The Architecture of a [s]ocial [e]ducation:

A Self- Study in Building a [s]ocial [e]ducation Experience

A DISSERTATION PRESENTED TO:
THE FACULTY OF THE COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT IN THE REQUIREMENT FOR

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION IN CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

By

DEBRA D. SHULSKY, B.A., M. Ed.

DECEMBER, 2010

Acknowledgment

This dissertation is offered as a gift for all my ‘teachers’ along the way.
You each taught me so much over the course of this journey.

My boys, Joe and Stone, you taught me about unconditional support and love.

My parents, you taught me about unwavering commitment to my core beliefs.

My sisters, Linn and Lori, you taught me to live my passion with no excuses.

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Cam, you taught me to trust in the journey.

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Rick, you taught me to never to apologize for my passion.

Social Education Crew, you taught me how to not take myself so seriously and have fun!

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An Abstract
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Abstract

As architects of our curricula, teacher educators need access to architectural digests that catalogue ways in which we can create content specific methods courses that empower students to be their own designers of education. This self-study offers an entry in such an educational digest of practice through the exploration of the practice of an elementary Social Studies methods instructor, teaching from the paradigm of a social education. Built upon the pyramidal structure of a social education as access to critical awakening, freedom and transformative action this study offers sketches of my teaching practice as guided by the following inquiries: How will I construct a meaningful social education experience for students? What might be the far- reaching possibilities of such an experience on the students' creation of their own *being as* educators?

At its foundation, this self-study is the story of my practice from varied perspectives. The layered narratives of this study metaphorically construct the multiple-storied structure that is the course. The first level houses the blueprints, redesigns, and tools of renovation. The research offers insights into the direction and extent of the redesign of the course over time. The story of the course is further explored through a paralleled chronological analysis of the doctoral readings and reflections explored and produced as a result of my dual role as both methods instructor and doctoral student.

The second level of this study is home to the inhabitants of those who experienced living in the course. The voices of the residents of the course can be distinguished in three ways. First is the voice of the students while in the course.

Student teachers and first year teachers who took the course comprise the second category of voices heard in this study. Lastly my own voice is offered as I lived alongside students during the course.

The third story of this research houses the architectural firm that offers personal support as I develop my course designs. My collaboration with other architects of social education cultivates creative synergy and a strong mentorship in the development of my teacher knowledge as a teacher educator devoted to creating social education experiences.

The snapshots of practice offered in this study present the challenges and successes of a novice teacher educator committed to understanding the impact of her course on the burgeoning teaching careers of her former students. In the end, it is offered as a possible blueprint of practice as others construct their educational courses.

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POURING THE FOUNDATION: AN INTRODUCTION

Introduction

It was five a.m. in the morning as I trudged, wet with mist, through the lowland rainforests of Northern Guatemala. I had lain awake the night before in anticipation of this trek through the jungle to the ancient Mayan ruins of Tikal. Nothing I could have imagined would prepare me for the complete sensory and spiritual experience of stepping from the rainforest into the Grand Plaza in one of the largest archeological sites ever excavated. I was first moved by the grandeur of the space that included two flanking pyramids, numerous stone carved altars and a ball court. I felt small within the square of such massive stone structures. However, I could imagine being one of 60,0000 Mayans bustling through this sociopolitical center of Mayan culture at its apex. I could hear the voices of the priests as they stood at the altars offering the heavens sacrifices in the name of the Mayan rulers. I wondered how these colossal structures were imagined. Why were they designed as they were? How can structures erected as early as 300 A.D. offer such a powerful voice in the modern world (Demarest, 2004)?

It is easy to describe a place, which one has visited with the wonder of an extraordinary experience when in an exotic and foreign land. Often, this alone gives a powerful voice to the structures discovered in our travels throughout the world. However, I contend that power lies not in the impact of a singular edifice, but in its placement within the spectrum of eons, a placement that moves beyond the simplistic erection of a temple or burial chamber. It is the collective voice of worldwide pyramids, walls, and other structures over a breath of time that offers poignant messages. For me, the message offers an artful expression of humanity. Such expression echoes the fears, challenges, joys, and pursuits of civilizations both past and present. The existence of structures, such as the Great Wall of

China, the Great Pyramids of Egypt, or the temples of Tibet move well beyond practical construction of a given civilization. Such structures tell a story of a culture. When we view structures collectively, we can see the story of seemingly disconnected civilizations and peoples can be connected. Architecture has the capability to create the collective story of humanity across civilizations and historical time. This idea expands the isolated historical moment of a structure and speaks to the far-reaching, often accidental, impact of architecture as an artful expression of civilizations. Drexler (1971) avows,

> We could think of architecture not as a thing, but as a process for perfecting the earth…If you think of most buildings as a way of perfecting the earth, they need not exist before our eyes as discrete objects, as things set in the landscape (as cited in Aoki, 1971, p.4).

Drexler challenges us to see construction beyond the present moment of the formation of an isolated building and seek a holistic vision of the artful process of architecture as transformative being in the world. For me, Drexler's proposition powerfully aligns with the art of teaching. As an educator, I am driven to expose the panoramic landscape of the teaching craft. Such a landscape calls students to seek a vista beyond the *doing* of an undergraduate education student and focus upon the collective experience of the *being* of teacher.

As a teacher educator, my goal is to offer students a holistic experience that lives beyond the construction of lesson plans and the engaging models of an Elementary Social Studies Methods course. I aspire to engage students to look beyond the moment of an individual assignment and see the larger impact of the experience on their beings as future teachers. Like an architect, I struggle to create an experience that lives beyond the

functionality of everyday living and becomes an experience that potentially inspires beyond that of a limited visit to a 12-week course. In the current educational landscape, dominated by test-laden accountability structures, I seek the innovation of architects as they pursue new ways to engage in the art of building in a world with changing needs, constraints of space and limited resources. With these larger visions guiding the design of the Elementary Social Studies Methods course that I teach, I continually sketch and re-sketch a course built upon the foundation of a social education.

Collectively, these sketches present a holistic view of my work as a teacher educator within my own architectural portfolio, a portfolio explored through inquiries and insights of both its builder and inhabitants. As teacher and curriculum maker of the course, I constantly review the blueprint of the experience as guided by two framing queries: How will I construct a meaningful social education experience for students? What might be the far- reaching possibilities of such an experience on the students' creation of their own *being as* educators?

Framed by these inquires, the course design is modified and inspired by my own experience as the instructor and student of social education, and the reactions, reflections and resistance of students living the experience of the class. Any modifications to the structure of the experience are guided by a Self-Study of the final construction of the course. Such research methodology allows both immediate modification of the design of the course and long- range reconstruction of the course. In other words, I have access to real time needs of the class while students and I live in the experience. Yet, in the final analysis, self-study offers me access to a panoramic view of the design of the course impacting the next generation of students. Both views offer powerful insights for my

practice as a teacher educator who is committed to creating an experience of learning, deeply rooted in a social education. This paper or "architectural portfolio" offers the self-study of my struggle to build a solid, foundational experience of a social education within an elementary Social Studies methods class.

Discovering My Design

To understand the style of an architect it is important to understand the way in which she or he combine and integrate a wide range of design elements. For instance, various architects may use the same design elements in distinctive ways, resulting in varied degrees of overall design outcome or impact. This is true in the study of my work. To understand the vision of my course, it becomes necessary to explore the design elements that structure it and the varied ways I have combined, rejected or re-framed them into the design of the course.

In many ways, I discovered the design elements of Social Education right alongside of my students. As a graduate assistant to an elementary Social Studies methods instructor, I was presented a different design approach for Social Studies curricula; one founded on something called Social Education. I remember thinking, as I listened to Dr. McCormack explain the grounding of her course, that this was merely a semantic difference. She spoke of her course as a course in Social Education. I naively collapsed this "new term" with the traditional discipline of Social Studies. However, through continued observation of Dr. McCormack's teaching and my own experience in a Social Education Masters course, I soon realized that Social Education was far removed from the traditional framework of Social Studies as I knew it. This insight was exposed as I simultaneously taught two sections of the methods course independent of Dr. McCormack and continued to engage in

Masters level Social Education coursework. This layered experience allowed me to begin to distinguish for myself, what I would coin the pillars of Social Education.

In architecture, pillars are isolated vertical support structures that offer a stabilizing function (Burden, 2000). They offer design details in the form of intricate or simple stone carvings that can distract visitors of such structures from the functionality of their role as supportive elements. When I approached the idea of Social Education within Dr. McCormacks's course, I focused upon the intricate details of the course or the carvings of the class. I thought about the topics selected for exploration, strategies used to engage the students, emergent themes of the course, and ways in which to move learning beyond the classroom. In short, I focused on individual design elements of the course removed from the panoramic view of the experience of the class. This attention to the detailed elements of the course lead to my articulation of the self- proclaimed pillars of critical questioning, social justice and action, the supporting structures of Social Education (Kincheloe, 2005; Kozol, 2005; Winn, 2004; Lowen, 1996).

The basis of the curriculum for the methods course in my first spring semester was centered upon critical questioning of the content in which our students were engaged. Beyond higher levels of questioning, the course challenged students' critical consideration of the assumptions behind the material offered as "truth" and the perspectives absent within the content (Loewen, 2007). This approach encouraged students to move beyond blind acceptance of the standards and content presented in the area of Social Studies and pushed them to consider multiple perspectives within the disciplines of Social Education.

For me, the practice of rigorous critical questioning offered me an essential tool to my practice as a teacher educator. Such critical analysis brought a new level of

consciousness concerning the Social Studies curriculum as a whole, the evaluation of my past teaching practices and the direction of my future as a teacher educator. In short, critical questioning became the hammer with which I began to construct a framework for teaching Social Education for both students and myself.

With a critical approach to Social Studies (Kincheloe, 2005) came a focus on issues of social justice; equity in voice within both the curriculum and the classroom as a whole. Dr. McCormack and I created lessons that emphasized the missing voices in Social Studies, such as Native American perspectives, the voice of women and the often ignored contributions of the minority peoples of the world such as the Maya and their descendents. The exposure to these missing voices offered students a divergent approach to the mandated curriculum presented by the state; this divergence modeled the possibility of a critical and rich elementary Social Studies curriculum. The realization of Social Justice as a pillar of Social Education validated my past teaching practice and began to connect Social Education to my own approach to teaching. As a teacher who was troubled by the missing voices of marginalized peoples in the Social Studies curriculum and committed to illuminating them in her classroom, this validation created a tangible experience to connect with my forming ideas about Social Education.

As a high school American history teacher, I always felt as if the students missed the connections between past and present actions. I tried to meaningfully connect the historical content to students' lives in an effort to inspire them to action in their current realities. Yet, I continually felt as if I failed to help them bridge this connection. In working with Dr. McCormack and the elementary pre-service teachers, I began to see the potential to solidify such a connection in a more direct way. Through assignments looking beyond

the classroom door, including unique field trips to Neighborhood Art Installations and the design of service learning projects, our students linked the Social Studies curriculum to real life meaningful action available to students. This experience with Social Education offered me a missing link in my former practice. Although I connected subject matter in a relevant way to the lives of teenagers, I had failed to ask the next question: Now what? Therefore, the knowledge remained distant from actions made in the form of social activism, self-advocacy, or basic civic responsibility. In the distinction of this pillar, I had found the support to consider how I could meaningfully tie learning to action beyond the classroom.

When approaching an edifice that incorporates pillars, it is easy to be drawn to the details of a stone-carved Doric or Ionic column and negate the foundation from which they emerge. My early understanding of Social Education was much like this as I distinguished the pillars of Social Education. My simplistic articulation of the pillars of Social Education had offered an understanding of how they might stand in my practice as a Social Education methods instructor. In the pillars, I had experienced the detailed, individual design elements of the course. Yet, I had viewed these pillars removed from the panoramic vision of the class experience. In other words, I had failed to see the foundation from which the pillars were grounded. With this limited view of Social Education, I entered the doctoral program and found myself in rigorous pursuit of a deeper understanding of Social Education, its foundational theories and its application to my practice. Now three years into my doctoral studies, I have come to view more clearly the foundations from which these self-proclaimed pillars emerge. The pouring of this foundation has led me to both redefine Social Education and reframe how it lives in my practice.

Pouring the Foundation: From Social Education to a [s]ocial [e]ducation

In my early years of exploration, I viewed Social Education as a subject area. I sought to find the elements of such a subject, so that I could teach it. I was seeking the design elements that, when integrated, would construct a Social Education class. However, despite the establishment of the pillars of Social Education, I felt there was something more. From what base did these pillars emerge? What is the essence of the "structure" of Social Education beyond the distinction of its supporting pillars?

It was not until recently that I have made distinctions regarding a *capital S* Social Education. It is not a subject area. It is not a single program area in a college of education. It is more than an approach to teaching. Through paralleled journeys as both student and teacher, I have modified my understanding of Social Education as something more expansive in nature. Up to this point, I have related to Social Education, conscious or unconsciously, as a better and more transformative way to approach traditional Social Studies curriculums. The result of this approach is that students walk away with elements of Social Education, such as the integration of pop culture, the importance of critical thinking and the imperative need for multiple perspectives. Although, I find these important, I feel this view is limiting in the landscape of today's schools.

As the architect of the course, I feel the need to expand the view of the course in an effort to ensure the most impactful placement of Social Education within the elementary schools students will teach. Within the comments of my students, I hear that Social Education is a way to teach Social Studies. However, my concern is that Social Studies is rarely or spottily taught at the elementary level. Seventy one percent of school districts report that instructional time within the elementary setting was reduced or eliminated in at

least one other subject in order to direct time to reading or math (Azzam, Perkins-Gough, & Thiers, 2006). How does this affect the translation of Social Education when viewed as a subject area or just meaningful teaching strategies? With this in mind, I began to seek deeper meaning within the foundational readings in Social Education and their relationship to my practice. In revisiting many of the readings and journaling about what I feel offers the supporting design elements of *capital S* Social Education, I have come to claim *a social education.*

A social education is one that is about being or becoming in the world. An education of possibility in which the subjects [learners] understand that learning, or as Freire (1998) calls it "formation," is a continual process of becoming. It is a life-long process--one that is messy, confrontational, and tied to experience. In short, for Freire (1998) and myself this continual search of becoming is the essence of the human condition. In this refined space, I have considered what frames such an education.

In architecture, the spirit of a building is most obviously expressed by the choice of shape for the structure. Many like the straight lines and uniformity of rectangular spaces, while others prefer the curved shapes of the arch. Regardless of the aesthetic nature of a building, its shape is key to the overall stability of the design. Although rectangular structures are most common, they are unstable. In fact, rectangular buildings can find added stability with the use of the most important shape in architecture, the triangle (Teachers Domain, 2009). The Great Pyramids of Egypt are a famous example of the long - standing strength of structures conceived around the triangular shape. Aligned with this notion, I have distinguished a triadic frame that offers a solid and strong structure from

which to build my course. At this point in my journey, I offer a social education as an experience of awakening, access to freedom, and an avenue to transformative action.

Mystical Connections: An Awakening

There is a mystical quality to a pyramid. It does not matter if I stand in front of the pyramidal entrance of the Lourve or at the base of Chichen Itza in Mexico; I am moved by the spiritual nature of the shape of such edifices. Historically, many pyramidal spaces were the center of spiritual activity, a place in which humanities' connection to the natural or spiritual world beyond reach is of primary concern. The Maya designed their pyramidal complexes to align with the solar system connecting them to the cosmic world of the stars (Lost Civilization, 2009). Egyptians used the pyramid as a vessel to take them to the other side (Lost Civilization, 2009). Regardless the civilization, it seems that pyramids have a historical role to play regarding humanity's connection to the world beyond what they see before them.

Like the pyramids, the course I teach attempts to align or guide students and instructor to the world beyond the reality constructed and placed before us. To aide in this endeavor, a social education becomes an experience of awakening to and questioning the world around you. As a teacher educator, such an inquisitive approach to teaching and learning is met with much resistance. Seemingly, schools do not support structures and systems that cultivate and honor such ways of being in schools for both teachers and students. This is evidenced by the fear my students express as we explore the idea of questioning the unquestionable "facts" of schools and education. In short, students are afraid to question critically the canon of the elementary curricula, as well as the structures and routines of elementary schools.

Students seem to come to education already “created” as teachers-created by their own years in a system focused on products, order, and high stakes accountability structures (Hinchey, 1998). Many have assumed the role of teacher from their own experiences. This is normal. However, the struggle for me becomes clearing this assumptive nature and slowing students down so they may begin to question and connect education, the craft of teaching, and society as a whole.

As Dewey (1938) claims, education is life and life is education. I cannot step over the life experiences of my students, however, I also need to pull them to another experience, an experience of awakening and questioning. Dewey (1897) states,

“It is impossible to prepare a child for any precise set of conditions. To prepare him for a future life means to give him command of himself; it means so to train him that he will have the full and ready use of all his capacities” (p.2).

In this quote, I hear an invitation to empower students to be critically aware of their place in the world. To ‘be in command of oneself” requires a level of consciousness cultivated through systematic critical reflection of ones reactions and actions in the world. I believe that an internal awakening at this level will inevitably transfer beyond the self and extend into the world.

My ambition for students is that through experiences that engage them in critical introspection, they can begin to transfer deep questioning to the “taken for granted” of the world beyond themselves. Unfortunately, the educational landscape of both the university and the school systems in which they teach is unable to support the need for such experiences. The design and pace of an elementary school day and a typical semester in a teacher education program focus on quantifiable results, like test scores, TEKS covered, or

lesson plans turned in. The *doing* of teaching is emphasized, not the *being* of teacher. I declare that without an experience of contemplative practices, both teachers and students will be challenged to "have full and ready use of all his capacities" (Dewey, 1897, p.2) in conscious and meaningful ways.

Despite this challenge, my hope for growth is that it offers students the experience of awakening aligned with Freire's (1998) critical consciousness. Such a consciousness widens our eyes to the contradictions within our world (Freire, 1998). It offers us a "refocus on the place we have lived all our lives" (Hinchey, 1998, p.4). When engaged from this new vantage point, the world as we know it provokes a questioning of what we think we know or consider to be the "truth." This endeavor warrants an awakening to the world only cultivated when engaged in dialogue regarding the inconsistencies in the world around us.

In the context of education, Freire (1970/1992) suggests that the dominant mode of education is removed from this critical awakening and offers a banking system of education that produces objects of knowledge. The banking system claims to deposit knowledge into the receptacles (students) who passively accept, memorize and regurgitate these academic deposits (Freire, 1970/1992). The passive learner questions nothing and awaits education to be done to him or her. Freire (1970/1992) claims, "The more students work at storing the deposits entrusted to them, the less they develop the critical consciousness which would result from their intervention in the world as transformers of that world" (p.60). This process sources the blind acceptance of oppressive realities and inevitable truths.

To engage in the world around us in such a critical way, the cultivation of what Freire (1998) calls an epistemological curiosity is needed. Such a curiosity drives a social

education. It continually engages us in asking how one has come to know what one knows. The pursuit of a critical consciousness through epistemological curiosity pushes those of us committed to an education removed from the mental boundaries often created for us. Such an education questions experiences in relation to both historical and personal contexts. It wonders about the socialization of our belief systems. In the end, it views the world from a non-assumptive viewpoint, which in turn offers access to change in the world.

What pushes us to engage in the awakening needed to interact in our world in this way? As Greene (1978) states, the catalyst for such a journey looks different for many, but inevitably is tied back to Dewey's idea of experience. The scholar argues that we must engage in experiences that pull us out of our sleep and robotic manner of living. In the context of education she sees this as the responsibility of the teacher. Greene contends the role of an educator is not to tell students what to do, but rather cultivate a practice of how to choose and decide what to do. However, without our own [teacher] awakening creating such experiences will never happen. In the context of my practice, I wish to develop an educative experience that begins to challenge what Hinchey (1998) calls the "mental cages" of one's dormant mind, guiding students into a state of awareness that will facilitate them in becoming teachers grounded as transformative leaders in education.

I have struggled with how to approach such a task. However, in critical pedagogy, I have found insight into how I may begin to create an experience that moves my students to critical consciousness. Kincheloe (2005) offers critical pedagogy as a praxis of teaching grounded in critical consciousness. The term praxis is defined as "the complex combination of theory and practice resulting in informed action" (Kincheloe, 2005, p.110). It is the exercise of engaging in a cycle of action-reflection-action (Kincheloe, 2005). Kincheloe

(2005) challenges us to engage in questions about the relationship between our thoughts, praxis, and actions as they collide with our lived experiences. At the heart of this pedagogical approach to teaching lies the need to gain critical capacity in complex societal constructs. Critical pedagogy offers the foundations to begin to question and dissect our constructed narratives (Kincheloe, 2005). The idea of questioning issues of power, social justice, and the structures of society leads to the transformation of the narratives given us.

Critical pedagogy seeks a critical knowledge versus a productive knowledge (Kincheloe, 2005). A knowledge that "seeks to connect with the corporeal and the emotional in a way that understands at multiple levels and seeks to assuage human suffering (Kincheloe, 2005, p.3). Therefore, the role of critical pedagogy in my practice is one by which the development of a critical capacity is foundational to the experience of the course and understanding of a social education. Conversely, a social education is incomplete without the experience of opening ones eyes to the world and questioning what is seen. When awake to the world at this level, the possibility of new alternatives and views emerges offering unimagined choices.

I wonder what inspired the pharaohs to build the pyramids? What unimagined concept were they envisioning? Were they troubled by the complexity of the task? In many ways I feel my work is like building pyramids. I ask students to visualize a social education within their own practice and question the traditional structures or constraints of teaching and education. For many this is unimaginable and they resist. For others they get to work laying the stones of a pyramid. I am not quite sure if the pyramid is uniquely their own or a mimicked reflection of my own architecture. Regardless, the approach to the experience, I

am continually present to the sacrifices made along the way, as we both view the world more consciously.

The Other Side: Access to Choice and Freedom

The pyramid offered a vessel to the after life for Egyptian royalty. Death was seen as the beginning of the journey to the other world, a journey of reward and freedom from the complication of the earthly realm. This long journey required access to the material riches of the decease's earthly life. In the pyramid the ancient Egyptians found a structure that protected the entombed and offered the support necessary for the deads' transformation and ascension to the other world.

Like the pyramids, a social education offers access to another world--one of authentic, empowered choices and freedom. Freire (1970/1992) describes an emanicipatory education as one grounded in the pursuit of an ontological freedom of all humans, an education removed from the societal constructed realities offering access to *conscientizaco* or critical consciousness. The limitations of these constructed narratives paralyze us. Without question, we step into a prescribed history, a history in which our role and growth as humans has been predetermined (Freire, 1970/1992). We see no alternatives.

A social education combats a limited acceptance of our "story" and empowers us through critical consciousness to begin to see other possibilities of our story. We realize it can be another way and begin to question the status quo approach. Maxine Greene (1978) suggests that as educators we must cultivate an ability to choose in order for students to step out from the constructed stories offered them. Freire (1970/1992) comments such liberation of choice is the process of humanization.

The dialectic process plays a meaningful role in the discovery of choice. Merriam Webster (2009) defines dialectic as any systematic reasoning, exposition, or argument that juxtaposes opposed or contradictory ideas. Through the banter of opposing ideas there is the potential for refinement of ideological stances and/or shifts in thinking. The dialectic offers intellectual fodder for the *hearing out* of other alternatives. To truly *hear out* others, one needs an understanding of the development of a critical consciousness and the disposition of humility. Without these elements, the intellectual exchange within the dialectic offers an empty promise of change.

If grounded in the process of the development of a critical consciousness, we can distinguish what guides and obstructs our thinking and listening of others. This offers a consciousness in being that allows us to listen beyond our limited, constructed paradigm. Yet, for this to happen, educators need to be ethically grounded (Freire, 1998). Freire (1998) states, "…I speak of a universal human ethic in the same way as I speak of humanity's ontological vocation, which calls us out of and beyond ourselves" (p.25).

As we participate in a true dialectic, a conversation beyond ourselves, Freire (1970/1992) reminds educators to refrain from hypocritical moralism. Hinchey (1998) speaks of such moralism as educational bigotry. Both scholars emphasize the need to remove educational battlegrounds of right and wrong philosophies and stand in the sharing of a variety of opposing views. In the face of an educational landscape with multiple educational arguments, the challenge of Freire (1970/1992) and Hinchey (1998) requires grand intent and vigilance on the part of all educators. Without humility our choices are limited; without choice we run the risk never seeing the possibilities that lay within our reach. In short, we fail to transform ourselves as educators.

The Egyptians were given worldly tools to aide in their transition to the next life. In my work, the deepening of consciousness, the dialectic process and the practice of humility are offered as the tools to another world, one of choice and freedom. My hope is that students use these tools to envision the possibilities education can be. My ultimate goal is that students are empowered to authentically create themselves as educators removed from the divisive nature of prevalent educational philosophies and societal expectations. I want them to choose who they are as teachers and refrain from blindly accepting the status quo narrative of American Education.

Rituals of Ascension: Transformative Action

Beyond the construction and stocking of the pyramid much more action was required to ensure the ascension of the *ka* (twined soul) of the pharaoh. The Egyptians mummification practices were elaborate tasks undertaken to ensure the complete and total transcendence to the other side. Internal organs were preserved in ornate and symbolic vessels. Specialized rituals were performed regarding the removal of all organs and the protection of the deceased's voice, as guaranteed by the Opening of the Mouth ritual. Pyramid texts were created to instruct the dead through their journey to the other world. In the final analysis, Egyptian burial customs were supported by the intentional actions of slaves, family members, and priests. In the minds of the Egyptians such collective action was necessary to assure a successful transition to the other world.

In regards to my work, the role of intentional action is equally as important. Without direct action, a social education fails to move beyond a critical awareness of the world. Being awake to the world and empowered in choice matters most deeply when actions follow insights discovered in such critical introspections. Both Kincheloe (2005)

and Freire (1970/1992) emphasize the importance of the movement to action beyond the act of deepening the consciousness.

The power of transforming the realities around us lies in the actions chosen by the critically conscious (Kincheloe, 2005). These actions do not have to be far- reaching monumental changes, but changes in our own realms of passion. We can aid in bringing peace to the Middle East if that is our passion, however, we may spearhead a campaign to help the homeless in our community if that is in our heart. Both examples call us to critically question the world around us, reflect upon place in relationship to our discovery, and most importantly inspire us to act. In the context of a social education, all students, including those traditionally silenced, find a place in which they can promote social change that honors their passions and talents.

Within the tombs of the pharaohs the community readied the deceased with the tools needed for the transition to the afterlife. In much the same way, the pyramidal structure of a social education, prepares students for the possibility of a new world for education. By critically awakening students, access to a world of educational alternatives is offered. Using the tools of critical pedagogy, the dialectic process and practice of humility, students can build a vision of education authentically designed by themselves. These layered levels of social education create a framework in which I begin to build an experience of a social education. This process is an adventure in the mysterious, much like a visit to the awe- inspiring pyramids of ancient civilizations.

Understanding the Architect: Personal Narratives

The work of the famous American architect Frank Lloyd Wright offers viewers an experience in geometric simplicity. His choice of design aesthetics offers insight into the

influences of a lifetime. Knowing that as a small child Wright engaged with Frobel games, a game based on geometric blocks, offers an additional layer to the experience of viewing a Frank Lloyd Wright structure (Twombly, 1979). As one views his work the connection to his experience with the childhood game of Frobel becomes hard to ignore. If in tune with Wright's love of music, the form, structure and composition of his work takes on different meaning (Twombly, 1979). Wright himself spoke of the connection of music and architecture when he observed that architecture is the edifice of sound (Twombly, 1979). To view Wright's work from the context of the influences of his life experiences adds a depth of richness to the experience of his building design talents. In the end, observers of his work are left with a deeper understanding of his design choices when offered the life context by which his ideas were influenced.

In a similar fashion, I believe it imperative to understand the personal context from which my practice is influenced. My distinction of a social education as access to critical awakening, freedom and transformative action emerged as inseparable expressions of my own significant life experiences. In short, the collective experiences of my life have found voice in my intellectual work. In a very powerful way, the story of significant life moments have created my current, impassioned path; one founded in the need to discover the most impactful way my practice can offer an experience in a social education and how such an experience can influence students as they create the essence of their teaching philosophy.

The need for me to re-live experiences of my life is directly tied to the development of my teaching identity. Deborah Britzman's (1997) work adds a psychoanalytical layer to the inseparability of the past and the present. She contends that understanding the impact of the transference of ones experiences allows teachers to deeply

understand their actions in their professional life. In the context of Maxine Greene (1978), such insights offer educators clarity about how their values and relationship to possibility are echoed in their teaching practice. In the snapshot stories of my personal experiences, I hope to offer the reader an added vantage point in which to understand the essence of Debby, as teacher educator and designer of an elementary methods course founded in a social education.

The Construction of an American: Awakening to the World Beyond the Military Base

I was deeply aware at an early age of the significance of being an American. As the only daughter of a career military man, I was born overseas on an Air Force base and raised most of my formative years on various bases in both Europe and the States. My earliest memories are wrapped in red, white, blue and an unquestionable allegiance to what my father called the greatest country in the world; America the beautiful.

My days began with the raising of the flag on the way to school and my compliant action of halting whatever I was doing at the time to honor the colors of our country. Once at school, I beamed with pride as my class faced our own small classroom flag and loudly pledged our allegiance to our country. My diverse school community would then pursue the studies of a curriculum void of the blemishes of America, a history that I believed to be true and provided me a source of pride. After school, as my friends and I played well into the dusk of the evening, I again would halt all activity to say goodnight to the flag as it was slowly lowered to the sound of the National Anthem. I found comfort in such rituals. They connected me to a community of Americans while in a foreign land. They reminded me of

my father's duty and commitment to his country. Ultimately, they reminded me that I was an American and made present the honor that came with such an affiliation.

Only in retrospect can I begin to understand the power this rigid and structured environment played in the development of my identity. In the moments of these early childhood experiences, I blindly accepted without question the manner in which our lives were structured and managed. I was so conditioned to the orchestrated world that the military offered us; a world focused on the collective; a world in which orders were followed without question; a world in which nonconformists were dishonorable discharged. In the world of the military, the collective is dominant over self. Freethinking is dangerous on the battlefield. My father had chosen this world. Yet, his family had not. Both my mother and I, in varying degrees, were casualties of such a rigid and oppressive system.

For a child developing a sense of self, this system proved both suffocating and painfully poignant to whom I would become as an adult. It took years to open the door to freedom for myself by becoming aware of the conditioning nature of this time in my life. Once conscious of this, "I know that I can go beyond it, which is the essential difference between conditioned and determined existence (Freire, 1998. p. 54). This is an empowering revelation.

Beyond living in a community with strict rules of engagement, the dynamics of my family life offered another layer of rigidity. As an only child of parents as old, or older than my contemporaries' grandparents, I was raised in a home in which I was undoubtedly loved but rarely truly heard as a child. In a world of adults, I was seen yet ignored. I was in complete submission to the hegemony of the adult world in which I lived, removed from other children or even child-like adults. This dominance of power only reiterated the

outside world of the base, in which authentic choice failed to exist for me, choices were made by those in power; my parents, my teachers, the Church, or the United States military. Not following the clearly delineated norms of any of these arenas in my life categorized me as trouble. The existence of Debby was guided or rather, mandated from an external environment. In short, I was successfully indoctrinated into experiencing the world in a very polarized fashion; things were black or white. Gray failed to exist at home and most certainly in the collective military community. One was either good or bad. One either followed the rules or rebelliously broke them. The burden of such duality would both challenge and inspire me throughout my entire life to continually seek who I would or could authentically *be*.

Foundations of Freedom: An Education in Being

In the late nineties, I embarked on a personal exploration as guided by an organization called Landmark Education. The work of Landmark is founded in the ontological. The courses I took offered me the space, time and support by which I could move beyond merely surviving life. I had hit a time in my life in which I felt trapped yet comfortable and that terrified me. This was the "why" that drew me to seek wide-awakeness in a life that was moving into mindless indifference (Greene, 1978). This is how I found myself enrolled in the first of many Landmark courses. Within all of these courses, I grappled with the power of my fear, my own interpretations of reality as related to my past, and the authentic expression of my purpose in the world. These discoveries offered me the avenue in which I recreated myself and found access to both freedom and possibility. Within Isaiah Berlin's (1970) beautiful quote in *Dialectic* of *Freedom,* I

discovered an expression that encapsulates both my need for and experience of my work at Landmark:

> We are enslaved despots-institutions or beliefs or neuroses-which can be removed only by being analyzed and understood. We are imprisoned by evil spirits which we have ourselves-albeit not consciously created, and can exorcize them only by becoming conscious and acting appropriately (as cited in Greene, 1988, p.4).

My work with Landmark allowed me access to clearing the internal "oppressive" obstacles that prevented me from living a life grounded in the possibility of who I am; in boundless liberation. Once discovered or recreated, this possibility and freedom offered me inspiration for action and contribution in my communities. One course in particular, moved my newly awakened state to a powerful critical consciousness; the Self Expression and Leadership Course (SELP). This course was the third of a series. The first course illuminated the power of our lived experiences in our present. In addition, the course allowed the space to get complete with this past and begin with a present liberated from the past and free to create a new present. One is left with a clean slate or nothing. From nothing a possibility is created in the second course. You exit this course with a newly self-created possibility for yourself and your life.

The work is hard in these first two courses. The road to wide awakeness is uncomfortable and confronting. However, I have never been so inspired for action in my life. I cannot tell you the first possibility I created for myself, because since then I have recreated myself so many times. However, within the final course, I gained access to a praxis that would forever impact my life, action as an extension of one's possibility. In the course participates create community projects. These projects are designed to be in service of others and make a difference, big or small. Such projects included, the spearheading of

family reunions, the organization of fundraisers, or the sharing of participant's talents and passions, through art shows and the like. Regardless of the project, the process of creating and fulfilling the project with the help of your communities was access to empowerment and joy.

Until most recently, I had no words to explain this experience. However, I believe that I experienced critical pedagogy at its finest. Through relentless internal inquiry, I had awakened new possibilities for myself. From the space of these possibilities I created my next steps; the transformation of my reality through empowered action (Freire, 1970/1992).

The Act of Building: Critical Action in My World

The experiences of Landmark provided me the inspiration to step out of self-imposed limitations and begin to challenge the status quo of the world and offer possibilities of transformation within both my personal and professional life. I learned to seek the freedom that Bigelow (2007) contends is within our reach if we would only acknowledge that, "the most powerful agent of censorship lives in our heads, and we almost always have more freedom than we use" (as cited in Wade, 2007, p.88). To some extent, this freedom had existed within the walls of my classroom. I was innately critical about my teaching. I sought innovative approaches to education that engaged my students beyond the traditional approaches condoned by the majority of a school's faculty; despite limited success of such teaching practices. However, because of censorship at my own hand, my own classroom was as far as my critical inquiry of education extended. I was silenced at the threshold of my classroom door. Yet, as I developed my voice as a teacher and deepened my own consciousness, the inevitable marriage of the two offered me a more global view of the alternatives to business as usual in my school community. In short, I was

empowered to move beyond my classroom door and the comfort of like-minded colleagues, and ask hard questions of my school community.

With this expansion of critical inquiry, I began to question the educational story of the inner city high school in which I taught (Hinchey, 1998). This story was embedded deeply into the consciousness of the faculty and school community. A constructed consciousness was at the heart of the decisions of the school. Hinchey (1998) states that such consciousness, is a passive acceptance or value judgment "that results in the privilege for some group at the cost of its own welfare" (p.18). In short, my school, as a collective, failed to question critically the underlying values of their actions (Hinchey, 1998). The sounds of this constructed story was heard in such comments as, "These students can not do that!" Or found in the echoes of an answer to the question of why we approach student scheduling as we do; "We have always done it this way." Both limitation and blind adherence to the status quo lie at the foundation of comments such as these. Such obstacles offered challenges for the community as we began to seek insights regarding high failure rates, low test scores, increasing drop out rates, and smaller graduation classes.

Within this context, a group of educators, committed to the possibility of something different from the assumed way, embarked on a critical inquiry regarding current practices both in our individual schools and our feeder pattern as a whole. This is how I found myself at my first committee meeting in 1996. This particular committee focused on easing the transition of our elementary students to middle school, and middle school students to high school. Yet, the teachers on these individual campuses failed to work with one another. This lack of collaboration was fueled for many by the belief that those "lower" on the educational hierarchy could offer nothing to a high school teacher.

The work of this committee was to transcend this “story” and offer an alternative--one based in the power of collaboration and shared leadership. My role in this work placed me on a trajectory to be both, a school and feeder pattern leader, who facilitated teachers in dialogue that encouraged them to critically question their practice, and the decisions and structures of their schools as a whole.

My role in this reform movement within the school district, evolved from an isolated classroom teacher to a teacher leader. Eventually, I was pulled from the classroom and depending on the era of reform, I was labeled a project coordinator,

Co-nect facilitator or School Improvement Facilitator (SIF). Regardless the title, the job was the same; I served as a change agent in the school and region.

I learned valuable lessons in this challenging role. I discovered that even in education, critical inquiry threatens those entrenched in the status quo. Questioning the silent values of our actions as teachers and schools confronts and questions people at their core. Parker Palmer (1998) reminds us “teaching holds a mirror to the soul” (p. 2). The questioning of teaching practices and school structures, naturally challenged members of the faculty to question themselves and their values at a level that ran deeper than the implementation of a new teaching strategy or integration of a new initiative. In an effort to truly engage in transformative dialogue, we had to explore the core values of our teaching, both, individually and collectively. This was hard and messy work. I learned that some people, although confronted, were more willing to go to such places in an effort to powerfully address the challenges of our school. At every opportunity, others would resist this required inner and collective journey. They would hold on to the status quo, even though they may have doubts about the power of entrenched practices and systems.

I walked away from my experiences with a faculty with differing degrees of resistance, understanding the personal nature of any change within the educational system. Our goal had been to question the traditional structures and teaching practices of a high school. The pursuit of this goal could not be separated by the personal nature of the task. Teaching and all that it involves is personal. Any suggestion of change pulls educators to question themselves and quite often defend themselves. Our work challenged teachers to explore the depth of their consciousness in relationship to their practice. In the end, I left this experience understanding the imperative call to cultivate critically reflective educators, because only then can authentic change occur.

The most powerful insight from my years as a reformer in the school district was the solidification of my belief in the unimagined possibilities of education and the urgent need for them. I had experienced stepping out of a constructed story and discovered the unlimited alternatives such action offered. By leaving the confines of my classroom with my passion and ideas, I found myself among others who believed in alternative and empowered approaches to education. I found hope that things could change because they did. I discovered the inseparable nature of consciousness and change. Retrospectively, I have come to understand that my years a teacher leader in the district provided a living example of praxis; the power of critical consciousness coupled with action (Freire, 1970/1992). I left the district to pursue my advanced degree and with me I took a passion for change. My passionate belief in the possibility of the future of education shapes all that I do as a teacher educator today and I am inspired to relentlessly pursue deepening my own consciousness, so I can guard against becoming complacent in accepting our education system as it stands today.

I have been working from the inside out for years. I have pushed myself beyond the constraints of a childhood founded in unquestionable allegiance. I have designed my life, both personal and professional, upon the foundation of critical reflection. To this end, I engaged in personal development removed from the institution of formalized education and experienced the intoxicating freedom that comes with conscious transformation offered through deep reflection and action. Because of this work, I am an educator driven to critically question the standard approach to teaching and learning. My life experiences have shaped me to be an educator committed to the possibilities of the freedom education can and should offer. A kind of freedom that Freire (1970/1992) explains as, "…not an ideal located outside of man; no, it is an idea which becomes myth. It is rather the indispensable condition for the quest of the human condition" (p.31). In short, it is the possibility of humanity, our human vocation (Freire 1970/1992). In my distinction of a social education as access to critical awakening, freedom and transformative action I contend I have found a possible structure to fulfilling this vocation.

The Blueprint: The Study

As architects of our curricula, teacher educators need access to architectural digests that catalogue ways in which we can create content specific methods courses that empower students to be their own designers of education. This self-study offers an entry in such an educational digest of practice through the exploration of the practice of an elementary Social Studies methods instructor, teaching from the paradigm of a social education. Built upon the pyramidal structure of a social education as access to critical awakening, freedom and transformative action this study offers sketches of my practice as guided by the following inquiries: How will I construct a meaningful social education experience for

students? What might be the far- reaching possibilities of such an experience on the students' creation of their own *being as* educators? In the end, I hope this study offers a possible blueprint of practice for others as they construct their educational structures.

CHAPTER TWO

THE ARCHITECTS OF INFLUENCE: A LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The infamous Italian city of Pompeii is known to most as the victim of a catastrophic volcanic eruption in 79 A.D. In a moment, this Roman city was encased in lava and frozen in time, offering the preservation of an ancient community. In 1995 I stood in the heart of this city astonished by the familiarity of the space. I expected a community of less architectural sophistication. What I experienced was a historically distant community that reflected images of modern cities in which I lived and traveled. Nuances of modern day living were exhibited in Pompeii through the curbed streets, urbane plumbing systems, eerily modern public water fountains and additional modern elements of city life. Much of this Roman city could be seen in my 20th century world. Undeniably, the architects of this ancient community had influenced the world in which I lived.

Students of any craft explore the artistic *masters* that precede them. They seek knowledge, insight and inspiration as they build their own practice. Architectural students study design feats throughout history to inform their modern architectural endeavors. Sometimes the modern day edifice subtlety offers reflections of past architectural inspiration as evidence in many of our modern day bridges. However, sometimes the connection to past architecture is palpable as exemplified in the architecture of the Capitol building in Washington, D.C. Regardless the extent of expression of influence, the *experts* of any craft aid in shaping the work of the apprentice.

Like the modern echoes of influence heard through the streets of Pompeii, my work reverberates the educational *masters* who have shaped the development of my course design and my role as a teacher educator. The first sketches of the course were based on

early exposure to Kincheloe (2005) and Freire (1970/1992). The results in my practice were that of a novice apprentice. In short, I held onto the basics of these mentors and clumsily attempted to bridge their theories to my practice.

As I deepened my studies of the masters the complexity of my design followed. With this complexity, came a new level of inquiry that called me to the nuances of my course design, details hidden from the novice apprentice. These inquires led me to attempt to deepen the design of the course beyond the traditional approach to a Social Studies methods course. Similar to the apprentice of a master craftsman, the study of the educational masters facilitated an exploration of my craft and discovery of my voice as a teacher educator.

Although influenced by the classic architects of the past, today's emergent designers naturally leave the shadow of their historical influences and establish their own unique style of design. Similarly, I have begun to claim my own design. Through my teaching experiences and scholarly discoveries, my philosophies and approaches to the course are being reframed in relationship to the influence of master scholars of whom I have explored and newly discovered. Through the use of an architectural metaphor, I hope to ground the reader in the inspirations and experiences that facilitated the reframing of my practice.

My choice of an architectural metaphor as the image of my work emerged through insight in the seemingly accidental language of my reflective writings as both teacher educator and doctoral student. Architecture echoed throughout my work as I distinguished the pillars of Social Education and articulated the foundational tenets of a social education. From the viewpoint of the metaphor, I was pulled to the specific edifice of the pyramid.

However, the story of my work aligns in a variety of ways with the creative pursuits of builders.

Through varied metaphoric connections this chapter presents the works of master educational architects aligned with narratives of the challenges and celebrations of my practice in an effort to powerfully capture the experience of my practice (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990). The organization of this section offers two approaches to understanding the construction and evolution of my course. First, I offer a discussion of the educational scholars whose work influenced the building of a course grounded in a social education. This discussion is supported by storied examples of my practice in an effort to offer insight into how theory and practice may be more closely aligned. This juxtaposed presentation of my theoretical education and my course's development is framed by the self-proclaimed triadic distinctions of a social education as access to critical awakening, freedom and transformative action.

Secondly, I present the pedagogical tools of my work, the literature of curriculum development and teacher education. Through exploration of my pedagogical inspirations, I hope to provide teacher educators, regardless of content area, a transparent view of a possible process for the critical renovation of their teacher education courses and practice as teacher educators. This journey is catalogued through a reflective inquiry of the scholars whose voices resonated with my work. In the end, the goal of this chapter is to present the influences of master educational architects on the development of my knowledge as a teacher educator committed to offering an experience in a social education.

Foundational Masters: Awakening to the Space We Inhabit

The architectural space in which we live can often become invisible to us the longer we inhabit it. This phenomenon is most evident when we find ourselves a visitor of a new environment. I recall my first inspiring visit to Paris. As I walked the streets and experienced the architectural diversity and wonder of this famous city, I wondered about the cities impact on its residents. Are they present to the connection of the historical spaces to their daily world? Are Parisians resigned to their blind spots regarding the edifices that surround them daily?

I contend that humans without conscious effort fail to truly see the spaces in which we dwell. We often become so accustomed to our environment that it becomes invisible to us. In the context of inhabiting the world of education both as practitioner and student, the comprehensive essence of the educational environment became invisible to me. Somewhere along the line, unconsciously so, I segregated the practical world of teaching and the theoretical world of scholarship.

Like the Parisian who without note walks past the Eiffel Tower daily, I had failed to connect my daily life as a teacher educator to the edifices of theory offered by the educational “masters” of a social education. The foundational scholars illuminated in the Social Education doctoral program, awakened a broader and complex view of the educational space I inhabited for my seventeen years as a secondary educator. With this awakening came the realization of the tension in my work as both practitioner and doctoral student of a social education. In short, I became conscious of the gap between my practice as a teacher educator and the theory I studied as a doctoral student.

Not unlike my experience, the senior education students I teach openly struggle with this same theory-practice split. For many of them, the field experience attached to their methods instruction is their first opportunity to integrate their academic learning to the real world of teaching. They literally inhabit two worlds of education, an academic world of learning to teach and a practical world of teaching. Within this context, they begin to question the validity of their education in a teacher education program presenting methods and theories of a social education that are often contradictory to the classroom experiences of their teaching placement.

The awakening of students and myself to the disconnect of theory and practice was guided by a foundational element of a social education-critical pedagogy. The experience offered in my doctoral coursework began a critical inquiry into my approach to teaching and interpretations of the world around me. Through the voices of the educational architects of Kincheloe (2005), Freire (1970/1992), hooks (2003), Greene (1978) and Hinchey (1998). I was encouraged to explore a critical approach to teaching, analyze the impact of experience on my role as a educator and consider the blind spots of my practice. These new perspectives on my work offered a newfound presence to the constructed space of the course, my role in it and my students experience as inhabitants in the course.

Critical Pedagogy: An Awakening to Educational Spaces

One of my favorite spots in the world is the Tuileries Gardens adjacent the Louvre in Paris, France. What I love about this space is the architectural contrast it provides. The vast structure of the Louvre offers a classic architectural statement as it shadows the modern designed, ancient inspired pyramidal lower leveled entrance to the museum. Clearly separate entities; the power of these two edifices lays in their relationship to one

another. The context of the partnership of these structures is at the heart of the experience of this space. A view of these buildings as one connected architectural statement offers a complex, perplexing and engaging inquiry in the contrast of the traditional and modern.

Like the Tuileries Gardens, critical pedagogy offers a distinctive vantage point from which to view the world. It views the structures of the world in relationship to one another-taking in the entirety of context (Kincheloe, 2005). Critical pedagogy places education in relationship to political, cultural and historical context and questions the influence and power of socially constructed spaces (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008).

Metaphorically, the Parisian who views the modern entrance to the Louvre as a challenge to the classics of architecture or the French status quo would be challenged by the critical pedagogues to question the source of such reaction. What has influenced their opinion? Why is there not room for a new manifestation of French architecture? Who decides what is classically French? In the end, a critical pedagogue would engage in an inquiry of *knowing* with the resistant Parisian.

In the space of education, critical pedagogy is teaching grounded in questioning what we know as truth, the source, or influences of our perceptions and the effects of the context of our experiences (Freire, 1970/1992; Hinchey, 1998; Kincheloe, 2005). I realize the expression of these foundational elements of critical pedagogy falls short of an academic definition. However, the pursuit of a critical pedagogy is a personal journey, a journey that questions personal truths, perspectives, and experiences. Although the way critical educators construct their teaching experiences is individuated, foundational objectives unite them in pursuit of the empowerment of the marginalized and transformation of societal inequities (McLaren, 1998).

Kincheloe (2005) offers critical pedagogy as “ an ambitious entity that seeks nothing less than a form of educational adventurism that takes us where no one has gone before” (p.4). The words of this quote encapsulate my own journey of understanding critical pedagogy and its place in my practice. As I began to deconstruct the elements of a critical pedagogy, I was confronted by the ambitious nature of this espoused approach to teaching. My exploration put me in the role as critical inquirer of my experience of the world around me. As a teacher educator, what I uncovered in this critical exploration was overwhelming, confronting, and quite messy at times (hooks, 1994).

In the face of this disequilibrium, I began to seek definable characteristics of critical pedagogy. In pursuit of these features, two things happened. First, I began to bridge the ideas of critical pedagogy and Social Education. Secondly, I became uncomfortably aware of the level of consciousness required of such an approach to teaching for both students and instructor.

Earlier, I defined the framework of my understanding of a social education through the pillars of Social Education. The early distinction of these pillars as critical questioning; social justice and action were birthed from my study of critical pedagogy. Each of these pillars can be directly linked to the considerations of critical educators (Freire, 1970/1992; Kincheloe, 2005; McLaren, 1998). In the final analysis, it is impossible for me to consider a social education removed from the praxis of a critical pedagogy.

In my initial explorations, I contemplated the view of critical pedagogues that education is a political act, grounded in equity and social justice. (Freire, 1970/1992; Hinchey, 1998; Kincheloe, 2005; McLaren, 1998). To consider such a postulation, critical inquiry must be at the heart of a critical education. With this at the forefront of my thought,

I began to question how I could translate these ideas into an elementary methods course deeply embedded in an educational system that emphasizes the technical approach to teaching the sacred canon of the American education system (Kincheloe, 2005; McLaren, 1998).

In retrospect, I can see that my early experiments in critical pedagogy were founded in the simple exercise of engaging students in questioning the “truths” of the schools, curricula and teaching. Undergirding this endeavor was my own parallel journey of questioning everything I knew about being an educator. I attempted to engage students and myself in traversing layered spaces of education; the larger context beyond the classroom, the specific space of the classroom and the individual space of personal experience. Like the view of the Louvre provided from Tuileries Gardens, I attempted to offer students a more comprehensive and complex view of education through the experience of the course; an experience formed by the critical questioning of the world around them.

The Space Beyond the Classroom

Early in the semester I request students relinquish a common truth held about being a teacher; Teachers must be unbiased. We are humans and are bias by nature. However, teachers can be responsible with their impartiality. They can intently offer multiple views of any given subject in order to present a complete exploration of ideas and approaches. I start here because, for me, critical pedagogy challenges the idea of neutrality quite directly. In short, critical pedagogues insist schools be viewed in the grander space of society and in doing so, cannot be neutral sites of teaching and learning (Kincheloe, 2005).

In this larger context, schools are offered as social institutions inseparable from the politics of society (Kincheloe 2005; McClaren, 1998). At any given moment teachers are

“faced with complex decisions concerning justice, democracy and competing ethical claims”(Kincheloe, 2005, p. 1). In a most recent moment, national attention focused upon the decision of schools to allow students’ viewership of President Barack Obama’s address to public school students. For many schools across the country, claimed neutrality faltered to seemingly political pressures of both the local and national community and created opt out opportunities for the opponents of this presidential tradition.

This current national incident offers a powerful example of the critical pedagogues contention that educational decisions are placed within the political context of the community (McLaren, 1998). This places educators within a system propelled by those in political power. The educational structures teachers work within are clearly not neutral spaces awaiting the guidance of educational professionals (Kincheloe, 2005). More to the point, the educational system is a constructed entity both created and managed by the dominant power of society (hooks, 1994; Kincheloe, 2005; McLaren, 1998).

Without the acknowledgement and questioning of the constructed nature of education as part of a political context, education will fail to challenge the status quo of society and exist as an avenue to social change (Kincheloe, 2005). The awakening of the political influences upon education is made difficult by a system that participates in the “[g]reat denial of the political nature of education” (Kincheloe, 2005, p.10). This unquestioning acceptance of the status quo offers grand resistance for critical educators who directly question the political powers often invisible within the structures of education. The danger in the denial is the hidden messages that often lurk behind the banner of neutrality. It is the role of the critical educator to expose such pretense and illuminate the political reasoning propelling such choices.

Critical pedagogy upholds the notion that the constructed experience of education sanctions dominant perspectives and silences others (Kincheloe, 2005a). Within the political context, education can be analyzed from an economic, cultural, social and cognitive perspective (Kincheloe, 2005). This global placement of education presents educators with the ability to connect the disenfranchisement of certain student populations to the larger of society (Kincheloe, 2005). Kincheloe (2005) states, "[a] stunting of potential takes place in the pedagogy of low expectations where concern for disciplining the incompetent poor to create a more ordered and efficient society takes the place of a democratic critical social vision" (p. 7).

With this said, critical educators look beyond the cultivation of mere cogs for society and seek questioning citizens ready and able to promote social change. However, the marginalized of society are submerged within the dominant and oppressive contexts in which they live (Freire, 1970/1992). The blind spot created by the immersion into the constructed reality of those in power offers no motivation or cause to question and act. In short, oppressed peoples unconsciously accept the reality before them as unchangeable.

The implication of such a disempowering education places silenced peoples in a role that fails to honor who they are and what they have to offer to the world. For critical educators, offering experiences in which the voice of the marginalized can be heard, honored and shared is foundational to their pedagogy. This is not a superficial attempt at multiculturalism. It is not an attempt to indoctrinate "others" into the dominant white culture (Kincheloe, 2005). It is a commitment to "profoundly understand subjugated knowledge coming from various oppressed groups and examine them in relation to other forms of academic knowledge" (Kincheloe, 2005, p. 26).

Critical pedagogy questions the collective narrative of education within contexts beyond the schoolhouse door. It takes under consideration the impact of social, economic, cultural and political influences on the institution of schools. In the end, critical pedagogy engages in a vigilant inquiry in the influence of society's power over the education system.

How is such an in inquiry pursued in an elementary methods course? How can I awaken students to the influential spaces beyond the classroom? In review of my practice, I have discovered that I am challenged to directly address the larger context of education as suggested by critical pedagogues. As a student of critical pedagogy, I have resisted the seemingly hopelessness of the reach of the political hand of power to our institutions of education. Do not misunderstand. I do believe greater contexts of society need to be connected to the work of education. However, my quandary is in the language of the conversation around the idea of power as exhibited in the following quotes:

> In the United States television has become primarily a series of spectacles that perpetuate and maintain the ideology of imperialist white-supremacist capitalist patriarchy (hooks, 2003, p. 11).

> The dominant class secures hegemony-the consent of the dominated-by supplying the symbols, representations, and practices of social life in such a way that the basis of social authority and the unequal relations of power and privilege remain hidden (McClaren, 2003, p.77).

My experience as an elementary instructor is that such language confronts and loses the attention of my listeners. In my practice, for better of for worse, I have sought avenues by which my students can hear and explore the idea of power through more palatable means. For many this is the first step in their journey with critical pedagogy and although I believe discomfort leads to growth, confrontation often leads to withdrawal. Therefore, I have considered how to subtly engage students in questioning the construction of society as

evidenced in the contradictions within the principles, structures and realities of our social order.

Early on in the development of the course, I assigned an article by Jonathan Kozol (2007), *Still Separate, Still Unequal: America's Educational Apartheid* as an accompaniment to an art integration lesson using Norman Rockwell's piece, *A Problem We All Live With.* The aim of this lesson, beyond using art in classrooms, was to engage students in discussion about issues of social justice. The article was offered as a catalyst for discussion about the invisible inequities of our current society. The author presents an argument that claims the inner city schools of today mirror the schools of America prior to Brown vs. The Board of Education. In brief, Kozol (2007) pushes readers to look closely at the parallels of injustice that plague many minority students today. The voices of the students in these re-segregated schools offer poignant and controversial insight into the impact of modern day segregation, racism and classism.

The reading of this article was most resisted by students, however as the instructor offered some of the most powerful moments of the semester. In the discussion about the oppressive structures of inner city schools, highlighted in the article, many students ran head long into their unconscious mindsets regarding race and equity issues in society, despite the educational focus of the article.

> **Student 1:** "If they [minority students] want to go to good schools they just need to move to another neighborhood where there are better schools."
>
> **Student 2:** "You think it is that easy? What if they can't afford the neighborhood? It is unfair for poor people to have that stop them from getting a good education. Everyone should have access to a good education."

> **Student 3:** "But the deal is property taxes fund schools and poor neighborhoods will always come up short."

This brief snapshot of discussion illuminates numerous issues that take students to spaces beyond education and into a realm that deals with societal issues of power. In the first comment, one can hear the assumptive nature that for all Americans such a problem can be easy solved by moving. This comment begs to question the realities hidden from view for members of the dominant culture or power structure (Freire 1970/1992; hooks, 2003;Kincheloe, 2005).

The second student attempts to expose a blind spot of her classmate by expressing the reality of certain segments of the population that opportunities are often limited by social, cultural, economic and political status. The final student hones in on the economic dynamic underlying issues of equalized opportunity regarding education. This insight offers a catalyst to consider the implications of how economical contexts aid in the institutionalization of inequities in American society.

Other students expressed disbelief of the disparate experience in inner city schools. Clearly, a blind spot had been exposed. Others shared lived experiences supporting the realities of urban schools described by Kozol. One black student shared his story. He had gone school with a majority white student population due to the inadequacies of this neighborhood school. He described his experience as isolating and difficult. He recanted his effort to "become more like the other kids to fit in." This occurred at the expense of his friendships in his own neighborhood, leaving him fitting in nowhere. In one story this student had offered a lived example of a contention of the duality placed upon oppressed populations.

Freire (1970/1992) explained,

> The conflict lies in the choice between being wholly himself or herself or being divided; between ejecting the oppressor within or not ejecting him; between human solidarity or alienation; between following prescriptions or having choices; between being spectators or actors; between speaking out or being silent, castrated in their power to create, re-create, in their power to transform the world (p.33).

In the sharing of his story, this student offered me a powerful connection of practice and theory. For other students it offered a space of empathic discomfort. Emotions were evident in all students as a result of this discussion. The article had pushed them to an uncomfortable place. At times the conversation was heated, strained and emotional. I was reminded of the messy nature of uncovering contradictions in your worldview. hooks (1994) reminds critical educators, “Some degree of pain is involved in giving up old ways of thinking and knowing and learning new approaches” (p.43). This remark holds true for both the instructor and the student in the case of this lesson.

In the final assessment, I contend this experience offered a first step in uncovering the impact of the educational spaces beyond schools for both my students and myself. For my students, they were challenged to consider disproportionate economic, social and cultural issues and the impact of such issues on education. They heard and were personally connected to the story of a classmate, who pulled the issue of cultural power towards the school experience. For many, their view was expanded. However, I question students’ transference of these insights to their practice as elementary teachers. Beyond the often fuzzily coated conversations about lessons that address issues of multiculturalism and diversity, I assert that most students, at least during the span of my course, fail to see the

extent of influence of the spaces beyond the schoolyard and the way in which the American educational systems is shaped by them.

In the aftermath of the discussion of Kozol's article, as the instructor, I was left unsure and shaky on where to go in my curriculum. Innately, I wanted to go deeper, however, I discounted this as unrealistic for two reasons. First, as a novice critical educator, I have the context for conversations that would aide in going deeper into the hegemonic influence of society on educational institutions. My students do not. Quite frankly, I continue to struggle with how to expand students' context beyond their experience as a student of education attempting to grasp a 12-week elementary methods course.

Secondly, students are immersed in a program constrained by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) requirements. When in my course, they take 5 methods courses and participate in extensive field experiences. The space created in the program offers limited space to explore alternative educational approaches as offered by critical pedagogy at the level needed to powerfully impact the practices of young teachers. Students are surviving the program. This impedes the level of critical analysis and reflection required of a course guided by critical pedagogy.

In semesters since this experience, I have addressed the tentacles of society within the context of issues easily connected to classroom instruction. In an effort to engage students in exploring the influences of society upon their approach to teaching and learning, I have offered experiences in critical media literacy by way of a pop culture analysis in which students critical explore the pop cultural favorites of elementary students. This exercise has naturally driven conversation towards the hidden curriculum of society through toys, film, music and other popular pop cultural genres (Giroux, 1997; Kincheloe,

2005). In analysis of the covert and overt messages students connect to their role as educators; one founded in the development of critical thinking skills. In the most immediate semester, students have bridged this realization with earlier dialogue related to the purpose of education. Students distinguished the purpose of education as one in which students articulate the role of educators as one of cultivating critical thinking and active citizens. In the context of exploring pop culture, students link the idea of their role as cultivators of actively critical citizens (we unpack this) to the need for educators and students alike to question and explore societal messages of power, including race, gender and economic status.

In the final analysis, exploration of the space beyond education remains a challenge for me. I know that without extensive exposure to the critical philosophies facilitating academic dialogue regarding the hegemonic impacts of society, my students will lack the ability to make truly transformative shifts in the constructed narrative of teaching and learning. However, as the instructor, I struggle with the manner in which I present the critical investigation required of such an endeavor. Am I too gentle in my approach? Does the subtle manner by which I attempt to engage students in questioning the hegemonic influences on education make a difference at all? Do my less than radical means make me less of a critical educator? These inquiries guide me as I push myself and my students to critically interrogate the world beyond the institution of education and incorporate the insights discovered in our teaching practices.

The Space of the Curriculum

Within the current educational landscape the focus on accountability, as directed by the national educational legislation of No Child Left Behind (United States Department of

Education, 2001), has become the dominant force in decisions made by educators in the school districts of this country. The effects of this test-laden system reverberate within classrooms as is evidenced by both the narrowing of the curriculum and the shift of teaching practice (Cawelti, 2006). Focusing heavily on both math and language arts, No Child Left Behind (NCLB) often pressures administrators to either severely decrease or eliminate instructional time in content areas such as physical education, science, art, and social studies. Seventy one percent of school districts report that instructional time within the elementary setting was reduced or eliminated in at least one other subject in order to direct time to reading or math (Azzam, Perkins-Gough, & Thiers, 2006). It is within this high-pressure environment that teachers often relinquish creative, experiential methods of instruction and move towards directly teaching to the test via practice tests and worksheets.

In the face of reauthorization of NCLB, the reality of schools will not soon shift. New teachers will be faced with learning environments immersed in the mandates of NCLB and the programs and strategies used to adhere to its accountability measures. In the face of such pressures, new teachers will be challenged to implement engaged, high level instruction. According to a survey conducted by the Wisconsin ASCD, eighteen percent of educators surveyed stated that the test proved to be a de-motivator for quality instruction and feared the loss of higher level instruction resulting in a lack of critical thinking skill development (Frontier, Pheifer, and Zellmer, 2006). In addition to this potential loss of quality instruction, core content areas are being sacrificed for those that are tested. Social Studies is often the casualty of this narrowing of the curriculum, especially in elementary schools.

Within this new instructional context, teacher educators are challenged by the potential disconnect between university content methods courses and the reality of the instructional practice found within a teaching environment focused on high stakes testing. This is especially true if the content area is a non-tested area, such as Social Studies. This challenge is only deepened if the traditional approach to teaching Social Studies methods is replaced with the critical pedagogy central to the experience of a social education. Inside this reality teacher educators are preparing the next generation of teachers.

As a teacher educator resolute to the experience of a social education, my course emphasizes a critical approach to curriculum, which necessitates movement beyond the standards presented in the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (Texas Education Agency, 2006). Instructional strategies, presented within my curriculum, move well beyond the "banking" concept of education in which students are viewed as passive receptacles of learning (Freire, 1970/1992). I offer the consideration that standardized testing of Social Studies falls short of accurately supporting the competencies required of at the citizenry of a democratic society (Stanley, 2001). Often, such ideas lie in direct contradiction to the reality of many schools.

Teaching environments grounded in succeeding on "the test," often pressure new teachers to accommodate a teaching practice based on best practice to one focused on teaching to the test. This pressure is only heightened as students explore the tenets of a social education. Students begin to discover through the exploration of critical teaching that a social education is far removed from the compartmentalized learning used in preparation for the numerous accountability measures facing classroom teachers today. In the face of this tension, students begin to question the status quo of the elementary curriculum and

inevitably wonder if it is possible to navigate the duality between the realities of test focused schools and the tenets of a critical pedagogy, the foundation of a social education.

As a teacher educator, I am interested in the tension presented in this disconnect. Such a divide places the foundations of a social education at risk of being eliminated from the teaching practice of students. There is little opportunity for my students to observe, question, and practice alternative approaches to teaching within the context of their field experience. They observe limited traditional Social Studies lessons due to tested content area priorities. Additionally, they are challenged to find abundant exemplars of critical educators or examples of non-traditional approaches to teaching Social Studies to young children. Within such a context, I continually wonder how I can empower students to transform traditional Social Studies curricula into experiences directed by a critical pedagogy.

Many students come to the Social Studies methods courses with notions of Social Studies curricula based upon their own experiences as students of Social Studies. When asked to define Social Studies the most common replies include a generalized list of traditional Social Studies subjects such as history, economics, government, and geography. Although these disciplines have traditionally dominated the Social Studies curricula as most students experience it, such a narrow characterization of the Social Studies offers a very limited view of the expanse of Social Studies education (Stanley, 2001).

Social Studies is a complex area of study. Experts in Social Studies education debate the underlying principles of the field (Kincheloe, 2001; Stanley, 2001). Disciplines of study include those within the social sciences (i.e., geography, anthropology, political science, economics, psychology, sociology) and the humanities (i.e., history, law, literature,

philosophy) (Stanely, 2001). Additionally, social studies engages in interdisciplinary studies of other fields like, critical race theory, ethnic studies or gender studies to name a few (Stanley, 2001). It is the breadth of disciplines held within the field that presents Social Studies as a convoluted “subject” to be taught at all levels within the educational system.

What is social studies? Numerous voices have equally numbered retorts to this query. Some voices suggest that social studies is the avenue by which children become knowledgeable and patriotic Americans (Finn, 2003; Vinson & Ross, 2001). Stanley offer social studies as “the study of all human enterprise over time and space” (as cited in Vinson & Ross, 2001, p. 266). Others state that Social Studies is the unification of all relevant materials for deliberation on contemporary societal issues (Evans, 2007). The National Council of Social Studies (1994) claims that social studies is the integrated study of the social sciences and humanities to promote a civically competent citizenry. However articulated the foundational claimed purpose of social studies is aligned with educating for the role of citizen, a role that places Social Studies education firmly in a political space (Barr, Barth & Shermis, 1977; Martorella, 1996;Kincheloe, 2001;Vinson & Ross, 2001; White, 2000). Yet both the manner and extent by which Social Studies educators approach this task is up for considerable debate.

On the back of the standardization of elementary curricula social studies instructional approaches place teachers as the givers of knowledge and students as the receivers (Freire 1970/1992; Vinson & Ross, 2001) Knowledge is a pre-determined, static entity that remains constant and standardized for all, regardless the context of the learners’ reality (Kincheloe, 2001; McLaren, 1998;Vinson & Ross, 2001). From the epistemological perspective, this approach aligns with positivistic belief that all knowledge is scientific

knowledge. In other words, even the social knowledge innate in the study of the social studies can be approached in an objective and decontextualized manner (Kincheloe, 2001, 2005). Educators aligned in this tradition offer one direction to education. They see definable and quantifiable truths. They view themselves as the transmitters of knowledge. In educating the next generation of citizens, social studies educators aligned in this tradition offers social studies education as the transmission of "American" values and "democratic" ideals (Barr, Barth & Shermis, 1977; Kincheloe, 2001; McLaren 1998, White, 2000). Opponents of this approach to social studies education claim that such low level forms of knowledge acquisition fail to develop the capabilities required of a citizen in a democratic culture and world (Stanley, 1992; White, 2000).

Critical pedagogues claim that the role of citizen is grounded in the need to be an informed social critic (Matorella, 1996). In other words, citizenship is not a role by which the status quo is maintained and society never changed, but a role committed to a transformative citizenship that demands societal change (Freire, 1970/1992; hooks, 1994; Kincheloe, 2005; McLaren 1998; Vinson & Ross, 2001). What is at the heart of a curriculum that supports the development of such a transformative role?

A critical curriculum is grounded in the need to understand the source of knowledge (Kincheloe, 2005; McLaren, 1998). Socially constructed, knowledge is to be critically explored in an effort to understand the socially reproductive nature of the "truths" offered as knowledge (Freire, 1970/1992; Kincheloe, 2001, McLaren, 1998). In other words, we must deconstruct the unconscious patterns of knowledge designed through social interactions within a specific culture, time or place (McLaren, 1998). From this standpoint,

espiemologically critical pedagogy redefines the mainstream educational idea of knowledge. It seeks to understand the contextual nature of knowing.

Critical pedagogy questions whose knowledge warrants social importance. And asks who gets to say. It questions the absentee interests and demands inclusive voice or perspectives about the world around us. In the end, critical pedagogy critically questions the world and challenges the foundational basis for all knowledge. Simply put, critical pedagogy relentlessly questions “accepted” knowledge in an effort to unearth the veiled obstacles to the democratic ideals of social justice and equity.

From this space, critical pedagogues uphold curricula far removed from productive knowledge and founded in pursuit of directive knowledge (Giroux, 1998; McLaren, 1998). Directive knowledge offers the sociopolitical application of knowledge (Giroux, 1998). This steps beyond the internalization of the micro objectives or productive knowledge of specific content and offers a bridge to grander societal objectives that might include an understanding of the values, norms and structural purposes of the social order (Giroux, 1998).

In the case of the study of American history, the micro objective of understanding the Declaration of Independence offers little insight into responsibilities of civically active citizens dedicated to the adherence to the ideals presented in this historical document. The time honored reading of the declaration offers exposure to the founding document of America, yet fails to move beyond the script of the document. However, attention to directive knowledge offers analysis of the meaning and possible disconnect of values presented within the document and the actions of the American government and its people. A curriculum design honoring directive knowledge cultivates critical analysis of the

constructive knowledge of society. Only with such critical questioning can issues of injustice, oppression, and dominance be exposed and acted upon by a citizenry equipped to stand for change of the status quo.

The challenge of my practice is to consider how I can engage pre-service teachers in a critical inquiry of teaching and learning in a way that impacts their practice as classroom teachers. How can I do this when the teaching environment from which they were educated and will soon enter as teaching professionals honors the standardization of curriculum? How can I illuminate the need to step beyond the basics of Social Studies and engage students with the curriculum in such a way that cultivates the skills warranted for a transformative citizen?

Sadly, students are most familiar with the experience of Social Studies taught from the positivistic philosophy. Amid this milieu, the experience of my course challenges what students know to be the Social Studies curriculum. As mentioned earlier, students come to Social Studies education classes with constructed narratives regarding the definition of Social Studies. They loudly claim individual disciplines such as economics, history, geography, government, and geography as Social Studies; all compartmentalized subjects experienced in their educational tenure as K-12 students. When asked why we study Social Studies, students express statements that claim the need to learn from the past in order to refrain from making the same mistakes. Or they claim that Social Studies educates students how to become productive members of society. Some offer hints that Social Studies should teach students to critically think so they can be productive in the world.

Most frequently, as presented earlier, students contend Social Studies' role as one in which students are taught how to be citizens. Semester after semester, I hear words such as

these fall from the mouths of students with robotic ease. However, when asked to expound on the role of citizen there is a collective contemplative pause. This silence is usually broken by statements that mention voting, following laws and volunteerism. This is where we begin.

Over the last couple of semesters, the critical deconstruction of the curriculum has been approached in numerous ways. First, students are asked to consider the language of the standards. For instance, the Texas Essential Knowledge standards (TEKS) call students to “understand characteristics of good citizenship as exemplified by historical figures and ordinary people” (1999). We ponder the concept of “good citizenship.” What does it mean? What guides us in our definition of “good”? Can “good” citizenship be standardized?

There are no definitive answers to such questions. Answers rest in the experience, beliefs and historical context of those defining the matter (Britzman 2003; Dewey, 1938; Hinchey, 1998; Kincheloe, 2005). However, young teachers, for the most part, have not been asked to consider such speculations. My hope is that through my course, such critical analysis of the language of our standards and schools will aid in the development of students own critical reflection about teaching and learning.

This critical questioning translates to the Social Studies canon, as presented in the standards. Students are asked to analyze the standards for what content or thematic emphasis is present. They are asked to consider what they deem imperative to student learning. Conversely, they are invited to consider what is absent in the curriculum. What voices are unheard within the standards? What might they include/exclude in the standards? This line of inquiry is offered as an awakening of students to the essence of the Social Studies standards elementary teachers are charged to teach.

Beyond on-going analysis of the curriculum, experiences are offered in the exploration of the missing voices of the curriculum. Through reading excerpts of *Lies My Teacher Told Me* (Loewen, 2007), students are challenged to move past blind acceptance of the knowledge of the canon as traditionally presented to them. In the reading of this text, discussion turns to the idea of official knowledge versus the silent voices of marginalized populations. Who anoints the official knowledge of education? What viewpoints are missing in the sacred stories that make up the official knowledge of a culture?

Such inquiry aligns with the critical pedagogues stance that curricula in schools are political driven by those in power and as a result present the stories of the dominant power at the expense of the voice of the other (hooks, 1994; Kincheloe, 2005; McLaren, 1998). This reading, coupled with a lesson that analyzes the forgotten other, pulled students to consider the idea of truth. For many, the questioning of their educational truth was confronting. They felt betrayed by the system and consciously aware of the limitation of the curriculum being implemented in their classrooms.

When reading Loewen's (2007c) chapter on the first Thanksgiving, students were astounded at the one sided story they were exposed to year after year. They questioned the treatment of Thanksgiving with their students and questioned their role as an educator dedicated to multiple perspectives. We debated the role of the sacred story of Thanksgiving in the lives of students, particularly young students. We considered the narrowed presentation of Native Americans within the sacred stories of Thanksgiving. We questioned the learning offered through the production of the beloved hand turkey, pilgrim hat and bursting cornucopia. We contemplated how a Native American might relate to the celebration of Thanksgiving as compared to many other Americans. In the end, this reading

was the beginning of the formation of many students critical questioning of the curriculum they were taught and presently teaching to their elementary students.

In an effort to build upon this new awakening students were given an assignment in which they were to present an alternative perspective of a time honored concept, historical figure or event within the elementary Social Studies curriculum. Students were assigned prevalent elementary subject matter that included Columbus, George Washington, Thanksgiving, patriotism, Native Americans and the Texas Revolution. The assignment guidelines were presented as follows:

> *In pairs research your assigned topic to design and present a photo-story that addresses the following questions:*
>
> 1. *What is the traditional educational approach to this topic?*
> 2. *What do you feel is missing in these common approaches?*
> 3. *How would you approach this topic differently? Why?*
> 4. *How does your approach tie to the standards?*
> 5. *How does your approach align with the readings/ discussions of this class? Be specific.*
> 6. *What resources did you use in the research of this project?*
> 7. *What alternative texts would you use to support this topic in an elementary classroom?*

The results of this assignment were less impactful than I had hoped. Students presented generalizations regarding their topic, as expressed in the recommendations of a group exploring the concept of patriotism.

- *Patriotism should be taught with respect.*
- *Students should be aware as to why they are entitled to say or sing such Patriotic songs.*

- *We would take our time to teach the great meaning behind the pledge of allegiance, the Patriotic song and the reasons why they were created.*

Certainly, the approach to understanding the meaning behind these rituals is a first step. However, it occurs that the depth of critical analysis of why such traditions are studied at all is missing. One can hear the background acceptance of the inoculation of school children to patriotic traditions. The approach taken within this particular group offers a common example of the extent by which many students grasped the exercise of seeking radically different approaches to commonplace content.

Students should not be faulted for this. In fact, the alternative approaches of numerous groups offer evidence of the power of the constructive narrative behind many of scared Social Studies subject matter. Columbus went unquestioned in his "discovery" of America despite the addition of the Native voice. Texans remained the "good" guys at the battle of the Alamo, despite the added perspective of the Mexican military. For many students, this first foray into deep consideration of varied perspectives to these topics only went so far. It was not necessarily dangerous to bring in the voice of another perspective. Yet, to critically question the sanitized version of history was quite another endeavor. For many, this task seemed dangerous and irresponsible as evidence by their concern for what administrators and parents would say when they "taught such radical views."

Is the questioning of the stories of the Social Studies curriculum dangerous to students? To the social order of society? I, like other educators dedicated to the foundations of critical pedagogy would loudly claim that the skills cultivated through such instruction are key in the creation and maintenance of the ideals of socially just and equitable societies. Without such skills, the development of a generation of citizens dedicated and empowered to stand for societal change will be a risk. Standing in the belief that education should offer

access to transformative actions in society and the world at large, I offered students the opportunity to explore the idea of citizenship beyond mere Social Studies lessons. I challenged them to ponder how the essence of their teaching philosophy might educate towards the role of transformative citizenship? What will their classroom management style communicate about democratic ideals? What will the culture of the classroom teach about citizenship? How will the proclaimed ideals of democracy; truth, justice, equality and responsibility for the common good be addressed within the culture of their classroom? The possible actions connected to these inquires move beyond one -time lessons or units of study on citizenship.

I ask students to unpack the following democratic ideals using critical thought: truth, justice, equality, and responsibility for the common good. I begin here because throughout the Texas Social Studies K-12 curriculum these ideals are touted, both directly and indirectly, as imperative to democracy (Texas Education Agency, 1999). In groups, students discussed their understanding of these concepts. This task proved to be dynamic due to the inseparability of life experiences of each student (Britzman, 1996; Dewey 1938; Hinchey, 1998). Some students offered a different level of discussion regarding the heady concepts of justice and equality. For marginalized students, their life experiences often offer a critical viewpoint from which to explore these democratic ideals. Students' range of interpretations offered no definitive answers, only opportunities for expanded perspectives on the concept. However, students were challenged to negotiate to consensus on the essence of the democratic concept assigned to their group.

Both individually and collectively students created concrete action statements that illustrated how they, as teachers, would build the assigned ideal within their classroom. For

example, the prompt for equality asked “As a teacher, how will you model and cultivate the democratic ideal of equality in your classroom on an ongoing basis?” Students were challenged to create concrete actions in support of establishing the essence of this democratic ideal in their future classroom. The list that follows offers a snapshot of actions that would possibly infuse the idea of equality in their future classrooms:

> *I will have a classroom library that has books representing multiple cultures.*
>
> *I will use popsicle sticks to assure the all students voices are heard in classroom activities.*
>
> *I will not segregate the boys and girls in anyway. Like, hallway lines, classroom duties or classroom competitions.*

Actions aligned with responsibility for the common good provided students opportunities to be active participants in the responsibilities of the classroom through assigned jobs. Daily class meetings emerged as a way to offer equity of voice and a forum by which students could make decisions regarding classroom issues-actions that “live out” the ideals of social justice, equity, and responsibility to the common good.

The discussion regarding the ideal of truth proved more complex. One group proposed consideration of “good” and “bad” truth. In the opinion of this group, the latter hurts or is not safe for young children to hear. Examples of controversial issues such as September 11, natural disasters and death were provided as examples. This discussion lead back to the clean version of history presented by Loewen (2007c) around Thanksgiving. Many students exclaimed commitment to unveiling the dirty truth about current events, historical events, and influential people in age appropriate ways.

Other students offered the idea of teaching right and wrong through the ideals of truth and the opposite; lying. Is there a difference between the democratic ideal of truth and

simple honesty? We argued this point to no conclusive ending. As a class, myself included, we were reminded of the personal nature of truth. One's truth is another's blind spot.

The discussion around these heady democratic ideals offered an understanding of the complexity of transforming these ideals into action. Students offered ideas that most certainly would provide living examples of such democratic values. However, messages of contradiction of these values are present beyond the classroom door, in the hallways of schools, within the local newspapers and on the national news. In the end, students were left to consider their role in making sense of such contradictions and the ways in which they will attempt to do so.

My attempts to have students critically analyze the curricula they teach occurs a slow and arduous process, understandably. By students' own admission, many of them have not experienced such critical inquiry of education or the world around them. Such consideration of thinking takes time to cultivate and I teach them for a mere 12 week period during their senior year. My impatience in the development of their critical eye is fueled by my sense of urgency for education. Without a generation of teachers diligently reflecting upon the message of the curriculum, the contradictions between societal actions and democratic ideals and the omissions of multiple versions of truth, I fear students in elementary classrooms will not be equipped to step into the space of a transformative citizen.

Personal Spaces

Critical pedagogy is contextual work (Duncan-Andrrade & Morrell, 2008; Kincheloe, 2001; McLaren,1998). Social, educative and personal milieus undeniably shape the practice of teachers in our classrooms today. However, attention to the personal context

of teaching offers powerful insights into the development of the being of teacher. Understanding and critically questioning personal experiences, assumptions and dispositions are crucial for the development of a critical educator (Greene, 1978; Hinchey, 2006). As a teacher, understanding the source of personal knowing offers access to responsibility in ones practice and an avenue by which to teach students how to awaken to the world around them and critically question what they see (Greene, 1978).

My course attempts to awaken students to the connections of their personal experiences and their teaching philosophies (Britzman, 2003; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Students consider a moment from their elementary years and determine the incident's influential reach upon their approach to teaching and learning. They are challenged to critically connect their teaching philosophies to their personal experiences, challenges and dispositions (Britzman, 2000; Hinchey, 1998). Students reflect upon articles and texts that push the status quo and require personal analysis of their reactions to the thesis of the author or other classmate's divergent opinions about the article. Simple put, students are asked to critically consider the connection of their past experiences upon the actions of their developing professional life (Britzman, 1997).

The introspective nature of the course offers quite a challenge for students. They approach the early activities distance from their opinions and connections with the material. Time and time again, I coach students to put more of them in the analysis of the text we explore. I ask them to make connections to their own learning experiences. They are requested to spell out the path of their thoughts in ways that illuminate a bit of themselves.

For many this level of reflection is difficult. Reflection in education programs is a common practice. With frequent use of reflection in their classes, students seem to

approach reflection in a detached manner. It becomes a task in which students often recant the education jargon and platitudes that are all too familiar; “I want to make a difference in the lives of children”; “I believe in hands-on teaching”; “I want to be a teacher who thinks outside the box.” Although, the intent of these comments is noble, my concerns lie with the source behind them. What in their experience influenced these beliefs? What are the most unshakeable ideals of their philosophy? What within their personal beliefs may impend their classroom practices and interactions? In the face of exploring critical pedagogy, these personal inquiries are foundational in the development of a critical educator.

The resistance of students to take the path of their practice inward is of concern for me. I worry that without an awakening to themselves they will be limited in the pursuit of critical pedagogy. When disconnected from our lives, we robotically go through the mechanics of our daily lives in a state of indifference (Greene, 1978). We only skim the plane of consciousness in our world. From here, a critical pedagogy would be inauthentic and incomplete.

As I expanded my knowledge base on critical pedagogy, I continually returned to the same nagging thought-critical introspection is vital to being a critical educator. Analytical reflection allows educators to own their narratives about teaching and learning, solidly defend their philosophies in the face of disagreement and take responsibility for interactions with students, parents and colleagues. Simply put, exploration of our personal spaces allows for the development of a critical consciousness that will extend to the rest of the world (Greene, 1978; Hinchey, 2006).

The complexity of critical pedagogy calls critical educators to understand multiple layers of education and society. They must look beyond teaching strategies and seek a

broader vision of education; a vision that understands the, “complexity of educational decisions based in justice, democracy, and competing ethical claims (Kincheloe, 2005b, p.1).” Critical educators are acutely aware of the institutionalized beliefs created by society as obstacles to the fulfillment of possibility for all human beings (Kincheloe, 2000). This cannot be achieved void of the development of a double consciousness; one based in understanding the self in addition to the institution of education as constructed by society (Britzman, 2003). In short, an internal awakening is a critical part of a critical pedagogy.

As mentioned earlier, critical pedagogy is focused on the relationships of varied contexts. When contradictions occur between the layered spaces of society, education and our personal experiences, the common reaction in educational institutions is avoidance. Such exploration is complex and often threatening to embedded mind- sets. Inconsistencies in methods courses and the “real world” of teaching can evoke complicated and provoking questions. Do I really believe in hands-on instruction? Am I really an educator committed to social justice? Do I believe *all* children can learn? Do I really want my students to think critically? If pursued such questions allow for the emergence of difficult knowledge. In other words, bad news insights potentially surface. This is experience can be uncomfortable, however, it provides access to powerful learning.

In grappling with making meaning of the contradictory collisions of the multiple contexts effecting the development of the being of teachers, self -knowledge emerges. Without self- knowledge educators will fail to respond adequately and feel both hopeless and disempowered (Britzman, 2000). More concisely put, they will lose themselves in the face the contradiction. For this reason, the development of self-knowledge must be a focal point in teacher education programs. In the absent of self-knowledge furor to teach will

dominate the field; blindly teaching knowledge devoid of questioning or doubting the role of society on schools, the knowledge of curricula and teachers' personal lived experiences (Britzman, 2000). Teaching is a "social, existential, and emotional engagement in learning" (Britzman, 2000, p.4). This definition of teaching calls teacher educators to design pre-service programs that allow students to explore such dimensions and the impact they have on their development as a future educators. Sadly, many educational programs are not designed to support a meaningful exploration of self and conversely "produce" students/citizens who are blind to the world around them and unable to reflectively, question themselves.

Summary of Critical Pedagogy Literature

As stated earlier, critical pedagogy explores the nature of *knowing*. It challenges official knowledge and seeks critical knowledge guided by questioning of the world we live in. The critical knowledge promoted by critical educators "seeks to connect with the corporeal and the emotional in a way that understands at multiple levels and seeks to assuage human suffering" (Kincheloe, 2005b, p. 3). Within this statement one can hear the challenge of the critical educator.

Teaching is not removed from the larger context of the world. Because of this, critical educators must be learned in reading the world at a deeper level. They understand the influences of politics on education. They understand the power of constructed realities throughout their students' lives. They seek relevant connections of experience for students that question and challenge both overt and covert systems of power and oppression. Yet, most importantly, they seek to cultivate a critical knowledge and move towards transformative action. The cultivation of a critical intellect is meaningless if social change

is not the end result. Kincheloe (2005b) warns, " [we] cannot simply attempt to cultivate the intellect without changing the unjust social context in which such minds operate" (p.21)

I reason that the beliefs of critical educators offer a shake up in the compliance education has become. Kincheloe (2005b) states, "If we are unable to articulate this transformative, just, critical vision then the job of schooling will continue to involve taming, controlling/or rescuing the least empowered of our students." He is asking us to consider our role in the development of fully empowered students that will question the questioner, find the expression of their humanity in the world and act upon it.

With this the charge of a critical educator, my ever -present question is, "How?"

A classmate offered a possible approach to my inquiry by suggesting that critical pedagogy is simply a state of being. I contend that the foundation of this state of being is the cultivation of critical curiosity. Such critical inquiry, the basis of critical pedagogy, compels students to explore the world at depths normally unvisited. In the experience of a social education methods course, young teachers are exposed, if only for 12 weeks, to a critical pedagogy that provides a multi-layered space in which they can begin a critical examination of the broader world beyond the classroom, the grander institute of education, the sacred academic canon and the relationship between their personal narratives and their educational philosophies.

The level of examination warranted in critical pedagogy is a life-long process. For some students my class is a continuation of a critical inquiry of the world. For others it is their first experience with critical exploration of what they know. Regardless of where students are on this continuum of critical inquiry, my personal inquiry continually ponders the extent to which their brief visit to the course will impact their careers.

Foundational Masters: The Space of Freedom

The owner of a home under renovation is limited in the perception of the space and its potential transformation. Walls and structured boundaries cannot visually be eliminated easily. Homeowners may struggle with the visualization of a transformed space only because of their limited perspective in the world of space. They are bound by the constraints of an untrained eye.

Yet, an architect or builder has a freedom with space that provides a creative source by which new spaces are created and old spaces transformed. They own the ability to envision space unbounded by perceived spatial limitations or existing structures. All space has transformative potential. No space is restricted to the existing design. Viewing space and structures from this perspective, I imagine, offers creative power or freedom for the architect as they interact with the world. In their eyes, the world must look like impermanent space available for creation.

In the context of such freedom, architectural possibilities are unlimited. Seeing past the traditional paradigm in architecture and construction offers an opening for innovative practices that will, from an inventive space, create unimagined solutions to modern day challenges facing the growing populations of the world.

In this sense, architecture models a key component in a social education-access to transformational freedom. Liberation in its simplest form is merely the ability to act without restriction. However, for critical pedagogues they speak of ontological freedom-the liberated spirit of humanity (Freire, 1970/1992; Kincheloe, 2005). This freedom offers access to the full expression of human potential; it is transformative in nature, allowing for boundless possibilities at the hands of humans. Like the architect who possesses the

creative freedom to see the possibility of space and transform it, a social education offers access to a liberation of the human spirit opening up avenues to be inspirations for social change.

In the minds of many critical educators, society needs to address the oppressive structures that suppress the emergence of a fully expressed and empowered person.

Varied institutions and instruments of society maintain a constructed reality that often silences “the other” of society. The educational system is offered as a mechanism used to maintain the silence and disempowerment of the marginalized populations of society (Freire, 1970/1992).

The inauthentic and standardized manner in which education is offered to students kills the idea of the possibility that each unique person offers in the world. In short, they are ontological slaves. Schaull (1992) contends,

> Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate the integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity of it, *or* it becomes “the practice of freedom,” the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world (p. 15).

As an educator, this quote encapsulates the essence of my work as I seek to create a course design that honors such freedom.

Redesigning Freedom

How do we transform an education of conformity to one with a true emancipatory spirit? I have grappled with this question semester after semester, seeking insights on how I might model such liberation in education for my students so that they may offer it to their students. I have struggled with what such freedom looks like in the confines of an educational system demanding standardization and different levels of conformity of both

students and faculty. At this point in my journey, the assessment of my practice of emanciptory education is more theoretical than practical. My theoretical foundations have been gleaned from the works of Freire (1998), Greene (1978, 1988), and Hinchey (1998).

To be a stand for the depth of freedom proposed by critical educators it is imperative to be ethically grounded. Freire (1998) explained, “I speak of a universal human ethic in the same way as I speak of humanity’s ontological vocation, which calls us out of and beyond ourselves” (p.25). The challenge echoed in this quote is multifaceted. First, to move beyond ourselves we must have a commitment to seek, with humility, the ideas, gestures, and differences of the “other” (Freire, 1998). Secondly, the focus of a universal ethic must vehemently contest racial, sexual and class discrimination in all facets of society (Freire, 1998). Finally, such ethical foundations have a propensity to evolve into hypocritical moralism, which warrants vigilant attention (Freire, 1998). In other words, the universal human ethic has the potential to evolve to an ethic of self-righteousness that in turn binds ontological freedom and divides humanity.

In the end, educators who are grounded in universal ethics empower themselves to stand firm in the face of the inevitable transgressions of a modern society guided by the ideals of profit (Freire, 1998). Such a capability empowers individuals to be subjects in the world, engaged in authentic freedom of choice rather than powerless objects compliant with their seemingly predetermined roles in society.

Through critical pedagogy, as already discussed, we begin to “refocus on the place we have lived all our lives” (Hinchey, 1998, p.15). It is through the process of critical inquiry with the world around us that we begin to gain access to the ontological freedom

suggested by critical pedagogues. For the critical educator the first step in the discovery of such freedom is found in the development of a critical capacity of learners.

Without the capacity of a critical view of the world, education becomes nothing but a transfer of knowledge, or a banking system (Freire, 1998). Information is given to objects (the learner). Such an educational approach is a deterministic view of the world (Freire, 1998). A decided history, if you will. In other words, it was a history where humans have a predetermined, powerless role to play; a role in which choice is absent and conditioned thinking prevails. In short, possibilities are limited.

An emanicipatory education "creates the possibility of the construction and production of knowledge" (Freire, 1998, p. 49). It is an education that embraces the notion of the unfinished nature of humans. An education of possibility; one in which the subjects (learners) understand that learning or "formation" is a continual process of becoming (Freire, 1998). Such learning moves beyond a critical inquiry of the world but demands the cultivation of a critical consciousness. Freire (1998) explained,

> In truth [critical awareness] is a requirement of our human condition. It is one of the roads we have to follow if we are to deepen our awareness of our world, of facts, of events and the demands of human consciousness to develop our capacity for epistemological curiosity (p. 55).

The development of such a curiosity allows students to profoundly engage in the dissection of what they know and how they know it. Freire (1998) expands on this thought, " the foundation stone of the whole [educational] process is human curiosity. This is what makes me question, know, act, ask again, recognize" (p.19). This way of being removes the learner from having education *done* to them and empowers them to be critically awake to the world- engaging in it, questioning it and transforming it. In the end, such critical

engagement with the world offers an expanded view of what is possible and in turn offers hope for inspiring alternatives to teaching and learning.

In my practice, I have struggled with the practice of freedom required to fully empower students in the design of themselves as educators. As a social education experience, I want the course, to be presented as an alterative teaching paradigm to be considered as they create their educational philosophies. However, my own resistance troubles me when students critically engage in questioning the tenets of a social education and hold on to seemingly "limited" educational views. This stance produces no practice of freedom for students. In turn, I wonder if they are offered any choice at all in the course. Seemingly, students' access to conscious choice is negated by my own attachment to the "right way" presented in the course. I have come to realize that I unconsciously present my course as "the way", whether I say differently or not. My message is clear; Social Education is the way. My attachment to my own beliefs of how a social education should look and be received by others provides an example of my educational bigotry or hypocritical moralism (Freire, 1998; Hinchey, 1998).

Hinchey (1998) contends, "[l]ike religious zealots, we educators often wreak extensive havoc when we confuse what we believe with what we know" (p. 5) This quote warns critical educators to refrain from an educational bigotry often cultivated by the collapse of belief and fact. In a teaching atmosphere in which lines are drawn, it is easy to label certain arguments right or wrong. Yet, such decisive actions create nothing but educational battlegrounds (Hinchey, 1998). From a different perspective educators could view these debates as competing convictions and definitions of education (Hinchey, 1998).

The ability to do this rests in the educator's ability to be critically aware of his or her own assumptive and bias nature.

Within the context of a specific conversation with a student, I was awakened to how I walk a very fine line between honoring the different viewpoints of students and coaching them to find a social education. The story that follows illustrates my struggle with my educational bigotry regarding the experiences of students as they explore or resist the experiences of a social education as presented in my course.

At the end of last year, I was troubled by what occurred to me, as my lack of responsibility with my bias in education. Throughout the year, I was aware of how my presentations of Social Education could and did, explicitly and implicitly, make the educational beliefs of my students and supervising teachers wrong. I heard this in the voices of my students when they judged the way their teachers handled Social Studies or in their own silence in class discussions. Although, I warned against the villainization of in-service teachers and the schools themselves, my students had sensed my outward inauthentic reactions to their observations in the field. I had claimed my bias at the beginning of the semester, but I was still uncomfortable with the way in which my students unquestioningly followed my lead.

In the context of a pyramidal metaphor, one might place me as the self-indulgent Pharaoh enslaving those around him to the work of his passion. In the Pharaoh's case this work was the erection of an elaborate tomb for transition to the after life. For me, students dutifully parrot my philosophy presenting themselves as willing laborers in the building of a social education. Many students are silent in their resistance to the divergent educational approaches to the course and habitually engage in the course in a safe and eerily, agreeing

manner. Although, I understand the protective nature of such a decision, I am continually troubled by the occurrence of student suppression or inauthentic agreement in the course. Each and every semester I receive course evaluations (both university and personal), which offer surprising evidence of this phenomenon. Seemingly engaged students contradict their actions and words in the course within the comments on the evaluations. This troubled me.

This troubled inquiry led me to seek ways I could generate a learning community that offered students authentic interaction with the ideas presented in the course and me the ability to both honor and challenge the differing educational philosophies of my students and their supervisors. As a result the next evolution of the course was presented as an alternative educational choice. I offered the course as a choice; a choice that I requested they “try on” for our 12 -week semester. Little did I realize my own denial in this endeavor?

Henry catapulted me into an inquiry about my commitment to divergent opinions within my course. On the surface, I would argue that I am in fact committed to the tenets of a social education being challenged by the students enrolled in my class. I am sickened at the thought of students parroting what they think I want to hear. I cannot blame them. They are of a system that covertly (often, overtly) trains them to unquestionably regurgitate the “truth” or the right answer. Yet in Henry, I had a student who boldly stated his criticisms of the material and philosophy of the course, a student who was seemingly a lone voice with such opinions, yet remained vocal. This is what I wanted. Or was it? That fall semester, I was feeling confronted and irritated by Henry. These feelings of self -hypocrisy had me wonder; do I really want students to voice what they really think?

It was with the first posting of the semester, I was forced to deal with the challenge of owning my educational bigotry. In regards to the ideal of social justice in the classroom, Henry stated that “thus far, a social justice classroom is a safe haven for an underachiever willing to get by doing the bare minimum” He went on to say that there are limits to what freedoms students should have and that we are teachers not mediators. My reaction to this comment alongside Henry’s resistance to a course text, *Black Ants and Buddhists,* was emotional and aligned directly to the concept of educational bigotry.

For me, the student was wrong and exhibited attitudes ill suited for teaching. I was right to stubbornly resist such close- minded thinking. One can hear the educational bigotry in my reaction. I clearly had done my theoretical masters had warned me not to do; I had collapsed my belief in a social education with fact. I sought help. I shared with a colleague, who verbalized my feelings, “This student should not be a teacher.” The validation of my guttural reaction to this posting was in fact comforting, but I remained uneasy.

This posting sent me on a line of inquiry about the process of a social education experience. Such an experience is messy. It is a journey. It is often confronting. Critical questioning of the status quo, often presents resistance in students. As a teacher educator, one responsible for advancing students into student teaching and ultimately the elementary classroom, how do I distinguish between the messy process of the course and my own bias towards attitudes I believe teachers should not hold?

In my search of insight into this inquiry, I was reminded that the expression of radical choices requires an increased commitment (Freire, 1974/2007). Such commitment is a positive stance; one that is critical, loving, humble, and communicative (Freire,

1974/2007). In the case of Henry, I had not been loving or humble. Freire (1974/2007) offered a possible stance in my perplexing and confronting situation with Henry. He states,

> The man who has made a radical option does not deny another man's right to choose, nor does he try to impose his own choice. He can discuss their respective positions. He is convinced he is right, but respects another man's prerogative to judge himself correct. He tries to convince and convert, not to crush his opponent (p.9).

With this in mind, I meet with Henry. I decided to step beyond my bias of his opinion (a task requiring great intentionality) and engage in dialectic in hopes of expanding both our views and understandings of the experience of the course. I was committed to not impose but, critically and lovingly, question his stance in an effort to understand his educational philosophy. In preparation for this conversation, I revisited the narrative of Henry's elementary years to gain further insight into how his lived experiences had shaped his beliefs (Britzman, 2000; Hinchey, 1998). What I found was a contradiction within his story of experience and resistance to the readings of the course.

Henry's elementary years were troubled. He was a self- proclaimed "problem" student. He rarely did his work and was a discipline problem in his classes. The school principal, however, believed in Henry. As a result, this administrator created a unique and innovative incentive for Henry. If he got his class work done without incident, Henry could go to lunch early and help the cafeteria staff prepare and serve lunch (an activity Henry found engaging and fun.) This experience lies in direct contradiction to Henry's continuous reaction to the innovative teaching practices of Mary Cowhey , the second grade teacher found in the course text, *Black Ants and Buddhist*s (2006).

Henry often lamented of the unrealistic and disconnected nature of Cowhey's approach to teaching-"It just is not practical." However, I saw parallel experiences in his

story and the story presented in the text. This revelation offered more complexity to the situation as I struggled to make sense of Henry's reaction to the experience of the course and my reactions to Henry within the course.

Our conversation was insightful, but the result disappointing. I discovered what I perceive to be evidence that the student was confronted by the exposure of alternative views on issues such as race and poverty. What had seemingly occurred to me as Henry's concern with the innovative teaching practices of Mary Cowhey were in fact foundationally about his conflict regarding how he was to "teach and deal with the poverty issues of his students" His experience of being raised in a rural, all white community, understandably, lay at the foundation of his reactions to the idea of race and poverty as expressed regarding a field trip to an urban community art installation. He candidly spoke of his struggles with a world far removed from the one he knew. I reassured him this was part of the struggle of the course, which he adamantly resisted. In the end the student, despite my requests, decided to say quiet in class for fear of being considered the racist in the room or hurting others feelings.

In retrospect, I feel like I pressured Henry to express his divergent opinions; opinions I was not sure I wanted to hear. In the face of my confused and inauthentic request, I do not blame the student for retreat. In the end, I shared my thoughts regarding his decision to remain mute in the following email correspondence:

> I understand. This course is designed so that students ponder the issues of social justice and how they can be addressed in a classroom. This is not the norm and is an uncomfortable process for all of us to different degrees. I believe that what you are experiencing is merely part of that process.
>
> In retrospect, I think I created pressure for you to go through this process publicly and I am sorry for that if that is the case. In the end, I think you need to judge the extent to which you are willing to voice your thoughts in

> the public forum of both e-classrooms [an electronic discussion board] and classroom discussions. I just request that you stay in the process in whatever manner that works for you.

In the end, Henry shut down. I was forced to confront the impact of my educational bigotry on the educational freedom of this student. This experience reminded me of the complexity of what we do as teacher educators. More specifically, this situation illuminated the level of consciousness required of teaching a course grounded in critical pedagogy. Even after uncovering the theory of educational bigotry, I habitually engaged in the right and wrong debate of educational viewpoints with this student. This awakening is enlightening but offers more questions regarding the *being* of a teacher of a social education. We critically question the status quo, but isn't there an innate "make wrong" in that? Do we not profess to have "the way" to education? How can I reconcile the collapse of belief and facts, when I believe in an experience of social education/critical pedagogy-both paradigms that repudiate "facts" or single "truths"? More importantly, how do I situate my course as a true alternative choice and honor students who resist it when I am passionately attached to the tenets of a social education to the degree that I am? Is that even possible?

In the end, I have no answers to these questions, however, the story of Henry offers revelations regarding the internal work of being and educator. The situation with Henry reminded me of the rigor it takes to remain wide-awake in my teaching. Without wide-awakeness we are more easily prone to embrace the habitual nature promoted by societal institutions, which offers no access to freedom (Greene, 1988). Such access to freedom begins with the teacher. The only educator readied to cultivate a search for such freedom in students is the educator readied to seek it himself or herself (Greene, 1988).

In this experience of practice, my zealous commitment to a social education had unconsciously created a decisive space in the course. With Henry, I negated the complexity of awakening or deepening the consciousness. I forgot that such an endeavor is a process- an ongoing, confronting process that proceeds at varied rates for each of us. In doing so, my educational bigotry had unconsciously offered him little freedom to be in the course the only way he knew how. This experience provided insights into my unconscious expectations of students- hidden expectations that offered students no real choice in the matter of authentically exploring the course from their own personal space.

The experience with Henry illuminated the level at which I had became complacent with my personal narratives about the hope of education and the status of teacher education. I had unconsciously trapped students within the confines of my own philosophical context. Although I asked students to critically consider the ideas of the course alongside their own educational philosophy, the learning Henry offered me unveiled a hidden hypocritical moralism within my practice. Seemingly, one could say that I was dedicated to ontological freedom if the choices of my students aligned with my own. This insight exposed an alarming disconnect between my own practice and my theoretical beliefs.

In a semester, I was reminded of the level of consciousness required to teach a course that begins to explore freedom. Such liberation calls students to be active, responsible and step beyond the boundaries of the constructed design of education (Freire, 1970/1992). In the end, the humility of the situation with Henry reminded me, quite poignantly, that as instructors we must consciously consider our role in the development of the structure of education as it exists.

I purport an educational philosophy that offers access to freedom- “a freedom to create and construct, to wonder and to venture” (Freire, 1970/1992, p. 55). However, this theoretical wish remains distance in my practice. The experience with Henry, afforded me a powerful insight- I must be rigorous in my efforts to refrain from offering my course as the answer and thus a replacement for current constructed narratives on education. Without this conscious reframing, the living contradictions of my theoretical inspirations and my practice will remain wide.

Like architects, I want students to experience a practice of freedom and authentic choice in the design of their professional selves. This is an imperative point in the experience of a social education. Without the educational experience and practice of unbounded freedom of being, society runs the risk of being populated by citizens who blindly embrace the habitual nature promoted by societal institutions (Greene, 1978). The possibility of such a limited view of the world offers little or no access to the transformative power of the authentically emancipated people. For me, this is the essence of education.

Constructing Critical Consciousness: A Process of Freedom

As I engaged more deeply in the development of a course grounded in critical pedagogy, I began to contemplate the connection between our role as critical questioners of the world and how this role provides access to freedom from society’s status quo. Within this inquiry I determined that a key element in bridging critical inquiry and liberation from the constraints of the social order was the development of critical consciousness.

One may simplistically, as I did in the beginning, equate a critical consciousness with a critical awareness in the world. Although a first step in the development of critical

consciousness, merely deepening awareness regarding the dynamics that shape society is insufficient. Action must be tethered to the awakening offered through critical inquiry. Thus, critical consciousness or *conscientizacao* is a process- one committed to actions as inspired by the insights of critically questioning the contradictions and inequities of society (Freire, 1970/1992). This process offers freedom- "Liberation is praxis: the action and reflection of men upon their world in order to transform it (Freire, 1970/1992, p. 66).

The first step in the developmental process of critical consciousness is the awakening of people to the contradictions of society as a whole, whether politically, economically, or socially (Freire 1970/1992). In regards to the 'why' of this awakening, Greene (1978) states, "the 'why' may accompany a sudden perception of the insufficiencies in ordinary life, of inequities and injustices in the world, of oppressions and brutality and control" (p. 43). When mindful of the world at this level, we can begin to see alternatives past the reality given to us and make authentic or moral choices- choices removed from indifference and in action (Greene, 1978).

In this context, morality is directed by an awakening to the multiple alternatives of any given situation. This widened perspective of the world offers one a sensitivity and power to make moral decisions, decisions that are authentic expressions of the mindful decision maker (Green, 1978). The critical exploration of the contradictions of society, as well as the inquiry into the source of our beliefs, assumptions and knowledge inevitably develops a habit of mind that continually seeks epistemological insight, uncovers alternatives to the status quo and offers an avenue to social change (Hinchey, 1998).

In the current landscape of education, learners are far removed from this level of critical engagement in learning. Greene (1978) suggests "wide awakeness ought to

accompany every effort made to initiate persons into any form of life or academic discipline" (p. 47). The role of an educator is to not tell students what to do, but rather cultivate a practice of how to choose and how to decide what to do (Greene, 1978). By contrast, the current dominant mode of education offers education as a transmission of knowledge-information deposited into receptacles (students) that passively accept, memorize, and regurgitate these academic deposits (Freire, 1970/1992). As educators, Freire (1970/1992) warned, "[t]he more students worked at storing the deposits entrusting to them, the less they developed the critical consciousness which would result from their intervention in the world as transformers of that world" (p. 60). This process retains learners to mental cages constructed by blind acceptance of oppressive realities and inevitable truths and sequesters the opportunity of empowered self-agency and social action.

Any endeavor in a social education seeks ways in which citizens can begin to develop critical consciousness. Access to the power of transforming the realties around us lay in the actions chosen by those engaged in the development of critical consciousness.

Without this process society is offered little hope of addressing issues of power and injustice. However, educators must take into account the varied levels at which citizens are engaged with the context of the reality of society, especially populations historically ignored. Freire (1974/2007) maintained three states of consciousness or conditioned levels of understanding needed to be understood if social change was to occur. They are semi-intransitivity, transitive and critical transitive consciousness.

Semi-intransitivity of consciousness is closely tied to survival. "Men of semi-intransitive consciousness cannot apprehend problems situated outside their sphere of

biological necessity" (Freire, 1974/2007, p. 13). The extent of their perception is very limited, which in turn makes them vulnerable to groundless explanations and easily lulled into passive and unconscious engagement with the world (Freire 1974/2007).

The second state of consciousness, transitive may be described as one of gentle wakefulness. One in this state expands her/his perceptions beyond the ideas of mere survival. She/He interacts with others and the world in total engagement (Freire, 1974/2007). Yet the downfall of this state is the pull to naïve transitivity or the oversimplification of problems. Freire (1974/2007) explains such naivety as a "consciousness of men who are still almost part of the mass, in whom the developing capacity for dialogue is still fragile and capable of distortion" (p. 14).

Critical transitive consciousness, the last state of understanding, is one of great depth. Problems are critically interrogated, findings openly analyzed and solutions actively explored. The questioning of the contradictions of society is the first step in the awakening of such a consciousness. Freire (1974/2007) stated that such a consciousness is not given to a person, but rather an authentically critical person makes his own intervention in and integration with his own context. Critical transitive consciousness is cultivated through educative efforts planted firmly in the context of both society and the learner.

In the context of my practice, for students and myself, each of these stages of consciousness is present to varying degrees throughout the semester. For many the structure of their experience in their K-12 education has cultivated a strong semi-intransitivity of consciousness. For some students, especially those of marginalized populations, this was the only way in which they could survive the educational system. Unquestionable acceptance of the knowledge and authority offered in schools provides

access to surviving in society. In the end, this state offers students an education removed from inquiry limiting learners sphere of perception. This limitation presents the space for learners to be disengaged with the problems and challenges of the world (Freire, 1974/2007). In the end the skill of discernment is profoundly absent or stunted.

Within the experience of both being a student and teacher of a social education, I assert that for many, (I include myself here) transitive consciousness begins to develop or deepen through the exploration of a social education. This is one of the goals of my course with the ultimate goal being the internalization of the final stage of consciousness-critical transitive consciousness. These goals seem daunting amid the time constraints of a twelve - week course coupled with intensive field experience. For many students, surviving the semester is at the forefront of their practice of becoming a teacher. Within this learning environment students often resist the awakening required of the transitive state of consciousness much less the rigor required in the experience of the final stage of critical consciousness.

I am acutely, aware that experience in the two latter stages of Freire's (1974/2007) stages of consciousness, especially critical transitive consciousness, is a life long process. However, I continually wonder how I can design a course that offers experiences that presents the process of critical consciousness- a praxis that marries critical inquiry, reflection, action, and freedom.

An experience of praxis was attempted in an assignment that encouraged students to consider their unconscious beliefs about the children and communities in which they taught. I had always been troubled by the way students were plopped into a district to teach alongside an in- service teacher. Students are placed in districts with little to no context of

the communities beyond the schoolhouse door. How could they understand the context of their students' lives, if they merely entered and exited the faculty parking lot? How did their unconscious assumptions manifest in their teaching practice? With these inquiries in mind, I designed *Framing the Community*.

In pairs, students took a walk around the school with a digital camera. They were asked to take pictures that might provide insight into the community, school, or students. Following the walk the class debriefed their experience and considered any emerging wonderings about the learning community. The following week, students were asked to bring the photographs along with a question generated by the image. In pairs, students shared their questions and photographs and were asked to seek common themes in the photographs as well as question one another on the possible assumptions underlying the photograph queries. Finally, student pairs created one framing question to explore.

A gallery walk was created with the photographs and questions. Photographs offered a wide scope of views on the community surrounding the school. Students posted pictures of liquor bottles near the playground, churches, "unkempt" homes, and industrial parks bordering the schoolyard. The conversations generated by students, as they toured the work of their classmates, were powerful. Students debated about what constitutes an assumption as supported by their readings from *Becoming a Critical Educator* (2006).

A photograph of a dilapidated home adjoined with a comment stating the absence of attention to education by the homeowner, instigated a conversation regarding the validity of the comment. One student asked, "Where did you get that idea from this picture? It seems that you brought that to the picture. That is an assumption." Her partner retorted that it was a fact. A quick banter back noted that such a fact was absent in the photo. This interaction

instigated a class discussion on the nature of assumptions and how they are often invisible to us; illustrating Hinchey's (2006) contention that critical consciousness allows a refocus of our assumptive interactions with the world. We discussed the source of their assumptions and their impact upon their developing practice as a teacher.

In the end, students showed evidence of discomfort and resistance to the insights gleaned through this gallery walk. It became clear that by confronting the assumptions around the photographs many students were faced with bad news insights. I realized for many students this was the beginning of a broadening view of their perspectives of the world, a movement in their level of consciousness.

Critical inquiry was begun in a personal way regarding students' assumptive notions about their students, the school, and surrounding community. The second level of this assignment attempted to draw students to reflect upon avenues of action based on the critical inquiries as inspired by their walk and exploration of assumptions regarding the learning community in which they taught. For some students issues of social justice were unearthed. They questioned the disparity of resources of schools within the QUEST 2 program. Others questioned discriminatory practices regarding gender in the classroom. Still others, wondered about the absence of empowerment of students regarding important social issues in the neighborhood, like poverty and hunger.

These critical wonderings fueled the creation of a community project design. The criteria of this project included research on the topic, connections to standards, and a detailed classroom community project. This project was to bridge the school with the community taking students out into the community and bringing community members into the school. The projects produced varied in the critical approach to the assignment.

However, I experienced, as they presented their projects, the sense that a door had opened for them. This was particularly true of one project that explored possible actions of the school community regarding hunger in the neighborhood.

Two reserved students, who seldom exhibited outward engagement in the course, exuberantly shared a school garden project. In phase one of the project, they had uncovered layered insights of inspiration; neighborhood homeless personalities, a run down greenhouse on school grounds, neglected and unused school land, high rates of free and reduce lunch applications within the school and a low average income within the community at large. As they discussed their findings, they expressed their blindness to these elements in the learning community until this assignment.

Their awakening to the community around them produced a Garden Project in which all grade levels refurbished the abandoned greenhouse and created and maintained a vegetable garden. Academically, the project was integrated and inclusive of all grade levels. Beyond this proposed rich academic experience, the project presented the idea of School Farmers Market Days in which those in need within the community could take what was needed.

As I became present to the impact of this assignment upon this one group of students and others, I was offered a brief glimmer of hope regarding pulling students toward an experience in critical consciousness. This assignment attempted to integrate my burgeoning critical teaching practices; critical analysis of the context in which students found themselves, critical reflection upon their assumptive reactions with their world, and empowered action as inspired by the inequities and issues unearthed through their critical awakening. Ultimately, I had hoped to offer them an experience of freedom in knowing, as

teachers, it is possible to step beyond the role of the transmitter of prescribed curricula and generate learning that is conscious and moved to consequential action-from this space of freedom, like architects, they are presented unlimited possibilities within the practice of their craft.

Foundational Masters: Pedagogical Tools

Architects and builders, alike, depend upon the tools of their trade. Whether a drafting table or a carving chisel, the completion of design depends upon the quality and manner in which the instruments are utilized. Similarly, my craft possesses specific tools by which my work is shaped. Without these tools, my practice as teacher educator would be shoddily constructed. In short, the construction of my course is guided by the influences of master craftsmen in teacher education.

The essence of my work as a teacher educator is influenced by the essential insights of Dewey (1897, 1938) and the specialized views of critical educators like Britzman (2000, 2003), hooks (1994), and Hinchey (1998,2006). Each of these scholars has impacted the totality of my practice and my development as a critical teacher educator. In addition, I have found equally important guidance in the voices of Bullough (1997), Goodlad, (1990) and Loughran (2006). The experiences of their practice, as master teacher educators, frame my understanding of how I might begin to address the obligations and challenges of teacher education. In the end, all these scholars provide profound and deeply contemplative revelations regarding the process of developing the *being* of teacher.

The collective voices of these pedagogical experts make available a toolbox by which I can build myself as a teacher educator who offers educational experiences that impact students' development as educators in long-lasting ways. The sections that follow,

offer a narrative inquiry of the inspirational scholars who have been crucial in the shaping of my own pedagogical leanings.

The Essential Tool: Dewey

Inseparable from my work as a teacher educator is the influence of John Dewey (1897, 1938). I have stated more than once, that the core of my course in based upon the experience of a social education. This entails engagement with the world in order to critically interact, question, and act upon the revelations of experience. Through it all, I encourage students to seek connections between their own lived experiences and the current manner in which they experience the act of being a teacher. In short, my course is grounded in experience; hence, the importance of Dewey in the construction of understanding the development of my own pedagogy.

The experiences of learners lie at the center of Dewey's educational philosophy. Basic skills, core knowledge, and compartmentalized curriculums supported by traditional schools are too contextually distant from learning, learning often forgotten in future situations. Dewey (1897) stated, "I believe there is no succession of studies ideal for school curriculum. If education is life, all life has, from the outset, a scientific aspect, an aspect of art and culture and an aspect of communication" (p. 6). With these thoughts, I find validation in my attempts to offer a course as a layered experience in varied contexts. In other words, I seek ways in which I can pull students from the prescribed lessons and texts of the standardized education and make meaningful connections to life beyond the schoolhouse door. However, I remain challenged by students' compartmentalization of education as a separate reality from the "real world."

From the Deweyian perspective, education *is* life and not a preparation for a future yet to be determined (Dewey, 1938). For my students, their own educational experiences negate such a notion. For many, the learning offered in their education was far removed from the experiences of their lives and desired futures.

This experience is powerfully supported in the work of Dewey (1897) as presented in the idea that the compartmentalization of curriculum exposes a disconnect from experience resulting in a lack of ability to bridge knowledge to actual real life situations. Dewey (1897) claims, “The progress [of curriculum] is not in the succession of studies but in the development of new attitudes towards and new interests in experience” (p. 6). In my work, semester after semester I seek ways in which I can pull students to understand that a social education is not just Social Studies content and teaching strategies- it is an exploration and discovery of the learners experience, both past and present. In a teaching environment in which the curriculum of my education students is compartmentalized and removed from anything beyond the classroom such expansion of learning as a holistic experience proves difficult.

To clarify, I do not mean to imply that traditional educational approaches fail to offer experiences, unlike progressive educational methods. However, there is a distinction in an educative experience and it lay in the quality of the experience. In the context of traditional schooling, experiences could be “wrong or defective of character”(Dewey, 1938, p.27). In short, such experiences fail to connect with future experiences. They are detached from the real live experiences facing the learner, as often guided by the standardization of traditional teaching paradigms.

Although, progressive education is not immune to negative experiences, Dewey (1938) suggested that progressives were more proficient at creating experiences in which enjoyment and clear connection to future encounters were experienced by students. In my work, this is a reoccurring concern for me. The evaluation of my course as a positive educative experience for students occurs to me as questionable. Is the learning offered in my course meaningful to the future of my students? As a teacher educator committed to an experience with a social education, I claim the answer is yes! However, in the face of no agreement in the current educational system, I constantly wonder if the experience of my course will live beyond the present, seemingly idealistic, moments of the semester and powerfully impact subsequent teaching experiences of my students. If not, the experience of the course fails to meet Dewey's (1938) criteria of an educative experience. I am continually questioning this notion in regards of the structure of my course as placed in the current educational landscape.

As a model for my students regarding education as explorations of experience, I encourage students to challenge their traditional notions regarding the role of a teacher. Guided by the experiential method of teaching, teachers are not managers of information; rather they are facilitators of experience. This calls teacher candidates to be learned in the social and physical conditions of experiences in order to meaningfully shape experiences for their students (Dewey, 1938). Within the interactive process of learning, teachers understand the capacities of their students and create conditions that both satisfy student needs and develop their capacities (Dewey, 1938). In other words, teachers as facilitators of experience balance the freedom of individual experience with the guidance needed to push for continuous student growth.

When this balance is attained, educators have a greater chance of creating collateral learning, which is defined as the enduring attitudes of the learning process (Dewey, 1938). Such attitudes live well into the future and have an enormous impact upon the desire to pursue learning beyond the core knowledge and basic skills focused upon in most schools (Dewey, 1938).

Yet, the love of learning is immeasurable, offering no quantifiable method by which to judge the preparation of the learner. According to Gibboney (2006) schools are only successful when they create within students a desire for learning that moves beyond the confines of their school years. Connected to Deweyian thought, this suggestion offers education, in the truest sense, as an ever-present process of learning.

My course is designed as an experience in the never-ending journey of becoming a teacher. My desire in the course is to transport students towards an education beyond mere answers on teacher certification examinations. The balance between the practicality of the required pre-service teacher requirements and the critical and reflective nature of a social education is a source of great frustration in my work. I am not clear that students, as future teachers, understand the need for scholarship in teaching. In fact, most of the resistance during the course relates to my focus on building the skills of scholarship and reflective practice. Regarding this impasse, I wonder how I might more effectively express the importance of this endeavor to the ongoing learning process of becoming a teacher.

In the current context in which I teach the next generation of teachers, Dewey offers great advice regarding the clash of the traditional and the progressive approaches to teaching. Dewey (1938) claims that the either/or duality of education cannot be considered. This idea echoes the concept of educational bigotry (Hinchey, 1998) as already discussed

in relationship to critical pedagogy. Dewey warns, like Freire (1970/1992), that newly constructed educational experiences must be grounded in a critical examination of the opposing philosophies. Dewey (1938) states, " [t]he problems [of new education] are not even recognized, to say nothing of being solved, when it is assumed that it suffices to reject the ideas and practices of the old education and then go to the opposite extreme" (p.22). This statement reminds me to consider the experience of the course as one in need of a balance of wisdom in regards to shifting the direction of education. In the end Dewey, speaks to ways in which I may more easily strike the balance between honoring the experiences of students and pushing them to consider other alternatives to what they have already encountered in respect to teaching and learning.

Dedicated to offering an experience in a social education, the thoughts of Dewey have provided a guide in the creation of a course that attempts to emphasis experience in education as imperative for today's classrooms. My students are encouraged to engage in the course as an experience in an alternative approach to education. They are asked to bring the experiences that shaped their understanding and beliefs about teaching and learning to the conversations within the course and critically analyze them. They are encouraged to consider their journey to teacher as one guided by continually learning from their teaching experiences and growth as a scholar. Like Dewey, I ask them to engage in the, often-intangible process of experiential learning. As their teacher, my own experiences in the course, continually teach me imperative lessons as I continue to develop as a teacher educator.

Specialty Tools: Teacher Educators

Critical pedagogy, as already discussed in detail, provides the foundational design of my course. In my experimentation with course design, I have sought out specific, critical, teacher educators. There are many teachers of teachers that warrant exploration in relationship to my developing role as a teacher educator. However, the experiences within my practice drew me to the specific voices presented here. These scholars offered stimulating suggestions and solace in respect to my personal struggles as I attempt to define myself as a critical teacher educator.

My course attempts to offer students an experience with an engaged pedagogy- a pedagogy that is transformative in nature as it critically explores in internal space of students as future educators alongside the academics of teaching. I continually struggle with how I feel as a teacher educator in the process of facilitating such a complex and atypical approach to teaching to teach. To be frank, I often feel unrealistic, ineffective, and uncomfortably impatient in my endeavors with the course.

The continually experience of these reactions conjures up numerous reoccurring inquiries regarding the manner in which I, as a teacher educator, reside within my practice. Yet all questions regarding my practice lead to one foundational query; Are my aspirations as a critical educator and teacher of teachers unrealistic in the context of a learning environment that upholds the technical aspect of teaching?

Exploring Internal Terrain

The development of a teaching practice is directly tied to the principles of those teaching (Bullough, 1997). Practice is tied to the guiding assumptions of the teacher. In fact, in times of clash between principle and practice, teachers should be informed and

sustained by internal principles, both distinguished and responsibly owned (Bullough, 1997). In this irrevocable binding of practice and principle, it becomes vitally important that students in education programs explore the inner self. A conceptual discussion, through the exploration of critical awakening and critical consciousness, has already been addressed regarding such introspective analysis. However, the discussion presented here is distinct. It considers the role of teacher education and the struggles of teacher educators as they create programs that deem such introspective work essential in the development of fully empowered teachers, an aspiration foundational to my practice.

The foundation of most teacher education programs aligns with the academics of learning to teach. “Technique matters and learning to fit into and survive within ‘an operational role’ in the classroom matters the most”(Goodlad, 1990, p. 251). As a whole, teacher education programs do little to address the internal narratives that shape teacher candidate’s beliefs about teaching and learning (Bullough, 1997). Teacher education programs are often not holistically unified in philosophy or long enough in duration to support the shifting of students’ personal narratives in respect to teaching and learning (Goodlad, 1990). It is within this context that I seek support in my commitment to this great challenge.

Pre-service programs should be designed to explore the social, existential, and emotional engagement in learning (Britzman, 1997). In this sense teaching addresses both the intellectual and spiritual growth of students (hooks, 1994). In order to attend to this charge, teacher educators must create opportunities for students to discover both the implicit and explicit connections between their forming teaching practice (academic) and their personal beliefs (principles) (Bullough, 1997). Making sense of internal stories

provides a form of narrative reasoning- a reasoning that informs efforts to create the teaching self (Bullough, 1997). The self -knowledge that emerges from such endeavors offers ownership in the formation of teaching identity (Britzman, 2000). In being made explicit, personal theories, as created by narratives of experience, can be responsibly owned and critically analyzed with the possibility of being transformed.

Through the ownership of personal narratives and their connections to teaching practices, teachers consciously create a learning environment that honors multiple perspectives and refrains in presenting education from the standpoint of an either/or mentality. This point monitors the emergence of educational bigotry (Hinchey, 1997) and provides a freedom in learning that lies in direct correlation to the lived experiences of *all* students (hooks, 1994). In short, the ownership of critically explored stories offers teaching candidates access to being responsible for the inevitable convergence of a teachers' practice and their internal beliefs or principles.

Additionally, the empowered ownership of the internal held within professional practice provides the space for resolute action in the face of educational dilemmas. Without this level of self –knowledge, there is failure to respond adequately, as well as the emergence of feelings of hopelessness and disempowerment for the educator (Britzman, 2000). More concisely put, one is lost in the face of the trauma presented by the dilemma (Britzman, 2000). Being powerfully grounded in the conscious principles shaping teaching practice provides courage to stand in the face of the inevitable philosophical contradictions prevalent in the current educational system.

The emergence of change happens in the face of contemplative consideration. With critical contemplation in respect to the role personal narratives play in the development of

educational philosophies, room is provided in which to consider alternative narratives that might access transformative action. The vehicle for such contemplation is engagement with complicated and provoking questions regarding continuously emergent contradictions in the world of education (Britzman, 2000). Devoid of such provocative interaction with personal narratives and educational environments, the alternative can be categorized as a furor to teach-blindly teaching knowledge and remiss from questioning or doubting the knowledge our curriculums and personal lived experiences offer (Britzman, 2000).

Accordingly, teacher educators are called to provide opportunities by which students are engaged in dissonant dialogue regarding the source and validity of their storied teaching philosophies. Exclusive to such a dialogical approach, students will mindlessly adhere to educational postures out of habit and be negligent to any true contemplation of alternative thinking (Hinchey, 2006). From this perspective, “the classroom remains the most radical space of possibility for the academy” (hooks, 1994, p. 12).

In learning environments where constructive confrontation and critical interrogation are promoted, student resistance is sure to follow (hooks, 1994). When educators engage in the examination of issues that students relate to passionately and personally, there is always the possibility of “confrontational, forceful expression of ideas, and even conflict” (hooks, 1994, p.39). Students experience a disequilibrium as caused by the disconnect of newly presented teaching paradigms and their deeply held beliefs about teaching and learning. This process of cognitive dissonance will always be a messy endeavor, however, one that is crucial in the development of the professional knowledge of student teacher candidates (Loughran, 2006). In the face of this disconcerted experience, it is imperative that teacher

educators honor the inevitable pain that accompanies challenging students to give up old ways of thinking and knowing (hooks, 1994).

Such charged classroom environments require a need for teacher educators to explain their philosophy, strategy, and intent behind the construct of the course (hooks, 1994). This transparent expression of teaching practice provides students a view of how teaching practices are conceived, justified, and eventually implemented. As teacher educators this open and honest communication as it relates to the design of our work is imperative to the development of student understanding of teaching (Loughran, 2006).

Within my practice the pursuit of opening up the internal terrain of students has been the source of feeling that my course is unrealistic in the context of a methods course and the larger context of the teacher education program. As transparent as I am about the construct of the assignments and goals of the course, students continually fail to see the connection of inner exploration to the development of empowered teaching practices. Student concern lies in the survival of teaching and as result they actively seek the “how to” of teaching to the detriment of understanding the “why” of teaching practices.

My exploration of these phenomena thus far, offers me solace in knowing that other teacher educators concur with my commitment to students distinguishing and owning their assumptive beliefs about teaching and learning. It is clear to me that taking teaching candidates on an internal exploration is crucial in the development of empowered teachers. This insight both validates and empowers me as a teacher educator attempting to both build and articulate my own professional knowledge.

Explicitly Teaching

Teaching is a tacit endeavor (Northfield & Gunstone, 1997; Loughran, 2006). This proves problematic, as students often demand clear paths towards the technical aspects of teaching (Loughran, 2006). Reasonably, students relate to teacher education programs this way in an effort to feel adequately prepared to comfortably step into a classroom and teach (Britzman, 2000). However, such an approach to learning is safely removed from the controversial entanglements presented in the placement of the critical internal interrogation deemed imperative in teacher education (Britzman, 2000; Bullough, 1997; Hinchey, 1998; hooks, 1994; Loughran, 2006). From this perspective, teacher educators must discover ways by which to make the tacit explicit in the practice of learning to teach. This is a challenge in that teaching about teaching is a complicated and messy practice that proves difficult to articulate to those learning the craft (Loughran, 2006).

How do teacher educators pursue this call to unveil that, which is often hidden, from students? This inquiry has caused me much angst as a novice teacher educator.

In pursuit of insights to this query, I have unearthed a deepening of my own knowledge of practice regarding exposure of the implicitness of teaching.

Loughran (2006) offers practical ways by which teacher educators may more overtly approach teaching students to teach. Easily integrated into teacher education practices is the concept of thinking aloud. This fish bowl approach offers students access to the thinking of the teacher educator. One could say that this process provides student teachers with an internal text by which they can glean information that forwards their development of practice. Additionally, journal entries as fashioned by the teacher educator,

can offer students access to professional knowledge. Loughran (2006) contends this provides students with

> Documented accounts of my anticipatory, contemporaneous, and retrospective reflections on our teaching and learning offering entry points for the thinking that underpinned my practice so that it could be questioned, examined, and critiqued so that that which was being modeled was more than 'just the teaching' (p. 50).

In the sharing of practitioner journals, teacher candidates are provided a more personal look at the reflective nature required for the creation of "mere models."

Collaboration with others offers a layered perspective to the understanding of practice. Educational partnership should be a key component in teacher education programs. Loughran (2006) supports this imperative of teacher education, "Teachers working together, collaborating and teaming in ways that provide professional support for one another leads to improvements in practice as the sharing with, and learning from, one another offers meaningful ways of framing and reframing existing practice" (p.57).

Such strategies provide access to ways by which I can open up my practice to students. However, such disclosure is inefficient. Student teachers must be encouraged to step beyond their role as students readied to make notations on the numerous models and field observations so prevalent in their university experiences. They must begin to live in the world of teacher. From this point of view, they can begin to explore for themselves the implicit nature of teaching and how that may be translated to their newly forming practice. In the end, this will offer a skill essential to the continuous development of professional knowledge.

Assessments of a teacher educator

Every semester I am left with the same wondering about my practice- did the experience of the course make a difference for students? The answer to this question is undecidedly varied student to student. For some, there is a palpable shift. In others, I question if the course reached them at all. Loughran (2006) reminds me that teaching is never completely successful. The best we can do is take on the complexity of our work as "intellectually challenging and practically engaging so it can be professionally rewarding" (Loughran, 2006, p. 31).

Beyond owning the complexity and unfinished nature of our work, what can educators realistically expect regarding their students becoming teachers? Northfield & Gunstone (1997) suggest that teacher education programs are inadequate in *preparing* teachers and should approach teacher education as a process in *becoming*. In this respect, teacher education programs are only the beginning of a career long journey of teaching and learning (Loughran, 2006). However, in the context of my program, I am concerned that for many students they see the end of their "formal" education as the end of their need for reflective scholarship regarding their practice as teachers. This concern is only deepened by the absence of such scholarship in K-12 educational setting.

Fortunately, the recognition of this fact exposes the problematic nature of teaching in all educational settings and nurtures the growth of my own pedagogical philosophies. I have been encouraged to focus on the "dilemmas, puzzles, issues, and concerns" that shape the complex craft of teaching, only then can I empower my students to powerfully grapple with the same inevitable difficulties (Loughran, 2006). In the end, I only hope that I can heed the words of Loughran (2006) regarding engaging in the

complexities of teacher education. He states, “Teacher educators need confidence in their practice in order to display the vulnerability necessary to publicly unpack teaching without carrying the baggage associated with ‘good’ and ‘bad’ teaching” (p. 42). I am both inspired and challenged by the possibility of this notion.

Architects of Influence: A Conclusion

This section was purposely designed with the narrative of my practice woven alongside the architectural masters who have guided my practice. This structure was chosen as an attempt to emphasize the inseparability of my practice and theoretical exposures. Like an architect, my work offers insight into my design influences. However, I attempt, through the stories of practice, to offer the reader my personal sketches of how such master educators manifest in my work. Without this approach, I contend that the connection between theory and practice would be distance, if present at all. As a doctoral student, I have rigorously attempted to close the distance between theory and practice- theory is empty if it cannot be moved to practice, which concurrently informs theory (Freire, 1998). Without the juxtaposed narrative of my practice, the theoretical masters explored here would be both detached and meaningless to my development as a teacher educator.

I remain a novice apprentice as a teacher educator. The exploration of the educational masters presented here has shaped my practice as I attempt to grow myself as a *critical* teacher educator. In many respects, I have directly fused their ideas into my practice. Yet, the emergence of my own voice is beginning to take form as I claim a social education. Furthermore, I sense a divergent approach to critical pedagogy; one that is introduced to undergraduate students in ways better suited to their place in the journey of teacher education.

The evolution of my course has mirrored my growth as a critical teacher educator and reflective practitioner. I began this journey with the basic need to understand Social Education at a very elementary and practical level so I might teach it. As I grew in my knowledge of the foundational framework of a social education, I sought ways to powerfully impact my students in the face of a short 12-week experience. Semester after semester, my praxis pushes me to redesign my approach to practice. No two semesters are the same, the course in a perpetual state of change, as am I as the instructor.

Although my continually attention to the evolution of the course has enriched my teaching experience and influenced some students in compelling ways, I remain concerned with the world beyond my 12-week course-too little time for the development a new generation of critical educators. Students leave the confines of my classroom and step into an education system riddled with prescribed curriculums, restrictive schedules, and high stake accountability measures.

This world begins in their field experience and continues into their student teaching experiences. Students continually question how they are to take the messages of a social education and apply them into their first year of teaching and beyond. I am continually challenged at how to prepare them for the inevitability of a teaching reality that will not honor the essence of a social education as facilitated by a critical educator. How are my former students navigating this milieu? What lessons might I learn from them in respect to the influence or lack thereof of the experience of my course? It is with these questions that I pursue the study outlined in the subsequent chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

PORTFOLIO OF PRACTICE: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of an architectural portfolio is to showcase the work of an architect.

It provides a retrospective history of the work of the designer and the development of the voice of their craft. This broad view of the work illustrates the influence of varied environmental landscapes, experimentation with diverse materials and design elements, attention to the needs and demands of clients, and the inspirations of the voices of other architects. In the end, the architectural portfolio documents the evolutionary journey of the craft of the architect.

Like an architectural portfolio this research presents a portfolio of practice. This study provides a chronological snapshot of the development of an elementary social education methods course from fall 2008 to fall 2009 within an urban university setting. However, the portfolio of practice offered within this study looks beyond individual design elements of a methods course. Through a multi-layered narrative, the research excavates the complexities of diverse influences that shape the course's edifice. As guided by layered stories through course documents, instructor experience, and student experience, this study is presented as a narrative self-study that explores both the structure and far-reaching impact of a presumably meaningful social education experience on pre-service elementary education students.

Why Self-Study

The reasoning for the methodological choice of this study of is three-fold. First, I view self-study as a methodology authentically aligned with the foundations of a social education, the focus of my dissertation. Secondly, self –study echoes Dewey (1938) and Kincheloe (2005), both major influences in my developing practice. Lastly, in self-study I find access to real reform in education, a goal deeply rooted in my own educational philosophy.

The foundation of my work is the pursuit of *a social education.* This means an education of *becoming.* A self-study of my practice will grant a space in which I can begin to bring meaning to my theoretical beliefs and my practical endeavors. Because my philosophical grounding is based on the experiences offered by a social education, I believe that self-study compliments the nebulous nature of my topic.

The formation of a social education is a hermeneutic process of becoming (Kincheloe, 2005). Self-study is a hermeneutic inquiry of self in context (Samaras & Freese, 2006). A social education is about possible insights and not finalized answers. Self-study attempts to understand and not assert a final knowing (Pinnegar, 1998). The development of a social education is personal and un-prescribed. Similarly, self-study resists definition of process and presents itself as an opportunity to explore the challenges of teaching with critical eyes (Samaras & Freese, 2006). Both are grounded in the hope for meaningful change in education. These similarities have drawn me to self-study as a methodological partner for my doctoral work.

The foundation of self-study is based on personal experiences (Samaras & Freese, 2006). The work is driven by the knowledge gained through the analysis of

expereince from multiple perspectives. For me, the connection to Dewey is undeniable. Dewey (1897) places expereince at the center of his educational philosophy, offering a new definition of education, “[education] is not preparation for life; education is life itself”(pg.78). Life is a culimination of expereinces. The knowledge gained from these experiences provides access to a depth of learning that extends beyond the confines of compartmentalized classroom learning and prescribed teacher professional development experiences. In other words, experience is to be honored as a powerful way to learn in lasting ways.

In relationship to the self-study of teaching practices, authority of experience is an essential element in teacher education (Russell,1998). This notion places the experience of practitioners at the forefront of research about teaching. Honoring the learning acquired through experience is imperative in the development of teachers. Such knowledge provides a touchstone by which educators can address the gap between theory and practice. Self-study provides the vehicle by which educators can attend to the theory-practice divide.

The idea of teacher as investigator ties directly to Deweyan thought. Kincheloe (2000) reminds us of Dewey’s belief that teachers are the key to improving schools and the craft of teaching. As teachers study their teaching and students “consciousness forms and education takes place.” (Kincheloe, 2000, p. 267). This practitioner generated knowledge offers empowering insights into the field of education. In fact, a new form of thinking is developed (Kincheloe, 2000).

Teacher research immerses teachers firmly in the *all* of the educational process, a process that exposes the tension between social and educational theory and classroom practice (Hamiltion, 1998; Kincheloe, 2000; Samaras & Freese, 2006). In the making

sense of this conflict, teachers transcend problem-solving thinking paragidms and develop a paradigm of problem-discovery (Kincheloe, 2000). In this development, teachers distance themselves from formulatic teaching solutions and powerfully unearth the connections between theory and practice (Kincheloe, 2000). This outcome strongly supports my aspirations for the novice teachers that take my course, as well as myself as I navigate the role of teacher educator.

The ultimate purpose of self-study is one of refining, reframing, and renewing education (Samaras & Freese, 2006). This purpose may begin with an individual pracitioner seeking renewal in their career. However, as the work becomes public the influence expands. In making our work public, educators may collectively begin to question the practice of teaching and learning for grander purposes. Ultimately, self-study offers access to a journey of change -a journey grounded in critical questioning, discovery, challenge and hope through the grassroots efforts of curious and reflective teachers (Samaras & Freese, 2006; Loughran & Northfield, 1998). Returning to both Dewey (1897) and Kincheloe (2000), teachers offer the front line of change in our education system. In self-study, one finds an avenue by which teachers at all levels can be empowered to question the status quo of education. This point addresses one of my greatest concerns as a teacher educator, to foster a generation of teachers who embrace their roles of change agent through the scholarship of their practice.

Self-Study

Samaras and Freese (2006) state, “Self-study is a teacher’s systematic and critical examination of their actions and their context as a path to develop a more consciously driven mode of professional activity” (p. 11). It is a process that includes self in relation to

students, colleagues, and contexts. It is a method that reflects upon the effects of lived experiences on present teacher *being* and teaching practices (Samaras & Freese, 2006). In short, self-study is much more than a self -indulgent study of a teacher's practice. It is true that the spark of a self-study is flamed by a dilemma of practice. However, the pursuit of the inquiries posed by the practitioner in a self-study move beyond the isolated contexts and internal dialogue of the lone educator. Self-study causes practitioners to walk the walk and practice what they preach (Loughran, 2007). It pulls educators to question and pursue a reframing of their work and generates teacher knowledge for themselves and other practitioners (Connelly and Clandinin, 2004). In the end, self-study calls for open collaboration. Such exposed alliances provide access to a widened view for the inquiry, expansion of scholarship, and balance of the public and private in research, leading to the grander intent of making a difference in classrooms.

Practice and Theory

The critical examination of teaching practices in self-study pulls teachers to explore the dissonance between their beliefs and their practices. Whitehead (as cited in Hamilton, 1998) calls the gap between beliefs of the teacher and their practice "[their] living contradictions"(p.5). The nature of self-study seeks to discover ways to bridge this gap and offer closer connections between philosophy or theory and the practice of teaching. This is not solitary work. The goal of self-study is to reframe the work of teachers. To achieve an authentic redefinition of one's work, layered voices are needed in order to assure a rigorous study of practice (Loughran & Northfield, 1998). The rigorously reflective and collaborative nature of quality self-study unites with the critical foundations of my teaching philosophy and course.

As a teacher educator, self-study offers a powerful methodology in which I can align my educational beliefs with my craft as a teacher educator, a process I encourage my students to consider. The essence of self-study offers space in which I can trace my own philosophical development through a critically reflective investigation of how my philosophy manifests within my practice. By seeking insight into how my theoretical foundations live in my classroom, I hope to discover how I can most effectively join theory and practice. In the end, an exploration of the dissonance between my beliefs and practices is fundamental to action in my practice (Hamilton, 1998). For me, such action will lead to more compelling and effective ways of teaching, increasing the possible impact of my course.

The design of a self-study may be approached in a variety of ways. Like the varied clients of architects, it is the issue/dilemmas being addressed that frame the work of the researcher. The continual interaction of the client and the architect often guides the construction project away from the original blueprint. In self-study the interaction between the research and the practice is continual and relational. As the research develops, learning inevitably occurs and interacts with the practice of the instructor (Pinnegar, 1998). Since the researcher is the instructor practice naturally is shifted. In understanding this interchange, self-study researchers often refocus the study that in turn calls for a modification or expansion of field text collection and analysis protocols. Pinnegar (1998) contends that self-study research “seeks at its hallmark not claims of certainty, but evidence the researchers, however stumblingly, demonstrate in their practice the understandings they have gained through their study” (p.33).

Self and Others

Self-study is paradoxial in nature as illustrated through the duality of both the self and collective approaches required for rigorous and trustworthy self-studies (Loughran, 2007; Samaras & Freese, 2006). For self-study scholars a concentration on the self exclusivley offers nothing but romantized rationalizations and justifications for their practice (Loughran, 2007). Self-study is guided by the pracitioner's focused inquiry on their teaching dilemmas. As a result, they learn about who they are as a teacher, how they got there, and how they are changing. In doing so, new knowledge is generated about themselves and their interactions with students (Samaras & Freese, 2006). However, this private endeavor fails to enrichen and challenge the reframing of knowledge without the inclusion of other voices in the study (Loughran, 2007; Samaras & Freese, 2006. To expand the views of the work beyond the private and place it in the public widens the lens of the study and provides triangulation of field text that both deepens the work and promotes the trustworthiness of the study (Loughran, 2007).

In the context of my work, the holistic approach of self-study affords insights beyond a limited view of myself. It offers the critical structure by which I can assess the extent to which I authenitically bridge the course, my teaching being, and my theoritical philosophies. Self-study challenges me to open the door of my teaching self and invite my students and other colleagues to step through as critical friends (LaBoskey, 2004).The perspective these personalities provide access to the blind spots of my craft which in turn exposes areas in my practice that require reflection. Such critical engagement pushes me to honestly question my framework of my practice through the eyes of others. In the final analysis, this kind of open collaboration provides a catalyst for my growth as teacher

educator and scholar. Additionally, it offers a model for students as they create themselves as teacher scholars. Simply stated, the inclusion of multiple voices pushes all involved to consider their practice in a different way. In the end, we all become better pracitioners.

Narrative Inquiry

Narrative was selected as the research method for this study because of the power of story in education. Dewey reminds us that education is made of experiences. This study is focused on a course designed as an experience in social education and the impact of such an experience. Through narrative inquiry researchers come closest to the rawness of human experience (Craig, 2003). Coming as close to human experience in this state offers an avenue by which relationships between education, experience, and life may be both discovered and explored (Dewey, 1898). This research presents the story of a course through the narratives of multiple sources, offering a collective telling of the experience presented in the course. As such, it is is a multi-layered and many stranded investigation of the human expierence (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The storied nature of this research offers a way to both represent and understand the significance of the experiences of the instructor and the students within the course (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). I examine diverse narratives to understand the influences that shape the course and the impact of the course on teacher development, both mine and students.

I use this study to consider how I might refine my teaching. Specifically, I seek to align my pedagogical practices with my theoretical insights. In the end, my ultimate goal is to provide a course that supports my students' discovery of the skills they will need to navigate the challenges of the current educational landscape. The varied narratives explored in the study will provide a dimiension required for such a challenging task.

Jackson (1968) spoke of the transformative nature of stories when he contends that they [stories] leave us with altered states of consciousness. This assertion offers a bridge to the subject of this study: How does the experience of the course shift the consciousness of both instructor and students as they transtion beyond the confines of a semester course? In other words, how does the experience of the course impact the practice of both the instructor and students beyond a one-semester methods course?

The Landscape of the Study

This study is firmly situated in the larger context of the Quaility Urban Education for Students and Teachers (QUEST) teacher education program at the University of Houston. The organization of this program is designed in three phases. QUEST 1 builds foundational knowledge of the teaching profession and development of children. QUEST 2 concentrates on content-focused methods and strategies alongside field teaching experiences. QUEST 3, known as student teaching, immerses students in the real work of teaching in school settings (http://www.coe.uh.edu/QUEST/quest2.cfm).

All students are admitted into the QUEST program through an application process based on the following criteria: mimimum TASP /THEA (Texas Higher Education Assessment) scores-Reading 250, Math-230, Writing-240; completed coursework in each academic specialization with a minimum GPA of 2.5, and minimum GEPA of 2.5 in all college work incuding transfers from other universities. Each phase of the program requires an application process and successful completion of the QUEST phase preceding to move forward in the program. QUEST 2 admittance requirements expand to include a score of 240 or higher on the Pedagogy and Professional Responsbilities (PPR) qualifier exam and successful completion of QUEST 1. All students must pass the Generalists exam with a 240

or higher and met all course requirements of QUEST 2 to move into student teaching or QUEST 3. Successful completion of this final phase of the program is dependent upon University Supervisor and Site-based teacher mentors assessment.

The course studied is one of five methods courses taught in QUEST 2. These courses are supplemented by two days of field experiences in which students engage in a range of activities. Activities vary from observation, one-on-one tutoring, small group instruction, or whole group instruction. Student experiences in the field are dependent on the discretion of the Site-based teacher (SBTE) assigned to mentor the student. Through the course of the semester, students are placed in two different grade level classrooms for approximately six weeks each. University in-field support is offered by University QUEST facilitators who serve as liasions between the school and the university. Most importantly, facilitators observe students in the field and work to strenghten student lesson implementation. At the end of the semester, facilitators, methods instructors, field coordinators, and the program director review the status of each student and make recommendations regarding admittance and possible support needed during student teaching (QUEST 3).

The Study: A Storied Structure

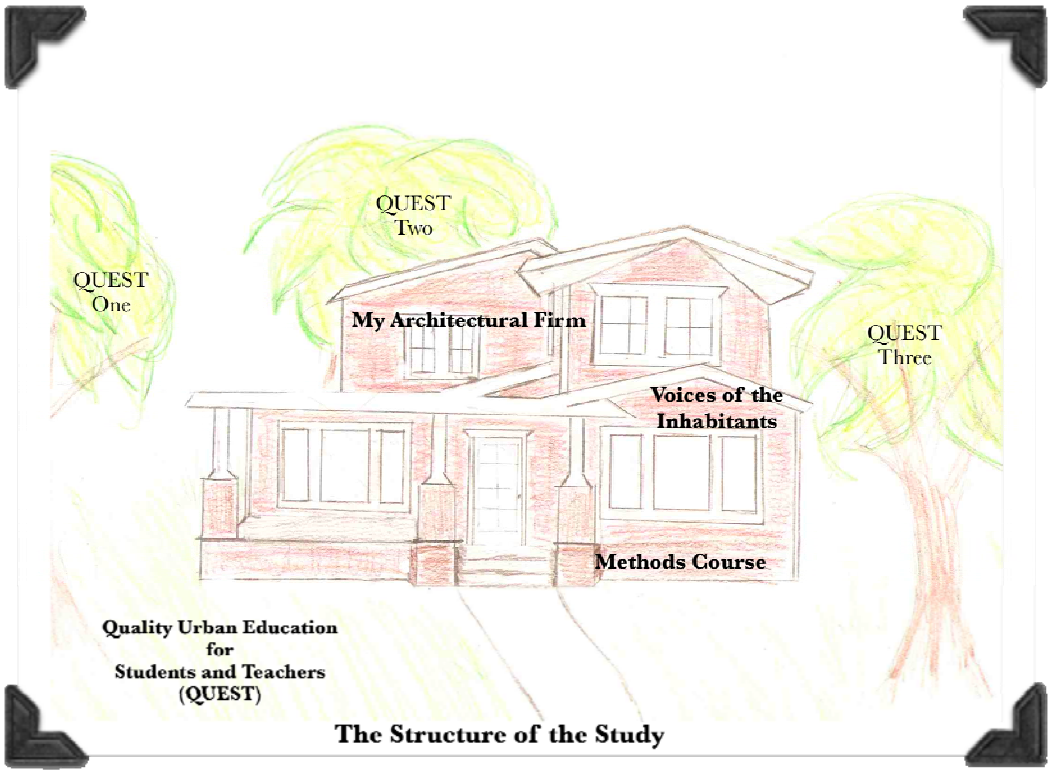
At its foundation, this self-study is the story of my practice from varied perspectives. As mentioned before the layered narratives of this study metaphorically construct the multiple-storied structure that is the course. *(figure 1)* The first level houses the blueprints, redesigns, and tools of renovation. The research offers insights into the direction and extent of the redesign of the course over time. Blueprints were drawn, analyzed, and redrawn. To be clear, this was not a cosmetic redecoration of the space, but a

total renovation of the course. Whether inhabited (school year) or uninhabited (summer) the course is perpetually under construction.

An evolutionary analysis of the ELED 4320 curriculum presents insights of the changes and modifications of the course beginning fall 2008 and extending to fall of 2009. Using the narrative interpretive tool of broadening (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990), generalized patterns regarding the contextual development of the course is analyzed. Broadening offers a generalization or “long hand” story of data or field text (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990; Craig, 2007). In this case, the historical context of the course is created through a side-by-side comparative analysis of the course syllabi spanning three semesters (fall 2008, spring 2009 and fall 2009). Syllabi illuminate the evolution of components of the course including the curriculum focus and sequence, course assignments, assigned readings and assessment procedures.

The story of the course is further explored through a paralleled chronological analysis of the doctoral readings and reflections explored and produced as a result of my dual role as both methods instructor and doctoral student. This process allowed for a re-storying (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990; Craig, 2007) of my in -time educational influences and how they impacted my practice. This widening perspective on the development course is imperative for the deepening of my own understanding of how and if my developing theories as a social educator live in my practice. I have proclaimed that an experience in social education includes a critical awakening, access to freedom and an avenue to transformative action. This triadic structure offers the frame by which the course syllabi and my own paralleled learnings are analyzed, allowing possible insight into the living contradictions residing in my practice.

Figure 1 Structure of the Study



Second Story: The Voices of Others

The second level of this study is home to the inhabitants of those who experienced living in the course. The voices of the residents of the course can be distinguished in three ways. First is the voice of the students while in the course. Student teachers and first year teachers who took the course comprise the second category of voices heard in this study. Lastly my own voice is offered as I lived alongside students during the course. These layered perspectives of experience will be explored in an effort to understand the shared space of the course as lived by various inhabitants.

The Inhabitants

The voice of students who have taken 4320 ELED Social Education Methods with me during one of three semesters beginning the Fall of 2008 and extending to the Fall of 2008 was explored through archival field text. These texts include student work, electronic discussions, natural course correspondence, and both university and instructor generated course evaluations. These field texts were systematically read and re-read to establish color- coded emergent themes across the experiences of students in the course.

The Relocated

Voices of these students were drawn from former QUEST 2 students who successfully completed the course during one of the three semesters under study (Fall 2008, Spring 2009, Fall 2009). Following approval by the Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects, an email (Appendix A) was sent to 108 former ELED 4320 students; Fall 2009-31 students, Spring 2009-39 students and 38 students- Fall of 2008. This letter invited participation in the study and outlined expectations and commitments of the project. The decision to respond to the email was placed soley in the hands of the recipients of the correspondence. All students invited completed the course being studied (ELED 4320) and were presented with no conflict of interest or unwarranted pressure regarding success in coursework. At the time of the study, the researcher was not teaching any additional courses in which particpants are enrolled.

The goal of this study was to select six participants through the use of a random sample, selecting two students from each of the two sections taught the Fall of 2009 and student teaching in the QUEST 3 program in the Spring of 2010. The remaining two participants were to be randomly selected from students who completed the course prior to

Fall of 2009, completed QUEST 3, and were employeed as a full time, first year elementary school teacher in a Houston Metropolitan school district. Final selection was to be based on the best representation of the life of the course.

In the end, five former students replied to the request for participation, three of which failed to meet the critieria of the study. The remaining two students are the participants in this study. Martha (psuedoymn) is a first year teacher who took the course during the Fall semester of 2008. At the time of the study, Esperzana (psuedoymn) was a student teacher who had completed the course in the Spring of 2009. Expanded biographical sketches of these participants are offered in a later chapter within the study.

At the beginning of the research cycle participants were given a survey with the purpose of gathering baseline particpant biographical information (Appendix B). Such questions were designed to be exploratory, with the additional intent of re-establishing a relationship of trust between the participants and the researcher. Upon completion of the survey, four individual interviews were scheduled for no more than one hour each over an eight week period. Initially interviews were designed to be conducted week two, four, six, eight of the research cycle. However, due to scheduling issues with participants this interview calendar was not maintained. Interviews spanned a 12-week period with one to three week intervals between interviews.

The initial interview was guided by the questions offered in Appendix C. These queries focus upon how the experience and learning of the course have translated into the participants classroom practice. As connected to the course participants were asked about the impact of the course assignments upon their current classroom expereriences. Additionally, participants were asked about the challenges and support they experience as

they attempt to implement their pedgogical commitments, as influenced by the course. All subsequent interviews were guided by emergent themes from preceding interviews, reflections, or archival analysis. All interviews, in additional to being hand-written, were audio taped in an effort to assure accuracy. Interview questions (Appendix C) were deliberately broad in order to allow participants to answer with limited constraint and provide a forum by which the researcher could explore the experience of former students and how they were (or were not) integrating the philosophical tenets of a social education within their practice as new teaching professionals. To obtain such narratives of practice all subsequent interviews were guided by emergent themes from preceding interviews and participant reflections.

A total of four reflective journal entries were designed to deepen the emergent dialogue provided within each interview. Participants were asked to email these reflective journals before the next scheduled interview. This guideline was not always upheld. However, participants consistently brought journals and artifacts that related to the insights of our previous conversation. In addition, emails were utilized to clarify and follow up on the insights/reflections of participants during the research cycle, not exceeding four communications over the span of the project.

Narrative inquiry drives both the field text collection and the research text analysis process. Within the second level of this study, field texts (raw data) were translated into research text using the intrepretative tool of burrowing (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990). Present day classroom experiences were explored for deeper connections to the participants lived experiences. In short, story lines of experience presented by the participant were “unraveled” in order to discover connections to the personal expereince and knowledge of

participants. This offers a deeper understanding of the moral, emotional, and aesthetic quailities that shape the development of teacher knowledge (Craig, 2007).

The Architect

My voice as the instructor of the course is shared in two ways. First, reflective journals were used to gain insight into the development of ideas shaping the design of the course. Analysis of these journals correlated with the semesters being studied and offered a re-storying of my teaching experiences from a retrospective vantage point, bringing a transparent understanding of my decisions in the evolution of the course. (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Craig, 2007).

Additionally, my voice as the instructor is shared through personal reflections regarding field interviews. These reactions are posed in italic, alongside excerpts of interview dialogue in an effort to re-story my practice as influenced by the insights of the participants' experiences.

The Third Story: My Architectural Firm

The third story of this research houses the architectural firm that offers personal support as I develop my course designs. My collaboration with other architects of social education cultivates creative synergy and a strong mentorship in the development of my teacher knowledge as a teacher educator devoted to creating social education experiences. As a collaborative self-study research group, **T**eachers, **R**esearchers: **I**magining, **A**rticulating and **D**oing (TRIAD), includes two assistant professors and myself. Each of us did our graduate studies within the same program at the University of Houston, which provides a common starting point as we make sense of our practice as methods instructors.

The field text for this study was gleaned from on-line reflective journals, personal journals and remembered conversations connected with TRIAD meetings and projects. Through re-storying, these documents allowed for collaborative influences to be connected to the evolutionary changes of both the course and the instructor.

Conclusion of Methodology

In the construction of a multi-storied building each level is dependent upon the support structures and quality of construction of the level beneath it. Each level is independent, yet connected to those below and above it. Constructing such a structure requires a linear and sequential approach. Although the structure of this research was organized using the visual representation of a multi-storied home, the innately ordered building process of a three- storied structure does not apply. The design process of this narrative self-study was fluid, flexible, and went where the stories led (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Craig, 2009; Schwab, 1962). Each storied level of this study was intricately intertwined with one another, often overlapping in development and influence of story. The choice to present the study framed by the metaphor of a home was done in an effort to bring organization to the varied, yet equally important, research text that informed the wonderings presented in this study.

The intent of this research is to reveal a practice that, like architecture, engages in the art of building in a world with changing needs, constraints of space, and limited resources. The three-storied design of this study presents multiple perspectives on the design, implementation, and impact of the course as aligned to my theoretical foundations. The snapshot of practices offered through these layers of stories inevitably present the challenges and successes of a novice teacher educator and her students as they seek to

connect their understanding of social education and their teaching practices. As architects of our curriculums, teacher educators need access to architectural digests that catalogue ways in which we can create content specific methods courses that empower students to be the designers of their teaching practices and unify our professed theories and practice as teacher educators. This self-study is offered as possible blueprint for such an endeavor.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE BLUEPRINT: THE STORY OF THE COURSE

Introduction

A blueprint is an architect's compass. They give direction to the design. When redirected by obstacles they are redrawn. Like architects, educators possess a blueprint of design found in course syllabi, curriculum maps, and the like. This chapter presents the first level of the structure of this study, the blueprint of the course.

The Context

At the time of this study I had been teaching 4320 ELED Social Education Methods for five years. I began teaching the course the last year of my graduate studies as a graduate student. The early years of teaching this course were focused upon making sense of social education as compared to social studies. Within this inquiry, I began to distinguish common structures within social education, the pillars of social education. These pillars of critical questioning, social justice, and action guided the early development of the course as explored earlier in this paper. Such educational intents were echoed in my doctoral studies as I read Freire (1970/1992) and Kincheloe (2005). However, my exposure to the ideas of critical pedagogy presented by these scholars complicated my developing understanding of social education. I wondered, "How can I integrate the level of critical exploration of societal status quo systems professed by both Freire and Kincheloe within my practice as a social education methods instructor?"

In the end, I began to discern social education and critical pedagogy as inseparable. However, the marriage of these two paradigms only deepened the elusive nature of how the theory I studied lived within my practice as an elementary teacher educator. I entered my

third year wondering how I could teach social education/ critical pedagogy in an educational system focused upon the standardization of teaching and learning.

As I further explored varied scholars of critical pedagogy, I continually returned to its nexus-the development of a critical consciousness. My early exposures to critical pedagogy had challenged me to consider the impact of our unconscious blindness to the world influences around us. I was continually engaged in pondering the intent of consciousness required to see the world critically and the implications of such a view on my teaching practice and the developing practice of my students. As I exposed myself to Freire's work (1970/1992; 1998; 1974/2007) more deeply and discovered the work of Maxine Greene (1978; 1988), I realized until my students became 'wide awake' (Greene, 1978) to the world around them they would run the risk of blindly accepting education as it is, and that they would be paralyzed to act on what it could be.

In the face of the educational context both my students and I found ourselves, I wondered about the reality of developing and deepening the critical consciousness of students enrolled in the 12-week course I would teach. Such an endeavor is a life-long process. I considered how I might create a curriculum that could begin students in this perpetual journey within the confines of a one-semester course.

Contemplations regarding the impact of the course upon the longer journey of students' development engaged me to focus upon the essence of teaching. How could I integrate such an introspective inquiry alongside the practicality of content specific methods? Methods of how to teach Social Studies abound. However within the context of social education, I began to see the import of addressing the essence of teacher being; the critical questioner; the manager of prejudicial and assumptive mind-sets; the relentless

advocate for social justice; and the unconditional champion for students' discovery of their voice and talents.

This is the point at which the story of the course's development begins. The course taught the Fall 2008 is an accumulation of my experiences both as a student of social education and a teacher educator. In my remembrance of the development of the course it was the first time in which I consciously began to consider the relationship between practical methods and the seemingly less practical exploration of what my students unconsciously hold as truth about students, learning, and teaching. My studies have illuminated the need for both. However, my experience of practice has presented a collision between the immediate practical needs of my students and my grander vision of the development of the critical dispositions required of critical educators. My challenge, as I began the Fall of 2008, was to consider how my own developing theoretical philosophies could live in my practice alongside the practical needs of my students. In the end, I was committed to offer a meaningful experience for my students that stepped beyond an accumulation of Social Studies methods and began students on a discovery of the essence of their teacher selves.

With this last goal in mind, this chapter presents the course's development over a one-year span (Fall 2008, Spring 2009, Fall 2009). Presented is a side-by-side comparative analysis of three varied aspects of the courses' syllabi. These include analysis of each semester's scope and sequence, assigned readings, and assignments. Examination of each of these individual components of the syllabi presents a first level of description and analysis of these data.

As second level of analysis is explored through a parallel examination of the readings and reflections of my graduate studies as presented in relationship to all syllabi. Through narrative, these data are presented in order to discover any possible connections between my theoretical influences and curricula decisions as a teacher educator.

A final landscaped analysis of these data is framed by the triadic structure of an experience in social education, critical awakening, access to freedom, and an avenue to transformative action. This deductive approach to these data is used to illuminate any connection or disconnection between my theory and practice, a goal of this and all self-studies.

Scope and Sequence

The Data

The scope and sequence of the courses are presented in a chart generated from the syllabus of each semester (*Table 1*). This information was taken from the agenda category found on the schedule within these course documents (Appendixes D-F). The expressions of the topics presented are offered as themes rather than the specific models found within the detailed agendas offered to students. For example, the Spring 2009 syllabus (Appendix E) states outlines the agenda for the day, which engages the specific activities/models, *History's Mysteries*, *History in the Bag*, and exploration of standards. The first two activities address the concept of critical thinking and, as such, are presented in the chart below in this condensed form. This process was consistently utilized in the creation of Table 1.

Table 1 ELED 4320 Course Scope and Sequence

Fall 2008	Spring 2009	Fall 2009
Critical Thinking: History in the Bag	Critical Thinking- Standards	Out of the Box- Critical Thinking
Lesson Plan Building	Alternative Text-Integration	Standards –Anatomy of Lesson
Knowledge/Schooling/Education	Lesson Plan-5 E's Art Literacy: Ruby Bridges	Alternative Text Resource Fair
Facing our Assumptions: Community Walk	Independent Field Trip- A Toy Store	Lesson Plans Visual Literacy: Ruby Bridges
Guided Field Trip (Project Row House)	Pop Culture	Independent Field Trip- A Toy Store
Standards	Patriotism and Music	Pop Culture
Art integration: Ruby Bridges	Citizenship for Social Justice	Social Justice
The Use of Alternative Text: Marginalized Populations	Alternative Perspectives: War and Peace	Integration Stations
Controversial Issues in the Classroom	Community Walk	Citizenship
Media Literacy	Presentations	Patriotism
Patriotism	Presentations	Alternative Perspectives/Presentations
Peace		

Scope: Similarities

As illustrated by Table 1, topics explored within the courses are consistent over the span of this year of practice. Each course addresses critical thinking, lesson plan construction, standards exploration, field trips, alternative text, art literacy, pop culture/media literacy, and patriotism.

Upon close examination of each respective syllabus it can be noted that specific models/activities used to support thematic topics were not always the same semester to semester. However, the explorations of critical thinking, art literacy, and pop culture/media literacy were taught using the same strategic approach. Respectively, models used were *History's Mysteries* and *History is in the Bag*, *Art Literacy Through Ruby Bridges*, and *Bratz to Batman*.

Areas in which different strategies were employed include lesson plan construction, exploration of standards, field trips, and patriotism. Lesson plan construction was explored using different content focus such as history, visual literacy, or geography. However, the 5 E's model was used as the framework for lesson plan construction across all semesters. Standards were not addressed directly in a classroom model during the Fall 2008 semester. Yet, in the following two semesters standards were explored through the classroom strategy of integration.

The pattern of field trips exists within all three semesters. However, in 2008 the field trip was guided and incorporated a community art installation. Comparatively, the courses in 2009 required students to independently go a toy store of their choice. The 2008 trip correlated to a previous community walk. All toy store field experiences linked to a model on the use of pop culture in the classroom.

Finally, the concept of patriotism was taught using varied methods. In 2008 this topic was explored in a traditional way through readings and analysis of primary documents. During the following semesters patriotism was presented using music as an alternative text.

Scope: Differences

In regards to the differences illustrated in these courses, two distinct topics surface within the Fall 2008 curriculum, which are absent the following two semesters: 1) Discussions about the nature and meaning of knowledge, schooling, and education; 2) Exploration of models that address controversial issues in elementary classrooms. A commonality found both within the courses taught Fall 2008 and Spring 2009 centers upon a strategy engaging students in a school community walk. This particular model is absent

from the Fall 2009 curriculum. Comparatively, the courses taught in 2009 addressed topics untouched during the Fall 2008. These were lessons focused upon integration, citizenship, social justice, and alternative perspectives.

Sequence

The chart (*Table 2*) below catalogues the sequence by which the common curricula topics were taught within the semesters under study. A correlating number offers the week in which the topic was explored.

Table 2: ELED 4320 Sequence of Classroom Concepts, Strategies, and Topics

Curriculum Topic	Fall 2008	Spring 2009	Fall 2009
Critical Thinking	Week 1	Week 1	Week 1
Lesson Plan Construction	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Standard Exploration	Week 6	Week 1	Week 2
Field Trips	Week 5	Week 4	Week 5
Alternative Text	Week 8	Week 2	Week 3
Art Literacy	Week 7	Week 3	Week 4
Pop Culture/Media Literacy	Week 10	Week 5	Week 6
Patriotism	Week 11	Week 6	Week 10

Each course begins with emphasis on critical thinking as noted by its immediate attention within the sequence of the course. Similarly aligned across semesters is the early attention paid to lesson plan construction. Such models are explored in the early weeks of the course, ranging from week two to week four. Another closely aligned sequence is seen in regards to field trips, which occur either week four or five.

These data illuminate early consideration of models related to standard exploration, alternative text, art literacy, and pop culture for courses taught in 2009. Each of these topics was addressed within the first six weeks of the course. By comparison, such topics are in the later part of the 2008 semester, beginning week six and extending to week ten.

Patriotism is addressed at varied times across the semesters, week eleven, week six, and week ten, respectively.

Topics only common to the courses taught in 2009 included integration, alternative perspectives, and citizenship. Integration was explored during week two Spring 2009 and week eight the following fall. Corresponding to the semesters taught alternative texts were addressed week eight and week eleven. Little distinction between semesters is seen regarding exploration of citizenship, which was addressed week seven and week nine correspondingly.

Making Sense: Scope and Sequence

The challenge of this analysis is to view the course through the provided scope and sequence as offered in the figures presented above. Certainly, the side-by-side matrix allows a manageable way by which to highlight cross semester similarities and differences. However, the analysis of the planned curriculum, as presented here, fails to address the lived curriculum of the course and the inevitable modifications that occurred. As the researcher, this analysis has been, with great struggle, purposely, removed from my experience of the lived curriculum. Consequentially, this examination of data provides insight into the intent of the instructor with regard to each of the semesters taught.

Presence of the Pillars

The broad view of the evolution of ELED 4320, as presented in these data illuminates consistent and divergent patterns over the span of the year studied. A wide glance of these data support the integration of the self-proclaimed pillars of education distinguished early in my career as a teacher educator: critical questioning, social justice,

and action. To different degrees these pillars are explicitly or implicitly addressed within all syllabi.

The pillar of critical questioning is addressed across the curricula at the very beginning of each semester. Through deductive activities such as *History, It's in the Bag*, students reason through historical clues of events, concepts, and historical people found in the state standards. This attention to critical thinking is thread throughout the semester as evidenced in the analysis of art and pop culture phenomena, to name a few. In the end, critical thinking is foundational to all models across the semesters being studied.

Exploration of social justice, another pillar, is evidenced within the course explicitly through models that explore civil rights through art, as offered in a lesson integrating the art of Rockwell's *The Problem We All Live With*, and *The Story of Ruby Bridges* (Coles, 1995), and activities focused on alternative perspectives of historical events. More implicit integration of the pillar of social justice emerges in lessons exploring school communities (community walk), patriotism, and pop culture and media literacy. Curiously, explicit social justice models exist more readily in the 2009 semesters. Upon analysis, all classroom agendas have a potential undercurrent that can be pulled to issues of social justice, even those seemingly practical endeavors such as understanding the standards.

These data show a gap in the explicit treatment of the final pillar, action. Although, unexpressed in the scope and sequence provided here, models addressing citizenship most directly attend to the pillar of action. This analysis highlights the need for more explicit attention to the idea of social action across all semesters. While these data show mild attention through citizenship during the 2009 courses, a lack of attention to action is neither

implied, nor explicit during the 2008 course. This insight begs to wonder why a self-proclaimed pillar of social education is seemingly so distant within the scope of the courses under examination.

Distinctions

Aligned to the pillars of social education, the foundations of each semester are more similar than different. However, distinctions between the 2008 course and those of 2009 highlight two clear distinctions of implementation. The first addresses the sequence of the course. The second addresses the concept of integration.

Although not lock-stepped, the sequences of the courses taught in 2009 were closely aligned. Experiences with alternative text, including the Alternative Ttext Resource fair and the exploration of art and pop culture, are offered within the first six weeks of the courses in 2009. In general, one could assert that in the year 2009 an early emphasis was placed upon strategies for teaching.

By comparison the first six weeks of 2008 were devoted to, what can be categorized as, a mix of the practical and the philosophical. Practical issues included lesson plan construction and standards analysis. However, students in 2008 engaged in philosophical queries regarding the meaning of knowledge, school, and education. In addition, they participated in a community walk that was designed to unearth and explore student assumptions regarding the school communities in which they were teaching. These seemingly philosophical lessons are silent in the second half of the course where the focus is primarily on strategies of teaching. Largely, these data highlight a decreased emphasis on the philosophical within the course from 2008 to 2009. This revelation poses an interesting inquiry into the explanation of such a distinct shift in the approach to the course.

A second divergence between the course of 2008 and those taught in 2009 centers upon the concept of integration. These data clearly illustrate the overall absence of attention to integration during the Fall 2008. Subsequently, integration is an integral component of the courses taught in 2009. Although not explicit in these documents, in both semesters taught in 2009, models/activities built students' experience levels with integration over multiple classes. For example, models and activities highlighting standards, alternative text, and integrated stations were linked to build the skill of integration over two or more classes in both spring and Fall 2009. Curiously, I wonder about the catalyst for such a dissimilar approach of practice from Fall 2008 to the semesters of 2009.

Conclusion of Scope and Sequence

Examination of the scope and sequence of these courses, as stated before, is based upon the intended outcomes of the course. Although generalizations are made regarding the scope and sequence of the course over time, these data do little to capture the serendipitous moments of teaching. For example, in 2008 a hurricane hit our city with great impact to our daily lives. A redesign of the curriculum was quickly made to incorporate the loss of public services and the impact on the larger community. Such modifications to the scope and sequence fail to be captured from an analysis of the intended curriculum. Nonetheless, these data illuminate intriguing insight into both the common and divergent approaches of ELED 4320 over the course of a year; 1) Consistent expression of the pillars of social education of critical questioning and social justice; 2) Silence of the final pillar, action; 3) Elimination of the philosophical for the seemingly more practical strategies of teaching; 4) Emphasis on integration in 2009.

Course Readings

The Data

A set of foundational texts provided the readings for the courses over the span of the three semesters under study. To offer the context from which the readings emerged, a brief description of the texts is provided below. In addition, examination of the course readings is presented in a side-by-side matrix (*Table 3*), illuminating the authorship, sequence, and variances of the readings across the semesters.

Becoming a Critical Educator: Defining Classroom Identity and Designing a Critical Pedagogy

Hinchey (2006) provides a text about critical theory accessible to all. The thesis of the book focuses upon empowering teachers as agents of change and keepers of equity in schools.

black ants and buddhists: Thinking Critically and Teaching Differently in the Primary Grades

This text presents the practice of a second grade teacher dedicated to a teaching from a critical, social justice framework. It offers classroom examples of what critical pedagogy and teaching for social justice looks like in elementary schools.

Classroom Teaching

This introduction to teaching provides a critical exploration of teaching. Grounded in pragmatic approaches that are both democratic and challenging. The text pushes readers to examine alternatives to status quo teaching.

Critical Pedagogy: Notes from the Real World

Wink (2000) presents a dialogue about critical pedagogy alongside vignettes of practice. The design of the chapters encourages readers to embark in an inquiry about the what and how of critical pedagogy.

Curriculum Standards for Social Studies: Expectations of Excellence

Published by the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) this text explores the definition, thematic framework, and strategies for teaching the Social Studies.

Kinderculture: The Corporate Construction of Childhood

Through numerous essays, this edited text engages readers in a critical examination of the influence of varied pop culture phenomena upon children. Topics explored include, movies, toys, television programs, and video games.

Building Bridges: Connecting Classroom and Community Service- Learning in Social Studies

A direct and practical exploration of service learning is presented within this volume. In addition to a general introduction to service learning, real life examples are offered for all levels of education.

Lies My Teacher Told Me

Framed around tried and true "stories" of American History, this book provides another perspective to the limited history offered in most textbooks.

Social Studies for Social Justice: Teaching Strategies for the Elementary Classroom.

The text examines social justice in the Social Studies curriculum providing guidelines for practice.

Pledging allegiance: The Politics of Patriotism in America's school

This collection of essays explores the idea of patriotism in our schools today. This book offers a critical inquiry regarding our understanding of patriotism within a democratic society.

Table 3 ELED 4320 Course Readings

Fall 2008	**Spring 2009**	**Fall 2009**
NCSS Introduction **and** Thematic Strands	NCSS Introduction	NCSS Introduction **and** Thematic Strands
Nurturing History Detectives (Cowhey)	*The High Cost of Uncritical Thinking* (Winn)	*The Basics, Educational Purpose, and the Curriculum* (Gordon)
Understanding Social Justice Education (Wade)	*Nurturing History Detectives* (Cowhey)	*Compassion, Action and Change* **and** *Teaching History so that Children will Care* (Cowhey)
Starting Points and Assumptions and Alternatives (Hinchey)	*Is Curriculum Integration a Boon or a Threat to Social Studies* (Alleman & Brophy) Thematic Strands (NCSS)	*Learning through Activism (Cowhey)*
Going against the Grain (Cowhey)	*Compassion, Action and Change* (Cowhey)	*Community Service-Learning in the Social Studies* (Wade)
Reinventing the Social Studies Curriculum	*Understanding Social Justice Education (*Wade)	*Starting Points and Assumptions and Alternatives*

(Wade)		(Hinchey)
Compassion, Action and Change (Cowhey)	*Teaching History so that Children will Care* (Cowhey)	*Critical Pedagogy: What in thWorld is it?* (Wink)
Creating a Socially Just Classroom Community (Wade)	*Going Against the Grain* (Cowhey)	*The Truth About the First Thanksgiving* (Loewen)
It takes a Village to Teacher First Grade (Cowhey)	*The Bitch that has Everything* (Steinberg)	
Learning through Activism (Cowhey)	*Starting Points and Assumptions and Alternatives* **and** *Understanding Our Own Thinking: Developing a Critical Consciousness* (Hinchey)	
Activism and Community Connections (Wade)	*Patriotism, Nationalism, and Our Jobs as Americans* (Loewen)	
Teaching History so Children Care (Cowhey)	*Learning through Activism (*Cowhey)	
Social Justice Themes and Skills (Wade)	*Talking about Peace* **and** *Building Trust with Families and Weathering Controversy* (Cowhey)	
Esstential Teaching Strategies (Wade)	*The Truth About the First Thanksgiving* (Loewen)	
*The Land of Opportunity (*Loewen)	*Community Service-Learning in the Social Studies* (Wade)	
Responding when Tragedy Enters the Classroom (Cowhey)	*It Takes a Village to Teacher first Grade* **and** *Responding when Tragedy Enters the Classroom* (Cowhey)	
Patriotism, Nationalism, and Our Jobs as Americans (Loewen)		

Examination of the reading materials of this year reveals the solid presence of a practical piece of text, *black ants and buddhists*. This book is comprehensively explored throughout all three semesters of the course. This is the only clear cut parallel made regarding the reading assignments given over the year of the course under study.

A basic revelation found in these data is the amount of reading required of students. Students enrolled in the Fall 2008 course were assigned a total of 17. Comparatively, during the following semester students were assigned 20 readings. Fall

2009 students' reading list was reduced to include only ten readings over the course of the semester.

Despite variation in the quantity of reading assignments, the essences of the selected texts are connected. However, these data unearth nuanced distinctions relating to specific reading selections. All of *Social Studies for Social Justice* was read Fall 2008, with only a single chapter assigned in the spring semester. By Fall 2009 this text was eliminated entirely from the course reading list without any direct replacement of the text.

Early readings connected to critical thinking and standards offered in these data indicate none of the semesters studied explored text related to both topics. However, each semester read the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) presentation of the organization's Social Studies themes as offered in the *Curriculum Standards for Social Studies: Expectations of Excellence* (1994). Beyond this text and analysis of state standards, additional supportive readings on standards are absent from both Fall 2008 and Spring 2009 semesters. Yet, the Fall 2009 students' examination of standards was supported by text, *The Basics, Educational Purpose and the Curriculum*

The exploration of the impact and use of pop culture in the classroom was not directly explored through text in 2008 or Fall 2009. In contrast, the concept was explicitly introduced through an article Spring 2009. An additional revelation regarding the reading list illuminates the presence of a text related to integration of curriculum in Spring 2009, exclusively.

In summary, these data illuminate the commonality of focus of the readings in the courses. Threaded through all semesters is the exploration of the Cowhey (2006) text and *Curriculum Standards for Social Studies* (NCSS, 1994). Despite the variability of the

amount of reading done across semesters, the core of the readings selected is similar in message. Students, to a varying degree, explored text grounded in critical pedagogy, to include specific topics such as the national Social Studies standards, critical thinking, social justice, and pop culture.

Making Sense: Course Readings

Examination of the scope and sequence of the course revealed more explicit attention to topics of social justice in the 2009 semesters. Interestingly, data connected to reading assignments of the courses, present solid attention to readings focused on social justice exclusively in the Fall 2008, a semester that revealed only implied models/activities of social justice. Is this insight connected to the discovered shift of the course from the philosophical focus of 2008 to the more practical approach of the 2009 courses?

Connected to this inquiry are data that illuminate the reading load of the respective semesters. The two earliest syllabi offer a more extended reading requirement as required of the Fall 2009 course. Examination of the reading requirements highlights a more structured and comprehensive approach to reading assignments during the Fall 2008. Two complete books were read, *black ants and buddhists* and *Social Studies for Social Justice.* As a result, the reading schedule presents a structured organizational approach to reading assignments. Although, the spring course required more readings than the other semesters, the reading list was less cohesive than those semesters before and after. What could be the cause of this distinctive approach concerning the choice of reading selections during the spring?

The placement of *Becoming a Critical Educator: Defining Classroom Identity and Designing a Critical Pedagogy* within each semester illuminate questions that also relate to

the suggested movement towards the more practical approach to the course. Although all students read chapters from this text, Fall 2008 students were offered early exposure to the text in comparison with the students of 2009. This text has clear importance in the curriculum as a common piece for all semesters, however, the timing of the reading is most curious. What factors influenced the placement of this piece of text?

Additional interesting questions can be posed regarding exposure to pop culture through multiple readings. The same model of practice, *Bratz to Batman*, was explored in all three semesters. Yet, Fall 2008 and Fall 2009 students were offered no reading to support in-class pop culture activities. By contrast, students enrolled the Spring 2009 course were offered supportive readings alongside the in-class model, different as they were. What influenced the placement of pop culture text on the syllabi of Spring 2009 for it to disappear the next semester?

These data also exposed the presence and disappearance of readings highlighting integration. Integration aided by readings explored in only one semester, Spring 2009. The scope and sequence of the course exposed the absence of integration within the 2008 curriculum and subsequently no reading is offered. However, the topic of integration emerges as a focus for both semesters of 2009, yet, a reading is provided only in the spring. This pattern of elimination is unique in that it removes a supportive reading in the semester immediately following the implementation of the concept it explores. Up to this point, readings have been added to deepen a topic of the previous semester(s). To what end, was the reading on integration erased from the Fall 2009 syllabus?

To sum up, the insights reflected in these data, regarding the reading assignments of the course, further deepen or connect to earlier data on the scope and sequence of the

course. First, these data seemingly continue to support the idea of movement within the course from the philosophical to the more practical approach to the curriculum. Secondly, the reduction of the reading requirements for the Fall 2009 course demonstrates additional supportive evidence of the shift from the philosophical to the practical direction of the course. Next, these data illuminate the integration of new readings in support of topics found to be common across semesters. Finally, data reveals a curious pattern of elimination related to the introduced topic of integration.

Course Assignments

The Data

The side-by-side matrix offered in Table 4 presents insight into the class assignments over the course of this study. Once again these data submit the planned curriculum of the instructor and provide little insight into the elimination or shift of any projects assigned to students. An asterisk, however, denotes any assignment that was removed from the course expectations. Brief accounts of each of the assignments, as planned, are offered within syllabi found in appendixes D-F.

Table 4 ELED 4320 Course Assignments

Fall 2008	Spring 2009	Fall 2009
Student facilitated on-line discussions (Group)	Traveling Journals	Reflective Journals
Educational Philosophy Questions	Annotated Bibliography	Your Philosophy in Art
Your Story: A story of an elementary school experience.	Pop Culture Case Study	Pop Culture Case Study
Lesson Plans: 5 E's format	Lesson Plans	Lesson Plans
Alternative Text Activity	Alternative Text Tool Box	Alternative Text Tool Box
Research Journal *	Field Trip Analysis	
Thinker Reflection: Expansion of a weekly thinker.	Alternative Perspectives Photo Story	Alternative Perspectives Photo Story (Group)

Controversial Unit*	Integrated Unit with Curriculum matrix (3 Lessons) (Group)	Integrated Unit (4 lessons) (Group)
Community Project Proposal (Group)	Community Project Proposal (Group)	Community Project Proposal (Group)
Action Research Project: Research on a TEK Strand (Group)	Letters to Parents and Professor	Curriculum Map
		*Letters to Parents and Professor

At a glance, these data highlight common course requirements that offer a focus upon the development of student reflection, construction of lesson plans, use of alternative text, and experience with community projects. Early assignments provide attention to students' ability to reflect upon the experience of the course. These assignments vary each semester to include trials at on-line discussion, traveling journals, and individual reflective journals. Lesson plan assignments illustrate a consistent assignment requirement across all semesters. All students, regardless of the semester, explored the use of alternative texts. These data offer a change in the assignment title post Fall 2008. Finally, a group community project proposal is evident across all three semesters.

Fall of 2008 data presents assignments unique to that semester. These are an education philosophy query, *Your Story*, *Thinker* reflection, research journal, controversial unit, standard action research project, and portfolio. Similarly, *Letters to Parents and Professors* and a field trip analysis surface for the first time Spring of 2009. Exclusive to the Fall 2009 course requirements is *Your Philosophy through Art*.

The side-by-side matrix offers a landscaped view of the assignment requirements for all courses taught from Fall 2008-Fall 2009. Not surprisingly, these data reflect the patterns of the course analysis of the scope/sequence and reading requirements of each semester. For example, the inclusion of integration on the scope and sequence post 2008 is

echoed through the course assignments of 2009. Concluding assessment of these data highlight the fact the planned course assignments for these three semesters are more similar than different. Of the ten projects assigned, 40 percent are common across all three semesters. For the courses of 2009 assignments alignment is 80 percent.

Making Sense: Course Assignments

The straightforward analysis of Table 4 submits the commonalities of the course assignments over the year of study. Upon closer examination of specific course assignments, variances in course projects highlight changes and refocus of assignment requirements over the range of three semesters. These assignments center upon reflection and alternative text.

As noted earlier, reflective assignments are present within all three courses under study. Yet, three divergent reflective strategies were utilized, online discussions, traveling journals, and personal journals. Analysis of Fall 2008 reading schedule suggested a more structured approach comparative to other semesters. Aligned with course assignment data this conclusion is deepened. The syllabus illuminates the students' roles in Fall 2008 as on-line discussion facilitators. These student groups created online reflection questions from weekly readings and facilitated on-line discussions. This structure upholds the requirement of a tightly organized reading list as uncovered in analysis of course reading requirement.

Comparatively, spring reflective assignments were removed from the on-line platform and integrated into a traveling journal system. The collaborative nature of on-line discussions was retained but modified. Students reflected upon readings within a journal, which passed to another classmate the following week. (Appendix G)

Students reflected, responded to the journal entry before them, and posed a question for the next student. This process, removed from technology, continues to engage students with one another regarding their reflections about the course and the readings.

The last reflective strategy employed over the course of this year was the use of a traditional personal journal shared with the instructor. This modification removes reflection from any public forum providing a more private reflective space. This interesting insight offers speculation regarding the forum by which students are asked to reflect. To what end does the instructor want reflections posted on-line? Is this more dialogue than reflection? Which honors the development of reflective practices, public spaces or private spaces?

Alternative texts explorations were presented through three assignments. Fall 2008 students focused upon art as alternative text. Art works were selected and used as the centerpiece for the construction of a classroom activity. The following semester, students concentrated on literature as an alternative text. Designed around the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) themes, students located children's literature that would support one of the assigned themes. By Fall 2009 students created a resource file connected to each one of the ten themes. Students were asked to include an assortment of alternative text, including literature, music, art, toys, film, websites, and teacher resources.

The evolution of these assignments illustrates a deepening approach to exposing students to alternative text. Semesters in 2009 present an alignment with national standards with the inclusion of the NCSS themes. This thematic turn in the assignments endorses early speculation relating to the practical shift of the course.

Interestingly, each course requires a Community Action Project Proposal, which remained consistent offer the span of the year. Earlier data illuminated the lack of explicit

attention to the topic of action, one of the pillars of social education. These data, however, expose attention to community action through an assignment across all three semesters. The revelation challenges the notion that although explicit models of action are absent, students do explore the notion of action outside the classroom.

Divergent Assignments

Several assignments required in Fall 2008 are absent the following semesters. Some of these assignments could be categorized as theoretical in nature, including an education philosophy query, *Your Story*, *Thinker Reflection*, and final portfolio. These assignments explore the development of students' teaching philosophies and how they manifest within classroom practice. Earlier conclusions posing the evolution of the course from the philosophical to the practical is echoed in the exclusivity of these assignments to the 2008 course. Such introspective assignments are absent from the following spring course requirements and limited in the Fall 2009 through one assignment, *Your Philosophy through Art.* These data underscore speculation to the cause of this perceived movement towards practical strategies at the expense of introspective theoretical exploration.

The 2008 presence of a research project about a current educational issue suggests the import of continual teacher learning. The integration of this experience offers a step away from a traditional methods course and is reminiscent of professional development approaches offered in general education courses. Interestingly, this approach fails to transfer to either of the remaining courses of the study. If my goal was to create a curriculum that offered a balance between the philosophical and the practical, why do assignments based the theoretical exist most directly in the Fall of 2008?

Earlier scope and sequence data illuminate the absence of exploration of integration during the Fall 2008 semester. Nevertheless, a controversial issue unit based upon a science concept was assigned. As a practice in integration the assignment offers needed speculation regarding the modeling of integration within the scope of the course. Amid the absence of an integrated model in the curriculum, I wonder the extent to which this assignment was both meaningful and fair. Did the experience of this semester aid in the inclusion of both an integrated model and assignment the semesters of 2009?

As been established in earlier data analysis, explicit classroom models regarding standard analysis are missing during the Fall 2008 course. A comprehensive *Strand Project*, however, is required of students. This project is presented as an action research project as guided by the following question: How do you teach Social Justice from a critical perspective in the context of prescribed Social Studies curriculum? Students aligned an assigned NCSS theme to the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKs) objective and then researched teaching strategies and trends regarding their topic. Lessons were then created as guided by the research question. This assignment suggests an attempt to bridge the theoretical (critical teaching/ social justice) with the practical. In short, it asks how such theories can possibly align with prescribed standards? These data in relation to earlier data has me to wonder about the actual balance of theory and practice within the curriculum of the course.

The courses of 2009 offer only two divergent course projects as compared to the 2008 course. Yet, upon closer examination, assignments present exploration of both the philosophical and the practical. In Spring 2009 students, through letters to parents,

presented and justified their philosophical leanings regarding students and learning. In Fall 2009, this is done with the use of art in the assignment, *Your Philosophy through Art.*

The practical is explored, in the spring, through a field trip analysis, which interestingly enough supports the same field trip taken the Fall 2009. Comparatively, the field trip of 2008 can be categorized as more structured as it was guided. Yet, students this semester fail to engage in any analysis or follow up activity.

The practical piece of Fall 2009 closely aligns with the *Strand project* of 2008. Students created a curriculum map that aligned the national and state standards. Taken at a glance, these assignments are divergent for those of 2008, however, the spirit of the assignments offer insight into how both theory and practicality live within the latter courses. Philosophical approaches are more explicit in the assignments of 2008, but to what extent are assignments integrating both the philosophical and practical in the semesters of 2009?

Conclusion of Course Assignments

In summary, the analysis of these data provides insight into the evolution of course assignments over three semesters. First, although not always explicit, the influences of curriculum of Fall 2008 are threaded into both precluding semesters. Such evidence is offered by the evolutionary states of the alternative text assignment. The echoes of the Fall 2008 are heard within the deepened assignment given the following fall.

Secondly, patterns connected to the design of class models/strategies are aligned with assignments. For example, the scope of Fall 2008 syllabus presents a void regarding the topic of standards. However, students engaged in a comprehensive project, Strand Project, extensively focused upon standards. The following semesters, this topic is

represented in both the scope for specific course models and major assignments. The matched pattern of model-assignment is more consistent in the latter semesters as compared to the Fall 2008 semester.

Confirmation of earlier insights in relationship to the shift of the course from a more philosophical approach to a more practical approach is supported within these data. Less direct philosophical assignments are present on the latter course syllabi. Yet, these data also illuminate the need to consider the idea of balance between the theoretical and the practical.

Additionally, these data challenge the conclusions of the early analysis regarding the inclusion of the pillars of action and social justice. Action was distinguished, through analysis of the scope of the courses, as missing from the explicit intent of the class models. Although a true assessment of the scope of the course, the original claim that the pillar of action was completely absent within the course is inaccurate. The inclusion of community action proposals illustrate attention to the pillar of action, despite its explicit absence within the models explored each class.

Earlier analysis of the scope of the course highlight overt social justice teaching models within the courses taught in 2009. Nothing, however, in these data promotes the idea that classroom assignments mirror direct attention to issues of social justice. Contrary, the Fall 2008 *Strand Project* straightforwardly explores the integration of social justice within standard based education.

Connections to Renovations: Doctoral Explorations and Design of Practice

Major influences upon the curricula development of the courses I teach have been my academic development as a doctoral student. To this end, a chronological narrative is presented that explores the alignment between the doctoral experiences and the creation and renovation of each syllabi. Data were collected from personal reading journals and course writing assignments spanning Summer 2008-Spring 2009. This range of data was selected to expose possible connections between my doctoral studies preceding the semester under study. For example, to gain insight into the curriculum design of the Fall 2008 course, data were reviewed from my previous graduate semester, Summer 2008. Both journal entries and course work were read and analyzed to unearth reoccurring themes for each respective semester.

Fall 2008

I entered the summer prior to the Fall 2008 course with my attention upon the development of critical consciousness. During the spring, I explored the works of works of Freire (1970/1992), Greene (1988), and hooks (1994). These scholars engaged me in an inquiry about the development and deepening of critical consciousness. As I considered the direction of the course for the following fall, I aspired to redirect the course with the following goals in mind; 1) creation of a curriculum that attended to awakening students' consciousness, 2) the cultivation of my ability to honor the inevitably discomfort that accompanies such an exploration (Course Presentation, Fall 2008). Holistically, I considered how I might engage students in consideration of the 'being' of teaching and learning rather than the 'doing' of teaching and learning. However, I struggled with how to

approach this task in a way that would both connect and translate to the students' developing teaching practices.

With this on my mind, I entered a summer doctoral seminar entitled Teacher as Researcher. In review of my reflective journal and assignments for this course, not surprisingly, critical consciousness continues to emerge as a focus of my queries. Yet, additional themes emerge. As evidenced in these data my attention extends to the development of reflective practices as an avenue to critical consciousness. A second theme that appears, most frequently, is the concept of educational bigotry. Finally, these data highlight the recurring subject of empowerment. Although, I address these themes individually, all are interconnected.

Reflective Practices

As a student, my level of development grew exponentially during the summer of 2008. I equate this to my enrollment in a course that required a journal. I kept a journal before, however, not to the depth of this summer's journal. Over the course of my studies, my journal has evolved into a crucial part of my practice as both researcher and practitioner. The pages offer space in which I connect both past and current teaching experiences, my new theoretical knowledge, and my personal values and philosophies. The structure of my journals helps to develop my writing, analysis, and reflective skills. During this summer course, I found great power in maintaining, reviewing, and sharing the emerging inquires and insights explored through consistent journal keeping. How could I share this experience with students? I wrote,

> I want journals to be an authentic experience; one that offers students insights into their practice-I don't want it to become just an assignment. These journals could provide a space for students to make sense of the

> course and a touchstone for me regarding their progress. However, my biggest concern is overwhelming them (Personal journal, summer 2008).

Were the reflective practices of the course meaningful? My answer to this question is mixed at best. The semesters prior to Fall 2008, I had posted reflective questions about the readings and discussions of the class on an electronic discussion board managed by me. Additionally, most assignments incorporated a reflective component. Some students were deeply reflective in these assignments. Others were mere mimics of others, whether scholar, instructor, or classmate. Troubled by the robotic and distant nature in which students approach reflective endeavors, I have constantly sought new ways to model the power of reflective practices. This is supported by the assignment data of three semesters in which three different approaches to reflection are attempted.

As illustrated in the analysis of course assignments, the foundational reflective structure of the course has moved from the public form (electronic discussion board), to semi-private traveling journals to the private personal journal shared only with me. Interestingly, this evolution aligns with my own personal experiences as doctoral student.

An on-line discussion board in which students were to reflect between classes supported each of my Social Education courses. I resisted this public forum of reflection as a catalyst for course discussions. In retrospect, I believe intimidation played a factor in my disdain for this reflective structure. As a new student in a socialized, cohort of experienced doctoral students, I was fearful of the public nature of thinking through our course work. Like my students I was beginning my exploration of social education. I felt the reflective public forum used to make sense of the course hindered my freedom of reflection.

Despite this feeling, an electronic based reflective structure was used during the Fall of 2008. With critical consciousness as the focus of the course, reflection became an

integral part of class requirements. Structured reflections were posted, discussed, and expanded as illustrated in the course assignments of that semester. Coupled with my meaningful experience with journal writing in my seminar and my reading of *Finding Freedom in the Classroom: A practical Introduction to Critical Theory* (Hinchey, 1998), I was inspired to experiment with a more critical approach to the course that next fall. With this critical approach to the course, I purposely pushed students more directly towards the exploration of the source of their beliefs about teaching and learning. In the process, reflections took on a vulnerability that I believe was absence before and reminiscent of my own experiences as new student of social education.

I sensed the shift in the course caused more students to refrain from a perceived unsafe depth of reflection. All subsequent adaptations to the reflective practices of the course were offered with one goal in mind, the creation of a safe forum in which students could authentically reflect and engage with the queries posed in the course.

Educational Bigotry

The convergence of two scholars influenced the development of the course of the Fall 2008 in a very powerful way. Both Peskin (1988) and Hinchey (1998) helped shape the attempted introspective elements of the course. Also, connected with reshaping the curriculum of the course was my exposure to narrative inquiry as a research method. All these influences combined to inspire exploration of stories of experience and how these stories mold the biases and shield blind spots within the practices of educators.

Peskin (1988) authored a required article in my Teacher as Researcher seminar. Through his work, I engaged in an inquiry about my own subjectivities in relationship to my research. Directed to researchers, the premise of Peskin's article is the need for

researchers to be aware and their subjectivities. In relationship to my practice as a teacher educator, I correlated the exploration of our individual subjectivity with the development of critical consciousness. I wrote then,

> Much of my course is about students discovering their own subjectivities about schooling, education, teaching, social justice, race, etc. I realize that my course attempts to offer a space in which students can discover their biases and awaken to the impact such lenses have on their curricula and teaching (Personal journal, summer 2008).

This article inspired me to closely examine my own subjectivities in relationship to my practice. I began consideration of the source of my uncomfortable feeling with the tone of the course. Over the course of Spring 2008, I was troubled by my developing and, sometimes, overt self-righteous approach with students as they resisted the course. In Peskin's article, I unearthed my bias towards students who I perceived as negative and devoid of the possible integration of the innovative and progressive teaching approaches I presented. I viewed this tension or natural discomfort as a rejection of consideration for the heart of the course and most importantly, surrender to the system. This bias often stood in the way of me hearing students and engaging with them in productive and meaningful ways. Through the distinction of this bias and others, I was empowered to manage such biases and engage with students in open and encouraging ways.

While exploring Peskin, I independently discovered Hinchey (1998). This scholar propelled me on an inquiry about the constructed stories students bring to class and how they shape biases and beliefs about teaching and learning. For me, Hinchey's work deepened the ideas of Peskin's article for application in my role as a teacher educator. Hinchey claims,

> In their [education students] minds the actions of a 'real teacher' were prescribed and predetermined by some invisible and all knowing director.

> Their job was to pay the role; Teachers give homework and that is just the way it is (p.2).

In response, I scribed in my journal, “I need to look at ways students can distinguish their “way it is” and the source of their decisions (Personal journal, summer 2008). This insight directly correlates with the integration of the *Your Story* assignment during the Fall 2008. Students were asked to write an educational narrative about their elementary years. To explore the influential backdrop of the narrative on students’ developing teaching philosophy the stories were further analyzed. Additionally, these narratives offered me an avenue of entry when struggling with understanding the source of the views expressed by students. I ended the summer strongly convicted to the power of educational narratives. I wrote,

> I think I can’t teach a course based in critical teaching without a deconstruction of the educational stories that students bring to the job. Only then, with this kind of an awakening, can something else be created (Personal journal, summer 2008).

This entry echoes my search for avenues to critically awaken the consciousness of students, directly correlating to the assessed philosophical leanings of the course of Fall 2008.

Another salient point presented by Hinchey is her warnings about educational bigotry. She claims that educators view current educational debates right or wrong and such polarized stances position us as intolerant educators- educational bigots. Her ideas connected with others regarding the danger of the either/or approach to teaching (Dewey, 1938) and the humility required when educating (Freire, 1970/1992). These revelations matched theory to what I experienced in both in my Social Education seminars and my

practice. Journal data illustrate consistent focus on making sense of educational bigotry within the context of my role as both student and teacher.

I had grown uncomfortable with the self-righteous slant I heard within the voices of my department, a department that professed unilateral honor of all voices. Echoing this concern, I wrote, “It seems antithetical to the tenets of social education to fail to openly hear the stances and perspectives of other educational approaches and beliefs of practice” (Personal journal, summer, 2008). Within my practice, I had grown conscious of the sanctimonious tone of my delivery of the course. In relationship to my teaching, I share,

> I am uncomfortable with the direction of the course. I have offered Social Education as the ‘right’ way. Yuck! I am an educational bigot! How can I deal with my educational bigotry and teach others to manage theirs (Personal journal, summer 2008)?

These data strongly support the consistent presence of Hinchey’s writings within the courses over time. Fall 2008 course data offer evidence of explicit reflective assignments tied to the readings of Hinchey, as evidenced of the *Your Story* assignment and the community project assignment. On the issue of educational bigotry, I posed this wish for the Fall 2008 course,

> I want to set the context of the course through a metaphor, so I will present the experience of the course as something to “try on” My hope is that they will understand my open bias to social education and openly consider the approach- much like you try on the outfit your mother/girlfriend hands you across the dressing room door. It may not obviously represent who you are and you may be uncomfortable to try it as a possibility, but you do anyway. Sometimes the fit surprises you. Other times such experiences only solidifies who you are (Personal journal, summer, 2008).

Empowerment

The idea of teacher empowerment emerges in these data both in the foreground and background of my journal. It is heard in my entries considering the development of critical

consciousness. I contend that empowerment is the result of awakening to our educational bigotry and power of our educational stories. In short, we are empowered with self-knowledge. Through summer coursework, I saw the skill of teacher research as a valuable tool in challenging current standardized approaches to teaching and learning. For pre-service teachers, this skill offers evidential support for teaching decisions divergent from mandated programs and curricula approaches.

Time and time again, students worried about the integration of aspects of social education. They worried that a commitment to teaching students to critically question the world may cause retaliation from principals and parents. Many feared they would get fired for incorporating any educational approach removed from the status quo. I wrote,

> I continually combat students' fears about the security of their job in the face of stepping outside the status quo of education and engaging in divergent approaches to teaching and learning. In teacher research, I find a vehicle by which students can arm themselves with evidence to support their decisions of practice (Personal journal, summer 2008).

Exposure to scholars such as Smith and Lytle (1990) and others focused on teacher research offered a tool I could bring to the students enrolled in my class. I believe that practitioner research is the best way to bridge practice and theory. I am sure that such connection is imperative to empowering students to courageously present their decisions of practice as researched choices. How would I meaningful integrate such research in a methods course? My answer to this query the Fall 2008 is manifest in the development of two assignments, the *Community Action Project*, and the *Strands Project*.

The first of these was designed as a proposal to the principal regarding the implementation of a class community action project in which students partnered with the community beyond the school. Issues were researched, organizations and resources

identified, and standards aligned. The hope of this assignment was to empower students to inspire administrators to support an idea that is often missing in elementary schools-community involvement and social action.

The *Strands Project* presented and opportunity to analyze the standards through the lens of social justice, research trends of practice, and generate critical lessons divergent from common approaches. This assignment was designed to combat the defeatist attitude of students regarding mandated curricula. Through modeling this kind of research, I hoped students would discover a tool that would aid them in honoring their philosophical roots within the confines of any mandated curriculum.

As I deepen my own understanding of self-study and other practitioner research, I wonder how I can cultivate a disposition towards teacher researcher in new teachers. Certainly, this exploration was begun Fall 2008. However, the depth needed for the cultivation of commitment to research in the classroom is beyond a 12-week methods course. I wrote of this frustration, “Again, I wonder if I am naïve to think that my course can effectively offer change in a system that fails to support teachers exploring the relationship of theory and practice”(Personal journal, summer 2008). I contend that teacher research should be a foundational piece of all teacher education programs. For me this is an urgent goal considering that most school cultures fail to cultivate the space for teacher research.

Conclusion for Fall 2008

On the heels of my early explorations of critical consciousness through scholars such as Freire (1970/1002) and Greene (1988), my summer coursework offered a deepening consideration for how I might tackle critical consciousness in my practice. The

discovery of consistent journal writing as a powerful medium allowed me to hear lived experiences, passions, bias, and questions. Hinchey (1998) presented a term to aid in the redirection of the self-righteous tone of my teaching. Peskin (1988) added another dimension to bias that supported me hearing the resistance of the students in a new way. I discovered that teacher research reached beyond my immediate need as a graduate student and offered a way to power for pre-service teachers. In the end, the lessons of my summer manifest in the goals of my fall course. I wrote,

> My goals for my students:
>
> - I want students to explore their constructed consciousness and their assumptions.
> - I want them to have the ability to be a teacher researcher in their classroom.
> - I want them to distinguish the values and morals that shape their teaching being.
> - I need to construct all models around pushing assumptions and dissolving/owning the sacred stories of schools, students, teaching, and social studies (Personal journal, summer, 2008).

Ultimately, the Fall 2008 syllabus illuminates these goals. Critical consciousness exploration was presented through the readings of Hinchey and the retelling of personal educational stories. My models and queries focused upon the epistemological. In the end, analysis of these data presents the Fall 2008 course as an experiment with introspective activities in a methods course. My summer studies inspired my belief that such pursuits are worthy of methods instructors' exploration. I contend critical, reflective experiences are required of teachers if we are to awaken to the internal constraints of our thinking inevitably shaping who we are as classroom practitioners.

Spring 2009

I learned so much about myself as a teacher educator the Fall 2008. I aggressively pursued the development of my own critical consciousness. As a result the course echoes this personal focus. My aim for the semester was to integrate the exploration of critical consciousness within a methods course. I was tentative about diverting too far from the traditional framework of methods, but inspired by my theoretical studies. In the end, I committed to design a course that would begin to explore and develop critical consciousness.

I had been warned about educational bigotry. With great intent, I considered the presentation of the course and how I could offer it as an alternative among alternatives- not the one and only way. However, I committed to owning my lack of neutrality in my educational philosophical leanings. I was openly, transparent with my bias to social education and worked hard to honor my students' differing opinions, despite my pedagogical passions. However, an experience with a student both challenged and deepened my understanding of my assumptions and how they impact relationships with students.

I have told the story of Henry earlier (Chapter 2) in this work. However, the experience made such a deep impact upon my development as a social educator it is necessary to briefly revisit the experience. Excerpts from a reflection assignment, given in my Spring 2009 Social Education seminar, provide retrospective consideration regarding my interactions with Henry, a critically engaged student enrolled in my Fall 2008 course.

> At the end of last year [Spring 2008], I was troubled by what occurred to me, as my lack of responsibility with my bias in education. Throughout the year, I was aware of how my presentations of Social Education could and did, explicitly and implicitly, make the educational beliefs of my

> students and supervising teachers wrong. I heard this in the voices of my students when they judged the way their teachers handled Social Studies or in their own silence in class discussions. Although, I warned against the villainization of in- service teachers and the schools themselves, my students had sensed my outward inauthentic reactions to their observations in the field. I claimed my bias at the beginning of the fall semester, but I was still uncomfortable with the way in which my students unquestioningly followed my lead.
>
> One particular student this semester has catapulted me into an inquiry about my commitment to divergent opinions within my course. On the surface, I would argue that I am in fact committed to the tenets of Social Education being challenged by the students enrolled in my class. I am sickened at the thought of students parroting what they think I want to hear. I cannot blame them. They are of a system that covertly (often, overtly) trains them to unquestionably regurgitate the "truth" or right answer. Yet last semester, I had a student who boldly stated his criticisms of the material and philosophy of the course- a student who was seemingly a lone voice with such opinions, yet remained vocal. This is what I wanted. Or was it? I was confronted and irritated by this student. These feelings of self-hypocrisy have me wonder; do I really want students to voice what they really think (Course Assignment, Spring 2009)?

This excerpt illustrates my continual struggle with aligning both my theory and practice. Simply put, do I practice what I preach? I had been warned about educational bigotry and I was committed to be openly transparent with my philosophical struggles. Yet, with Henry, a critically questioning student, I had, quite frankly, not liked what I had heard. I vehemently responded to his divergent opinions regarding the philosophy and strategies of the course. I wrote in my journal,

> I am struggling with the idea that biases make people wrong. Is this true? In my work, I have been up front with my biases. Yet, I have been blasted by the dominant positivist approach to education. I want to be a stand for my philosophies and at the same time respect the choices of others. I feel as if my educational bigotry has closed off authentic choice and devalued the beliefs of some of my students (Personal journal, Fall 2008).

On the heels of this experience, I entered the 2009 term wondering how I could push students' assumptions while at the same time honor their values and lived

experiences. I entered the Spring 2009 semester with the following aspirations for the course,

- Distinction of assumptions shaping what students believe about teaching, learning, and students.
- Redirection my educational bigotry.
- Movement from “methods” fetish towards inspired action on knowledge (Personal journal, Fall 2008).

In review of these goals, the influence of the totality of my experiences as both graduate student and teacher educator is echoed. As a result of my fumbled interactions with Henry, I learned that educational bigotry must consistently be confronted and transformed. Merely being aware of your educational close-mindedness is not enough. The work needed to continually explore the blind spots of our practice is deep and needed to ward off complacency within our practice. My experience with Henry quite humbly inspired this revelation. As a result, critical consciousness remained at the heart of the course in the spring.

These data illustrate the continued exploration of bias and assumptions as directed by Hinchey, one of the consistent scholars read over all semesters. Supporting this exploration is my continual ambition in regards to the intentional management of my educational bigotry. Imperative to this endeavor are my personal journals and professional collaborations. These venues allow a safe space in which my biases can be heard, confronted, and unpacked more deeply.

My exploration of critical consciousness evolved towards consideration of the relationship between critical consciousness and action. Through the experiences of the fall semester, I felt the next step to critical consciousness was the actions that followed. Being

aware is a first step, but action is the *so what* the critical insight. In short, action manifests our insights into the practical and tangible.

The ever-present omission of Social Studies within the elementary school-day schedule inspired my attention toward integration. By focusing upon the integration of curricula students can bypass the constraints on Social Studies "time." In the end, I entered that spring semester informed by the experiences of the fall and readied to deepen my understanding of critical consciousness as it lived within the practicality of a methods course. Personal journals from the Fall of 2008 inform this commitment through the emergent themes of critical consciousness, practicality, and the impact of mandated curriculums on elementary Social Studies curricula.

Critical Consciousness

As stated earlier, I continued to explore the idea of critical consciousness. I did this through a review of Hinchey's, *Finding Freedom in the Classroom: A practical introduction to Critical Theory.* In addition, I discovered additional texts on the subject of critical awakening, *Becoming a Critical Educator* (Hinchey, 2006) and *Curriculum and Consciousness* (Greene, 1971). Finally, *Pedagogy of Freedom* (Freire, 1998) further deepened my understanding of the importance of critical consciousness in the creation of education as access to freedom.

As a result of these readings, I considered the relationship between critical consciousness and action. This is evident in the assignments of 2009. Beyond the obvious action orientation of the *Community Project*, an action component was part of every assignment. I incessantly questioned students regarding the actions that resulted in their personal insights, curricula design, and resource choices. Captured in my journal, the

following quote illustrates this interest in the link between critical awakening and action in the world. I scribed, “A student is only in position to learn when he is committed to act upon the world” (Greene, 1971). I further expound,

> Dewey, states that teaching is the art of “shaping human power and giving them [students] to social service” (Dewey, 1897) Currently there are U-Tube postings on education which remind of us that the students in our classrooms today will be solving the yet to be defined problems of the future. I think Dewey would loudly state they we can prepare them only one way-the development of their critical consciousness. This is the humanity of education, the need for critical consciousness- one grounded in the need for action or a reconstruction of society (Personal journal, Fall 2008).

These data present my continued attention to the concept of critical consciousness in my practice. This particular entry echoes my belief that critical consciousness is meaningless unless tied to action. However, these data contradict an earlier inquiry regarding the comparative decrease in the philosophical elements of the course between the 2008/2009 semesters. Was there a decrease or a mere quieting of my approach? Either way, there is a distinctive shift to the manner in which I addressed the critical awakening post 2008. I equate this shift to my experience with Henry and the readings of a doctoral seminar focused upon curriculum theory.

At the immediate end of the Fall 2008, I assessed my approach, for better or worse, as an overzealous attempt at pushing students to critical consciousness. I was a novice. It was messy. In retrospect, I considered my unrelenting approach as ill balanced with the intent of a methods course. Was it all too much, too fast? In the end, I felt as if my expectations were unrealistically high in relationship to the reality of students enrolled in a semester of five, field based methods courses. This realization is heard in the following question, posed in my journal, “How could I provide a partnership between the

introspective work required of critical consciousness development and the practical matters of teaching elementary Social Studies" (Personal journal, Fall 2008)?

In fact, I had attempted to integrate the exploration of critical consciousness into the curriculum. This may explain earlier analysis that attention to critical consciousness decreased. These data suggest it merely went quietly in the background of the course. I explored ways to integrate the theoretical within the structure of a methods course. As a result, my journal entries reflected this preoccupation as the evidence by the emergent theme of practicality.

Practicality

As a method instructor, practicality is a desired outcome for the students in my class. As a graduate student, deep in theory, practicality is often far removed from any theoretical discussions. As a doctoral student, I have engaged in numerous debates regarding the practical line of my questioning in relationship to theory. Upon the discovery of new theorists I consistently ask, how does this look in a methods course or elementary classroom? I struggle with academia's need to pigeonhole graduate students as either theorists or practitioners. Within my department the theory-practice split causes alliances and interesting debate. In 2008, I wrote,

> I am closer to owning the practitioner in me. Since I have started this program, I have continually resisted the appearance/feeling that doctoral programs silence the practitioner in all of us. I am committed to learn how to translate theory to my practice (Personal Journal, Fall 2008).

I have continually struggled with the theory-practice pull within my work. As influenced by my studies, I have firmly stated the importance of the expansion of critical conscious approaches in teacher education. This commitment has made for a sticky point in regards to the traditional practical approach to methods courses. Students enter methods

courses wanting prescriptions to teaching (Personal journal, Fall 2008). In Fall 2008, my course was designed to incorporate attention to the philosophical elements of teaching. As a result, I felt as if the course offered an impractical experience of my students (Personal journal, Fall 2008).

My experiment with the development of critical consciousness the Fall 2008 left me nervous about the practicality of the course. Were students getting what they needed regarding strategies? I remember feeling the practical leg of the course was silenced by my attention to the readings, reflections, and discussions created to support critical introspection. My struggle with the practical and theoretical divide, as evidenced in my fall journal, turns most specifically to the impact of mandated curricula on the teaching of Social Studies.

Mandated Curriculum

After reading Eisner's (1985) work on the orientations of curriculum, assessment of my placement on the spectrum between academic rationalism and social reconstruction was in clear contradiction to what my students were confronted with in their field experiences. We know the limitations of categorical alignments of characteristics. However, Eisner's description of the curricula orientation of Social Reconstruction directly describes my curricula leanings. He states of social reconstruction,

> This orientation is basically aimed at developing levels of critical consciousness among children and youth so that they become aware of the kinds of ills that the society has and become motivated to learn how to alleviate them (Eisner, p.76).

This orientation is lost in the midst of the academic rationalism prevalent in most American schools today. This core content approach to education focuses upon the

disciplines deemed most worthy of study (Eisner, 1985). This is the context in which my elementary education students, most often, find themselves.

My course attempts to offer social reconstruction as a viable choice in the design of their teaching orientations. I scribe, “My course is less about formalized knowledge (I judge this with great disdain) and more about student finding space and voice in which they can maneuver and discover formal knowledge” (Personal Journal, Fall 2008). Yet, academic rationalists who hold on to formalized knowledge and the disciplines approach to teaching and learning, for the most part, surround my students. Additionally, elementary Social Studies is not a tested content area thereby making it unworthy of curricula focus, forcing it off or severely limiting time on the school schedule. My journal laments, “How can I aid students in situating my course in their field experiences when SS is rarely taught” (Personal Journal, Fall 2008)?

In the same Curriculum Theory course, exposure to Aoki’s (1989) idea of the curriculum-as-planned and curriculum- as-lived assisted me in shifting my perspective regarding the curricula dilemmas often facing my students. Of Aoki, I wrote,

> I hear Aoki, proposing integration between the planned and lived curricula, but I am disappointed when I consider the academically rational Social Studies curriculum of Texas. Such curricula need to be translated, or as Aoki states brought to life in the school setting. If not, knowledge remains static and we return to the banking system (Personal journal, Fall 2008).

Aoki helped me reframe the idea of mandated curricula. To this point, I viewed mandated curriculum as a restriction and block to creative, meaningful teaching. I lamented like many educators about the constraints and challenges of restrictive planned curriculum. However, Aoki inspired me to consider a more proactive approach to the reality of planned curriculum.

I wondered in my journal,

> How could I teach students to negotiate a mandated curriculum so that it has a space for them and their students with some pull to formal knowledge? How can we move from an either/or mentality and offer a balanced approach regarding the planned and lived curriculum (Personal journal, Fall 2008)?

This query, as inspired by readings of this course, challenged me to consider the question of balance and practicality in the curriculum for the next generation of my students. As a result, these data correlate directly with two shifts in the Spring 2009 course as compared to the preceding semester.

Data linked to the documents of the course uncovers modification in the philosophical elements of its curriculum. Earlier, I wondered about the distinct shift in the approach to the course. These data illuminate the reason. Both my teaching experience and coursework the Fall 2008 offered new direction regarding the exploration of critical consciousness in a methods course. In short, I attempted to integrate the introspective work of awakening the conscious into the more practical matters of the course. In my teaching this looked like critical inquiry and engaged discourse as opposed to direct assignments such as the educational story of 2008. In every assignment my questions focused on the journey of their decision. The data review of the reading schedule supports my deliberate choice to overtly introduce students to the idea of critical awakening before exposure to the Hinchey's ideas regarding the relationship between our assumptions and teaching.

Modifications linked to the issue of practicality and the challenge of mandated curricula are evidenced by the inclusion of integration in the course. Although some of the assignments of 2008 engaged in thematic and integrative elements, the redesign of assignments for 2009 were explicitly focused upon the idea of integration. For example, the

alternative text file of 2009, was restructured around the NCSS themes. These themes were linked through additional assignments to the standards creating an integrative matrix. This thematic approach begins to emerge in my reactions to both Aoki and Eisner,

> For me generalized themes offer the ability for teachers to find space for their students and create meaningful learning experiences. How can I model this in my course? Will they [students] be able to translate this skill into the current educational landscape (Personal journal, Fall 2008)?

The queries posed in this entry speak to the inspiration of the inclusion of an integrated unit the Spring 2009. To be frank, students were limited in their chances to both observe and teach Social Studies. Inspired by Aoki, I considered ways to work with the realities of the planned curriculum. This line of inquiry led to a focus on integration in all of the assignments Spring 2009. Deliberate attention was placed on teaching students to integrate the elements of social education into every lesson. This was done from both a philosophical and practical frame. Students were called to consider integrate critical questioning and alternative perspectives in all lessons as well as strong connections to multiple content area standards.

Conclusion of Spring 2009

As an instructor, I felt more confident about the balance of the philosophical and practical elements of the course. I approached the course with a focus of integration for myself. I was intent to integrate conscious exploration alongside the shared strategies and methods of the course. Attention to the building of the skill of integration expanded some projects and linked many others. Student reaction was negative. After an extremely hard classroom session I wrote,

> Mutiny in HISD! It was like an attack on Pearl Harbor students “vented” about the matrix assignment. I felt helpless as students complained that the assignment was nothing but busy work and that they learned nothing. Was

> this conversation just them imploding from the pressure of the program? Or is the course too much? Am I headed in the wrong way with this course (Personal journal, Spring 2009)?

I recall wondering if the reactions of the students were a reaction to the course bumping up against the design of the program as a whole. I wrote,

> I wonder if the structure of the program is detrimental to the connections aimed for in my course. What can we do as a program to connect our courses to one another and students' field experiences? Students live the semester in survival mode. Most relate to the semester like a checklist. I yearn for insights about teaching, student relationships, and learning (Personal journal, Spring 2009)!

I ended the semester confused and defeated. However, I decided to make only minor changes to the syllabus. I needed more time to assess this version of the course.

Fall 2009

A dramatic shift in the course was absent this semester. Quite honestly, my focus shifted from the course design to the design of my proposal. All of my reading this semester was committed to the exploration of possible research methods. As a result, one might say that I was distant from the curriculum of the course. I certainly felt less attached to it compared to other semesters. In retrospect, I think this provided an element of freedom for both students and me. There was a presence of trust and ease with students that I had not felt in a long while. Students shared openly and reached out to me in ways that moved beyond the curriculum.

In many ways, I felt like an observer in the class. Was this an impact of my placement as a researcher as I drafted my proposal? Yes. However, I now think that an additional influence was my exploration of a new intellectual discovery. In the spring, I sat for my doctoral comprehensive exam. In preparation for this exam, I began to formulate my understanding of social education. In this process I made a declaration of what I

believed an experience in social education demanded. I articulated this as the triadic framework of an experience in social education. I composed the earliest version as,

> **A social education is the experience** of awakening and questioning the world around us.
>
> **A social education experience** provides access to authentic empowered choices.
>
> **A social education experience** inspires transformative actions.

These distinctions were in the forefront of my thoughts during the Fall 2009. My revelations provided a solid framework by which to access my work. In my recollection, it was the first time I observed the course in a holistic manner. The three distinctions of an experience in social education provided a powerful framework from which I could, as an observer, explore the essence of the course.

The Triadic Framework

The triadic framework offers a strong foundation for assessing the collective of the semesters in this study. This analysis offers a landscaped view of the essence of my work, both before and immediately after I articulated the triadic framework for myself. In the end, these data provide insights into the connection or disconnection between my sense making of social education and the design of my course.

Awakening To the World around Us

As a collective, I contend that the courses have provided varied degrees of exploration of critical consciousness. Not surprisingly, the degree to which I addressed critical consciousness is directly correlated with my own learning. In my earliest explorations of critical consciousness, the course design reflects great emphasis on the topic within the syllabus. This is especially true for the Fall 2008, as already discussed. As

my experiences presented the dilemma of practicality, critical consciousness quieted in the course.

The route to critical consciousness is through critical pedagogy, which I have personally collapsed with social education. Consistently, I have attempted to model critical pedagogy in the courses. This is seen in all courses through topics including issues of social justice and media literacy. However, I am not sure if students have made the connection between critical pedagogy and critical consciousness. How can I bridge the idea of their awakening as essential to the development of a critical pedagogy?

In analysis of these data, I return to the shift of the curriculum in 2009 regarding the philosophical elements of the course. Is this the right direction to take? My initial decision to pull back regarding student awakening was justified by the need for a more balanced approach to the course, offering more practicality for students. However, as noted in these data, the issue of practicality was not addressed by this quieting of consciousness exploration. Is there an obtainable balance between practicality and critical awakening? I believe critical consciousness is imperative in teacher education programs. Does this make me misplaced as a methods instructor?

Empowered Choices

I contend you cannot make empowered choices while unconscious. The journey to your decision must me explored. Is the choice yours? Was it constructed for you by a bias, experience, or outsider’s expectation? Such questions must be asked and reflected upon. Answers to these questions must be consciously owned. Then individuals can make a choice, one critically selected.

Have my courses, engaged students in such questions and watchfulness? My answer is maybe. I have certainly introduced the concept of empowered choice. Analysis of the courses' syllabi presents a spotted attempt at aiding students in making empowered curricula choices. In 2008, I attempted such empowerment through the community action proposal to the principal. In both semesters of 2009, the Letter to Parents and Professor assignment attempts to provide a venue by which students articulate their curricula decisions.

Analysis of these data illuminates the need of a more direct approach to teaching the process required of empowered choice making. To this point, I have been the external force questioning students regarding their curricula choices. However, I see the need to consider ways in which I can foster the internalization of making choices authentically and critically. In other words, how can I aid students in stepping beyond the constructed choices often presented in education?

Transformative Action

In a very superficial way, I have pushed students to consider the role of curriculum in inspiring their young students to action in the world. We have considered how present the formalized knowledge of the Social Studies in ways that engage students to move knowledge into action in their own lives. The community project assignment, given all semesters, provides a template by which pre-service teachers can begin to transfer curriculum standards to meaningful community issues and concerns. However, analysis of all course documents highlights the need for more explicit models of action in the curriculum and connected readings about young children acting on their learning beyond the classroom door.

Nothing I do in the course means anything unless action in my students' lives as teachers is taken. For me this is the connection of content to the real world. I worry about the fate of the philosophical and pedagogical commitments made by students as a result of my class. Students across all semesters have struggled with how the course fits into the current context of schools. Many agree with the foundations of the course, but worry how such "radical" teaching actions will translate in reality. I worry they will not critically act at all. The reality is most students have no continued conversation regarding the goal of transformative action in their practice. What support structures could be created to keep transformative action as a goal for educators?

Conclusion

The layered structure of this analysis has offered a view into the cycle of my practice in relationship to my development as a student of social education. The first layer of this story is offered by review of the documents of the course. The second layer is expressed through exploration of the relationship between my practice and theoretical studies of my graduate program. Finally, a deductive analysis of the course, using the triadic framework of an experience in social education, allows insight into the connection of my declared philosophical foundation and my practice.

The review of the varied components of the course documents present common insight regarding the design of the course. The inclusion of integration is supported by data as highlighted from the scope and sequence, readings, and assignments of the course. Secondly, these data uphold the speculation that the Fall 2008 course offers the foundations for the semesters to follow. Most importantly data reveal a tightening of the curriculum by Fall 2009. This is supported by the inclusion of the reading-model-assignment cycle.

Finally, all course components reviewed support the idea that the course moves from a philosophical focus to a more practical approach over the course of the year studied.

By contrast, review of the scope and sequence of the course revealed an absence of attention to the pillar of social education, social action. Analysis of reading assignments reframes this conclusion, offering evidence that supports the inclusion of assignments addressing social action, although not supported by explicit models within the scope of the course. In the end, analysis of the three elements of the course documents reveal nuances of each semester taught, but illuminate a common essence of approach to all semesters. Each semester, although in varied ways, explores issues of social justice, media literacy, social action, and critical analysis of Social Studies content.

Early speculations as illuminated in the documents of the class are deepened through correlation with my graduate studies. These data present insight into the decisions illustrated in the modification of the course documents. In short, review of my journals brings voice to the static story offered by the documents of the course.

As I deepen my theoretical understandings, two themes arise consistently. They are: the development of critical consciousness and the practicality of such explorations in a methods course. As I continue to discover the process of critical awakening, I struggle with how to introduce it to my students. The course syllabi provide a tangible example of how this intellectual journey translates in my practice. Fall 2008, critical consciousness was a primary focus in my studies and as a result was a focal point in my practice. Through the insights of further reading and student interactions, I reframed my approach by attempting to integrate exploration within the practical matters of the course.

Data links many curricula decisions, such as the inclusion of an integrated unit, with my need to find practical ways to express my newly forming theoretical leanings. This continual struggle is highlighted in various ways throughout all the data reviewed regarding my graduate study reflections and journals. At the conclusion of the Fall 2009 semester I lamented,

I find it important to address the holistic nature of teaching-ways of being-philosophical stances. I can't give this up for the "practical." The more I learn the more I think that I am not a Social Studies methods teacher! Does this harm my students? Are my assignments addressing their needs as elementary teachers (Personal journal, 2009).

To date, I continue the struggle of how best to approach the balance between my theoretical commitments and practice as a methods instructor.

The triadic framework of an experience in social education creates the final layer in the story of the course. I claim that an experience in social education includes critical awakening, empowered choice, and transformative action. Review of the entire year of study, through the lens of these distinctions, illustrates my commitment to discovering ways to translate them into my practice. My attempts have been novice at best, but review of these data has highlighted a definite link between my professed theories and my practice. However, continued development of these distinctions within the setting of a methods course in needed.

I began this chapter stating that a blueprint is the architect's compass. Throughout the three semesters reviewed in this study, I have felt quite lost. I have and continue to struggle with how my professed theories live in my practice. I have questioned, like many students, if my course has a place in the reality of elementary classrooms. However,

through the review of the story of the course, I have solidified the direction of the course. These data highlight a growth in my ability to create ways to link my educational philosophies to the classroom. In the end, this course blueprint presents only the beginning of my discovery of how to best unite my impassioned theoretical philosophies with my steadfast commitment to readying students enrolled in the courses for the realities of public school elementary classrooms.

CHAPTER 5

THE SECOND STORY: RESIDENTS OF THE COURSE

Introduction

An architect's blueprint of design guides the construction process. However, the true test of the design is revealed, as the building becomes inhabited. Only as people live within the structure can the designer gain insight into the successes and challenges of the space. The residents'voices offer an opportunity for architects to deepen their craft and address the varied needs of those who reside within their buildings.

As the architect of ELED 4320, residents' voices enrolled in the course are imperative to my practice as a teacher educator. In the end, a study of the course design is incomplete without exploration of the experiences of those who lived the curriculum. This chapter explores the voices of varied residents of the course in order to seek insight into the impact of the course design upon its inhabitants. The residents of the course are categorized in three ways; 1) Students enrolled in ELED 4320 Fall 2008, Spring 2009, or Fall 2009. 2) Student teachers or first year teachers who took the course. 3) The instructor. These shared voices of the residents of the course present insights into how the course design translates into the field for students and the instructor.

Inhabitants

As the instructor of the course, I continually wonder about the impact of the course curriculum on students. Is the intent of my design translating to them? Does the structure of the course support meaningful learning? Is the coursework influencing their ideas on teaching and learning? I seek clues to these questions in the moments of teaching. However, the most immediate indicators of students' answers to these queries are presented through vocal reactions and questions, varied non-verbal cues, and fluctuating energy

levels in the room. These clues offer limited revelations regarding how the students translate the intent of the course. However, as instructors, we are given numerous tools that offer some idea of how students bridge our curricula to their developing practices as elementary teachers. Such tools include student work, electronic discussions/journals, and university and instructor generated course evaluations. This study layers these data to gain insight into how the curriculum design of a social education methods course translates to the inhabitants of the course–the students enrolled in the course. Pseudonyms are used to offer anonymity to student voices as presented in the varied data explored and analyzed.

Student Work

Student work offers insight into how students translate the intent of our curricula. For this reason, the final assignment from each semester of the study (Fall 2008, Spring 2009, Fall 2009) is analyzed for emergent themes. Due to the evolution of the course, two distinct assignments are explored. The assignment reviewed for the Fall 2008 semester is described below:

> Much of this semester is about finding your professional voice and the "being" of teacher. This portfolio will offer an opportunity for you to begin to explore w**ho** you are as a teacher now, and how the experience of QUEST II is redefining or solidifying your teaching philosophy.
>
> I asked you to answer the following questions upon our first meeting. As you experience this course and the QUEST II program in totality, your answers may transform or deepen. This portfolio will be a <u>display of your journey</u> this semester in relationship to these basic questions and how you have begun to create yourself as a teacher.
>
> 1. What is the purpose/goal of public education?
> 2. Who is responsible for the child's educational well-being?
> 3. Who designs and determines the curricula for school-aged children? How should it be selected?
> 4. Describe the optimal learning environment.
> 5. Describe the roles related to public education (i.e. students, teachers, administrators, etc.).

6. Describe the day in the life of a student, teacher, parent/guardian or administrator.
7. What is the most powerful influence on a child's education?
8. Describe your most memorable educative experience.
9. What do you envision your first year of teaching to be?
10. Describe your greatest challenges or concerns for your first year of teaching.

By comparison, the following two semesters (Spring 2009, Fall 2009) offer a final letter to the professor as explained in the following excerpt from the assignment instructions:

> The letter to me needs to offer explicit evidence from the readings, discussions, assignments, and field experiences you have been exposed to this semester. (APA citations needed when appropriate) Use the following as guidelines as you think about expressing your "teaching self" within the letter:
>
> -Review your readings. What readings stand out and why? (Negatively or positively) What affect will these reactions to the readings have on the development of your teacher identity?
>
> -Recall how you entered QUEST 2, and specifically this course. Has anything changed? Remained the same? What factors or experiences do you believe contributed to these changes? What insights have you gained about yourself?
>
> - What is your greatest ah-ha or discovery?
>
> - How do you see yourself as a teacher at this stage in your teacher development?
>
> - What are you still struggling to understand about yourself and /or others?
>
> - What are your professional wishes and hopes for *your being* as teacher?

Within the exploration of these two different assignments, this study analyzes five randomly selected pieces of student work from each semester for thematic connections in the first two semesters under study (Fall 2008, Spring 2009). Only four samples of work

are explored for the Fall 2009, since the letter assignment was an optional assignment severely limiting the data reviewed. The design decision to review these limited amounts of data is a result of inconsistent quantities of data over the semesters under study.

The analysis of these data discovered both common and distinct themes across the semesters of study. First addressed are the specific themes for each semester supported by evidentiary student quotes from the explored assignments. Finally, a landscaped view of the data is offered through the distinction and analysis of remerging themes that are common across all semesters of the study.

Fall 2008

Four themes emerged through the assignments reviewed from the Fall 2008 coursework; critical thinking, meaningful learning, citizenship, and community. Each of these themes is consistently present in all five pieces of data analyzed for this semester. The depth at which students addressed these themes varied from student to student, demonstrating the range of reflective ability within this small sample of student work. Students' grade breakdown for the assignment offered two A's, one A- and two B's.

Critical Thinking

As a collective these students proclaim the need for critical thinking both implicitly and explicitly. Ellie states, "It was very boring and not engaging. Students did worksheets all day long with no group work or projects." At a deeper level, one student openly expresses her preconceived notions of critical thinking in elementary classrooms. Mary states, "I originally believe it [critical thinking] would breed rebellious, back talking students, but now I see that it will actually breed students who strive to make a difference in the world they live." Yet another student declares, "Students need to know how to delve

into information they are presented with. This is essential because one day they will be the ones making the decisions of how our society is to be run and who they believe should run it" (Lindsey).

Meaningful Curriculum

Related to the construction and implementation of meaningful curriculum the core statements from students are expressed as a commitment to linking the curriculum to the lives of all students. Amy pledges, "I want to prepare my students for real world or authentic situations." A pattern of frustration with the disengaged instruction they observed in the field is represented by Ellie when she states, "It has been upsetting to sit in a classroom watching a teacher teach a lesson thinking I could make it more engaging and fun for the students and still meet the same TEKS." Mary echoes this frustration when she states, "Although teachers are told what they need to teach, it is up to them how to teach it. Some teachers take the time to make the curriculum meaningful and unfortunately so do not."

Citizenship

Kara articulates the essence of the ideas of many of the students in relationship to citizenship. She states, "As an educator it is a requirement to be creative so that the children can benefit the most out of education and actually become active and informed citizens." This comment echoes an earlier comment by Lindsey when she claimed students the future decision makers in our society. Mary ties the idea of citizenship with critical thinking when she comments, "A student who is given the chance to criticize what affects him and his world, is the child who will have the courage change what is unjust."

Community.

The concept of community emerged throughout all the entries but approached it from varied avenues. Both Mary and Lindsey express the idea of community as a support structure for the teacher in the education of children. Mary reveals that she has discovered she cannot teach alone. Lindsey most directly states the communal stake in education when she declares; “It takes the effort of a community to put time and energy into investing into the educational well-being of children.” In contrast, Amy pulls the idea of community to what she can contribute, she says; “Just like people gave me in the past, I want to be the individual who now gives back to my community.”

Spring 2009

The data reviewed for Spring 2009 offer two foundational themes across all student work: empowered choices and Social Studies teaching strategies. A personally reflective tone is evident in all the comments offered by the samples of student as guided by the shift in the design of the final project from the previous semester. These randomly selected students earned a total of four A’s and one A- on the final assignment reviewed for this study.

Empowered choice

The loudest theme illuminated in these data is that of empowered choice. Students continually share how they were encouraged to explore the source of their beliefs and decisions regarding the issues and activities explored within the course. Krista states, “I gained insight into how I would defend or explain my beliefs and values to future parents. At this stage in my development as a teacher, I feel self aware.” In expansion of this idea of

being able to defend your teaching decisions and practices, students highlighted a level of confrontation felt when engaging *in* such exercises. Susan exclaims,

> No matter how hard we pushed against what you presented us, you always pushed us to think for ourselves. And while I did not agree with some of the things you said, I was forced to think about why I did or did not agree.

Lori makes connections to the methods aspect of the course when she reflects, "You would not just hand me strategies and information packets on how to teach a subject. You wanted me to change my thinking entirely and become more aware of what we really should be teaching students."

Strategies

The data of this semester highlight an occupation with specific content teaching strategies or methods. However, student comments expose a connection beyond mere strategies as students tether instructional methods to grander educational goals. Regarding social studies content Lori states,

> It [social studies] should go beyond dates and times of people in the past, and be about building democratic students and teaching them to be civically involved. I see that George Washington doesn't have to be so detached from my modern history.

In response to reading exploring the use of pop culture in the classroom, Jennifer responds, "Before this article toys were just toys to me. I am more aware of pop culture and I can integrate it in my classroom as alternative text." The strategy offering multiple perspective to the people, events, and issues that make up most Social Studies curricula, Rachel states, "Through the readings in Cowhey's book, I have learned that some things need to be questioned when trying to teach our students, so that they leave your classroom knowing more than just one part of the story."

Fall 2009

Three themes surface in the final assignments of students enrolled in ELED 4320 the Fall 2009; content teaching strategies, critical thinking, and the ongoing challenges or struggles of teaching. Of the four pieces of data selected, two directly concurred with these themes. However, two students' work offers no specificity in connections to these themes. Rather these students provide only generalized inferences to the themes explored. The four pieces of work analyzed for this study earned one A, B, B-, and C. This sampling of student work offers the greatest grade spread of all data reviewed. Such results may be tied to the fact that for this semester, this reflective assignment was optional.

Strategies

Data evidences instructional strategies as a common theme in the letters analyzed. Strategies were directly linked to the design of meaningful curriculum. Lillian claims, "I learned how to make the lesson more meaningful to them by connecting it to their own lives, and answer the question, why it matters for them to learn it." The most mentioned strategy was that of curricula integration. Judith declares, "I want them [students] to understand that there is a whole different style of learning that is out there with integration. I want them to connect everything together." Alongside the strategy of integration, these data highlight student occupation with the use of alternative text in the classroom. Students correlate the use of alternative text as a key component in, as Lillian states, "an enriched, meaningful Social Studies curriculum."

Critical Thinking

Another theme illuminated in the selected letters from the Fall 2009 is the idea of critical thinking. This was either indirectly or directly tied to the use of alternative text. Denise writes in response to her experience in the class with a pop culture,

> In our pop culture assignment, I would have never thought of feeling the way I did when writing the paper. I do not think I allowed myself to 'go there' and think critically about the messages toys could be sending to children.

Another student expands on the idea of critical thinking by linking to a quote from Kincheloe. He states, "What is essential in education is not so much the acquisition of new information or skills but the way in which the learner interprets and interacts with this new knowledge" (2005, p. 78). In reaction, Lillian writes,

> This means that I have to teach besides the basics, students need to learn how to think. I need to help my students to be critical thinkers and in turn they will become citizens who are informed and reflective about themselves and their surroundings.

Denise highlights the words of Cowhey (2006) in connection to the topic of critical thinking. The student selected quote claims, "Teaching critically listens to and affirms minority voice that challenges the status quo"(Cowhey, 2006, p. 13). Denise goes on to state, "This line speaks to me so much because it brings out the purpose of what critical thinking in a student can do-give them a voice."

Struggles

Students shared their struggles in relationship to moving to student teaching. Although distinct in articulation, all the ideas expressed can be framed as a search for their teacher voice. For some this looks like finding their ground in designing and implementing lesson plans. For others this looks like being comfortable having their *own* class. Denise

articulates her struggle this way, “I am trying to overcome finding my voice. And by finding my voice, I really think I mean finding myself. I know how to agree and follow the rules, the challenge for me is to think outside of that.”

Making Sense: Distinctive and Collective Voices

Analysis of these data has illuminated both distinctive and common insights relating to the voice of students as illustrated in the selected reflective pieces of the work explored. The most distinctive revelation is noted in the data from Fall 2008. As compared to the other semesters under study the comments discovered within the assignments were more holistic in nature. In short, evidence exhibits a global approach to the concepts presented in the class. Students highlight a conceptual approach to the curriculum when they speak of issues such as citizenship and community. Varied levels of internalization of each are exhibited in the evidence. For example, regarding community, students discuss the role of community in the education of all children. Yet, others pulled the idea of community directly to them, questioning what they can do to contribute to the communities that contributed to them.

The conceptualization of the ideas offered in the course are voiced in varied ways however, all are removed from strategy specific examples. As a result, these data support a retreat from a traditional methods approach. The expression offered in the student work of 2008 correlate with the earlier conclusions regarding the philosophical bend to this specific semester as related to my personal philosophical development as a doctoral student of Social Education. In the end, student work voices the intention of the course design as the philosophical and/or conceptual underpinnings of a course in Social Education.

The conceptual approach of 2008 seemingly falls away in the following two semesters in which students specifically speak of teaching strategies. Modeled strategies are pulled to their developing teaching practices. These data highlight the learning of specific strategies ranging from the skill of integration to the use of specific alternative text such as pop culture. Attention to the strategies of teaching Social Studies aligns with the paralleled shift of the course design post 2008, uncovered in analysis of the course design. The earlier exploration of the course provided insight into the movement of the course towards a balanced approach between the philosophical and the practical and that is supported by the 2009 student work analysis.

Data from both 2009 semesters provide a more personal tone to the assignments as compared to the data of 2008. The obvious supporting factor for this distinction is the difference in the nature of the final assignments given to the students of 2009. The nature of the letter as compared to the reflective journal ultimately shaped responses of students.

Within the letters another distinction emerges and is especially loud in the data of Spring 2009. These data illuminate the presence of critical awareness. Students, of 2009, repeatedly address the issue of their own critical awareness in their decision making as a teacher. Students speak of being made aware of their choices, questioning their curricula decisions, and articulating their choices to others. The emergence of critical awareness in all decisions about teaching and learning during 2009 is not accidental. As tied to insights from the analysis of the course design, these data correlate with my discovery of Patricia Hinchey, following my challenge with Henry in Fall 2008. In my own learning, Hinchey's work offered exploration of the individual bias of teaching and the need to explore and

question the source of all our teaching decisions. Not surprisingly such focus is illuminated most directly in the Spring 2009 and quietly in Fall 2009.

Collective Voices

A landscaped view of these data provides insight into the complexity of this assignment analysis. Many of the themes merge together and blur lines of distinction. For example, critical thinking is irrevocable tied to meaningful learning and citizenship as illuminated in the data from the 2008. In addition, many of the strategic specific themes in 2009 are directly linked to the larger conceptual issues illuminated in 2008. It is as if the strategy specific themes of 2009 are subsets of the conceptual themes of 2008. For example, the idea of alternative text as a strategy, explored in 2009, is echoed in both the conceptual themes of meaningful learning and critical thinking. Such insight causes me to wonder if the assignments of 2009 can be accurately labeled practical expressions of student learning. In other words, did the assignments of the latter courses actually illustrate a balance between the philosophical and the practical?

Additionally, these data consistently illustrate student frustration regarding the confines of the static environments in which they observed. Across the semesters, students either directly or indirectly make statements that exhibit a discovery of contradiction between their developing understanding of teaching and their observations in the field. They believe Social Studies is something more than dates, but see worksheets and disconnected lessons. They are challenged to make teaching Social Studies meaningful but see no strategies that do so. Such revelations illustrate both struggle and fear that students have as they move into the field. As a teacher educator, I feel frustrated that my course can occur so disjointed from the reality of the classroom.

Conclusion of Student Work

Seemingly, the voice of these assignments highlights the movement of the course from a dominantly philosophical to a more strategically focused course. However, the extent to which the latter semesters can be categorized simply as strategy focused is challenged by these data. Assignments from 2009 offered a layered approach that silently address grander conceptual issues presented in 2008. Is this evidence that my quieted approach to philosophy in both semesters of 2009 is in fact impacting the practical pieces of the course? Most certainly, these data concur with the need that a course in Social Education takes on a balanced approach to both the philosophical and the practical.

Secondly, these data illuminate contradictions between education courses and the field of education. How do we make our courses relevant in the field? Can we in the current educational landscape? How can education programs prepare students and empower them to shake up the system? If my students are grappling with contradictions of their practice in elementary classrooms now, what will happen when they leave the discussions of practice in my course? What support will they have beyond the university to aid in the navigation of the inevitably contradictions of practice presented to them in a system of high stakes accountability?

Electronic Discussions or Journals

As discussed early, the shifts in the reflective venues of the course are evidence of my effort to discover reflective spaces that promote authentic, open, and courageous reflections from students. As a result, the platform for reflectivity and making sense of the course changed over the course of the three semesters under study. The data explored

ranges from the in-depth electronic journals of Fall 08, failed traveling journals of Spring 09, and the directed, personal journals of Fall 09.

Fall 08

The electronic postings were gleaned from seven individual, facilitated on-line discussions. The catalyst for these prompts varied. Some were instructor generated inquires linked to issues surfacing in the class or within course work. Other posts were connected to course readings and facilitated by students. The nature of the postings offered these data predetermined themes as guided by the readings. Such themes included, critical teaching, multiple perspectives, citizenship, standards, race, diversity, activism, teaching "truth," and social justice. However, coding these data through the specific voices of three randomly selected students, four themes speak most loudly. These themes are critical teaching, multiple perspectives, race, and citizenship.

Critical Teaching

A major component of the course is the exploration of critical teaching. In making sense of this topic, students vehemently stated their opinions as they pulled this inquiry to their life experiences. Regarding the lack of exposure to critical analysis of history, Arthur declares, "I do not feel as though I'm any less inquisitive, or any more WASP-ish, because of my homework or the one-sided perspective provided in my history lesson" (Personal communication, September 7, 2008). Another student questions her lack of critical analysis of the curriculum when she confesses,

> I figured that being a teacher meant just being able to get in front of a group of students and teach them what the schools told you to, without questioning the curriculum. Now I am wondering if the curriculum people provide is even valid or good for children at all (Personal communication, September 8, 2008).

Nick openly states his perspective on critical teaching when he claims, “History is repetitious, because it is the same. Sure, as teachers we can come up with new and exciting ways to teach it, but the facts are always the same (Personal communication, September 10, 2008).

Multiple Perspectives

Linked to the theme of critical teaching, student postings illuminate continued exploration of the depth at which they should expose their students to multiple perspectives or the “truths” within the social studies curriculum. Nick says,

> It is not false history if some details are just left out. I believe we are teaching real history when we teach about Thomas Jefferson and the Declaration of Independence. I don’t think its relevant that he owned slaves as well (Personal communication, October 5, 2008).

Conversely, Arthur states, “History should be presented factually and as unbiased as possible. It should not be painted up or glossed over as it most often is” (Personal communication, October 5, 2008). Linn sums up her feeling about providing multiple lens by which to view Social Studies when she declares, “Most importantly teach all the versions of every story. Let the students analyze the different perspectives of the story (Personal communication, October 6, 2008).

Race

Racial issues are rarely a comfortable topic in society, much less a college education course. Inevitably, as we explored the idea of critical teaching, students were exposed to new paradigms regarding race. In reaction, Arthur, an Asian-American, honestly states, ”While it once may have been true that race determined what doors were open or closed to you, it is the education that you possess that deems what opportunities are

presented to you (Personal communication, October 14, 2008). Nick openly grapples with his racial place in society when he exclaims,

> I think everybody has this same privilege. Some just want to blame others for their injustices. I am white and I don't have to worry about getting a job and worry about affirmative action. However, that affirmative action might cost me getting my job though (Personal communication, October 16, 2008).

Hinchey (2006) claims, " Despite the fact that people of color now constitute half or more of the United States population, the teaching profession mirrors the national white template" (p.27). Linn agrees with this quote and expands on the lack of historical heroes of color. She further expounds from the perspective of a student of color when she claims,

> Their [students of color] white teachers will never be able to understand their hardship or their situations, unless the teacher has experienced it. Even when a white teacher has had some negative things happen to them, it will never be like the experience of a person of color. And the main reason is because color of your skin has a lot to do with how and why things happen to a person" (Personal communication, October 19, 2008).

Citizenship

The National Council for the Social Studies standards (1994) articulates one of the duties of Social Studies educators the production of "civically competent citizens" (p.4). In light of this responsibility, student comments express their discovery of the complex nature of such an enormous educational task. Nick wonders, "How can I teach citizenship to someone who doesn't value the belief of a country that is not their own" (Personal communication, September 10, 2008)? Arthur personally reflects on the lessons of citizenship. He states,

> The pledge, as well as, the rest of the "patriotic rhetoric" that Hinchey refers to, was things that I remained largely indifferent to throughout most of my years in school. Don't get me wrong, I am very aware of the opportunities presented in America, as well as the social freedoms that many take for granted, but it was in no part because of any sort of patriotic

> drivel that was drilled into my head at a young age (Personal communication, September 1, 2008).

Linn challenges the assimilation notion stating, ”What about feeling proud of your native country? What happens to that feeling? Should it disappear just because you’re living in the United States (Personal communication, November 2, 2008)?

Spring 2009

A redesign of the reflective tool in the course introduced the idea of a traveling journal. The concept behind this idea was that students would, through paper and pen journals, engage with the readings of the course. They would summarize, reflect, synthesis, and evaluate the texts. Journals would be passed from student to student. Beyond the aforementioned criteria students were to pose the next reader a burning question about the text of which the second reader would reflect. These student-generated queries are the focus of analysis for these data. Provided below are the specific instructions for this task:

Traveling Reflective Journal

Step 1: The instructor poses a prompt
Step 2: Locate the reading material for the week
Step 3: Carefully read and jot down notes as you read the material thinking about the weekly prompt.
Step 4: How do you personally connect to the reading? Respond to the weekly prompt being careful to include the following elements in your response:
- A synopsis of the material
- Your thoughts regarding the material
- How the material connects to the class instruction.
- How the material connects to the social studies tools (TEKS, NCSS themes and competencies)
- How will it affect your future teaching?

Step 5: Pose a new question for your classmates to consider.

This process was a failed experiment. Organizationally it was a disaster. Students forgot their journals, thereby affecting the systematic exchange of journals. As an instructor, I

felt removed from the process because I was could not interact with the journals weekly since they were in constant circulation. Exploration of these data was complicated by the disjointed structure of the reflective tool. Two journals were randomly selected to explore the queries of students as inspired by the experiences of the course. These data reflect the questions posed by eight students over the pages of two different journals. One journal offers five entries and the other three. Data is presented alongside the context preceding the student query.

Student One and Two

Context
The instructor generated prompt asked students to reflect upon the characteristics needed to assume the office of citizen.

Student Question
In reflection to this prompt, the student stated that it was essential for citizens to have strong knowledge in the community, the nation, and the world. She ties this to being able to discern the truth. She ends asking, ”One , day the Iraq war will be in our history books. Are you going to tell our children that the U.S. attacked Iraq, after a 10 year embargo, in which they could not import weapons or medicine under the pretext that they were making weapons of mass destruction” (Personal communication, Spring 2009).

Student Question
“Does democracy work in a classroom” (Personal communication, Spring 2009)?

Student Three:

Context
Students were requested to consider how they would address dilemma of teachers regarding critical thinking and teaching to the test.

Student Question
“Do you think it is essential to integrate content subjects? Why or why not” (Personal communication, Spring 2009)?

Student Four:

Context
Students were asked to define social justice for themselves and consider how they would explore its complex nature in relationship to their classrooms.

Student Question
"How will your integrate social justice in your curriculum" (Personal communication, Spring 2009)?

Student Five:

Context
Following the reading of a critical article on the messages of Barbie dolls students asked to share their initial reactions to the text.

Student Question
"How do you feel about Barbie" (Personal communication, Spring 2009)?

Student Six and Seven:

Context
The instructor asked student so reflect upon how activism and patriotism connect.

Student Question
"How old should children be when the start playing activist roles? Will you do activities like Cowhey does in your classroom" (Personal communication, Spring 2009)?

Student Question
"Who for you is a modern day patriot, and why?" (Personal communication, Spring 2009)?

Student Eight

Context
Students were asked to reflect upon how they would move beyond state standards and take Social Studies education in to the realm of "doing."

Student Question
What community service projects would you consider for your classroom" (Personal communication, Spring 2009)?

Fall 2009

With the failure of the traveling journal, the reflective tool for the course was redesigned to incorporate student engagement with course readings. These data present the selected quotes of five students from chapters one and two in *Becoming a Critical*

Educator (Hinchey, 2006). These chapters are in part one of the text, entitled, *Beginning the Journey: Thinking about Our Thinking.* Readers are challenged to explore the assumptions that shape their decisions and embark in the development of critical consciousness. Students were asked to reflect on a quote they either embraced or rejected.

> Our assumptions, beliefs, theories, and philosophies about schools and learning have a direct impact on how we conduct ourselves in the classroom, consciously or not; every action we take reflects some particular line of thinking and eliminates another at the same time (Hinchey, p. 28).

In reflecting upon this quote, Kelly hears that teachers need to give up having the answer. She states, "Every teacher takes what they have seen has worked, heard works, or worked for them as a child in elementary school and decides that is the way their classroom is going to be" (Personal journal, October 22, 2009). She explains further that teachers need to do what works in the present moment of teaching with the students that are in the classroom that year. She proclaims that you cannot do the same thing with every class, every year.

Hinchey (2006) states, "Unlike Whites, persons of color never have the luxury of forgetting about their skin color or considering it an unimportant factor in daily life" (p. 30). This quote enrages Ella. She exclaims, "I resist the idea that someone could think that whites are not judged just like Hispanics and Blacks on a daily basis. Every race has been stereotyped in one aspect or another and that makes this quote a biased statement (Personal Communication, October 21, 2009).

On a similar note, another student selects the following quote, "What we can say is that white teachers in contexts where others are of the same race receive greater co-worker support, experience less role conflict, have greater autonomy in decision making,

and have adequate resources (Hinchey, p. 30). The student speculates, “My assumptions about this quote is that they are trying to say Whites are more superior to any other cultures such as Hispanics, Asians, and African-Americans, etc. I feel this article was talking down on cultures other than Whites. It is frustrating to hear that race is still an issue in our society” (Personal communication, October 20, 2009). Regarding automatic habits Bill selects this passage from Hinchey (2006),

> Our lives overflow with countless daily acts that are essentially habits, actions we take without thinking about them. We no longer question whether the assumptions underpinning them are sound-if, in fact, we ever did think about those assumptions when authorities like parents where schooling us in certain behaviors (p. 4).

Bill both embraces and rejects this idea. He explains, “I embrace the concept that this [habitual action] is a tendency that most of us follow without thinking about it. What I reject, and always have rejected is the application of this tendency in my own life” (Personal communication, October 2009). He further explains that he is a questioner of everything as was taught to him by his family.

Kendra resists Hinchey’s perspective on teaching as she hears it in this quote, “Teachers who develop classroom plans based solely on beliefs and expectations born of their own life experiences are likely to be ineffective in, and probably very frustrated by a school where others with different experiences have norms”(pg. 23). Kendra vehemently declares that she doesn’t believe teachers will be ineffective if they teach at schools that are opposite of teachers’ experiences and what they know. She further claims, “An opportunity like that could allow you to gain a new perspective and embrace new ideas and practices” (Personal communication, October 2009).

Making Sense: Patterns of Reflection

The voices of the Fall on 2008, offer a distinctive critical tone through the reflections. They are impassioned and clear reactions to the personal experiences of each of the students. The distinction of experience of each student is obvious in the way in which each student works through the dissonance caused by the reflective prompts and supporting readings. Comparative to Arthur and Nick, the experiences of Linn clearly align with the philosophical grounding of the course's texts. She engages with the notion of her uncritical relationship to curriculum and aligns with multiple readings in regards to issues of social justice. Linn echoes her personal experience with such issues when she states, "The color of your skin has a lot to do with how and why things happen to you." In short, the readings speak to her life experiences and this is evident by her collective reflections.

Arthur presents a highly critical relationship with the readings resulting in both agreement and disagreement with the ideas presented in the texts. His life experiences reverberate within his comments regarding the theme of race. He equates his family emphasis on education as the key to opportunity in American society and refutes the idea that race limits access to success. However, Arthur embraces other philosophical underpinnings explored within texts of the course. He is committed to "not glossing over history." A landscaped view of all Arthur's reflections illustrates his thought process as he critical engages with the material of the course while transparently presenting his justifications for acceptance or rejection of them.

Nick's voice, exhibits his struggle as he considers the tenets of the course reflected in the explored texts. He seemingly supports traditional approaches to curriculum, citing that the elimination of certain perspectives or details in history does not create "false

histories." He openly wonders how he will teach citizenship to "someone who doesn't value the belief of a country" not their own. Nick's reflections offer clues to how the course pushes against his experiences. His values of tradition are clearly being challenged and he honestly displays his struggle with the ideas of the course.

In the end, the students of Fall 2008 voice varied reactions to the course. Linn leans into the course with minimal struggle. Arthur critically "tries on" the ideas presented in the course work. And, Nick openly struggles with the ideas of the course as they collide with his valued life experiences. Regardless the student, the tone of these reflections is deeply personal and quite powerfully articulated, which I believe aligns with the philosophical focus of the semester. The heart of the course was exploration the philosophical underpinnings of a social education course. It comes as no surprise that the students' voices reflect a strong personal philosophical tone.

By comparison, the exploration of the questions posed in the traveling journals of Spring 2009, present students' voices in a more distance and less personal way. In fact, the journals of this semester directly tie most queries to the practice of teaching. Students engage in inquiries that push their classmates to consider the concepts of the course as connected to their developing teaching practices. The foundational question of the semester resonates quite loudly; how will you take the tenets of a social education to your teaching?

This insight aligns with the shift of the course established earlier. As I attempted to balance the philosophical and practical within the course, the reflections of the course swing towards the practical. My prompts to students were more pointedly focused in the direction of teaching practices. However, the philosophical essence of the course is silent. This contradicts the data from the assignments documents in which the students of the

spring illustrated their attention to critical awareness. Was it the reflective vehicle of the traveling journal that caused an obstacle in highlighting the critical awareness of students exhibited in the assignments? In the end, I believe this semester provides evidence of the balance approach I seek. Analysis of these data alongside the assignment data provide a holistic view of how students are making sense of the philosophical aspects of the course and synthesizing them to the practical issues that lay at the forefront of their experience as in-the-field education students.

The voices of the final semester of 2009 parallel those of Fall 2008, although they are more quietly offered. Interestingly, the focus of these explored data is the specific readings of Patricia Hinchey (2006). The unpacking of the development of a critical educator, as posed by Hinchey, confronts traditional teaching paradigms. As a result, student journals present focused reactions to the thoughts offered in the text.

Most students critically disagree with the ideas posed by Hinchey. They most vehemently disagree with ideas regarding race as proposed by Hinchey. In pushing students to consider “the other” perspective in all that is connected to teaching and learning, students refute the ideas of the author. For example, in offering the idea of the privilege of whites in society, Ella adamantly refutes the claim that whites are not judged just as all other racial groups. Directly or indirectly, the thematic conclusion exhibited in these data is that most students were confronted by the ideas that related to the discrepancies of experience between races. In short, the idea that teachers consider how their ways of practice are both powerful shaped and limited by their life experiences only went so far. Students affirmed that who they are teachers is informed by what they know from the past.

However, the extent to which they could be with the negative impacts of this insight was wholeheartedly dismissed.

Each of these semesters, two scholars' readings were constant: Mary Cowhey (2006) and Patricia Hinchey (2006). Both scholars explore the idea of critical education. Cowhey's text aligns the ideas of critical education within the context of classroom teaching, whereas Hinchey's is a more philosophical text. Of interest to these data is the placement of the Hinchey readings. For the Fall 2008 Hinchey is the fourth text explored. The reading laden Spring 09 semester, places this text much later in the semester-tenth. Fall 2009 students read Hinchey midway in the semester. What is the relationship between the placement of the most philosophical readings of the course and the tone of the discussions and reflections?

Conclusion of Reflections and Discussions

The philosophy of social education, as informed by critical educators, is confronting for students to varying degrees. Each semester, at least one if not more students expressed a level of confrontation with the topics of the reflections. So much of the willingness to consider the paradigm of the course depends on the student's experience. This is both obvious and supported by many educational scholars. As a teacher educator, I wonder to what extent I explore the students'experiences in relationship to their philosophical openness to the course. What experiences aid them in openly hearing the course? How can I use the experiences of open students to aid other struggling students to consider the ideas of the course? Should I even attempt this?

The voices of these sixteen students confirm my need for a balance of the philosophical and practice. These data illustrate my experimenting with this balance.

Juxtaposed to the course readings, data highlight the need for critical analysis of how reading and course discussions should be placed, facilitated, and continually supported over the span of the course.

How should highly critical readings be placed in a syllabus? Does it matter? These data fail to answer these queries. Although, placement of such readings was early on in 2008, I wonder about level of practical support students had to link the discussed philosophical tenets of the course.

Admittedly, a movement from weekly electronic discussion boards placed me in a disconnected position regarding the discovery of areas of interest and struggle for students. This is illuminated in the data for the 2009 semesters. All three semesters of data inform my need to have a consistent, accessible reflective tool that allows students to make sense of the deeper aspects of the course and me the ability to learn what issues or topics need to be connected or reemphasized within the course itself. This is a powerful insight regarding the structure of class reflective tools and allows for intentional redesign that I hope will deepen the material of the course beyond the three hour course. Connected to this insight is the reemerging theme that the course needs philosophical support before the course as well as within the context of the in-service teaching that follows the course completion. These revelations moves my work beyond the confines of the development of one course and pulls my vision to the grander challenge of building a program grounded in the development of critical educators.

Evaluations

The exploration of both university and instructor generated course evaluations provide an additional layer to the voice of the inhabitants of the course. The data explored

thus far, regarding students as residents of the course, has been attached to assessment. I contend, although an imperative dimension of the student voice, student work and reflection, whether electronic or otherwise, constrains the voice of the inhabitants of the course. However, anonymous evaluations by nature, offer an unrestrained layer of expression regarding the immediate experience of the course by students.

University Evaluations

The university evaluative process is guided by the five-scaled evaluation. Each scale is representative of three questions as offered in Table 5. Three randomly selected sections of the course provide semester specific results in the comparative table represented in Table 6. This comparative analysis structure is offered in an effort to gain insight into the impact of the evolution of the course on student experience with the class and the instructor.

Scale One is illustrative of the assessment procedures of the course. These data illuminate student displeasure with the manner in which feedback and assessments were handled in the course. Across all three of the semester between 20%-23% of students thought that the instructor failed to evaluate work in a meaningful and conscientious manner. In two of the semesters evaluations of this standard highlighted the lowest mean, Fall 2008 with 9.5 and Fall 2009 with 11.5. Comparatively, all semesters fall below the department mean.

The thematic tie within scale two is the impact of the course on student learning and competency. For both fall semesters these data illuminate the highest mean on all five standards. Between 69% and 93% of students stated that they learned a great deal in the

course. The general pattern evidenced in these data offer students' agreement that the course offered a deeper understanding of the field resulting in increased competencies.

The instructor's overall ability is expressed within Scale Three. With varied degrees, all student evaluations illuminate agreement in the instructor's level of knowledge and preparedness within the course. Evidence reveals that 77%, 80%, 94% of students were confident in the abilities of the instructor regarding the content of the course. However, the course mean regarding this standard remains lower than the mean of the department.

Scale Four addresses the sensitive of the instructor to the students'needs. Was the instructor fair and accessible to students? These data echo patterns illuminated in scale one, regarding fair and equitable treatment. In short, students rated the instructor low, between 45%-70%, regarding fairness to students. The range across the semesters regarding this scale, illustrate a split decision on the level of sensitivity and instructor accessibility. However, the Fall 2008 remains the lowest rating in all categories regarding this scale, as is true with all five scales of the evaluation.

Thematically, Scale Five presents student reaction to the assignments, course, and learning environment of the course. Evidence shows that over the three semesters improvement in the mean associated with this scale. The lowest mean at 10.8, Fall 2008 and the highest mean of 12.6, Fall 2009. In fact, 80% of students in the 2009 course believed the assignments given were useful. Comparatively, only 46% of students felt this way the Fall 2008.

Table 5 College of Education Course Evaluation Scale

College of Education Course Evaluation Scale	
	(1)The instructor evaluated my work in a meaningful and conscientious manner. (6)Evaluations of my work were made in a constructive manner. (11) The grading procedures for the course were Fair/Unfair?
	(2) How much have you learned in this course? (7) Did this course improve your understanding of concepts and principles in the field? (12) I have become more competent in this area due to this course.
	(3) The instructor's knowledge of the subject was Excellent/Poor? (8) How would your characterize the instructor's ability to explain? (13) The instructor seemed well prepared for classes.
	(4) The instructor was fair to students (9) The instructor was sensitive to students' needs. (14) How accessible was the instructor for student conferences about the course?
	(5) The instructor gave assignments that were useful for learning subject matter. (10) Was the progression of the course logical and coherent from beginning to end? (15) The instructor promoted an atmosphere conducive to work and learning.

Table 6 Evaluation Results

Formal Evaluation Results			
Scale	**Fall 2008**	**Spring 2009**	**Fall 2009**
1	9.5	10.8	11.5
2	11.4	10.4	13.7
3	11.8	11.9	12.7
4	10.8	11.4	12.0
5	10.8	11	12.6

When the university evaluations are administered, students have the option to write direct comments regarding the course and the instructor. All courses reviewed offered comments for analysis. Since this is an option for students, the number of comments across semesters is inconsistent. Fall 2008 produced a total of five comments, four of which can be interpreted as negative. Of the five comments the theme that emerged was the amount of work required in the course. A student wrote, "The work was too much!" Spring 2009

generated eight comments, split between positive and negative reactions. Overall the students expressed a range of feelings regarding the course. One student commented,

> These are the type of classes I wish this program was founded. Thank you for giving us quality work and showing what education should be, connections, growth, and an appreciation for others. Also, I've always thought that we put too much emphasis on grades. Thank you for showing a class in which grades and rubrics are not the driving force of learning.

On the other end of the spectrum, a student expressed, "I felt that I did not learn the content as I was meant to. I did not like the professor's methods." The following fall, the evaluative process produced eight comments, over half of which expressed displeasure with the assignments and manner of feedback provided. The following comment is illustrative of such comments,

> There were too many assignments for this course, most of which were due at the very end of the semester. The guidelines for the assignments were not given in a timely manner to complete them. Most assignments were not for a grade, but for practice; however, if you did not do complete them it effected the grades on other assignments. We did not receive graded assignments back in a timely manner.

Instructor-Generated Evaluations

Coupled with university-generated evaluations, these data explore insights provided by an instructor-generated evaluation. This personal evaluation provides specificity of course evaluation absent in the generic university evaluation. The following course evaluation questions were offered each of the semesters of this study:

> What assignment, activity, or reading did you find most meaningful/relevant? Please explain, why.
>
> In retrospect, what kinds of assignments, models or skills do you feel would make this class meaningful and relevant to the next generation of QUEST 2 students?
>
> Any additional comments?

Over the three semesters, these data offer semester specific insights that are tied to the curriculum of each course. Fall 2008 students found the final portfolio project to be the most meaningful assignment. This assignment reflected upon a pre and post semester questionnaire, as described in the previous chapter. The majority of students echoed the reasoning heard in this student statement, “I was able to see how I’ve changed throughout the program. It was interesting to see how much I’ve grown as an individual and as an educator.” This same class suggested more than two lesson plans be completed as a practical tie to the classroom.

Commonality can be found within the both semesters of 2009. A majority of students declared the most meaningful assignment of the semester as the integrated unit. Most students reasoned that the assignment could be practically used in their future classrooms. In addition, many students claimed it offered a strategy to assure social studies content a place in the elementary curriculum. Students of the 2009 semesters were split on suggestions for the next generation of students. Students in the spring semester proclaimed an emphasis on content for support in their teaching certification exams. Those in the fall semester offered suggestions of what they considered superfluous projects. Mentioned in the category were a community service project, critical photo-story presentation, and pop culture analysis. For these students, they saw these assignments as embedded in the integrated unit assignment.

Making Sense: The Protected “Space” of Evaluations

The reader will notice the manner in which I engaged with the data in the previous section was distance. This was a protective choice on my part. The absence of the pronoun “I” was an attempt to prevent me from personally reacting to the difficult trends and

comments that emerged within the data. This did not work. As I engaged with these data, I was troubled by some of the loudest voices. As is my nature, I considered the comments honestly. In many cases, I simply could not believe what I was discovering. Am I unaware of my inequitable way with students? Are my assessments too rigorous? These inquiries need more time for contemplation and I suspect will motivate additional research. However, my immediate analysis of these data highlights both my personal development as a teacher educator and the evolution of a course founded in the tenets of social education.

These data illustrates a challenge I face as a teacher educator; how can we meaningfully assess the process of developing the craft of teaching? In the space of a methods course, students have a propensity to focus on methods to the determent of the foundational philosophies that support our choices of practice. In the area of assessment this has always been my battle. How do I balance out assessing the nuts and bolts with development of the soul of their social studies endeavors? Can I? Students are clearly frustrated by the way I interact with their assignments. Why is offering further inquiries around their work not enough for them? I had a student say to me once, “Can’t you just tell me what to do to get it right!” This just-tell-me-what-do attitude collides with my goal for the course: the engagement of students in critically thinking about why and how they will teach social studies. In the end, I need to pursue additional research on the experience of my students regarding assessment in my course.

Analysis of Scale Two as compared to standard one highlights a curious, and quite ironic, contradiction. In both the Falls of 2008 and 2009, students expressed the lack of meaningful feedback and fair assessment practices. However, in each of these semesters students highest mean was found in the standard regarding learning. Despite the perceived

lack of constructive feedback and inequitable evaluation methods, students felt they learned in the course. Is this evidence of a misunderstanding of my assessment practices?

Data from scale three illuminate a range of reaction to my overall knowledge of the course material. Not surprisingly, Fall 2008 expressed the lowest percentage regarding this scale. I equate this to the fact that this semester aligned with my own philosophical growth as a social educator. In short, I was very messily trying to make sense of the course in the context of my own philosophical dissonance. Fall 2008 was the semester in which I began to engage in the balancing act of critical foundations with the practicality of methods. I believe these data echo my lack of sure footedness in this endeavor.

I am mystified by the emergent theme challenging equity in my actions as an instructor. Both scales one and four illuminate that students question my fairness to them. Consideration of the particular piece of the data warrants long-term critical reflections on my practices in the classroom. My initial reactions equate such student reaction to my high level of expectation. Are students collapsing rigorous course work and assessment with inequitable actions?

For me, these data illustrate the growth of the course. As discussed the 2008 course can be described as the most philosophical of all three semesters under study. As a result, students found the assignments less practical than students from other semesters. However, a contradiction to this conclusion arises in the instructor-generated evaluation. Students of 2008 proclaim the most philosophically based assignment as the most meaningful to them. As the instructor, I recall the most practical of assignments of this semester being strongly resisted by these students. What does this mixed message mean? Did I fail at connecting assignments to the practical world of teaching?

As I explored the balance between the philosophical and the practical, these data highlight that students related to the assignments in more positive ways. Analysis of my self-created evaluations illuminates numerous positive reaction to the relevancy of course assignments. Overwhelming, students of both 2009 semesters declared the integration unit the most meaningful to them. This evidences a concerted shift in my focus towards teaching integration as a way to combat the absence of social studies in elementary schools. Regardless of the positive shifts offered through these data, I wonder if balance between the practical and the philosophical was present in the spring or did I merely exchange the philosophical for the practical?

Simply put, I cannot make sense of open-ended evaluation comments made by students over the course of all of the semesters. Each semester offered both positive and negative comments. However, the comments of 2008 held a particularly personal tone. Overall, the comments reviewed offered such a polarized view of the course. Comments exposed the broad spectrum of reaction to the course and me, as the instructor. I wonder how there can be such a wide disparity in the students'experiences the same class? What factors play into this difference? Is there anything that can be done to lessen the gap of experience within the course? Such inquires align with formerly illuminated queries regarding the relationship between student life experiences and their openness to "hear" the course. Is this what I am really hearing in these data?

Conclusion of Inhabitants' Voices

The inhabitants that live and work in a structure can offer a level of insight into the nuances of the space. Day to day experiences can unearth the challenges of the structure and need for redesign. As the inhabitants of my course, the students enrolled in my courses

voiced their experiences through assignments, electronic discussions, journals, and two types of course evaluations. What have they said about their experience in the space of the course?

Overwhelmingly, all data voices the challenge of the course's philosophical foundation in relationship to student life experiences. For some, the course critically challenges what they know to be true about the world. For others, their life experiences are validated and given support. It seems that no neutral voices were uncovered in these data.

Each specific piece of data offers an opinionated voice regarding the guiding principles of the course. The assignments of 2008 illustrate the level of struggle of three students with the ideas presented in the course as connected to their life experiences. Resoundingly these data give voice to the life experiences of students. Openly, students express acceptance or challenge to the course work as it either collides or validates their personal experiences.

The vehement resistance in the Spring 2009 to Hinchey's (2006) exploration of constructed and assumptive notions about race loudly illustrates student experience colliding with critical philosophy. However, the reoccurring theme of critical awareness during this same term speaks to a growth in students as a result of the philosophical approach of the course.

Analysis of evaluations illuminate resistance to my approach in the class, an approach committed to the goal that students explore the "whys" of the decisions shaping their teaching philosophies. Students' collective resistance to the way I assess their work is illustrative of not fully understanding the process orientation of the course, as tied to the philosophical foundations shaping the course.

Another straightforward statement regarding the course, as heard in reflections and evaluations, is the need for a connection between the course work and the field. In some capacity, students of each semester, speak to the disconnect felt between the readings, activities, and discussions of the course with what they witness in the field. However, these data shift this conversation as the course evolves to seemingly more practical matters. For example, the philosophical focused Fall 2008 semester expresses this disconnect through a need for more practical assignments and readings. Students challenge the texts of the course as being unrealistic in the real world in which they are teaching. They seemingly relinquish to the pressures of test-laden schools as the reason the approaches of the course will never work.

By comparison, the following semesters focus upon the field itself. These students see the methods of the course as viable solutions to the challenges of Social Studies education. I equate this shift to the emphasis of the course on integration as a way to combat the dilemmas of teaching Social Studies in elementary schools. Students in the latter two semesters observe the field from the perspective of what they can bring to the challenges of the field. Seemingly, they are more empowered to face the challenges of the field as compared to students of 2008.

In the end, these data clearly illustrate the evolution of the course. As I began to engage in ways to balance the course between the theoretical and the practical, students offered a more positive reaction to the experience of the course. The voices of the latter semesters present a practical mindset and positively focused on the transference of methods and ideas of course to their teaching practices. Quite frankly, these data offer me validation for the direction of the course. Although, I hear students struggling with the critical nature

of the course, I also hear more empowered students willing to consider how they can bring critical Social Studies education to elementary schools.

The Relocated

In the context of the architectural metaphor, I define students who have moved to the new location of student teaching or a first year teaching position as the "relocated." I am most curious about the influences of their experience in education programs on these newly located field placements. Interviews with former students provide an additional layer of data that offer insight into the specific impact of my course beyond residency in a Social Studies methods course.

A total of 108 students were invited to participant in the research project. This included one section from each of the semesters of the study; Fall 2008, Spring 2009, and Fall 2009. In the end, the invitation of participation yielded six responses, two of whom met the critieria for the study.The participants of this study represent students from two different semesters of the course a year apart.The first participant represents the Fall 2008 course and is a full-time elementary school teacher and, for the purposes of this paper, will be referred to as Jennifer.

The second participant is drawn from Fall 2009 student rosters and is completing the Quality Urban Education for Students and Teachers (QUEST) program as a student teacher. Her self selected psuedoymn is Esperanza.

The stories heard from both these participants were rich and complex tellings of their speicific field experiences. This study retells a specific story line that continally resurfaced throughout the research process. This is not to negate the power of the numerous

other story threads shared by these participants but to attempt to bring focus to this research project.

Over the span of a month, both participants completed a baseline biographical survey (Appendix B) and two one-hour interviews. Jennifer provided one reflective journal. The initial interviews were guided by the questions offered in Appendix C. Such questions were exploratory, with the additional intent of re-establishing a relationship of trust with each former student. Questions were deliberately broad in order to allow the participants to answer with limited constraint (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). I analyzed both participants' responses to formulate initial themes for further exploration. In the second interviews, I asked more pointed questions as guided by emergent issues and concerns illuminated in our first conversations.

In an attempt to bring transparency to my role as the interviewer, I provide access to my immediate and internal reactions during the course of the interviews. Such personal reactions are noted in the italicized segments presented alongside each participant's interview highlights. These personal in-the-moment reactions offer guidance for the next interview. In many cases, this process links the present situation of the partcipant to specific experiences of the semester in which they were enrolled in my courses. Most importantly, my personal reactions allow queires to surface that offer direction for future reflection and research.

Building Stories: Jennifer's Story

As a first year teacher, Jennifer holds a position at elementary school within a large Houston metropolitan school district. She is a third grade bilingual teacher in a school of

approximately 600 students, 61 percent considered “at-risk.” The school is a Title One school receiving federal funds in support of the school’s at-risk student population.

Before I begin Jennifer’s story, it is important to offer a glimpse into our conversation preceding the second interview and focus of this analysis. In our first meeting, Jennifer and I explored her overall experience as a first-year teacher. We explored topics such as mentor relationships, the teaching of Social Studies, her integration of social education experiences, and her greatest challenges as a first-year teacher. Two general themes emerged within this interview. First, she reiterated the need for an understanding of administrative multi-tasking required of a teacher. She stated, “It [lesson planning] wasn’t hard but with all the added paperwork it was hard. Help is needed in multitasking all of this.”

Secondly, when asked how she was integrating her experiences with social education into practice, she was quick to reply, “I am disappointed that I don’t do a lot.” When probed to explain what she saw as the obstacle of integrating social education into her practice, she offered time constraints as her reasoning. She explained that while Social Studies was allotted one hour a day, this allotment was threatened by transition time within the schedule and, most foundationally, sacrificed for re-teaching and testing other content areas. She stated,

> My students are struggling with tested areas. As a result, we cut Social Studies and Science. There are days when I teach nothing but Math. How can I go on when they don’t have the basic concept? There are rare days, about once a month, that I teach everything I planned and they understand it. I love these days! So do they. We both love Social Studies and Science.

Jennifer explains that she has cried about the scores of her students on standardized tests. She courageously shares her struggle in trying to make sense of what is in the way of their success.

> I think about my job and how I am affecting their lives. Is it [what she is teaching] sticking? Both math and bilingual specialists come to my room to assist, but is it me? My kids stay after school for tutoring and some get pull-out tutoring and the scores still don't go up.

I share this early conversation with Jennifer because I believe that it offers the context in which she is developing her teaching practice and sets up her storied experience presented in second interview and focus of my analysis.

I began the second interview by simply asking, "How are you today?" Jennifer's retort offered a string of experiences that began with a recent meeting with her principal and thread its way to her parents' involvement in her education and its impact on her success. The fluidity of this experience allowed an insightful story to emerge (Schwab, 1960).

The Foundational Story

As I approached Jennifer in our second interview I sensed tension. As a first-year teacher, she was reeling from an earlier meeting with her principal regarding her students' Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) benchmark test scores. Disappointedly, Jennifer shares that her class had a 50 percent pass rate on the exam. The principal presented an intervention plan to address the unacceptable rating. The principal proposed that Jennifer's mentor teacher come into her class for the next three weeks—every day, for two hours each day—to teach test-taking strategies. In our interview, Jennifer states, "I will not be teaching writing, social studies, spelling or science. We will eat and breathe math and reading."

When asked how she feels about this Jennifer revisits her yearly struggle with focusing on testing and test scores and the effect both have on her students and her curriculum. She explains,

> I don't think they are not ready [for the assessments] but they are rejecting the test. Since October we have had one benchmark a month. They can do it in class, one on one, and individually. I think that they think the test is practice and don't take it serious.

In the aftermath of the meeting with her principal, Jennifer is confronted by her role in the perceived failure of her students. She reflects,

> Could I have stayed later, prepared more? What could I have done? These students go to an hour of one-on-one small group tutoring every Friday. If all this is done then how is it me? It isn't me. It isn't me. In my personal opinion it is a lack of parent involvement in the students' lives.

In this moment, I was taken back to an experience within the semester I taught Jennifer. The field experience of that semester placed my students in an underserved, prominently Latino learning community. As with every class, I began with an open discussion about the students' experiences the prior week. Quite quickly, a heated discussion began regarding the perceived lack of support of parents as evidenced by low participation in teacher-parent conferences. The student who initiated this discussion adamantly proclaimed, "These parents don't care enough for their kids to even come to a teacher parent conference!" At this point, I reminded students of Hinchey's work (2006) regarding the notion of the mindfulness in addressing the assumptions that educators bring into their classrooms. I encouraged the class to consider alternative narratives about why a parent might not come for a conference. What time were the conferences? Do the parents work one or more jobs? Were there other alternatives offered beyond a face-to-face conference at the school? How was their own experience as students/parents affecting their

expectations of parents, many of whom were of a different ethic and socio-economic background? The purpose of these queries was to push engagement with the assumptive nature of my students when dealing with students and parents. Some students vocalized how they had never considered such questions. I recall feeling like the class had turned a corner.

Up to that point, we had been focused on critically engaging and questioning the Social Studies curriculum using the lens of social justice. This confronted the assumptions of what they knew about learning and teaching Social Studies in elementary schools. However, in the dialogue about parent involvement, I found that students began to experience the expansion of this skill to the totality of teaching. The echoes of the proclamation that began this rich dialogue can undeniably be heard in Jennifer's reactions regarding the lack of parent support in her classroom. Our assumptions are always with us, and because of that I wonder what structures Jennifer has in place that critically engage her with the unchecked assumptions that surface in her teaching practice? Do I step out of researcher mode and coach her in this?

Jennifer shares that she does have some parents that ask what they can do. She sent out a supply request in both September and January only to have eight of twenty-two families send them. She understands that many cannot afford supplies. She buys supplies but feels like she is enabling parents. Jennifer explains that she sees the students who are engaged, passing, and doing well all around have parents that are involved. This leads to the frustration she shares,

> I have called, sent progress reports, and attempted conferences. I have one student who is not working to his full potential and I can't get the parent to conference with me. I have seen her once when she came to pick up another student. Her job comes first.

Jennifer adamantly expresses that all a child needs or wants is for their parents to help them with their work. In her experience students that have this are succeeding. I ask her about her own parents' involvement in her education. She pauses to think and shares that they were much like the parents of her students. They made sure she had supplies and sometimes checked her homework but only until the first grade. Her aunt offered the most help in her studies, but the family member spoke limited English. She reminiscences about the challenge of this language barrier and explains how her aunt was great at uncovering her bluff regarding studying effectively. *I wonder if she sees any connection with her own life and those of her students. In many ways she has walked a similar path. What might this mean for her current frustration level?*

We explore what she equates to her success within the context of her family's involvement level. Most generously, Jennifer shares that she did not want to be like her mom or dad. She explains that though they are both successful in their own way, they do not make much money. She explains,

> My poor mom knows more than her boss. Why doesn't she get the big bucks? She came from Mexico in 1968. She told me that she grew up with dirt floors in the house. They slept on the floor. I saw pictures. They were poor. I told myself that I would not live like that! This is what has motivated me.

She explains that she and her mother have discussed how her mother, in retrospect, believes she needed to be more available to Jennifer in middle and high school. This revelation was not shared with Jennifer until she was in college.

Jennifer's father made an impact on the direction of her success in school despite his lack of involvement. "I made it my mission to prove my father wrong." This statement ends a story regarding how her father constantly put her down and told her she would sell

her body or drugs and never amount to anything. “This is what motivated me. And I still have a way to go to be as successful as I want to be!” *I am touched by the Jennifer’s vulnerability as she so courageously shares her family history. I wonder how these life experiences have shaped how she reacts to her students’ parents. How do I delicately go there as a researcher?*

Our conversation returns to the meeting with the principal regarding the intervention plan for Jennifer’s students. She exclaims, “I knew something drastic was going to happen after Spring Break. I just wasn’t sure what.” She explains that she had seen the hints with each benchmark assessment in the fall. I ask if she felt supported by the administration. She replies that she feels supported by the third grade team, but she is not as clear in her support by administration. In the context of the most recent conversation with the principal, Jennifer explains that she asks about bringing parents in to discuss the test scores. The principal advises not to do this, telling Jennifer that if they did not come before when asked they will not come now.

Jennifer continues to explain how she often feels shut out on moving forward with what she sees as possible actions in her classroom. She further reflects on this, “When do you know when to keep pushing? As a new teacher, I feel confident when I see the support of administration.” She continues sharing her apprehension in speaking out: “If I speak my mind I will get shut down and maybe the union will get involved.” She explains the context of her fears as a direct reaction to the new push of the Educational Valued Added Assessment program (EVAAS), a system in which teachers are evaluated based on their students’ growth. The risk of this evaluation system is the loss of a teaching position based on student growth indicated by this assessment system. Jennifer reaction to this notion,

"What happens to the passionate teacher that has limited results? There are so many factors affecting performance—hunger, safety, poverty, home life, etc. You can't just blame the teachers, parents, principals, and schools." *This is an interesting statement in light of where our conversation began? Is she blaming parents or am I misinterpreting the meaning of her frustration?*

We end our session with Jennifer reviewing a past assignment given in my class—a course portfolio. Within a final portfolio, students responded to questions regarding their beliefs about teaching and education. Questions address anticipated expectations for the first year of teaching to the consideration of the most powerful influence in a child's life. As Jennifer flips the pages of her portfolio, she giggles as she reads her response to the question that asks students what they envision the first year of teaching to be. Jennifer wrote then,

> For my first year of teaching I envision chaos, good chaos. I can imagine that I will be overwhelmed and not know where or how to begin. I know that there are going to be a lot of bittersweet mistakes. I can imagine that there is going to be crying, laughing, and stress. I can imagine that I will have a lot of questions and stay late almost every day. I envision my first year to be successful and a year of learning.

She explains that she can see how her year has echoed her speculations of a year ago. We both believe that a retrospective revisit of these questions may prove a rich reflective exercise that we can explore together in our next interview.

In the aftermath of this interview, I have come up with numerous follow-up questions for Jennifer. Does she remember the class discussion regarding parent conference during our semester together? Does she recall her thinking then? Does it align with her thinking now? Does she see herself similar to her kids in anyway? How is her own

parents' involvement in her education influencing her present-day reactions to her students' parent involvement?

It seems as if the interview unearthed multiple issues, the most predominant of which is the pressures of testing. I am saddened by the struggles of Jennifer regarding testing, yet not surprised. She seems distant from truly exploring "the being" of teacher. She proceeds as if her wings are clipped and she is philosophically confronted. As her former professor, I am frustrated by the constraints that Jennifer is experiencing. What support does she have? What support does she need? How in the world can my one course penetrate the milieu of this district and others like it?

At our following interview, Jennifer took the lead in the conversation, catching me up on the status of the testing intervention. She exclaimed, "It didn't make a difference. Students were at 50 percent before and are there now." When asked how she felt about these results, she timidly, said, "Okay." *Although Jennifer is seemingly saying all the right words, her non-verbal cues contradict her presentation of positivity on the matter. In the moment, I aware of my own questionable glance regarding the disconnect of her words and who I know her to be. In short, I do not buy it.*

Jennifer continues to explain how she has been seeking "an answer" to why her students were failing to offer evidence of their growth on *the* test. She sees growth in her students in the day-to- day doings in the classroom. Why are the benchmarks not illustrating what she experiences of her students? I listen as she begins the search for someone to blame for this disconnect in experience. She exclaims, "It is not me. It is not the administration. It is not the parents. It is the kids- their personalities-it is just their choice to take the tests seriously." She further explains that all of the team worked with

these kids and not even the veteran teachers could make a difference. *Although not shocked, I am saddened by Jennifer's need assess a "blame" list in an effort to justify the students' failures. I am most alarmed by her final conclusions.*

In our early interviews, she found "blame" for student failure with some of her students' parents. With some time and some test scores, she absolved parents and placed cause at the students'feet. I ask her about this shift. She explains, "I have learned that you can take a horse to water, but you can't make it drink. I can raise it, nurture it with food, and lead to towards a path, but it must choose to drink." I ask her what this realization meant for next year. She retorts, "I will reflect on what I can do differently with the horse. I will get a lot of summer training- anything to improve my teaching, but I will not give up on the horse!"

As I listen to Jennifer recant this time-honored adage, I am taken back to my own early years of teaching. Many a veteran teacher and non-educators alike shared a variation of this horse proverb in an effort to comfort me as I spoke of the challenges of discovering ways to reach all students. I was basically told to stop reflecting on It- it was the way it was. As I listen to Jennifer, I hear this same message. Although I am not suggesting total ownership of the issue, I fear such messages cultivate an environment that disengages educators from reflection practices that might make a difference. Most importantly, it prevents communities from taking some level of responsibility in the education of all children. For now, thankfully, I hear in Jennifer her commitment to continually develop despite the justifications she just professed to me.

Our conversation returns to my curiosity in respect to her struggle with parents. I ask if she recalls our class discussion regarding parent conferences and her reaction to the

inquiry that followed in the class. She replies, “Yes, I remember. As a minority I was insulted by the stereotypical reaction of my classmates. They can’t say parents don’t care if they don’t know the situation!” I gently ask if she sees any parallels with her current feeling and challenges with her students’ parents. She explains, “In my situation, I don’t think they don’t care. I think they don’t have time.” *I wonder if this is just semantics and the extent to which will challenge herself to critical question her assumptions regarding the challenges of parent involvement. I remain perplexed by the contradiction of her lived experiences as a child of self-proclaimed inactive parents and her reactions to similar parents.*

As we sit in her classroom at the end of her first year, I ask Jennifer what she learned this year. She proclaims that students “did a 360 on their behavior.” I ask what she equated as the cause for this turn around. She explains, “I am a sergeant. I nick them for everything.” I wonder how this makes her feel. She quickly exclaims, “I hate it, but I realized that I can’t smile until TAKS results are in. This is the only way they will take it seriously.” She sadly adds, “This went against my own grain. It is not me, but I have learned that I have to go against my heart to be successful.” I ask if she believes this for her future. She waivers, “I don’t know. It worked this semester.” *This is what I fear of all my former students- a loss of who they are to a system guided by test results. Jennifer feels “it” worked. I challenge her reasoning. Scores did not get better. However, evidence shows that compliance in the classroom improve, but at what cost?*

Jennifer pulls out an old reflection from my class and reads the following passage regarding her then pending first year of teaching. She writes,

> During my time in the classroom observations, I realize how difficult it is for educators to do their job. They are always under pressure; it is either

> testing or being the perfect school. After all is said and done it is all about the money. I can imagine the principals conversing with the teachers and quoting Jerry Maquire, "Show me the money!" the teachers can do this by getting high test scores on standardized exams or having a classroom that reaches capacity.

I am very troubled by the premonitions of education students, like Jennifer. At the time she wrote this she had not gone through student teaching. Are our students entering the field already defeated and cynical? Almost a year later, Jennifer laughs as she notes, "Wow, it was like I knew ahead of time the situation I would be put in. I lived it my first year."

As I seek positive closure to the interview, I ask Jennifer what she is most proud of about her first year of teaching. She sighs deeply, "I survived." *Do our students first years need to be a test of survival? What can we do in schools of education and school districts to counter this narrative of the first years of teaching? My fear is that this question can be extended to veteran teachers, students, and administrators alike. How can my work as a teacher educator and educational researcher make a difference in such a context where schools are places of survival for all members of the learning community? Can I?*

In the end, Jennifer survived her first year. Only to hear that any learning of experience she gained was to be transferred to another position the following year. Now she prepares of a new position as a bilingual special education teacher working with small groups of students with specific individualized instruction. When asked if she feels prepared she states, "I have no concerns. I went to an in-service training and it really helped." *As her advocate, I worry that Jennifer will experience a second year of survival and the impact of this on her choice to remain in the teaching field.*

Making Sense: The Insights of Jennifer's Story

How does Jennifer's story impact my practice as a teacher education? How does her story inform the grander context of teacher education? During the process of this research project, I have held these questions close. This facilitates a continuous exploration of the connections between research and practice, an imperative in all self-study (Hamilton, 1998). Though I continue to reflect on the depth and richness of my conversations with Jennifer, I have distinguished several influential connections between Jennifer's story and my practice as teacher educator. The revelations presented relate both to my personal practice as the developer of a course grounded in the experience of social education, as well as the larger context of teacher education.

When Jennifer entered my course, I was exploring the ideas of critical consciousness and attempting to expand my students' experience with the assumptive nature we all possess. This was guided by the notion that, as critical educators, we must be first and foremost critically awake to ourselves if we want students to experience such wide-awakeness in the world (Greene, 1988).

In light of the level of blame that Jennifer seemingly placed on her students' parents, I began to wonder how I might deepen the practice of critically engaging my students with the assumptions we all bring to the classroom. Jennifer's reaction is not shocking in light of the large body of research that presents poverty and socio-economic class as determinants of student success. However, I am troubled by the underlying message of such research—a message that has clearly reached Jennifer: *I do not have to own this problem.* The implication of this message is that it may cause teachers to fail to consider what they *can* do for kids who are both poor and failing.

I ashamedly admit that in the process of working through Jennifer's story I found myself grappling with my own assumptive leanings. In the aftermath of the interview, I recall thinking how shocked I was that Jennifer would proclaim parents involvement as the exclusive source to her students' academic struggles. As I explored the source of my discomfort, I unearthed my assumption about Jennifer: she was of immigrant parents and most certainly would understand the plight of both her students and their parents.

Frustrated by the shadowed pull to engage with my own conjectures about Jennifer's story, I wondered about the reality of exploring critical consciousness within my courses. Students come to the course with preconceived notions, some of which are justified with "research." They find support for their assumptive beliefs and comments in such "scholarship." In light of this, how are teachers to proceed? How do teacher education programs, as a whole, support teachers in the development and deepening of the critical consciousness required to combat deficit thinking (Valencia, 1997). Is it a realistic goal, given some of the environments new teachers find themselves?

My conversation with Jennifer also reminds us of the power of the *hidden curriculum* (Jackson,1966). The participant shares her struggle with the multi-tasking aspect associated with the administrative demands of teaching. She expresses the hidden political pressures in the retelling of her story about the intervention plan and knowing when to "push." None of these experiences are new; however, I wonder the extent to which I have been seriously addressing the reality of classrooms today. How can we prepare students to navigate the milieu of education as it is today and, at the same time, strongly develop themselves as critical teacher practitioners?

School culture, as well as district culture, has influenced the shaping of Jennifer's experience this year. The environment in which Jennifer finds herself has presented pressures in regards to testing, collegial influences, and the reactions and requests of the principal. How do such elements of school culture positively and negatively shape students formation and re-formation of their teaching philosophies? What can I do, if anything, to prepare them to critically consider the often, blind influence school culture has upon the way they create themselves as teachers?

We believe *all* children can learn. This is a common statement heard in all arenas of education. It if often the justification for the need for the strict accountability measures of extensive standardized testing. In the context of my interview with Jennifer, I begin to contemplate how this statement connected to her reaction regarding parent involvement.

Does she believe that *all* children can learn despite their parents? I believe that her answer would be yes, but this inquiry caused me to consider the statement "We believe that all children can learn" as a proclamation for social justice. This question might be considered a foundation philosophical question for educators for social justice. It could be the touchstone by which we navigate the challenges of teaching our students.

With these revelations, I realized that although I discuss social justice in the context of curriculum quite rigorously, I never directly asked students where they stand in regards to this statement. We could assume that all students, or teachers, would loudly claim that they do indeed believe that all students can learn. I do not doubt that they believe this until they are asked how a decision or reaction to a student, parent, or situation supports this declaration. It is in these teachable moments that we can teach critical consciousness and alignment of professed philosophy and practice. I never saw this before and intend to

critically engage in questioning both the sufficiency and meaning of the statement, “We believe *all* children can learn.”

Building Stories: Esperanza’s Story

As a student teacher completing her education program, Esperanza has a two-grade placement at an elementary school in a large urban district in the Houston metropolitan area. She currently teaches pre-kindergarten students in a one-way dual language program in which students receive instruction in English one day and Spanish the next. During the course of our interviews, Esperanza transitions to her second placement in a fourth grade one-way dual language classroom.

Esperanza’s experiences in student teaching directly follow her experiences in my course. As such, our initial interview explores direct connections of the course to her current teaching experiences. Although important insights surface in this early interview, I selected to focus this research on the deeper story thread that emerges in interview two and three. However, I deem it important to build the context of those powerful story lines, by offering a brief exploration of my earliest conversation with Esperanza.

In our first interview, Esperanza finds herself midway in the semester and transitioning into the world of fourth graders As such she speaks exclusively about her fourth graders as we explore her transference of the course. As a self-contained fourth grade teacher she has 45 minutes for Social Studies instruction. When asked what assignment helped her the most in her current teaching situation she shares, “Connecting the curriculum to kids lives. The community project helped me look around and connect to the environment. I thought of tying in the revolution to the rights of students and school and what is going on in their lives.”

As we move deeper into the interview, I ask how she defines social education in her current role as a student teacher. She exclaims, “We are thinking about things that happened in the past, relating it to the individual, which is *me*. I get to see how I can make a difference in the future.” She goes on to say, “When I think of social education the first thing that comes to mind is community. And I can’t think about that without individuals and I think about their acts, the things they do and their interactions.”

Esperanza goes on to recant her transition into the fourth grade classroom. She happily shares,

> Before, I felt like a tourist in the classroom. But I noticed the environment that she [mentor teacher] had created. The kids were trusting. When she said they were there to help-they helped me. For the first couple of days, I didn’t expect them [students] to come to me. When they started to come to me I felt welcomed. I felt like part of this community. They counted me. No, they *involved* me.

Her choice of words here are so very powerful. I wonder about the feeling of being counted and community- where was such a story line seeded? She goes on to link this feeling to the course. She explains,

> All this connects to how we talked in the course about community. I realized that it isn’t about the block of Social Studies time. I notice social education is not a subject. I think I found social education in this class. They feel as an individual they belong. They have a say. Without that they couldn’t be a community.

I felt as the instructor, what Esperanza speaks of is the abstract element of the course. You must feel and experience it. I struggle with the abstractness of such foundations in the course. I feel much of what I want students to experience is un-definable within the inauthentic space of a methods course. In this way, the course is failing. I need to consider that I am not creating an experience of community.

The seeds of Esperanza's dominant plotline of community begin to emerge in this early interview. The focus of this study centers on the personal way in which Esperanza reflects on her life experiences and makes sense of how she finds connection with this emergent theme.

The Foundational Story

The entirety of the second interview focuses on an incident that happened during a fire drill with Esperanza's fourth grade class. She recants,

> We had a fire drill and I overheard a student talking about her brother getting his papers. I listened to her and thought about how that was for her. I don't have my papers and my brothers do, so this girl's story hit a nerve with me. I have grown up ashamed that I don't have my papers. I have hidden this as much as I could. My mentor teacher, who is Columbian, whispered to me that a lot of her students are undocumented or have family members that are. She spoke to me like I had my papers. I was really thinking if I should I tell her? I did. She was surprised because I am graduating from the university in May. She asked me if I would be comfortable sharing this with the students.

I am moved by the honesty of this story. I will never forget the look of surprise/pride on her face when she stated, "She spoke to me like I had my papers." She must have felt "counted" in that moment.

Esperanza continues her story explaining when the students returned to the classroom, the mentor teacher told them that Esperanza was "like many of them." With that Esperanza spoke to the class,

> I am like many of you or maybe your friends or families. I don't have my papers. The class gasped. They were so excited. I felt so connected. I told them that despite being told I would never get into college, I was graduating from the university in May. One boy jumped out of his chair and yelled! They were full of questions about how I did it and thanked me for sharing. I am glad I told them because I think it gave them hope.

I am taken to last semester when this student ashamedly told me she couldn't do a field experience because of her documentation issues. She stood before me then shamed and defeated. Here she is a couple of months later, transforming her shame into an experience that allowed her to make a difference with her students. I now see a seemingly more confident, hopeful, and empowered student despite her documentation issues. Her shame seems to be fading.

In aftermath of the retelling of this story Esperanza and I talk about her shame. She was a fourth grader herself when she came to the states alongside her parents. She did this move under their direction. As we talk Esperanza concludes that this experience afforded her the ability to make a difference with these students. She says of this insight, "I always *said* that teachers make a difference, but I really didn't believe that *I* could make a difference. But after this, I see that I can." *She is hopeful and maybe for the first time trusts that that she can make a difference. Sadly, I fear that she will not be afforded the opportunity until she becomes a documented worker.*

I timidly broach the subject of the obstacle of her documentation in finding a job and continuing to make a difference with students. She replies, "I need to do it, but it is complicated." *I am angered that we have to have this conversation. Who do I know that can help her? Why weren't the advisors guiding her towards solution to this obstacle? The university accepted her money, but her education will not offer her a ticket to the classroom. Where is the social justice in that?*

In the follow up interview, I am interested in Esperanza's emerging philosophy of teaching. As someone looking in, I can hear the theme of community shaping the foundations of her philosophy, but I wonder what she might hear. Quite ironically,

Esperanza begins our conversation with the aid of a teaching philosophy paper that she wrote in my course. She shares her understanding in the evolution of her philosophy of teaching. Esperanza notes that in the paper her ideas focused upon the job of the teacher. She explains, “It was for me not students. I said all the right words, but it wasn’t me just-what I had heard. I just never thought it out for myself. Now my philosophy is for the students.” What lead to your shift, I ask? She shares,

> My fourth graders. They invited me to an event with Rocket players. It was a reward for all the students in tutoring on Thursdays. They specifically asked the teacher in charge if I could come because they remembered I loved the Rockets. They were so excited that I might come. It was this kind of community that made me change my philosophy. They didn’t see me as just another teacher but an individual.

Esperanza explains that her early philosophy was generalized to all students and what she could do for or to them. She expands, “My original thoughts were more about the physical things I can bring to a classroom. Like, what environment I could create. Now, it is about the inside of students. I look at all the students as individuals and have to understand where they are coming from and relate to them as a person.”

Esperanza transparently tries to make sense of her insights regarding her developing philosophy and her beliefs about teaching and learning. As such she bridges relating to students to the use of alterative text, a strategy emphasized in my course. She connects this idea with a remembrance of her seventh grade teacher. She shares, “I was trying to remember what I learned in his class. I remember the textbook and videos, but I can’t remember anything else. I remember his personality. He talked to us and asked us about our days and lives.” I ask how this story informs her as a developing teacher? She replies, “If I was one of my students, I want look back and think about that time we were doing fractions. It was fun. I want them to remember not only the content but how it related to

their lives." About teaching she declares, "Everything I have learned is related to me and my experiences. In my lessons, I have related something that has happened to me."

I ask Esperanza about her experiences as a student and how they may connect to the 'fire drill story.' We meander through memories of her early years in the American school system, which began in fourth grade. Throughout the disjointed retelling of these stories, the theme of relationship and community continually resurface. She recants how her fourth grade teacher shared his potato chips and bought all students a scholastic book. Esperanza says of her male teacher that year, "I was new to this country and he made me more comfortable. His class had a sense of community and I didn't see it until know. He made me feel like I was part of the family."

Of her fifth grade teacher, Esperanza recalls, "She always counted me as part of the class. She goes on tell about a day when she was asked get in front of the class and do a presentation. Esperanza remembers,

> She gave me an option to do what I could in English. I presented in both languages. I don't know what she did to me to make me feel so comfortable to stand in front of the class without knowing English. I was so shy. What I do remember is that she always was interested in us sharing something about our lives.

The meandering nature of this interview was frustrating, but it feels like I am watching Esperanza make sense of the dominant force driving her developing philosophy- community, relationship, and belonging.

Making Sense: The Insights of Esperanza's Story

On the heels of finishing my course, Esperanza's interviews provided an opportunity for immediate exploration of what ideas/concepts she continued to unpack during her student teaching. As such, this analysis offers a direct link between Esperanza's

journey as a student teacher and my practice as a teacher educator. As a student in my course in the spring of 09, Esperanza was exposed to a course that attempted to balance the practical and the philosophical in a way that connected with students. Conversations with Esperanza reveal her continuation of this process as she focuses on the development of her teaching philosophy as influenced by both her current classroom experiences and her life experiences as a student.

The stories of Esperanza support emergent themes in earlier analysis of student work and reflections during the Spring 2009. She discusses making connections with students through the curriculum, by linking learning with the lives of students. Early data support connected curricula strategies of integration and the use of alternative texts as ways to make learning relevant for students. Esperanza links such strategies with the idea of knowing her students. However, this remains the extent to which Esperanza connects any teaching strategy/method with her current role as a student teacher. What does this illuminate about my course? Esperanza continued to explore the essence of teaching in a much broader sense making connections with her past. Is this where most students are in their student teaching or is this uniquely situated to Esperanza? Regardless, the absence of attention to curricula issues in my conversations with Esperanza warrants speculation about the transference of the skills, methods, and strategies needed to teach Social Studies as presented in my course.

What is apparent in the collective interviews with Esperanza is the notion that life experiences are inseparable from who we develop into as teachers. As Esperanza shares her reframed teaching philosophy she continually connects to her lived experiences. A sense of community is the foundation from which Esperanza builds her teaching beliefs. This

process echoes the reading of Hinchey (2006) explored in the course the semester of Esperanza's enrollment. Emphasis on conscious decision making in teaching is linked to understanding how our past informs our professional decisions.

The implications of Esperanza's exploration of her past, as linked to her developing teacher identity, present a powerful insight as tied to my practice. Seemingly, the exploration of Hinchey's work offered this student a place to begin to make sense of her experiences of the past and her beliefs as a new teacher while in the field. As a teacher educator this supports the notion that student teaching provides a space in which students may distinguish and explore contradictions of their practice and philosophy. The practical experiences of the field allow them to begin to realign their ideas about teaching and learning. In short, the theoretical notions of schools of education can be test driven and reshaped.

This is exactly what happened to Esperanza. However, the experience of these interviews illuminated a tension regarding my practice. Much of my course is focused on dimensions of experience. Learning as experience. Past experiences as guides for present beliefs and experience as knowledge. These interviews allowed me to see evidence that I had empowered Esperanza to recognize her experiences in the heart of her teaching. In a real sense she had found what Berry (2007) calls her "authority of experience." But had I made the point that alone that was not enough? In Esperanza's case her experience illuminates the need for relationships and community in her community. Of course this is a first step. My concern is the limited attention to the intellectual development of students in her classroom community. For me this is illustrative of my own challenge in balancing my

course to expose students to the holistic essence of teaching, like building classroom communities, and the practical intellectual matters of teaching content.

My experience with Esperanza emphasizes the need for deeply reflective structures for the student teaching experience. I question that without the space of the interviews this student would have embarked on such a deep exploration of her philosophy. By her own admission, she saw her student teaching supervisor in the classroom at observations with limited time for meaningful conversation. I contend that this is a missed opportunity of meaningful learning. In fact, I believe that the experience of student teaching should be coupled with or followed by a seminar course in which students revisit their experiences in ways that reframe what they thought they knew and offer powerful next steps as they move forward into their own classrooms. This insight connects with my belief that in many ways my course is not understood without the experiences of real classrooms.

The implications of this suggestion require a complete transformation of the way we develop teachers. Curricula should be designed to alternate between teacher education courses and fieldwork. What I suggest is more semesters of fluid student teaching experience followed by courses that deconstruct the experience and connect it to the content of our educational courses. Within the context of the de-skilling of teachers (Kincheloe, 2001), offered in Jennifer's story, I feel this proposal has little chance of finding support. Sadly, the reality of the current educational system does not honor such contemplative approaches to learning.

Conclusions of Relocated Voices

We can better appreciate Jennifer and Esperanza's concrete experiences by situating them in larger issues inherent in education. The seemingly inescapable demands of

accountability create a sense that teachers cannot provide rich, multi-layered curricula and, instead, must turn to test-taking strategies and the "basics" of mathematics and reading. This is evidence in the experiences of Jennifer. As teacher educators and educational researchers, we must work toward cultivating teacher agency in a system that actively attempts to de-center the role of teacher as curriculum maker. While we must always attend to the *institutional* structures of schooling, we must remind teachers of their inherent power. To this point, I am not sure that my course prepares students to tap this power. How can I precede in regards to this insight?

While I remain a strong advocate for rich pre-service teaching experiences, I am reminded of how teacher educators must support teachers once they are outside the confines of the university. We might consider models that encourage multi-year support following graduation. Furthermore, we must recognize the power of constructive dialogue as a supportive tool for teachers. My conversations with Jennifer and Esperanza have certainly created a reflective platform for my own practice as a teacher educator, and the same conversations have undoubtedly challenged both students to consider their teaching more deeply. Unfortunately, dialogues like these are rare. Teaching is paradoxical; while teachers confront the humanity of interacting with hundreds of students each day, they rarely have the kind of face-to-face dialogues that both these students and I shared as part of this study.

The Instructor

The experience of an architect who resides in a home that he/she designs can offer powerful insight into the structures of the design. For this reason, I briefly explore my own experience as a resident of the course I designed. For the most part, deep analysis of my

role as both architect and instructor has been explored within the context of my doctoral work offered in Chapter Four. Here I offer examples of semester specific journal entries that illuminate my personal struggles or reoccurring questions about the course design while experiencing the course alongside students.

Fall 2008

A general theme of this semester's writings are centered on the disconnect between the course and the real world. Regarding a discussion on the status quo, students question the feasibility of lessons on social justice within the mandated world of the classroom. I write of this discussion,

> Students are struggle with challenging the status quo by teaching critical lessons focused on issues of social justice. They claim the constraints of prescribed schedules, curricula, and teaching objectives. Henry comments they will have to play the game. Others suggest they don't have to and it has to start somewhere. Again, I wonder if the work of my class will ever "prepare" them for the confines of a "mandated" space. They ask me how they will maneuver the system and push critical teaching. I am left wondering about Dr. Craig's comment regarding agency. She asked, "Is it ethical for me to ask my students to be a change agent in schools and send them into unsupportive systems?" I don't want to relinquish my belief in teachers as agents of change in our system, but am I being irresponsible knowing students enter the landscape with no support? How can my practice address this?

Spring 2009

The challenges of this semester are thematically connected to the survival mode of students. My journal holds numerous entries that offer this dominant theme. Students vent. They express their overwhelm. Students complain. Students go through the motions. The following entry encapsulates the entries of the semester. I write

> I got the impression that students are merely surviving the program and as a result surviving the assignments. They are seemingly relating to the course like a to-do list. From where I stand they are not internalizing or making connections between the course and the field. I wonder if the

> structure of the program is detrimental to the connections intended by the structure of the semester. How can I connect the course more directly to student field experiences?

Fall 2009

The essence of my journals of this semester is how students are interpreting the course in the field. I seek insight into this inquiry as I assess the final portfolio presentations for the program. Students present what they have learned in the entire program to a panel of professors. They are asked to tie their learning to both the field and their methods courses. My journal following this presentation exclaims,

> Again, I come to the same question, "Is my approach practical enough for translation to the elementary classrooms struggling to squeeze in Social Studies?" When I sit in these presentations I am really troubled by the lack of connections being made to Social Studies. Why is this? Is it my approach or the fact that they have no models in the field?

Making Sense: Resident Instructor

I am taken aback by the repetitive nature of each of these journal entries. Data analyzed early suggest the balancing act between the philosophical and the practical as improving through each semester. However, these data illuminate a counter-experience as the instructor. The program, the students I teach, and I are at odds. The program is set up like a factory assembly line-ever moving and highly choreographed. Students fear of student teaching drives their need for all that is practical. They want take-away lessons and strategies that are assured to work. I want reflective experiences and critical inquiry with curriculum, trusting the practical application of such an approach. These data make me wonder if my course will ever be viewed as practical. Are my expectations too high of students, the system, and myself?

Conclusions

The residents of this course offered a range of experience in the course. Inhabitants of the course in its earliest form express a need for more practical connections between the course and the field. As noted in my own journal entries, I struggle with student preoccupation with this notion. However these data provide evidence of the courses evolution on this point, illustrating a more balanced approach between the practical and the philosophical by Fall 2009.

Additionally, these data emphasize the messy nature of developing critical educators. Students exhibit their open struggle with the ideas explored in the context of social education as evidenced by the passionate questioning and rejection of the readings of the course and reactions on the course evaluations. With this said, as the instructor, this insight solidifies the need for critical analysis and reflection upon the ideals that help shape a critical approach to Social Studies curriculum.

Finally, the voices of the relocated students of Jennifer and Esperanza illuminate the need for support beyond the confines of my 12-week course. Each offers unique insight into the transference of the course. Jennifer, as a first year teacher, struggles with restrictions of curriculum as guided by the need for success on standardized tests in both Math and Reading. She illustrates the reality driven dilemmas of graduates of my course. By comparison, Esperanza, seeks connections between her lived experiences and her shifting teaching philosophy, seemingly removed from the practical matters of the classroom.

In the end, these data run across a broad spectrum regarding the reaction to and impact of the course on student learning. The factor that determines the manner in which

students bring the course to their practice is determined by their own individual experiences as students. This is the challenge of my practice. How do I honor students' personal stories that shape their thoughts about teaching and learning and, at the same time, push them to consider different story lines that aid in their development as a critical educator?

CHAPTER SIX

THE LANDSCAPED VIEW OF THE STRUCTURE

Introduction

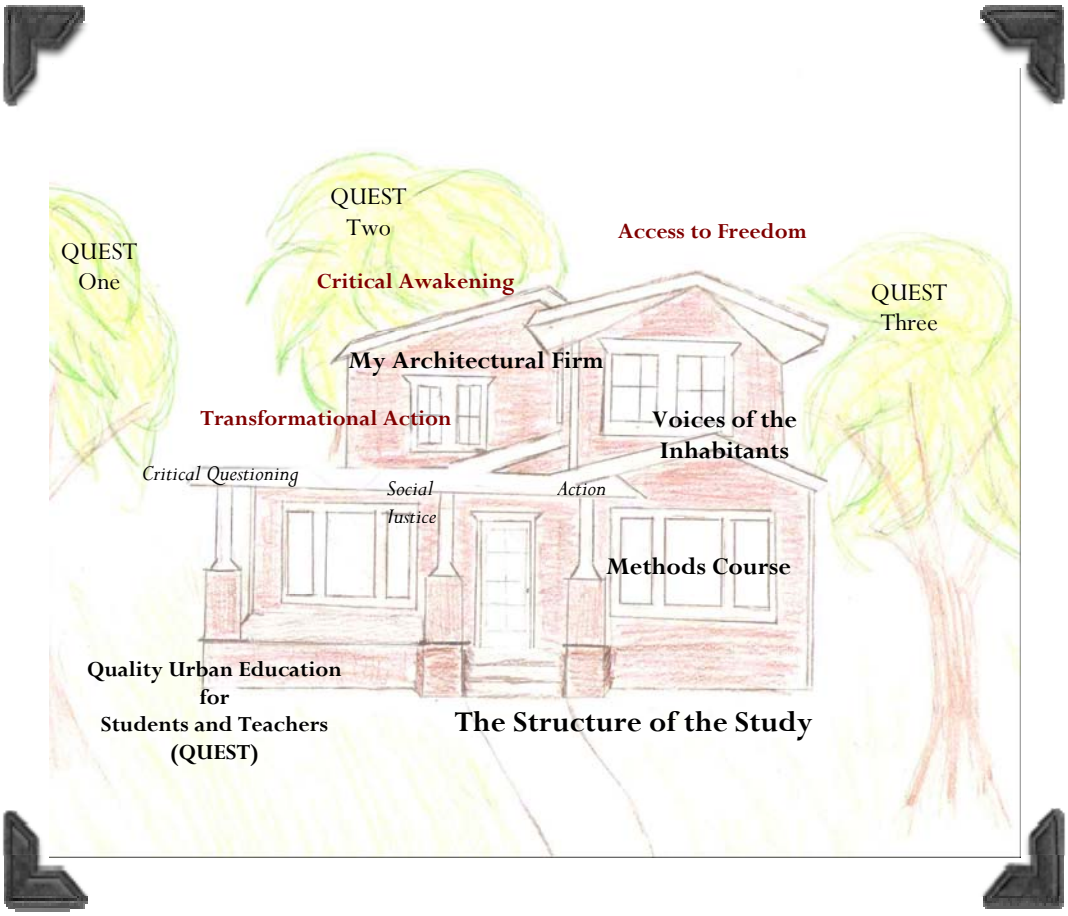
When designing a home an architect focuses on both the exterior and interior structural design. They check the foundational strengths of their design. They monitor construction of the interior to guarantee integrity to the floor plan design. However, often the broader landscape in which the new structure sits is often forgotten in the design. How does the home interact in the natural landscape of the neighborhood? The answer to this question is dependent upon the type of neighborhood one is building in. New neighborhoods offer an unrestricted slate from which to build and plant landscaped details. Established neighborhoods are more challenging. Architects must ponder the existing landscape that includes nature and the other residential spaces. Designers need to consider if their structure makes sense in the broader landscape of the neighborhood.

As the designer of a structure in the well-established neighborhood of American education, I am faced with the challenge of designing a course that addresses conflicting goals. As residents of the course, my students demand a semester that fulfills their immediate needs as emerging professionals within the American education system. They want practical solutions and applications relating to their future classrooms. In contrast, I am committed students explore the idea of transformational teaching. For me, this means the discovery of student voice coupled with an educational system that authentically honors these voices.

The vehicle, I believe, offers us the most hope in this grand goal is grounded in an experience in social education. My practice is built upon a triadic framework of such an experience, which includes critical awakening, access to freedom through choice, and transformative action. This study has explored the extent to which my philosophical

commitments have translated into my practice in meaningful ways for students. In addition, I have sought insight into the impact of the course on the development of students as they shape their own teaching philosophies and being. The storied approach of the study, as reviewed in Figure 2, results in layered insights regarding the specificity of my course design, the needs of students, challenges of teacher educators, and the urgent actions required of teacher education programs.

Figure 2



The Ground Floor: The Course

A goal of self-study is to explore the manner in which the philosophical leanings of the professor manifest/or do not manifest within their classroom practice. This goal was the driving force of this study in the beginning. However, the yet to be discussed grander conclusions of the study have taken precedence over any revelations related to the specifics of the course. As a result, the discussion of insights regarding the details of the course curriculum will be brief and offered only as a framework for the subsequent discussion.

I wondered about my ability to create an experience in social education for my students. Was the triadic framework of such an experience evident in the course? Exploration of the course documents, alongside my development as a doctoral student, give rise to numerous insights regarding the framework of a social education. First, it is clear in all the data explored that attention to critical awakening was a mainstay in all the courses taught of the study. Each semester the course attempts to engage students in critical analysis of the curriculum, education, and their personal beliefs about teaching and learning.

I offer social education as an experience that can lead to freedom. Critical awakening is a first step towards accessing such freedom. As we awaken to the world around us we note choices that would otherwise be beyond our sight. In the context of education, critical awakening is the tool in which students may begin to envision alternative ways to approach education. This is the goal of my course. However, exploration of the course data, illuminate the challenge of consciously presenting the course as an educational option. Data suggests the difficulty of such a task in my own

experience and suggests the need for constant management of my own either-or mentality regarding curricula choices.

Ultimately, my hope for this course is to give access to agency to students as they enter the teaching field. I want them to awaken to critical inquires, have the freedom to assess the choices, and be empowered to put their ideas into action. However, this study illuminates a weak link to this pursuit. Although, assignments are present that engage students in socially conscious projects, there is little present in the course that empowers students as change agents with the educational system. I am left wondering how I can deepen this aspect of the course.

In the end, these data offer evidence that the course merely plants the seeds of a framework of social education. However, solidifying the triadic framework of an experience in social education within the course in a way that impacts students beyond the 12-weeks is challenged by numerous factors that reside outside the course itself. I contend that the influence of these external elements profoundly impact the level to which students internalize the ideas explored within my course. Although, not a new revelation this insight has expanded the impact of this study beyond the specificity of a social studies methods curriculum and offers grander conclusions regarding teacher education.

The Second Story: The Residents of the Course

The varied voices of the residents of the course provided profound insight into the depth at which the triadic framework was living both within the course and beyond the confines of a university education course. These voices brought the study alive by way of giving voice to the authentic experiences of students regarding the content and philosophies offered in the course curriculum. Some of what is shared is not new, however the extent to

which I see the grander landscape of my work, greatly informs the conclusions of the study.

Critical Awakening

The most profound insight of this study was heard in the voice of Jennifer, a first year teacher. Within our interview cycle I was presented with a contradiction of experience with Jennifer. As a minority student, I had known her to question the assumptive tendencies of her privileged classmates regarding working with minority students and their families. Yet, as a first year teacher of only six months, Jennifer strayed far from this critical approach to issues with students and their families. Her voice was that of her old classmates, a voice of negative assumptions and blame. At face value one might say that this is natural for new teachers as they enter the 'real' world of the classroom. However, for me, I viewed this as a sign that Jennifer had, in a few short months, quieted her critical voice. In turn, she embraced an educational system that plays the blame game. In short, she had forgotten to consider a counter narrative to the situation she found herself in with a parent. Instead she accepted to institutional story of minority parents, they do not care. Her students and parents had lost her to a system grounded in deficit thinking. This was counter to all I knew of Jennifer as my student and distance from the philosophies of my course.

This insight created a critical awakening within myself regarding the urgent action required of teacher education programs to prevent the loss our students to the mindset of the current educational system, one riddled in standardization and accountability. What do we have in place to support students like Jennifer? Who or what structures create the space for the ongoing development of critical consciousness and the exploration of assumptive reactions? I contend it is the role of teacher educator programs to take on this urgent matter

by creating programs that reach beyond the four-year programs on university campuses. It is our job to provide the forum for the dialogue required for both pre-service and in-service teachers to continually explore and deepen their critical consciousness. This looks like both university and district programs foundationally structured to honor the development of critical consciousness. As teaching programs, we must create post-graduate experiences that cultivate continued exploration our critical consciousness as it relates to our teaching.

Freedom

The voices of the study offer insight to the manner in which access to freedom is challenged or embraced. As related to the field, the words of students in this study loudly yearn for the practical approaches to teaching Social Studies to elementary students. This insight is of no surprise to me. And, I find no reason to dismiss the practical. However, I worry the search for teacher-proofed methods only fuels the standardization of teaching and runs the risk of pulling teachers away from critically engaging in the development of their practice, encouraging their own de-skilling as professionals. From this viewpoint, access to choice or freedom is distant for both teachers and students.

As the instructor, I have struggled with the exclusionary practical needs of my students. This study openly highlights my challenge in discovering balance between the practical and theoretical. As a methods instructor, I am confronted by the either-or stance of many of my colleagues and the total rejection of philosophy from students. I find no freedom in this one-sided view of theory and practice. In fact, I think that without a balance between the theoretical and the practical, methods courses offer students little hope of being able to navigate the terrain of classrooms today. The adherence to the practical, exclusively offers a limited view of teaching. I contend that without a strong philosophical

grounding and commitment, students will be unable to make choices and gain freedom from the contradictions and dilemmas of practice they are most certain to experience as teachers. As teacher educators, we must move from our theoretical or practical camps. As a profession we need to design comprehensive programs that explore the relationship between theory and practice in way that embolden our students to challenge the limiting choices of standardized teaching.

Transformative Action

In assessing the presence of transformative action within these data, I cannot say it is completely absence within the course. Analysis of these data offers speculation to what I expected to see regarding this piece of the structure. Did I expect to release curricula activists? Or could I be at peace in beginning conversations with students about how they could take on “small” battles of action within their own classrooms? In the end students engaged in experiences that pull the curriculum to action, as illustrated in the projects centered on community issues. However, the course steps beyond its reach of influence regarding readying students as change agents in the educational system as whole. As teacher educators, I proclaim we are obligated to consider how we can equip our students with the skills to question the status quo of the educational system. If this is not done, we will be complicit in aiding in the creation of professionals that follow rather than lead. This offers no hope of the state of education.

This study has offered insight into how I might address the idea of transformative action for myself. At the sake of over simplification, I have distinguished two lines of action regarding the challenges facing education today. One is on the front lines, in the classrooms. The second avenue addresses the creation and implementation of policy. I have

chosen the charge of the former rather than the latter. For me, as a teacher of the next generation of educators, I need to cultivate the space in which critical educators emerge readied to creatively clear obstacles that challenge the tenets of critical education. To this, as revealed by this study, I will have to take on more than a renovation of my course. In short, I am forced to look more globally at the program in which my course is placed.

The Third Floor: My Architectural Firm

I have sought advice and guidance from other designers with more established designs than myself. This architectural firm, or TRIAD (Teachers, Researchers: Imagining, Articulating, Doing) offers me an imperative apprenticeship as I make sense of how I can construct and renovate my course within the established system. Through this partnership, my blueprints have been reviewed by others in the field and reshaped as a result of their experiences as course designers.

I do not want to belabor the tenets of social education any further, but find it imperative to offer the following insight regarding the importance of the TRIAD in my work. This group provides a staging ground in which I can contemplate, recharge, and unite on issues that guide the development of a course grounded in critical awakening, freedom, and transformation action. In short, this group provides a critical mass in my inquiry regarding the challenge of constructing a course like mine. In fact, our collective work provides me a tangible avenue by which I can take transformative action in the field of Social Studies education.

The Neighborhood of Teacher Education

At this point in my work, I have been renovating the course within the reality of the system my students enter. The portfolio of practice offered in this study discusses both my

limited successes and always-present challenges in such an endeavor. At this juncture, I stand at the curb looking at the broader placement of my work. Located in the well-established neighborhood of teacher education, my course often clashes with the designs around it. This is no revelation to me but begs to inform my next steps as a teacher educator. Thus far, I have been an individual designer shaped by a body of master builders. Focused on my design only. However, this study has sketched out a broader vision for my work as a designer of *teacher education programs*. It is from this point that I wonder if I dare begin to consider ways to redesign the entire neighborhood of teacher education.

This study illuminates the extent of this challenge in the current landscape. As of most recent, I have awakened to the understanding that the milieu in which I find myself at the university level is closely aligned with that of classroom teachers. Standardization has come to the university through the likes of varied accreditation organizations. As such, education professors are confronted with the same issues that our students face, standardized testing and other accountability measures. As a result, my course in danger of being systematically confined to the practical matters of teaching content and state test survival techniques. However, more importantly, teacher education programs run the risk presenting teaching as a how-to-checklist.

In light of my commitment to critical education, I am placed in a position that forces me to stand firm in my philosophical convictions while at the same time be responsible for preparing my students with the skills to succeed in the system. I have been teaching for almost 20 years and I struggle with the pull of these conflicting goals. Yet, I have been asking my students, who have not been in the classroom, to this as well. I insist that they face down the pressures of standardization and teach critically, engaging students

in meaningfully connected curriculum. This insight has harnessed my commitment to discover ways to empower students to critically maneuver this rough landscape and remain true to their philosophical convictions.

For me, my actions are clear. I must step beyond my course and consider larger actions that will impact the program development of teacher education. I proclaim the following actions essential to this commitment 1) develop teacher education programs grounded in critical education with equal emphasis on theory and practice 2) create a space for the development of critical educators amid the harsh reality of the field through post-graduate programs 3) create collaboratives of critical educators that build critical mass 4) teach to uncover and honor the unique voices of all. This is my charge as an architect of an experience in social education. I hope this study inspires others to their own actions.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

Email Invitation of Participation

Good morning,

I hope this email finds you inspired by the fall semester, wherever you find yourself in your journey to becoming a teacher! As many of you already know I have been in the process of working on my dissertation. At this point in my own journey, I am ready to begin my formalized research. My research will take a hard look at my course in the context of the current educational landscape, one laden with tests and limited Social Studies instruction. I feel my research would be meaningless without the voice of teachers in the field. This is where you come in. As former students, I need your voice and perspectives regarding the connection of your practice with the ideas presented within our Social Education methods course. With that, I invite you to participate in my study. Below, I offer a more formalized description of my research and the expectations of the participants in the study.

My dissertation seeks insights into these two questions: How will I construct a meaningful social education experience for students? What might be the far-reaching possibilities of such an experience on the students' creation of their own being as educators? My research is a self-study of my practice and the impact of the course upon students' teaching practices and philosophies. The coupling of the voices of the instructor and former students will offer great insight into the courses impact in the field. To date there is little research addressing the design, implementation, and impact of teaching strategies with an intentional social education focus.

The requirements for participation:

- You must have completed 4320: Social Education Methods in the Fall of 2008, Spring 2009, or Fall 2009.
- You are a student teacher or employed as a full time elementary school teacher in the Houston metropolitan area as of January 2010.

The expectations of participants:

- The completion of a brief introductory survey delivered and returned via email.
- To attend 4, 1-hour individual interviews, at the University of Houston to be scheduled at your convenience. (All interviews will be recorded for accuracy)
- Reflective journals will be completed following each of the interviews and emailed to me prior to the next interview.
- Reply to no more than 4 emails throughout the entire project regarding any necessary clarifications around interviews or journals.

Your participation is entirely voluntary and will have no impact on any future course work at the University of Houston. Any information you provide in the interview will be reported and used anonymously.

If you have any questions I can be reached by email (dshulsky@global.net) or phone (832-633-9509). You can also address your questions to my advisor, Dr. Cameron White, by email at cswhite@uh.edu or by phone at 713-743-8673

Thank you,

Debby Shulsky, M.Ed.
Graduate Student
University of Houston
College of Education

APPENDIX B
Biographical Survey

Please answer the following questions with as much detail as you wish to divulge. These questions will aid in the process of gaining background information regarding your experience in 4320: Social Education methods and your first teaching experiences as both student teachers and/or first year teachers. If you are uncomfortable answering any question please feel free to let me know.

1. What year and semester did you complete 4320: ELED Social Education Methods? (i.e. Fall 2000)

2. What grade did you receive in the course?

3. Describe your experience in the course.

4. Upon completion of the course what lingering question(s) do you have regarding Social Education?

5. When did you complete your student teaching? In what district? What grade levels did you teach?

6. What year did you get your first teaching position?

7. What grade (s) do you or have you taught as an elementary teacher?

8. What school district (s) and school (s) do you work in or have you worked in?

9. How much time in the daily schedule does your school allocate for Social Studies?

10. What elementary content area do you feel most confident teaching? Most challenged by? Why?

APPENDIX C
Interview Protocol

These questions will be used a catalyst for dialogue about participant teaching experiences in relation to the philosophical offerings of 4320:ELED Social Education Methods. Other questions will evidently emerge in the progression of this interview, however these questions are unknown at this time. Participants will be asked to elaborate and provide examples when answering the questions that require such attention.

Project: The Architecture of a [s]ocial [e]ducation: A Self- Study in Building a [s]ocial [e]ducation Experience

Time of interview:
Date:
Place:
Interviewer:

Interviewee:
Completion Semester of Course:
Position of Interviewee:
School District/ School:

Questions:

1. What has been you greatest challenge in your teaching experience thus far?

2. When you completed 4320 what, if anything, would you say you were committed to integrating with your teaching philosophy/style?

3. Now that you are in the field full time, what do you feel was the most helpful assignment/ interaction/ experience within the course? (if none, explain)

4. What have been the challenges of implementing the concepts of your Social Education Methods course in your classroom experiences?

5. How has the school community supported or challenged the implementation of the philosophy of the Social Education Methods course or Social Studies in general?

6. In what ways does your teaching illuminate the methods and philosophy taught in the Social Education Methods course at the University of Houston? (in none, explain)

APPENDIX D
Syllabus Fall 2008

University of Houston College of Education
COLLABORATION
FOR LEARNING & LEADING

QUEST 2 – ELED 4320 Elementary Social Education
Fall 2008

Instructor- : Debby Shulsky M.Ed
Office Hours- by appointment, Office- 230 Farish Hall, box- 256 Farish Hall
Cell 832-633-9509; Email dshulsky@sbcglobal.net

Description of Course
A field-based approach, students are immersed in an elementary school environment where they develop a knowledge base and practical skills for elementary social studies education using diverse pedagogical approaches, such as: participating in and facilitating collaboration and informational and instructional technologies. The elementary school immersion facilitates collaboration among the educational community, as well as in the methods learning environment. The instructor explores constructivist teaching models fostering the learners' individual responsibility for constructing unique educational experiences. While the course supports the NCSS national social studies standards, the curricula foundations also reflect the Texas Teacher Proficiencies including learner-centered approaches to: knowledge, instruction, integration, equity, communication, and professional development. ELED 4320 integrates the SBEC identified Social Studies Standards located in Domain III (Competencies 16 – 19) and assessed through the TExES EC-4 Generalist exam TExES social studies competencies located at (http://www.texes.nesinc.com/).

Objectives of the course
Upon successful completion of this course, students in this class will be able to demonstrate

- Explore the foundations, skills, values and status of social studies education (EC-4: Domain III; EC-4 Generalist: Standards I – X; Competencies 16 – 19).
- Develop a comprehensive knowledge of the state-mandated competencies/standards for entry level elementary social studies teachers in all seven social studies content areas (EC-4 Generalist, Domain III: Standards I – X; Competencies 16 – 19).
- Construct and implement learner-centered social studies curricula, instruction and assessment that recognize schools' and students' diversity (EC-4: Domain III – Competency 16).

- Construct collaborative methods for curricula integration across the social studies and other disciplines most specifically the integration of literature and technology (EC-4 Generalist: Domain III – Competency 16).
- Explore the relationship between the student learner and continuous professional development (EC-4 Generalist: Domain III – Competency 16).
- Practice frequent reflective skills regarding social educative instruction (EC-4: Generalist: Domain III – Competency 16).

Course Materials
Some of the writings, lectures, films, or presentations in this course may include material that conflicts with the core beliefs of some students. Please review the syllabus carefully to see if the course is one that you are committed to taking. If you have a concern, please discuss it with me at your earliest convenience.

Required Texts
Cowhey, Mary. (2006). *Black Ants and Buddhists: Thinking Critically and Teaching Differently in the Primary Grades.*

Wade, Rahima. (2007). *Social Studies for Social Justice: Teaching Strategies for the Elementary Classroom.*

Required Electronic Tools *(bookmark):*
EC – 4 Social Studies TEKS and Strategies Online: **(print TEKS out)**
http://www.tea.state.tx.us/ssc/index.html

NCSS Expectations of Excellence: *Introduction*
http://www.socialstudies.org/standards/introduction/

NCSS Expectations of Excellence: Strands
http://www.socialstudies.org/standards/strands/

Website for Course: http://discussions.coe.uh.edu
You will need a valid UH student ID number in order to logon to eClassrooms. This site will be used for student facilitated discussions and assignment distribution. All other communications may be directly emailed to my email address. dshulsky@sbcglobal.net

ADA Statement
When possible, and in accordance with 504/ADA guidelines, we will attempt to provide reasonable academic accommodations to students who request and require them. Please call the Center for Students with Disabilities at ext. 3-5400 for more assistance.

Academic Honesty
Students are expected to abide by the university's academic honesty policy in all matters concerning this course. (http://www.uh.edu/dos/hdbk/acad/achonpol.html). In particular, plagiarism, "Representing as one's own work the work of another without acknowledging

the source," whether intentional or unintentional, will be treated with great severity, as directed by the university.

Assessment Procedures and Course Requirements
The requirements for this course fall into one of two categories. The first category offers practice and feedback only; these are called Coached Assignments. Although these assignments are not "graded" in the traditional sense, they offer practice, imperative feedback and experience toward the second requirement category: the Big 5, which are assessed on a four (4) point scale. Each assignment will be accompanied by a detailed rubric, which outlines the criteria for each of the following assessment levels:

4 – Exemplary 3 – Proficient 2 – Progressing 1 – Unacceptable

*You may resubmit any assignment assessed as Unacceptable within one (1) week. Failure to turn in a Coached Assignment eliminates the opportunity for resubmission of work. Any assessment concerns may be addressed via conference with me; you must bring all coached/assessed assignments for this meeting.

The final course assessment is based on the following assessment guidelines:

A 3 Exemplary Assignments, 2 Proficient A - 2 Exemplary Assignments, 3 Proficient

B 3 Proficient Assignments, 2 Progressing B - 2 Proficient Assignments, 3 Progressing

C All Progressing Assignments C - 2 Progressing Assignments, an Unacceptable

<u>Coached Assignments</u>
Thinkers
These discussions are both online and in class for the length of the semester. Student groups facilitate online discussions as well as in class debriefs regarding the assigned readings. All discussions should be approached as interactive dialogues in which student groups will pose questions and insightful comments that push all of our thinking.
Alief: All comments must be posted by Sunday at midnight each week. **Houston:** Comments must be posted by Tuesday at midnight each week. I will offer written and verbal coaching regarding the level of questioning and analysis regarding the readings for both student facilitators and student participants.

Your Story
You will compose a narrative reflection of your experience as an elementary student and how this experience has influenced how you see learning, teaching, and education. **(Due week of September 8)**

Lesson Plan
You will design and teach one original lesson plan for your first rotation. You will arrange a time to teach with your SBTE that honors the due date for the assignment. In addition, you will arrange for a fellow student to observe your teaching. The lesson plan, peer feedback and a reflective piece regarding the experience will be the components necessary for this assignment. **(Due week of September 29)**

Alternative Text Activity
You will design a classroom activity around a piece of art work. **(Due week of October 6)**

Research Journal
You will bring a piece of research literature and compose a research journal entry related to your research topic. You will discuss your findings with your group. **(Due week of October 6)**

THE BIG 5
Thinker Reflection
Students will compose a paper expanding one thinker from the semester to one of the essential questions posed early in the semester. This reflection will be placed in the final portfolio. **(Due week of December 1)**

Community Project Proposal
Student groups will create a proposal for a school principal or community organization offering an idea for a class community project that involves the collaboration between students and community members or organizations. **(Due week of October 20)**

Controversial Issues Mini Unit
A mini unit will be designed around a science concept explored in Science methods. Students will develop three (3) lessons that investigate that concept further by connecting it with the social studies strands, current controversial issues and possible social action. **(Due Week of November 3)**

Action Research Project
Student groups will research the following question through the lens of one of the Social Studies strands (TEKS strands).

How do you teach Social Justice from a critical perspective in the context of a prescribed Social Studies curriculum?

All groups will present their research findings at a Curriculum Fair at the end of the semester.
(Due week of November 17)

Portfolio
Students will design a portfolio that illustrates any consistencies or shifts between the first and final responses to the essential questions given at the beginning of the course. These questions offer the framework in which students will organize evidence that is explicitly tied to the experiences, readings and discussions of the course. **(Due week of December 1)**

* Specific criteria for each assignment will be distributed as we proceed throughout the semester.
* If conditions warrant, any alteration to this assignment overview is at the discretion of the instructor.
* Every attempt will be made to notify students of changes in advance.

Additional Notes

This course is highly reflective in nature and not about "getting the right answer." Yet, all assignments will be expected to possess a high level of analysis, synthesis, and scholarly justification for student approaches to the assignments.

This course is a transition into the professional world and students will be held to a high level of expectation regarding professional behavior to include attendance, punctuality, deadlines, and all communication.

SCHEDULE FALL 2008

Week	Date	Agenda	Assignments
1	Week of August 25	Intro (syllabus) Antz Tools for the course: texts, e-classrooms, groups, assessment process, and me. Next class	Read : NCSS Expectations of Excellence: The Introduction Read : *Black Ants* and *Buddhists* Chapter 8 *(handout)* Read*: Social Studies for Social Justice* Chapter 1 and 2 *(handout)* Bring a Lesson Plan template Download Essential ? and email to me. Download the 5' s Lesson Plan
2	Week of September 1	History's Mysteries History, It is in the Bag Debrief Article Anatomy of a Lesson Dissection of a lesson plan (5E) (groups) **Portfolio**	Read: *Becoming a Critical Educator* Chapter 1 (online book) Read: Ants Chapter 1 and 12 Read: Social Justice Chapter 4 Write the story of your education (guidelines posted) **Post Thinker** (me)
3	Week of September 8	Debrief Thinkers (ideas balloons) Knowledge/ Schooling/ Education	Read: Ants Chapter 2 Read: Social Justice Chapter 3 Bring a digital camera

		Hinchey Courageous Conversations Share Stories Thinkers Groups **Action Research Project**	Review 5 Es Lesson Plan template **Post Thinker** facilitated by Group One
4	Week of September 15	5 E's Workshop: Geography Debrief Thinkers Group One Mapping the Community Community Walk I **FRIDAY SEPTEMBER 19 FIELD TRIP**	Read: Ants Chapter 4 and 6 Read: Social Justice Chapter 7 Bring digital camera Download Community Project Proposal Listen to Hello Neighbors: NPR story Begin Working on Lesson Plans **Post Thinker** facilitated by Group Two
5	Week of September 22	Debrief Thinkers Group Two Community Maps with Pictures So What? TEKS to CT Community Walk II **Class Community Project Proposal**	Read: Ants Chapter 7 Read: Social Justice Chapter 5 Bring Pictures **Post Thinker** facilitated by Group 3
6	Week of September 29	Debrief Thinker Group Three Gallery Walk Ruby Bridges (model 5 e's) ***(On campus)*** **Art Application Activity**	Read: Social Justice Chapter 6 Read: Lies Chapter 7 Bring Pictures Explore Eye on the Third Ward website **DUE:** Lesson Plan One **Post Thinker** facilitated by Group 4
7	Week of October 6 (AATC 9-12)	Debrief Thinker Group Four Voices Alternative Texts Research Traveling Journals Controversial Issues Unit (on campus)	• Read: Ants Chapter 10 and 12 • Read: Rethinking Article • DUE: Art Application Activity • DUE: Research Journal • Post Thinker Facilitated by Group 5
8	Week of October 13	Reflection Week	e on one meetings (optional)
9	Week of October 20	Debrief Thinker Group 5 Controversial Issues	JE: Community Project Proposal
10	Week of October 27	Media Literacy (on campus)	• Read: Patriotism, Nationalism, and Our Jobs as Americans. • Watch the movie Horton Hears a Who • Post Thinker facilitated by Group 6
11	Week of November 3	Debrief Thinker Group 6 Patriotism	• Read: Ants Chapter 5 • Post Thinker facilitated by Group 7 • DUE: Controversial Issues Unit

12	Week of November 10 (NCSS)	Debrief Thinker Group 7 Peace	ork on remaining assignments
13	Week of November 17	Curriculum Fair	JE: Action Research Project
14	Week of November 24	GOBBLE, GOBBLE, GOBBLE	t, sleep, and eat again.
15	Week of December 1	Portfolio Share Outs	JE: Portfolio

APPENDIX E
Syllabus Spring 2009

University of Houston College of Education
COLLABORATION
FOR LEARNING & LEADING

QUEST 2 – ELED 4320 Elementary Social Education Spring 2009

Instructor-: Debby Shulsky M.Ed
Office Hours- by appointment, Office- 230 Farish Hall, box- 256 Farish Hall
Cell 832-633-9509; Email dshulsky@sbcglobal.net

Description of Course
A field-based approach, students are immersed in an elementary school environment where they develop a knowledge base and practical skills for elementary social studies education using diverse pedagogical approaches, such as: participating in and facilitating collaboration and informational and instructional technologies. The elementary school immersion facilitates collaboration among the educational community, as well as in the methods learning environment. The instructor explores constructivist-teaching models fostering the learners' individual responsibility for constructing unique educational experiences. While the course supports the NCSS national social studies standards, the curricula foundations also reflect the Texas Teacher Proficiencies including learner-centered approaches to: knowledge, instruction, integration, equity, communication, and professional development. ELED 4320 integrates the SBEC identified Social Studies Standards located in Domain III (Competencies 16 – 19) and assessed through the TExES EC-4 Generalist exam TExES social studies competencies located at (http://www.texes.nesinc.com/).

Social Education Program Statement
While we resist "defining" Social Education, our program area emphasizes 3 areas of study; critical pedagogy, cultural/media studies and Social Studies education. We believe that education, interpreted broadly, has the potential to advance social justice.

Objectives of the course
Upon successful completion of this course, students in this class will be able to demonstrate

- Explore the foundations, skills, values and status of social studies education (EC-4: Domain III; EC-6 Generalist: Standards I – X; Competencies 16 – 19).
- Develop a comprehensive knowledge of the state-mandated competencies/standards for entry-level elementary social studies teachers in all seven social studies content areas (EC-4 Generalist, Domain III: Standards I – X; Competencies 16 – 19).

- Construct and implement learner-centered social studies curricula, instruction and assessment that recognize schools' and students' diversity (EC-4: Domain III – Competency 16).
- Construct collaborative methods for curricula integration across the social studies and other disciplines most specifically the integration of literature and technology (EC-4 Generalist: Domain III – Competency 16).
- Explore the relationship between the student learner and continuous professional development (EC-4 Generalist: Domain III – Competency 16).
- Practice frequent reflective skills regarding social educative instruction (EC-4: Generalist: Domain III – Competency 16).

Course Materials
Some of the writings, lectures, films, or presentations in this course may include material that conflicts with the core beliefs of some students. Please review the syllabus carefully to see if the course is one that you are committed to taking. If you have a concern, please discuss it with me at your earliest convenience.

Required Texts

Cowhey, Mary. (2006). *Black Ants and Buddhists: Thinking Critically and Teaching Differently in the Primary Grades.* Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishers (ISBN: 1571104186)

National Council for Social Studies: *Expectations of Excellence: Curriculum Standards for Social Studies*
Order toll free 9-5 1-800-683-0812
Website: *http://www.socialstudies.org/standards/introduction/*

Required Electronic Tools*:*

EC – 4 Social Studies TEKS and Strategies Online: **(print TEKS out)**
http://www.tea.state.tx.us/ssc/index.html

EC-6 TeXES Competencies **(print Social Studies)**
http://www.texes.ets.org/assets/pdf/testpre

APA Reference Guide
http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource

Course Wiki Page
The Social Education tab on this page and my name will give you access to announcements, class recaps and assignment distribution. Access to this site will be facilitated through your cluster facilitator. http://questprogram.pbwiki.com

All one on one communications will go through my personal email:
dshulsky@sbcglobal.net

ADA Statement
When possible, and in accordance with 504/ADA guidelines, we will attempt to provide reasonable academic accommodations to students who request and require them. Please call the Center for Students with Disabilities at ext. 3-5400 for more assistance.

Academic Honesty
Students are expected to abide by the university's academic honesty policy in all matters concerning this course. (http://www.uh.edu/dos/hdbk/acad/achonpol.html). In particular, plagiarism, "Representing as one's own work the work of another without acknowledging the source," whether intentional or unintentional, will be treated with great severity, as directed by the university.

Assessment Procedures and Course Requirements
The requirements for this course fall into one of two categories. The first category offers practice and feedback only; these are called **Coached Assignments**. Although these assignments are not "graded" in the traditional sense, they offer practice, imperative feedback and experience toward the second requirement category: the **Big 5**, which are assessed using a four (4) point assessment scale. Each assignment will be accompanied by a detailed rubric, which outlines the criteria for each of the following assessment levels:

4-Exemplary 3-Proficient 2-Progressing 1-Unacceptable

***You may resubmit any assignment assessed as Unacceptable within one (1) week. Failure to turn in a Coached Assignment eliminates the opportunity for resubmission of work**. Any assessment concerns may be addressed via conference with me; you must bring all coached/assessed assignments for this meeting.

The final course assessment is based on average of the BIG 5 assignments and aligns with the following assessment guidelines:

A > 3.667, A - >3.333, B+ >3.0, B > 2.667, B-> 2.333 and so on.

Coached Assignments

Traveling Reflective Journal
Due Dates: Beginning of every class
These discussions are both individual and exchanged through the length of the semester. All discussions should be approached as interactive dialogues in which students will post questions and insightful comments that push everyone's thinking. Journal entries must be posted by the next class day. Reflections should referent all class texts and class discussions. APA style documentation should be used. These journals are tied to the BIG 5 assignment, **Analyzing the Angles: Reflective Journals and Letters.**

Annotated Bibliography Cards
We will create annotations in class during discussions related to literature and alternative texts. This discussion will allow you to build your own annotated bibliography in relationship to the BIG 5 assignment, **The Tool Box: Texts as Tools to Integration.**

Pop Culture Case Study
Due Date: Week of February 23.
You will explore how pop culture (toys, music, film, etc) influences gender roles. This analysis will be modeled after an in -class model and will incorporate a student survey and personal experience with the pop culture discovered through the survey. This assignment is directly tied to the BIG 5 assignment, **Civic Center: Alternative Perspectives Photo story.**

Lesson Plans
Due Dates: Lesson I on the day, March 10 Lesson 2 Week of April 6
You will design and teach one original lesson incorporating an alternative text (movie, song, children's literature, game, toy, etc) for each rotation. You will arrange a time to teach with your SBTE that honors the deadline for the assignment. In addition, you will arrange for a fellow student to observe your teaching.
Your lesson plans should be designed to part of the BIG 5 assignment, **Construction: Building an Integrated Unit.**

Field Trip Analysis
Due Date: Week of April 20.
You will compare difference between "common" field trips and alternative sites that are designed for service**.** This analysis is tied the BIG 5 assignment**, Neighborhood Watch: A Community Project Proposal.**

THE BIG 5

The Tool Box: Texts as Tools to Integration
You will create an annotated bibliography card box around an assigned NCSS theme. Resources will include a variety of alternative texts and be presented at an in-class resource fair. **Due Date: Week of February 23.**

Construction: Building an Integrated
Using a self -created curriculum matrix, you will design three (3) lesson integrated unit incorporating all the elements of the course. (alternative text, field trip, community involvement, etc.)
Matrix Due Date: Week of February 9 Unit: Week of April 13

Civic Center: Alternative Perspectives Photo story
Student groups will research stereotyping or other controversial issues in Social Education, locate lessons that address the issue, rewrite the lessons to incorporate varied perspectives, and create a photostory for presentation to the class.
Due Date: Week of April 20
Neighborhood Watch: Community Project Proposal
Student groups will create a proposal for a school principal or community organization offering an idea for a class community project that involves the collaboration between

students and community members or organizations. Projects should be devoted to an NCSS theme.
Due Date: April 27

Analyzing the Angles: Journals and Letters
Full participation in the traveling journal is required to get an exemplary on this assignment. Students will use reflective journals to compose two letters, one to me and another to prospective classroom parents.
Due Date: Week of April 27
* Specific criteria for each assignment will be distributed as we proceed throughout the semester.
* If conditions warrant, any alteration to this assignment overview is at the discretion of the instructor.
* Every attempt will be made to notify students of changes in advance.

Additional Notes

Scholarship
This course is highly reflective in nature and not about "getting the right answer." Yet, all assignments will be expected to possess a high level of analysis, synthesis, and scholarly justification for student approaches to the assignments.

This course is a transition into the professional world and students will be held to a high level of expectation regarding professional behavior to include attendance, punctuality, deadlines, and all communication. (Reference professional attributes in QUEST teacher Candidate Handbook)

Attendance/Punctuality
Class attendance and participation are vital in a learner-centered, constructivist classroom. Attendance will be managed through sign-in sheets presented **before** the start of each class. Sign in sheets are unavailable after the start of class. Notification via email or phone is requested for absences. More than 2 tardies warrants a warning email from the instructor. More than 3 the cluster facilitator will be notified.

Professional Courtesy
Cell phones or blackberries should be disabled at the start of class. This includes any mode (i.e. text messaging, etc.)

Deadlines
All assignment dates are posted on the schedule. Closely monitor these dates and plan accordingly.
Exceptions regarding due dates will be made **only once**, if requested prior to original due date.

SCHEDULE SPRING 2009

Date	Standards and Strategies	Agenda	Assignments
Week of January 26	**Standard:** NCSS II (Time Continuity and Change) **Strategies:** Student engagement, hands-on instruction, use of graphic organizer, alternative text.	Introductions History's Mysteries History, It is in the Bag Introduction to standards Traveling Journal Set Up Syllabus Q & A *Coached Assignment 1: The Matrix*	• Begin Matrix Assignment: **Due Week of February 9.** • Read: *NCSS Expectations of Excellence:* The Introduction • Read: *High Cost of Uncritical Thinking* (see Wiki) • Read: *Black Ants and Buddhists:* Chapter 8 (copies given) • Journal Entry 1
Week of February 2	**Standard:** NCSS II (Time Continuity and Change) **Strategies:** Integration, Literature as alternative text, use of stations	Journal 1 Discussion Resource Fair Annotated Bibliographies Worms Integrated Stations Matrix Connections *BIG 5 Assignment 1: Tool Box*	• Begin Tool Box Assignment: **Due Week of February 23.** • Read: Integration and the Social Studies (copies given) • Read: *NCSS Expectations of Excellence:* Thematic Standards • Read: *Black Ants*: Chapter 2 • Journal Entry 2
Week of February 9	**Standard**: NCSS X (Civic Ideals and Practices) **Strategies:** visual literacy, use of technology, and multiple perspectives.	Journal 2 Discussion Breathing Life into a Lesson Plan Visual Literacy: Ruby Bridges Anatomy of a Lesson: 5 E's lesson plan. Schedule one on one meetings. *Coached Assignment 2: Pop Culture Case Study* *Coached Assignment 3: Lesson Plan*	• Begin Pop Culture Case Study: **Due Week of February 23.** • Begin Lesson Plan #1: **Due via email Week of March 9.** • **Due Date: The Matrix** • Read: Social Studies for Social Justice Chapter 1 & 2 (copies given) • Read: Black Ants Chapter 7 • Journal Entry 3
Week of February 16	**Standards:** NCSS IV (Individual Development and Identity)	**No Class**	• Work on Pop Culture Case Study • Work on The Tool Box • Read: *Black Ants*: Chapters 1, 12
Week of	**Standards:** NCSS IV	Journal 3 Discussion	• **Due Date: Pop Culture**

February Week 23 .	(Individual Development and Identity) NCSS VII (Science, Technology, and Society NCSS X (Civic Ideals and Practices) S**trategies**: media literacy, controversial issues and stereotyping. *one on one meetings February 27.	Bratz to Batman Resource Fair *BIG 5 Assignment 2: Integrated Unit*	**Case Study** • **Due Date: The Tool Box** • Read: Rethinking Schools (copy given) • Read: *Kinderculture* Chapter 10 (copy given) • Begin Integrated Assignment: **Due Week of April 13** • Journal Entry 4
Week of March 9		Reflection Week	• One on one meetings • Read *Becoming a Critical Educator* Chapter 1 & 2 (eBook) • **Due Date: (March 10) Lesson Plan**
Week of March 16		SPRING BREAK	Partake in your favorite Pop Culture!
Week of March 23	**Standards:** NCSS I (Culture) NCSS IV (Individual Development and Identity) NCSS VI (Power, Authority, and Governance) NCSS X (Civic Ideals and Practices**)** **Strategies:** alternative text, differentiated learning.	Social Education over Spring Break Journal 4 Discussion Patriotism and Music *Coached Assignment 4:Lesson Plan 2*	• Read: Politics and Patriotism in Education (copy given) • Begin Lesson 2 Due Week of April 17. • Journal entry 5
Week of March 30	Standards: NCSS IV (Individual Identity) NCSS X (Civic Ideals and Practices) Strategies: Primary Source documents and real world connections	Journal Discussion 5 Citizenship for Social Justice *Coached Assignment 5: Field Trip Analysis*	• Read Black Ant Chapter 6 • Begin Field Trip Analysis: **Due Week of April 20** • Journal entry 6
Week of April 6	**Standards**: NCSS I (Culture) NCSS IV (Individual Identity NCSS X (Civil Ideals and Practices) **Strategies:** alternative viewpoints, technology	Journal Discussion 6 Alternative Perspectives: War and Peace *BIG 5 Assignment 3: Civic Center Photo story*	• Read *Black Ants* Chapter 5 & 11 • Read *Lies My Teacher Told Me* Chapter 2 (copy given) • Begin Civic Center Photo story: **Due date Week of ?** • Journal entry 7
Week of	**Standards:** NCSS III	Journal Discussion 7	• Read *Building Bridges*

April 13	(People, Places and Environments) NCSS IV (Individual Identity) NCSS X (Civil Ideals and Practices) **Strategies:** field trips, gallery walk	Community Walk Framing the Community Integrative Unit Fair *BIG 5 Assignment 4: Community Project Proposal*	Chapter 1 (copy given) • Read *Black Ants* Chapter 4 &10 • Begin Community Proposal: **Due date Week of April 27** • **Due date: Integrative Unit** • Journal entry 8
April 17 AERA		Independent Work Week	• Work on field trip analysis. • Due date: Lesson Plan
Week of April 20		Journal Discussion 8 Integrative Unit Project Fair Journal Review *Big Assignment 5: Journals & Letters*	• **Due date: Photo story** • Begin Journal and Letters: **Due date Week of April 27** • Journal Entry 9
Week of April 27		Journal 9 Discussion Community Project Presentations Goodbyes	**Due date: Community Project** **Due date: Journals and letters**
Week of May 4		Portfolio Presentations	

APPENDIX F
Fall 2008

University of Houston College of Education
COLLABORATION
FOR LEARNING & LEADING

QUEST 2 – ELED 4320 Elementary Social Education
Fall 2009

Instructor-: Debby Shulsky M.Ed
Office Hours- by appointment, Office- 230 Farish Hall, box- 256 Farish Hall
Cell 832-633-9509; Email dshulsky@sbcglobal.net

Description of Course
A field-based approach, students are immersed in an elementary school environment where they develop a knowledge base and practical skills for elementary social studies education using diverse pedagogical approaches, such as: participating in and facilitating collaboration and informational and instructional technologies. The elementary school immersion facilitates collaboration among the educational community, as well as in the methods learning environment. The instructor explores constructivist-teaching models fostering the learners' individual responsibility for constructing unique educational experiences. While the course supports the NCSS national social studies standards, the curricula foundations also reflect the Texas Teacher Proficiencies including learner-centered approaches to: knowledge, instruction, integration, equity, communication, and professional development. ELED 4320 integrates the SBEC identified Social Studies Standards located in Domain III (Competencies 16 – 19) and assessed through the TExES EC-4 Generalist exam TExES social studies competencies located at (http://www.texes.nesinc.com/).

Social Education Program Statement
While we resist "defining" Social Education, our program area emphasizes 3 areas of study; critical pedagogy, cultural/media studies and Social Studies education. We believe that education, interpreted broadly, has the potential to advance social justice.

Objectives of the course
Upon successful completion of this course, students in this class will be able to demonstrate

- Explore the foundations, skills, values and status of social studies education (EC-4: Domain III; EC-6 Generalist: Standards I – X; Competencies 16 – 19).

- Develop a comprehensive knowledge of the state-mandated competencies/standards for entry-level elementary social studies teachers in all seven social studies content areas (EC-4 Generalist, Domain III: Standards I – X; Competencies 16 – 19).
- Construct and implement learner-centered social studies curricula, instruction and assessment that recognize schools' and students' diversity (EC-4: Domain III – Competency 16).
- Construct collaborative methods for curricula integration across the social studies and other disciplines most specifically the integration of literature and technology (EC-4 Generalist: Domain III – Competency 16).
- Explore the relationship between the student learner and continuous professional development (EC-4 Generalist: Domain III – Competency 16).
- Practice frequent reflective skills regarding social educative instruction (EC-4: Generalist: Domain III – Competency 16).

Course Materials
Some of the writings, lectures, films, or presentations in this course may include material that conflicts with the core beliefs of some students. Please review the syllabus carefully to see if the course is one that you are committed to taking. If you have a concern, please discuss it with me at your earliest convenience.

Required Texts

Cowhey, Mary. (2006). *Black Ants and Buddhists: Thinking Critically and Teaching Differently in the Primary Grades.* Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishers (ISBN: 1571104186)

Required Electronic Tools*:*

National Council for Social Studies: *Expectations of Excellence: Curriculum Standards for Social Studies*
http://www.socialstudies.org/standards/introduction/

Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Social Studies **(print out all grade level TEKS)**
http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/rules/tac/chapter113/index.html

EC – 4 Social Studies TEKS and Strategies Online: (Go to downloads for glossaries and bios for test prep)
http://www.tea.state.tx.us/ssc/index.html

Social Studies EC-6 Generalists Standards (**print out Social Studies)**
http://www.sbec.state.tx.us/SBECOnline/standtest/standards/ec6gen.asp

APA Styling and Format Guide
http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/

Course Wiki Page
The Social Education tab on this page and my name will give you access to announcements, class recaps and assignment distribution. Access to this site will be facilitated through your cluster facilitator.
http://questprogram.pbwiki.com

All one on one communications will go through my personal email:
dshulsky@sbcglobal.net

ADA Statement
When possible, and in accordance with 504/ADA guidelines, we will attempt to provide reasonable academic accommodations to students who request and require them. Please call the Center for Students with Disabilities at ext. 3-5400 for more assistance.

Academic Honesty
Students are expected to abide by the university's academic honesty policy in all matters concerning this course. (http://www.uh.edu/dos/hdbk/acad/achonpol.html). In particular, plagiarism, "Representing as one's own work the work of another without acknowledging the source," whether intentional or unintentional, will be treated with great severity, as directed by the university.

Assessment Procedures and Course Requirements
The requirements for this course fall into one of two categories. The first category offers practice and feedback only; these are called **Coached Assignments**. Although these assignments are not "graded" in the traditional sense, they offer practice, imperative feedback and direct connections to the second requirement category: the **Big 5**, which are assessed using a four (4) point assessment scale. Each assignment will be accompanied by a detailed rubric, which outlines the criteria for each of the following assessment levels:

4-Exemplary 3-Proficient 2-Progressing 1-Unacceptable

***You may resubmit any assignment assessed as <u>Unacceptable</u> within one (1) week. Failure to turn in a Coached Assignment eliminates the opportunity for resubmission of work**. Any assessment concerns may be addressed via conference with me; you must bring all coached/assessed assignments for this meeting.

The final course assessment is based on average of the BIG 5 assignments and aligns with the following assessment guidelines:

A > 3.667, A - >3.333, B+ >3.0, B > 2.667, B-> 2.333 and so on.

<u>Coached Assignments</u>

Reflective Journals
Ongoing throughout semester

These journals are designed as a structure for students to critically reflect about the craft of teaching. Students are asked to engage in wonderings about the course models, readings, classroom discussions, and field experiences. (i.e.) How do these pieces connect? Do they? What aching questions keep arising? ….
Journal entries are expected to articulate students' exploration of their teaching philosophy, challenges, concerns, innovative ideas, etc. Weekly entries will be required and will guide classroom discussions.

The Tool Box: Texts as Tools to Integration
You will create an annotated bibliography card box on an assigned NCSS theme. Resources will include a variety of alternative texts and be presented at an in-class resource fair. **Due date_____**

Alternative Tools: Pop Culture Case Study
You will explore how pop culture (toys, music, film, etc) influences gender roles. This analysis will include a student survey and personal experience with the pop culture discovered through the survey.
Due date_____

Beyond the Classroom: Community Project Proposal
Student groups will create a proposal for a school principal or community organization offering an idea for a class community project that involves the collaboration between students and community members or organizations. **Due date_____**

Lesson Plans
Due Dates: Lesson I _____ Lesson 2 _____
You will design and teach one original lesson incorporating an alternative text (movie, song, children's literature, game, toy, etc) for each rotation. You will arrange a time to teach with your SBTE that honors the deadline for the assignment. In addition, you will arrange for a fellow student to observe your teaching.

THE BIG 5

The Blueprint: Creating an Integrated Curriculum Map
You will build a matrix that aligns and analyzes one assigned NCSS theme, Ec-6 Social Studies TEKS, 2 other content area TEKS and the TExes standards. Alternative resources to support the teaching of these standards will be included.

Construction: Building an Integrated Unit
You will design three (4) lesson integrated unit incorporating all the elements of the course. (alternative text, field trip, community involvement, etc.)

Civic Center: Alternative Perspectives Photo story
Student groups will research stereotyping or other controversial issues in Social Education, locate lessons that address the issue, rewrite the lessons to incorporate varied perspectives, and create a photostory for presentation to the class.

Neighborhood Watch: Community Project
Based on the Community Project Proposal, student groups will design a community project curriculum that connects learning objectives (TEKS) to community action.

Analyzing the Angles: Letters To…
Students will use reflective journals to compose two letters, one to me and another to prospective classroom parents. Audience appropriate, letters should exhibit your choices in philosophy and commitment, as guided by the insights of your journal. Completed journals will be handed in conjunction with this assignment

* Specific criteria for each assignment will be distributed as we proceed throughout the semester.
* If conditions warrant, any alteration to this assignment overview is at the discretion of the instructor.
* Every attempt will be made to notify students of changes in advance.

Scholarship
This course is highly reflective in nature and not about "getting the right answer." Yet, all assignments will be expected to possess a high level of analysis, synthesis, and scholarly justification for student approaches to the assignments.

Professional Attributes
This course is a transition into the professional world and students will be held to a high level of expectation regarding professional behavior to include attendance, punctuality, deadlines, and all communication. (Reference professional attributes in QUEST teacher Candidate Handbook)

Attendance/Punctuality
Class attendance and participation are vital in a learner-centered, constructivist classroom. Attendance will be managed through sign-in sheets presented **before** the start of each class. Sign in sheets are unavailable after the start of class. Notification via email or phone is requested for absences. More than 2 tardies warrants a warning email from the instructor. More than 3 and the cluster facilitator will be notified.

Professional Courtesy
Cell phones or blackberries should be disabled at the start of class. This includes any mode (i.e. text messaging, etc.)

Deadlines
All assignment dates are posted on the schedule. Closely monitor these dates and plan accordingly.
Exceptions regarding due dates will be made **only once**, if requested prior to original due date.

ROTATION ONE
FALL 2009

Date	Standards	Agenda	Assignments
Week of August 25		Out of the Box Course at a Glance Context of Class	Copy and bring TEKS for elementary Ec-6 Copy Social Studies Standards Download and read syllabus Bring an artifact from home that represents your essence. Order books
Week of August 31	**Standards:** NCSS II: Time, Continuity & Change; TExes: 016-1, 017-8, 017-10	Introductions History's Mysteries History in a Bag Standards/ The Matrix Reflective Journals Syllabus Q & A	Read : NCSS Expectations of Excellence: The Introduction Read: NCSS Expectations of Excellence: Thematic Strands Read : *The Basics, Educational Purpose, and the Curriculum* (handed out) Journal entry One (prompts will be posted on wiki) Bring a S.S. lesson plan you might consider for your classroom **Big 5-1: The Blueprint (due week of 9-14)**
Week of September 7	**Standards:** NCSS II: Time, Continuity & Change; TExes: 016-1, 016-2, 016-3, 016-8	Discussion1- Chalk Talk Anatomy of a Lesson Resource Fair Blueprint Connections	Read Chapter 1, 2, & 7 in *Black Ants* (hand out) Journal 2 (prompts posted on wiki) (art) Gather ideas and resources for first lesson plan. **Coached 1: The Tool Box (due week of September 21)**
Week of September 14	**Standards:** NCSS X : Civic Ideals and Practices ; TExes: 016-4, 017-10, 019-2, 016-8	Discussion 2-Art Breathing Life in a LP Visual Literacy: Ruby Lesson Plan Coaching **(Blueprint Due)**	Go to http://www.wordle.net/ and design a word cloud using your teaching philosophy text. Read one of various articles on pop culture (handed out) Journal 3- (prompts posted on wiki) **Coached 2: Pop Culture Case Study (due week of September 21)** **Coached 3: Lesson Plan 1 (due week of October 5)** **No journal this week, just prep for jigsaw!**
Friday, September 18			Independent Pop Culture Field Experiences

Week of September 21		Discussion 3-Jigsaw Bratz to Batman Resource Fair **(Tool Box Due)** **(Pop Case Study Due)**	Read Chapter 6 *Black Ants* Read Chapter 1 *Building Bridges* (handout) Journal 3(prompts posted on wiki) Community Drive bys
Week of September 28		Discussion Citizenship for Social Justice Action Groups 4- Final Word Schedule one on one mtgs.	Read Chapter 1 *Becoming Critical Educator* (e-book) Read Integrating Curriculum Journal 4 (prompts posted on wiki) **Coached 4: Community Project Proposal (due week of October 19)**
Week of October 5		Discussion 5: Four A's Integrated Stations Integration Brainstorms Rotation One Insights Confirm one on one mtgs. **(Lesson Plan 1 Due)**	**Big 5-2 Integrated Project (due week of October 26)** Read Excerpts of Chapter 2, *Critical Pedagogy: Notes from the Real World* (handout) Read excerpts from *Lies my Teacher Told Me* Journal 5 (prompt posted on wiki)
Week of October 12		**Reflection Week** *One on one meetings*	See assignments week of October 5.

Other due dates to put in your calendar: **Week of November 2-** Alternative Photo Story,
November 10 – Letter To,
Week of November 16- Community Project

Your vision will become clear only when you look into your heart. Who looks outside, dreams. Who looks inside, awakens." ~Carl Jung

REFLECTIVE JOURNALS/ CLASSROOM DISCUSSIONS

What am I looking for?
Every student must participate in reflective discussions each week. Participation must be thoughtful and justified by: (1) significant quotes found within the required readings, (2) references to discussions or events observed in the methods classroom and possible application to your own teaching future, (3) Each journal entry should conclude with a question to bring to the discussion the following week.

Coaching Will Address
Does the discussion response include thoughtful (critical analysis) insight to the readings?
Does the discussion response include relevant reflections on classroom activities/ field experiences?
Does the discussion flow or prompt further discussion?
Is there evidence that the reflections are unearthing more questions to ponder and discuss with the class?

ROTATION TWO

Date	Standards	Agenda	Assignments
Week of October 19		Citizen Service Learning Action	Serivce Learning Article Handout Community Project
Week of October 26	**Standards:** NCSS II: Time, Continuity & Change; TExes: 016-1, 017-8, 017-10	Discussion 7-Patriotism Integrated Unit Fair Community Time **(Integrated Project due-Alief)**	**Lies My Teacher Told Me**
Week of November 2	**Standards:** NCSS II: Time, Continuity & Change; TExes: 016-1, 016-2, 016-3, 016-8	Thanksgiving **(Integrated Project FB)**	**Handout Photo Story**
Week of November 9		No class: WORK DAY	Read Chapter 12 *Black Ants* Write your statement of philosophy again and Wordle it.

APPENDIX G
TRAVELING JOURNAL LOG

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Traveling Journal Log

You will participate in shared reflective discussions each week requiring that you respond to weekly prompts that will be generated by your instructor. Working from a "Traveling Reflective Journal," you will consider your instructor's question, read the relevant material for the week and carefully construct a response that allows the instructor to assess your ability to process the readings and class instruction in a scholarly manner. In your discussions, you will address the information as if you were talking to a colleague about the nuts-and-bolts of the course. In your will consider how the material will assist you in your future teacher role. As you formulate your response, you are to refer to your readings and cite your sources as you go along. At the end of the reflection process, you will then think about burning issues that came up and continue the reflection by posing a new question to your peers. Each question will be discussed at the beginning of the next class. After the discussion, you will forward the journal to a classmate so they may respond to your question. You will receive a new journal and the process begins again. You will respond to your classmates' inquiry along with the instructor's next query. You are encouraged to challenge your peers to think at a critical level.

What am I looking for?
Every student must participate in reflective discussions each week. Participation must be thoughtful and justified by: (1) significant quotes found within the required readings, (2) references to discussions or events observed in the methods classroom and possible application to your own teaching future. Each week, random samples will be monitored and thoroughly coached to ensure that you are on the right track. You must participate in the reflective process each week in order to pass the journal to your colleagues each week.

Coaching Will Address
Does the discussion response include thoughtful (critical analysis) insight to the readings?
Does the discussion response include relevant reflections on classroom activities?
Does the discussion flow or prompt further discussion?

Journal Log

Week #	Journal	Question