
> McDonald, 1992, p. 20

> But here they were shedding skins. They could imitate nothing but what they were. There was no defence but to look for the truth in others.
> Ondaatje, 1992, p. 117

Encountering the Difficulties of Reflective Experiences Through Action Research

a. *Opening to lived experiences of difficulty through research and teaching*

As I mentioned several times earlier, my participation in an action research study began with a question of practice, that is, how a reflective approach to becoming a teacher could be implemented in a teacher education program. But as I also wrote, working more closely with a group of student teachers began to make fuzzy the borders of conceptual understanding and the process of implementing a reflective approach in a teacher education program.

Action research as an interpretive encounter with student teachers encouraged an orientation to the experiences and meanings of reflection for those student teachers. As an interpretive encounter, action research encourages a greater appreciation of the difficulties of understanding and reflection in lived situations. Asking student teachers to become reflective opened to the difficulties and complexities of understanding teaching and

understanding the self as teacher. The difficulties of reflection and the difficulties opened up by reflection are explored through the way student teachers wrote and talked about those experiences related in the following sections. Such talk and writing did not necessarily overcome the uncertainties about what constitutes teaching and reflection. As Caputo cautions, we ought to heed the "acute sense of the contingency of all social, historical, linguistic structures, an appreciation of their constituted character, their character as effects" (1987, p. 209).

Caputo's application of radical hermeneutics is oriented to resisting closure and the reduction of the understanding of experience to thoughtless categories. Reflection in teaching and learning to teach may be such experiences. As an idea and another "method" in teaching, reflection may not really describe the layered and textual qualities of experience. My conversations with Karen, Sam, Mary, Diana, Martin began to show that reflection as an idea did not describe a more authentic way to becoming a teacher. But my participation in action research did become oriented to the difficulties of reflection, and the difficulties of understanding for student teachers. That orientation also raised questions about pedagogic understanding and responsibility as a problem for teacher educators.

In part that pedagogic responsibility revolves around the experienced difficulties of students who I worked with and for whom I had responsibility as an instructor and faculty consultant. Difficulty in the hermeneutic sense means that we seek understanding in real life struggles, in practices, in relations with others, with that understanding is oriented to our everyday work. Often, as in teacher education, it is assumed that difficulty can be overcome through the correct and unerring application of conceptual knowledge and technique. Sometimes, "reflective teaching" may be used in that fashion, another way to overcome the difficulties of learning to teach.

As the experiences of student teachers illustrate, their experiences have much to do with difficulties. But such difficulties are precisely moments in experience when understanding, that is, when reflection in interpretive terms may be allowed to happen. They are moments when knowledge becomes fallible, but nonetheless create an opening for understanding to grow. It is in this sense that reflection takes on such crucial pedagogic implication, where a space for the growth of self and understanding opens and offers possibility for understanding. That is why Caputo, writing about the importance of hermeneutics in life's struggles, suggests that we ought to "restore the difficulty in life, not to make it impossible" (1987, p. 209).

It seemed to me that part of the difficulty for student teachers, as it is for all of us, is to understand how our selves and our histories are implicated in what we are, do, and become. Towards the end of the last chapter, I attempted to give shape to a concern I

encountered as part of my action research, that is, the problem of who the reflecting self is, and what and where the locus of reflection is. Reflection of course has a great deal to do with who the reflecting subject is; the problem is how the relationship between becoming a teacher and reflection can be understood and what that might mean for teacher education.

It would be dishonest for me to say that I approached that question narratively, at least in a conscious, theoretical, methodological way, while I was working with student teachers. That is to say, when Karen, Sam, Mary, et.al. were telling me their stories, I was not thinking about the narrative possibilities and structures in those stories at the time. However, in trying to make sense of my encounters with student teachers, and the texts of reflective student teaching experiences, ideas about narrative and how narrative understanding may be linked to identity, began to make greater sense, and allowed me to approach the texts of my encounters with student teachers differently. Rather than providing theoretical explanations of reflection, for example, I found that I had to tell about my encounters with student teachers, and their encounters with the difficulties of reflection in a more narrative way. Indeed, as I was engaged in research, I found I was often caught in stories of learning to teach, stories from which it was very difficult, if not impossible, to extricate oneself.

From a research perspective, my interviews with student teachers could not easily be translated into a seamless portrait of reflection-in-action without reference to the real life struggles of the students for whom I had responsibility as a teacher educator. The difficulties students talked about in interviews and explored in journal writing undermined the certainties of theoretical notions of teaching and reflection I may have had in mind. Originally, my research was driven by a notion of defining the meaning of reflection, and to simply appropriate student teachers' experiences as examples of ideas in the process of implementation. As I attempted to show in the previous chapter however, student teachers' experiences rarely fit neatly with theoretical conceptions of reflective practice.

b. *The narrative and ethical responsibilities of research*

By trying to narrate the experiences in ways that show the difficulties and struggles that resist easy explanation, but nonetheless call out for understanding, I was drawn away from theoretical certainty and the attempt to homogenize experience through explanation. In that sense, action research, as research, is drawn more to the marginal, the contradictory, the incomplete and rough edges of lived experience. Such research demands a certain responsibility of the researcher to acknowledge the stories and voices of the other (Opie, 1992).

Moreover, practiced as action research, trying to understand better or differently has a practical and indeed ethical intent. That is, one tries to better understand oneself as a teacher in terms of pedagogical intent towards others, and for their struggles in life. Understanding through action research is oriented towards our work and relations with others. As Charles Taylor emphasizes, "...in order to make minimal sense of our lives, in order to have an identity, we need an orientation to the good..." (1989, p. 47). The practice of action research travels that difficult road that attempts to link knowing and action, oriented by a sense of responsibility. Max van Manen has written compellingly about pedagogy and the exercise of "tact" as that kind "orientation to the good".

In *Oneself as Another* (1992), Ricoeur explores a "hermeneutics of the self", which places narrative in a mediating position between what he terms "description" and "prescription". As I struggled to relate my encounters with student teachers and ideas about reflection through action research, it seemed more and more that at least part of my own struggle to write lay in that narrative relation Ricoeur describes. Describing the narrative structure of understanding he writes,

> narrative theory can genuinely mediate between description and prescription only if the broadening of the practical field and the anticipation of ethical considerations are implied in the very structure of the act of narrating. (1992, p. 115)

From Ricoeur's perspective, my encounters through action research cannot be understood as being solely interested in theory or in practice. In exploring the difficulties of reflective experiences for student teachers I am also therefore asking how certain texts, be they educational or philosophical, may help to better understand our experiences, and offer possibilities for teacher education practices. Ricoeur's examination of narrative helps to understand the possible structure of action research as a hermeneutic encounter with others, with written and non-written texts, and with certain practices and traditions. Action research is oriented to understanding in a way that also enlarges, and indeed makes possible self-understanding. But that does not happen outside of a field of ethical intent and concerns. As I worked with student teachers, the pull of pedagogic responsibility was constant.

Sometimes action research is conceived as filling the gap between theory and practice. But as Kondo illustrates in her encounters with skilled workers in a Japanese work place, practice and theory are never, in daily life, separated from each other (1990, p. 300). Experience and theory are interwoven in ways that people attempt to make sense of their "selves"; in Kondo's terms, people 'craft" their identities or subject positions in response to real dilemmas and situations, and with culturally available symbols and understandings. Kondo explains,

> What counts as experience is itself a discursive production underlain by certain theoretical assumptions, and what is conventually considered "theory" is always already a position in which a positioned subject has "personal" stakes. (1990, p. 303-4)

Hermeneutics helps us to understand that how we make sense of the world is already implicated in how we live in the world. And, in Gadamer's terms, understanding is always applied to our lives, to enlarge who we are as persons in relations to others. Understanding and application, and the way they are so integrally related, are deeply normative, engaged activities. As Ricoeur emphasizes, "...there is no ethically neutral narrative" (1992, p. 115).

I was drawn to the difficulties of the student teachers I worked with, and accepted those difficulties both as a challenge to my own work as a teacher, and as critiques of practices which may deny the kinds of difficulties experienced in becoming teachers. Viewed from these perspectives, action research has a fundamentally pedagogic quality. Action research has an interest in both theory and practice, but in ways that relate to how they are intertwined in everyday practice and self-understandings. Narratives--or "stories of our lives" (Kerby, 1991) have much to do with how "selves" encounter, make sense of, and resolve difficulties and in turn enlarge the sense of self. That which calls for understanding is woven around and through difficulties experienced in everyday life.

In the student teachers' reflective experiences there were certain points of difficulty that stood out for me as requiring pedagogical attention, and which I explore below. Those moments of encounter called out for understanding--and understanding by those students living the experiences of becoming teachers in a reflective way. My conversations with a number of student teachers as well as some others' sharing of dialogue journals provided texts of their reflective experiences.

I read those experiences with the question of what reflection in teaching might mean. The question of the meaning of reflection--and in relation to reflection, experience and identity--was complemented by a parallel reading of certain hermeneutic texts. My readings of the difficulties of the reflective experience does not attempt to "explain" those experiences, but does attempt to read the encounters with the language in which we lived the experiences of becoming a teacher and the difficulties of reflecting on those experiences. The parallel reading of hermeneutic literature provided an orientation to think about the nature of experience and understanding.

However, such a reading of experience and text may be characterized as one that tries hard not to appropriate voices to justify certain practices and knowledges (Opie, 1992). My reading of the difficulties of reflection is not to say "this is what reflection is",

but rather to illustrate the difficulties, and how we may also read those difficulties. My focus on certain significant difficulties forms the basis for the narrative to follow, written around certain experiences of student teachers. If you were to ask me why I chose the particular words of student teachers, I would need to point to certain qualities of the language and responses of the student teachers I worked with. I would agree with Anne Opie (1992) when she outlines certain "principles" for choosing the words of people who have participated in research interviews, or who offered their written texts for "appropriation" in another's research. Opie emphasizes the importance of attending to the intensity, the emotional tone, and the articulate nature of respondent's words.

As the reader may have already noted, and may note in further passages below, the student teachers who I chose to include in my narrative about reflective experiences wrote and spoke quite eloquently. Their words and sentences reflected considerable thought, I felt, about their difficulties and reflective experiences. While the spoken interviews translated to the written page may not be able to provide that sense, having been in conversation with Karen, Sam, Mary, and others framed some of their words for me with intensity and emotion. Citing the work of Charles Taylor with regard to the self and interpretation, Kerby (1991) notes the importance of emotion in marking moments of difficulty when understanding is called for:

> Emotions can thereby bring us to ourselves in their demand for understanding: they very often demand a narrative to be unfolded, which gives meaning to their manifestation, and, thereby, an interpretation to our lives. (1991, p. 50-51)

The articulate nature of the student teachers' words, and the intensity and emotional quality of their oral and written responses pointed to real difficulties, reflectively experienced in their practices as student teachers. From a "radical hermeneutic perspective", Caputo (1987) advises us that it is the encounters with difficulty that provides openings for understanding. We should be suspicious, Caputo warns, of any formulations that attempt to finally and irrevocably, "nail things down" (p. 211) and deny that understanding is difficult and ongoing and fundamentally related to our lived endeavours. But those moments of difficulty are worthy of reflective engagement, and deserve telling in the hope that understanding may come about.

The following explorations of reflective encounters, then, are my attempt to make sense in a more narrative fashion. As an attempt at interpretation, it is not a representation of actual experience in its totality but does try to give shape to certain lived and felt experiences of reflection. Aritha van Herk, in exploring her own identity as a writer in *Places Far From Ellesmere* notes the tentative and tenuous nature of authorship, one that I certainly would want to admit to in the telling of my own and my students' stories:

> Knowing that this story, all that is written, can be un/read, uninscribed. The words are stirred, mixed, like pieces of a jigsaw, broken up into their separate shapes, and the whole picture lost, left to be reconstructed by another, a different hand. (1990, p. 113)

The Difficulties of Linking Reflection with Self-Understanding

> What are the requirements of "making sense" of our lives? These requirements are not yet met if we have some theoretical language which purports to explain behaviour from the observer's standpoint but is of no use to the agent in making sense of his own thinking, feeling, and activity.
> Taylor, 1989, p. 57

a. *Experiencing a loss of orientation in student teaching experiences*

Astrid, one of the students I introduced towards the end of the second chapter, wrote vividly of the difficulty and frustration she encountered in her practicum:

> On Wednesday, I started geography. Chaos. Noise: shuffle of paper. Pass this back please. Can I have an extra map? What do we do? Sit down. I'll explain. Chaos. How to hand out maps, explain the criteria for each one and maintain classroom order? I thought I had the sequence down pat: I would hand out one map at a time and explain the criteria for each one as we went along. That way, I could minimize confusion as to what went where and how. Was I wrong! Wrong, wrong, wrong!! What I should have done was explain everything first and <u>then</u> handed out the maps. Teaching lessons. Why don't they teach us stuff like this in university?

As her instructor in the social studies curriculum and instruction course, I thought I had taught her "stuff like that"! Unit planning, lesson planning, classroom organization, effective teaching methods, etc. were all part of the program. Astrid, in fact was a "good" student in the course. Her experience in the practicum, was of course, also not unusual. As an instructor, then a practicum consultant to some of the same students I taught, I was frequently frustrated and sometimes disheartened when the university program did not travel well with student teachers into their school classrooms.

One way to think of a student teacher's experience is that in her teacher education program she must negotiate a journey in which neither the directions nor the markers are always consistent and reliable. University preparation and theories about teaching provide a kind of map for becoming a teacher. But more often than not, practice in schools does not offer landmarks in quite the way that the map describes or prescribes. Armed with a certain kind of knowledge, in Karen's terms from last chapter, situations of practice do not speak back in anticipated ways. Feelings of alienation often ensue. There is no place for the self to find or locate itself. Where is there a home for reflection then?

Historically and culturally, there are peoples who experience a different kind of relation between "knowing" and "acting" and how a self is implicated in that. A very interesting example came to mind reading Bruce Chatwin's *The Songlines*. In his book, Chatwin, nominally a "travel writer", relates his experiences among Aboriginal peoples of Australia. His specific interest was to learn more about a phenomenon translated as "songlines", a form of communication that marks a person's belongingness to place in traditional Aboriginal cultures. Chatwin tries to arrive at the meaning of songline from a conversation recounted in his story:

> He went on to explain how each totemic ancestor, while travelling through the country, was thought to have scattered a trail of words and musical notes along the line of his footprints, and how these Dreaming-tracks lay over the land as 'ways' of communication between the most far-flung tribes.
> 'A song', he said, 'was both a map and direction-finder. Providing you knew the song, you could always find your way across country.' (1987, p. 13)

According to Chatwin, while negotiating a landscape travelling across vast expanses of Australia, Aboriginal peoples could literally sing their place, their geographic and bodily presence into being. The borders of their conscious lives, translated into feeling at one with the landscape could be announced through song, providing a sense of place and identity. Melodies, intonations, rhythms, as well as lyrics could be identified as characteristic of place. Who one was as a member of a group was related integrally to place and could be identified from song.

> Aboriginals could not believe the country existed until they could see and sing it--just as in the Dreamtime, the country had not existed until the Ancestors sang it. (1987, p.14)

Chatwin discovered that the songlines were very real to many people although they were not, strictly speaking, physically marked as paths or routes over actual terrain. He was candid in admitting the difficulty of explaining the "reality" of the songlines, and I found as a reader that I understood the phenomena even less. His informers among people he met could talk about the songlines in a way, but their descriptions were elusive and elliptical. In the translations into English from Aboriginal languages, much seemed to be lost. More than technique, so to speak, of songline, Chatwin's informers would tell stories, sing songs, speak of traditions and ancestors, and lead him on seemingly aimless walks.

In stark contrast to the idea of songlines was a conception of space and distance held by railway surveyors who Chatwin also encountered in his travels across a remote part of Australia. The surveyors were attempting to lay out routes for a railway through the territory that was also home to the songlines Chatwin was attempting to understand. With

some considerable frustration, the surveyors were meeting resistance froms groups of Aboriginals who feared that the railways and roads would violate ancient and sacre' . .hs and landmarks. From the perspective of the surveyors, however, space was something to be represented by uninterrupted lines, and time and distance by number, rather than by story or song. Straight lines on a map, abstractly conceived, would be translated into linear tracks of steel. Interesting anomalies or features in the landscape were obstacles to be literally overcome.

For the railway builders, land was something to be covered over by railway tracks. Travel over those artificial tracks in a railway car would have little to do with the land, or one's connection to an historical and cultural tradition. Rather than the fullness of what it has to offer, space would be just something connecting two points on a map. Chatwin describes the differences between those world views:

> It was one thing to persuade a surveyor that a heap of boulders were the eggs of the Rainbow Snake, or a lump of reddish sandstone was the liver of a speared kangaroo. It was something else to convince him that a featureless stretch of gravel was the musical equivalent of Beethoven's Opus III. (1987, p. 14)

It was not until Chatwin began to "walk" around some of Australia that he started to get some sense of the historical depth, complexity, and particularity of songlines. I think it is possible to conclude that Chatwin, as an outsider, could not fully and unambiguously represent the meaning of songlines to his readers. As interesting, however, was that his book became a kind of songline of his own travels. Chatwin was especially interested in exploring nomadic lives and cultures. As he encountered and interpreted cultural landmarks, artifacts, customs, and others' writings and interpretations, Chatwin *re-created* a kind of songline of his own connection to peoples and places. Through his interpretive engagement with Aboriginal songlines--through his conversational and interpretive encounters with others--Chatwin came to understand himself *differently* in terms of our common origins as human beings, and in the process, invited his readers to also join in the journey.

In a sense, a teacher preparation course seeks to equip the student teacher with a "songline", so that she may find her way through the topography of university courses and practice teaching and link together in understanding the "commonplaces" of student, teacher, curriculum, and milieu. But unlike the Aboriginal experiences about which Chatwin wrote and sought understanding, teacher education lacks an authentic "songline". Reason, method, technique, subject matter knowledge, psychology, pedagogical knowledge all offer ways to knowledge and practice, but often not coherently, and not in

ways that helps the student teacher either find direction, or in relation to place, understand better who she is.

Teacher education may equip a student with the kind of knowledge comparable to that of the railway surveyor in Chatwin's story: the surveyor possesses a method to see across the landscape, but that "seeing" does not touch the complexities that lay behind or underneath varying contours and unique landmarks. Ignorance of the landscape means a traveller can become lost and not recognize the significance of important features. Perhaps a good map would help--and teacher education attempts to provide that kind of map. But if one cannot locate oneself on the map either, or know how to interpret the map, a feeling of being lost can still be experienced (Taylor, 1989, p. 41). Moreover, if there is no felt purpose to the travels, the map may not help either. Thus, perhaps, the lost, in-between nature of the experience student teachers often encounter.

The difference that Chatwin illustrates between the surveyor's relation to land and space with his transits and maps and other tools of the trade, and that of the Aboriginal's songlines, and the way I allude to that difference as an analogy for teacher education finds resonance in Gadamer's hermeneutic critique of method. Gadamer discusses the difficulty of understanding experience through a rationality narrowly conceived in methodological terms. He would see in much of the educational "sciences", the similar alienation from traditions and experiences to be understood:

> If the alienation which the age of mechanics felt from nature as the natural world was expressed epistemologically in the concept of self-consciousness and in the rule of certainty, developed into a method of 'clear and distinct perception', the human sciences of the nineteenth century felt a similar alienation from the world of history. The intellectual creations of the past, art and history, are no longer automatically part of the present, but are objects of research, data from which a past can be made present. (1975, p. 58)

Gadamer's critique of the human sciences is that they represent forms of understanding that have lost touch with the very grounds of understanding in the first place. As a "human science", teacher education has attempted to provide a road to understanding, one that intends to help persons become teachers. Yet, as I indicated at the outset of this study, there is much frustration and disappointment about the failure of educational research and teacher education knowledge to make teaching better, or to turn out better teachers (however problematic the term *better* is). The burden of that failure is felt acutely by student teachers. It is within that context of living between theory and practice, so to speak, that student teachers are asked to be reflective; as Sam, one of my students doing his practicum in a high school told me,

> I think a lot of times I'm living in a world of ideals and always thinking in terms of theory, and practice always screws up theory. A lot of times my approaches to teaching are all thinking in terms of theory and I'm always frustrated by the actual practice of it. I'm trying to explain something I don't even completely understand myself.

The experiences of student teachers like Sam can perhaps be characterized as a kind of homelessness. They are asked to be reflective in ways that sets their subjectivity against the world--including self, others, and situations--to be understood. "Homelessness is the inevitable outcome of subject-object thinking" (Crusius, 1991, p. 12), however, as the consequence of that kind of thinking and the practices it engenders. When we work with language that has lost a connection to the lived world, as often the language of teacher education has, the student teacher's experience may be something like that expressed in Sam's feeling of frustration. And reflection, conceived of as a tool or method of understanding, may not help find a way home; "...method famishes the very craving for homecoming that it is designed to satisfy" (Weinsheimer, 1985, p. 5).

Mary too talked about the kind of understanding she could not find in the gaps she experienced between her university education and practice teaching, neither of which she was able to read in ways she could find herself as teacher:

> I've been going to school for a long, long time, and I was getting tired of theory and philosophy and stuff like that, and I just wanted to get going. And really, I don't have any ideas, and unless I find them myself I don't have any. So that's why I was looking for a resource of ideas or strategies or something like that.

Sam and Mary's experiences raise questions about what the response ought to be to the vulnerability expressed and experienced by student teachers. They have a strong desire to realize "ideals" in practice. However, overprivileging a reflective attitude, or the application of critical concepts to understanding experiences does not necessarily help them. As David Linge writes in his reading of Gadamer's hermeneutics, the situations in which we find ourselves hold possibilities for understanding. "Reflection", however, "can never entirely hold at a critical distance" that which is to be understood (1976, p. xv). Student teachers express a need for reflection to be grounded in the realities and demands of classroom and school situations. But such reflection does not translate easily into self-knowledge through the application of method. "*Understanding is not reconstruction but mediation*" (Linge, 1976, p. xvi; italics in original). And what mediates is a self, who rather than being ontologically and wholly prior, comes into being through understanding; as Gadamer explains,

> Understanding itself is not to be thought of so much as an action of subjectivity, but as the entering into an event of transmission in which past and present are constantly mediated. (quoted in Linge, 1976, p. xvi)

Towards the end of the last chapter I attempted to show that student teachers may experience reflection in ways that both assumes unproblematically an all-seeing self and at the same time a self that can stand apart, at a distance, from participation in language and understanding. Working with student teachers, then, I began to wonder about the purpose, value, and place of reflection. Reflection seemed so important and yet quite consistently student teachers kept telling me that they felt lost in schools. They sought confidence in their university education but often came to dismiss their university courses as irrelevant or too idealistic.

Student teachers, like those portrayed in Britzman's study, often come to assume that conformity to practice in schools, or even more narrowly, conformity to a cooperating teacher's practice, is the way to really become a teacher. But also for some, that is not so wonderful either, as for example in Mary's story when she worried about the use of a whistle for classroom management; or, in Karen's situation, feeling personally devastated by thoughtless application of methods of classroom control. Both felt something was wrong with methods of discipline in their schools. At the same time, their own conscientiously held critical views did not translate easily into action. Ultimately, each had to fall back on her own "self" as a source of affirmation for what she thought was right. Or perhaps even more devastatingly, each had to deny a sense of moral self and conform to the externally imposed norms of the school.

b. *The groundlessness of reflection in student teachers' experiences*

Britzman's study of the student teaching experience illustrates very strongly how the discourse of "practice makes practice" reinforces an ideological belief in individualism, and the power of the individual to make her own way. In *Sources of the Self*, Taylor examines how the belief in the power of the individual, and by corollary, the power of individual reflection as an act of willful consciousness, has deep roots in modernist ideas of self. In modern culture, "conceptions of individualism", writes Taylor, "picture the human person...as finding his or her own bearings [from] within" (1989, p. 36). There is a heavy cost to this view and the practices it founds, Taylor emphasizes, in that "our embedding in webs of interlocution" are ignored.

By "webs of interlocution", Taylor refers to the histories--or traditions in Gadamer's terms--from and through which our knowledges and practices are derived, and "enframe" who we are and what we do. The way reflection is sometimes conceived in teacher education, however, seems to want to bypass the connection to tradition--and how we might understand that tradition through language, through conversation with others. When participation in language is ignored, reflection as a "discourse" in teacher education

is symptomatic of what Taylor terms "the culture of self-reliance". In a sense, then, reflection becomes a work, or effect, of an "authentic", individual self; in Taylor's words: "Each young person may take up a stance which is authentically his or her own"; but, as Taylor continues,

> this stance does not originate just in that person: the very possibility of this is enframed in a social understanding of great temporal depth, in fact, in a "tradition". (1989, p. 39)

Gadamer also reminds us of the potential alienation in "self-reflecting activity" when it asserts "an opposition and separation between the ongoing natural 'tradition' and the reflective appropriation of it" (1976, p. 28). In theory, a reflective approach in a teacher education program intends to help student teachers make sense of the "traditions" of teaching, either as represented in theory, or observed practices in schools. The intention of reflection is to transcend the "practice makes practice" orientation that Britzman describes in her study of student teaching.

However experiences of vulnerability in the face of the real demands of a school classroom show that reflection, as "taught" in a university classroom can effect a distancing from what requires understanding and in a sense bypass the self altogether. As I attempted to show at the end of the last chapter, that approach to reflection takes its toll. Karen, in experiencing the feeling of loss of the theoretic, abstract, universal self as teacher fostered by university courses, expressed a need to see a connection between her strong commitment to a possible language of teaching and her student teaching experience.

She wrote to me of her desire for understanding when she experienced a disjuncture between her "theoretical" self, and and its disconnectedness from what she was experiencing in her practicum. Indeed, she raised a fundamental question of hermeneutic understanding, namely, how our ideas and experiences or practices are linked temporally and textually;

> You mentioned shedding [your university self]...I was thinking it shouldn't have to be that way, it is connected, the theory and teaching, because ultimately, whoever has written this book that you're reading, the ideas that you're exploring, may come from somebody's experiences and somebody's perceptions, so they have to have some validity and credibility somewhere, and if people are nodding their heads yes, it has to have some validity...

Comments and responses from student teachers raised the question of the meaning of reflection in the action research in which I was a participant. That question encouraged an interpretive turning back on my own understandings and practices. How could my own practice as a teacher educator help student teachers understand what it is to be a teacher? What would send understanding on its way to paraphrase Gadamer? What would count as

a form of reflection that encouraged a student teacher to find a "home" for self in the negotiation between the texts of teacher preparation?

As Mary reminded us with her story of the whistle in the previous chapter, her struggle to both implement and understand classroom control, manifested a large gap between her own beliefs and theories of teaching and discipline, and the immediate demands of student teaching. Expressing her vulnerability, she did not *know* what to do. But she expressed a strong desire to speak the experience of doubt and uncertainty in ways that opens to other possibilities for being in the classroom. Ricoeur contends that "experience can be said, it demands to be said" (Madison, 1988, p. 91). The meaning of experience, however, does not simply come from a pre-existing consciousness, nor from technique unproblematically applied.

The experiences of student teachers show that reflection as an act of appropriation requires an encounter with ways to make sense of experience. It is in that respect that the learning of practical teaching strategies--"techniques"--do assume importance as student teachers negotiate the uncertainty of learning teaching, and the meaning of that in creating possibilities for selves as teachers. Not having a practical grounding in classroom practice, student teachers flounder in self-questioning, lacking the communicative means that would allow the growth of understanding. When student teachers call for more practical strategies, they are in a sense requesting means to mediate the self and the world of teaching.

Just as knowing the words and melodies of specific, culturally-grounded songs allowed Aborigines to negotiate place and self, so practical knowledge about teaching can provide guideposts for questioning and possibilities for deeper and more critical reflection about what it means to be a teacher. However, just focusing on practical knowledge itself, outside of a reflective engagement and without understanding, may also lead students into blind gullies or valorize thoughtless application of techniques or teacher authority. Jerome Bruner writes about the problem in ways that is relevant to the education of teachers:

> If he fails to develop any sense of what I shall call reflective intervention in the knowledge he encounters, the young person will be operating continually from the outside in--knowledge will control and guide him. (1986, p. 132)

As much as gaining knowledge, adding on to something that is already assumed to be there, perhaps learning to become a teacher involves a different way of coming into being as Bruner suggests. The question that student teachers force teacher educators to face is how reflection can be *pedagogic*. In other words, how can reflective activity be oriented to finding a "home" for the self as teacher-to-be, and help that person understand better or differently? As Britzman has written so persuasively, those involved in the

education of teachers--university teachers and researchers, cooperating teachers, student teachers--must develop a "pedagogy of theory". This is a phrase borrowed from David Lusted who explains in his introduction to an issue of *Screen* dealing with the question of pedagogy, that a pedagogy of theory is:

> a more transactional model whereby knowledge is produced not just at the researcher's desk nor at the lectern but in the *consciousness*, through the process of thought, discussion, writing, debate, exchange; in the social and internal, collective and isolated struggle for control of understanding; from engagement in the unfamiliar idea...in the meeting of the deeply held with the casually dismissed; an unarticulated desire, the barely assimilated, can come alive, make for a new sense of self...(1986, p. 4, italics in original).

Although I think the term "consciousness" is problematic in terms of the argument I am trying to make, Lusted's emphasis on pedagogy is important because it focuses on "the process through which knowledge is produced" (1986, p. 1). As the stories of student teachers show, there is a strong desire to make sense of theory in the context of practice, but to also make sense more reflectively of practice, and the developing, but unformed self as teacher. The object of learning and reflection may be to become a teacher, but the kind of teacher one will become is hard to define in advance and difficult to encapsulate with limiting categories. In *Hermeneutics and Education*, Shaun Gallagher persuasively argues for understanding learning as a fundamentally hermeneutic project; "the paradigm of learning is one that takes its bearing from the interpretational *process* rather than from the interpretational *object*" (1992, p. 331). Gallagher's formulation again suggests the centrality of interpretation, an educational process that necessarily involves both self and others and various texts of experience and learning.

In the experiences of student teachers, there is an urgent quality to their words, a strong desire to understand self as teacher in engagement with both the theory and practice of teaching. It is in this sense that reflection in teacher education requires a pedagogy of theory and also, of course, practice. Student teachers require a way to cross the borders of both theory and practice, enhancing self-understanding through the exploration of the meaning of being a teacher. If reflection is to be that kind of process, a hermeneutic disposition and orientation would seem to be called for, one that does not separate understanding and application.

The "illusion of technique" (Barrett, 1979) lies in the hope that techniques--practical teaching strategies--by themselves will create a competent teacher without acknowledging that understanding grows in a reflective (that is, interpretative) engagement with practice *and* theory mediated through a self who comes into being through that interpretive engagement. Effective teaching, for example, circumvents that kind of reflective

engagement. In terms of Bruner's critique of objectivist approaches, knowledge simply comes from the outside and often bypasses understanding at all. Not dissimilarly, application of critical concepts to educational situations may also leave out mediation through a self who requires understanding as Ellsworth (1989) has argued in her critique of the application of critical pedagogy to classroom situations.

From Ricoeur's perspective about "what it means to be a thinking, reflective subject" (Madison, 1988, p. 90), reflection, conceived as *hermeneutic appropriation* aims to bring to understanding the experiences of becoming a teacher. Those experiences are not simply given nor immediately accessible through concepts. Rather, experience "constitutes itself in memory and reflection" (Weinsheimer, 1987, p. 88). The knowledge of teacher education as well as the way in which that practice is talked about in schools can provide experiences, but those experiences still require reflective appropriation. Ricoeur's discussion of hermeneutic appropriation is helpful in thinking about reflection in ways that bring the self as teacher into being, giving it a home, so to speak:

> By 'appropriation ', I understand this: that the interpretation of a text culminates in the self-interpretation of a subject who thenceforth understands himself better, understands himself differently, or simply begins to understand himself...On the one hand, self-understanding passes through the detour of understanding the cultural signs in which the self documents and forms itself. On the other hand, understanding the text is not an end in itself; it mediates the relation to himself of a subject who, in the short circuit of immediate reflection, does not find the meaning of his own life. Thus it must be said, with equal force, that reflection is nothing without the mediation of signs and works, and that explanation is nothing if not incorporated as an intermediary stage in the process of self-understanding. In short, *in hermeneutical reflection--or in reflective hermeneutics--the constitution of the self is contemporaneous with the constitution of meaning*. (1981b, p. 158-9; italics added)

Reflection as hermeneutic appropriation sees neither practice following theory, nor theory and practice as a dualism. Rather both theory and practice are texts requiring an interpretative engagement by a self in a process of becoming a teacher. It is in this sense that reflection may become more *pedagogic* in significance: as a process to create meaning and understanding in the process of becoming a teacher self. Sam captures the need for that in his teacher education experiences:

> I think what's happening to me is that I don't have answers to any of these questions [questions about teaching in both a narrow technical sense, and more normative questions] I just have more questions. The things that are affecting me the most are things that make me think about my viewpoints.....

What is missing for student teachers like Sam is a *narrative* engagement with experience, or as Taylor puts, an interpretive engagement with "webs of interlocution". Based on large part on Ricoeur's work, Kerby (1991) has written convincingly of the

narrative structure of identity and how that is linked to possibilities for reflection. Kerby makes the "crucial point" that the self "is essentially a being of reflexivity, coming to itself in its own narrational acts" (1991, p. 41).

The narrative perspective--which is hermeneutic in orientation and the way that is lived and practiced--implies that the events, actions, and texts that are encountered in the teacher education experience only become meaningful within a larger story, one that is oriented especially to ethical purposes, that is, to finding the good in one's work and life (Taylor, 1989; Kerby, 1991; Ricoeur, 1992). Thus reflection through narrative, that is, locating oneself through conversation with the texts of becoming a teacher, must do more "than merely structuring my present. What I am has to be understood as what I have become" (Taylor, 1989, p. 47). As a narrative engagement, Taylor explores the need for a self to locate her self in "a space of moral issues, to do with identity and how one ought to be", and, he emphasizes, rather than just taking a role or perspective, to *be* that perspective (1989, p. 112). Barb, a student teacher with whom I corresponded through her dialogue journal, expresses that very well; she wrote of the difficulty of finding oneself as teacher in terms not just of methods and techniques, but also identity and purpose:

> I suppose I should be talking about teaching strategies and stuff but I feel that it is more important that I talk about my own evolving philosophy towards teaching. It has to all start within me before I can be an effective teacher and an effective teacher, in my opinion, *is a teacher who doesn't act like one but is one.* (italics added for emphasis)

Barb's words remind us of the deep pedagogic responsibility required of teacher education. Her use of the word "is" evokes the experienced shallowness of teacher education and the practice of reflection when it is forgetful of the person who has the potential to be a teacher and understand better the responsibilities of being a teacher. Aoki stesses the "is" when he asks "what *is* teaching?" This question, Aoki writes, "allows the being of teaching to speak to me....I feel much more oriented, I hope more properly oriented to be in the presence of the beingness of teaching" (1991b, p. 2). The homelessness of reflection is painfully experienced when such orientation is absent or ignored, when the self cannot be located in the language and discourses of becoming a teacher.

The Pre-narrative Self as a Difficulty for Reflection

> The prenarrative is, in its most general form, the drama we call our lives.
> Kerby, 1991, p. 39

> When we talk about the process of distancing oneself from one's thoughts, reflecting better to gain perspectives, does this not imply something about the knower?
> Bruner, 1986, p. 129

> Reflection on a given pre-understanding brings before me something that otherwise happens *behind my back.*
> Gadamer, 1976, p. 38

a. *Understanding self and identity as a difficulty for reflection*

It was interesting, but also sometimes uncomfortable, when in nearly all of my conversations with the student teachers who participated in my action research study the talk often strayed to more personal levels. That is, students would quite spontaneously talk about their pasts or their feelings about becoming teachers. With one or two of the students, especially, that became a major topic of our discussions. Sam for one, frequently mentioned his ambiguity about becoming a teacher. He had written about that in his journal and I asked him about his feelings in regard to becoming a teacher in our first recorded conversation shortly after he started his practicum. Sam responded,

> It's been an ongoing question...from the start it wasn't that I was committed to the profession and always wanted to become a teacher. It was just something I thought I would do for a couple of years and then move on. That's not to say I intended to take it lightly. That's another, one of the reasons I don't really want to get into it [teaching] because I know if I got into it, I would take it extremely seriously and it would take over my life, I think.

I felt uncomfortable because I was not certain about how I could respond in terms of the pedagogic responsibility I had as a teacher educator. Moreover, I was not sure about how Sam's concerns fit into my research about reflective teaching. As much as talking about student teaching, Sam was in considerable turmoil about his life plans and whether or not he really wanted to be a classroom teacher. What made it even more complicated was that I also observed and evaluated Sam's teaching, and both his cooperating teacher and I were sometimes frustrated with Sam's apparent lack of effort and preparation during his practicum. At the same time, through my lengthy conversations with him, I knew that the visible lack of effort could not be easily explained away or remedied. As Sam himself told me as we talked about his apparent "holding back" in his practicum:

> It's easy to say it's laziness. It's not that, because I've had jobs that I really, really enjoyed before, that I would stay up and work for 24 hours just to finish something and not even think that it was work. And with the band [Sam had been a member

> of a relatively successful rock band before returning to university], some of the stuff we used to do...We'd play till two, and then we'd have to get up, because eight o'clock in the morning was the only time we could rehearse, and we would have had two hours sleep....It was no big deal putting in those sorts of hours. So I don't really think I'm lazy; there are obviously other reasons behind it....

For Sam reflection about teaching could not be easily contained within the narrowly defined limits of teaching knowledge and practice. And as one of his "evaluators", my responsibility could not be limited, I felt, to completing an official assessment of his student teaching practice. Sam also had a desire or need to make sense in broader context of his life story. In his personal struggle about whether or not to become a teacher Sam was also in an important sense reflecting on the meaning and possibilities of being a teacher.

In our conversations, Sam and I talked at a fair length about our respective experiences outside of teaching. Sam had come into teaching out of what he termed a practical necessity in terms of employment opportunities. He had experienced considerable disappointment as a musician, when the demands of the commercial market place had placed limits on what he thought would be more creative expression. But sadly perhaps, he did not see that a career in teaching was a route to creative expression either.

Sam was not alone in his ambiguous feelings towards teaching. I ought to have realized from my own experiences, some of which I outlined previously, that becoming a teacher was more difficult and involved much more than simply acquiring knowledge and skills. What struck me especially strongly was the tremendous ambiguity many students felt about teaching as a chosen profession, again something I had felt myself and sometimes still do. Reflective talk or writing often revolved around questions of self-identity and questions about past experiences of schooling. Those kinds of questions seemed to become more urgent when student teachers encountered difficulty in their practicum situations, and began wondering "who" they might be as teachers.

Astrid was one of the students who wrote very eloquently in her journal about difficulties during her practicum. She was placed in a junior high school where discipline problems seemed to be more prevalent. Astrid experienced a tremendous amount of stress in dealing with those discipline problems, as she wrote quite honestly about in her journal:

> There are three girls in the "bad" [grade 8] class who are giving me a hard time. I have had a horrible power struggle with them and I feel like I lost. Well, I did lose. I don't have the stomach for confrontation of that sort. I lose all concept of control and just become dumbfounded. They think I'm treating them unfairly. I'm picking on them. I don't like them. All I do all day long is think about them. The scary thing is they remind me of me and my best friend, Traci, during our junior high. We were the same way: defiant, bold, daring, rebellious.....Right now, I'm ingnoring their behaviour in class but inside I'm quite shaken up. They defy my

> authority and it's spreading. I've become just another repressive force in their lives. I hate it. I hate me. Or, rather I hate the way I treat them. I'm not smart enough to resolve this!!!! ARGH! They think they're so cool. The truth is, they've got the jump on me because I can't counterpoint their defiance.

In the section cited from her journal above, Astrid seems to be trying to make sense of her *self* as teacher. As much as reflecting on the situation, on instructional and teaching knowledge, on conflicts in the classroom--all legitimate objects for reflection--Astrid is reminded of herself--not without pain--in her students, and this self is someone who calls out for understanding. This is a self who is still very much in process, in transition. Earlier in her journal, before beginning her student teaching, Astrid had discussed her own, rather negative experiences as a student in junior high:

> School was not a priority, except as a meeting place where you could think of new ways to cheat and skip and torture the teachers...to achieve in school meant, for me, to fail my classes and give grief to my teachers.

The situation for Astrid was a very complex, with narrative strands that trailed back into past experiences. Moreover, Astrid's difficulties, although she attributed them to inadequacies of own fledgling teaching self, were not just her own. For one thing, the school appeared to be a difficult one for student teachers. Astrid's experiences with discipline problems were not unique to her. As well, she was placed with a cooperating teacher who did not seem to be sensitive to the kinds of difficulties Astrid was experiencing. That is, at least in her journal writing, Astrid seemed to be struggling with questions about teaching in terms of her own self-understanding. The problems Astrid was experiencing could not be simply resolved through more knowledge or application of, in this instance, rules of classroom management.

As a teacher-to-be, Astrid seemed to want to rectify learning experiences for students in ways different from her own negative memories of school. As a student she had found that social studies was the subject that was least interesting and meaningful to her; however in response to a question about her hopes for teaching social studies, she responded,

> When I teach social studies, I would like to create an atmosphere where the students would be able to put away their non-academic ambitions and openly discuss and debate current issues. This atmosphere can only be generated through a mutual trust between my students and myself. Hopefully, social studies won't be the class where you draw maps, or watch boring films, or sleep...this I can do by never forgetting my own junior high experiences....

Sam expressed quite lofty ideals for teaching as well. He read widely and was particularly interested in critical pedagogy and fostering critical thinking in his social studies classes. However, even before he began his practicum, Sam had serious misgivings about

realizing his ideals in teaching. Both his parents, who now operated a small business, had been teachers and were not particularly encouraging about Sam's decision to go into education. Sam mentioned to me that his father had expressed serious reservations about teaching as a career choice;

> One thing that my Dad said when he got out of teaching was that it got so it was just breaking his heart every year to see the first-year teachers come in, fired up, ready to change the world, and slowly just get the shit kicked out of them and become meek little people. He said he saw that happen so many times, it was just depressing.

It would be difficult to explain how the past experiences of each of the student teachers I worked with affected their thinking and actions as student teachers. From a more "conventional" research perspective, the reader or interpreter may try to construct or read biographical narratives to uncover intent, to show how a person's identity and actions derive from past experiences (Rosenau, 1992, p. 39). As Rosenau suggests in the case of any "author" or person, that would be a problematic endeavour. Explaining intentions in another's life story, let alone one's own, assumes a unity and coherence of experience that would be difficult, if not impossible, to track. Moreover that kind of interpretation assumes that the interpreter holds a privileged space from which a true reading of others' experiences can be related.

Sam's and Astrid's stories--even as told at the time by themselves in writing and conversation--are not simple recountings--or mirrorings--of an accessible past. It is not uncommon in teacher education courses for students to be asked to link their past experiences of schooling and teaching with their present attitudes and experiences. Students may be asked to "reflect" autobiographically, but such reflection does not automatically become a coherent story. Nor does it help bring the self into full presence, as if that were ever possible. From a hermeneutic perspective, "all interpretation effects a self-understanding which is never fulfillable, since 'the conversation that we are is one that never ends'" (Gallagher, 1992, p. 349).

It would be difficult, therefore, to see the exercise of autobiographical reflection as providing an unproblematic explanation for a student teacher's understanding of teaching. There is not likely a linear and causal relationship between past experiences, and identity and understanding in the present. Asking student teachers to reflect on past experiences may also assume that those experiences hold a privileged place before being expressed--and understood--in language (Weedon, 1987, p. 79). As Chris Weedon notes, "experience is [considered] authentic because it is guaranteed by the full weight of the individual's subjectivity" (1987, p. 85). Or rather, this is the way we often approach the connections between subjectivity and experience.

When Sam talked with me about his own experiences, however, his self-narration was already an interpretation (Kerby, 1991, p. 7), a selective remembering from his past encounters, educational and otherwise. Experience is not just an empirical mass of random events that fill up what we call our pasts, but already possesses something of the structure of narrative. In *Narrative and the Self*, Kerby makes the argument that experience has the shape or quality of narrative which offers possiblities for constructing more conscious, "emplotted" stories. Kerby suggests that experiences constitute a "pre-narrative" in that they are not yet formally and explicitly narratives of self (1991, p. 8), but,

> With regard to the subject matter of our personal narratives, the thematic material generally relates back, directly or indirectly, to what we are calling the prenarrative aspects of experience. The prenarrative is, in its most general form, the drama we call our lives. (1991, p. 39)

Kerby explains that while our life experiences have a narrative quality, they are not yet narratives in a full sense, but rather have what he refers to as a "quasi-narrative" quality. Quasi-narrative "refers to the general structure of our experiences, or in other words, of our ongoing lives" (1991, p. 8). In Ricoeur's (1992) terms, such quasi-narratives are not yet narratives in the full sense, especially because they lack an orientation to the "good" or to a wider ethical purpose. In the way that Ricoeur (1992) discusses narrative, a person's full story is incomplete unless it can be linked to a wider story, one especially that is oriented to some sense of social responsibility and openness to understanding others.

b. *Student teachers experience the need to tell their own stories*

What seems especially important about Kerby's discussion for thinking about reflection and student teachers, and this is reinforced by the work of Ricoeur and Taylor, is that narratives have to be understood in terms of the temporal dimension of our lives. That is, experience is an ongoing, if not always explicit and fully present, part of who we already are and can become. Our lives have depth and meaning in temporal terms. As Kerby explains,

> Already there is in experience an implicit narrative structure and hence understanding. Our explicit narratives may indeed extend, even change, the meaning of our lived time, but this time is already structured according to our style of being-in-the world, our habitus. As such, our narrative interpretations do not function ex nihilo but follow naturally upon the structure of experience. (1991, p. 42)

The notion of narrative and how it holds possibility for fostering identity is an important one for thinking about reflection in student teaching. If narrative is the more

conscious emplotment of experience as Kerby terms it--a story that already contains some structure, direction, and purpose--then there is much a student teacher can bring to his or her reflections about teaching and to the reflective process of becoming a teacher. As Britzman's study, *Practice Makes Practice* illustrates, the question of experience is a pivotal, if difficult one, in teacher education. Indeed, "whenever we speak of education, we are speaking of a person's experience in the world", writes Madeleine Grumet (1992, p. 29). However, that experience is not just there, but requires a kind of telling.

For example, student teachers call upon their experiences of school to justify certain directions for their selves as teachers, as Astrid, cited above, did. Sam, who had invested a lot of his life into music and credited some of that interest to his music teacher and music courses in high school, wanted to realize some of that vision into teaching social studies. Martin had completed his schooling in a northern community. What he remembered about that, particularly in terms of social studies, was mostly negative, however. He wanted to become a social studies teacher unlike a particular teacher he had abjectly disliked in terms of how that teacher had taught him. Mary had completed her teacher education over a period of fifteen years while raising a family. She had developed strong, pedagogic practices and beliefs from her experience of parenting, which she wanted to realize in teaching as well.

All these experiences may be important for the kinds of teachers each of these students envisioned becoming. But as each of the student experienced in their own ways as well, those visions did not translate easily into student teaching practice. Often the experience in schools was at odds with the hopes each had for teaching. Their stories point to the difficulties and complexity of reflection in terms of process and content. As a process limited only to student teaching practice and immediate classroom encounters, reflection may be experienced as being external to questions of history and identity. Limited to a technical understanding of teaching, reflection did not resolve deeper questions and anxieties each of the student teachers carried with him or her.

Ir other words, experiences of student teachers in the process of becoming teachers show that *who* they are as teachers is very much implicated, but not unambiguously available for defining selves as teachers. That difficulty poses questions about the pedagogic responsibilities of teacher education. Helping an other become a teacher is not just a matter of teaching curriculum, subject-area knowledge, and pedagogical techniques. As importantly, student teachers in their experiences of becoming teachers call forth a response from an other to an other who is in the process of becoming a self as teacher. And that raises questions about the purpose and place of reflection.

Particularly in practicum situations, student teachers are expected to perform, to show skills and competencies, the "doing" of teaching (Hultgren, 1987) which assumes a self fully in control of those actions. Reflection, then, becomes a process of evaluating those actions from the security of a monitoring self. As argued previously, such a process rehabilitates the modernist notions of identity and reflection: "The relation of reflection is intended to provide an account of what it is to be a self, yet in the very activity of reflection the self is already presupposed" (Dews, 1987, p. 21). Perhaps there are some student teachers who are able to "do" that very ably, and who seem not to experience anguish and doubt. But the student teachers who I encountered in conversation and writing, although by conventional standards all competent enough to become teachers, appeared not to be certain at all about *being* teachers.

While all of them struggled with the practical aspects of teaching and without exception wanted and needed more practical guidance, they all wondered also about their respective selves as teachers. As with the student teachers described by Britzman, experience in schools was valorized as an aspect of their teacher education program. But that experience was not necessarily happy. In conforming to practice in schools there also had to be a forgetting, a premature erasure of alternative possibilities for self and identity.

c. *The self as implicit possibility in teacher education experiences*

As I discussed previously student teachers often experience reflection in ways that assume a coherent subjectivity that is clearly separate from an outside world. It is common to talk about such a self in developmental terms. For example, theories of human moral or intellectual development see the development of a differentiated and stable self, one able to reflect in terms of her self in the world. Kondo, in *Crafting Selves*, describes this idea of self:

> Western notions of self as psychological consciousness and a reflexive self-awareness, based on a division between the inner space of selfhood and outer world, are clearly held up as the highest most "differentiated" development of the "the self" possible. (1990, p. 35)

This "western notion of self", or the modernist notion of self as I have referred to it earlier, is still complicit in much of our thinking and practices in teacher education. That way of thinking very much frames how we conceive of reflective teaching. Most reflective teaching programs stress analytic methods and reflection as objective, emotionally detached processes (Houston and Clift, 1990). The successful, "reflective" student teacher is one who demonstrates a kind of autonomy and self-sufficiency in the application of objective knowledge.

Some feminist writers have taken this view to task for the way it formalizes a particularly gendered way of being in the world and denies the more connected ways we live, denying the private dimensions of our lives and the way they play out in our public interactions. As one example, Seyla Benhabib critiques Kohlberg's moral subject, at his most "developed" stage, as an "autonomous self [who] is disembedded and disembodied" (1987, p. 85). What is prized in that view of moral self and action is the ability to stand apart and assess or analyze a situation or others in rather solipsistic or narcisstic terms. That is, the self is conceived in terms of already being whole and present present prior to the active act of understanding, and seeks identity with who it already is (Dews, 1987, p. 21). Britzman's study of student teaching uncovers the ideological underpinnings as well of such a view of self and subjectivity.

The reflective experiences of student teachers, however, do not seem to fit that model of subjectivity at all. Even where students attempt to contain their reflective talk, thinking, and writing on external events, so-called private issues, and issues of self as teacher spill into the mix. As Taylor emphasizes, narrative constructions, including our reflections on experiences, are not simply oriented to present actions (1989, p. 47). There is both a temporal depth and narrative quality therefore to reflections on experience and how experience speaks to us in the present (Taylor, 1989, p. 50).

In the stories of the student teachers I worked with an important aspect of their reflective experiences was the encounters with their own histories, their pre-narrative selves. The difficulty emerged in how they could give shape to those experiences in ways that assisted the process of becoming teachers. In teacher education programs we often ask students to reflect on experience. But that either assumes an already coherent self identity, or bypasses it. Experience is considered to be amenable to any kind of structure, sometimes predetermined by categories imposed by courses or practicum experiences.

The way in which Kerby explores the question of self and narrative, however, helps us to understand that one's experience is not simply available for any kind of story: "one cannot tell just any old story without committing some form of injustice to the content of one's experience" (1991, p. 42). Kerby argues that experience "naturally" evolves into narration. However, this is not the same as saying that narrative structures are imposed on experience (p. 43). There is a question, then, about what kinds of stories can be told and how student teachers can tell their stories in ways that lead to understanding.

The experiences of student teachers show that instead of their pre-narrative stories taking shape as part of the development of self, they are often set aside, giving precedence and value to more immediate pressures and concerns. Student teaching experience, as Britzman also shows, becomes validated as the real or true experience. Yet, Sam, Astrid,

and many of the other student teachers I worked with expressed at the same time a need to explore and tell their stories. "Narratives...are justified by the felt need for the untold stories of lives to be told" (Kerby, 1991, p. 43). As much as learning about teaching, Sam was trying find some direction for himself; his experienced difficulties in the practicum kept coming back to who he was trying to be as a person. At the end of the practicum, we came back to that question again, about whether or not he saw possibilities for himself as a teacher:

> I don't know exactly what it is, Hans. It's not for a lack of challenge that I don't go into teaching, because I always see the challenge is there. Or a sense of purpose, because there would be a sense of purpose there. But I honestly don't know exactly why I don't want to do it....even now, even when I'm just a few weeks away from actually having a degree, I don't think I'll ever get a certificate....I don't know why. It's just not for me.

My conversations with Sam, as much as his immediate teaching experiences, revolved around his questions of self identity and understanding. Although Sam did not like writing in a journal format very much, I felt that in our conversations he was attempting to create a story about possible directions for himself. Astrid's journal writing also began to show possibilities for developing a story from her experiences. Through the difficulties she was experiencing as a student teacher, she sought understanding of herself as potential teacher. Reflecting on her past experiences in school as a junior high student, Astrid had a sense of the complexity of self and identity and how that might be informing how she made sense of her student teaching experiences. The drama of her own life in school as a junior high school came back to haunt her. She was beginning to understand school better from the students' perspectives. Yet, she could not yet bring coherence to her story; understanding her self as teacher became a central difficulty;

> How does theory help me to understand what went wrong? It doesn't. I have no practical diagnosis skills. I haven't yet learned this--on my own. Teaching seems to me to be a sink or swim occupation. You, as a new teacher, have to learn and adapt as you go. If you cannot adapt, then you fail. Then you become a taxi driver.

I felt saddened by Astrid's experience. And also somewhat powerless. Although I was not directly responsible for supervising her practicum, I attempted to correspond with her through her journal and through the structure of the university course. But that was not sufficient as a support during her daily struggles in the classroom. Astrid's experience of reflecting on her difficulties called for different kinds of pedagogic responses which were not available to her, especially in the practicum experience.

Painfully, Astrid shows us the fallibility of personal beliefs about teaching and how those are tested in the difficulties of real situations. But what is even more painful in her

experience is how little prepared she was and what little support there was for her to interrogate her experiences in ways that would not be just self-accusatory. Astrid's conflicts about teaching caused her to reflect on her own biography of schooling and the contradictory feelings she has about school and teaching. Her reflections about becoming a teacher are rooted in very particular ways in her own history, in her own ideals, and her own sense-making of that.

Astrid's feeling of "sink or swim" and Sam's ambiguity about teaching are not isolated or unique experiences for students in teacher education programs, however. As well, both students were very reflective, perhaps somewhat like Karen who I introduced in the previous chapter, almost too reflective. Both felt at odds with their immediate experiences. Both wanted and needed, on the other hand, some way of developing a better understanding of selves as teachers or possibilities for being teachers. Lacking the support, means, and orientation to do otherwise, self-understanding was replaced by conformity to more external criteria, to a deferral of possibilities for self.

The difficulty of reflection on the pre-narrative self has partly to do with the task of keeping open possibility. As well, reflection has something to do with preventing a loss of the temporal dimensions of identity--the "non-identity of the speaker and the voice which resonates through the mask" (Caputo, 1987, p. 289). Perhaps the question is, *who* is the *person* that wants to be a teacher? Even after she completed her teacher education program Karen felt a need to come back to that question for herself. She had become a teacher, yet that was not yet linked to a completed narrative of self. Karen still felt a need to tell her story. As she recounted in a lengthy conversation with me a few months after her teacher education program had been completed,

> That's why I keep going back to it. My saying for that right now is, how on earth could a 17 year old girl, who has never seen the world, make a decision that's going to decide her life...It's coming back now, because I keep going back to it. I remember one moment in my life, I was teaching my godsister, and I remember thinking this would be OK. It was just a moment...and then I remember talking to my teachers in high school and they encouraged it, and I did work experience in high school in elementary and that was OK. Then my mother was a big factor in my life, which I think daughters have to deal with, and my mother, and I don't know if this influenced me unconsciously, but she had wanted to be a teacher....a lot of my ideas come from her, a lot of her attitudes, how she relates to the world that's where I come from. She very much loves teaching, really enjoys teaching. She's taught a lot of workshops and things like that. So that's where I learned to organize and how to deal with people in that way. But as far as saying why I wanted to be a teacher, I enjoyed English and Social studies and I had some really good teachers and that's where it came from.....Once I got to university all these possibilities opened up. It was mind boggling. I just wanted to grab everything. So I was saying, I made a decision when I was seventeen years old.....

In Karen's words there is a strong sense of a person trying to come through. She wants to know who the person is who wants to be a teacher, and that this question has temporal and emotional roots in her past. But that "pre-narrative" self, the "seventeen year old" self for example, cannot be attributed totally and unproblematically to Karen's decision to be a teacher. Karen's pre-narrative self is part of her story of course. The difficulty is telling the story as well from her more present perspectives and integrating new experiences and learnings into the story. Creating a narrative of self involves an "emplotment", as Kerby puts it. Emplotment means that significant experiences are put into language in order to tell a meaningful story. Following up on her memories about why she thought she had become a teacher, Karen continued,

> As far as teaching goes, I don't think I'm going to be a conventional teacher. I cannot picture myself, and maybe that's part of the problem, I cannot picture myself in the public school system for the rest of my life, and becoming a public school teacher...it's a certain kind of lifestyle and I'm not interested in that. And my parents don't understand that in a lot of ways, that I want to do my own thing, that I want to take my own job, and it wouldn't be anything like I would teach in a junior high and then go on to be a principal, or I would teach and then go on to work for Alberta Education. Those things will come, but in a very piecemeal fashion...

Karen implies a strong sense of a need to explore the person she was, is, and might be. In the midst of all the turmoil in her life, the reflecting self is not already in a position to sort things out and define directions. In contrast to "the modern notion of of the self-identical ego or self-present consciousness", Caputo, writing from radical or postmodern hermeneutic perspective, suggests a rehabilitation of "an old word"--*"per-sona"*--which he describes as "the person sounding through" (1987, p. 289). Caputo emphasizes the *per* in persona. *Per* means through and for, suggesting as Caputo does, the mediating quality of identity: the self does not stand outside of experience and language, but comes into being through it. As Kerby explains about the hermeneutic quality of self, it,

> places particular importance on the role of both language and interpretation to the very constitution of what we generally mean by a self-conscious human subject. (1991, p. 11)

The original meaning of persona referred to a mask, especially one worn by an actor (Ayto, 1990, p. 390). It may imply that the self is simply a mask that can be put on at will or discarded at will depending on the situation. That is a characterization of identity and subjectivity attributed especially to postmodern views which see subjectivity as an effect of language, and in shape, formed by prevailing practices and discourses. From a postmodern perspective, "a person is just a 'tissue' of these practices" (Flax, 1990, p. 237). However, some writers ambiguously sympathetic to the postmodern view,

particularly feminist writers, are critical of such a view because it denies a sense of agency. Without a sense of self, without some sense of having a centre, the person is afloat in world with no anchor points (Flax, 1990).

On the other hand, the experiences of student teachers do raise the question of what constitutes a self, and a conception of self that would "do justice to the full complexity of subjectivity and the spaces in which it is likely to find itself" (Flax, 1990, p. 219). Flax makes the argument that it is crucial to build a sense of subjectivity that is built around a notion of the "we", that especially helps individuals locate themselves in relation to others. That sense of we is especially possible through and mediated by language. It is through language that subjectivity becomes possible and allows the possibility to both recreate the past and orient to the future.

Both Astrid and Karen told me stories about their pasts which strongly implicated others in their formations of possible teaching selves. Each had a *per*sona coming through those stories. Reflection on those past stories was perhaps helpful to them. But reflection on possible teaching selves also required support for what Caputo (1987) terms the "*per.*" A means of support through which reflection could speak in productive ways often seemed to be lacking. Reflection is a rather lonely experience. As Karen said about her concerns about teaching, and particularly trying to justify being a teacher,

> It's hard because I really think that I'm alone sometimes and I think that I'm way off base, and a lot of times I feel very critical about things, talking about conflict strategies, the environment, and I look at my own lifestyle, you know, what am I doing?

The experiences of reflection for student teachers appear to be engagements in making sense of their "selves" as teachers as constituted in the language of discourses both private and public which frame experiences of self and others. Reflection then, may involve the tension between the world as it is received and the the world as it can be constructed. The experiences of students show that this is a process fraught with difficulty. Students struggle with the kinds of knowledge that will help them in the classroom. That involves the need for both technical knowledge and the ability to put that into some kind of perspective. But students are also confronted with who they are, biographically and bodily speaking, and why they have chosen teaching as a possible career. In terms of Ricoeur's notion of a "hermeneutics of the self", the telling of one's story can help link the world of practice, the more immediate world, and as well the sense of ethical purpose, that which links us in responsibility to others.

"It is in telling our own stories that we give ourselves an identity", suggests Ricoeur (Kerby, 1991, p. 40). From that perspective, reflection on the pre-narrative self is

foremost a difficulty of language and communication. Rather than an act of a removed consciousness, reflection is fundamentally linguistic in nature. Becoming a self as teacher is to give meaning to experiences, to discover one's own horizons in conversations with others. In Gadamer's terms, when student teachers begin to understand, they are also offered the opportunity to understand their selves--and to begin to understand differently. For reflection to be meaningful--indeed possible--then, opportunities for a narrative engagement with past, present, and future possibilities must necessarily be created as a ground for understanding.

Crisis of the Self as a Source for Reflection

> Learning to teach constitutes a time of biographical crisis...
> Britzman, 1991, p. 8

> To exist means to stand in crisis.
> Bollnow, 1987, p. 5

a. *The importance of crisis for reflective possibilities*

The word *crisis* comes from the Greek word *krisis* which in part means decision, judgement, event, issue, and from *krinein*, to decide (Brown, 1993, p. 550). To a dictionary explanation, O.F. Bollnow adds that the Greek word *krinein* also implies the idea of separation and purification (1987, p. 1). Our more common, everyday use of the word crisis carries with it the connotation of danger or risk or impending catastrophe. Serious illnesses, precarious psychological or social situations, or perilous economic circumstances may all be instances of crises in which people sometimes may find themselves. So when we encounter a person who is in crisis in such contexts or situations, we would rightly by concerned. As Bollnow suggests, these examples, "involve processes, which due to their pointed, grave, and risky character, stand out from the steady current of the rest of life" (1987, p. 1).

In my encounters with student teachers there were often situations or times when they experienced what might be called crises. I initially hesitated describing such experiences as crises because of what that implies in the everyday usage of the word. Except in rare instances, student teachers' experiences could hardly be characterized as "grave", or even particularly "risky" in a life threatening sense. Yet not infrequently there were in the stories of student teachers points at which they experienced what could plausibly termed crises. These were particular focal points at which decisions had to be made, and which involved considerable anguish and emotion. Such points might have

involved questions of self confidence or esteem. Questions of identity may have become more urgent, with students questioning whether or not to become teachers. Or perhaps more commonly, but nonetheless intensely felt, student teachers experienced practical difficulties in teaching within their practicum placements. Astrid relates quite dramatically experiences during her practicum that perhaps incorporates all of those elements or experiences of crisis:

> Well, the kids finally did it to me. I broke down and ended up leaving the classroom in tears. Luckily for me I just appeared very angry to the students and the tears didn't flow until I hit the staff room. I felt so weak (in character) that I let a bunch of 12 year olds get to me! The one thing I vowed never to do was to cry over the frustrations of my students. Everyone was really great to me in the staff room; all the teachers gave me reassuring pats on the back and told me not to let the kids "get to me". That's just the problem, though. The kids didn't really get to me: they were just being normal 12 year olds looking forward to spring break. The problem was with me. This teaching experience is so false that I didn't have the necessary strengths to handle the students' frustrations, as well as my own. The students were rebelling to my lesson which was too structured and regulated for their ambitions....What really went on today, I couldn't say. The important thing is: I don't want to quit like I felt in the first few weeks of the practicum. However, I don't know what I want to do.

Astrid was perhaps unique in her ability to express her experiences in writing. But other students I worked and talked with experienced to a greater or lesser degree similar moments in their teacher education experiences. Astrid's journal "reflections" especially revolved around questions of her possible teacher self or identity. In conversations with Astrid, she often mentioned "hating" her practicum experience and she seriously contemplated dropping teaching as a possible career choice. A few weeks after her practicum is over, Astrid was still attempting to make sense of herself as a future teacher; reflecting on the quitting of a "fellow student teacher", she touched on her own thoughts about teaching and the kind of personal commitment becoming a teacher entails:

> I arrive at school today to find out that one of my fellow student teachers has quit. I find it hard to believe that someone could get this far in university and with only three weeks to go, just quit. I wonder how he feels: relief, anxiety, depression? It is so easy to quit and I think that if we want to teach children anything about life, we have to persevere and demonstrate commitment to a cause or an ideal. In a way, it's good that Alex found out that teaching was not to be his chosen career.

Exploring the place of crisis in human lives, Bollnow writes that "crisis belongs to the nature of the human life. They are necessary if life is ever to arrive at a higher level" (1987, p. 5). As difficult as it has been for her, it seemed that Astrid's crisis was important for her in thinking about becoming a teacher. Her experiences of crisis offered focal points--or "nodal points" (Kerby, 1991; Kondo, 1990) at which the possibility of telling

important stories about oneself become both possible and necessary. At these nodal points, reflection takes on an especially interpretive and narrative quality.

Nodal points are instances when there are more intensely felt intersections of the private and public, personal narratives, and larger stories of life. Susan Griffin writes that "In the steady continuum of history we meet a divide between public and private events" (1992, p. 32-33). There are moments when we cross that divide, or find it troublesome to clearly distinquish one from the other. These are moments when story-telling, especially stories of self, become more pertinent and urgent. While this kind of reflection is not a "normal" everyday activity as Kerby suggests in his exploration of the links between narrative and self, experiencing crisis may be a spur to reflection--a way to begin telling stories that puts the self into perspective and also provides it with an orientation.

Reflecting on the relation between crisis and the beginning of telling the story of self, Kerby notes that in normal, ongoing, everyday situations, that kind of narrative concern is hardly pressing or paramount (1991, p. 6-7). Indeed (and perhaps this is part of the difficulty of the student teaching experience for some) intense reflection and worry about who one is as a teacher may become dysfunctional. At the same time the kinds of crises that Astrid and other student teachers experience, create possibilities for reflection on self and identity. They represent moments when stories need to be told. As Kerby notes, "Questions of identity and self-understanding arise primarily in crisis situations and at certain turning points in our routine behaviour (1991, p.6-7)." Practicing reflection while becoming a teacher in relation to these nodal points of experience is also to put the self at risk, to perhaps open a door to the private dimensions of experience that otherwise remain at the margins of the student teaching experience.

b. *Crisis is experienced in the alienation between theory and practice*

There are several qualities to the experience of crisis. First, crisis may be experienced as risk, which has something to do with a disjuncture between knowledge and experience. The notion of risk implies running close to danger; an older meaning of risk suggests to "sail dangerously close to rocks" (Ayto, 1990, p. 446). In an interesting and relevant discussion, Anthony Giddens (1990) defines the kind of crisis and risk that student teachers describe in their experiences as a particular consequence of life and work in modernist institutions. In his sense of the word, risk may be experienced when the solidity of the relationship between knowledge and action flounders.

Specifically, Giddens identifies the problem of trust in what he describes as "expert systems" and knowledge. In modernist institutions, face-to-face interactions, decisions about what to do, self-understanding, and so forth, are all governed by a belief in the

reliability of abstract principles (Giddens, 1990, p. 34) and confidence that the correct application of reason will lead to planned outcomes. Giddens' analysis of modernity in this respect finds resonance in other examinations of modern life and practices. For example, in his critique of modernity, Borgmann (1992) persuasively shows how reason and abstract systems of thought and relationships have displaced more local, grounded, personal, and collaborative relationships.

It is precisely on the "rocks" of reliability of abstract "systems" or knowledge that student teachers often flounder and encounter risk and crisis. In several of the previous stories I have related--Karen's, Astrid's, Mary's for example--more abstract university knowledge about teaching could not account for the difficulties of learning to teach. In that kind of context, reflection too became a kind of abstract experience, torn especially out of the temporal element--the prenarrative--of the student teachers' lives and experiences. Indeed, as I have attempted to argue earlier, reflection in that situation is an essential element of the modernist project; Giddens expains:

> The construction of self as a reflexive project, [is] an elemental part of the reflexivity of modernity; an individual must find her or his identity amid the strategies and options provided by abstract systems. (1990, p. 124)

As Giddens shows, this is quite an individualistic and lonely, if not impossible project. Giddens notes as a consequence that modern institutional practices fail to nurture what he terms "ontological security": modern systems are "disembedding" systems that pull the individuals out of the narratives that give possibility for identity linked to other than disembodied knowledge. The kind of indentity fostered by modern institutions is one that is not kind to difference. And in terms of the individual who must negotiate her self through institutions, it with a sense of identity that does not necessarily nurture feelings of security.

Discussing that problem further, Giddens notes that kind of security, what he terms "ontological security", "has to do with 'being' or, in the terms of phenomenology, 'being-in-the-world'" (1990, p. 92-93). Ontological security, Giddens suggests, is more an emotional and inter-subjective phenomena than a cognitive one. In other words, questions of identity, orientation, and relationship cannot be satisfied solely through rational, analytic, or technocratic means. Along similar lines, Borgmann (1992) provides examples of how modernity translates into hyperreal forms, which despite their often alluring qualities, are nonetheless "ontologically inert" (1992, p. 95); that is, hyperreal forms, like abstract systems of thought and action, are indifferent to real encounters with the world.

What becomes poignantly felt as crisis by student teachers is in part the failure of expert systems to sustain self-understanding, but also as a "reflective" experience, one that

turns back as a failure of self. The disembeddedness from the "webs of interlocution" that Taylor (1989) describes means that the failure to understand becomes an experience of self-blame. Mary was one of the most committed students whom I encountered in terms of seriously wanting to learn to teach. Yet the structures and pedagogy for fostering that in her teacher education experienced seemed to be missing for her. Moreover, she acutely felt the pressure to be a teacher as she still experienced the need to develop a sense of teaching for herself:

> You said that student teaching is supposed to be when we actually learn to teach. Yes it is! All along I've been waiting to learn to teach. I know I don't know "how" to teach, that it's not natural, and I know that the only way I'm going to learn is to do it. So why? Should there be so much pressure to be able to perform perfectly? I have put so much pressure on myself about student teaching that I am truly dreading it and can't wait for it to be over. I hate me for this because I'm not like this. Usually I am very positive and confident but something is very very wrong this time.

Britzman attributes student teachers' crises in part to the failure to deal with deeper epistemological questions--questions about where teacher knowledge comes from and what gives teaching practices legitimacy (1991, p. 99). Without the ability to connect to a larger narrative, reflection turns back on an incomplete or absent teacher self, a self who still requires interpretation and understanding. But that self is nonetheless blamed for the experienced difficulties of teaching. In my conversations with Karen, we discussed the problems she was experiencing during her practicum. Like Mary and Astrid, much of her experienced difficulty dealt with feelings of self-blame:

> [You] were talking about risks. That was a risk I was taking because I thought you know, here I am someone without teaching experience, someone without experience, and really trying to be up for people, encouraging other people, and here I was having this experience and doing things like kicking students out of the classroom and things that I thought I would never ever do, and I was really disappointed with myself, that I'd react that way...

Despite the difficulties of her practicum experience, Karen recognized it as well as an opportunity to begin to risk telling her own story and build a sense of self as teacher. The stories of student teachers like Karen show that opening up questions of what it means to teach may also involve exploration of private desires and ideals for teaching. Experiencing the difficulties of becoming teachers, student teachers may confront questions of teaching that go beyond conceptions of teaching fostered during the years of university preparation. Experiencing crisis suggests that student teachers engage dimensions of self that are more than narrowly defined by the teacher role or abstract knowledge about teaching.

c. *Crisis of experiencing the distance of ideals for teaching*

Often the feelings of crisis are experienced as a conflict between private--or what I have earlier termed "pre-narrative" experiences--and more public encounters. In often quite emotional terms student teachers express conflicts between those private and public dimensions of their experiences. Ideals for self as teacher, and for conceptualizing teaching were often linked to the private dimensions of self. The struggle to link those to more public ways of being was especially evident in Karen's and Astrid's stories as they began to relate past experiences and future hopes. Karen talked about the difficulties of realizing ideals in her student teaching practice, and the complexity of telling a story that could incorporate self, other, context, and normative concerns:

> I thought there was kind of a tripartite, I don't know if that's the word, struggle, in that there was the normative, what a teacher should be, of the reality of the situation, of what is, and then the third one was what I'd like to be, and trying to reconcile all those...you know people walk in and they just feel that all their idealism has just been blown against the wall, just shattering all over the classroom. But really that might just be the first part of it, and then you begin to see, what these people, all these books you've read are really talking about...you can begin to see how the idealism is really working in your classroom

Karen's ideals were, in a sense, a story of self she was trying to construct in relation to the other narrative plotlines of teaching. She eagerly appropriated "global education" as one way to give herself a perspective and orientation to teaching. The notion of "global" was not simply an abstract idea for her. She began to re-interpret her own past to find beginnings of that interest. It began to frame her thinking about social studies. She started interpreting the social studies curriculum in terms of global connections. Karen became actively involved through participation in a teacher conference.

In a way, a student teacher's ideals may be seen as a way to tell a possible story, a "capacity of people to construct versions of the world in terms of their own needs and interests that are more solid in imagination than they ever are in reality" (Weinstein, 1990, p. 9). The constructions of such stories can be described as ideologies in a sense. Such ideologies are often counter to official or scientific forms of knowing and conceptual categories, forms of knowledge which do not necessarily help in understanding one's place in the world;

> people are not just the passive receptors of a symbol system that directs their behavior; rather, they actively construe the significance of the system for themselves, in developmental terms, however idiosyncratic, and in terms of the various social locations they occupy. (Weinstein, 1990, p. 30)

The notion of ideology normally carries with it some sense of falseness, a wrong-headed or mis-guided view, as in the idea of *false-ideology*. Weinstein's exploration of

historical interpretation is interesting, however, in that more theoretical, or distant and abstract explanations of events and behaviours do little to offer people understanding, or in Gidden's terms discussed above, trust. Neither does understanding of one's self come in a pre-packaged form, but always remains as a story to be told, as a possibility. It is in this sense that thinking about the reflective process in narrative and interpretitive terms is germane to the experiences of student teachers.

Kerby's exploration of the relationships between narrative and the self is relevant to the struggles and crisis experienced by student teachers. He characterizes reflection as a narrative process, a way that we make sense and connect experiences over and through time. However, Kerby cautions that reflection is not simply a "gratuitous act": "self-reflectivity is not that of a pregiven self simply musing over its past and future"; Kerby continues,

> Self-narration, I have argued, is what first raises our temporal existence out of the closets of memorial traces and routine and unthematic activity, constituting thereby a self as its implied subject. This self is, then, the implied subject of a narrated history. Stated another way, in order to be we must be *as* something or someone, and this someone that we take ourselves to be is the character delineated in our personal narratives. (1991, p. 109; italics in original)

However, assaulted from both the certainties of theoretic knowledge, and the vagaries of practicum experiences, student teachers' personal ideals--those ideologies of teaching that are nonetheless central to one's *being* as teacher--literally take a beating, exposing the student teacher to fallibility and insecurity. Constancy and acceptance is then sought in conformity to existing forms and methods of teaching and given ideological justification, as Britzman (1991) demonstrates in her study.

On the other hand, the experience of crisis offers a possibility for learning and a receptiveness to possibilities beyond the immediate situations. Who the self becomes as teacher, and the understanding of that presents both an opportunity and difficulty for reflection. In relation to the moments of crisis, the difficulty of reflection has to do in particular with narrating a sense of self and possibilities for self as teacher.

Ricoeur's (1992) discussion of a hermeneutics of the self is especially helpful in thinking about the crisis of self-understanding experienced as a difficulty of reflection. Ricoeur's argument is complex, but I think he means to show that the identification of self through narrative cannot be simply an individual act of will, asserted without reference to others. Ricoeur suggests that the question "who am I?" is an empty question without an interpretive engagement with others, other stories, and other texts (1992, p. 166-7). The "crisis of the self" occurs in part where the self can only find reference to itself, without detours through narrative engagements with self and others. The self is an empty

construction without reference to others and, as Ricoeur argues, without reference to ethical intent. Ricoeur explains how important it is for the self to move from being able to say "here I am", a declaration of selfhood that recognizes only itself, to "here is where I stand", a sense of selfhood that incorporates an openness and deferral to others and ethical responsibility (1992, p. 167).

Ricoeur also emphasizes the importance of recognizing narrative's *mimetic* quality. Likening the lived stories of persons to fictional accounts of human lives, Ricoeur considers mimesis as the creative imitation of human action (Thompson, 1981, p. 16). What is important about the idea of narrative as mimesis, therefore, is not that a story of self and action is a copy or representation of what actually occurs, but is a creative construction (1981c, p. 180). Thus the notion of mimesis has compelling hermeneutic implications and qualities--that interpretation and understanding ought to lead new possibilities for self. Ricoeur discusses the importance of mimesis in this sense, seeing what he terms "poetry" as the creative appropriation of the meaning of human actions:

> Why should we draw new meanings from our language if we have nothing new to say, no new world to project? The creations of language would be devoid of sense unless they served the general project of letting new worlds emerge by means of poetry. (1981a, p. 181)

Earlier I discussed the problem of relying on "expert" or abstract systems in giving meaning to self. Such systems already assume a world of fixed meaning and the self as a fixed entity in negotiating the world of knowledge and the world of action. Yet, in terms of the story I am trying to tell, for students learning to become teachers, it is the self that falls into question as possible teacher. The self calls out for some kind of narrative creation, a way to link private or pre-narrative aspects of experience, with external and newly experienced stories of learning to teach. When the existing self falters as a firm source of knowledge and action for learning to teach, an experience of crisis ensues.

d. *Crisis as the negativity of experience*

While the stories of these kinds of crises sound negative, they are important and indeed crucial in the way that opportunities for reflection--and an enlarged growth of self--are provided as possibilities. From a pedagogic perspective, crisis is important for beginning to recognize--as it was for students in the context of this study--oneself as a teacher and what that entails in terms of self-identity and awareness. There may be a commonsense belief that one becomes a good teacher "naturally" (he or she is a "born teacher"), or as Britzman (1991) has written, simply through experience. However, it is

more likely the case that becoming a teacher is not a simple process of natural maturation or development.

In this regard, Gadamer's notion of the historicality and negativity of experience is also important for thinking about the place of crisis in reflection on becoming a teacher. Britzman's (1991) critique of experience as a basis for becoming a teacher is important because, and I think she would agree, the experience of learning to teach is not experience at all, at least in the way that Gadamer considers experience as contributing to understanding. If experience of learning to teach merely conforms to previous exposures of being taught, or to certain deeply held beliefs, or to unquestioned conceptual categories, then Gadamer would argue that is not experience at all: "Every experience worthy of the name runs counter to our expectation" (Gadamer, 1975, p. 319).

Of course Gadamer does not write about teacher education. But I think he would be critical of much of teacher education on at least two levels. One is the belief that knowledge about teaching can somehow pass into the practice and experience of teaching without the active appropriation of meaning. Gadamer contends that experience, however, does not come to us in the form of information; as he suggests, "experience itself can never be a science. It is in absolute antithesis to knowledge and to that kind of instruction that follows from general theoretical or technical knowledge" (1975, p. 319). Learning to teach would be an instance, given the nature of the work (relating to and understanding children, interpreting and applying the pedagogic qualities of subject knowledge, responding to unique situations, dealing with the "uncertainties" that McDonald (1992) writes about) that requires an openness to experience, to learning from situations in which knowledge must be applied to action.

The second aspect of Gadamer's critique is the historical, temporal nature of experience. From Gadamer's hermeneutic perspective, no person can be spared from experience, to paraphrase him (1975, p. 319). As I have tried to show above, the difficulties of learning to teach, at least for some students, often uncovers past stories, what Kerby (1991) calls prenarrative experience located in the temperal dimensions of life. Those aspects of experience require telling, perhaps in new stories, but nonethless ones that incorporate the fertile sources of a self's ongoing life. But also in Gadamer's terms, there is not a neat dividing line between past, present, and future experiences. For Gadamer, people are historical beings. Experience is something constantly acquired (1975, p. 319).

Rather than expecting the transition to becoming a teacher to be a smooth, linear process of theory into practice, or practice into practice, Gadamer's notion of experience implies that the process is much more difficult, perhaps even necessarily so. There are

moments, the nodal points I mentioned above, when a person will be caught up short, when new experiences call into question pre-conceptions, beliefs, who we are and what is possible. In this sense, "experience is first of all experience of 'not-ness'--something is *not* as we had assumed" (Palmer, 1969, p. 195; italics in original).

What I have attempted to show in this study is that reflection is not simply a cognitive, detached act of consciousness that can smooth over the road to becoming a teacher. The difficulty of reflection and the difficulties that engender possibilities for reflection have to do with the way that Gadamer talks about experience, and how that experience is much more than perceptual and cognitive in nature. Experience, as Palmer notes, is "a happening, an event, an encounter" (1969, p. 195). The kinds of happenings, events, encounters that student teachers experience, may sometimes be experienced as crises, in the way the student teachers often talk about significant experiences. While there is a negative, often distressful quality to these experiences of crisis, they are in a sense essential. They are particularly pedagogic moments when new learning can occur; or in the context of this study, when reflection becomes possible and meaningful. Gadamer writes about the importance of the negativity of experience:

> experience in this sense involves inevitably many disappointments of one's expectations and only thus is experience acquired. That experience refers chiefly to painful and disagreeable experiences does not mean that we are being especially pessimistic, but can be seen directly from its nature. Only through negative instances do we acquire new experiences...(1975, p. 319)

In his discussion of a "hermeneutics of the self", Ricoeur too considers the importance of crisis for self-understanding. The negativity of experiences can bring the self into question; in the context of this study for example, to engender reflection about what it means to be a teacher. We often think of learning as accumulation or possession, as adding on to what we are already. But in terms of Gadamer's notion of the negativity of experience, learning is a much more dialectical process and involves a process of give and take.

The moment of letting go, realizing an experience of incompleteness, is referred to by Ricoeur as an event of relinquishment. Kerby likens the experience of relinquishment of self to that of reading a novel. To participate in the reading, we must necessarily give ourselves over to the elements of a story which is at the same time more than we are (1991, p. 106). For Ricoeur, relinquishment is an important moment in the development of the self. Referring to appropriation of meaning as providing opportunities for an enlarged self, Ricoeur sees this as less a process of possession than a letting go of the narcissistic ego (1981d, p. 192). Such moments of "dispossession" or relinquishment are difficult however, and may well be experienced as crisis, a "crisis of the self" in Ricoeur's terms:

> What is suggested by the limiting cases produced by the narrative imagination is a dialectic of ownership and of dispossesion, of care and of carefreeness, of self-affirmation and of self-effacement. Thus the imagined nothingness of the self becomes the existential "crisis" of the self. (1992, p. 168)

Ricoeur is especially concerned to show how the crisis of the self is important for developing understanding, and for endowing reflection with meaning. The negativity of experience is important in that, as Ricoeur suggests, it is not ownership of experience that matters, but rather that experience--the event, encounter, or "hap" as Weinsheimer calls it (1987, p. 8) opens to understanding new experience. For Ricoeur, the crisis of the self has crucial ethical implications. Crisis--as a negativity of experience--provides opportunities to reflect in ways that go beyond narrow self-interest. Crisis instead is important in the way that it offers possibilities for understanding self in terms of becoming a teacher. Those ways of becoming a teacher have strong pedagogic qualities, particularly in terms of assuming responsibility for self and others. As Ricoeur explains,

> the issue here is the ethical primacy of the other than the self over the self. Even recognizing this, it is still necessary that the irruption of the other, breaking through the enclosure of the same, meet with the complicity of this movement of effacement by which the self makes itself available to others. For the effect of the "crisis" of selfhood must not be the substitution of self-hatred for self-esteem. (p. 168)

While the term "self-hatred" is perhaps extreme to describe the feelings of student teachers I worked with, I nevertheless felt it disconcerting and worrisome that student teachers were often left with less than full esteem of their possible teaching selves. Ricoeur's use of the term "self-esteem" is important for this discussion of crisis. For Ricoeur, self-esteem--"esteem of the self and not esteem of myself" (1992, p. 180)--is an outgrowth, a consequence of the growth of understanding. Particularly in terms of ethical action, to act in terms of virtue, there must be a hermeneutic encounter between the self and the situations he or she encounters: "our concept of the self is greatly enriched by this relation between interpretation of the text of action and self-interpretation" (Ricoeur, 1992, p. 179).

The nodal points of crisis that I discuss above especially provoke this kind of interpretation, which Ricoeur likens to an instance of the "hermeneutic circle". The idea of a hermeneutic circle is that in terms of the possibility of textual understanding, there must be a constant interplay between whole and the part. Referring to a hermeneutics of the self, Ricoeur sees the hermeneutic circle at work when there is a dialectic between broader ethical aims and the more immediate, private, or practical aspects of our lives; "between our aim of a 'good life' and the most important decisions of our existence (career, loves, leisure, etc.)" (1992, p. 179). For student teachers like Karen and Astrid, their experience

of crisis, although not necessarily resolved, was articulated in terms of trying to understand connections between their ideals, and understanding their selves in more immediate terms. Karen especially found this tension difficult to resolve; she wanted to stay resolute to a strong sense of purpose of teaching, but found it hard to realize in practice, where she found herself slipping to ways of being a teacher she resented;

> That's what I can't get away from. It's a sense of purpose...I don't know if my head is too in the clouds, or where it comes from, but I just feel really guided...[but]...then you look at [my] course, and the concrete end of it is that I'm teaching to an exam...

The experiences of student teachers I worked with show that crisis may offer opportunities for a process of interpretation to work. What is especially called for is a form of reflection that has a narrative structure--that allows a story of self to be told and understood in relation to texts of teaching and others. Unless this kind of movement can happen there is a danger, as Ricoeur cautions, that reflection--"reflexivity" in his terms--will only turn back on itself (1992, p. 180). The risk for student teachers then becomes a danger that it is the self who is attributed as the source of failure--and foreclose on other possibilities for teaching.

As both Ricoeur and Gadamer argue, self-understanding and an appreciation--or esteem--of the self requires more than the application of scientific or expert knowledge. What is required is an openness to experience and an ability to author that experience. Ricoeur emphasizes the importance of reflecting more on the "capacities" for action than on the doing or outcomes. He puts it very nicely, in a way that might well be a goal of reflective teaching:

> I am that being who can evaluate his actions and, in assessing the goals of some of them to be good, is capable of evaluating himself and of judging himself to be good. (1992, p. 181).

While, as Ricoeur suggests, this way of conceptualizing reflection still seems to place an emphasis on the "I", it is an I who realizes the important mediating quality of others and the relationship to others. Ricoeur's use of the word "good" refers to an ethical stance that is solicitous not only of the self, but the self in terms of others. That is the kind of growth in capacity that may be occasioned by the experience of crisis, given support for a narrative of self-understanding.

Returning to Bollnow's idea of crisis, with which I started this section, the experience of crisis can be understood to create possibilities for meaningful reflection to occur. The stuggle with crisis, which may not ever be finally resolved, may nonetheless allow the student teacher to build an "esteem of self", an appreciation of who he or she is

and can be as a future teacher. A reflective engagement with experience provides opportunities for crisis to become fertile ground for critical judgements, to build a capacity, then, to interpret and appropriate experience and knowledge for self-understanding and possibilities for self as teacher.

From the perspective of teacher education, student teachers' experiences of crisis raises particular questions of pedagogy and responsibility. Rather than being smoothed over by a belief in the certainty of knowledge and techniques, student teachers' experiences of crisis raises questions of how such experiences, and the reflective appropriation of them may be guided and nourished so as to build a stronger sense of self as teacher. This became an issue for me in a more immediate sense, through my encounters with student teachers through action research, again raising questions of responsibility and pedagogy. These are questions I will return to in the following chapter, as I reflect back on my study as a whole.

Chapter 5

Opening to Responsibilities and Possibilities in Teacher Education

> Educational experience is always hermeneutical experience.
> Gallagher, 1992, p. 39

> He was back out, now, in the fertile world--where theory could not protect him from the chaos of other people's lives--and the mayhem of reality.
> Findley, 1993, p. 143

> If I have argued anything, it is that addressing our sociology is ultimately a matter of getting down to cases, of getting a lot of heads together--specialists and nonspecialists, perpetrators and victims, dreamers and pragmatists, professionals and amateurs (which means lovers)--and letting them hammer something out for the time being, which may even last quite a while--to their surprise.
> Caputo, 1987, p. 264

Reading Back Through the Research

a. *The negativity of student teachers' experiences*

Reading back through the accounts I have written about some student teachers' experiences of reflection and learning to teach, I was not initially aware of the negativity of those experiences. Nor did I fully anticipate that they could or would be read as negative in nature. If they are indeed negative in their portrayal of reflective experiences, one might well ask if there were not happier stories, stories about students who were more enthusiastic about becoming teachers. Were there no students who rejoiced in finding a sense of self-esteem, as Ricoeur uses the term? Recall from the previous chapter that Ricoeur, in exploring a hermeneutics of the self, writes of a sense of esteem of self that comes through interpretive engagement with others. Esteem of self refers to the development of self understanding through interpretation. In terms of the experiences of student teachers, then, were there none who found confidence in melding knowledge of practice with self-understanding?

In fact, many of the students who I worked with did achieve positive resolution, especially in the awareness that becoming a teacher has much to do with caring for students as learners and that a teacher's identity is especially defined by pedagogic responsibility for children. Even Sam, who struggled so much with the question of whether or not he should become a teacher, recognized the responsibility inherent in being a teacher as he neared the end of his teacher education program. He talked about how much that responsibility is integral to the meaning of being a teacher:

> If you care about the kids, and you care about the future of kids, then everything else will fall into place, right? You will make sure that you will be qualified, because you care. If you don't care you don't have that basic starting point...I have always got along well with kids. I wasn't so naive that I thought I could change the world, but I had begun to feel responsible for my corner of the world. I thought of life as a teacher as a sort of sacrifice. And I realize now that learning how to motivate kids and learning actually how to teach kids--I'm really trying to avoid clichés--but it would be a lifetime thing. It would never, ever go away. It would always be there.

Recalling Sam's earlier words, he was one of my students who was initially quite skeptical about the whole enterprise of teaching. Yet even through his doubts, his experiences of student teaching in a school began to allow a sense of what it means to be a teacher to take hold as part of his own self-understanding. He provides a glimpse of a deeper notion of reflection, one that does more than focus on method and technique alone. Sam seems to be opening his sense of self towards the "implicit relational significance" of pedagogy (van Manen, 1992, p. 6). Such an awareness, however, is not simply a selflessness expressed as a romanticized caring for children. The "relational significance" of pedagogy also points back, and indeed sets a ground for the teacher's own identity. Natasha, a character in Timothy Findley's novel, *Headhunter*, perhaps expresses that notion well: "we have to remember that some of us really do live for others. I don't mean unselfishly--only that others are often at the centre of our own well-being" (1993, p. 381).

"The centre of our own well-being" points to the question of identity in becoming a self. It follows Ricoeur's notion of "self-esteem", an esteem of self which depends on a notion of responsibility for others (1992, p. 180). If Sam tells us anything, it is that learning to teach cannot be separated from questions of identity: who and what the teacher is and what a teacher stands for in relation to children. That kind of learning was not an easy journey for Sam. Nor was it for the other students I worked with. Many did struggle with what becoming a teacher might mean for their selves and who their selves would be as teachers. It was those struggles, the process of coming to realizations like those of Sam's, that most occupied the conversations I had with student teachers.

b. *Negativity as an opening to understanding*

In defense of the way I have presented some student teachers' experiences therefore, my intent was not to focus on the negative, nor did I seek it out in my interviews. Rather, I was drawn to certain difficulties student teachers encountered. Those difficulties, although on the surface seemingly negative, were integrally related to questions about the meaning of teaching. They were central to attempts to understand better their selves as teachers. Indeed, as I have attempted to argue, the experienced difficulties made reflection in a meaningful sense both possible and necessary.

As I have explained previously, my understanding of the importance of difficulty for meaningful reflective experiences is partly inspired by hermeneutics. The hermeneutic perspective converges with an understanding of reflection as a form of pragmatic inquiry when in the course of learning, difficulties are encountered and offered for interpretation. The "negativity of experience" offers fertile opportunities for understanding to grow. This is a way of thinking about reflection I find compelling and one that is also supported by Dewey's notion of "reflective intelligence":

> Inquiry arises as the "dominant trait of a situation when there is something seriously the matter, some trouble, due to active discordance, dissentiency, conflict among the factors of a prior non-intellectual experience: when...a situation becomes tensional." (Bernstein, 1971, p. 204-5)

Thus, the focus on reflective experiences in previous chapters did revolve around certain difficulties that stood out in student teachers' words, because in large part their attention was focused on those moments of trouble. They were experiences of tensionality, a pull between the world as experienced and a world that required understanding. I did not invent those difficulties nor was my initial questioning oriented to drawing those out. But I was pulled towards those difficulties almost involuntarily in terms of my responsibilities as a teacher educator; or more accurately, my work with student teachers seemed to call forth certain responsibilities, certain responses which I could not avoid. Moreover, from several years of work with student teachers I was not able to remain oblivious to the problems students experienced in the process of learning about teaching, especially in terms of the transition from university courses to practicum programs.

The experiences of student teachers occur in the context of institutional structures and practices that many writers and researchers in teacher education consider problematic. Britzman for instance, referring to how student teachers make sense of teaching, contends quite convincingly that "the structure of learning to teach is fundamentally flawed" (1991, p. 221). This is a view supported by recent inquiries into the condition of teacher education. Such inquiries have emphasized the fragmented quality of teacher education

programs and the implications of that for learning to become a teacher (Fullan, 1991; Holmes Report, 1986). Thus, it is also important to read the difficulties of student teachers in the context of institutional structures and practices which may engender some of the seemingly negative experiences the student teachers related in their conversations with me.

c. *The hermeneutic inspiration for action research*

It was within such flawed structures that I worked with a group of student teachers attempting to implement a reflective approach to becoming a teacher and trying to understand what reflection means. While the original intention of my action research project was the implementation of a reflective approach to becoming a teacher, that was at first poorly understood in terms of the experiences of student teachers. As the study progressed, I was challenged to do more than define reflection. I became aware that reflection could not be considered a process detached from its meaning and use in the lives of students for whom I had responsibility as an instructor and consultant.

The question for my action research project revolved around the possibilities for encouraging critical reflection with student teachers. What would allow this to happen? Asking that question became part of an action research approach, one inspired by a hermeneutic orientation. Why hermeneutics? While strictly speaking hermeneutics is a philosophic discipline, it nonetheless has practical and normative implications for how we conduct our lives and practices. Especially when we are thinking about human practices and how we ought to conduct those better, hermeneutics has much to with understanding in concrete and practical terms. Gadamer provides a strong sense of the relation of understanding and the responsibility that entails for practice:

> the knowledge that gives direction to action is essentially called for by concrete situations in which we are to choose the thing to be done; and no learned and mastered technique can spare us the task of deliberation and decision. As a result, the practical science directed toward this practical knowledge is neither theoretical science in the style of mathematics nor expert know-how in the sense of a knowledgeable mastery of operational procedures (*poiesis*) but a unique sort of science. It must arise from practice itself and, with all the typical generalizations that it brings to explicit consciousness, be related back to practice. (1981, p. 92)

Gadamer helps us to see the kind of practical knowledge and interpretive orientation required when we are trying better to understand practices like education. This is especially so because our actions are largely mediated through language and symbol sedimented in traditions, practices, and ideologies. From the perspective of hermeneutics, language and symbols, and the way that we talk about education and teaching, *is* the world; it is what we encounter everyday, and it both limits and creates possibilities. Hermeneutics is oriented to

understanding the language that we live and that understanding offers possibilities for what we are and do.

But understanding is not an esoteric and detached exercise. Through the act of interpretation, attempting to arrive at understanding also implies application. Further, in terms of human actions and communication, there is a concrete responsibility to apply our understanding. Interpretation is purposefully oriented : "All understanding involves application in the sense that all interpretation is interpretation for some purpose defined by the situation" (Gallagher, 1992, p. 151). This is a view of understanding and interpretation which respects both the way we live and experience our situations but with a desire to link that understanding to some purpose in terms of our practices and actions. Ricoeur explains the normative quality of interpretation further:

> we would say that it is in the unending work of interpretation applied to action and to oneself that we pursue the search for adequation between what seems to us to be best with regard to our life as a whole and the preferential choices that govern our practices. (1992, p. 179)

Applying that hermeneutic perspective to action research, it may be conceived as a practice of interpretation. As such, action research dwells within the tension between the need to interpret and understand the situations we find ourselves in--that is making sense of a present or familiar situation--and interpretation of something new or unfamiliar. Rather than just seeking understanding for the sake of understanding, however, hermeneutically inspired action research is normative and practical. In terms of a hermeneutic approach action research is oriented to applying our understanding in ways that allow us to fulfill our actions more thoughtfully or reflectively. Action research cannot escape questions of what are the right things to do in particular situations at particular moments. Those questions arise from the desire to better understand--and practice--our responsibilities.

The normative quality of action research is thus parallel to the hermeneutic idea of application. Application refers to the responsibility to bring together or bridge the understanding of the familiar and the new (Gallagher, 1992, p. 150). Action research is practical in the way that the application of understanding occurs in dialogue with others about how we should conduct ourselves and our practices and how we should apply our understandings. Through action research, we try to sort out the meanings of the language we use and the actions that represent our intents and understandings. The impetus for action research arises from our present horizons but is oriented, as Ricoeur has said of hermeneutics, to certain preferences. As Rorty argues, this is a pragmatic orientation based on the idea of responsibility to each other in social endeavours: "our account of the value

of cooperative human inquiry has only an ethical base, not an epistemological or metaphysical one" (1987, p. 42-43).

I freely admit that the way I try to explain action research above was not my understanding and practice of it at the outset of the study. Because of my work with student teachers represented by this study, however, a more pragmatic and hermeneutic orientation to action research began to guide the work of research and writing. My work became in greater part an effort to not only learn from student teachers' experiences, but also to open dialogue about their teaching experiences to encourage them to understand themselves as teachers-to-be.

d. *Action research and the "ethic of the word"*

In the previous chapters I attempted to highlight some experiences of reflection for student teachers. Those experiences revolved around certain lived difficulties in learning about teaching. Those difficulties also demonstrated the complexity of what reflecting about becoming a teacher involves. As an action research project to implement and promote a reflective approach to becoming a teacher, my encounters with student teachers necessarily came to focus on their experienced difficulties of learning to become a teacher, but in a way that could not evade my pedagogic responsibilities.

I say necessarily because it was those experiences that most called into question not only certain beliefs and practices of teacher education, but also my own self-understanding as a teacher. And also necessarily because student teachers' experiences called forth a response--a response to the realization that learning to become a teacher does not simply happen naturally or through the actions of an isolated and individual self. Yet student teachers often experience feelings of despair at the inadequacies of incomplete teacher selves. When that happens, one cannot remain immune to the responsibilities of being a teacher educator and to reflect critically on teaching and institutional practices.

My encounters with student teachers through action research encouraged a greater appreciation of the experiential and narrative qualities of becoming a teacher and the complexity of reflection on those experiences. As well, the research pointed to the problems of some of the language and concepts we use in education and the ways in which that sometimes hides other meanings and experiences. From that perspective the research also became a way to explore my own self-understanding and what that means for practice.

The readings of the interviews I have included, as well as my readings of other texts, attempts to be a narrative of my own work. As a narrative, however, the intention is not necessarily to foreground my self as the determining element. Rather it is to acknowledge how identity as teacher and researcher and writer is made possible through an

interpretative appropriation of other texts, other stories, and one's own prenarrative possibilities--that is, in stories yet to be told. While, as Ricoeur (1991a) suggests, a narrative is never life itself, narrative does represent a way that we try to give shape to our understandings. From a hermeneutic perspective giving shape to experiences entails responsibility for bringing to understanding the language we use--language that mediates our actions and encounters in the world. Ricoeur discusses this notion of responsibility in a conversation with Richard Kearney; referring to how our actions are mediated through language, Ricoeur states:

> It shows that there is an *ethic of the word*, that language is not just the abstract concern of logic or semiotics, but entails the fundamental moral duty that people be responsible for what they say. (1991b, p. 477; italics in original)

Action research, inspired by hermeneutics attempts, I believe, to practice that kind of "ethic of the word". In Ricoeur's terms to be responsible for what we say means to take responsibility for defining our identities as teachers and teacher educators and to give shape to the meaning of that work. An ethic of the word means to take the responsibility for the language we use, so that our practices so that our practices may also be more thoughtfully constituted.

The Happenstance of Student Teachers' Experiences

a. *Postmodernism engenders a pragmatic/hermeneutic response to experiences*

In terms of the way I have attempted to describe the movement of the practice of action research above, the study represents an endeavor at understanding possible--and other--meanings of reflection in teacher education, and from that, implications for the responsibilities of teacher education work. In other words, the study stands as an effort to give voice to the other--both in terms of student teachers' experiences and other possibilities and understandings--that are sometimes lost or forgotten in dominant discourses of teacher education. In a sense, then, my focus on student teachers' experiences of difficulty also stands as a criticism of teacher education structures and practices.

But it is a criticism that is uncertain about fixed ends, perspectives, and procedures. From a postmodern or poststructural view, I recognize that criticism from an ahistorical, transcendent perspective is problematic. But that recognition is also a way to see the limits of our interpretative frames and foundational certainties and recognize possibilities for understanding language and practices in alternative directions. Moreover, the postmodern critique of foundational claims and abstract reason does turn back to questions of

responsibility and agency, in ways that I have talked about above for example, in terms of language and understanding.

There is admittedly a dark and nihilist side to the postmodern view of society. The postmodern ethos is one that sometimes despairs of possibilities for progressive and ameliorative work. But there is also a side to postmodernism that encourages greater attention to the ethical and practical qualities of our work. Postmodernism may engender distrust in ways that our work and understandings have proceeded over time and asks us instead to accept and live with contingency, ambivalence, and uncertainty (Smart, 1993, p. 102).

In terms of educational work, despite efforts to rationalize and package educational practices in certainties, most educational encounters and situations resist abstract theorizing and technological fixes. Learning to teach is a good example of that--the student teachers' stories I have shared in this study have more to do with the particularities of experience, including narratives of self, than with grand theories of teaching and education. The postmodern condition that we find ourselves in, as Lyotard argues, is in part a lament that "the 'loss of meaning' in postmodernity boils down to mourning the fact that knowledge is no longer principally narrative " (1984, p. 26).

Eschewing the certainties of overarching narratives nevertheless compels us to deal with questions of how we should live, act, and make sense of experiences (Bernstein, 1992; Rosenau, 1992; Lyotard, 1984). Postmodernism does throw into question technical and rational approaches to human activity and challenges us to work in a more pragmatic way. In terms of the approach to action research I discussed above, a pragmatic orientation converges with hermeneutics on the question of responsibility for language and our interpretations of action. As Cherryholmes explains in his support for a "critical pragmatism" in educational work :

> Critical pragmatism results when a sense of crisis is brought to our choices, when it is accepted that our standards, beliefs, values, guiding texts, and discourses-practices themselves require evaluation and reappraisal. (1988, p. 151)

In terms of action research, a pragmatic and hermeneutic perspective allows us to understand that actions and practices are mediated in language. Action research is therefore not an objective observation and description of action--as if that were ever possible--but it is a way to consider how action becomes storied in language and how we may better, then, act on our understandings. Like hermeneutics, pragmatism is normative in the way that inquiry, even philosophic inquiry, is oriented to applying understanding to our lives (Bernstein, 1971, 1992). Such a view of pragmatism is certainly a sustaining

thread in Dewey's writings about education. Bernstein provides a sense of the normative impact of Dewey's pragmatism:

> There is rather the clear imperative never to block the road to inquiry, to realize that any of our beliefs, no matter how cherished and fundamental they may seem to be, are open (and indeed require) further criticism. If we are to secure and warrant our knowledge claims, we do not do this by searching for absolute foundations or origins, but by cultivating those habits and forms of conduct that further the realization of the critical spirit. (Bernstein, 1971, p. 314)

Although I had some preliminary orientation to understanding action research from a pragmatic/hermeneutic perspective, that is not how I initially approached the task of action research from which this study evolved. I have stated several times previously that my research began with some sense of certainty--a belief that reflection in teaching was an important idea. Moreover, the action research project in which I participated started with the goal of implementing a reflective approach in a teacher education program. That too began with some certainty that the structure of teacher education programs could contain and encourage alternative approaches and understandings.

That initial approach to action research was still guided in many respects by a technical-rational orientation. As part of my emerging awareness, I came to realize that it is difficult to escape the hold of modern reason and practices. Gallagher (1992) argues that education, and the very ways we generally think about it are caught in the modernist grasp of reason and technological thinking. Even when we consciously attempt to think otherwise, particularly in certain critical terms, we find ourselves back in that mode. That is, even with an attempt to think non-technologically about action research and reflective practice, for example, the tendency is to fall back into a technological mode of thinking. As a consequence, action research can become a way to use knowledge as power and as a form of control. An example from my own work was to think of action research as a form of implementation or applied research; and to think of reflection as an orientation to learning to teach in ways set apart or from experience and language and time.

Gallagher suggests that it is impossible to escape totally the modernist conception of education--after all it is a tradition that shapes very deeply our very institutions, practices, and understandings of self. On the other hand, he argues that is possible to think differently, that is to think in more hermeneutic terms; he writes,

> We should conceive of education not as a deliberate human enterprise, but as a process that happens to the human enterprise; not as a process that is consciously achieved within human culture, but as a process that achieves culture. Within education both individuals and traditions are formed and formulated--we [should be] motivated to question whether education is something under our control, or

> something that has its own power in which we must learn to participate. (1992, p. 179)

b. *Encountering crisis and difficulty in research and writing*

I cannot claim that my work avoids elements which are not modernist, or overly rational, or technological. But nonetheless, faith in my work and understanding were shaken in the process of doing the research and writing about my experiences with student teachers. In particular it was student teachers' experiences of difficulty and the apparent negativity of their experiences that called into question the approach and initial understandings of both action research and reflection in learning to teach. Caputo (1987) writes most compellingly about how his notion of "radical hermeneutics" seeks to keep alive difficulty. Difficulty has to do with the unending task of interpretation and the responsibility to resist or break through conceptual certainties which limit understanding. Hermeneutics in Caputo's terms opens to the kind of "ethic of the word" Ricoeur talks about.

Admittedly however, the resulting focus on the difficulties of student teaching as a source for reflection about becoming a teacher is partial. I do not pretend to represent the entirety of student teachers' experiences. It would be presumptuous to try to represent the totality of possible experiences and difficulties encountered by student teachers. Thus, for example, the reflective moments students discussed with me do not directly deal with the experiences of specific techniques of teaching, or with experiences of teaching subject-matter. The experiences I focused on have more to do with questions about self and purpose, which in themselves are still rather broad categories and difficult to ground in terms of day to day practices and thinking.

My focus was not entirely guided by choice. To some extent, I allowed myself to go along with the difficulties and issues student teachers raised in their discussions with me. In terms of my research, that also meant letting go of more directive questions about the nature of reflection in their work. Those conversations around questions of identity and purpose seemed to provide student teachers particular cause for reflective thought and talk. The direction the conversations took also became a difficulty I encountered as an action researcher. My research evolved into trying to make sense of the quality and experience of reflection in student teachers' experiences but in ways that would also allow my students to make sense of their teaching selves.

Thus my research as an action research--and partly by choice and partly by accident through the way my conversations with student teachers evolved--came to focus on more than student teachers' immediate concerns and understandings of particular teaching

practices. I use the term "by accident" deliberately, because it marks a point in the research when I experienced my own sense of crisis, a crisis in doubt about method in research and teaching, about particular languages of teacher education--"reflective teaching" for example--and a crisis of my own self-understanding. Not least, I experienced considerable turmoil about my ability to express that crisis.

c. *Encountering the "hap" in working with student teachers*

In exploring the meaning of Gadamer's hermeneutics, Weinsheimer emphasizes how methodological knowing and conceptual understanding sometimes replaces a sense of being in the world. Bureaucratic and scientific languages can conceal a sense of belonging to something that already exists in traditions and long-standing practices which profoundly links us to others. A research project, like the one I have written here, carries the risk of setting the researcher apart from what has to be understood. Worrying about that perhaps puts the focus in the wrong direction, a way to avoid urgent normative questions. As Weinsheimer writes about the relation of the subject and object of research:

> Both subject and object are derivative and secondary, in that both precipitate out of the more primordial unity of being at home in the world. Further, both are determined negatively: the knowing subject no longer understands, and the object to be known no longer fits. (1985, p. 5)

Certainly I was brought up short in my work with student teachers. And as a researcher/teacher I could neither hide my lack of understanding nor elude my more immediate responsibilities. More than understanding reflection as a concept or cognitive category to be understood apart from experience, I was pulled into stories which spilled over the parameters initially set out for the action research. Weinsheimer refers to that which presents us for understanding as the "hap". It is something that exceeds the borders of methodological knowing--that which is excluded by method. Citing Gadamer, he writes that the hap is something which happens to us "beyond our willing and doing" (1985, p. 8). Reading Weinsheimer's explanation of hap gave me a sense of what I was experiencing in my own research, when the limits of my own knowing and possible explanations were transcended by others' experiences: hap, explains Weinsheimer,

> makes its presence felt when one happens onto something, in the haphazard guess, the happenstance situation, in happiness and haplessness. If, for better or worse, hap cannot be avoided, it eludes the hegemony of method. (1985, p. 8)

Although Weinsheimer is primarily writing about the experience of philosophy and Gadamer's approach to philosophic understanding, there is nonetheless a real-life dimension to the experience of hap. It is the happenstance and the problematic that draws

attention, that offers questions and demands action. That is where hermeneutically inspired action research finds fertile ground.

d. *The practical and ethical responsibility in action research*

However, action research is both more and less than a technical process of implementation. It is more in terms of its orientation to understanding the unexpected, urging us on to further understanding. Action research, as I have written earlier, fosters the disposition to think about meaning, but in a normative sense, towards imbuing our actions with more thought and responsibility.

But action research is also less. Less than grand theorizing. Less than schemes of programmatic implementation. It is also less in that it turns us back to the particular and hopefully enables us to face the other when things go amiss. It is in the immediacy and particularity of life and work that we also discover responsibility in terms of responsibility for others. The ethical movement, from a postmodern perspective, is the realization that one must act in terms of the particularity of the other, a responsibility to discover ways to act justly and well. In terms of my study it was a realization that the other--student teachers I worked with and their experiences--could not simply discover identity in predetermined theories of teaching. Perhaps this is where there is a pedagogy, a disposition to act with responsibility towards and with others, that lies in the "postmodern condition":

> The Other is itself always other than itself: it is not simply a displaced Identity in which we may once more recognize and reconstitute ourself. The demand is for a just relating to alterity, and for a cognition of the event of heterogeneity. (Docherty, 1993, p. 26).

In terms of my research I could not escape the pedagogical responsibilities with which I was challenged as a teacher educator--the challenge being to guide reflection in ways that would help particular student teachers--ones who I have referred to previously--understand not only teaching but also their teaching selves and identities in the process of formation. In my research, then, the *hap* was those student teachers' experiences, ones that especially did not conform either to my own understandings and slipped away from the assumed certainties of practices and procedures. It is at the point where the hap is encountered that action research shows its normative colour. "The most important thing in action research is to determine what one must do" (Gauthier, 1992, p. 190).

Through the process of interpretation and the attempt to arrive at an understanding of reflection I was called upon to provide guidance for the student teachers I worked with in their quest for self-understanding. It was from experienced life and difficulty that both the need and possibilities for understanding were derived. Interpretation, understanding,

and application in an immediate, practical, and normative sense could not be avoided. But also, as action research my work was oriented by the desire for self-understanding and to better understand the work of teaching in terms of my relationship to students as a teacher and consultant in practicum settings. The task of interpretation, then, draws us into the world and into responsibilities with and for others. Interpretation attempts to put understanding into words however provisionally, but also allows us to provide some support for our actions, again, even if those too are provisional and open to question (Ormiston and Schrift, 1990, p. 8-9).

In terms of teaching others, though actions are perhaps provisional, they are not simply frivolous and casual. In *The Tact of Teaching* (1991), van Manen helps us to understood the inherent responsibility in the pedagogical relation. Pedagogy has much to do with teaching our students in the present, but also with providing guidance for ongoing and future growth and understanding. While van Manen writes particularly about the responsibility of adults towards children, such pedagogical responsibility is also present, or ought to be, in the work of teacher education. It is not a responsibility of adult to children, but nonetheless is a responsibility that has pedagogic qualities. David Jardine (1993) writes of the inherent vulnerability experienced by student teachers and the deep need for guidance and support that is required in coming to understand what it is to be a teacher. In my own experience of learning to work with student teachers and what that means, I also became more aware of the complexity of that responsibility.

The Responsibility of Teaching About Teaching

a. *The problem of practice for student teachers*

There is, first of all, the responsibility of actually attempting to teach others to teach in a practical and immediate sense. Working with student teachers in university course and practicum situations I had to try to deal with the questions that student teachers' experiences of reflection raised. At one level those experiences of course had much to do with the actual difficulties of learning to teach and the difficulties of applying knowledge to immediate real-life teaching situations. The stories of some of the student teachers I have cited--Bob, Astrid, Mary, Karen especially--can be read as difficulties of teaching in a practical sense and the lack of support or guidance for learning how to teach that they experienced in their teacher education programs.

A plausible interpretation of the negative difficulties student teachers encounter is that those difficulties are only of a practical nature. In other words, it might be argued that student teachers primarily experience problems of learning to teach in a practical and

immediate sense as a consequence of their lack of experience and skill. In fact, this is the way that several of the students I worked with talked about their experiences. They saw the resolution of practical difficulties as the appropriate route to becoming a teacher, allocating other questions of teaching as more distant concerns.

In not making the immediate experiences of practical difficulty a primary focus of my writing about student teachers' experiences, I did not mean to denigrate the importance of practical teaching knowledge and techniques as an important source for reflection. In the teacher education literature there have been significant efforts to find a way to link reflection and practical teaching work. Grimmet (1988) for one, has attempted to make a convincing argument for linking research-validated pedagogical knowledge with a reflective approach in student teaching as a necessary and defensible approach. Indeed teacher education programs probably need to strengthen the links between valid and strong methodological knowledge with a more thoughtful and reflective understanding of methodologies.

However, it would be one-sided and reductionist to say that the solution to problems of teacher education lie only in emphasizing teaching techniques better or more intensively to student teachers; or likewise, that reflection can be limited to an objective assessment of teaching skill. Almost ninety years ago, John Dewey described what is still experienced as a problem inherent in the education of teachers: a tension between emphasizing immediate proficiency in a technical sense, and encouraging a more enduring thoughtfulness. Dewey warned about the danger of overemphasizing a too narrow and premature focus on practice in the preparation of teachers. He counseled for the importance of a reflective capacity in the ongoing formation of teaching ability:

> To place the emphasis upon the securing of proficiency in teaching and disciplines puts the attention of the student teacher in the wrong place, and tends to fix it in the wrong direction...practical work should be pursued primarily with reference to its reaction upon the professional pupil in making him a thoughtful and alert student of education, rather than to help him get immediate proficiency...For immediate skill may be got at the cost of power to go on growing. (Dewey, 1977, p. 253 and 256)

As Britzman has shown through her stories of student teachers' experiences, if technique and method are seen by student teachers as the source rather than the effect of pedagogy (1991, p. 227) there may be a foreclosure on understanding experience. Possibilities for learning about teaching are denigrated in favour of certainties which are ideologically persuasive but limiting in the way alternative possibilities for being teachers may be understood and practiced. Especially damaging is a diminished capacity and propensity for critical reflection.

Of course Dewey may be interpreted as suggesting that encouraging a reflective disposition in becoming a teacher is not something apart from or alien to technical skill and

proficiency. The notion of teaching as practical work as Dewey terms it obviously requires skill and knowledge. At least in part, the difficulties of student teachers I have related in the study indicate problems when skill and technique are missing, or more to the point, show problems when confidence in the application of skill is lacking from the perspective of self-understanding.

b. *Limitations of reflection on teaching skills*

Britzman's (1991) study of student teaching confirms Dewey's view of learning to teach. As she illustrates and explains, the process of learning to teach and becoming a teacher is much more complex and difficult than simply learning and applying techniques of teaching. Academic teacher education does not, by itself, prepare students to negotiate the realities of classroom experience. The stories of student teachers show that there is often disappointment when academic preparation does not translate well into actual teaching practice. Britzman's study reveals how student teachers, because of immediate necessity and external pressure, seek what she terms "internally-persuasive" authoritative discourses, whereby the difficulties of teaching are detoured by an uncritical application of method and technique.

According to Britzman, teacher education programs tend to engender a dualism between technique and critical reflection (1991, p. 211). That dualism is felt very strongly in student teachers' experiences as they relegate university learning to the category of impractical theory and valorize classroom practice in immediate, reductive, and uncritical ways. In some of the stories of student teachers that I have attempted to relate, the difficulties grew out of the experience of being unable to explore more reflectively the meaning of teaching approaches and classroom management techniques. They experienced practical difficulty but at the same time did not experience reflection as necessarily related to understanding that difficulty.

Britzman suggests that experience of dualism for student teachers tends to be resolved by an acceptance and embodiment of teaching in ideological terms--in terms of such authoritative discourses as the teacher as expert, the teacher as a controller of classroom and learning, and the "natural" or born teacher. When teaching is taken up in such terms, techniques and methods of teaching come to be seen as "the source rather than the effect of pedagogy" (Britzman, 1991, p. 227). In effect, then, questions of teaching identity and purpose and more critical explorations of classroom life are closed down in favour of positions that give illusory power through ideological justification. And I would add, real control in the classroom is concretely rewarded as evidence of teaching prowess.

On the basis of my experiences of working with student teachers, I agree with Britzman's conclusion that this is often an unhappy resolution for student teachers. Recall from the third chapter Mary's story of using a whistle to establish classroom control; while she was in some ways relieved to know she had the power to control kids, she was nonetheless disturbed at the nature of this power and its effects on junior high students. She was lauded by her cooperating teacher and university consultant for her ability to manage a classroom. However, for Mary that did not satisfy her own questions about the purposes of such control nor correspond to her own ideals about attempting to practice a more democratic form of pedagogy in her teaching.

Similarly, Karen, cited in previous chapters, felt compelled to become more authoritarian and "tougher" in her interactions with children. She was able to do that but not without the cost of despair at losing the opportunity to practice and learn about alternative approaches to classroom management and discipline. To a certain extent Karen was able to understand that her difficulties were not simply a consequence of her own, incomplete self as teacher, but that did not entirely alleviate her sense of failure despite formal success as a student teacher.

Astrid too struggled with real problems of classroom management in a difficult junior high school. She felt frustrated by her inability to practice control of her unruly grade eight students. Like Mary, she also did not know what to do and found little support from her teacher education program. The difficulty of learning to teach was experienced by Astrid as a dualism between her university education and school experiences. As much as the real difficulties of teaching in a junior high classroom, Astrid's anguish was also about the absence of means or support to bring theory and practice together as she noted very perceptively in her journal:

> Theory and practice. Where do the two meet? I think that theory gives you a nice background to practical matters. However, when you step into the classroom, there is not time to recall your theory. You do what comes natural to you or simply react to the students. I think that teacher education should be a <u>way</u> more practical, in that we should be taught how to deal with classroom interruption at all levels. We should be taught how to function within the school and we should be exposed to more real life students.

The immediate difficulties which Astrid encountered were not, however, the only source of her reflective writing. The moments of experienced crisis for Astrid also provoked memories of her own rebelliousness in junior high. Her memories of schooling provoked questions about how she could create experiences of schooling for children different from her own. And like Karen and Mary, ultimately succeeding in becoming a

more proficient classroom manager did not satisfy her craving for building an alternative identity of teacher:

> When I teach social studies, I would like to create an atmosphere where the students would be able to put away their non-academic ambitions and openly discuss and debate current issues. This atmosphere can only be generated through a mutual trust between my students and myself. Hopefully, social studies won't be the class where you draw maps, or watch boring films, or sleep. I would like to achieve the status of having a social studies class that is fun and interesting for my students and this can do by never forgetting my own junior high experiences. The trends may change and vary over time, but the nature of students remains in a period of change and adaptation. Junior high is trying time for teenage students and I hope to allow for them to grow and improve within my classroom, while still experimenting and learning their own personality and developing ambitions.

While on one level Astrid's immediate difficulties could be attributed to the absence of classroom proficiency, on an another level Astrid was very much concerned about the kind of teacher she wanted to be. Her journal writing manifested both a strong desire to understand her own experiences of schooling and a desire to understand practical issues of teaching within a broader critical and normative context. Moreover, referring back to the previous chapter, Astrid was attempting to build a narrative of self, one that linked her "pre-narrative" experiences with a story yet to be told or emplotted. The kinds of difficulties experienced by student teachers like Astrid point back to what the responsibilities of teacher education ought to be. In part, those responsibilities are inherent in the kinds of pertinent questions Britzman poses for teacher education programs:

> How do student teachers come to know the everyday of classroom life and not be subsumed by the immediate? How might university course work address the real of the everyday, the idiosyncratic, the emotive, and the anxieties that constitute lived lives? How might theory express the real? Yet in rendering theory and practice as dichotomous, the practical appears as separate from the values, theories, orientations, and investments that mark a technique, stance, or action as practical in the first place. (1991, p. 203)

Rather than coming to understand teaching techniques and approaches in the context of broader questions of purpose, student teachers instead experience an alienation between their university and school experiences. Britzman emphasizes the lack of pedagogic and institutional support that would allow student teachers interpretative experiences of both theoretical and practical discourses of teaching and to understand how practices come to be constituted. She especially deplores the absence of ways of fostering an understanding of an epistemology of practice. Student teachers lack support for questioning where pedagogical knowledge comes from, what authorizes classroom practice, and how experience can become instructive. Alternatively, Britzman emphasizes the need for reflection in learning about teaching in the context of practice. Her sense of critical

reflection has a strong interpretive orientation, one that calls for a reading and appropriation of multiple discourses of teaching;

> The point is to reflect, in critical ways, upon the processes and forces that structure experience as meaningful, useless, or even mysterious. Such reflections can help us to theorize pedagogically about the antagonistic discourses that position our sense of the practical, the real, and the necessary. (1991, p. 218)

c. *Lived experience as a focus for reflection*

In her study of student teachers' experiences, Britzman refers to the notion of "lived life" as a problem for reflection. Her study is in large part an extended critique of the notion of learning from experience--that experience, uncritically examined--can provide knowledge of teaching. Britzman does not refer explicitly in her discussion to hermeneutics as a possible orientation towards experience and understanding. But her discussion of the need to see "lived life" as a problem for reflection is nonetheless parallel to the hermeneutic view of experience as lived experience, that is, experience as it is given shape in language, thought, and action. She underscores the need for interpretation in student teachers' encounters with experiences in schools and education courses, a need that is also evident in the stories of student teachers I have related in this study.

As hermeneutic philosophers like Gadamer help us to understand, the meaning of experience is not simply given to us but rather is there to be given (Weisheimer, 1985, p. 88). What that means in terms of student teaching practice--and the way that both Dewey and Britzman have described the problem--is that it is a mistaken notion to assume that experience by itself, including experience of teaching methods necessarily leads to understanding. Such experiences only become meaningfully constituted in terms of self-understanding and in terms of more thoughtfully-constituted actions. In hermeneutic terms, "lived experience is necessarily meaningful experience" (Weinsheimer, 1985, p. 87).

The problem for student teachers, in part, is that teaching methods and techniques are objectified elements detached from their overall experience. Missing as an experience of reflection, is the exploration of where teaching practices and pedagogical techniques fit with one's own story or narrative, that is, in terms of one's own identity as teacher. Without encouragement for developing a deeper understanding of teaching, reflection can also be an experience of objectification, leaving out questions of self and denying the importance of understanding experience in a fuller sense. Addressing the question of learning pedagogy and becoming pedagogically sensitive, van Manen writes about the problem of a narrowly technological approach in education:

> a technological approach to education assumes that teaching can be taught by means of generalizations and general techniques. Only recently has anyone recognized that education needs to turn back to the world of experience. Experience can open up understanding that restores a sense of embodied knowing. (1991, p. 9)

In terms of the responsibility of teacher education to foster pedagogical understanding, the question is what the nature of the experience ought to be. As van Manen further suggests, to become a teacher requires "the most personal embodiment of a pedagogical thoughtfulness", and that is "something that can not be taught formally" (1991, p. 9). In part at least, the stories of student teachers I have presented in this study demonstrate the difficulty of learning to teach in ways that leads to a the kind of embodied knowing van Manen describes. Perhaps more so the stories raise questions about the kinds of experiences appropriate to learning about ways of teaching that will be thoughtfully constituted. "Something that can not be taught formally" nonetheless challenges us to think about learning activities, situations, and experiences that encourage active inquiry into teaching--and to understand what it is to be a teacher.

d. *The difficulty of contextualizing and embodying methods and teaching practices*

As in Dewey's advocacy for a reflective stance in learning to become a teacher, the importance of learning and practicing technique is not belittled, but what is thrown into question is the place of technique in learning to become a teacher. Dewey too was concerned about the kinds of dualisms and fragmentation that works against knowledge becoming embodied as thoughtful practice. For him, experience is also not just something given, but neither is experience found only in an unreflective application of method and technique. In his view of experience, Dewey pointed to the difficulty of isolating discrete elements and situations for reflective scrutiny :

> Experience, in short, is not a combination of mind and world, subject and object, method and subject matter, but is a single continuous interaction of a great diversity (literally countless in number) of energies. (Dewey, 1944, p. 167)

Dewey's understanding of experience perhaps provides some clues for the possible constitution of teacher education programs. His writing about education and experience elicits questions about whether there are practices and structures which could be more supportive of providing experience in a way that it becomes lived experience, that is, experience that truly becomes experience through reflection. Becoming a teacher, from Dewey's perspective, requires an active reconstitution of experience through practical inquiry and a capacity to remain open to encounters, practices, and learning.

In Dewey's writing, reflection is described as being more than method or technique. It is really an embodied approach to understanding experience. Reflection itself is an experience rather than a detached reflection on experience. In that sense reflection offers the possibility to become a more embodied form of knowing. That is, reflection understood in interpretive terms is a form of enactment, of bringing forth meaning, an acknowledgment that "knowledge depends on being in a world that is inseparable from our bodies, or language, and our social history--in short from our embodiment" (Varela, Thompson, and Rosch, 1993, p. 27; p. 149).

This a position not far from the way Dewey characterized the reflective disposition. In an early discussion of teacher education, for example, Dewey wrote about the importance of student teachers learning the pedagogy of subject matter. Becoming a teacher, in Dewey's terms was not simply to learn to transmit content nor manipulate abstracted techniques of teaching. The teacher as teacher is the embodiment of the subject matter itself: the student teacher should learn that the teaching of subjects "are significant embodiments of mental operations...they are not products of technical methods...but represent fundamental mental attitudes and operations" (1904, p. 329).

From a Deweyan perspective, which is helpful in thinking about the relationship between being a teacher and methods of teaching, techniques are not something external to the reflective attitude. Indeed, the teacher in a sense embodies technique in the reflective, doubting, experimental stance towards knowledge and learning, constantly reconstructing knowledge and experience. Technique, in this sense, is an integral aspect of the reflective attitude and not simply a method that is external to what it is to be a teacher or learner. Technique has to be related to purpose, and as the student teachers' stories I have related show, to self-understanding as well.

To put student teacher's hope on technique alone is a chimera, submerging ontological questions about what teaching is all about, and what kind of person a teacher ought to be. Stripped of an ontological context, technique can be illusory as a road to understanding the self as teacher, sometimes cruelly so--a "songline" that sings a mirage. However at the same time the comfort of technique is also more than illusion. For student teachers, techniques mediate between the certainty and uncertainty that mark the transitional experiences from being students to becoming teachers.

At the same time, learning to become a teacher has much to do with understanding and living with the contingencies and uncertainties of educational situations which resist the application of technique. As much as learning about teaching in terms of teaching approaches, classroom management, planning, and so forth, the student teachers I worked with also asked questions and related difficulties about what it *is* to be a teacher. Learning

to become a teacher is not just a matter of taking on new knowledge. Britzman (1991) writes of the necessity for an "epistemology of practice". But that is still a partial view of what becoming a teacher entails. There are also what Jardine calls "ontological transformations" in terms of "who the student teacher is" (1993, p. 7; underlined in original).

Learning to become a teacher then has very much to do with an embodied sense of self. What it is to become a teacher is a question that cannot be satisfactorily answered in terms of teaching knowledge alone. The person becoming a teacher is more than the repertoire of teaching skills. The person who uses and applies those skills has to understand those skills and what makes them pedagogically sound but that understanding is also mediated through the self and through an appropriation of teaching identity.

A too narrowly-conceived technical model of teacher education ultimately plays into nihilism in its denial of the subjectivities and meaning-constructing activities of students. The turn to more inquiry-oriented (Tom, 1985) and reflective modes of teacher education is, in part, a reaction to the overly rational bias embedded in much educational theory and practice: that, as Elliott attests, "good practice consists of the application of theoretical knowledge consciously understood prior to practice" (1988, p. 4). Moreover, the focus on narrow and decontextualized technique inhibits, as Dewey warned, a broader view and experience of curriculum and instruction, one which ought to reflect "the growth of mind itself" (1904, p. 332).

For teacher education, then, the question is how the practical and technical aspects of teaching can be imbued with a thoughtfulness that transcends an individualistic, technical orientation. The practice of education, or pedagogy, is a form of practice guided by theory with an orientation to the "good" (van Manen, 1982, 1992), or as Tom (1987), and Liston and Zeichner (1987) would have it, teaching as a "moral craft". The Faculty of Education (University of Alberta) report asks the questions: *"what does it mean to teach? "* and *"how does one learn to do it?"* (1989, p. 25). These are questions that take education out of the strictly technical, scientific sphere, into a practical and moral domain. Linking questions of meaning with immediately practical questions provides opportunities to lift learning to teach out of the dualism of university discourses and classroom practice. It assumes that our students can be and become "reflective practitioners" in the process of becoming teachers--that learning to become a teacher is a reflective process in the way that experience is an experience of inquiry and learning.

As I believe the experiences of student teachers presented in the foregoing sections inform us, learning to teach does require an interpretive openness that does not exclude an understanding of self and an understanding of possible teaching identities. An interpretive

approach would necessarily attend to how teaching is constituted in the multiple interactions of teacher, learners, and subject matter within classroom, school, and cultural contexts.

Ricoeur writes about how the practices of a profession are imbedded in traditions within a given community of practitioners (1992, p. 176). The worth of those practices, according to Ricoeur, cannot be judged in isolation from the purposes and responsibilities of the profession as a whole. It is the overall identity of the profession and its purposes--and how that becomes part of becoming a practitioner--which provides the possibility for giving meaning to discrete practices. And, in terms of thinking about the meaning of reflection in learning to teach, the meaning of practices for self as teacher are not simply the result of the solitary self's reflection on his or her own work;

> Practices...are cooperative activities whose constitutive rules are established socially; the standards of excellence that correspond to them on the level of this or that practice originate much further back than the solitary practitioner. (Ricoeur, 1992, p. 176).

Writing in the hermeneutic vein, Ricoeur helps us to understand how our practices, like teaching practices, are deeply embedded in life and expressed through language and symbol, albeit never completely nor ever without possibility of creativity. Hermeneutics can provide a possibility for thinking about reflection in a more fertile way. From a hermeneutic perspective, reflection is focused on the entire educational process rather than simply on outcomes or objects of reflection (Gallagher, 1992). In exploring the connections between hermeneutics and education, Gallagher joins a tradition of educational thought which emphasizes the importance of the learning process as much, if not more so, than what counts as measurable outcomes. The hermeneutical process includes the ability to develop understanding, but understanding, from a hermeneutic perspective, also includes a practice of interpretation, one that is applied to self-understanding.

Such understanding is developed through an "educative practice of interpretation" but one that leads to "a transformative self-understanding that comes through interpretation" (Gallagher, 1992, p. 330). The process of learning in hermeneutic terms is a more "adequate paradigm" in educational contexts according to Gallagher, because there is no learning (understanding) without a process of interpretation, and without applying that understanding to something (1992, p. 331). Meaning, suggests Ricoeur, is "a meaning for someone" and for that person, "interpreting the text of an action is interpreting himself or herself" (1992, p. 179). A hermeneutic approach to reflection is one that recognizes how we are immersed in history and life but at the same time how that also offers both limits and possibilities for understanding.

An interpretative notion of reflective thinking has precedents in educational theory. For one, Dewey championed the importance of starting with lived experience as a basis for understanding. He emphasized the importance of linking practical experience and intellectual work:

> Concrete educational experience is the primary source of all inquiry and reflection because it sets the problems, and tests, modifies, confirms or refutes the conclusions of intellectual investigation. (1929, p.56)

A dominant theme that weaves through Dewey's work is the need for an approach whereby experience can be meaningfully constituted as part of our thought about education. For Dewey, it is the quality of experience that gives meaning and weight to thought including ethical thinking (Tiles, 1988, p. 12). Inquiry in Dewey's terms is very much about building a unity between experience, knowing, and action. Moreover, the self is necessarily incomplete without a reflective and social engagement with experience. Dewey's discussion of learning from experience thus parallels the hermeneutical nature of reflection discussed by Gallagher, who builds on Gadamer's hermeneutics: that reflection is always a form of self-reflection for the learner in that the learner is able to discover his or her own possibilities (1992, p. 144-145).

Reading through some of Dewey's writings from early in this century it is evident that he foresaw many of the problems encountered today in the education of teachers. One of the main problems, as Sarason re-emphasizes in a recent book, is that teacher education does not adequately prepare teachers for life in real classrooms (1993, p. 137). He describes the problem in much the same way that Dewey might have nearly a century earlier. Sarason contends that current teacher education programs fail to nurture what he sees as the primary aim of education: "fostering a sense of discovery and growth in the learning process of students and teachers" (1993, p. 135-36). Instead, he suggests,

> The preparation of such personnel [student teachers] should begin not with theory or history or research findings or pedagogical technique but with concrete issues of classroom life: the practical, inevitable, action-requiring issues on the basis of which the would-be teacher can judge and utilize theory and research. (p. 137)

What is missing for student teachers is not just the ability to practice skillfully but a way to interact interpretively with classroom and school situations *and* theoretical knowledge of teaching. To the extent that there can be either an over-emphasis on survival or practical skills without critical awareness, or lack of support for critical thinking because of the structure of practicum experiences, possibilities for fostering alternative forms of teaching become diminished. These are not new insights. Dewey's advocacy for a

reflective approach to teacher education written nearly a century ago still rings clearly and compellingly:

> The thing needful is improvement of education, not simply by turning out teachers who can do better the things that are now necessary to do, but rather by changing the conception of what constitutes education. (1904, p. 338)

While this might sound like Dewey was placing undue responsibility on the shoulders of student teachers for education in general, Dewey was in fact pointing to the productive and creative responsibilities inherent in teaching and learning. In terms of teacher education then, there is a deep and abiding responsibility to help new teachers understand "what constitutes education". This is an understanding that cannot escape the mediation of self and identity.

The Responsibility for Fostering Identity in Becoming a Teacher

> Our concept of the self is greatly enriched by this relation between interpretation of the text of action and self-interpretation.
>
> Ricoeur, 1992, p. 179

> When we talk about the process of distancing oneself from one's thoughts, reflecting better to gain perspectives, does this not imply something about the knower? Are we not in some way talking about the forming of self?
>
> Bruner, 1986, p. 129

a. *The unsatisfactory nature of individual reflection on the self*

I have tried to show in this study that student teachers' questions arose around certain nodal points of experienced difficulty, sometimes marked by crisis, sometimes marked by extreme doubts about becoming a teacher. Those experiences of difficulty often revolved around questions of identity and self in relation to becoming a teacher. Those are questions that are neither easily resolved, nor as I attempted to argue above, replaced by a focus on abstracted practical knowledge.

Another level of the responsibility of teacher education, then, has much to do with questions of fostering self and identity as teachers. Such a responsibility goes beyond asking student teachers to reflect on the self in an individualistic and detached way. I have attempted to sustain the argument in this study that the way reflection has largely been appropriated in teacher education is one that over-emphasizes self-reliance and the modern view of the individual. As Taylor argues, modern culture especially promotes the idea that the person discovers his or her own way in the world, independent of the very engagement

in what would make the self possible in the first place, something he terms "webs of interlocution";

> a common picture of the self, as (at least potentially and ideally) drawing its purposes, goals, and life-plans out of itself, seeking "relationships" only insofar as they are "fulfilling", is largely based on ignoring our embedding in webs of interlocution. (1989, p. 38-39)

In terms of learning about teaching, that way of conceiving self as a source of reflection places too much responsibility on the individual student teacher and tends to reinforce ideological views of individualized subjectivity. The negative quality of student teachers' experiences in part point to the limitations of reflection as the work of a solitary and self-reliant subjectivity. The idea that "teachers are self-made", is according to Britzman, one of the dominant and enduring "myths" of becoming a teacher. The "natural" or "born teacher", the teacher as "self-made" is a powerful myth that perpetuates a sense of false autonomy and mystifies the process of becoming a teacher (Britzman, 1991, p. 232).

However, for some of the student teachers who related their experienced to me there was not a great deal of comfort or satisfaction in attributing success to some mysterious natural capacity. Mary, for instance, realized that learning to teach was not just a "natural thing". She came to understand that teaching is something that can be learned but requires a reflective engagement with practices, something that was for her frustratingly absent in her teaching education program:

> At university I kept waiting for someone to tell me how to teach, and nobody ever did. So I thought, well, it's got to be a natural thing then. And it isn't. I mean there are lots of things, like questioning, like drawing all the kids of the class in...you've got to be actually conscious of doing that because it's just not natural.

Mary had the confidence and maturity to cope with the limitations of her teacher education experiences. But it is not uncommon for student teachers to feel a sense of failure and disappointment, one that ideological beliefs may conceal but not entirely alleviate. Rather than encouraging an understanding of how learning to teach requires an interpretive openness to various texts of teaching and how the self grows through those interpretive possibilities, the self may be blamed for failure and disappointment.

For student teachers reflection does not necessarily ameliorate that sense of isolation and failure especially if reflection is understood and encouraged as a practice of reflecting only on the self by a self. It attributes the self as the source of reflection and competence--which as I have argued is problematic and indeed often disturbing for student teachers. Paul, another mature student teacher wrote about his experiences of reflection.

Recognizing the solipsistic nature of reflection, he began to realize that learning about teaching and what teaching means required a shift from a narrow focus on self:

> My journal entries focus on me, me, me. In order to change this focus, I must continually ask myself "why am I doing what I am doing?" Is it for me or the students? What is important here? This will allow me to see things from a different perspective. What is the main purpose of what I am doing?

Earlier I had mentioned Ricoeur's notion of a hermeneutics of the self whereby possibilities for identity and understanding grow out a kind of interpretive openness to others. Paul's dissatisfaction with reflection shows an awareness that his teaching self is something that can emerge through an openness to the needs of his students guided by an orientation to broader perspectives and purposes. He realized the emptiness of simply reflecting on "me" in the absence of consideration for others.

Long before reflection was a code word in teacher education, the social psychologist George Herbert Mead wrote about the "meagerness of individual experiences in isolation from the processes of social experience" (1934, p. 133). Mead argued for an understanding of self that grows out of interaction with others. Mead understood reflection to be significant as a condition for the development of self and mind, but a reflective process that is enabled by, and indeed is only possible through, social interaction. To put it in other terms, to focus too much on the self as an object and source of reflection is to deny the way the self is created as a narrative possibility within discourses and practices. Poststructural critics echo Mead's view of the development of self: that "to treat the 'I', the feeling or experience of individual identity, as the main ontological category is to repress history itself" (Sarup, 1989, p.142). Jerome Bruner too writes about a notion of self that is rooted in history and social interaction:

> Selves are not isolated nuclei of consciousness locked in the head, but are "distributed" interpersonally. Nor do Selves arise rootlessly in response only to the present; they take meaning as well from the historical circumstances that gave shape to the culture of which they are an expression. (1990, p. 138)

b. *Beginning to understand reflection as a narrative of self and identity*

In the previous chapter I devoted a section to the argument that one of the major difficulties student teachers experience is to develop an understanding of self and an identity of teaching. As I tried to show student teachers experience considerable difficulty in attempting to draw meaningful connections between their personal experiences, what Kerby (1991) termed "pre-narrative" experiences and their experiences of learning to teach. Those kinds of concerns emerged out of experienced crises in the transition from university-based teacher education to school classroom practices.

As much as wanting to achieve immediate competence, those students expressed a strong desire to understand teaching in terms of broader interests. They expressed strong desires to understand possible teaching identities. That sense of teaching self is engendered not through the kind of self reflection Paul, cited above, wrote about. Rather, there is a requirement for a more narrative engagement with both past and new experiences; as Kerby notes, "life is inherently of a narrative structure that we make explicit when we reflect upon our past and our possible future" (1991, p. 40). And it is the opportunity to link personal narratives with a broader, especially ethical purpose that provides the possibility for meaningful identity (Ricoeur, 1992; Taylor, 1989). Kerby explains further that

> the worlds that are opened up by narratives offer new possibilities to the reading or listening subject; they are worlds that both involve and affect the subject. In the end such experiences may lead to an active refiguration of the subject's own world and practices, giving them new significance and previously unseen purposes--which is in effect, to change the character of the subject. (1991, p. 62)

Some of the experiences of crisis I related previously can be understood as a crisis of the self, a denial of the narrative and reflective possibilities accorded through language and interaction with others. Instead, as Britzman has shown so well, the development of a sense of identity and alternative possibilities for developing an identity of teaching tend to be submerged under ideological discourses. Those discourses tend to discourage alternative ways to understand teaching other than the teacher as being self-made or expert purveyor of knowledge. The ideology of self-sufficiency leads to a restricted sense of reflection, one that does not extend outwards in an interpretive sense.

Of course such a focus on self may be interpreted simply as a symptom of immaturity as a teacher resulting from real life anxieties and difficulties. For example, in the Faculty of Education (1989) document which recommends a reflective approach to teaching, the importance of first attending to student teachers' concerns is emphasized;

> The concerns model suggests that teachers at the beginning of their preservice experience have more intense concern. [for example], *Self concerns* include questions about their adequacy and potential to be successful as teachers, their ability to control students, uncertainty about whether or not they know enough subject matter, and an absence of real, intense concerns about the effects of their teaching on students. (1989, p. 28)

Such concerns cannot be ignored in terms of the way they are experienced by student teachers. For some of the students I worked with the kinds of self-concerns described in the quote were surely pressing and legitimate concerns. But what can be legitimately questioned is how and in what direction concerns are resolved. Bob, Sam, Karen, Mary, Astrid--indeed all the students I worked closely with--expressed at one time

or another concerns in terms discussed above. They were particularly disturbed by questions of classroom management and teacher control, for example.

Becoming competent in school-based practicum experiences may mean that the student teacher can, in fact, learn to control students. According to the literature cited in the Faculty report the concerns-based model is clearly developmental in nature. As the student teacher progresses or matures, concerns about self are transcended; indeed as the student teacher becomes a teacher, concerns about "tasks" and "impacts" become more predominant. It is almost as if the self can be taken for granted and the student teacher more smoothly becomes a competent and professional teacher.

Despite the fact, however, that student teachers were able to practice more control in the classroom, some of those same students also expressed what could best described as rather hollow feelings--the practice of control did not entirely satisfy the craving to understand better and to experience other possibilities. I concur with Britzman's assessment that sometimes practical concerns are resolved in terms of what she calls the dominant myths of becoming a teacher, myths which valorize the independent teacher as expert, controller of knowledge and children, one who is largely self-made. Yet in working closely with the student teachers who shared their stories with me I also came to seriously doubt that the kind of myths Britzman discusses give satisfaction. I found it disturbing that possibilities for self-understanding as teachers was lost or diminished.

I do believe that the examples of student teachers' reflective experiences I have shared in this study show that student teachers require a way to move beyond self, thought of in ego-centred terms, to an understanding of self that appropriated understanding of teaching and others. In many respects the student teachers who I worked with had an incipient sense of teaching as being more than a repertoire of skills. They experienced glimmerings that becoming a teacher, in Aoki's terms, has much to do with the struggle to understand, "so we can and hear who we *are* as teachers" (1992, p. 27; italics in original).

"Who we are as teachers?" As I worked with student teachers in university courses and school practica I wondered together with student teachers if that question was really ever asked. Or to put it in other terms, I wondered if there were really institutional and practical supports for exploring that question. Yet if the question was ignored or downplayed, student teachers nonetheless brought it up in their conversations with me. The question does offer opportunities for reflection. But it is a sense of reflection that is quite different from the way that it has been developed in the teacher education literature.

The way that student teachers experienced the notion of reflection was something implicit in the desire to tell stories, that through constructing stories through an interpretive

relationship with self, others, and texts, opportunities are encountered which offer possibilities for identity. Kerby puts this very nicely:

> Narrative...not only delivers over the past but is also the medium of our aspirations and desires, imaginatively expressing, in the stories we tell ourselves and those others that we hear and read, a possible future with its attendant joys and hardships and, hence, possible selves. (Kerby, 1991, p. 54)

The stories of student teachers show, I believe, the need and the possibilities for developing a sense of narrative. That sense of narrative is related to reflection: reflection as a narrative act creates possibilities for identity. I will relate a specific incident from my work during the course of the action research that relates to how Kerby writes about narrative above. It is an example of the kinds of difficulties student teachers encounter in learning about teaching in schools.

But it also shows, I believe, that those difficulties cannot be resolved through technical competence alone. In many respects, the story relates the desire to understand teaching in terms of identity. That is, the story shows that student teachers do want and need to explore the question of "what we are as teachers". That question also includes the way van Manen describes teaching's normative and implicit relational qualities and understanding the responsibilities of teaching that extend beyond teaching skill in a narrow or effective sense.

c. *A story about the relationship of identity to learning to teach*

As part of my work as an instructor of a secondary social studies curriculum and instruction course and subsequent consultant in a practicum setting, I worked with a group of six student teachers doing their practicum in a local high school. The six student teachers and I met once a week. We did not really set any strict parameters for the discussion. I sometimes suggested some general concerns based on my observations of their teaching. But more often a student started with a concern and that initiated discussion.

Some of those concerns arose from action research projects students were conducting as part of their course and practicum responsibilities. As part of my role as a faculty consultant, I attempted to serve as a critical friend in the discussion about their classroom observations and experiences which were the basis of their action research projects. The story focuses particularly on Martin, another student who participated in my action research study. I relate an extended part of my own journal, written after one of our weekly meetings:

> Martin jumped in barely before coffee cups were finished being stirred, animated by his concern about leading discussions, and his frustration at not being

able to move students beyond what he saw as fairly narrow interests and perspectives. Martin has been trying to engage students in discussions about poverty, a topic in the program of studies. He wants his students to be able to distinguish between "absolute" and "relative" poverty. What he has discovered thus far, however, is that students seem unwilling to transcend what he sees to be their own rather narrow perspectives on economic well-being. Martin claims students will uncritically claim that they will be able to get well-paying jobs, and will be able to buy "100,000 dollar houses"; or at least, that is their ambition. Martin is frustrated because in class discussions, students are not willing to entertain alternative possibilities, or to countenance critical reflection on what are essentially ideologically-formed views of success. He is frustrated by the absence of genuine discussion in the classroom, where students would go beyond taken-for granted views, and would willingly engage in a critique of those views. If that could happen, Martin would feel some real learning would be happening in his social studies classroom.

Martin's description of his experiences sparks a spirited discussion among members of our group. Others share similar experiences in the difficulty of getting students to "really" open up. There is a feeling that teaching only really scratches the surface, if at all, of what students experience, think, and feel. The content of social studies only seems to run as a parallel current to the that of everyday life and struggles. There seems to be a common question about how social studies and teaching can penetrate an invisible wall that seems to separate what students accept in the class, and what students really think and live outside of school. As several of the action research projects deal with fostering student interest in social studies, there are glimmerings of awareness that interest does not simply grow out of the application of techniques of teaching and classroom organization.

Our discussion seemed to enlarge, however. In terms of the "commonplaces" we have used as a structure for understanding in the university class, questions are raised about one of those: the milieu: specifically, the culture and background of the kids in school. It is noted that most kids in the school come from working class and immigrant families of a diversity of cultural backgrounds. We discuss how that influences attitudes towards school and work and success. We begin to question the purpose of social studies and criticism is heard about the narrow focus on content that appears to mark much social studies teaching in the high school.

To some extent, the conversation goes in circles. We come back to Martin's concern: how do you run good discussions anyway in a high school class? Particularly with a group of "non-academic students"? A few practical ideas are shared: strategies some have tried in their classrooms, or what they have observed their cooperating teachers do. But almost simultaneously, the discussion creeps up to another level: questions arise about the experiences of non-academic students in school and why there is so much passivity. There is a not so implied criticism of channeling kids into different streams. There is an attempt to see through the veils of indifference put up by kids, and the sparks of interest, anger, questioning that lie underneath. But there is also some resignation--this is the way it is, and we do have to teach this "stuff" (the word stuff has attained greater currency, it seems in recent discussions with student teachers).

And so it goes. But in this discussion about discussion, we perhaps have landed down at times on deeper questions about teaching, and what education means to kids. As I drive home after our Wednesday afternoon coffee club, I worry about whether this collective form of faculty consulting will really help each student teacher deal with the immediate concerns of the practicum, concerns which are embedded in their action research questions. But at the same time, I see that their action research questions, and perhaps more importantly, the collaborative

> form of reflection we are attempting to practice has opened some doors to thought about the meaning of being a teacher, and to think more genuinely how we as teachers, are there for others, who are also trying to make sense of the world.

Martin stands out for me in this memory of a particular encounter with a group of student teachers. In addition to the meeting recounted above, I also had several discussions with Martin following observations of his teaching. In fact, I was somewhat baffled by Martin's concern about discussion. In his classes--and I had expressed this to him on several occasions--I was frustrated with his approach to teaching which was dominated by giving students notes on an overhead projector. Martin was aware of this but felt constrained by the context and expectations of his cooperating teacher. As well as that, however, he expressed a strong responsibility to provide the students he was teaching a solid background in knowledge, something he felt he had been cheated of in his own school experience.

Martin related at length his own experiences of high school in a distant northern town. In his social studies class he had suffered, in his estimation, the negative effects of an incompetent and uncaring teacher. In order to do well on formal examinations, Martin had had to rely on his own study habits, but he was also aware that many of his classmates failed or did poorly because the teacher did not really teach. As he recounted to me in one of our conversations,

> I think one of the things that I kept saying to myself, even when I would study for those tests or for the departmental, "I would not wish this on anybody." I remember writing the "Why Do You Want to Be a Teacher?" essay when I first got here, and for the longest time I said it was probably because I wanted to be as good as those teachers I really liked and better than those I disliked, sort of a saviour-type thing, you know, never let someone go through that, and I think maybe I'll be a good teacher.

I am not attempting to entirely read Martin's motives for his own explanations about becoming a teacher. However, his experiences as well as those of the other student teachers I worked with began to shake the certainties of my work and understanding of practice and reflection. On the one hand, Martin's actual classroom practice could be read, as Britzman might suggest, as an ideological resolution of teacher as expert and controller. On the other hand, in both individual conversations, and as in the group discussion recounted above, there is much more going on. Like many other student teachers, Martin was attempting to give shape to an understanding of teaching, an understanding that could foster a sense of self as teacher and an understanding that could give meaning to practices.

Martin talked with me at considerable length about his hopes for teaching. He felt a strong mission to return to his home area. He was concerned about how his former classmates had been somehow cheated by poor teaching and felt a responsibility to be

different, to right the wrongs of his remembered experiences of teaching. I later re-read Martin's conversations with me in the context of Ricoeur's and Kerby's notions about narrative and the self. Martin's experiences confirms the idea that one's self and identity grows not out of self-reflection, but rather out of narrative possibility, that is, of story that has the potential to be told. Such a story includes the person's own history, but it is also related to some orientation; as Taylor suggests, "in order to make minimal sense of our lives, in order to have an identity, we need an orientation to the good" (1989, p. 47).

d. *Identity and the narrative quality of reflection*

I have tried to present an argument for understanding reflection in the context of coming to understand, in part, self as teacher. "The self...is essentially a being of reflexivity, coming to itself in its own narrational acts" (Kerby, 1991, p. 41). Narratives are of course always ongoing, never complete. I have no way of knowing whether Martin and other student teachers like him will act on the possibilities in their own narratives. But what does concern me is that the experiences of teacher education do not necessarily foster the disposition and orientation to open and learn from experiences which could lead to a narrative understanding of self and other, self and possibility, and the ongoing responsibility to learn about teaching. Martin was in fact rather bitter about his teacher education experience. He felt that both his university preparation and practical school experiences had let him down in terms of realizing an understanding of self as teacher through teaching practices and knowledge.

If there is a strong message that comes through in the stories of student teachers, it is that they are calling out to teacher educators, teacher education institutions, and the teaching profession in general to provide meaningful direction and guidance for becoming teachers. In the American context some teacher educators have viewed the Holmes Report (1986) for example, as an opportunity for realizing the reconceptualist critique of curriculum and schooling in the practice of teacher education (Beyer, 1989; Grumet, 1989; Pinar, 1989). Such a reconceptualization implies a renunciation of individualistic, applied science approaches to teacher and education, and a shift to an autobiographical and critical engagement with the language of educational discourse. Grumet articulates what a reconception of teacher education involves:

> This is our opportunity to reconceive the study of teaching so that we honor the complexity, the sensitivity, and the joyousness of those who do it well. The study of teaching is too personal, too complex to be reduced to a one year graduate program. It is an extended developmental process that needs to take place with other people over time. The study of teaching must accompany the student's own

> learning so that the student can develop the reflexive grasp and understanding of her own learning processes. (1989, p. 17)

Reform proposals like the Holmes report, and the Faculty of Education Report which initiated the present study are only proposals of course. The danger in some of the proposals is that they want to strengthen the professionalization of teacher education in the universities (Labaree, 1994, 1992). If the focus is too much on professional knowledge outside the context of lived experiences in the schools, there is a danger of reinforcing and reemphasizing the "rationalized authority" embedded in academic teacher education discourse (Labaree, 1994), a problem with which I started at the outset of this study.

While, as Labaree suggests, the professionalizaton of teacher education knowledge and practices within the university may be of benefit to the practitioners involved in those institutions, it has detrimental effects not only on productive relations with schools, but also for the experiences of our student teachers. If "reflection" is promoted in a context outside of ways to make sense of experience in a broad sense, it is a form of reflection that rings hollow indeed. If nothing else the stories of student teachers I have presented here show the need for collaborative and democratic relations between practitioners in universities and schools, the necessity for building real communities around the responsibility for bringing new teachers into the profession. We should, in other words, take seriously the postmodern challenge: to build meaningful narratives around lived experiences oriented by responsibilities to each other.

e. *Staying open to responsibility and possibility*

Perhaps there are deeper reasons too why we should be interested in fostering more thoughtful, non-technocratic orientations to teaching and pedagogy. David Levin, pondering what some people have called the pervasive feeling of "endism" in the global situation today (i.e., the end of progress, and certainly a deep-seated skepticism if not despair), talks about facing the future as a modern; and certainly as those who would still have faith in the power of education to make a difference, we are still caught to some extent in the modernist project. Levin admits, "Like other moderns, I shall face the future, gazing directly into it. But unlike earlier moderns, I face this future with more confusion, more uncertainty, more self-doubt, and more awareness of ambiguities and complexities." He goes on to raise a number of questions which shake the self-certainty and confidence we have in the enlightenment vision, to which our educational systems and hopes are not immune. After posing the incredible political, economic, and social difficulties facing us, battering "our oldest certainties", Levin asks.

> Who today still trusts in science and technology to solve all these problems? Who today believes in the rationality of technocratic administrations? Who today sees in the objectivity and value-neutrality for which science is our paradigm an unconditional good? Who today still believes in 'Man' and the 'science of Man'? Despair and depression, rooted in a very deep sense of hopelessness, are pervasive phenomena in our life-world. (1990, p. 83)

The recent embrace of reflection in teaching does seem to call on us to reflect on the meaning of reflection in education in ways that addresses nihilism, a responsibility that cannot be deferred by theories and thoughtless practices. Perhaps the most important question is what is it to *be* a reflective teacher? Aoki eloquently gives words to the concerns that underlie the turn to fostering more reflective practice when he characterizes the teacher as one who is "guided by the authority of the good in pedagogical situations, for embodied thoughtfulness that makes possible a living as human beings" (1989, p. 24).

Despite the difficulties inherent in various notions of reflection, there appears to be a greater propensity to come to terms with the meaning and practice of pedagogy. There is a growing recognition of the need to engage interpretively and collaboratively with those responsible for teaching and schools and to understand the experiences of becoming a teacher. There is perhaps a growing recognition of the need to shatter the theoretic gaze, to question the "I's eye" in Levin's terms, and to begin to listen to others, to practice an "ethics of the ear".

Mandelfelder (1990) writes of a sense of ethical responsibility "which has to do with the particular, which is an affirmation of the particular over the universal", a movement to let the other speak and be heard. It is with this sense of interpretation that attempted to listen to my students as they struggled to assume identities as teachers. This is a struggle that is fraught with tensionality but also shows how reflection is much more (or much different from) the rationalist notion of the theoretic gaze, or a theoretical understanding of the world. Reflection is much more a kind of being in the world, a situated sense-making. Such an orientation also questions, for us, as teacher-educators the dominance of our theories (of teaching, reflection), and asks that we turn our heads, to defer to the speaking of the other.

When we turn to the work of hermeneutic philosophers like Gadamer and Ricoeur, we can receive an enriched view of reflection, one that avoids the kind of retreat into subjectivism which is implicit, I have argued, in the way reflection is conceived in much of the mainstream teacher education literature. It is a review of reflection that relies on a creative interpretation of texts of teaching and experience, but one that remains open to continued possibility.

Gadamer helps us to think about the possibilities for being and understanding when he describes the importance of understanding the reflective capacity as a way to bring

experience into language: "it is part of experience itself that it seeks and finds words that express it", and not simply a reflection on a predetermined system of truths (1976, p. 377). The hermeneutic notion of reflection points to both the human need, and the human responsibility for understanding. Those needs and responsibilities cannot be assigned only to procedures and techniques, but must, in a sense, be rediscovered in our work with others.

In his recent novel, *The English Patient*, Michael Ondaatje describes the struggles of a young nurse to identify a mysterious and severely burned flyer who has fallen into her care at the end of the second world war. The flyer's only possession is a "commonplace book", a copy of Herodutus' *Histories*. Through a reading of the commonplace book, the nurse is drawn into the life and adventures of the flyer, but frustrated in her attempt to discover his identity:

> And in his commonplace book, his 1890 edition of Herodotus' *Histories*, are other fragments--maps, diary entries, writing entries, writings in many languages, paragraphs cut out of other books. *All that is missing is his own name.* There is still no clue to who he actually is, nameless, without rank or battalion or squadron. (1992, p. 96; italics added)

"*All that is missing is his own name.*" While frustrated in her attempts to discover the name of the flyer, the task of interpretation does not end. Her reading takes her further and begins also to bring her own identity into focus and question. In terms of teacher education perhaps too many practices attempt to name too quickly, to close down openness to the possibilities embedded in narratives yet to be. The nurse in *The English Patient* embodies, in the way she reads, possibilities for understanding reflection as something which is embedded in life and in responsibilities towards others. For the student teachers who generously shared their experiences with me for this study, the "name" was often missing. That is, the opportunity to explore their present and possible identities as teachers was not fully supported or made available as an aspect of their teacher education experiences. The experiences of those student teachers pose a challenge to teacher education to support meaningfully and practically an opportunity to name the experience of teaching in an ongoing and, indeed, reflective way. It is really, in many ways, a request to put reflection back into life itself.

From the end of one of my interviews:

> Q. (me): I think we've probably exhausted this for now.
> A. (Sam): Your questions are done?

POSTSCRIPT

Reflecting on Reflective Practice: Thinking Forward to Implications for Teacher Education

> In repetition, eternity is not something lost but something to be attained, not a lost actuality but a possibility yet to be seized, not something passed (past) but something to come, not something to recover but something toward which we must press forward.
> Caputo, 1987, p. 14-15

Reflecting on the study as recollection and repetition

Reflecting on the writing of this study after its writing is in part a process of recollection. In literal terms the act of recollection is to pick up and follow the strands of memory and meaning that are woven into the text as a whole, to gather and collect, and indeed even try to remember what one's original intentions were in the writing. Recollection is a conscious act of bringing closure to a journey. Written as a postscript to the study, it is a way of saying this is what I understand at this point and this is what I stand for.

As a way of reading back to interpret what has been written, recollection is a hermeneutic task. From a radical hermeneutic perspective, Caputo (1987) is critical, however, of hermeneutics as a process limited only to recollection. As he writes, "recollection says that everything important has already been" (p. 17). As a conclusion to this study then, recollection in Caputo's sense would mean to reiterate what has already been written and to recover meaning that is already present. It would be to offer the study as a closed text.

In reality it is difficult to recover a fixed and original meaning from the text of the study. For one thing, the process of writing has to be acknowledged as a way of coming into understanding, but never completely nor conclusively. The writing of this study did not begin with complete understanding of the question of reflective practice at the beginning and thus does not represent a simple accounting of a prior knowledge and awareness. That knowledge and awareness grew and changed with the responsibility to give words to experience and thought. There is a temporality to understanding and its telling that resists reduction to firm and unassailable conclusions.

Secondly, it is difficult to re-read the study and attempt to determine exactly what it was that I originally meant and intended. My reading of the text is already leading to other questions. As others read it, they too will find questions which cannot be answered by the text. An attempt at recollection through reading itself leads to new questions, criticisms, and different understandings. Indeed to recollect also means to summon the strength and courage to venture forth again, to admit that despite words frozen on paper, questions remain. And in a practical, lived sense, we need to find ways to realize our thinking and responsibility in our work and through our actions. This what Caputo refers to with his notion of "repetition" as a hermeneutic act: that there is a responsibility to "think forward", "that actuality must be continually produced, brought forth anew, again and again" (1987, p. 17).

Thus more than a simple recollection of the intentions and implications of the study, this conclusion attempts to think forward to some extent. It repeats some of the motifs of the study and their possible implications for further action as well as study. As repetition, this concluding statement wants to take responsibility for what the study has attempted to convey, which asks to think about the meaning and quality of reflection for student teachers. Although it comes at the end, stated as a set of implications--or possible "theses" for further action--it represents a beginning and challenge for understanding the work of teacher education and the difficulties of reflection about becoming a teacher.

Action research as thinking forward

Although the study was not explicitly about action research, it did attempt to show or to exemplify the process and movement of action research as a form of practical inquiry inspired by hermeneutics. As practical inquiry, action research is concerned with understanding practice and experience. But practices and experiences are mediated through language, which implies that our encounters with others and with particular situations present us with the need for interpretation and understanding.

The linguistic nature of experience is something we learn from Gadamer who reminds us that the languages we live in both constrain and produce possibilities for understanding. That is where action research can be informed and inspired by hermeneutics. As a hermeneutic practice action research seeks to find a productive tension between local circumstances and broader purposes and understandings, between what is known and what is unfamiliar. Action research accepts the particularities and difficulties of experience, but does not deny that understanding can be applied to questions of how we ought to conduct our practices. Part of the struggle of action research is to give language to

our experiences, and thus make those experiences amenable for conversation, writing, and reflection.

Action research inspired by hermeneutics therefore has both ethical and creative dimensions. Ricoeur (1991b) has talked about an "ethic of the word", which has to do with taking responsibility for the language we use, and for defining our identities and responsibilities; as Caputo also suggests, "Identity must be established, produced" (1987, p. 17). As practical inquiry, action research accepts the hermeneutic understanding of understanding--that it also implies application to our lives and to our relations with others. In looking to hermeneutics as a practical philosophy, Gadamer writes about the normative and ethical import of interpretation and understanding: "we try to find the best, the good, in our decisions and this is always a very concrete thing" (1979, p. 82).

Action research from a hermeneutic perspective is also creative in that sense. That is to say, action research as a hermeneutic process is not about simply reproducing prior understanding into present realities. Rather it is to learn something new, or different, from an interpretive engagement with our experiences. From a postmodern perspective, that is also to accept that there is always something that exceeds the known and what can be captured in concepts. A postmodern/hermeneutic perspective is willing to admit that our understandings are provisional, but that understanding can nonetheless change and enlarge.

I have attempted to develop my understanding of action research from a postmodern/hermeneutic perspective. From beginning with a fairly technical notion of implementing a reflective approach in a teacher education program, opening to the experiences of student teachers called into question a technical rationality that can still be embedded both in the practice of action research and conceptions of reflective practice. The experiences of student teachers instead called for a more interpretive approach. Along with certain postmodern critiques of knowledge and modernist practices, a hermeneutically-inspired action research questions our practices and the language we use to describe those practices. For example, I have attempted to show how reflective practice in teacher education has been shaped by forms of thinking that have persistent roots in modernist notions of individual subjectivity.

However, the action research project I became involved in and from which this study evolved began to show how the experiences of our students in the process of learning to become teachers exceeded the concept of reflection understood as an act of coherent subjectivity acting on an objective world. The experiences of reflection for student teachers also had a great deal to do with questions of identity, a struggle to understand self as teacher, and the desire to create a narrative understanding of self and the world. A postmodern hermeneutics is especially valuable for understanding subjectivity--

one that sees self-understanding and possibilities for identity formation following the development of understanding. Reflection, thought of as interpretive act, opens possibilities for identity and self.

Thus, in encountering difficulties in the world, action research inspired by hermeneutics begins to question the language that has appeared to support our actions in an unproblematic way. Or to put it in other terms, action research begins to question the certainty of theoretical constructs and their relationships to experiences. That movement is reflected in this study as an extended critique of the notion of reflective practice in teacher education. That critique led to a consequent search for different ways to conceive of reflection, ones that attend more to the lived difficulties of understanding what it is to become a teacher. However, in action research such an understanding points back also to our practices. From that perspective, the theory and practice of teacher education are not separate realms but inextricably linked in terms of responsibilities for understanding and action.

The following implications of the study for understanding reflective practice and the work of teacher education are thus offered in the spirit of hermeneutics. That implies a couple of things. First it means that the implications below are offered in a provisional way. They are in a sense possibilities for questions for further action research projects. Our work with students, whether in schools or faculties of education in universities calls on us to act, hopefully with certain degrees of wisdom and caring. But also, to cite Caputo, "We act not on the basis of unshakable grounds but in order to do what we can, taking what action as seems wise, and not without misgivings (1987, p.239).

Second, it is also to say that this study is offered as a text for reading, for critique, and for further understanding. For Ricoeur, it is precisely the nature of the text that it belongs to neither author or reader. It is the text that affords the possibility for reflection, and upon that reflection, both relinquishment and appropriation.

As a concluding part of the text the following statements of implication--theses derived from the study--are offered in the hope for building possibilities for teaching and teacher education, possibilities that take seriously the idea that reflection is integrally related to the question of what it means to be a teacher.

Theses

1. Reflective practice is a significant and meaningful idea for teacher education. As an idea, it represents a placeholder for ways to imagine how teaching might be learned and practiced in an alternative manner from technical-rational approaches to professional knowledge and practice.

2. Postmodern/ hermeneutic philosophies inform an understanding of reflection that question subjectivist and modernist views of reflection. Postmodern views of subjectivity point to the limitations of reflection as the work of a solitary and self-reliant subjectivity.

3. Difficulties in learning to teach are not simply technical difficulties or difficulties of immediate practice. Reflection is integrally related to questions of purpose, self, and identity.

4. As an interpretive practice, reflection has narrative qualities in that it involves the active emplotment and linking of stories of self, other, texts of teaching and learning to teach, and an understanding of the ethical dimensions of being a teacher. Reflection is an experience of coming to self-understanding through interpretive appropriation of experiences in teacher education.

5. The question of identity is central to the experience of becoming a teacher. Student teachers require support for exploring their understandings of what it means to be a teacher. Reflection on identity is an ontological concern, a concern for who the teacher is and the possibilities for self. Learning how to teach cannot be separated from an understanding of who a teacher is or can be. A focus on identity implies that student teachers require pedagogic support to connect practical aspects of teaching with wider questions of purpose and direction.

6. Student teachers require more concrete experiences in schools and classrooms, but the nature of that experience cannot be assumed to simply lead to reflective and meaningful learning. Experience becomes meaningful and educational when it becomes reflected experience. Possibilities for self and identity formation are related to meaningful social engagements and reflective experiences with others in sites of practice.

7. Student teachers require a more practical teacher education experience, but the quality of the practical should be more than emphasis on a narrow technical orientation. Overemphasizing immediate technical proficiency is at the cost of reflective understanding and possibilities for self as teacher in an ongoing way. Teaching practices have to be understood in relation to self-understanding as a teacher and the ethical dimensions of teaching practice.

8. The university as a modernist institution has affected a dualism between theory and practice in the experiences of learning about teaching. Student teachers experience considerable difficulty in the transition from university-based teacher education to school-based experience, suggesting a need for collaborative approaches between teacher educators and schools and teachers for the preparation of teachers.

9. Teacher education programs are often experienced by student teachers in a fragmented way. A reflective approach to becoming a teacher entails a more coordinated focus on the relationships among elements of a program, including the university course components and field experiences.

10. Teacher education is an ongoing, life long process. Initial teacher preparation should foster the capacity and possibility for continued learning as an aspect of collaborative teacher education.

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