BUILDING A CRITICALLY REFLECTIVE PRACTICE: RELATING BROOKFIELD’S FOUR LENSES TO INSERVICE TEACHERS’ EXPERIENCES

by

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated in loving memory of my mother, Helen Price Akridge. It is often quoted that when God closes a door, He opens a window. Well, upon her death, I felt the door had been slammed in my face, and I was not sure if I was ready for this journey. Soon after beginning the program, I realized that it was the window for which I had been searching. I continued in her honor.

Mom was a graduate of Bessie Tift College in 1953, and she was delighted when I received my Master’s from Tift College of Education. She always encouraged me to advance my education as far as I was able to go. She often told me that nothing could deter me from continuing my education if I had enough stamina and courage for the journey. It has been an uphill climb, and I have often been delayed and discouraged. However, her memory provided the gumption, and sometimes the chutzpa, to endure the journey.

I would also like to thank my family who tolerated late nights and grumpy mornings. I missed too many vacations, and even after school study time. To my sweet young man, who has endured many a weekend playing alone while I studied and wrote, I commit to becoming the overly involved parent that you deserve. We will focus on getting you ready for your Junior Level Black Belt testing next year. To my husband, my “olds”, my sister, brothers, aunts, cousins, and friends, I cannot wait to catch up with you.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

As this journey ends and the door closes, I am encouraged as I reflect on the path that led me here. It was not without tremendous support, encouragement, and understanding from those around me. First, I must acknowledge my committee members. Dr. Randolph, thank you for stepping into the position of chair, your patience, understanding, and ability to create Sheldonian, and other, analogies to help me relate to the process. Your feedback, support, and reassurance helped me to look at my research from a new perspective. Dr. Swanson, your constructive feedback kept me on track. Dr. Scott-Simmons, your positive energy and passion kept me motivated.

I would like to thank my participants. Your openness and honesty provided a level of depth to the study. Our conversations prompted me to reflect upon aspects of my life and my teaching that I would not have otherwise considered. Thank you again!

Thank you to my editor, Dr. Elizabeth Keaney. I salute you. Your expertise making this word processing program bend to your every whim was an amazing feat. It inspired me to learn more about the hidden wonders it holds—later on.

I would also like to thank my colleagues. Marsha, I cannot thank you enough for all those afternoons of encouragement, discourse, and motivation. “Aunt Judy”, “Curly,” and Denise, I thank you for your prayers, shoulders, and fires you lit when I was losing stamina. Mike, thank you for your understanding and support through each assignment
change request. I truly believe that with each rotation, I learned more about what it takes outside the classroom to make teaching inside the classroom possible.
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ABSTRACT

LAURA HELEN. NAGER
BUILDING A CRITICALLY REFLECTIVE PRACTICE: RELATING BROOKFIELD’S FOUR LENSES TO INSERVICE TEACHERS’ EXPERIENCES
Under the Direction of JUSTUS J. RANDOLPH, Ph.D.

Educators are a special group of professional practitioners. They are often characterized as self-directed, lifelong learners who routinely implement some level of reflection to improve instruction. Dewey referred to these reflective practitioners as professionals who, in an effort to continually develop their practice, actively consider multiple points of view when making decisions and weigh the impact those decisions will have on others. Upon making a decision, the reflective practitioners can explain, defend, or change those decisions when needed.

The purpose of this narrative inquiry was to investigate how the practice of reflection authentically develops in context of the classroom and to compare the critical content of reflection between teachers and their contexts. I sought to explore the impact life experiences had on the development of the teachers’ social consciousness and their depth of reflection the influence of life and academic experiences on instructional choices over time, including the consideration of multiple perspectives. Data collected from four veteran teachers with at least seven years of classroom teaching experience included a series of in-depth interviews, participant generated timelines, field notes, and follow up communications. McCracken’s (1988) five-step method for analyzing the narrative
interviews was employed. MAXQDA was utilized to collect and sort through the open, axial, and selective coding stages.

The findings suggest that these participants consistently engaged their autobiographical lens when reflecting. Considering the needs and perspectives of the student by engaging the student lens was also more consistent than the other two lenses. All of the participants experienced some growth in their reflective practice with colleagues and theory. Findings suggest that the participants’ level of social consciousness varied based upon school climate, school demographics, openness of colleagues, and administrative expectations appeared to influence the results. For some participants, personal stressors such as money, divorce, and gain or loss of a child indicated a positive correlation to the level of consciousness displayed.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

“Educators must ask themselves for whom and on whose behalf they are working. The more conscious and committed they are, the more they understand that their role as educators requires them to take risks, including a willingness to risk their own jobs.”
-Paulo Freire, 1985

Today’s classrooms are changing. They are more academically, racially, and socioeconomically diverse than ever before (Center for Education Policy, 2007). Heraclitus is credited with saying, “The only thing that is constant is change” (Kahn, 1979, p. 148). Prior to the 1980s, state-to-state comparisons of student achievement were considered taboo (Birman, 2013). Then came the 1983 report, A Nation at Risk. According to Birman (2013), the report pointed out the need for a way to monitor student achievement across America so that more accurate nation-to-nation comparisons could be conducted. Congress and numerous education groups called for the establishment of academic goals and expectations for all students in the core content areas. Eventually, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) was enacted in an effort to create and maintain an educational equilibrium nationwide. Uniform accountability measures, such as mandated standardized assessments and teacher evaluations (Aske, Connolly, & Corman, 2013) were expectations, especially of districts that received federal funding.

However, the uniform and test-driven curriculum and instruction required by NCLB did not consistently promote pedagogy attuned to diverse student needs (Hannaway & Hamilton, 2008). Local schools received the responsibility of
implementing a workable solution to bridge the requirements of uniformity and the needs of a diverse student population (Jorgensen & Hoffman, 2003). Schools that encouraged the use of critical practices have provided educators a way to balance the requirements of current accountability measures with the pedagogy necessary to impact the learning for all students (Gay & Kirkland, 2003).

Changes in measures of teacher qualifications accompanied the changes in the method and measure of student achievement (Kober, 2007). Most recently, the unit by which teachers are measured shifted from being “highly qualified” (United States Department of Education, 2001) to “highly effective” (Kober, 2007). Bransford, Darling-Hammond, and LePage (2005) wrote of parents who witnessed the pedagogical practices of highly qualified teachers. The teachers had previously received multiple content area awards and publication honors, yet these same teachers were not able to assist a diverse student population in effectively synthesizing the information. Bransford et al. (2005) posited that effective teachers will find a way to differentiate instruction to meet student needs.

What good is educational change that does not bring improvement? Bergson (1911/1998) imparted, “To exist is to change, to change is to mature, to mature is to go on creating oneself endlessly” (p. 7). Teachers are aware of this endless creation of self. Often they are on their own to analyze their practice as well as decode effectively the meanings of the subtle events that unfold within the lives of others each day (Gay & Kirkland, 2003; Jay, 2003). In 2017, the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) reported the urgency of valuable change: “The teaching profession
cannot afford to wait a year or more for new teachers to become really effective” (para. 2); they “have to be effective from Day 1” (para. 2). Teachers are responsible for the education and personal growth of nearly 20% of the population of the United States (United States Census Bureau, 2013). Teachers must be able to provide effectively the best outcome for the growth of the population for which they are responsible (Sellars, 2012).

The traits of effective leaders include an internal motivation to continue learning, a tendency to collaborate with others in the pursuit of a positive outcome, an ongoing analysis of their personal point of view while respecting the different views of others, and a comprehension of the hegemonic structure of their organization (Argyris, 1990; Banks, 1994; Brown, 2004; Senge, Kleiner, Roberts, Ross, & Smith, 1994; Wheatley, 1992). Research conducted with university teacher educators and students indicates that an effective teacher should implement the following critical practices: (a) become a lifelong, self-directed learner (Brookfield, 1995b; Darling-Hammond, 2005; Gureckis & Markant, 2012; Knowles, 1984); (b) work collaboratively toward a critical pedagogy (Arora, Kean, & Anthony, 2000; Bean & Stevens, 2002; Beltran, 2004; Carrington & Selva, 2010; Ellison, 2008; Franz, 2007; Gomez, 1996; Wlodarsky, 2005; Zeichner & Liston, 1996); (c) critically reflect to transform assumptions (Johnson, 2002; Newman, 1987; Schlitz, Vieten, & Miller, 2010; Taylor, 2008; Weber, 2008); and (d) consider the structure and nature of schools (Andrews & Grogan, 2001; Cochran-Smith et al., 1999; Gutierrez, 2008; Ladson-Billings, 1994).
According to Saylor (2014), many of the studies cited in the previous paragraph focus narrowly on quantitative or categorical survey data. Studies on self-directed learning derived much of its data from other fields of study. The empirical results have been inconclusive in the domains relevant to teacher education and reflection (Gureckis & Markant, 2012). Studies touted to be conducted with teachers in the classroom often focused on K-12 teachers who participated in district-approved professional development (Arora, Kean, & Anthony, 2000; Ellison, 2008; Williams & Grudnoff, 2011) instead of coursework and strategies the teachers might have chosen themselves. In other studies, teachers in higher education analyzed their own instruction and curriculum choices using student weekly responses to develop a critical practice (Canning, 1991; Horwitz, 2007; Wlodarsky, 2005). Still other teacher educators conducted studies using the data from student journals and interviews for the purpose of creating an attribute scale with which to measure the development of student levels of reflective practice (Carrington & Selva, 2010; Kember et al., 1999; Myers, 2003). In these cases the results, though heavily quantitative, were too narrow to be generalized (Chi, 2010; Hegerty, 2009; Kember et al., 1999; Williams & Grudnoff, 2011; Wlodarsky, 2005).

Surveys used in these studies provided researchers with characteristic traits of a critically reflective practitioner; however, the transformational path taken by each participant was not, nor was it feasible to be, recorded in the findings. Much of the qualitative data resulted from studies conducted with preservice teachers in which the focus was on critical incidents reports of their coursework (Brookfield, 1992, 2002; Gilstrap, 2010; Gilstrap & Dupree, 2008; Glowacki-Dudka & Barnett, 2007; Holyoke &
Larson, 2009; Jaruszewicz, 2000; Keefer, 2009; Tripp, 1993), as well as whether or not the depth of reflective comments reached a critical level (Chi, 2010; Kember et al., 1999). Jaeger (2013) encouraged teacher educators to adopt instructional practices that promoted effective reflection by teachers. Zeichner (1986) noted the low rate of transference in the level of reflective practice from preservice to novice year hindered the research from being replicated or combined into one study.

As detailed above, the focus of the many earlier studies on reflection and reflective practice focused on its use among preservice teachers. Allison-Roan (2006) and Langley-Weber (2012) conducted qualitative studies of inservice teachers' use of critical reflection and the factors that influenced its use. Allison-Roan (2006) explored the critical process behind teachers’ choice of pedagogical options and the internal and external influences taken into consideration. Langley-Weber (2012) attempted to correlate life experiences with the manner in which teachers categorized classroom situations as “problems”, how they assessed the environmental factors influencing the situation, and what actions they took to enhance the learning experience of students. The development and influence of teachers’ depth of understanding and the effective implementation of critical practices over time were the foci for Langley-Weber’s inquiry.

Theoretical Framework

The present study was situated within the body of literature on adult learning theory (Brookfield, 1985; Knowles, 1988), transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 1995, 1998, 2000), critical social theory’s tenets of critical social consciousness (Freire, 1974/2012; Gimenez, 1998; Vygotsky, 1934/1987) and critical pedagogy (Apple, 1988;

Adult Learning Theory

According to Brookfield (1995a), four areas of study reify adult learning theory in education: self-directed learning, critical reflection, experiential learning, and learning to learn. At the heart of adult learning is the process of self-directedness in which adults determine what they will learn, how they will gain the knowledge they seek, and how they will gauge success throughout the process (Knowles, 1975). The second part of adult learning involves the application of critical theory to examine how personal knowledge is framed in relation to one’s culture and one’s situatedness of that culture in society (Frank, 2008; Vygotsky, 1934/1987). “Situatedness implies that where you are when you do what you do matters” (Reffat & Gero, 1999, p. 2). The practice of critical reflection provides a framework to compare what is known and how it came to be known to the cultural hegemony (Giroux, 1983). This “self-knowledge is a prerequisite for autonomy in self-directed learning” (Mezirow, 1985, p. 27).

This meaning making derives from experiences (Mezirow, 1990). Gadamer (1975) defined an experience as a single event in an individual’s life. The term provided a succinct description of an event that exists within itself. A lived experience, according to van Manen (1990), is a culmination of feelings, meanings, and values existing up to that moment based on the significance afforded them through memory. Learning through
lived experiences provides a participatory action that Dewey (1938/1997) deemed a natural part of the learning cycle. Kolb (1984) extended this idea of learning in the form of a structure by which adults make sense of information. As part of an experience, the learners assesses it for similarities to and differences with their current beliefs and understandings before assimilating, or modifying, the new knowledge. An incorporation of reflection and awareness provides a construct for learning to learn or coming to understand the methods that work best for locating the truth in the information received (Kitchener & King, 1990).

Contextualizing the self-directed learner. Researchers have often attributed the characteristics of motivation and self-directedness to teachers (Baiocco & DeWaters, 1998; Berliner, 1987; Garrison, 1997; Goleman, 1995). Knowles (1975) considered self-direction to be part of a natural human process. Self-directed learning originates from multiple perspectives based on its catalyst (Merriam, 2004). In other words, that which causes a person to decide to learn something new could be an external condition or internal motivation to improve (Merriam, 2004).

Self-directed learners, who are internally motivated, respond to personal desires to emancipate or change themselves for the good of self or society by engaging in learning outside the confines of packaged courses or lock-step procedures (Brookfield, 1995b; Foley, 2000; Marsick & Watkins, 2003). The current schemata about what and how to learn influences the manner in which self-directed learners choose to approach the task (Hodkinson & Hodkinson, 2003). Frankl (1959/1985) observed, “Man is ultimately self-determining” (p. 154). The choices people make influence their personal growth and
empower the human race (Frankl, 1959/1985). Education philosopher Paulo Freire (1970/2012) purported a similar idea in which a learner’s level of growth and empowerment was dependent on the learner’s level of consciousness, or conscientization. While an explanation of Freire’s (1970/2012, 1974/2012) levels of consciousness is beyond the scope of this section, in summary, the levels correlate to a growing awareness of hegemony in the environment. Bruner (1996) also investigated the personal growth of teachers based upon the mode of meaning making they utilized.

Recent and seminal studies (Carr, 2009; Carter, 2003; Haertel, Walerg, & Haertel, 1981; Vartuli, 2005) also implored teachers to effect change. Osterman and Kottkamp (2004), for instance, encouraged teachers to effect change by critically reflecting on their pedagogical style. Sellars (2012) also urged teachers to reflect on their level of social consciousness in addition to their pedagogy. Other researchers (Foley, 2000; Marsick & Watkins, 2003) suggested teachers should effect change by engaging in learning outside the confines of packaged courses or lock-step procedures. However, the level to which a teacher employs self-direction depends on the environmental context and his or her internal beliefs (Merriam, 2004).

Contextualizing the effective teacher. Effectiveness is, of course, almost tautological with being a successful teacher (Haycock, 1998). Anderson (2009) attempted to clarify the difference between efficient and effective stating that efficient is doing what is required, but effective is fulfilling the requirements correctly. Horowitz et al. (2005) conceded that “effective teachers are able to figure out not only what they
want to teach, but also how to do it in such a way that students can understand and use the new information and skills” (p. 88).

In 2013, Stojiljković, Todorović, Djigić, and Dosković built upon Anderson’s (2009) work. They focused on cognitive factors that influence the quality and the effectiveness of teaching. Lupascua, Pânisoarăa, and Pânisoarăa (2013) also referred to Anderson’s (2009) conclusion regarding effective teachers as those possessing the three components of ability, personality, and knowledge. Goleman (1995) described effectiveness in terms of these same character traits. Some of the other traits he named were self-awareness, persistence, optimism, and common sense.

Anderson (2009) viewed effectiveness as only part of success in teaching—it “is a measure of the outcome of learning. It is what students can do, because of teaching, to demonstrate they have met the objectives of the course” (p. 3). Hunt, Wiseman, and Touzel (2009) professed that while “knowledge, skills and dispositions” (p. 7) are essential characteristics for teachers to possess, “effective teaching necessitates high levels of informed and reasoned decision making” (p. 6). Similarly, Sternberg (1996) posited that effectiveness was dependent on a person’s ability to analyze, generate, and apply acquired knowledge and skills.

Transformational Learning Theory

The focus of this narrative inquiry was the development of critical practices, such as reflection, in the classroom. Critical reflection is one element of transformative learning. This type of inquiry sought to reveal how teachers’ lived experiences influenced the integration of content into their instruction and how those experiences with
instructional outcomes transformed their reflective practice. The works of Dewey (1933), Mezirow (1981), Piaget (1968), and Vygotsky (1930/1978) provided support for this portion of the inquiry.

Although not all of the aforementioned researchers used the term critical reflection, the context in which the action is recommended for use does fit within the meaning of the definition as applied to this inquiry. Beginning with Dewey (1933), teachers were encouraged to participate in reflective action that would scaffold their transition into inquiry-oriented practitioners by facing the situations and determining what is to be done. Adding to Dewey’s (1933) suggestion, Cunningham (2000) remarked, “Reflection is not just a skill; it’s a disposition that develops over time and through experience” (p. 122). Educators’ reflective practice must not only analyze and evaluate content and praxis for accountability but also include the needs of the learner.

Piaget (1968) asserted that learners construct knowledge via interactions with their surroundings, often experiencing disequilibrium or an inconsistency between what they expected to encounter and the actual experience. From this point of experiential imbalance, the learner is motivated to make meaning. In Piaget’s context, this may be observed as a teacher constructing knowledge through classroom interactions that create disequilibrium and eventually a transformation of the learner’s constructed knowledge.

Vygotsky (1930/1978) theorized that an important experience of learning occurs with the creation of a zone of proximal development. This zone of proximal development is “the distance between the actual developmental level, as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined
through problem-solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers” (Vygotsky, 1930/1978, p. 86). It is the difference between learning alone compared to learning with guidance.

For teachers practicing reflection, it is possible to create a zone of proximal development by collaboration when planning lessons, creating assessments or evaluating student work (Allen & Blythe, 2004). By taking into account the perspectives of others, a critical level of reflection has, by definition, been employed. Within Mezirow’s (1991) theory is a focus on the development of critical reflection by the educator. It specifically spotlights how educators’ awareness of critical social issues within their worldview influences their lived experiences, and in turn, the integration of content into their instruction. Thus, educators’ reflective practices are transformed from a technical look back at how a lesson went to a more meaningful investigation that includes reasons why a lesson went the way it did. Mezirow’s (1981) theory of transformation is a multifaceted adult learning theory consisting of 10 stages. The first three stages, explicated in the following paragraphs, are significant to this inquiry.

The first stage focuses on a change in perspective, based on experiences, causing a change in the traditional beliefs and thoughts of the learner. Mezirow (1991) asserted that for a change to truly be transformational, it must induce a sense of disequilibrium. Upon accomplishing the first stage, the learner moves into the second stage. It is here that a transformation requires the learner to invoke a deep examination of currently employed reflection and practice. Delving into a deeper analysis of these actions allows the learner to become aware of existing assumptions.
In the third stage, the learner must place these assumptions within the political and social context of the existing organization in which he, or she, operates. Only after such analysis can a learner continue past the third stage to engage in dialectical discourse based on those assumptions and finally the active integration of a new perspective (Hoffman-Kipp, Artiles, & Lopez-Torres, 2003; Mezirow, 2000). Mezirow (2000) concluded that transformative learning theory helped to shape views of critical reflection. Although Mezirow (2000) emphasized the highway of cognitive processes used by individuals as they obtain the skills and dispositions to confront the assumptions they hold about their worldview, critical reflection is the vehicle by which individuals travel to this state of consciousness.

Teachers and administrators are called upon to consider “their ethical and moral obligations to create schools that promote and deliver social justice” (Andrews & Grogan, 2001, p. 24). In order for a diverse leadership to meet such obligations, all leaders must assess their awareness of the oppressive structures and practices of the institution, develop plans for change, and collaborate within the leadership to implement and sustain those changes toward the end goal (Mezirow, 1998).

Critical Social Theory

Additional support for the present inquiry’s framework comes from critical social theory, which is a unique derivative of social theory and critical theory. Social theory itself is a compilation of ideas “about how societies change and develop, about methods of explaining social behaviour, about power and social structure, gender and ethnicity,
modernity and ‘civilisation’, revolutions and utopias” (Harrington, 2005, p. 1), but social theories tend to focus on how change can, or should, occur with a discipline.

The idea of critical theory was the brainchild of a group of German sociologists in the 1920s. Together they organized The Frankfurt School, which was not truly a school at first. Instead, it was a division within the Institute of Social Research at The University of Frankfurt. These social scientists were committed to integrating traditional empirical inquiry of the social sciences and the transformative social movements to address the emancipation of the working class from oppression (Kellner, 1990). Within a decade came the Nazi regime. The group’s study of social structures of power were not appreciated, and the group was forced to move out of Germany. By the time World War II reached global proportions, the members were living on both coasts of America. With the separation came changes in leadership, focus, and procedure. Although the term critical theory was not popular among the members of the group for nearly another decade, postwar leader Max Horkheimer and his supporters believed in the necessity of studying society’s issues of oppression from multiple angles simultaneously because sociocultural concerns of power do not occur in isolation. To implement this change, Horkheimer amended the procedure of the institute away from the historical orientation of separate fields of study conducting interdisciplinary work to one in which philosophy and the social sciences would work together to critique on another’s claims (Kellner, 1990).

In this change of focus resides the first view of critical social theory. Humans, it was argued, were more than just individuals oppressed in unique ways, but part of a
community limited by community laws, community economy, and the dominant religion of the community (Kellner, 1990). The overlaying of the tenets of social theory and critical theory generated the concept of critical social theory. The concept can be viewed as the critique of social practice “which reproduce[s] dominant forms of social activity” (Kellner, 1990, p. 19). In essence, critical social theory incorporates the hegemony of the dominant class (Brown, 2004). When the theory is applied to education, teachers find themselves motivated to evaluate their own culturally produced social consciousness and pedagogical perspectives (Freire, 1970/2012). Teachers must then take into consideration the part they play in the historically oppressive role of the banking concept of education and the schools systems that continue to produce citizens who are expected to uphold the dominant culture of the country (Freire, 1970/2012).

Developing social consciousness. As teachers examine the status quo, their understanding, or level of consciousness, increases (Freire, 1970/2012). It is in the critical examination of the social conditions of the school environment that educators must question their role in the lives of students (Weis, 2012). Freire (1970/2012) defined critical consciousness as an individual’s assessment of self in relation to the world around them, in concert with a critique of how they have been informed by, and furthered, the dominant sociopolitical culture (Weis, 2012).

Freire (1970/2012, 1974/2012) presented a concept of levels of consciousness, originally named as the three stages of magical consciousness, naïve consciousness, and critical consciousness. Later, the terms were expanded to semi-intransitive, naïve transitive, transitive, and critically transitive (Freire 1974/2012). These terms are
explicated in the next chapter. The levels are not sequential, but instead overlap, depending upon the individual’s perception of the social situation (Freire, 1974/2012). In essence, as individuals assess their cultural heritage, and how they fit within the sociopolitical power structures of that heritage, they begin to develop an increased awareness of how the people around them fit into or subject to the influence of those same power structures (Freire, 1974/2012). Then individual must choose an action step, which may be passive, aggressive, or somewhere in between, depending upon the culturally based perspective of the individual (Freire, 1974/2012; Fromm, 1984).

Developing critical pedagogy. Teachers enter the profession with a certain socially conscious stance. Many come with a desire to help the next generation carry on the positive aspects of our country, while others hope to lend a helping hand to those who are less fortunate (Weis, 2012). Teachers’ lenses of cultural beliefs and attitudes towards the role of education influence their pedagogical choices. Through this multifocal lens, teachers interpret their task and institute their practice (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005). The aspect of critical practice, however, purports an additional step in the selection of pedagogical choices. Critical reflection begins with acknowledging a disorienting dilemma of practice (Allison-Roan, 2006). In other words, some aspect of chosen pedagogy that did not meet expectations is examined in the form of reflection.

As with any practice, the level of reflection may initially be only on the task itself. This surface level inquiry only takes into account how well aligned the task was with the desired outcome. In other words, did the task represent the standard? As educators expand, their colleagues may be employed to identify gaps in pedagogical practice
(Brookfield, 1995b). If the task did not match the standard, then perhaps a colleague
could recommend a task that will.

Although the teacher has, on some level, admitted to a need for change, the level
of reflection only considers the presentation mode of the task or if the task was
appropriate for the students. The next level of reflection may prompt the educator to
consider how the student fits into the grand scheme of instruction (Brookfield, 1995b).
What is it about the student that causes the gap? As the student’s role is considered, a
critically reflective educator would also inquire into the student’s role within the
sociopolitical structure of the educational institution (Brookfield, 1995b).

As the quest reaches its climax, the educator is motivated to reflect through the
lenses used to make pedagogical choices (Brookfield, 1995b). Educators who evaluate
their historical, cultural stance, assess the contradictions, and change their pedagogy are
better able to help students identify and address sociopolitical power structures (Greene,
1988; Langley-Weber, 2012). This transformation of a lived experience into
knowledgeable awareness provides an educational haven respectful of all students’ needs
(Weiss, 2012).

Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework, according to Maxwell (2013), consists of “ideas and
beliefs” (p. 39) the researcher has concerning the phenomenon under study. This inquiry
explored on the concept of how critically reflective teaching practices develop over time.
Freire (1998), Mezirow (2012), and Brookfield (1985) provided some general constructs.
As mentioned in the previous section, Freire (1998) proposed the process of developing
critical practice to be dependent upon the participant’s operant level of consciousness. Mezirow (2012) suggested that a change in ethics, values, or beliefs about the world requires a disorienting event that creates a critical level understanding within an individual’s habits of mind, and Brookfield (1985) described this level as that which holds an individual’s paradigmatic assumptions. He purported that it is the conscious action, based upon a teacher’s growing awareness of multiple perspectives, which propels reflective practice to a critical level. As a result, a foundation for more effective, critically conscious instruction and ultimately, a new level of understanding is generated (Mezirow, 1990). Figure 1 provides an illustration.

**Figure 1.** Conceptual framework illustrating the level of awareness of self and surroundings necessary to reflect at a critical level

Within the classroom, teachers employ self-directed learning when they choose to reflect upon the outcome of their lessons. The level of reflection provided within this
process varies based upon the individual’s depth of knowledge of and consideration for the topic at hand (Mezirow, 1990). The perspective lens through which a teacher focuses this reflection is, according to Mezirow (1990), partially based on past cultural experiences. These same perspectives influence how meaning is made and how values are assigned to a variety of beliefs (Mezirow, 1990). Upon exposure to new information that challenges the established perspective, teachers must make an actionable decision to either continue with existing status quo or integrate the new information into their own social consciousness.

This simple adaptation may not be critical enough to truly transform core perspectives, nor is critical reflection simply stopping to assess how a process is completed. It is not a Pavlovian stimulus-response (Covey, 1990; Frankl, 1959/1985). Instead, critical reflection requires an analysis of why an action should be taken, or why a change should be made (Mezirow, 1990). At times, this analysis may create an opportunity for an anomaly to be revealed. This dilemma, whether independent (Mezirow, 1990), or within a social group (Freire, 1970/2012), provides an opportunity for a critical shift in social beliefs and educational practices to transform educators’ core perspectives (Mezirow, 1990).

Through this research, an understanding emerges of how teachers’ critical practices develop over time. This conceptual framework was developed to illustrate the lens through which the data was first analyzed and interpreted (Brookfield, 1985). Thus, elucidating my perspective that teachers’ praxis may transform over time through the process of critical reflection (Brookfield, 1985; Mezirow, 1990).
Statement of the Problem

Researchers advocate that classroom teachers use a critical lens when they implement the curriculum (Giddings, 2005; Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2001; Howard, 2003; Lyons, 2010; Rodgers, 2002). Reflection and collaboration on instruction and student work, as an exercise, has been advocated for decades (Allen & Blythe, 2004; Blythe, Allen & Powell, 1999; Costa & Kallick, 1993; Senge, 1990). The works of Hunt et al. (2009), as well as Osterman and Kottkamp (2004), reiterated the recommendation for teachers to reflect upon their own professional practice as a way to develop a critical perspective on pedagogy.

However, these reflective exercises have seldom been viewed from a critical context of the classroom through narrative inquiry (Allison-Roan, 2006; Hagan, 2007; Jay, 2003). In fact, there is a dearth of studies investigating the various ways inservice teachers, who are not participating in a specific professional development program, develop critical practices in the classroom over time (Allison-Roan, 2006; Rayford, 2010).

Research investigating the use of critical practices by teachers only reinforces the need for allowing teachers to prioritize this personal examination of self and critically collaborate to improve instruction (Allison-Roan, 2006; Glickman et al., 2001; Lyons, 2010). Proponents of critical practices ascribe to a perspective in which critically reflective professionals possess traits of effectiveness and self-direction (Brookfield, 1995b; Freire, 1998; Gay & Kirkland, 2003; Hicks & Villaume, 2001; Hunt et al., 2009; Kraft, 2002; Zeichner & Liston, 1996). The proponents make the case that a teacher’s
use of critical practices, such as critical reflection and critical social consciousness, leads to the development of more effective instruction. Hunt et al. (2009) referenced Dewey, who described effective teachers as those who continually seek to develop their practice through reflection. Dewey (1933) described these reflective practitioners as teachers who critically reflect on their decisions, consider different points of view when making decisions, explain their pedagogical decisions, and change a decision willingly if presented with supporting evidence.

While the theoretical evidence and programmed research support the ideal of these critical practices by classroom teachers, too often new teachers begin their careers having little practice with reflection at a critical level (Conley & Garner, 2015). Most are unaware of the demographics of their surroundings, much less the hegemonic policies that exist within the schools (Brookfield, 1995b). Teachers typically work independently, and although they occasionally receive opportunities to gather with their peers, a meeting hour or even a single teacher workday is insufficient to elicit a critical transformation in their state of mind (Bonner, 2006; Guskey & Huberman, 1995; Mezirow, 2000). Some teachers view reflection as a time-consuming extravagance (Ladson-Billings, 2001; Maeroff, 1993). For others, it is difficult and disheartening to realize that improvement is needed without time to process what has occurred in order to make adjustments (Lyons, 2010). For this reason, inquiry into the impact a critical approach to teaching may have on teachers’ personal and professional morale is necessary (Allison-Roan, 2006; Hagan, 2007; Haycock, 1998; Jay, 2003; Rabkin, 2014).
Research Questions

The primary research questions for this narrative inquiry were:

1. What is the nature of the development of veteran teachers’ critically reflective practice over time?
   a. In what ways is Brookfield’s (1995b) autobiographical lens displayed in the narratives of the participants over time?
   b. In what ways is Brookfield’s (1995b) lens considering the student perspective displayed in the narratives of the participants over time?
   c. In what ways is Brookfield’s (1995b) lens considering critical collaboration with colleagues displayed in the narratives of the participants over time?
   d. In what ways is Brookfield’s (1995b) lens considering theoretical literature displayed in the narratives of the participants over time?

2. In what ways, if any, do the participants’ narratives reveal the development of a critically social consciousness (Freire, 1990) through critical reflection over time?

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this narrative inquiry was to investigate the development of teachers’ critically reflective practices over time. Implementing narrative in this qualitative study provided a unique opportunity to explore the concept of reflection, how the practice of reflection authentically develops in context, and compare the critical content of reflection between teachers and context. Using the concepts of Brookfield’s
(1995b) four lenses of becoming a critically reflective teacher as a foundation, I set out to understand the influence of life experiences on the development of teachers’ social consciousness and depth of reflection. I sought to understand the influence of life and academic experiences on instructional choices over time, including the consideration of multiple perspectives. In sharing the circumstances and perspectives that brought the participants to their current level of wide-awakeness (Greene, 1988), I attempted to present other educators routes to continue “growing in solidarity with other human beings” (Fromm, p. 24) using multiple perspectives that examine their situatedness, with the goal of resisting the bonds of negative freedom (Fromm, 1984).

Significance of the Study

This narrative inquiry is significant for teachers, administrators, professional development specialists, teacher educators, parents, and students because it makes visible the various forms of stimuli influencing the development and use of critically reflective practices, such as reflection and social consciousness, by classroom teachers over time.

This inquiry claims the promise of positive freedom through collaboration that results from the development of critically reflective practices (Freire, 1970/2012; Fromm, 1984, Giddings, 2005). When referring to Freire, Duarte (1999) proclaimed that freedom is to not only “be, but to become more human” (p. 1) In Pedagogy of the Oppressed, Freire (1970/2012) placed the human consciousness first within itself stating, “Human beings are because they are in a situation” (p. 90). Freedom comes with the development of critically reflective practices focusing on consciousness outside the teacher’s own
being. “They will be more the more they not only critically reflect upon their existence but critically act upon it” (Freire, 1970/2012, p. 90).

Administrators, professional development specialists, and teacher educators can benefit from the voices of classroom teachers to effectively evaluate the practice and implementation of critical reflection (Sellars, 2012). Additionally, administrators can consider their own ability to support critically reflective practices and positively influence teachers’ perspectives regarding critical reflection that leads to the transformation of teachers’ instructional practice (Jay, 2003). Richert (1990), as cited in Jay (2003), stated, “This kind of meta-reflection is critical to understanding the role of reflection in teaching and attempts to foster its occurrence” (p. 22). For teacher educators, the results provide insight into “the well-known gap between theory and practice” (Korthagen, 1993, p. 321).

Parents, students, and other community members benefit from the transformation of teachers who participate in critically reflective practices, which includes critical reflection and collaboration (Haycock, 1998). As teachers expand their critically reflective practices, there is the potential for transformation of their perspectives. Thinking critically about the impact their lived experiences and knowledge have on instruction encourages consideration of the lived experiences and knowledge base of the students, families, and community when planning the learning opportunities in the classroom (Horwitz, 2007). Such transformation enhances the effectiveness of the teacher’s practices (Darling-Hammond, 2010) by expanding the related student support,
bolstering the interest of students, and increasing students’ academic success (Jay, 2003; Zeichner & Liston, 1996).

Delimitations and Limitations

Although some aspects of this inquiry expand upon criteria set in previous studies, there were delimitations (Creswell, 2007). The first delimitation was the selection of participants from one private college in the Southeast. The second delimitation was that the participants were enrolled in the college’s advanced degree programs. A third delimitation was that potential participants must have at least seven years of classroom experience. The researcher’s chosen definitions, the choice of interview questions, and the limited focus of analysis using Brookfield’s (1995b) four lenses to incorporate critical reflection as part of a critical practice, resulting in use of the term critically reflective practices, also reduced the scope of the inquiry.

Others factors contributed to the limited the scope of the inquiry. The context of a smaller, private institution’s advanced degree program limited the population of candidates to the particular advanced degree programs offered at the college. The candidates enrolled in advanced degree programs were willing to incur the additional financial burden of attending not only graduate school, but also graduate school at a private institution. Additionally, the student-teacher ratio set for the program limited each advanced degree program’s population. Other limitations of the population included the demographics of the population enrolled in the advanced degree program, the personal and pedagogical perspectives embodied by each candidate in the population, the
similarities and differences in backgrounds among the population, and the body of knowledge and experiences to which they were previously exposed.

Furthermore, the number of advanced degree candidates in the population who initially agreed to participate limited the context of the selected participants. Subsequently, the participants' ability to fulfill their role throughout the data collection process limited the final product. The demographic makeup of the participants from the same race and gender limited the scope of the data. Another limitation was that participants’ length of experience at the current grade level, which influenced the perspectives and scope of lived experiences utilized during the critically reflective process (Berliner, 2001). The participants’ willingness to truthfully recall and retell the facts of a story limited to the data as well.

Assumptions

This study included several assumptions. First, the researcher assumed the participants understood the concept of reflection and that they employed some version of reflection even though they taught in different environments and grade levels. An additional assumption was that the participants had experienced some ideological change since they began teaching and would be able to recognize the change as they reflected upon their prior experiences (Greene, 1988). It was also assumed that the participants provided a true account of their perspectives, both past and present (McCracken, 1988).

Definition of Terms

The following terms used in this inquiry are defined based upon its scope. Terms with multiple meanings are defined based on the best fit for the context of the inquiry.
Autobiographical learner is an educator who participates in self-reflective practices including confronting hegemonic or pedagogical beliefs that may have been acquired through lived experiences (Brookfield, 1995b).

Conscientization is the realization that we know what we know (Freire, 1970/2012; Wink, 2011).

Critical consciousness extends beyond consciousness, which is an individual’s general awareness, or withitness as Maxine Greene would put it, of the world. The ability of an individual to perceive social, political, and economic oppression and willingness to take action against the oppressive elements of society are the key variables that elevate this awareness to a critical level (Freire, 1990).

Critical pedagogy considers many aspects of the classroom environment, the students, and the world outside of the classroom. It is “a way of thinking about . . . the production of knowledge, the institutional structures of the school, and the social and material relationships of the wider community, society, and nation-state” (McLaren, 1998, p. 445).

Critically reflective practices refer to a teacher’s development and use of critical pedagogy, critical reflection, and critical social consciousness based on recommendations by Brookfield (1995b).

Critical reflection is a process of thoughtful review or contemplation on one’s actions with an awareness of broad social and political implications and a willingness to move one’s future actions toward democratic principles that promote justice and equality for all individuals (Allison-Roan, 2006). Dewey (1933) defined it as a persistent and
careful consideration of any form of knowledge in light of the context that supports it and the “conclusions to which it tends” (p. 9) in order to inform future praxis.

*Critical social theory* “possesses a stereoscopic vision which recognises every situation as one both of gain and loss, of change and stasis, of possibility and limit” (Fay, 1987, p. 215).

*Critical theory* is the practice of transformative intent in which life events are examined for emancipatory goals (Cook, 2004).

*Emancipatory learning* is “an organized effort to help the learner challenge presuppositions, explore alternative perspectives, transform old ways of understanding, and act on new perspectives” (Mezirow, 1990, p. 20). A higher level of support from coworkers and administration is needed for individual learning to flourish in this way.

*Lived experiences*, which can be vicarious or barely recalled or moments of significance, become part of the fabric of our lives. Lived experiences are “related to each other like motifs in . . . a symphony” (van Manen, 1990, p. 37).

*Meaning perspective*, or *meaning making*, is the perspective from which an individual derives meaning, often considered at a time when an individual or group’s assumptions are framed in order to assign meaning to an experience (Mezirow, 1990).

*Negative freedom* is a transitive state of being through which one passes in an attempt to escape the unexpected limitations of new, unfamiliar experiences before achieving *positive freedom* (Fromm, 1984).
Operant level of consciousness is the categorical level of consciousness in which a person currently views and reacts to the sociocultural power structures (Freire, 1970/2012).

Pedagogy identifies teachers’ enactments of instruction and curriculum. It is the bringing together of teachers’ formal learning, their personal beliefs and values, and the context of the learning environment (Allison-Roan, 2006).

Positive freedom is a state of self-awareness along with the ability to balance individual needs and desires without separating from the community (Fromm, 1984).

Preservice teacher refers to an individual in training to become a teaching professional.

Professionalism, according to the Georgia Department of Education (2014) Teacher Keys Evaluation System (TKES), is a quality possessed by a teacher who meets certain criteria within the standards of education as related to proficiency.

Professional teacher is one who continues to learn (Darling-Hammond, 1996), consistently considers the learning goals of diverse students (Brighton, Hertberg, Moon, Tomlinson, & Callahan, 2005), utilizes instructional practices befitting the students while maintaining the standards (Wenglinsky, 2004), and exhibits qualities of professionalism (Gay & Kirkland, 2003).

Reflection is a process that includes the assessment of assumptions and beliefs to better determine their value and usefulness in solving internal, or external, conflict (Mezirow, 1990).
Reflective practice is a “fluid and holistic” (Osterman & Kottkamp, 2004, p. 40) “critical assessment of personal and organizational practice relative to personal, organizational, and social values and goals” (p. 18). A cyclical process of inquiry involving a “willingness and drive to act professionally and responsibly” (Osterman & Kottkamp, 2004, p. 190).

Reflective practitioners are professionals who, in an effort to continually develop their practice, will actively consider the perspectives of others, weigh the impact of those perspectives in relation to their own, defend their decisions, and amend their stance willingly if provided relevant evidence (Brookfield, 1995b; Dewey, 1933).

Self-directed learning is a process that takes place among all types of people from many backgrounds outside the tradition, formal classroom. As defined by Malcolm Knowles (1975), self-directed learning is a “process in which individuals take the initiative, with or without the help of others, in diagnosing their learning needs, formulating learning goals, identifying human and materials resources for learning, choosing and implementing appropriate learning strategies, and evaluating learning outcomes” (p. 18).

Situatedness is a term used to describe the way an object, or person fits into a learning opportunity. It “denotes the way(s) in which individual minds (cognitive processes) are shaped by their interaction with social and cultural structures” (Frank, 2008, p. 4).
Social consciousness is an individual’s awareness of the level of injustice or privilege in one’s personal life, or surrounding environment, when compared to the lives of others (Giddings, 2005).

Subjective reframing is a process involving critical self-reflection of one’s own assumptions about narrative (applying reflective insight from someone else's narrative to one's own experience), a system (economic, social or educational), an organization or workplace, feelings and interpersonal relations (counseling or psychotherapy) and the way we learn (Mezirow, 2000, p. 23).

Teacher reflection is “a deliberate analysis of information gained through observation in order to inform future practice and promote the development of a philosophy regarding the act of teaching” (Morgan, 2007, p. 6).

Transformative learning is the process of learning through critical self-reflection, resulting in a change in perspective that includes an understanding that was previously unknown or unvalued (Mezirow, 1990).

Transformational capacity is the ability to interpret or construct new meaning (Runco, 2004).

Summary

Many educators believe that they are self-directed, lifelong learners (Darling-Hammond, 1999) who use basic levels of reflection as a vital part of their daily routine to hone lesson plans and instructional pedagogy. Although there has been a national push for education professionals to consider all students as they shape the curriculum, teachers are seldom afforded time to reflect critically on the multiple perspectives of the varied
contexts of the classroom. With the increased pressures to keep abreast of the frequent changes to the required standards, fewer opportunities are available to confer critically with colleagues regarding instructional theories that best serve students, much less translate those same theories effectively into practice (Bonner, 2006).

Few studies focus on the development of inservice teachers’ critical practices concerning the classroom (Allison-Roan, 2006; Rayford, 2010). The present narrative inquiry set out to investigate the development of teachers’ critical practices, such as reflection and collaboration. Although prior work addressed the value of such practices (Allen & Blythe, 2004; Blythe, Allen & Powell, 1999; Costa & Kallick, 1993; Senge, 1990), a dearth of inquiries focused on the influence of a teacher’s level of criticalness on these practices and the influence of lived experiences (Mezirow, 2000; van Manen, 1990) on personal and professional development (Allison-Roan, 2006; Hagan, 2007; Jay, 2003; Rabkin, 2014). Other educators and administrators will benefit from knowing how these participants developed this aspect of criticalness, in addition to what other transformations occurred in the participants’ original practice.

Organization of the Dissertation

This dissertation contains five chapters. Chapter 1 introduced the inquiry, providing a theoretical and conceptual framework, a statement of the problem, guiding questions, the significance and purpose of the inquiry, limitations of the inquiry, the assumptions of the researcher, a list of terms pertinent to the inquiry, and a chapter summary. Chapter 2 includes reviews of past literature and empirical studies germane to the topic and its conceptual underpinnings. Chapter 3 provides insight to the
methodology of the research and includes descriptions and explanations of narrative inquiry, the research questions, rationale for the design of the study, the data collection process and instruments, and data analysis. Also considered are the researcher’s bias and trustworthiness. Chapter 4 contains a comprehensive description of the themes that arose during the inquiry. The narrative stories that describe the development of their reflective practices over time include the participants’ background information, as well as past and present operant levels of social consciousness. Also addressed are the concepts of Brookfield’s (1995b) four lenses of perspective: autobiographical, student, colleague, and theoretical literature. Chapter 5 presents a discussion of the resulting themes in relation to the literature, implications of this study, and recommendations for further research.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature reviewed for this narrative inquiry focused on studies related to the development of classroom teachers’ critically reflective practices over time. The seminal works of Brookfield, Mezirow, Dewey, and Freire initiated the quest to illustrate the milestones of change teachers experienced on the journey of growth and development. Randolph (2009) wrote, “The Educational Resources Information Center (1982) defines a literature review as an ‘information analysis and synthesis, focusing on findings, summarizing the substance of the literature and drawing conclusions from it’” (p. 85). The purpose of this literature review was to “a framework for relating new findings to previous findings” (Randolph, 2009, p. 2).

The theories of adult learning, transformative learning, and critical social theory, discussed in tandem with the supporting constructs of self-directed learning, professional effectiveness, and critical practices, served to frame this chapter. Brookfield’s (1995b) goal for educators focuses on the development of critically reflective practices by concentrating on the subcategories of critical social consciousness, critical reflection, and critical pedagogy. Although these constructs are primarily associated with a single theory, evidentiary support from the literature suggested that each construct was embedded within multiple theories.
This chapter consists of 10 sections and a summary. The first section focuses on generating an overall search strategy. Subsections contain information to Randolph’s (2009) five-step guide to a literature review, which includes a search strategy used to generate sources for this literature review, followed by the process of collecting, evaluating, and organizing the data that resulted from the searches. The second section provides a preview of the theories and constructs presented in Chapter 1. In the next three segments, the constructs of this research are situated within its associated theory. The sixth segment offers explanations of the concept of reflection, multiple definitions from earlier research that include classifications and models developed in earlier decades, and how the different levels/modes of reflection relate to the classroom, collaborative practice, and transformation. Brookfield’s (1995b) four lenses for becoming a critically reflective teacher are further detailed in the seventh segment. The eighth segment provides reviews of literature and meta-analyses that support the concepts of Brookfield’s (1995b) four lenses. In the ninth segment are reviews of related studies of teacher beliefs and practices conducted over time. The tenth, and final, section reviewing literature includes a longitudinal, biographical study incorporating all of Brookfield’s (1995b) lenses of critical reflection. The chapter concludes with a summary for the inquiry.

Generating a Search Strategy

Prior to conducting a literature review, researchers recommend selection of an explicit plan (Cooper, 1988; Randolph, 2009). Randolph’s (2009) meta-analysis of literature reviews presented multiple guides for conducting a qualitative or quantitative literature review. The terms used to label the steps for the plans vary, but the
characteristics of each step remain intact. The terms chosen for this narrative’s five-step
literature review include: (a) a rationale for the literature review; (b) formulate the focus
of the research; (c) devise a search strategy to collect data; (d) classify results; and (e)
organizing the data. The following subsections address each of these steps.

Rationale

New teachers entering the field of education may be overwhelmed by the variety
of tasks for which they are expected to not only perform, but upon which they will also
be evaluated based upon factors determined by entities outside the field of education.
Historical data in the report on teacher attrition and mobility from the late 1980s
completed by the National Center for Education Statistics revealed that as many as 5% of
all teachers left the classroom in a single year. In the five reports since that first
publication, the percentage of teachers leaving the field at the conclusion of the 2008-
2009 school year rose to eight percent, or nearly 270,000 teachers (Keigher, 2010). At
the end of the 2008-2009 school year, 9% of public school teachers with three years of
experience or less left the classroom (Keigher, 2010). While the percentage of those
leaving the field so soon may seem minimal, the report declares that “of teachers who left
teaching in 2008-09, about 40.8 percent of public school teachers, compared to 15.5
percent of private school teachers, reported opportunities for learning from colleagues
were better in their current position than in teaching” (Keigher, 2010, p. 3).

A professional field, built upon the social constructivist theories of Dewey and
Vygotsky, recently lost over 100,000 members who reflected upon their experience as
one in which learning from colleagues occurred less frequently than one not founded
upon such theories (Keigher, 2010). The reasons for such a perplexing outcome vary. Perhaps people take for granted the factors motivating them to do what they ultimately choose to do. Consequently, conflicting perceptions of the actions of others are misunderstood (Keigher, 2010). Brookfield (1995b) promoted the use of critical reflection to deter the misperceptions in the industry, and instead, empower disheartened teachers. To be effective, researchers urge teachers to possess more than just the technical applications of pedagogical training received in their teacher education program (Larrivee, 2000). In order to gain additional skills, teachers must first confront and accept their personal ideologies regarding students, the purpose of education in society, and their own effectiveness (Brookfield, 1995b; Zeichner & Liston, 1998). Critically reflecting on the juncture of their ideologies will allow teachers to implement self-directed learning habits, determine what professional development is needed, and to what extent, in order to successfully transform their individual practice and potentially the practice of others (Carr & Kemmis 1986).

Formulate a Focus

The first requirement in this step of the literature review is to determine what the focus, or goal, of the literature review should be and generate questions based on that characteristic or focus (Randolph, 2009). The focus of this review was “how a group of people tend to carry out a certain practice” (Randolph, 2009, p. 3). Specifically, this review sought to discover if teachers developed the skill of critical reflection over their career, and if so, did some aspects of critical practice develop before others? Additionally, I wondered if common indicators or correlations of development, including
life experiences and years of experience, influenced the participants’ level of criticalness. These focus questions assisted in the selection of terms used in an electronic search of databases, which then produced potential sources. The second requirement in formulating a focus is to determine the criteria by which each resulting source will either be selected or excluded from the review. The following sections explicate this initial search strategy.

Initial Search Strategy

The criteria of the initial search focused on the works of researchers, such as Brookfield; Zeichner and Liston; and Larrivee, who studied the reflective practices of teachers based on the seminal works of Dewey, Freire, Mezirow, van Manen, and Schön. Utilizing Google Scholar to get a quick view of the more popular authors, citations, and journals with the search terms critical reflection, teacher, and student, the initial online search generated over 82,000 results. Then, I amended the search to include reflective practices, educator, effective, and critical pedagogy. This set produced a more manageable 751 results.

Using the same terms, I searched ERIC, EBSCO, WorldCat, and ProQuest in various combinations. Although I did not initially limit my search of peer-reviewed journal articles to a date range, I did limit ProQuest dissertation searches to those completed after 2004 in order to conduct a citation search and possibly locate other seminal works. Searches within Taylor and Francis Online Journals included Review of Educational Research, Teaching and Teacher Education, and The International Journal of Educational Research were initiated via cross references of citations from The Handbook of Self-Study and Teacher Education, The Handbook of Reflection and
Reflective Inquiry: Mapping a Way of Knowing for Professional Reflective Inquiry, and The Handbook of Transformative Learning: Theory, Research, and Practice.

For each database search, I read the titles of the first 100 results in each search for consideration. Of those 100 titles, I read the abstracts of the 20 most relevant titles within the search results to determine the presence of answers to the research questions or additional depth of a related theory or construct. Other print sources and related nonresearch reports were obtained for inclusion in the data. Ogawa and Malen (as cited in Randolph, 2009) stated, “Reports such as memos, newspaper articles, or meeting minutes should also be included in the review and not necessarily regarded as having less value than qualitative research reports” (p. 10).

Criteria for inclusion of relevant research. I selected the articles initially for inclusion based on the following criteria:

(a) written in English;
(b) published after 1990;
(c) located in a peer-reviewed journal;
(d) constructs related to the field of education;
(e) focus related factors; and
(f) reference lists from books, professional education journals and newspapers, and professional blogs related to the theories or constructs of the study.

Criteria for exclusion of relevant research. I excluded the articles initially from the collection process based on the listed criteria:

(a) studies conducted on medical students and patients;
(b) studies conducted for the purpose of grading students; and

c) studies in which a professional development program was used for the marketing purposes or as part of a required school district implementation.

I conducted additional searches in these databases using a variety of timeframes ranging from 2004 to the present and 1980 to the present to ensure inclusion of references to seminal works. I amended or expanded the search criteria based on relevance to conceptual constructs, central themes, and pivotal works. This refined set of search combinations produced similar results, which was indicative of the point of saturation (Randolph, 2009).

Data Collection and Evaluation

The purpose of the data collection process was to locate, among the search results, articles with relevance to the narrative inquiry. As part of the process, upon collection and evaluation of the initial results, the search may be amended and more representative results collected and evaluated (Randolph, 2009). The most popular medium for conducting this process is a search of resources accessible via the Internet, or subscription online databases. Unfortunately, a simple search is limiting (Randolph, 2009). The following sections explicate the process selected for this inquiry.

Electronic data. Randolph (2009) advised that a search of key terms might only provide up to 10% of the relevant material for a study. This is an issue for qualitative and quantitative research, leading to recommendations to check citations from pertinent results for relevance. Upon review, the new references are searched for relevance, central and pivotal themes. When a point of saturation has been reached electronically,
Randolph (2009) suggested sharing references with colleagues to ensure all major authors pertinent to the central theme have been reviewed. For qualitative research, Ogawa and Malen (as cited in Randolph, 2009) encouraged a reference trail leading to less empirical, yet more relevant results. These references may require a separate search with its own criteria for inclusion and exclusion.

Cooper’s coverage categories. The task of collecting data for a qualitative literature review varies based upon the characteristics and breadth of information needed to achieve the goal of the search. Cooper (1988) suggested selecting from four coverage strategies: exhaustive, exhaustive/selective, representative, or purposive. Although more than one strategy can be implemented within a single literature review (Cooper, 1988), the selection of a proper pairing, or a single coverage strategy, requires understanding the expectations of each category.

Cooper (1988) defined an exhaustive literature review as one in which “the reviewer intends to be comprehensive in the presentation of works relevant to the topic under consideration” (pp. 11-12). Similarly, an exhaustive search in which only selected citations are presented provide the reader with a sense of depth on the topic without the extensive expository reading. The drawback of the latter strategy is that it does not allow the reader the opportunity to follow the research and reach the same conclusion. Cooper (1988) described a representative search as one in which the researcher selected the material based upon “the frequency with which works that share particular characteristics appear in the literature” (p. 13). The final coverage category, purposive, seeks materials for inclusion that are central to the topic, or provide support of pivotal changes in the
field. Thus, this category is also known as central/pivotal coverage since the purposive search may have been to locate evidence on a central theme or a pivotal construct.

When consideration of a single coverage strategy reduces the strength of the literature review, more than one may be considered (Cooper, 1988). The mutually exclusive nature of the exhaustive/selective strategies produces an obvious pairing within a single field of study. Conversely, the shared characteristics of the representative and central/pivotal coverage strategies provide a commonality in procedure and presentation.

Representative and central/pivotal coverage. For the purposes of this study, I collected articles central to, or representative of, the theories and constructs of the literature review to provide evidentiary support. The following examples provide an overview of the data collection process used with each of the theories and constructs. As the results accumulated, the analysis and organization process transpired. The selected coverage approach for each search provided a boundary for inclusion and the ability to determine the point of saturation for each topic.

Purposive search topics. As I continued this quest, I searched for information about Brookfield’s (1995b) critically reflective practices that might lead me to understand how teachers provided students with an effective foundation upon which to construct a personal connection to the content in the classroom. The studies on critical reflection led me to the realization that to effectively scaffold students to meet achievement levels, teachers must acknowledge and define their personal beliefs and question their practices in order to honor the cultures of their students (Torff, 2011). I continued my search using culture, cultural, beliefs, epistemological, practice, teacher, and educator. The terms
cultural competence, social consciousness, and critical social consciousness began to appear in the literature. These terms were then used in the selection of studies.

I also researched the terms with which to label instructional style in the classroom, using terms such as pedagogy, critical pedagogy, practices, and praxis interchangeably in that search. The literature on reflection most frequently pertained to its use by teacher educators with undergraduate and graduate students. With the exception of studies in which the participants were involved in a branded professional development program, few studies, domestic or international, qualitative or quantitative, involved K-12 teachers focused on critical reflection for the purpose of transforming their critical practices.

Representative search topics. The search shifted to include greater empirical support for each of Brookfield’s (1995b) lenses. It was at this stage of the literature search that the “explicit criteria to dictate the inclusion or exclusion” (Randolph, 2009, p. 6) of a source changed between each lens. I located the keywords of Brookfield’s (1995b) lenses in literature from a variety of fields and used in contexts unrelated to the meanings purported by Brookfield (1995b).

At this point, a representative sample of the research was sought using the same databases. Due to the lack of relevant empirical search results that could be located without an exhaustive search, I amended the criteria for inclusion. When the keywords for the lens provided more than 10,000 sources, I sought meta-analyses and literature reviews to help synthesize the material befitting the focus of this research. For each of Brookfield’s (1995b) lenses, an amended search included:
(a) the keyword *Brookfield*;
(b) no preferences for year of study, method, or field; and
(c) exclusionary indicators limited to English.

*Brookfield search topics.* The amended search criteria for Brookfield’s (1995b) four lens are explicated in the following paragraphs. For each lens, I conducted a purposive search of meta-studies and literature reviews on the central theme of the lens, followed by a search for empirical studies representative of the central theme of the lens.

In a quest for evidence on critical, self-reflective practices, I conducted a refined search. In order to ensure a representative sample, separate searches within the above databases were systematically conducted. One of primary terms, *review* or *meta*, was used in conjunction with one of the secondary terms *critical reflection*, *critical practices*, *teacher reflection*, *teacher self-reflection*, *teacher reflective practices*, *educator*, *reflection*, and *practices*. The results of the systematic pairings across each database increased the reliability of saturation and relevance to the inquiry.

In the search for evidence on the consideration of student perspectives, a refined search was conducted. Individual searches were conducted with and without the terms *review* and *meta* in conjunction with the terms *student reflection*, *student perspective*, and *student evaluation*. In this round of inquiry, searches for *critical incident reports* and *critical incident questionnaires* (CIQs) were separated. The reason for the separation reflects a difference in Brookfield’s (1995b) purpose and definition of this lens in relation to the purpose of the available literature. That section presents an explanation of these differences.
When refining the search criteria for collaborative perspectives, I expanded the inquiry to include empirical studies on critical reflection in which collaboration, or input from a colleague, was sought by participants were also included. Again, separate searches within each of the above databases were conducted using various combinations of the terms *review* or *meta* in conjunction with *teacher, educator, reflection, collaboration, colleague,* and *peer*. Some findings were later excluded due to differences in purpose and definition based on Brookfield’s (1995b) text and the interpretation of the terms of the other authors.

In an effort to locate the most relevant research sample, the amended searches on *critical theory* were expanded to include fields outside of education. An additional search for meta-studies or literature reviews on *critical reflection* was conducted. Separate searches within the above databases applied systematic combinations of the terms *review* or *meta* in conjunction with the terms *critical social consciousness, critical practice(s), critical reflective practice,* and *criticalness*. In an effort to then cull the findings (Randolph, 2009), I read the abstract of each result to confirm a relevant correlation with the intent of Brookfield’s (1995b) fourth lens of using theory to support practice.

**Preview of Theories and Constructs**

This section of the chapter provides an overview of the literature on adult learning theory, transformative learning theory, and critical social theory as it pertains to teachers utilizing them to develop critical practices. The constructs of effective teaching, self-directed learning, critical social consciousness, and critical reflection, are informed by
Educators are adult learners who plan with social consciousness in mind and are effective in their instruction (Hammerness et al., 2005). These effective teachers are self-directed in their quest to critically reflect upon their existing beliefs and pedagogy, with the intent to create a better connection between the student and the content using instructional techniques that are culturally and epistemologically balanced (Hamre & Pianta, 2005; Hattie, 2012). Of all the theories that inform this inquiry, transformative learning theory most prominently applies to the growth and development of the teacher and can occur with existing, or new, frames of reference following a disorienting dilemma or subjective reframing (Mezirow, 2003). Critical social theory supports not only what activities a teacher chooses to employ, but also how and why a choice is made.
Through this theory, teachers are reminded of the many disconnects between the political intent of education and the needs of the learners. By aiming for the centroid of how teachers develop both their reflective practice and social consciousness, this inquiry illustrated how these constructs meet in the “in-between spaces” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 1) to transform instruction using critical practices.

**Adult Learning Theory**

The focus on adult learning has taken various forms. In 1926, Lindeman, a colleague of Dewey, facilitated the concept when he wrote *The Meaning of Adult Education*, a book often considered “a derivative of Deweyan progressive education” (Stewart, 1987, p. 4). Lindeman’s (1926) vision for adult learning, illustrated in *Figure 3*, did not require classrooms and a set curriculum. He stated, “If education is life, then life is also education” (p. 7). He felt that the daily activities of adulthood provided a plethora of opportunity to learn. Lindeman (1926) framed the other three sides of his vision of adult learning with concepts of (a) *nonvocational ideals*; (b) learning through *situations not subjects*; and (c) learning through collaborative discussions of *people’s experience*. Nonvocational ideals refer to the concept that adults know their job but want to know their purpose in order to put meaning into life). Learning through situations not subjects refers to the fact that life’s opportunities to learn are not controlled textbook vignettes with limited outcomes. Learning through collaborative discussions of people’s experience means that life’s lessons do not, and cannot, be experienced by everyone at the same time; otherwise, humans could not develop.
Andragogy is the term Knowles (1975) coined to refer to a learning theory for adults to help separate the concept from the classic theories of learning which applied to both children and adults. Knowles (1984) observed a key difference in how the learning of adults and children was constructed. Adult learner behaviors were seen as voluntary, self-directed, and collaborative. Some researchers, including Merriam and Caffarella (1999), considered the assumption that adults were involved in self-directed learning specifically as unsubstantiated. It later became evident that not only does the process of learning change with age in children, but also in adults (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). In the context of adult learning, self-direction is both a process adults go through to learn, as well as, a disposition for learning (Brown, 2004).

Traditional transmission methods of the agrarian and industrial eras were sufficient then, perhaps. Unfortunately, not all students are able to synthesize and apply the skills transmitted to other contexts (Schön, 1987; Sternberg, 1996). Additionally, the workplace has constantly changed and required continued professional development.

Figure 3. Illustration of Lindeman’s (1926) vision for adult learning
beyond the knowledge acquired in educational programs (Senge, 1990; Sternberg, 1996). This change generated a need for the workers, already in place, to make improvements or risk being replaced (Harris, 1982). In this narrative inquiry, self-directed learning referenced a participant’s drive to learn more in a setting independent of a traditional student/teacher support system.

Self-Directed Learners

Teachers are considered to be motivated, self-directed learners (Biaocco & DeWaters, 1998; Berliner, 1987; Garrison, 1997; Goleman, 1995). Darling-Hammond (1996) has often referred to a professional teacher as one who continues to learn. For improvements to occur, teachers must be willing to learn from situations that occur in and out of the classroom. It is this learning, at the classroom instructional level, that is central to change in schools because it is the motivation and intent of the instructor, more so than the curriculum itself, which affects the learner (Finley, Marble, Copeland, Ferguson, & Alderete, 2000). Hodkinson and Hodkinson (2003) studied the social constructivist influence of the environment on teachers’ practice. The study focused on the interpersonal relationships, background schema, positive and negative external motivators that existed for the participants. Teachers in this study maintained a positive role with colleagues, curriculum, and context in which they had to operate.

Wagner (2011) investigated different ways teachers acquire knowledge and theory and if the information gained from such ventures translated into praxis, the synthesizing of theory into practice. Wagner (2011) found that teachers who were already intrinsically motivated were able to determine what their needs were to
experience growth. These teachers admitted to being lifelong learners. When required professional development did not fulfill their need for improvement, these teachers were motivated to find something to do just that. It was determined that these participants transformed their new knowledge and skills into practice in the classroom, as well as gaining self-validation as a result.

Sze-yeng and Hussain (2010) linked self-directed learning to its social constructivist roots. The pair of researchers created a technology college course in which the instructor set up learning tasks and problems aligned with the course requirements for the students to solve. The researchers provided minimal direct instruction, then students were “expected to actively discuss, reflect, adapt, evaluate and interact within the community” (Sze-yeng & Hussain, 2010, p. 1914). Students experienced what Mezirow (2003) termed a disorientating dilemma. During this time, their willingness to conform to the unique learning arrangement met with resistance. However, after reflecting upon their existing knowledge and current needs, as well as interacting with the learning community, the students were able to adapt to the situation and construct new meaning.

Effective Teachers

Larrivee (2000) proclaimed, “Effective teaching is more than just a compilation of skills and strategies” (p. 294). Priorities of what is to be accomplished must be set. Each activity must have a purpose that fits the needs of the learners, not just the intent of the curriculum. Effective teaching is the ability of practitioners to remain flexible, yet deliberate, in their philosophy and code of conduct. A mismatched technique and philosophy does not allow for the growth of student or teacher (Larrivee, 2000).
The common attributes of effectiveness are linked to a proclivity to self-initiate learning and reflect critically (Biaocco & DeWaters, 1998; Brookfield, 1995b; Hodkinson & Hodkinson, 2003). These attributes are discussed separately. Biaocco and DeWaters (1998) studied the emotional intelligence of effective professors. They deduced that professors who were willing to critically reflect on all facets of their work display higher levels of cognitive empathy and problem solving, making their instruction more relevant to the learner.

Stojiljković, Djigić, and Zlatković (2012) studied the personality traits of teachers. According to the researchers, teachers must fill the roles of content specialist, evaluator, diagnostician, behaviorist, and counselor. The study sought to determine if a teacher’s level of empathy contributed to success in the fulfillment of their assigned roles. The outcome suggested that personal and professional experience, along with professional development, assisted teachers in effectively fulfilling their professional roles. Emotional empathy alone was shown to fall short in preparing teachers for the roles they are assigned. Cognitive empathy, the ability to understand the viewpoint of others, was shown to have a higher correlation to effectiveness across the roles.

In 2013, Stojiljković, Todorović, Djigić, and Dosković focused on cognitive factors that contributed to educator effectiveness by linking self-concept to levels of cognitive and emotional empathy. They posited a connection between a stable self-concept and a high level of operational empathy in the classroom. The researchers concluded that a teacher’s self-concept (especially in the area of social value) was highly correlated to the teacher’s level of cognitive empathy. In this study, teacher effectiveness
was measured by the intrinsic view of self. In turn, a positive self-concept influenced reactions and the level of empathy displayed in the classroom. Stojiljković et al. (2013) cited other studies (Bjekić, 2000; Stojiljković, Stojanović, & Dosković, 2011) that showed empathetic teachers promoted a classroom climate that was appropriate for the learning activities of students.

According to Stronge (2007), effective teachers tend to possess strong verbal skills and a wide variety of experiences during their teacher education program. A strong knowledge of the content to be taught, efficiency in planning, and the ability to deviate from that plan with ease are consequences from the training program. An effective teacher must also possess a multitude of differentiated strategies for behavioral situations, an ability to explain the content to students performing below grade level, the ability to understand the social and emotional needs of all students, and the ability to extend learning opportunities to students performing above grade level. Teacher effectiveness has been categorized by a multitude of indicators over the years (Stronge, 2007). Most are based on the teacher’s subject knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and ability to communicate the knowledge to, and between, the student and teacher/peer in a way that integrates the student’s cultural and personal experiences (Adams & Pierce, 1999; Darling-Hammond et al., 1999; Shulman, 1987).

Summary of Adult Learning Theory

This section provided a review of adult learning theory. Knowles (1975) made popular the term andragogy to separate the learning theories of adults and children.
Adult learners in education often maintain their effectiveness traits through self-directed learning and critical reflection.

**Transformative Learning Theory**

Underpinned by assumptions from constructivist, humanist, and critical social theory, transformative learning theory falls under the broad cover of adult learning theory and consists of two orientations. The first focuses on the transformation of the individual. The second focuses on the transformation in awareness of and consideration for social change in the individual’s problem solving (Taylor, 2007). The crux of the theory suggests that individual transformation will bring about societal transformation (Tisdell, 2012).

In 1978, Jack Mezirow defined the transformative learning theory after studying the learning and change in perspectives of women returning to college. As he discovered how they perceived their place in the programs, how they learned, and the outcomes of their experience, he was able to recommend improvements for the programs being developed for the women.

In his writing, Mezirow (2012) contended that learning occurs by acquisition of new information, amending part of existing information, transforming a point of view, or transforming habits of mind. Transformative learning in education is a process through which change in learning occurs. Essentially, students evaluate that which they have come to know. Through actions, either guided or self-directed, that which is known to be is either amended or overwritten (Mezirow, 2012).
Mezirow (2000) encouraged educators to assist their students’ when they critically reflect, and implored them to take effective action on their existing beliefs, values, and assumptions. The length of time necessary for the change to occur varies based on the setting, the purpose for the change, and the influences of concept to be changed. Mezirow (2000, 2012) categorized the more commonly named structure known as the frame of reference into two dimensions he called point of view and habits of mind. The change in an adult’s point of view can be swift. It is a matter of examining the content, or a process, to solve a problem. Within this category is the term perspective. If a student reflects upon the scene of contention or the context of the problem, then the student may be persuaded to try on another point of view.

The second category of Mezirow’s (2000, 2012) habit of mind is more complex. Within it are assumptions of spirituality, knowledge of self, and the environment upon which most individuals were raised. Some habits of mind may change incrementally due to repeated exposure to stimuli. Other habits are so ingrained that only a reorienting event can bring them forth for evaluation.

Brookfield (1995b) discussed the three parts/levels of this anchor. The first level of assumptions he labeled causal, which are easily identified assumptions about what individuals know to be and how individuals can change it if they so decide. The next level, labeled prescriptive assumptions, are essentially opinions and more difficult to identify and change. A logical argument, a demonstration, or act of participation may be necessary. The third level, and most protected, are the paradigmatic assumptions. According to Mezirow (2012), within these assumptions are the ethics, values, beliefs,
and understandings with which the world and existence are anchored. For the
assumptions in this level to change, an event that is immediate and drastic would be
required. It would need to disorient so that it could be named and then evaluated
(Mezirow, 2012). Reaching this level of awareness is a process Freire (1970/2012)
termed conscientization. In this process, the student learns to recognize the
contradictions in the environment and take necessary action to bring them into balance.

As stated in Chapter 1, Mezirow (1978, 2012) outlined 10 stages through which
adults clarify the meaning of an event in order to transform, listed here for reference
(Mezirow, 2012, p. 86):

1. A disorienting dilemma
2. Self-examination with feelings of fear, anger, guilt, or shame
3. A critical assessment of assumptions
4. Recognition that one’s discontent and the process of transformation are shared
5. Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions
6. Planning a course of action
7. Acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one’s plans
8. Provisional trying of new roles
9. Building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships
10. A reintegration into one’s life based on conditions dictated by one’s new
perspective.
The transformative learning process, as a whole, is not always linear. Some stages are repeated before continuing. For the purposes of this narrative inquiry, only the first three stages that lead up to critical reflection of assumptions are detailed.

The disorienting dilemma is the first stage of the transformative learning process. In this stage, a disruption of extreme proportion to an individual’s daily life, or psyche, occurs (Mezirow, 2000), causing the individual to question that which was previously considered to be true. The event may be unavoidable, such as the unexpected death of a loved one. On the other hand, it may be an event such as a public wardrobe malfunction (Mezirow, 1978b), or the sound of a four-letter word emanating from the mouth of your own toddler. Each, with a bit of awareness, could have been controlled. In the situations presented here, a significant disruption resulted in a reevaluation of how each person’s daily life will operate in the future. The dilemma brought into the foreground an awareness of each event preceding it, each environmental context involving it, and each potential consequence due to it (Mezirow, 2009).

In the second stage of the transformative learning process, the individual must deal with the overwhelming emotions that accompany the event. Mezirow (2012) provides examples such as fear, anger, guilt, or shame. Depending on the significance of the event, this emotional stage may last long enough to incapacitate the person (Roberts, 2006). In the orientation of transformative learning, these emotions are generated on behalf of the victims of the social transgression. Examples include rage due to unfair labor practices, or sadness due to the loss of a promising student to the foster care system (Personal communication, Donna Peppers, October 21, 2014). These emotions allow the
person to address his, or her, point of view and unearth the underlying habit of mind for a close comparison to the truth in which the individual is currently living.

The third, and final, stage to address in this study is what Mezirow (2012) labeled a “critical assessment of assumptions” (p. 86). Through the emotional turmoil of the previous stage, the individual developed an awareness of his, or her, frame of reference. From a developmental perspective, the individual must now consider the existing assumptions as incomplete and determine if they are to be discarded and replaced, kept but amended, or kept intact and the event ignored (Brookfield, 1990). From a critical perspective, the latter would not be an option. Instead, the individual must contemplate why an action should, or should not, occur. The awareness and perspective of the other must be considered.

Transformative Learning in the Classroom

In order to become self-aware, teachers must be open to change. As mentioned previously, Mezirow’s (1991) theory of transformative learning is a broadly applied adult learning theory with a focus on a change in perspective. The process of learning via the transformation in perspective comes from experiences that change an individual’s thought process or contribute to a sense of disequilibrium. Freire (1970/2012) presented a similar concept in which the learner becomes aware of personal assumptions and then acts upon them. Larrivee (2000) expounded upon the need for teachers in the classroom to reflect critically. Too often reflection has been attributed to skills and strategies implemented to differentiate instruction, and that instruction does not correlate to either reform goals or the beliefs of the teachers who must implement those goals (Elbaz, 1981).
According to Tolstoy (1967), blind adherence to one method does not allow even the best
teacher to understand and adapt curricula to the needs of each diverse learner.

Of course, simply changing from one strategy to another based upon whether or
not a lesson went well was not what Larrivee (2000) or Mezirow (1995) would consider
transformative. However, Larrivee (2000) stated, “Uncertainty is the hallmark for
transformation and the emergence of new possibilities” (p. 304). The power dynamic
must shift from enforcing power over students into a shared power with students
(Larrivee, 2000). These accountable teachers move beyond content knowledge and best
practices of their content area in order to examine and evaluate those same methods and
curriculum goals in terms of the knowledge and experience that they bring to the
students, within the context of the classroom, and the students’ lives (Tolstoy, 1967). In
doing so, unexamined beliefs and expectations are exposed and the methods, by which
individuals assign value to data, made visible to all.

Mezirow’s (1991) research indicated that by working through the struggles of a
new viewpoint, or behavior, an individual undergoes a transformation. This
transformation cannot be prescribed, or followed as a 30-minute workout. It must be
lived within the context of each classroom. By letting go of the familiar, personal
discovery can emerge. Perhaps the best way of resisting a culture of control is “to learn
something. Learn why the world wags and what wags it” (Palmer, 2007, p. 166).

Transformative Teacher Epistemology

Developing conscientization is a bit like studying one’s genealogy. We must dig
deep into our past to assist in understanding what we know about our present.
Epistemological beliefs are built upon an interpretation of our past. As with most beliefs, we know what we know because we know it (Callister, 2007). Epistemology is generally considered the study of the nature of knowledge and learning. It includes how certain we are of the source of knowledge—its breadth and depth—and how we came to acquire it (DeRose, 2005; Schommer, 2004). Dewey (as cited in Pajares, 1992) described belief as crucial, because

it covers all the matters of which we have no sure knowledge and yet which we are sufficiently confident of to act upon and also the matters that we now accept as certainly true, as knowledge, but which nevertheless may be questioned in the future. (p. 313)

Czerniak, Lumpe, and Haney (1999) exemplified teacher beliefs as “conviction, philosophy, tenets, or opinions about teaching and learning” (p. 125).

Although research confirmed that teacher beliefs can be transformed (Arredondo & Rucinski, 1998), the change was reported to require additional support and time (Schommer, 1990). Arredondo and Rucinski’s (1998) study utilized a mentor support style. The researchers trained mentors to press their mentees to the forefront of growth using a theoretical model. They posited the extra time that Schommer (1990) reported is attributable to the involvement of an additional person throughout the process. Transformative learning for an individual teacher may not possess such a limitation. Contrary to Schommer’s (1990) concern of time constraints, Brownlee (2003) studied the changes in the epistemology of graduate students through interviews, journals, and coursework. The majority of the change occurred in the early stages of the study. An
element of the study that may account for the expedited results was that students were in a contextual setting that allotted time for this deep reflection and change (Brownlee, 2003).

The results of other studies correlate with the research presented in the preceding sections regarding the impact teachers’ beliefs and pedagogical choices had on students. Brownlee (2001), building upon the seminal works of William Perry (1970), conducted a study of teacher education students. In the study, she posited that teachers whose beliefs were relativistic would be more effective in the classroom. Perry (1970) presented a set of four epistemic positions through which adults moved regarding the nature of knowledge. When a teacher takes a relativistic stance, truths are no longer absolute, but dependent upon how the knower interprets the information. In this scenario, the outcome of transformative learning instills an attitude of open-mindedness and acceptance in the teacher. The outcome modeled the value of students as knowers and the importance of relating classroom experiences to the experiences of the students. Wyre’s (2007) research also provided similar results regarding the relationship between teachers’ epistemology and student outcomes. In that study, the focus of the correlation was between the teacher’s practice of critical thinking and the students’ ability to apply new knowledge.

Schraw and Olafsan (2002) studied the impact teacher epistemology had on student learning. They concluded that even though many of the beliefs held by teachers are modifiable, the epistemological beliefs continued to influence the planning, practices, and activities in the classroom. These overarching influences impacted not only the
teacher’s pedagogy, but the students’ experience, level of engagement, and learning (Schraw & Olafsan, 2002). These results correlated with the research of Garcia (2005), as well as Schommer (2004). Each researcher’s conclusion posited that the lived experiences of teachers subsequently influenced the epistemology of the students, which in turn, impacted the culture and quality of life for the students in and out of the classroom.

Carr and Kemmis (1986) asserted, “‘Knowledge’ may be constructed as ‘justified true belief’” (p. 43). Including a critical approach in the evaluation of knowledge was paramount to understanding its implementation, as it may be distorted by the constraints of society (Carr & Kemmis, 1986). Knowledge varies from teacher to teacher, and that is problematic in planning for the masses that arrive from diverse backgrounds to be educated. Carr and Kemmis (1986) stated, “[A] critical theory of education requires a disposition to think critically and a critical community of professionals committed to an examination of the teaching profession” (p. 44). Carr and Kemmis (1986) also noted, “Teacher knowledge provides a starting point for critical reflection” (p. 44).

Summary of Transformative Learning Theory

Transformative learning theory, explicated in the preceding section, was popularized through the works of Mezirow. The crux of the theory posits a change, for the better, in teacher epistemology at the conclusion of the 10-stage process. This section provided examples of studies exploring the transformative learning by student teacher’s and university instructors, as well as correlations to inservice teachers’ classroom practice.
Critical Theory and Critical Social Theory

The term *critical* is defined and applied various ways between, and within, academic fields. Perhaps this is due to the multiple meanings of the word. Seiler (2008) posited the idea that to be critical of an action or item is to critique it in a way that involves a judgment to be made for the purpose of improving that action or item. In its simplest form, *critic*, derived from the Greek word *kritikos* in the late 1580s, holds the meaning “able to discern, or judge” (Merriam-Webster online dictionary, n.d.). The Merriam-Webster online dictionary defines the word *critic* as follows:

1a: one who expresses a reasoned opinion on any matter especially involving a judgment of its value, truth, righteousness, beauty, or technique;

1b: one who engages often professionally in the analysis, evaluation, or appreciation of works of art or artistic performances.

Utilizing these definitions, it is understandable why the term critical has been interpreted to mean so many things to so many people when used in phrases such as *critical thinking* or *critical reflection*. To the novice educator, for example, following through on an administrator’s request to critically reflect upon the implementation of current curriculum and instructional techniques may be interpreted to mean a simple critique, or analysis, of what went well in a lesson and what did not. Although these actions fit reasonably within the secular definition, the concept of critical theory and critical social theory is more specific and for good, logical reason based on the Greek origins of the word.
Critiquing Critic

To understand better the meaning behind the term, as it applies to the theories, a look back will bring clarity to its use in this study. The time of the word’s origin, the 1580s, was significant, for the Renaissance period was ending and laying the foundation for the Modern Period. The Renaissance was a time of radical change in philosophical thought towards learning as the focus, moving away from the scholasticism of the Medieval period, in which the tools of logic and dialectical reasoning were used within the bounded orthodoxy of the Catholic church. Scholasticism of that era was a method to obtain the ethical, or true, answer or opinion and attempt to resolve the conflicts of classical philosophy and theology (Mastin, 2008). In other words, the Renaissance philosophers relied less on seeking truth within the confines of church dogma, but instead sought answers and opinions through the logic of human nature, known as humanism.

Within the humanism movement, logic, reason, and science continued to be useful tools for problem solving, along with resurgence in critical inquiry (Popkin & Stroll, 1981). Philosophers began to judge, or critique, the dependence on faith-based actions (Mastin, 2008). All people were held to be equally dignified and worthy to decide for themselves what was ethically right or wrong as they solved their own problems independent of religious doctrine (Mastin, 2008). In other words, faith was considered a personal approach to life and not a logical reason for action or judgment. This focus on humankind’s ability to rationally and ethically solve the mysteries of math and science, independent of religious doctrine, continued to grow in the Early Modern Era (late 16th-early 17th century), as seen in the Rational movement of the Age of Reason (Mastin, 2008).
As the concerns of the Humanistic movement merged with the Eurocentric Age of Enlightenment movement, a shift in power toward the common man evolved.

John Locke developed the concept of Liberalism in an effort to quell the capricious power of the governing bodies by promoting advocacy for the freedom of the common man, the education of youth, and democratic rights (Mastin, 2008). The critical focus of this era was on the analysis and evaluation of the existence and power of government, as well as its purpose and responsibilities to the masses (Mastin, 2008). The decision makers were expected to critique the situation and generate rational judgments befitting the common good (Mastin, 2008). For professionals, then and now, this created a conundrum. The intention is that a profession’s defined set of morals, ethics, principles, or values serve as the basis of judgments (Seiler, 2008). However, it is necessary to critique the origin of each set of morals, ethics, principles, or values used to make such judgments.

Tracing the Doctrines of Critical Theory

Situating this concept of critical theory can be a complex task. Its history spans three very different eras. The concept of criticalness is distinguishable as far back as the Plato’s Greek debates and the importance of truth and logic in the metaphysical doctrines of Idealism and Realism (Leonardo, 2004). Nearly two millennia later, the doctrine of Idealism again gained prominence in the German traditions of Marx, Hegel, Kant, and Weber. In the mid-19th century, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels openly opposed the dominant society in what is historically known as the classically, idealist concept labelled Marxism (Seiler, 2008). In the book The Communist Manifesto (1848), the pair
purported a viewpoint in which the relationship of dominance and oppression linked a linear concept of capitalistic powers of production and its conflict with an oppressed working class (Seiler, 2008). This idea, now referred to as the classic version of critical theory, set out to provide a “critique of political economy” (Seiler, 2008, para. 4).

Interestingly, the basic underpinnings are still relevant. The idealistic concept focuses on broader philosophical meanings in social inquiry and social movements that promote a population to critically evaluate its collective consciousness, or knowledgeable truths, in order to free its collective self from “all the circumstances that enslave human beings” (Bohman, 2005, para. 1). Understanding the evolutilonal underpinnings of Idealism in critical theory is helpful in the journey to becoming a critically reflective practitioner. However, interpreting critical theory within the Marxist philosophy requires researchers to make a critical decision. On one hand, they can take a classically broad, idealist philosophical approach presented by Marx and Engels “aimed at decreasing domination and increasing freedom in all their forms” (Bohman, 2005, para. 1). On the other hand, they can select a more complex, yet narrowed stance of criticalness that requires researchers and philosophers to grasp and explain each practical, purposeful concern even as its context splinters into multifaceted, narrowed norms of modern day philosophy and social sciences (Bohman, 2005). To make this decision requires a review the history of Idealism.

The history of Idealism. Idealism is a monist, epistemological doctrine that avers that reality consists of that of which we are conscious (Mastin, 2008). In other words, if I do not know that something exists, then it must not exist. Monism, from the Greek
meaning single, without division, is a theological stance promoting the idea that everything in the universe, including human kind, is connected as one entity ruled by a single set of natural laws that are equally applicable to all (Mastin, 2008). Monism can be divided into historical movements. During its earliest movement, Idealism was considered a subset of Mentalistic Monism, or Idealistic Monism, which holds the viewpoint that only the mind exists and reality is only a single perception of the collective’s illusion (Mastin, 2008). Historically, the Greek philosopher Plato receives credit for the earliest form of Idealism, often referred to as Platonic Idealism, or Platonic Realism. Essentially, what Plato posited was that, although there may be tangible Forms in existence (which is more Dualistic than Monistic), it is only through the conscious process of thought that these Forms can become part of personal reality through individual perception of how things make up our world.

Roughly 2,000 years later, French philosopher Rene Descartes, heavily influenced by the Rationalist movement during the Age of Reason, questioned what is known and how knowledge is acquired—supporting the doctrine of Dualism (that the mind and body were separate forms and not totally connected as Monist doctrine implied). Descartes did maintain Plato’s argument that all we know is what we are conscious of; however, the tangible objects in the world are merely idyllic projections from our mind (Mastin, 2008). The only truth that cannot be doubted was our own existence, in his famous conclusion, “I think, therefore I am.”

The development of modern Idealism. When the Age of Enlightenment blanketed Western Europe in the early 18th century, a modern form of Idealism emerged in the
theologically based philosophy of Bishop Berkeley (Mastin, 2008). Considered as one of the purest forms of Idealism, Berkeley’s contention was that we can only know what we are able to perceive. Therefore, if we do not perceive something, then the object can still exist in the collective human experiences ordained by God. At this point in the history of Idealism, subjective perception becomes an influence on reality: “to be is to be perceived”, as Berkley put it.

Meanwhile, in Germany, the philosopher Immanuel Kant was revolutionizing the German Idealism movement at the end of the Age of Enlightenment (Mastin, 2008). Kant considered Berkeley’s work to be naïve, but he attempted to build upon it in order to bring the dichotomous factions of Empiricism and Rationalism into balance. Empiricists believed knowledge is only gained from experience—we cannot know without empirical input. Rationalists, contending that certain natural knowledge with which we are born exists, opposed the Empiricists. Kant considered himself a Critical Idealist, arguing that ideas transcended experience to form a reality based upon our perceptions. Clearly, that which one person perceives about an object another may not. This perception does not deny the existence of other things or other ideas, but we cannot know of what we do not perceive. Therefore, one person’s idea of reality is likely different from another’s idea of reality.

At the beginning of the Early Modern Period, other German Idealists (Fichte, Jacobi, Hegel, and Schelling) put their own spin on Kant’s critical concepts (Mastin, 2008). From Hegel’s project of an Absolute Idea (sequentially arguing all the aspects of a basic idea until all the aspects are ultimately synthesized), the importance of examining
history was emphasized. Hegel realized that through a dialectical process, he could deduce a person’s current frame of reference by interpreting and understanding the person’s historical context. The future of all humans and, therefore all societies, can be shaped by understanding their histories.

Hegel’s dialectical method proved useful to philosophers from various schools of thought who followed in the decades after his death, including Karl Marx (Mastin, 2008). Marx’s political theory sought to use the history of capitalism to scientifically argue that an individual’s intangible ideas are constructed from a singular perspective for a singular need, but what happens in a successful society is based upon tangible, or material, items and not ideas. Material items are a reality for survival of the many members of society and must be produced. In the political arena, members of the society are divided into suppliers (authority) and workers. A member’s societal status only changes when the member’s relationship to the means of production changes (e.g., workers becoming suppliers). For Marx, an idealist view of society would provide an opportunity for members to change their status willfully. To argue his point regarding the reality of society, Marx used Hegel’s dialectical method to critically examine the past, present, and future impact of materialism and capitalism on society from multiple, practical perspectives.

A group of German philosophers and social scientists, who formed the Institute for Social Research in 1923, perpetuated the philosophy underpinning Marxist critical theory (Mastin, 2008). The Institute sought to understand why social movements such as Marxism and Communism failed to establish in some societies, while Capitalism and
Facism succeeded. The critical theory, established in the early years of the Institute, sought to critique and change society through a cooperative use of the dialectical method in which all the social sciences were integrated.

The saga of these philosophers, and that of critical theory’s evolution into multifaceted critical theories, is storied in the following pages. To clarify terms henceforth, references to the capitalized term Critical Theory, refer to the work of the original German philosophers of the Institute of Social Research and The Frankfurt School. References to the uncapitalized term refer to the concepts that splintered from the original, philosophical stance of the Frankfurt School. Additionally, the singular use of the term a critical theory within the context of a sentence may or may not refer to the original theories or projects Frankfurt School, but the phrase is a necessary identifier.

Some followers of Marx realized that a distinction between a traditional theory and one considered a critical theory was necessary (Mastin, 2008). To these followers, the overarching concept of a critical theory was “the result of a process of critical analysis” (King, 2015, p. 65). In order to be considered critical, a theory’s generative purpose must be “to liberate human beings from the circumstances that enslave them” (Horkheimer, 1982, p. 244) by developing a critical consciousness (Weiler, as cited in Kim, 2015).

As the 20th century dawned, Neo-Marxist Felix Weil, a political scientist at the University of Frankfurt in Germany, continued to explore the social philosophy of Marx’s critical theory as a basis for socializing the economy (Seiler, 2008). Weil founded The Frankfurt School in the early 1920s to study social change based upon what
came to be known as Critical Theory. Providing a basis for inquiry into the dimensions of German society, Critical Theory’s purpose was to assist in explicating why a society operates a certain way, identifying the members of the society with the power to change it, and generating processes for future evaluation and societal change (Bohman, 2005).

As the application of this Critical Theory expanded throughout the social sciences, the aim of inquiries into various facets of society initiated a shift in Critical Theory’s form of critical social inquiry, and researchers sought ways to transform capitalism into a democracy in which the people could be the authors of their own fate (Horkheimer, 1982). However, in the late 1920s and early 1930s, Germany spiraled into an economic depression (Kim, 2015) and the National Socialist Party gained power (Seiler, 2008). The members of the Frankfurt School eventually escaped to America to avoid persecution (Kim, 2015) and continued to investigate the elements influencing dominance and oppression in society, especially in the area of commercial media’s manipulation of information to the public as those in power determined what would and would not be relayed or represented in their respective medium (Seiler, 2008). Shortly after World War II, some of the leaders, Horkheimer, Adorno, and Pollock, returned to Germany to reestablish the Institute for Social Research, while others such as Habermas, Marcuse, and Lowenthal remained in the United States. A few decades later, the political climate of the 1960s paved the way for a new version of critical theory to be introduced as the Institute, and its researchers gradually disbanded (Kim, 2015).

In the 1970s, in the wake of the disbanded institute, Habermas’ work continued to grow and change. The idea of critical theory continued to focus on the political function
of criticalness and its ability to locate and name oppression so that all who are within its sphere might seek deliverance (Leonardo, 2004) and be emancipated through compassion and empathy for others (Giroux, 2004). However, the classic, unbalanced, Marxist equation of power equals oppression now had a fulcrum for change. The workers (typically the oppressed) could, through interaction or communication, attempt to distribute the application of power (Seiler, 2008). Possessing “the power to name experiences is equivalent to the power to construct reality” (Seiler, 2008, p. 10) and having that kind power over personal reality leads to freedom (Freire, 1970/2012).

The evolved version of critical theory can be summarized as a “socio-cultural and political theory” (Kim, 2015, p. 36) that looks at what the specific inequalities of production, distribution, and reproduction of goods are in a society compared to what they should be (Kim, 2015). A segue from the strictly political, Marxist version of Critical Theory to the more modern concept of critical theory is provided in this evolution (Leonardo, 2004). In the expanded concept of critical theory, political ideals are synthesized with socioeconomic realities that can be applied to the various fields within the social sciences (Kim, 2015). Ultimately, the transformation from critical theory to the more complete concept of critical social theory occurs (Leonardo, 2004). Critical social theory is a blended concept with the purpose of bringing to light the hegemonic practices of the dominant classes of society (Brown, 2004; Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). As a derivative of critical theory, critical social theory requires individuals to understand their part in the power structures of society. The underlying consideration of, and discourse with, others of the community is indicative of the theory of social constructivism
(Vygotsky, 1930/1978). Within this merged concept of critical social theory, critiques are made through discourse among community members to question existing knowledge, identify oppressive elements within that knowledge, and transform the knowledge in an emancipatory manner (Leonardo, 2004).

Allison-Roan (2006) posited a correlation between the degree to which a teacher questions and critiques new and existing knowledge for oppressive elements and the development of the teacher’s critical practices, such as critical social consciousness and critical reflection. Social theorists consider knowledge as gleaned from the environment (Agger, 1992). The level of importance, quantity, and quality associated with the new knowledge impacts the transformation of both the learner and the society (Allison-Roan, 2006).

Critical Social Consciousness

Kim (2015) defined two subcategories of critical theory: reproduction and resistance. Understanding and overcoming both require teachers, students, and parents to analyze the function of the presiding educational institution in order to minimize the effects of each on students. Reproduction theory, as depicted in these chosen quantifiers, presents a nation’s system of education as an institution designed to inculcate all who enter in the oscillatory standards of knowledge and social values deemed worthy by the presiding powers-that-be (Kim, 2015). Social class influences the curriculum choices available, as well as student expectations, variation of presentation (flash cards versus electronic devices), variation of work (skill and drill versus project based learning), and even the manner in which staff is treated.
With criticism from theorists such as Freire, Apple, Giroux, and McLauren, the self-determining outcome of reproduction theory gave way to the resistance theory in the 1980s and 1990s (Kim, 2015). Students began to display various resistant behaviors, and theorists sought to determine to what degree the resistant behaviors linked to the oppressive nature of reproduction theory (Kim, 2015). Working within the concept of resistance theory, a collaborative process of communication between administrator and teacher, teacher and student, and student and parent must be constructed to “create an equitable school environment, transcending conflicts and tensions and moving beyond zero-tolerance policies” (Kim, 2010, p. 274). It takes insight and an expanded social consciousness to work through such resistance.

In his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire (1970/2012) spoke of three levels of social consciousness through which a member of society must progress in order to develop critical consciousness. Though the levels are considered developmental, or linear, the level revealed by community members may vary depending on the context of the social situation.

Freire (1970/2012) labeled the first level of consciousness the *magical state of consciousness*. The term *magical* referred to the lives of the humans in mythology who were easily manipulated and accepting of the troubles they incurred. In this state of consciousness, members are in survival mode. Freire (1970/2012) described community members in this stage as pawns aware of their roles and responsibilities to the community at large but continuing to simply exist at the mercy of each situation with no desire, or
stimulus, to change their fate. Members consider their path in life to be static and are unaware of the existence of alternatives paths.

Freire (1970/2012) named the second level of consciousness naïve consciousness. At this level, members of the community become aware of their differences, but only in the context of their personal situation. In Freire’s opinion, most members of society operate in this state. They are aware that their life is not static. The members, however, do not yet realize how the actions of others influence their own ability to make dynamic changes in their path.

In the third level, critical consciousness, members are not only aware of the societal differences and each member’s role in the situation but are also empowered and enabled to intervene in situations where oppression exists. In this state, members develop agency or a state of being in action. Ultimately, members’ agency may expand into a heightened critical political consciousness. For those members who reach this level, an alliance forms among, within, and between, members of the entire community. These members see the reality of inequity, resist the oppressive situation, and work together to change the political practice and emancipate the community. Within the purview of the classroom, Freire (1970/2012, 1974/2012) purported a method of conscientizing what it means for a teacher to become critically conscious, especially of personal pedagogy.

The development of critical consciousness can be approached by building cultural competence (McKinley, 2004; Pajares, 1992; Stronge, 2002). Gay (2010) defined culture as a “dynamic system of social values, cognitive codes, behavioral standards, worldviews, and beliefs used to give order and meaning to our own lives as well as the
lives of others” (p. 8). These values may apply more in one culture than another may.

Ting-Toomey and Chung (2005) described culture:

A learned system of meanings—a value-laden meaning system that helps you to make sense of and explain what is going on in your everyday intercultural surroundings. It fosters a particular sense of shared identity and solidarity among its members. (p. 27)

The concept of culture extends to many organizations and industries and may hold different meanings in each one. The following are two definitions of what it means to be culturally competent. According to Leavitt (2002), cultural competence is:

... a set of behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together… to function effectively in transcultural interactions. In practice, cultural competence acknowledges and incorporates ... the importance of culture, the assessment of cross-cultural relations, the need to be aware of the dynamics resulting from cultural differences, the expansion of cultural knowledge, and the adaptation of services to meet culturally unique needs. (p. 36)

Similarly, the National Education Association (NEA) defined cultural competence:

... an awareness of one’s own cultural identity and views about difference, and the ability to learn and build on the varying cultural and community norms of students and their families. It is the ability to understand the within-group differences that make each student unique, while celebrating the between-group variations that make our country a tapestry. This understanding informs and
expands teaching practices in the culturally competent educator’s classroom.

(para. 3)

From these two definitions, it is possible to infer that key components of cultural competency include a teacher’s beliefs and practices, as well as a teacher’s capacity for reflection and how each of these impacts student learning. This inference is supported by Lewis and Lee’s (2009) observation that “people’s perceptions . . . in challenging racism, sexism, and social injustice [have] been found to have a significant impact on the reflection component of their critical consciousness” (p. 50).

Freire (1998), a social activist and philosopher, espoused the properties of social consciousness. According to Freire (1998), education might be a “political act” (p. 63), but “knowing is a social process” (p. 92). As such, it “equally involves other thinking subjects” (p. 92). Educators, he posited, need to be aware, or socially conscious, of the composition of their own knowledge. This awareness can assist them in a critical consideration of how they, as “thinking subjects”, will assist students in constructing knowledge (Freire, 1998, p. 72).

Thus, a teacher’s level of social consciousness of student diversity penultimately affects the teacher’s effectiveness in the classroom (McKinley, 2004; Pajares, 1992; Stronge, 2002), opportunities for learning in the classroom, and, ultimately, the students’ academic and social outcomes. Gay (2002) confirmed a correlation “between culturally responsive teaching and the school achievement of students of color” in addition to the students’ level of efficacy (p. 627). These attitudes and expectations about the ability level of a diverse population can either restrict or extend the opportunities of the entire
group (Gay, 2002). Gay and Kirkland (2003) averred that the development of a critical consciousness should be paired with self-reflection for the purpose of analyzing and monitoring personal beliefs regarding what should “be taught, how, and to whom” (p. 181).

Young (1990) voiced concern about teachers who failed to exhibit the behaviors of cultural competence and behaved in an elitist manner by trying to assimilate diverse students. This “oppression designates the disadvantage and injustice some people suffer” (p. 41) and is often replicated in the norms of society. Awareness and transformation are essential to building teacher capacity for cultural competence.

Delpit (2003) insisted that teachers educate themselves about the interests and histories of the students they teach. Similarly, Nieto (2006) postulated the acknowledgement and expansion of life experiences to promote academic growth. Doing so would empower student success and efficacy. Gay (2002) proclaimed, “Knowledge in the form of curriculum content is central to this empowerment. To be effective, this knowledge must be accessible to students and connected to their lives and experiences outside of school” (p. 111). In other words, if it is not important to the student, it is not important (Wink, 2011).

In addition to the personal stake taken in the lives of the students, a teacher must also be cognizant of the instructional strategies and beliefs exhibited, knowingly or unknowingly, in the classroom. The use of analogies, stories, and even methods of teacher-student interaction may need to be amended for relevance to age, culture, or unique need (Howard, 2001; McKinley, 2004). Open
communication between the classroom and home is essential for success. According to le Roux (2002), “Effective educators are effective communicators and thus culturally competent in cross-cultural encounters” (p. 37).

From these examples of cultural competence, it can be deduced that teachers’ beliefs influence what they perceive as instruction and learning. As a teacher’s epistemological beliefs become more sophisticated, so too does the understanding of the levels of pedagogy advance from the transmission model to the transformative model (Wink, 2011).

Critical Pedagogy

Freire (1970/2012) approached critical pedagogy from a point of consciousness. Learning begins with first understanding one’s own culture and the situatedness of each person in that culture. Knowing one’s place in society is not just a classist viewpoint for Freire (1970/2012); instead, it is a paramount skill necessary for reading the context of each situation over time, before reading text, a printed medium. From within this perspective of situatedness, each person must determine their purpose and take action to change any elements that obstruct the well-being of others. This applies to both the learner and the educator (Gruenewald, 2003). Similarly, Giroux (2004) stated, “Critical pedagogy proposes that education is a form of political intervention in the world that is capable of creating the possibilities for social transformation” (p. 34). Only by knowing what power you hold now can you plan for changes in power in the future.

Allison-Roan (2006) submitted the idea that as teachers develop critical practices, such as critical reflection and social consciousness, they take issues of justice and equity
into consideration. In doing so, students are empowered through the curriculum (Lather, 1986). For culturally competent instruction to evolve into critical pedagogy, the teacher’s actions, as well as the interactions and communication within the teacher-student world are important (Wink, 2011). The preparation of educators who have the skills to reflect, and the attitudes to “value the diversity among students . . . provide an environment of respect and reciprocity of ideas…and the ability to challenge and motivate diverse student populations,” are paramount to student success and improving the educational system as a whole (NEA, 2017, para. 1).

While Freire’s texts (1970/2012; 1974/2012) implored teachers and leaders to consider the viewpoints of others in decision making, other researchers (Allison-Roan, 2006; Stojiljković et al., 2012; Stojiljković et al., 2013) approached this idea using the term empathy. Merriam-Webster Online (n.d.) defined empathy as “the feeling that you understand and share another person’s experiences and emotions: the ability to share someone else's feelings.” Adding to Anderson’s (2009) studies on effectiveness, Stojiljković et al. (2012) studied empathy’s connection to perceived effectiveness in education. Empathy, as posited by Allison-Roan (2006), was linked more closely to Schön’s concept of critical reflection. Though not explicitly stated, Brookfield’s (1995b) lens of student perspective proposes the use of empathy when planning or reflecting on classroom instruction. Its importance is clear. Without empathy, a teacher would select an instructional pedagogy based on his/her own beliefs, or comfort level, versus considering the needs of the learners (Stojiljković et al., 2013).
Critical Reflection in Pedagogy

Freire’s seminal works *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970/2012) and *Education for Critical Consciousness* (1974/2012) brought to light the concept of emancipation through education. Taylor (as cited in Brown, 2004) summarized Freire’s concept of critical reflection as not simply a transformation of self, but one that, if effective, includes social change. Within this social participatory dynamic of critical theory lies the action-oriented step of critical reflection (Freeman & Vasconcelos, 2010). Freeman and Vasconcelos (2010) reminded researchers, “The development of new understanding is contingent on changes in practice . . . and cannot rely on rhetoric alone” (p. 8). Critical pedagogy’s communication flow requires critical reflection. It dares us to examine what we are doing, why we are doing it, and to whom it is being done while simultaneously empowering us to learn from what we see and transform based upon our lived experiences (Wink, 2011). Reflection can be used to evaluate how lived experiences influence a teacher’s beliefs and practices. Doing so can also increase cultural awareness, evaluate the manner in which information is presented to students, and pinpoint areas where instruction needs to be refined or changed (Arredondo-Rucinski, 2005; Ostermann, 1990; Schön, 1987). As teachers improve their knowledge and experience with culture, so do the students (Messiou & Ainscow, 2015). With this conscientization, students and teachers “have confidence in their own knowledge, ability and experiences” (Wink, 2011, p. 57).

For decades, researchers Schön (1987) and Brookfield (1995b) prompted educators, as well as other professionals, to “recognize and respond to dilemmas of their
practice” (Allison-Roan, 2006, p. 27). Schön (1987) oriented critical reflection as a task necessary to enact change in one’s personal viewpoint. Other researchers (Brookfield, 1995b; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Mezirow, 2000; Zeichner & Liston, 1996) considered critical reflection as a task requiring some form of social interaction with colleagues in order to gain insight into critical gaps in the pedagogy of the individual. It is possible to infer from the above literature that a level of criticalness is applicable to the majority of theories involving the ultimate well-being of human life. The evolution of a basic theory to one with criticality is as simple as it is complex and has been difficult for people to accept for over two millennia (Matthew 7:3-4 New International Version). It requires humans to not only think of others before thinking of themselves, but to also judge themselves before judging others (Matthew 7:5 New International Version). The following section explicates one literary journey on a path to transform the educational, workaday practice of reflection into a meaningful practice of critical reflection.

Summary of Critical Theory

Critical social theory in education focuses on the power structures of society that carry over into the classroom and the teacher’s ability to recognize those opposing power structures in an attempt to lessen the negative impact on students. Critical educators are concerned with the whole child. They are often self-directed to check for opportunities that promote student growth. Critical educators continuously reflect on their pedagogy and practices to preserve students’ cultural integrity while exposing them to the culture of the educational institution.
The Journey from Reflection to Critical Reflection

In addition to the existing need for a teacher to build content knowledge in order to improve practice is the need to develop a deeper knowledge of self (Sellars, 2012). Reflective practice of the human self has been of interest since the ancient days of Plato (Daniel, Auhl, & Hastings, 2013). It is human nature to ponder the essence of humanity and the conditions under which it survives. In education, teacher reflection has played a major role in teacher education and professional development literature. With this much exposure to the benefits of reflection, it seems logical that a common understanding of how to harness those benefits would exist among professional teachers and manifest in practice in consistent, observable ways. Unfortunately, this is not the case (Posner, 1989). Classroom teachers should critically reflect upon their practice to ensure proper awareness of the potential disconnect between their individual epistemology, instructional practice, and the culture of the classroom (Costa, 1995; Yerrick, 2000; Yerrick, Park, & Nugent, 1997). To reflect critically, teachers must look at their context from multiple points of view that are unique to each classroom (Brookfield, 1995b). The subsequent sections follow the concept of reflection from its simplest terms and most convenient definitions used typically in daily conversations to the definitions put forth by critical theorists who urge educators to look beyond the classroom activities and evaluate the impact of their personal hegemonic thinking on their students (Howard & Aleman, 2008).
Definitions and Descriptions of Reflection

Reflection is an ambiguous term (Jay & Johnson, 2002). As in most facets of education, the process and purpose of reflection has many descriptors. Rodgers (2002) argued that the lack of a common definition has negatively impacted the rigor in the research on reflection and reflective inquiry. This lack of a common definition has impacted the research in the following ways: (a) the process of reflection has not been delineated from other forms of thought; (b) assessing such a skill for accountability is difficult when the definition is obscure; and (c) it has lost its meaning by “becoming everything to everybody” (Rodgers, 2002, p. 842), and (d) it is “difficult to research the effects of reflective teaching . . . on teachers’ practice and student reflection” (Rodgers, 2002, p. 842). Rodgers has championed for the “clarification of the meaning of reflection so that might be taught, learned, assessed, discussed, and researched and evolve in both meaning and usefulness” (Rodgers, 2002, p. 844).

Bauer (1991) perceived reflection as a process of problem solving, and Schön (1983, 1987) regarded it as solving a known problem within the setting, as well as after the fact. Osterman and Kottkamp (2004) defined reflection as an observational and data gathering process that was at its greatest efficiency when used with open, honest communication in a collaborative setting. For Spalding, Garcia, and Braun (2010), the art of reflection required teachers to question decisions and actions in the classroom and then evaluate the effects. Jay (2001) summarized the definitions of Shulman (1987), Richert (1990), and Schön (1983) as “looking back on experience in a way that informs practice, learning in the midst of practice, and/or making informed and intelligent
decisions about what to do, when to do it, and why it should be done” (p. 14). John Dewey (1933), often considered the first to connect reflection with classroom teaching, defined reflection as the “active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends” (p. 9). Dewey (1933) contended that one must be willing “to sustain and protract that state of doubt which is the stimulus to thorough inquiry” (p. 16). Posner (1989) cautioned against characterizing all teachers as utilizing reflective practice because not all teachers possessed the open-mindedness and persistence to sustain such action.

Lyons (2010) quoted Shulman: “Reflection is not a replacement for action and performance in teaching, it is its complement” (p. ix). Reflection is worthless without the understanding and demonstration of teaching. Cruickshank and Applegate (1981) brought these thoughts into the classroom, explaining that reflection helped teachers focus on certain events and consider reactions that are more effective. Cunningham (2009) reminded educators, “Reflection must be analytical, evaluative, and inclusive of content, pedagogy, learning theory, standards, accountability, and individual learner needs. Reflection is not just a skill; it is a disposition that develops over time and through experience” (p. 122). Acquiring that disposition requires the development of the skill of questioning. Not only should students and colleagues be asked for input to shape teacher pedagogy, but as Rousseau and Tate (2003) reminded us “true reflection demands questioning assumptions and beliefs” (p. 215) of our own also. Cruickshank and
Applegate (1981) brought these thoughts into the classroom by explaining that reflection helps teachers focus on certain events and consider reactions that are more effective.

Raines and Shadiow (1995) expressed concern regarding educators’ oversimplification of the practice of reflection as simply thinking about what they were doing and suggested teachers look at the pedagogical outcomes of reflection as more than just another activity. The researchers implored educators to view the process as a means of following Freire’s (1970/2012) concept of conscientization regarding theory and practice and developing greater critical forms of classroom practice using processes that include critical reflection and inquiry. Adding the aspect of social consciousness to the construct of reflection, Maxine Greene asserted in an interview with Cruikshank (2008), that an educators’ critically, reflective practices begin with the self and the realization of *I am what I am not yet* because “that's what it is to be human—to lose, to gain, to march, to hope” (p. 1). Greene also noted that unless you can reflect on yourself and your life, there is really no consciousness. “Consciousness doesn't come automatically; it comes through being alive, awake, curious, and often furious” (Cruikshank, 2008, p. 1).

Zeichner (1981) considered reflection as critical inquiry involving more than just reflection on the content and context of the classroom, but also reflection on the teacher’s views of social justice and ethical issues. Valli (1990), however, defined critical reflection as that which requires considering “the social and political aspects of schooling” (p. 219), including “the real possibility that schools are implicated in perpetuating an unjust social order” (p. 219). Similarly, Larrivee (2000) described critical reflection as an “examination of personal and professional belief systems, as well
as the deliberate consideration of the ethical implications and impact of practice” (p. 294). Mezirow (1991), while taking a similar stance as the previous three researchers noted above, divided the concept of reflection into a personal component and an actionable, social component. Mezirow (1991) stated,

Critical reflection is the central dynamic in intentional learning, problem solving, and validity testing through rational discourse. Intentional learning centrally involves either the explication of meaning of an experience, reinterpretation of that meaning, or application of it in thoughtful action. (p. 99)

The definitions and descriptions of reflection, and critical reflection, range in origin from the business industry to the field of education. Its purpose has been portrayed as a process for solving problems in education, analyzing the impact teacher pedagogy has on student achievement, and conducting personal inquiry into learning processes that improve the self and practice. Each of these voyeuristic models offers only an expected continuum or postulate outcomes beyond the content, or context, of the actual classroom—none consider the concept of reflection from the point of view of the classroom teacher.

Models and Modes of Reflection

Researchers have attempted to organize reflection into different levels, phases, or types (Dewey, 1933, 1938/1997; Glen, Clark, & Nicole, 1995; Habermas, 1973; Jay & Johnson, 2002; Larrivee, 2000: 2004; Lyons, 2010; Schön, 1987; van Manen, 1977). A closer inquiry may provide some understanding regarding the role of reflection
holistically and explain how practitioners move fluidly between levels based on the context.

Lyons (2010) examined the theories of reflective practice on learning from three angles: “a mode of thinking (Dewey, 1933), a way of knowing (Schön, 1987), and as critical reflection (Freire, 1970/2012)” (p. 1). From Dewey’s (1933) point of view, learning occurs once the learner has learned how to think well and acquired “the general habits of reflecting” (p. 35). Reflective inquiry follows a moment of conflict, or confusion, and does not end through mere contemplation. Instead, an “active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it, and further conclusions to which it trends, constitutes reflective thought” (Dewey, 1933, p. 9). The latter represents what we know as critical reflection.

Schön (1987) conducted his work regarding ways of knowing primarily outside the field of education. His concern was the importance of epistemologies of institutions and the conflicts between theory and practice. In the professional realm, reflection was used as a way of knowing what you know, identifying that knowledge, transacting with it, and utilizing it in practice to frame the problem (or question) so it could be solved. Schön’s (1987) framework for knowing what we know and how we know it fits well within the realm of education. His focus was on how to understand the practitioners’ use of theory in an applied, ad hoc setting and how they adjusted their actions through reflective and reflexive practice. Schön (1983/1987) coined two terms to refer to the reflection process in the classroom. The first and most common term of reflection-on-action refers to the teacher reflecting on the day’s plans and implementation and making
the appropriate adjustments. The more complex term of reflection-in-action refers to the teacher making an immediate adjustment in instruction based on observations or interactions that occur during instruction. The latter is also called reflexive practice because adjustments may be made mid-lesson based on the classroom interactions (Cunliffe, 2004). Though both require practice, reflexive responses are found among professional teachers who have experienced similar situations, which is not to suggest that preservice teacher candidates would never experience reflexive practice only that it does require a similar situation, or lesson, to reoccur.

Freire’s (1970/2012) framework for reflective practice came from the viewpoint of considering the other. Freire perceived reflection as interrogation of the political, social, cultural contexts of learning and living in order to uncover inequalities—a process referred to as critical reflection. In this process, learners examine their social context in such a way that they “achieve a deepening awareness of both the sociocultural reality which shapes their lives and of their capacity to transform that reality through action upon it” (Freire, 1970/2012, p. 27).

van Manen (1990), Jay and Johnson (2002), and Larrivee (2006) categorized divided reflective practices into three levels. Action at the first level, which Larrivee (2006) called a surface reflection, merely utilized technical competencies and skills to describe what was happening in the context of the observation. The second level depicted a practical approach to compare different pedagogical viewpoints. Larrivee (2006) named this second level, a point at which a teacher tries to coordinate theory and practice, pedagogical reflection. Though van Manen (1990) used the word emancipatory,
Jay and Johnson (2002) and Larrivee (2006) used the term critical reflection, to name their most advanced level of reflection. The third level of each typology was considered the point at which a teacher not only correlates theory and practice but also coordinates moral and ethical issues (Larrivee, 2004). It involves transcendence of “a singular behavior change . . . [to] undergo a transformation” through an examination of beliefs systems, the ethical implications of those beliefs, and the impact of selected practices (Larrivee, 2000, p. 306).

Many researchers (Glen et al., 1995; Hatton & Smith, 1995; Henderson, 2001; Valli, 1992) conducted studies to provide an authentic method for preservice teachers to gain experience with reflection. Teacher educators needed a rubric, or typology, to use to scaffold and evaluate students. The following studies are pertinent to this narrative inquiry.

Hatton and Smith (1995) reviewed the seminal works regarding reflection by Dewey, Gore, and Zeichner; Schön; and van Manen in hopes of determining a common definition or practice of reflection. As in Rodgers’ (2002) case, these researchers found neither. The pair then conducted a multiyear study at Sydney University on the impact of strategies designed to foster reflection for preservice teachers. The results revealed four types of writing: (a) descriptive writing, (b) descriptive reflection, (c) dialogic reflection, and (d) critical reflection (Hatton & Smith, 1995). As the titles suggest, only three were considered reflective. Descriptive writing simply reported events while descriptive reflection provided reasons or purposes based on personal knowledge or perspectives. The dialogic form showed the use of inquiry and monologue to work through the events
to a conclusion. The participant submissions categorized in the critical form provided evidence of political, sociocultural, or historical contexts under consideration in the event planning or decisions for change (Hatton & Smith, 1995).

Valli (1992) studied teacher preparation programs’ use of reflection and proposed six hierarchical levels, versus models, of reflection beginning with (1) behavioral, through (2) technical decision making, (3) reflection-in-action, (4) deliberative, (5) personalistic, to (6) critical. Based on Schön’s (1983) descriptions of reflection-on-action and reflection-in-action, Valli’s placement of this form of reflection in the midst of development is contrary to the original work. Schön (1983) considered reflection-in-action to be complex and demanding and only a result of considerable experience can it develop.

Henderson (2001) also leveled different forms of reflection in a hierarchy: (a) public moral inquiry, (b) multi-perspective inquiry, (c) deliberative inquiry, (d) autobiographical inquiry, and (e) critical inquiry. Similar to Valli (1992), each step in this evolutionary process finds the educator considering how broader facets of influence impact classroom contexts and “creating oneself endlessly” (Bergson, 1911/1998, p. 7).

Glen et al. (1995) also considered reflection to pass through six phases as a teacher’s ability to reflect increased. For these researchers, professional development, whether self-directed or part of a program, aligned itself on a continuum throughout a teacher’s career. It is not to say that the continuum is a constant, but instead may ebb and flow as the individual’s career changes. As the teacher gained experiences, however, the ability to reflect increases, while the time it takes to move from the novice phase to
apprentice, professional, expert, distinguished, and eventually the evaluative phase, decreases. It is this evaluative phase that most resembles a critical reflection encompassing the needs of the subject, students and self (Glen et al., 1995).

This progression of change, or maturity, has been documented in research of professional teachers (Boud, Keogh, & Walker, 1985; Minott, 2006). According to Boud et al. (as cited in Moore, 2012), productive teachers utilize the three “clusters of reflective activity . . . returning to experience, attending to feelings’ and re-evaluating experience” (p. 125). Minott (2006) found that teachers approached reflection differently, even within the same school environment. Personal experience with students’ ability levels and content knowledge, philosophies about curriculum and instruction, and mood (feelings) greatly influenced not only their interview responses, but also why and how those responses came to be. Reflection, and being reflexive (Smyth, 1991), may be thought of by some researchers as a hierarchical progression, but it is clear from the research presented here that the outcome of reflection is enhanced by understanding of and experience with the intended curriculum, a variety of instructional strategies, and policy expectations. Unfortunately, some fail to reveal their understanding to themselves and to others.

Reflection and Collaboration

Osterman and Kottkamp (2004) investigated reflecting on instruction in a collaborative environment. They considered collaborative reflection on instruction to strengthen the validity of the output due to the complexity of the process. Employing reflective practice within a community allows for problem solving to occur from multiple
perspectives (Beauchamp, 2006). Working in collaboration, both formally and informally, allows teachers to exchange views, elicit alternative instructional techniques, and provide motivation and support (Elbaz, 1988; Osterman & Kottkamp, 2004).

Costa and Kallick (1993) placed critical collaboration into perspective through an analogy of a visit to an ophthalmologist by emphasizing Senge’s (1990) claim that learning requires feedback from assessments. For example, the doctor may assess your eyes via the use of an instrument, but he cannot make any rulings without your feedback. Ultimately, the doctor is there to assist you in a self-assessment of your eyesight. The doctor has a limited view into your situation, but by asking questions such as “Which looks better to you?” the doctor is able to recommend a lens for you. Analyzing student work is similar. Each teacher understands the classroom environment and the ways each student interacts with the curriculum. However, in order to best serve the students and provide them with the tools they need to view and work with the curriculum better, the teacher should get a second opinion to ensure as many options as possible are presented to the learner. By collaborating with a critical friend, students, teachers, and administrators obtain feedback, or assessment, of their work from someone “who will ask the provocative questions and offer helpful critiques” (Costa & Kallick, 1993, p. 49).

Many have trepidations about collaborating in a critical friends group simply due to the negative connotation of the word critique. Seldom do teachers recall that Bloom, Englehart, Furst, Hill, and Krathwohl (1956) referred to critique as an evaluative action of the highest order of thinking. For critical friends groups to benefit everyone involved, a
structure of trust must be built between participants. Upon building that frame, friends can utilize the lenses to focus upon the needs of the beneficiary.

Dearman and Alber (2005) summarized the works of Blasé & Blasé (1998), Blythe et al. (1999), and Seidel (1991), who supported the active collaboration between teachers before and after a lesson. These researchers suggested that teachers critically critique each other’s executed lesson after the fact in a nonthreatening environment in addition to planning lessons and pooling resources. They also suggested that teachers assist each other in evaluating student work for a fresh perspective. Blythe et al. (1999) designed this tuning protocol initially to provide feedback and fine-tune student assessment systems. The process is now implemented to critique student output as it relates to the focus person’s stated goal for a lesson. The participants may ask questions to understand the context of the classroom better, but they are not to directly interrogate the focus person about what he did or did not do to scaffold a particular student to meet the goal. The focus person can then address any comments or open questions that interest him.

Palmer (2007) referred to a community of learners who provide each other guidance by asking provocative questions and offering helpful critique when dealing with critical moments in teaching. Each community must establish what he called ground rules for dialogue. Palmer’s suggestion for such a social structure dates back over 300 years in the Quaker community. Among the Quakers, it is the clearness committee. This Quaker model allows the participant to self-select a diverse group of five to six trusted peers for whom the participant summarizes the situation. Unlike many modern forums in
education, no one can offer advice. The group is only able to ask thoughtful, pertinent questions so that the participant’s inner teacher can be heard and guidance from within can be revealed.

Arredondo-Rucinski (2005) recommended that groups review routine and nonroutine actions; put forth inquiries to assumptions; and reframe a problem or meaning in order to consider the concept from the perspective of another member. Once the critical inquiries are in practice, group members should record reflections in a journal or discuss with others through conversations (Arredondo & Rucinski, 1998). Participants in their study of reflective practice moved into the upper stages of reflective judgment, reasoning, and moral decision making. This review of the literature on reflection suggests its implementation varies, and it is as unique as the contexts of its definitions. Exploring the phenomenon of reflection, and its current role in praxis, provides a lens through which to view the uses of reflection and how it can improve the effectiveness of educators and students alike.

Transformation through Critical Reflection

Teachers are usually left to reflect upon their own practice, as well as decoding the meanings of the nuances that unfold within the classroom each day (Jay, 2003). Although the works of Osterman and Kottkamp (2004) reiterate the recommendation of teachers to reflect as part of their pedagogical process, few studies investigate the reflection practices of general education inservice teachers. It is often difficult to admit when improvement is necessary if there is no time to process what has just occurred. Research investigating the use of reflection by teachers only reinforces the need for
allowing teachers to prioritize this personal examination of self and critically collaborate to improve instruction (Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2001).

Many teachers experience reflection tasks in preservice, or during professional development (Raines & Shadiow, 1995; Wenzlaff, 1994). Although these instructional situations are appropriate for encouraging reflective practice, Posner (1989) asserted, “Reflection with no experience is sterile and generally leads to unworkable conclusions while experience with no reflection is shallow and at best leads to superficial knowledge” (p. 22). In both instances, reflective activity is considered a practice of problem solving (Bauer, 1991). Teachers must be motivated, self-directed learners. Reflection, both formal and informal, can be a part of the systems put in place to deal with the daily changes in the classroom.

Larrivee (1999) described essential practices for reflection:

1. Make time daily. It does not have to be a prescribed process, such as journaling, but it is suggested that a method be selected and followed. Journaling is the most common because it allows for ease of access, tracking of thoughts and frustrations, and is visible to those who may be required to access it. For whatever accountability purposes it might be used, reflection can validate feelings caused by dilemmas that create uncertainty.

2. Using reflection to solve problems presents opportunity to locate solutions. Reflection allows the teacher the opportunity to name and confront the dilemmas and contradictions they face daily. Problem solving requires getting
to the root issue. Critical reflection requires asking the questions necessary to
do just that, even when the emotional stakes are high.

3. Finally, question the status quo in the classroom. Not only will the activities
of the classroom becoming visible, it will allow the teacher to question why
things are happening the way they are. Not to the point of
antidisestablishmentarianism, but to tactfully pull co-workers out of the
fluorescent lighting and into the natural light to examine practices from a new
perspective.

Formal methods such as evaluations and Tuning Protocols (Blythe et al., 1999)
also benefit teachers as they work through a process like Schön’s (1973) thinking-on-
action. Schön (1987) purported that these practices are definable as “chunks of activity,
divisible into more or less familiar types, each of which is seen as calling for the exercise
of a certain kind of knowledge” (pp. 32-33). Thus, teacher practices can be viewed as
chunks of activity reflecting the beliefs of a teacher for purposefully expanding his or her
knowledge. Schön (1983) considered a practitioner as a “specialist who encounters
certain types of situations again and again” (p. 60). At the other end of the spectrum are
the informal, often unconscious, immediate reflexive methods that take place in during
the lesson. Schön (1973) described these methods as thinking-in-action to delineate them
from the formal processes.

Reflection in the Classroom

Classroom teachers are required to continue to develop their practice as part of
their licensure and individual evaluation plan (Georgia Professional Standards
Commission GAPSC, 2017). In the past, teachers received credits towards this professional learning requirement by attending college courses or local workshops. Both of these options were intended to expand their knowledge and skills in order to support student learning. However, Argyris and Schön (1974) proffered the idea that classroom teachers were more likely to implement skills from these workshops instead of the theoretical beliefs they hold. Through reflection, a transformation of behavior can occur, thus taking the practitioner from simply expressing what she would do, *theory-in-use*, to implementing that *theory-in-action*. Dewey’s (1933) concept of education posited the necessity of the reorganization of information obtained in each experience in such a way that it could be used to plan or manage subsequent experiences.

This definition by Dewey (1933) created an initial understanding of teacher reflection. From his viewpoint, teachers must nurture three attitudes of *open-mindedness*, *whole-heartedness*, and *intellectual responsibility* in order to develop an enduring reflective practice. It was his belief that teachers using reflective practice would be more likely to embrace the change to a classroom routine based on inquiry, rather than the standard input-response. Application of Dewey’s vision clarifies the notion that teachers-as-learners must critically reflect daily upon classroom experiences to assess the appropriateness of theory employed along with the quality of differentiated practice. As the practice of reflection improves, teachers may employ a reflexive practice in which the practitioner is able to reflect amidst the act of teaching and react (Schön, 1983, 1987).

type of model lies in its usefulness as a guide for enabling teachers to reflect on their instructional practice and underlying cognitions in a structured, comprehensive manner” (p. 223). Furthermore, “knowledge, beliefs, and goals directly influence thinking across three stages of teaching: pre-active (planning), interactive (monitoring and regulating), and post-active (evaluating and revising)” (Artzt & Armour-Thomas, 1999, p. 223). Lessons from the model presented by Artzt and Armour-Thomas (1999) outlined different dimensions of focus in the study, such as tasks, learning environment, and discourse. Observations of multifaceted groups of teachers revealed that having a plan allowed even novice teachers to display the instructional competences of an expert teacher, and conversely, that those teachers who did not fully implement the framework exhibited the instructional practice and cognition of a novice teacher (Leinhardt & Greeno, 1986).

Classroom teachers are often responsible for implementing curricular or operational changes efficiently and effectively without the adequate time afforded to other professions (Hargreaves, 1994). In addition, teachers are asked to reflect critically on their pedagogy in order to certify their level of effectiveness (Ahmad et al., 2013; Zeichner & Liston, 1996). Engaging in reflection is important in assisting teachers as they continue thinking about what they are doing (Raines & Shadiow, 1995). Each day teachers reflect on instruction, analyze the resulting student work, and compare the output to the intended results (Zemelman, Daniels, & Hyde, 2005). Schön (1973) pointed out that the practice of reflection amidst change can be a challenge even though change is a fundamental element of society for which we must develop systems that afford pathways
for adaptation. More research about how professional teachers transform this phenomenon from a practice of reflection that only focuses inward to a practice that incorporates multiple external foci is necessary.

Critical reflection is encouraged to scaffold teachers over time (Brookfield, 1995b; Freire, 1998; Zeichner & Liston, 1996). Educational researchers and theorists (Brookfield, 1995a, 1995b; Freire, 1998; Kraft, 2002) have linked critical reflection to improved teaching and learning, teacher effectiveness, career satisfaction, and teacher empowerment, as well as educational and social reform. However, few studies have investigated the ways in which general education teachers developed critically reflective practices over time (Brookfield, 1995b).

Brookfield’s Lenses of Critical Reflection

Brookfield (1995b) specifically categorized critical reflection in education. To be considered *critical*, the process must purposefully call into question not only the participant’s assumptions, but also core beliefs and practices. Additionally, the participating educator must not simply be able to identify the power structures in education but come to understand the origins of the bases of power structures.

Brookfield (1995b) described four lenses through which he recommended that teachers examine their developing pedagogical practice in order to gain insight of the hegemony that exists. The lenses described by Brookfield (1995b) are as follows:

(a) Examining the autobiographical experiences as teacher and learner;

(b) Viewing the classroom experience through the eyes of the student;
(c) Engaging in discourse with colleagues regarding the known, or unknown hegemony in the environment; and

(d) Consulting the theoretical literature to assist in naming and understanding an experience in the environment.

The following sections provide an explanation of each of Brookfield’s (1995b) lenses as well as representative or purposive evidence.

The Lens of the Autobiographical Learner

Brookfield (1995b) introduced his “process of learning and change” (p. 28) by introducing us to ourselves. Taking this outward stance in order to look inward uniquely positions the self for an analysis of assumptions, biases, core beliefs, and practices. As we look back through on our lived experiences, we tend to recall those events that changed the direction of our path. For example, when we experience birth or death for the first time in our youth, our career aspirations may migrate away from emulating a parent’s career choice to one in the healthcare industry with the desire to be a doctor or nurse. Too much death in our youth may have the opposite effect. Reflection as an adult may lead to questioning the benefits of such a career choice, when it seems to have failed us so often. As educators, we must look at our value systems. Where did they come from and how have they changed? Even more important than how they may have changed over time, but why have they changed? What was the trigger?

In the classroom, member checking in the form of teacher logs, audits, observations, and ideology critiques provide a place and time for environmental influences to be validated and changed if necessary (Brookfield, 1995b). Research by
Day, Pope, and Denicolo (1990) revealed that teachers tend to implement pedagogical styles that are familiar styles from their youth or fit within their own preferred learning style. As long as teachers keep these preferences in check, then they may be able to quell the hegemony associated with such practice. Part of improving in any practice is recognizing when reliance on dependable, comfortable measures supports continued growth and when reliance on what is comfortable hinders growth (Day et al., 1990).

Teacher review of personal work requires an allotment of time, which must take place after the instruction. At times, teachers may have a chance to change their instruction in the middle of a lesson, but it is necessary to identify these teachable moments first. Teachers who are not following the critical practices of reflection are sure to miss many opportunities for improvement. To combat this issue, Tripp (1993) suggested that teachers select an incident that typifies their preferred approach to instruction. Following a four-step analysis, the educator names/identifies the significance of the approach, which includes details of its acceptance in the field, as well as the level of dominance it holds over the learner. The instructor then attempts to name the advantages and disadvantages of its use from the point of view of the learner. Finally, the instructor seeks alternatives to this common instructional approach so that learners outside the majority also benefit (Tripp, 1993).

The Lens of a Student’s Perspective

Brookfield (1995b) continued his introductions as he challenged us to investigate the power structure of the classroom operating between the teacher and the student. This challenge continues to remind us of the pitfalls of assumptions. Instead of assuming that
we have the needs of the learner in mind, we must actually consult the learner. Just as we
cannot read the minds of the learner, neither can they read the minds of the instructor.
Common approaches such as wait time, or Socratic lines of questioning may confuse the
student who has never experienced the approach before. The instructor may know that a
minimum of five to ten seconds is often necessary for a certain percentage of the class to
raise their hands in response to a question, but for the anxious student who is frequently
the first to respond, the delay may be interpreted as a negative form of communication.
The instructor would have no indication of this misunderstanding without consulting the
students.

Asking for opinions, using active listening, and modeling how to respond when an
idea misses the mark are all admirable ways to reinforce the existence of a shared power
structure (Brookfield, 1995b). These examples provide limited insight for researching
what students already know and have experienced in order to construct an “empowering
curriculum” (Shor, 1992, p. 202). Finding creative ways to climb into the lives of the
student varies. In high school and college, teachers may implement an end of course
evaluation, which allows the student input regarding the relevance of the course and the
instructional style and decisions made by the instructor. In the intermediate elementary
grades, a common practice at the end of the year requires the students to write a letter
providing notes of inspiration and warnings regarding behavior or study hints to the
students entering the grade the next year. Teachers then read and potentially adjust their
practices for the next year based on these suggestions. In both cases, the information
comes too late for the teacher to make changes that would benefit the current students.
Some teachers have amended the process. After the new students have read the letters from the previous class, they are able to write an anonymous letter to the teacher to advise him or her of any concerns elicited because of the letters. It is their opportunity to tell the teacher about their learning preferences and for the teacher to adjust instruction.

Critical Incident Questionnaires (CIQs) are not just for educators to guide themselves toward building a more diverse, empowering curriculum. Students may receive a CIQ in order to provide feedback to the instructor in a timely manner. In doing so, students provide the instructor with information about the students’ perceptions and understandings (Brookfield, 1995b). As stated earlier, the typical CIQ is implemented at the end of the course. However, they can be implemented daily and in any form to acquire the students’ perspectives. An elementary example is the Ticket out the Door. At the end of a lesson, the teacher asks the students to either answer a simple question or provide the most important fact gleaned from the lesson. Though often anonymous and after the fact, teachers can infer if the majority reached goal of the lesson or if misinterpretations or misconceptions exist that need to be addressed in the next lesson. The purpose of the CIQ may be academic in nature, but it is beneficial in other ways. CIQs provide a glimpse at the diversity of the classroom; an outlet for students to reflect on their own learning; a platform upon which to build trust; a method for addressing problems or misunderstandings; and a basis from which to glean areas for improvement (Brookfield, 1995b).
The Lens of a Colleague’s Perspective

Brookfield’s (1995b) third challenge in the process of becoming a critically reflective teacher can be summarized by John Heywood’s famous epigram, “Two heads are better than one”. For some individuals, their core beliefs obscure their insight and, as mentioned earlier, students may be reluctant to voice their true opinion out of a cultural sign of respect, or a propensity to please. Thankfully, the process of critical reflection brings with it a propensity for supportive, social interaction.

Colleagues can provide a plethora of perspectives on as many topics. They may provide an honest feedback of our pedagogy, clarify or rectify our assumptions of power, and impart wisdom through storied, vicarious experiences (Brookfield 1995b; Chew, 2013). Horton (1990) reminded educators that not only do they learn from the active involvement of their experiences, but from an analysis of the experience as well. Discourse with peers may lead to the realization of personal biases and hegemony simply by obtaining a new perspective.

Brookfield (1995b) offered multiple suggestions for collaborating with peers. There exist many group activities where each participant has a role; however, these may be time consuming and require buy-in from the group in order for the process to work. The two processes involving the fewest time constraints also have the fewest possible alternate solutions. The first is a peer observation, in which a recommended peer provides feedback on instructional choices and situations or reactions that occurred during the lesson. Another is the Three-Role Structure, which Brookfield (1995b) described as a “structured critical conversation” (p. 155). During this meeting, one
educator intricately describes a perplexing incident. As the storyteller explicates the minute details, the detectives listen without interruption for hegemonic assumptions, implicit and explicit, held by the storyteller. At the end of the story, the detectives may ask questions to confirm details, but they may not provide opinions or judgements. The detectives then attempt to identify or name the beliefs and assumptions held by the storyteller. The detectives then offer alternative perspectives that might explain the instructional element that perplexed the storyteller. It is in the discourse with colleagues that understanding and transformation unfold.

The Lens of Theoretical Literature

There is power in a name (Wright, 2013). In human consciousness, it provides an individual with identity, a unique possession that no one can take. Thus, as with the power of language itself, examples of naming our surroundings are in the earliest of stories of man (Genesis 1:3-9 New International Version). Yet, nothing is quite so dismal as the unknown and unnamed. It is that nagging feeling that tugs at your core. It is indeed not knowing what you do not know.

Theoretical literature provides a foundation for inquiry in the absence of colleagues, or students (Brookfield, 1995b). From a critical theory perspective, critical pedagogy brings the role of educator into the process for the purpose of exposing the dominant groups and their values and naming them for analysis (Brookfield, 1995b). Reading about the learning process experienced by others can illuminate our own situation and provide a perspective that may not have otherwise been available.
Critical reflection and reflective practice are the ethnographic means by which “teachers learn to make sense of their actions and the contexts in which they work” (Brookfield, 1995b, p. 215). The study of critical theory compels adult learners to make a conscious effort to review “the situations and experiences which mold adult life” (Brookfield, 1995b, p. 222). For instance, peer groups are helpful when seeking alternative instructional strategies, but over time, peer groups have a propensity to synchronize ideologically. Conversely, there may be one within the group with a different ideology with ideas for a change in perspective that the majority overrides. The disadvantage of being in a shared paradigm is that some hegemonic views are overlooked. The reciprocal situation compels us to keep theory in the picture as it helps to decrease dissonance within the group when the voice of singularity has the support of multiple researchers.

Research Related to Brookfield’s Four Reflective Lenses

This section offers discussions of empirical studies, meta-analyses, and literature reviews related to each of Brookfield’s (1995b) lenses. Electronic searches within the previously mentioned databases that used Brookfield’s (1995b) key words from each lens produced thousands of potential studies. However, only the individual studies that focused on the crux of each of Brookfield’s lenses were included. Meta-studies, literature reviews, and syntheses were subject to specific exclusionary factors presented in the following segments. The exclusionary factors were based on the context in which key words were presented within the context of the abstract. A more refined, purposive
Evidence of the Autobiographical Lens

Brookfield (1995b) guided educators seeking to become critically reflective practitioners by urging them to reflect upon the lived experiences that shaped who they are today as a teacher. The resulting literature using the indicators critical AND self-reflection was vast. In an exhaustive search, multiple categories would have been necessary to organize the various uses of the terms. In an effort to limit results to those of an empirical nature versus the countless articles of rhetoric, a search for literature reviews and meta-analyses was initiated. Using these results and the top 25 search results from each database, a representative sample of empirical studies on critical self-reflection was determined. Upon review of 18 literature and meta-studies that focused on prior research of critical reflection and self-reflection, only three upheld the Brookfield’s (1995b) viewpoint. The following paragraphs review these three studies as well as further details for each search.

Sparks-Langer and Colton (1991) reviewed the research on reflective thinking and its role in critical reflection. They affirmed the confusing fluidity of the term reflection as used in the literature, but noted the important roles of cognition, criticality, and narrative in shaping that action of reflection. Sparks-Langer and Colton (1991) referenced Shulman’s (1987) work in which he suggested six categories of knowledge teachers’ reference in decision making and planning: content, pedagogical, curricular, learner, context, and educational aims. At the time of the publication, little research
addressed the last two categories. Of equal importance to possessing knowledge is the ability to retrieve it. This requires organization, referred to as schemata. Ease of access is dependent upon frequency of use, which leads to automaticity accessed by clearly constructed pathways to the information needed in each context.

Sparks-Langer and Colton (1991) cited McLaren (1998) and Smyth (1989), who revealed the importance of teachers' consideration of sociopolitical issues when making classroom decisions that may negatively inhibit student learning. Teachers who reflected energy in mind began to question hegemonic practices, such as tracking and ability. They then sought to clarify their own beliefs and practices in an effort to find a balance of power in the classroom. As teachers analyzed classroom events, they were able to create personal pedagogical goals to guide future actions. Ross (1990) stated that the concept of reflective thinking included five components. The first three are based upon Schön’s problem setting dialogue: recognizing the dilemma, responding to the similarities and special circumstances of the situation, then framing and reframing the dilemma. The final two components are based upon critical pedagogy. In these last two steps, teachers are encouraged to discover the consequences of different solutions, as well as consider any unexpected consequences of the chosen solution. Ross (1990) provided support for Brookfield’s (1995b) lens of the autobiographical learner’s self-reflective practice, when she stated that a change in perspective is the foundation for developing reflective practice.

In 2007, Taylor conducted a review of 40 recent studies of transformative learning theory and noted that, even though the theory gained significant popularity and
use in higher education, this was the first significant literature review conducted since 1998. While most of these studies continued to rely on a qualitative design focused on a single experience similar to the previous review (Taylor, 2007), more of these studies employed a longitudinal or mixed-method design than in the previous review. An additional contrast to the previous literature review is the increased attention to the critical reflection element of the theory.

Previous studies of transformative learning sought only to confirm the presence of reflection as a critical part in the process of transformation. Over the years, the concept of critical reflection has expanded in the areas of its influence, developmental levels, and use as an indicator of change. In a longitudinal study on teaching authentically by Cranton and Carusetta (2004), teachers who critically reflected on multiple perspectives (self, student, peers, district) and the context of their classroom were often striving to learn what was required to teach authentically. Cranton and Carusetta (2004) did not provide the details and frameworks of reflection used by these teachers.

In Kreber’s (2004) study, the focus on how teachers use of reflection in self-directed learning took a two-pronged approach. First, Kreber gathered data to determine how the participants utilized instructional, pedagogical, and curricular knowledge. Then, Kreber cross-referenced each domain of knowledge with Mezirow’s levels of reflection (content, process, and premise) to see if there was any difference in the relationship of the two perspectives of learning. The results indicated that premise, or critical, reflection was a factor of learning least often across all domains. Recommendations included workshops and courses in which premise reflection was the first type of reflection
discussed so that participants would infer the importance of understanding why they teach the way they do and be less concerned with how to teach what they are told to teach (Kreber, 2004). An important note presented by in Taylor’s (2007) summary of this study was that instances of found premise reflection involved its use by an experienced teacher. Merriam’s (2004) contention that a level of cognitive maturity is necessary to engage in critical reflection and discourse related to transformative learning supported Taylor’s (2007) finding.

Tembrioti and Tsangaridou (2014) reviewed the recent literature from the field of dance education. In decades past, research in the field was narrowly focused “to prepare the best future specialists in the workforce” (p. 4). Tembrioti and Tsangaridou (2014) cited Darling-Hammond (2006), who urged educators to consider “not only what they teach but also how, so that knowledge for teaching actually shapes teachers' practice and enables them to become adaptive experts who can continue to learn” (p. 305). In the past 10 years, research in dance education has continued to expand its focus to include a broad range of dance topics and learning styles.

An example of this movement referenced the study conducted by Leijen, Lam, Simons, and Wildschut (2008), in which this call for change was promoted in the field of dance education as they reminded dance teachers that the ability to reflect on what has been learned enhances critical thinking skills. In doing so, they provided an example to students of Darling Hammond's (2006) ""adaptive experts who can continue to learn” (p. 305). Leijen et al. (2008) noted further support in Doughty, Francksen, Huxley and Leach’s (2008) research. Doughty et al. pointed out the former inadequacy of dance
education that simply trained students to master skills without understanding the concepts behind them.

Three models of reflective practice were created for the discipline of dance education at the tertiary level. Lavender (1996) developed a five-step descriptive model for the area of choreography to help preservice dance teachers develop the skills necessary “in viewing, developing, and performing dance works” (p. 8). The model, known as ORDER, prompted preservice dance teachers to observe, write, discuss, evaluate, and provide revision notes for a dance performance.

Leijen et al. (2008) developed a second model in dance education, described as having five types of reflection. The first two are dyadic and urge dance teachers to consider how they apply the principles of dance in their practice and how they apply the same principles based on an awareness of the bodies potential and limits. The third and fourth are also dyadic and prompt dance teachers to consider new concepts they have developed based on the skills of dance, as well as how those new concepts relate to themselves. The fifth is pragmatic in nature, as it prompts the teacher to attend to activities necessary to enhance learning (Leijen et al., 2008).

The third model by Leijen, Valtina, Leijen, and Padaste (2012) involved a nonlinear coding system, developed to explore the two axes of focus and level of reflection. This framework (a) allows the teacher to clarify if the focus of reflection will be at the technical, situational, or sensitizing level, where the term sensitizing considers the social, emotional, and political aspects of the situation; and (b) simultaneously
clarifies the level of reflection category as description, discussion, justification, or critique.

Ultimately, Sparks-Langer and Colton (1991); Taylor (2007); and Tembrioti and Tsangaridou (2014) concluded from the research that reflection is multidimensional and its definition and use varies with the context in which it is employed. Additionally, reflection can be used as an instrument with which to hone skills as well as a practice. When used as an evaluatory practice, reflection should not be viewed as linear, but instead as a procedure in which the context of the situation and a personal stance are explicitly known in order to determine appropriate alternatives.

Representative examples of empirical studies of critical self-reflection. Eighty empirical studies that focused on prior research on critical reflection and self-reflection were reviewed. Although the purposive sample provided many options fulfilling the self-reflection theme of this element, only four upheld Brookfield’s (1995b) viewpoint of critical reflection. The following paragraphs detail these studies.

Pleschova and McAlpine’s (2016) research focused on a program designed to help inexperienced college instructors modify the context of the classroom, and thus the student experience in their courses, by expanding their own pedagogical knowledge. Participants in this one-year program taught undergraduate courses at one of eight colleges in Slovakia’s university system. Most of the 19 participants were doctoral candidates fulfilling their teaching requirement; other postdoctorate participants had been teaching less than five years. According to Pleschova and McAlpine, the traditional context and focus of the university system was prevalent. Classroom instruction
historically followed a transmissive style of pedagogy where learning occurred in class, followed by summative assessment. This program held a short, intensive summer orientation class during which participants were exposed to teaching practices for which the program was designed to promote student learning styles and reflection. Pleschova and McAlpine (2016) utilized mixed methods, and while the quantitative data accounted for all 19 participants, the qualitative data were selected passages from four writing assignments submitted by a subset of eight of the 19 participants. Key words in selected passages dealt with the three aims of the study: learner-centered, critically reflective, and theory-driven. Due to the variety of meanings of critical reflection, it is important to note that in this study critical reflection was defined as a form of reflection in which the learner’s style and the environmental contexts were considered when attempting to identify why a student struggles or succeeds. The practitioner would also evaluate the teaching style and materials used and how those elements affected the success of the learner. A third aim of the program—using educational theory to inform practice—was not developed as thoroughly within the program’s curriculum or implementation. Its lack of use or reference in participants’ work was evident. The course provided the participants with more than just pedagogical rhetoric.

Pleschova and McAlpine (2016) attributed the successful results for the program goals of learner-centered instruction and critical reflection in the one-year course to the participants’ roles as a part of action research. The classical context of the university’s expectation left little room for the participants to make extreme changes. They did find ways to implement independent, learner-centered, assignments to supplement the
required work. The participants’ descriptions of their use of reflection progressed from the descriptive level of what was done and its binary, informative method of amending lessons that include comments such as “They can’t handle it” or “It was too easy for them, so I changed to something else” in order to engage in a deeper, more critical reflection as previously defined. According to the qualitative results, five participants demonstrated positive developmental changes in their examples of critically reflective practice and creating learner-centered activities. This study exemplifies Brookfield’s (1995b) lens of developing critical practices by examining the impact of personal attitudes and pedagogy on learner outcomes.

Vaughn (2015) conducted a multicase study of two intermediate teachers to gather empirical evidence regarding the correlation of the teacher’s vision of pedagogy and the kinds of adaptations teachers made and the reason for the change in instruction. Using teacher interviews, observations, and student interviews as sources, Vaughn collected, categorized, and analyzed the data on adaptations and the reflections during the same four-month period of the year. The uniqueness of the participants, who both held advanced degrees and were observed teaching the same content area, limited the cases. Other information may have been available during other times of the year and in other content areas.

Both teachers tended to use one adaptation over others. The adaptations of one of the teachers, Ms. Baker, aligned with her vision of instruction and instructional adaptations of promoting students to take on many perspectives and to “think beyond the text” (Vaughn, 2015, p. 51). Conversely, Ms. Kay, whose instruction vision and
adaptations were intended to promote “collaboration, problem solving” and “making connections” (p. 52) instead adapted intended instruction “to teach a specific skill or strategy because the teacher focused on teaching context clues to develop meaning from a story” (p. 54). Vaughn (2015) concluded, “Possessing an instructional vision provides a lens into one’s practice that may inform the kinds of instructional adaptations teachers conduct in their classrooms” (p. 57).

Williams and Grudnoff (2011) longitudinal study of an Australian college program’s impact on participants’ perceptions of reflection in professional practice is representative of Brookfield’s (1995) lens of autobiographical self-reflection and presented in detail in a later section. In summary, a sample of 12 novice and 12 experienced teachers participated in semistructured interviews. The novice teachers, most of who were under age 25, participated in four interviews during their preparatory program and once in their beginning year of teaching. The experienced teachers, half administrators and half from the classroom and most with at least 20 years of experience, participated in a graduate course at the college and interviewed twice, once before and once after the course. The results did not reveal that the overall college program had any significant influence on the teachers’ practice (Williams & Grudnoff, 2011).

Of significance was the unexpected theme of reflection that emerged from the interview data from both groups. An inductive approach to this data indicated a single course on personal and professional empowerment had an influence on teachers’ instruction. Williams and Grudnoff (2011) selected Smyth’s (1989) four-stage model for use in the course because it was presented in only four steps, versus Mezirow’s ten
stages, and it required students to take cognitive action by answering a question before moving on to the next step. The model’s summarized steps are:

1. Describe . . . What did I do?
2. Inform . . . What does this mean?
3. Confront . . . How did I come to be like this?

According to Williams and Grudnoff (2011), both groups were unthreatened by the simplicity of the process of reflection within Smyth’s (1989) framework. Two major strands emerged: (a) exposure to Smyth’s (1989) model positively changed the participants’ perspective of reflection, and (b) the groups implemented the reflection process differently. New teachers needed the experiences of their own classroom before realizing the benefits of reflection. Their prior experiences with reflection were on terminal experiences. It took the venue of the classroom, where plans for the future emanate from the actions of today. The experienced teachers benefited from the purposeful structure of Smyth’s (1989) model and its focus on why practice can and should change (Williams & Grudnoff, 2011).

The difference in the implementation revealed that reflective practice is not intuitive but is limited by the range of lived experiences. The more varied experiences and depth of knowledge possessed by a teacher correlated with the ease of implementation and the depth of reflection expressed in practice. After implementing reflective practices, new teachers took approximately one year to move beyond step one’s descriptive level. The experienced teachers found it easier to move through lower
descriptive levels of reflections to levels in which they had to justify their choices. They focused on changes beyond the classroom and local school, allowing them to engage more effectively in collaboration and critical discourse to offset the status quo (Williams & Grudnoff, 2011).

In Yun’s (2008) study, comparisons were made between eight novice teachers’ and 26 experienced teachers’ results of three survey instruments and an open ended questionnaire to determine the extent to which teachers’ level of complexity in their reflective practice might be predicted by the inventory scales. Yun (2008) examined online survey responses from novice and experienced teachers. In addition to demographic information, the survey included seven open-ended reflection questions pertaining to a recent disorienting event. Participants also completed two inventory scales: an 18-item cognition scale and a two-part personality inventory consisting of 10 items in the Openness segment and eight items in the Neuroticism segment. Of the 64 original respondents, only 21 completed all the necessary sections. Multiple raters scored the complexity of the answers to the open-ended reflection questions using Hatton and Smith’s (1995) four-point coding system prior to comparing the results to the other instruments. Of the three scales, only the personality scale, Neuroticism, provided a significant predictor ($p<.01$) of a teacher’s level of reflective complexity (Yun, 2008).

Interestingly, although the number of novice teacher respondents was significantly fewer than the number of experienced teacher respondents, the distribution of theme and level of complexity had similar ratios between groups. The conclusions Yun (2008) reached regarding the results echo Brookfield’s (1995) lens of
autobiographical self-reflection. In this study, the overall score for the level of integrative complexity indicator was lower than expected considering the quantity of veteran teachers and the average number of years taught within that group. Yun noted that the word count for the answers to the reflection questions correlated to the level of cognition assigned by the raters to each segment. Yun’s (2008) explanation was that the participants with lower scores were not intrinsically motivated to complete the activities, but instead were completing the exercise due to an extrinsic obligation. Alternatively, the positive relationship between the Neuroticism scale and level of complexity suggested that one aspect of motivation to reflect critically may be due to “the more intense emotional responses associated with neuroticism [which] elicited higher quality reflections” (Yun, 2008, p. 72). In order for teachers to become critically reflective practitioners, the motivation to reflect critically must come from within in order to express the improvements outwardly.

Summary of research on critical self-reflection. The reviews and empirical research presented in this section on self-reflection present three overarching themes. Related first is Sparks-Langer and Colton’s (1991) attempt to reduce the confusion surrounding the multiple definitions of reflection. Like tines on a fork, the roles of cognition (reflective thinking), criticality (critical reflection), and narrative each point to a significant part in the design of the instrument of reflection. The scope of use and context, of the proverbial fork, dictate adjustments to the number of tines and overall design of the instrument. Smyth (1989) and McLaren (1998) presented literature reviews with conclusions that echo the results of empirical studies by Ross (1990) and Williams
and Grudnoff (2011), in which changes in perspective require the critical thought and consideration of beliefs in the balance of power. Taylor’s literature review results also correlated with Williams and Grudnoff’s (2011) study in that the participants, who most often were found to engage in reflection to a level described as critical based on the consideration of hegemonic beliefs, were more experienced or more mature (narrative). Finally, Tembrioti and Tsangaridou (2014) reviewed literature from the field of dance education in which teacher educators were urged to adjust instruction for the future benefit of the students. Similarly, the studies by Pleschova and McAlpine (2016) and Vaughn (2015) expressed a comparable theme of adaptation of instructional vision (reflective thinking) regarding the future skills and contexts of the students (critical reflection). Yun’s (2008) work produced a unique theme that linked a strong, negative, emotional response to positive motivation to change long-held beliefs or practices significantly.

Evidence of the Lens of Student Perspective

Brookfield’s (1995) second lens guides educators to become critically reflective practitioners by reflecting upon the lived experiences that shaped who they are today as a learner in order to empathize with their students. In seeking the perspective of the student, the indicators critical reflection AND student perspective were used. Most results regarding students and reflection referenced preservice teachers, college educators searching for a method to grade student reflections about coursework, or colleges assessing the end of course student evaluations. In an effort to exclude or synthesize articles of rhetoric, a search for literature reviews and meta-analyses was conducted.
Twenty-three meta-studies and literature reviews populated from the search. Only two were representative of Brookfield’s (1995) lens in which amendment of teacher pedagogy considered the perspective of the student. The following paragraphs review these studies as well as further details for each search.

Student evaluation surveys have become a vital method for gathering student perspective data at the college level. Davies and Lunt (2004) conducted a literature review on student assessment surveys published over a 10-year period from 1993-2003 in Australia. The purpose of student evaluation surveys varied. Some were for use in assessing an instructor’s growth in teaching practice. Others were to determine a more summative event, such as hiring, promoting, termination of employment, or simply “matching the appropriate teacher to the appropriate course” (Davies & Lunt, 2004, p. 1). The surveys’ summative influence for educators varied from department to department within the same university because weight given to the survey results was inconsistent.

One concern about the usefulness of these evaluations was that the results of a few Likert-scaled opinion questions delivered to the students at the end of a course served as the basis for the quantitative data. This timing did not provide teachers with the opportunity to adjust their pedagogy and then get additional feedback to confirm meeting of student needs. Furthermore, students did not receive the opportunity to benefit from the suggested change in teacher pedagogy. Davies and Lunt (2004) found instructor level determinants, student level determinants, and course level determinants influenced the results of the student evaluation surveys. In regards to evaluation of instructor effectives,
data yielded little consensus on the effect of the variables on student success or student satisfaction.

Clayson (2009) conducted a meta-analysis of literature regarding the dichotomous relationship between end-of-course student evaluations of teaching and the level of student learning. Results from the meta-analysis confirmed a relationship between the two factors, but the conditions during which a relationship existed varied. A caveat confirmed the sought-after conclusion relating the level of student learning to student evaluation results: the relationship was dependent upon the students’ perceptions of their learning. Five implications resulted from the meta-analysis. Of most concern was the correlation between student perception of learning and the evaluation score. Students who perceived they learned more than others in the course provided evaluation scores that correlated with a higher score on the evaluation form. Conversely, students who perceived they had learned less than expected ranked the instructor lower as well. Students who perceived coursework to be rigorous consistently generated negative scores on the student evaluation forms. Studies from the early 2000s indicated a negative correlation when coursework was assessed using objective measures, yet results from studies conducted before 1990 vary. A significant finding indicated that the area of study proved to be an important, but overlooked, variable often unaccounted for in the research. Other studies suggested that the variation in results were due to situational contexts and not differences in methodology, or due to calculation errors. Clayson (2009) speculated that the students’ perception of learning was reduced in disciplines that frequently utilized objective assessment measures and that the evaluation scores were also low.
The significant fact derived from Clayson’s (2009) meta-analysis was the validation of an association between student learning and the scores on the student evaluation form. However, this link was based upon perceptions of the individual student. Clayson made suggestions to counter the known, negative perceptions. Students need to perceive that their learning increased for them to increase the instructor’s rating on the evaluation form. Clayson (2009) referenced a study that indicated a strong association between instructor personality and evaluation scores, and his recommendation was to convince students that “what they are learning will be related to the evaluations” (p. 27). Studies indicated that students prefer assessments that are more subjective so that they have an opportunity to invoke their own interpretations. The perceived validity of student assessments were associated to the students’ beliefs. When the students questioned the validity of the assessment, the validity of the evaluation form was also questioned (Clayson, 2009).

Brookfield’s (1995) second lens urges educators to consider the student’s perspective. Many of Clayson’s (2009) suggestions for improved scores imply consistent and coordinated action from the instructors. He also encouraged schools to find ways to include the perceptions of the student body in the creation and implementation of coursework.

Representative examples of empirical studies with a student perspective. Using the top 50 search results from each database, a representative sample of empirical studies on critical reflection was collected in which there was a focus on, or consideration for, the student perspective. Of the 18 empirical studies generated from the search, only three
are representative of the intent of Brookfield’s (1995) lens to consider the perspective of the student.

The best example was the study of Hoban and Hastings (2006), who collaborated at various times over a 10-year period discussing research and developing various instruments with which to collect student feedback data. Initiated by Hoban’s dissertation research using student data to promote teacher reflection, the researchers explored four different methods of collecting data from students about their learning and the methods teachers used to support their learning. “Using student data as content for reflection . . . added to Hatton and Smith’s (1995) procedures for reflection-on-action,” (Hoban & Hastings, 2006, p. 1015) as well as a sociocultural influence “identified as content or critical reflection” ((Hoban & Hastings, 2006, p. 1015). To accomplish this, they used interview recordings, journals, observation forms, and surveys.

Hastings, for the majority of the 10-year study, was a classroom teacher, and he implemented the first three methods in his classroom at one time over the years. The surveys were a compromise during his first year as an administrator, in an effort to promote teacher reflection on student learning. Hoban, the outside researcher, conducted the student interview recordings to provide a layer of anonymity to the student answers in an effort to extract the most accurate and honest perspective possible. The interview tapes where then heard individually at monthly staff meetings. It took three years to hear all of them, but the four teachers in that segment of the study became more aware of what they were saying and why. Hastings, who had already been teaching for 10 years when the interviews began, admitted to teaching as he had been taught with limited
differentiation. His reflective journey began before the research project. Prompted by professional development courses focused on learning styles and constructivism, Hastings sought reasons why some student failed his class and others did not. Armed with the knowledge that a change was necessary, Hastings’ attempts to alter his teaching path without some kind of road map left him searching aimlessly for guidance and direction (Hoban & Hastings, 2006).

Since most of the sample students had moved on to higher levels of education and there were no outside researchers to take the time to conduct interviews and sort the information onto tapes, the small cohort of teachers looked for another instrument to use to gather similar data from a new set of students. Hoban and Hastings (2006) formulated a journal, or learning log, in which the students were asked to write about “what they learned” and “how they learned” (p. 1011) at the end of every lesson. Although more simplistic than Brookfield’s (1995) Critical Incident Questionnaire, the instrument contained a second question that posed difficulty for the students; thus students’ replies failed to benefit the teachers’ reflective practice. When Hoban was able to return to the school to have a discussion with the participating students, he discovered that many students found the process a waste of time. More importantly, he discovered that students lacked the pedagogical language to describe which elements of each teacher’s methods inhibited their learning and the type of change that would be helpful (Hoban & Hastings, 2006).

The following year, Hoban and Hastings (2006) constructed an observation schedule for the students to complete at the end of each class. As a reader and
practitioner, the term may elicit a feeling of student distracting, time consuming, formal evaluation, but the term is quite the opposite. This concept derived from the student learning logs from the prior year. Hoban and Hastings (2006) aimed for the same purpose: the students would complete an end of lesson review, similar to a ticket-out-the-door, and list two or three things they felt learned well along with two or three topics with which they struggled. With this document, however, the students had examples of phrases from which they could select an answer for each question pertaining to the actions of the teacher. This worked for Hastings, yet he found that his original plan to have the students complete a form at the end of each lesson was overwhelming for the students as well as the teacher. Hastings felt an obligation to review the forms from all his science segments, since the point was to get the students’ perspectives and change what he could. He found that the element of time worked against him as he attempted to review all the forms, adjust his lessons for the following day, and still have an opportunity to plan adjustments for future lessons. Although he continued to use this instrument, before the end of the year, he used it weekly for a short time and then every two weeks. The second week was more authentic, as it often marked the end of a unit and allowed the students multiple experiences with the material and various teaching styles in the lessons. Students also received time to make their own meaning from the new information, whereas before they often did not list questions because they did not know enough to realize they had questions.

A few years later, Hastings administered the final instrument, a 57-item anonymous survey, to staff and students at a different school where he served as an
assistant principal. He realized that the entire staff needed encouragement to begin the reflection process, and as a new administrator, he may appear overbearing if he introduced one of the other instruments in which students critiqued their teachers. The survey was completely anonymous, making it impossible to filter student information to the appropriate teachers. Through the survey, however, he hoped for honest information from the students and staff that might display any discrepancies between teacher perceptions and student perceptions of learning. The survey results indicated a large discrepancy for the survey item “My teachers use things I already know to help me learn new ideas”. Eighty percent of teachers provided a positive response; however, only 35% of the students agreed. Discussions of whole school statistics such as this provided a starting point for staff to consider the practice of reflecting on student perceptions in addition to graded work (Hoban & Hastings, 2006).

Each of these methods created a necessary element of emotion to provoke change. Overall, Hastings rated the recordings as providing the most powerful impact. The recorded voices were often easy to distinguish, so Hastings knew when the student information was relevant to him. Frustrations and concerns heard in the students’ voices added an extra emotional element that prompted Hastings to evaluate his own practice critically and make changes for the benefit of the student based on student input and not solely upon student output (work samples).

Messiou and Ainscow (2015) built upon previous research involving lesson study, as a way of building upon Lave and Wenger’s (1991) concept of communities of practice, and called for teachers to collaborate to improve their teaching practice. The prior
research results indicated that teachers collaborating in lesson studies often reflected only on the implementation, or outcome, of the lesson itself and rarely considered student perspectives. If they did, there were assumptions made based upon preexisting characteristics of the category/categories assigned to the student. Therefore, even if the format of the lessons or teacher practice changed, it occurred without advisement of the perspectives of the students, and attempts to improve practice and learning outcomes did not produce the intended results.

Messiou and Ainscow’s (2015) three-year study involved eight secondary schools with diverse student populations in four European cities, first in a six-month pilot study, and then in a full year study. In both cases, teachers received training on the multistep professional development process model for collaborative lesson study. The difference in the second study was that student perspectives became part of the data collected for review of the focus lesson. At each school after each focus lesson, a group of collaborating teachers reviewed the students’ perspectives of the focus lesson. Conducting this step as a group provided an opportunity for the focus teacher to hear the reactions of other adults to the student responses. Thus, the teacher would be less likely to assign priority to certain responses and maintain the integrity of the results. Additionally, reviewing student responses collaboratively allowed the schools to find new ways to categorize students using information other than achievement or demographic data. In this study, the use of student perspectives uncovered contextual barriers to learning that were identifiable only though student involvement. In line with Brookfield’s (1995) student lens, the results of this study provided evidence that
collaboration, in and of itself, is not always influential enough to act as a catalyst for change in practice. In order to improve the learning outcome, Messiou and Ainscow’s (2015) recommended the inclusion of the students’ perspectives.

Vaughn’s (2015) multicase study of two intermediate teachers also provided insight into the concept of adaptive teaching. As mentioned in an earlier section, the term adaptive teaching is most often associated with a teacher’s pedagogical reflective process. Student perspectives, gleaned first hand from 48 student interviews, provided evidence in the analysis process on adaptations and the areas needing further reflection.

Empirical evidence presented in this case study also provided support for Brookfield’s (1995) lens regarding teacher consideration of student perspective. Both teachers expressed concern for student learning. Ms. Baker’s resulting data provided evidence that her adaptive pedagogy aligned with her vision one-third of the time. Ms. Kay’s underlying vision was more complex and allowed for half of the observed instances of instructional adaptation to be categorized as aligned with her instructional vision. This data can serve as a baseline goal for other educators seeking to investigate gaps in their beliefs and practices.

Summary of research on student perspectives. The studies presented in this section align with Brookfield’s (1995) lens of considering the perspective of the student. The only literature review and meta-analysis that fit within the parameters of this inquiry focused on the student evaluation surveys presented to students at the secondary and tertiary levels. Intended for use as a springboard for teacher reflection, these surveys became an unwelcomed element of the teacher evaluation process. Within schools and
institutions, the weight of importance placed upon these instruments not only varies from school to school in the same district or university, but also differs from department to department. Both reviews mentioned issues with variations. Clayson (2009) did locate evidence of an association between student learning levels and rating scores on the evaluation instrument. Although the information was not consistent across studies, the association linked evaluation scores to the students’ perceptions of their level of learning.

Empirical studies by Hoban and Hastings (2006), Messiou and Ainscow (2015) and Vaughn (2015) revealed information relevant to Brookfield’s (1995) lens of student perspective. Each study began with the intent to improve upon the pedagogical practices of the educator. Through the eyes of the students the educators truly saw themselves with a level of criticality needed to spawn the appropriate adjustments between their ideals and actions.

Evidence of the Lens of Collaborative Input

Brookfield (1995b) urged educators seeking to become a critically reflective practitioner to enlist the assistance of a colleague for observational support and discourse. In an observation, the teachers may see the same actions or reactions from students, but their perspectives, or ideological assumptions, may differ greatly. An attempt for a purposive sample resulted in literature using the indicators critical and collaboration. In an effort to limit results to those of an empirical nature without excluding qualitative research, a search for literature reviews and meta-analyses was conducted. Eighteen literature reviews and meta-studies were located within the parameters of this search for
critical reflection in which collaborative input from a peer was sought. Only three met the criteria for Brookfield’s (1995b) lens of collaboration.

Brownell, Yeager, Rennells, and Riley (1997) organized a review that appeared to come closest to framing specific competencies. They conducted a review of research in literature of all “general education teachers because of the dearth of research on collaboration between special education and general education teachers” (p. 341). Results of this review suggested that collaboration among school professionals can be developed and sustained, and positive outcomes were shown both for students and for teachers. Through their review, Brownell et al. (1997) determined five fundamental characteristics of effective teacher-teacher collaboration: “a shared vision for student learning and teaching; a common commitment to collaboration; communities of care; frequent, extended, positive interactions between school faculty and leaders” (p. 341) and an administration that is open to sharing power with teachers to promote change. While examples of the benefits of collaboration existed in the literature, the amount of available research was scarce, and the results were inconclusive. Researchers categorized positive themes acknowledging the benefits of collaboration: (a) teacher identity grew in the communities to which the teachers belonged; and (b) self-efficacy improved, which often led to reported changes in beliefs, knowledge, and pedagogy followed by increased expectations for student achievement. Although correlations regarding increased student achievement were only implied, multiple studies noted leadership benefits, born of success with a changed pedagogy and authentic, long-term collaboration, encouraged participation in activities beyond the local school environment (Brownell et al., 1997).
Barriers to collaboration, aside from the antitheses of the above characteristics, found in the literature include individualism, balkanization, and mandated cohorts. These three unique cultures are embedded in most public schools in America. With the exception of individualism, teachers within balkanized or mandated groups may outwardly exhibit most of the fundamental characteristics needed for effective collaboration between teachers. Most teachers work in isolation, therefore new ideas that might promote change proved to go unnoticed. When an individual in the literature expressed an opinion or promoted pedagogy different from the rest of the school, the yet unproven practice was often marginalized to a point or with such frequency that the individual resorted back to the status quo (Brownell et al., 1997).

The more obvious balkanized teacher culture frequently found in, but not limited to, American high schools, purported most of the fundamental characteristics of teacher-to-teacher collaboration. These subcultures, entire academic departments often, maintained collaborative ideals within their group. However, attempts to maintain collaborative practices between these groups frequently failed due to subgroup rivalries over issues from hegemonic beliefs regarding department status to philosophical and pedagogical influence with administration. While these balkanized subcultures may have interfered with communication between groups and administration, their existence was well known. There were suggestions that administration assume the responsibility to oversee that some continuity existed between and within groups to support student progress (Brownell et al., 1997).
It was the attempt to create continuity that administration often implemented a third barrier mentioned in the literature. Brownell et al. (1997) cited Hargreaves’ (1994) work on the cultures of teaching in which he pointed out the administration’s solution to balkanization—a solution to which he applied the term “contrived congeniality” (p. 349). As the term implies, colleagues receive mandates to work together and implement a change often dictated from outside the local school or district. An example is the federal concept of inclusion of students with special needs. Like many other external mandates, the local school district dictates the concept and guidelines for compliance, but the local school is ultimately responsible for implementation of solutions. In this case, administrators saw their actions as an attempt to share power with expert teachers in hopes of creating the necessary change. When mandated collaboration was rushed and unmonitored, the requirement of change often exceeded teachers’ abilities to comply with fidelity. Attempts to change stagnated; work groups became frustrated at the lack of progress due to unmonitored, conflicting opinions; and teachers in the affected groups began to feign collaboration. As a result, practices changed only at a technical level.

This review of the literature provided an overview of environmental contexts that may hinder collaboration as well as five characteristics that are fundamental to teacher-to-teacher collaboration (Brownell et al., 1997).

In the second review, Vangrieken, Dochy, Raes, and Kyndt (2015) conducted a systematic review of the literature on teacher collaboration since 2000. In addition to reviewing the varied terminology, benefits, consequences, and conditions necessary for collaboration mentioned in the previous review, these authors investigated the criteria to
clarify “what successful teacher collaboration actually is” (Vangrieken et al., 2015, p. 33). Success was linked to effectiveness. Effectiveness was then subdivided into two parts: (a) criteria necessary for the implemented process to be considered effective; and (b) criteria necessary for the outcome produced by collaborative process to be considered effective.

Three important process criteria identified as necessary to achieve successful teacher collaboration at both the individual and team level included applying effort to each situation, use of knowledge and skills required to complete the task, and use of task strategies befitting the context (Vangrieken et al., 2015). Additionally, effective teams utilized each team member’s expertise to ensure the best possible student outcomes. Consensus within the literature suggested the use of clear individual roles for team members, as well as open communication within collaborative roles that allowed for flexibility and adaptability between individuals. Roles dealt with sources outside the collaborative team found to be necessary to promote adaptability included keeping up with educational innovations, gathering data from which element of student learning can be analyzed, and enlisting multiple levels of support from administration (Vangrieken et al., 2015).

Outcome-related criteria representative of effective teacher collaboration included clearly stated, attainable goals that may be represented by an increase in content knowledge or a change in pedagogy. The second outcome-related criteria found in the literature referred to the long-term viability of the team, based upon the premise that effective collaboration would address short-term and long-term goals. Teams were
considered effective if members were both willing and able to work together on future issues within the same context, or organization (Vangrieken et al., 2015).

In the third literature review of qualitative research, Thomas, Chie, Abraham, Raj, and Beh (2014) conducted an analysis of 65 studies to determine the feasibility of a strategy known as peer review of teaching among faculty in secondary and tertiary institutions. Thomas et al. (2014) constructed the research review using an extensive online search of many domestic and international databases. Although focused primarily on results from 2002-2012 on peer evaluation for professional development, seminal works from the 1980s and 1990s were included. Evaluations in the context of a department assessment, however, were not. The method of peer review of interest here provided accountability support, observation of lessons, monitoring of online interactions, evaluation of curriculum, and evaluation of student assessments for the purpose of promoting critical reflection in the social context of teaching at the tertiary level. Feedback from these encounters encouraged faculty to self-monitor “to improve teaching practices by identifying their weakness and correcting it, in addition to identifying their strengths and building on it” (Thomas et al., 2014, p. 119).

The peer review process has a few barriers hindering wider acceptance: “(a) fear, (b) uncertainty about what should be reviewed, and (c) how the process is reviewed” (p. 144). Another barrier is the limited number of validated instruments to use to promote and support the peer review of teaching process. For many institutions the concern would be whether or not the peer review teams should be multidisciplinary or within the same discipline. Each has its own merit. Multidisciplinary observations provide unique
perspectives to the nuances of the course while peer observations within the department call for more valued collaboration, more buy-in to the process and needed changes, and decrease the probability of the department members gradually reverting to their old ways. The reason for the decrease, according to Jenkins (as cited in Thomas et al., 2014), was due to the support from colleagues who continued to reflect on and engage in discourse on the feedback received.

These reviews supported Brookfield’s (1995b) lens for collaborative practice. Although Brookfield (1995b) did not explicitly promote any one procedure, the particular model of peer review presented in the third literature review did reinforce the giving and receiving of constructive feedback both within and across disciplines. Each review affirmed certain components that must exist and be understood between reviewer and reviewee: (a) changes in teaching practices occur gradually; (b) a sense of ownership in the change; (c) a sense of trust; and (d) effective professional discourse.

Representative examples of empirical studies with collaborative input. Determining the critical level of the teachers’ collaboration with peers as Brookfield (1995b) intended required a search for a representative sample of empirical evidence. Of the 23 empirical studies that populated, only five matched Brookfield’s (1995b) lens of critical reflection using collaborative input.

Berkey, Curtis, Minnick, Zietlow, Campbell, and Kirschner (1990) detailed the reflections of a four-year research project to bridge the gap between research and practice by promoting reflection as a way to direct personal, professional development. Berkey et al. (1990) described ways in which the processes of reflection impacted their ideas and
practices regarding education and research. For instance, they understood that much of teachers' practices had a contextual basis, since the teachers improvised each action based on the needs of the students from moment to moment. The researchers also understood that few of these contextual aspects ever accounted for evaluation, accountability, or instructional needs. Berkey et al. hoped that this multiyear, multicase ethnographic inquiry would help teachers involved in the project make their implicit knowledge and pedagogy explicit through collaborative reflection, thus providing future audiences with an example of how reflection can be fostered over time. Most importantly, the inquiry revealed how teachers' understanding and use of reflection developed over time (Berkey et al., 1990).

One participant, a first-grade teacher, changed her pedagogical perspective by implementing individual and collaborative methods of reflection. The purpose of this project was to build collaborative experiences between practitioners and researchers in order to bridge the gap between research and practice. For this first-grade teacher, Teresa, the ethnographic approach was a different experience. She had been involved with studies before in which she was observed, but feedback was mostly summative, vague and, worst of all, it arrived too late for any changes to be made in her pedagogy. In this experience, the researchers asked questions that caused the teachers to think about relations they had not questioned before, as well as prompting the teaches to reflect upon those generated questions generated and urge them to change (Berkey et al., 1990).

Teresa changed her pedagogy on a technical level by making some organizational and procedural changes, and by the second year, she and another first-grade colleague
had moved to the second level of reflection during which they changed their “developmental philosophy of working with children” (Berkey et al., p. 215). The experience changed Teresa’s attitudes and beliefs, as obvious in her statement:

It resulted in a shift from looking to experts or the University for 'what to think,' to learning more about “how to think”. I believe this is because the ethnographic stance was not only noncritical and nonjudgmental, but also because we were not praised. We really had to draw on what we believed in individually to make decisions. It had to come from within. (Berkey et al., 1990, p. 216)

Collaboration provided the group with an opportunity to learn more than they could have as individuals because it provided motivation instead of competition by removing the isolation, lessening the anxiety, and allowing choice and autonomy. In this example the external stimulus of research wedged its way into the ingrained culture of the classroom teacher, but instead of separating, it provided a third-space (Bhabha, 1994) in which a new culture of collaboration could be nurtured.

Marcos, Machado, and Abelha (2014) reported on concerns from Portugal regarding the concept of teacher evaluation as a way to promote professional development through collaborative practices. Marcos et al. (2014) referenced Lima (2002), who posited that collaboration was an ideal way to transform schools into learning communities and that without collaboration teacher development could not happen. Similarly, Bolzan (as cited in Marcos et al., 2014) contended that without the occurrence of teacher development in a collaborative environment, the development of independent work by individual teachers could not occur. Alternatively, attempts to
develop teachers within a negative collaborative environment, such as those that promote highly competitive individualism, destroy the community. Thus, a culture of teacher groups must be accounted for when considering reform adoptions.

In order to develop a questionnaire, Marcos et al. (2014) interviewed 12 educators who had been teaching for 5 to 20 years. Six were classroom teachers, and the other six held administrative positions. On average, the majority of the teachers was over 40 years of age and had been teaching for approximately 20 years. The resulting questionnaire received nearly 400 responses. The results of the survey indicated that the teacher evaluation reform model “did not facilitate practices that promote . . . the development of collaborative work” (p. 3679).

The reasons for the inhibitory effects of teacher evaluation varied from competition to unhealthy relational practices incurred when a peer with less experience or lesser qualifications evaluated a veteran or more qualified peer (Marcos et al., 2014). Additionally, fewer than 25% of the respondents indicated that they were trained evaluators. The respondents indicated that the increased training and its associated expense were significant inhibitors of the success of collaborative practices. Marcos et al. (2014) concluded that the reform model of teacher evaluation used in Portugal over a four-year period demonstrated certain inhibitory effects on collaboration, leading them to suggest a process “based on reflective and dialogical supervision strategies” (p. 3680) to promote collaborative practices in schools.

In a similar inquiry conducted among international medical educators, Tigelaar, Dolmans, Meijer, De Grave, and van der Vleuten (2008) explored correlations between
teacher interactions during purposive meetings with the intent to develop their practice through discussions using Hendricksen’s (1997) Critical Incident Review Method and known processes of collaborative reflection. Tigelaar et al. (2008) referenced MacDougall and Drummond (2005) who, in keeping with the idea of the social practice of teaching, explained that experienced teachers improved by reflecting on their teaching through discourse with colleagues. This type of collaborative reflection initiated a journey to a deeper understanding of individual beliefs and pedagogy. Tripp (as cited in Tigelaar et al., 2008) considered collaborative discussions of critical incidents “powerful tools to make tacit beliefs and values explicit” (p. 293). Using the Critical Incident Model in a flexible way provided the participants a guide with which to organize their meetings, as well as a basis from which to broaden the scope of their reflections beyond the technical levels of the model to the more critical levels of reflection in which personal beliefs and attitudes were changed.

Based on Brookfield’s (1995b) challenge to implement critically reflective practices, such as collaboration, Herbers, Antelo, Ettling, and Buck (2011) compiled the experiences of four teacher educators who participated in a collaborative experience to which Lave and Wenger (1991) bestowed the unique term community of practice. A community of practice is not limited to the field of education. Common practices and beliefs unite members in a community of practice. In other words, membership is purposeful, and the community’s membership defines its purpose.

The participants in this inquiry set out to align their sociocultural practices with the expectations set forth by the college and the department. Members in this community
had similar background interests, but experience with the college’s expectation varied among the members. The purpose of this collaborative process was for each member to thoroughly deconstruct and transform their multicultural teaching practices. Through discussions with peer members of the community and student discussions resulting from feedback using Brookfield’s (1995b) Critical Incident Questionnaire, participants not only transformed their classroom practices but reevaluated course objectives and text selections as well (Herbers et al., 2011).

Goddard, Goddard, and Tschannen-Moran (2007) conducted a naturalistic study to determine if a link existed between teacher collaborative practice and student achievement. Goddard et al. purported positive correlations found in studies focused on teacher collaboration models and discussed other collaborative studies designed to measure the outcome of collaboration in a professional development or college course. According to Goddard et al. (2007), surveys administered to college faculty, K-12 faculty, or preservice students anchored prior research results.

Although much research exists on teacher collaboration, Goddard et al. (2007) found little existing literature to link positive teacher collaboration for school improvement with positive student achievement. Using the state math and reading scores for a single Midwestern school district along with a faculty survey, Goddard et al. (2007) conducted a quantitative analysis. They entered school context and student characteristic variables (race, gender, SES) with current and prior year assessments. Reading and math achievement scores were negatively associated with SES and race. However, this study
indicated that teacher collaboration for school improvement was positively associated with increased student achievement (Goddard et al., 2007).

Summary of research on reflection through collaboration. The conclusions presented in this section supported Brookfield’s (1995b) lens promoting collaboration to develop critical practices. Each example confirmed a link to improved pedagogical practice resulting from collaboration with a colleague. Literature reviews listed criteria necessary for the collaborative processes to occur and produce a positive outcome. Qualitative and quantitative studies provided examples demonstrating the implementation of collaborative methods in a variety of contexts, domestic and international, involving a variety of participants from preservice and inservice teachers to tertiary educators.

Evidence of the Lens of Theoretical Support

Much literature exists expounding upon the theories of reflection. However, only five support Brookfield’s (1995b) lens for using critical theory and theories of critical reflection for the purpose of naming a paradox, breaking the cycle of the status quo, initiating dialogue and discourse in the absence of peers, hedging the balance of the group, or maintaining a social context through the study of theory.

The earliest literature review located in my search was from the field of nursing. In a review of the literature, Atkins and Murphy (1993) revealed the essence of Brookfield’s (1995b) lenses by stating, “The outcome of reflection is learning” and “self-awareness enables a person to analyze feelings” (p. 1190). The purpose of this literature review about reflection was to identify the skills necessary to reflect successfully. Atkins and Murphy (1993) cited seminal works from multiple fields. Included in the scope of
the literature search were Boud, Van Manen, Mezirow, and Schön from educational research, as well as philosophers Dewey, Habermas, and Freire. From the field of adult learning and nursing, Atkins and Murphy (1993) provided selected works by Jarvis. No skills for critically reflecting were stated explicitly in the scope of the literature to fulfill the answer to the question, but other skills used in critical reflection were stated implicitly. They were “identified as self-awareness, description, clinical analysis, synthesis and evaluation” (Atkins & Murphy, 1993, p. 1190), all of which align with Brookfield’s (1995b) lenses.

Tsangaridou and Siedentop (1995) conducted a review of the literature on reflective teaching that, aside from the seminal works of Dewey (1933) and Locke (1897), spanned 20 years. Tsangaridou and Siedentop (1995) reviewed the various definitions of reflection and the theoretical traditions in which the concepts of reflection are situated. Tsangaridou and Siedentop (1995) also discussed several specific preservice strategies. The purpose of the strategies was to promote the concept of teacher reflection by providing a model, or framework, that could be taught to the preservice teacher so that a baseline ideology might be developed and experiences with theory/curriculum and collaboration initiated.

For the inservice teacher, reflective practice became a growing topic in professional development. Teachers received encouragement to reassess their instructional pedagogy as well as the beliefs and values that undergird their instructional decisions. Tsangaridou’s (1993) study contextualized the classroom teachers’ authentic experiences with micro- and macro-reflection. Together, these two styles of reflection
correlate to Smyth’s (1989) four-phase model in which teachers begin their reflection with a more tangible description of their stance on daily pedagogy and values before examining how their stance on such topics have transformed through a dance (Brookfield, 1995b) between phases of conformity and reconstruction. For Smyth (1989), the four phases were linear and applicable to each situation. Tsangaridou (1993) purported that student demographics, school context, and available professional development were better indicators of change in pedagogy and values over time.

Fook, White, and Gardner (2006) conducted a review of the literature on critical reflection across multiple fields. The concepts of critical reflection and reflective practice have received criticism for their lack of transference of meaning. Due to this variation in meaning and use of the terms, it was necessary to limit what would be included. For the purposes of this review, Fook et al. (2006) reviewed 37 articles and book chapters. At the time of the literature review, research was lacking “empirical evidence of the value and outcomes of a reflective process” (Fook et al., 2006, p. 18). As a result, only three experimental studies were accessible, for the rest fell into three categories: (a) analysis of participant interviews, (b) analysis of student work to obtain a reseller, and (c) critical incidents.

Trying to cull and synthesize the research across such a varied topic is difficult, especially when the definitions and paradigms upon which each is built are so contrary to one another. Fook et al. (2006) detailed the various definitions of reflection, reflective practice, and critical reflection, as well as the various stages, or levels, proffered by multiple researchers. Along with the levels of reflection are the methods, or models, that
provide a structure and tools with which to carry out the task of reflection. While choices in structure provide researchers with options for the design of a study, if the culture of the inquiry does not understand the structure, the collaborative process (Brookfield, 1995b) and the other techniques put in place will lose their effectiveness.

Marcos, Miguel, and Tillema (2009) conducted a three-part investigation to review the literature on teacher reflection on action for the past 25 years. They found 50 conceptual papers regarding the theory of teacher reflection and 122 articles on the topic of reflection as it was disseminated to teachers through professional development channels, and they analyzed 49 accounts of how the process of reflection was actually implemented in practice among teachers. However, empirical evidence supporting theory in practice was lacking in all the findings (Marcos et al., 2009).

In part one of the investigation, Marcos et al. (2009) commenced to determine what key features and characteristics of teacher reflection had been put forth in the theoretical literature. Marcos et al. (2009) determined two concepts, each with their own characteristics. The first concept was teacher research, which included systematically improving practice using supporting theory through the action steps of “planning, evaluation, observation and collaboration” and review (Marcos et al., 2009, p. 194). The second concept was teachers’ reflection on their instructive decisions and actions, an internal process comprised of three key characteristics:

1. Self-awareness one’s actions, current beliefs, and the position held in one’s personal and professional cultures;
2. Exploration of the origins and intentions of pedagogical practice in its context; and

3. In-depth, or critical, consideration of the consequences to the self and others as a result of those beliefs.

Using the above information, Marcos et al. (2009) constructed a key feature regarding the problem-solving processes needed to link theory to action. Of the 50 studies with empirical results relating to reflection, action, and beliefs of participants, only four account for the entire problem-solving process. The rest of the studies focused on one or more parts of the process, but not a whole process. Seven studies provided empirical evidence for only one of three key characteristics of teacher reflection on action, which include self-awareness of beliefs and actions, deliberate correction practice based on context, and the critical consideration of the impact of beliefs and practices on others.

In the second part of the study, Marcos et al. (2009) conducted an investigation of the different models proposed to help teachers develop their reflective practice. To be included in this portion of the investigation, the proposed model had to be explicated, practiced, and supported in the field. Marcos et al. (2009) analyzed each study for supporting text and then categorized it by feature of reflection. The four categories included why reflection should be developed, what should be developed, how reflection should be developed, and what conditions were necessary for the development to occur. Over half of the 122 articles provided an explanation of a proposed reflection model. Less than 14% described how to implement the model in a different population of
inservice teachers. Approximately 9% of the studies referred to theoretical research, and less than 1% studies provided empirical data. Marcos et al. (2009) confirmed the existence of an extreme disconnect between theory and practice.

In the third part of the study, Marcos et al. (2009) focused on the concepts and actions teachers discuss regarding their reflective practice: (a) what they thought about changing; (b) what method or solution they adopted to support change; and (c) if they felt they had to overcome something in order to change. Marcos et al. (2009) analyzed 49 narrative accounts of teachers and extracted over 550 segments text, the majority of which provided an account of what they planned to do to solve their problem. Another 200 segments dealt with teachers concerned with a change in beliefs or values. The rest of the segments were insignificantly distributed between other topics. While reviewing the articles, Marcos et al. (2009) identified 13 different patterns of reflection, which they categorized to four main types or levels of reflection that ranged from a simple description of what was done and how it turned out to a complete cycle of reflection. The majority of the accounts detailed a specific plan for change but did not include steps to review the outcome. Self-awareness of beliefs and actions, deliberate correction of practice based on context, and critical consideration of the impact of beliefs and practices on others are the three parts of Marcos’ (2009) metacognitive process, which correlate to three-fourths of Brookfield’s (1995b) lenses of autobiographical self-reflection, consideration of student/participant perspective, and critical reflection.

To summarize, when comparing what is known to what is done, the theoretical information regarding what is known about teacher reflection had some empirical
support. However, most studies focused on a change in teacher thoughts and beliefs instead of the actions teachers took to change or solve a problem. When teacher narratives did include a model for reflective practice, and did not include enough procedural details that would allow other teachers to replicate the process, the authenticity of the reflective event is skewed. If the process of reflection is intended to validate pedagogical practices linked to value laden ideals, then there must some framework to support the process. It is in this search for, and implementation of, a framework that the intent of reflection to guide future action is often lost to the details, or the selected process is too rigid to apply to a variety of contexts.

Cumming, Sumsion, and Wong (2013) reported on a meta-analysis of 38 international, empirical studies published from 1994-2011 and focused on how “early childhood educators negotiate discourses . . . informing early childhood practice” (p. 223). Of interest in the study was the sustainability of an early childhood educator workforce in which the students were less than six years of age. Typically, students in this age group are in prekindergarten and kindergarten. Current discourse in the early childhood educator (ECE) field concerns the educators who did not currently have to possess a certification or degree to teach those students who are prekindergarten ages. Some of the discourse infers that they, as teachers of such young children, are not “quality teachers or professionals” (Cumming et al., 2013, p. 223).

In the studies, the early childhood teachers dealt with the negotiations of discourse differently, depending upon their context. Educators in these studies employed reflective practices in order to create and/or align with the hegemonic territories of
practice by compartmentalizing personal beliefs from accepted protocol, attempting to fit into a systemic protocol, compromising personal values in lieu of another protocol, conforming to the existing hegemony due to its empirically supported protocol, applying strategic compliance that provided a path for the educator to appear compliant to the contrary ways of the existing hegemonic forces, or strategically resisting the forces by advocating against the oppressive force with empirical support contrary to the hegemonic structure over time. Additional studies are necessary to define what practice should look like for an early childhood educator, as well as to provide more empirical studies to regulate policy.

Summary of theoretical literature. The theoretical literature provided in this section included results from quantitative and qualitative studies that supported Brookfield’s (1995b) lens of consulting theoretical research in order to critically reflect upon personal and professional ideologies instead of blindly implementing institutional protocol. An example included Marcos et al.’s (2009) review of the literature in which they posited that teacher reflection had two key features: teacher research in which practice was improved using the theoretical action steps of “planning, evaluation, observation and collaboration” (p. 194) and review; and teachers’ reflection on their instructive decisions. Cumming, Sumson, and Wong’s (2013) review concurred, for educators in their meta-analysis used reflective practices in order to determine an appropriate alignment with the existing hegemonic power. Tsangaridou’s (1993) study contextualized the classroom experience in terms of microreflection and macroreflection. When educators employ microreflection, they are attempting to make sense of complex,
daily elements of practice. Macroreflection attempts to gather information on the degree to which pedagogical practice, reflective practices, and educational values change over time. The next section explicates further research regarding the impact of time on reflective practice.

Reflection over Time

The intent of the practice of critical reflection is to reveal aspects of an individual’s beliefs and practices that others might construe as oppressive. Studies referenced in earlier sections of this chapter used surveys, critical incidents, and various interviewing techniques to gather data. However, the data were collected within or about a specific point in time. A unique factor of this inquiry is the span of time. Maturation, or human development, requires a span of time and a series of changes to occur. Some of the changes occur naturally (Bergson, 1911/1998). Cognitive maturation, however, requires external stimuli or experiences over time for changes to occur (Kegan, 1982). The representative studies in the following sections were collected using separate search indicators. Both utilized the term teachers and reflection. Subsequent searches added a combination of over time or new and novice or experienced.

Kissling’s (2014) narrative inquiry explored the influence that lived experiences had on teachers’ pedagogical choices. Collins (as cited in Williams & Grudnoff, 2011) argued that experiences provide the only lenses through which teachers can view their choices, both personally and pedagogically. Kissling's inquiry referred to Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) concept of the “three-dimensional narrative inquiry space” (p. 83). These three dimensions of continuity (temporality), interaction (sociality), and place
provide depth to what makes an experience significant to one person but not to another, and at one point in time but not in another.

Kissling’s (2014) point was that teachers’ pedagogical beliefs and tendencies toward practice begin well before enrollment in higher education. Although Feiman-Nemser’s (2001) professional learning continuum attends to the development of teacher tasks for preservice, novice, and experienced teachers, it omits the experiential relevance of the past and fails to account for current events in teachers’ lives outside of the classroom through which their teaching is influenced. Standardization of induction programs and evaluation plans fail to do for the adult learner exactly what the educational curriculum touts: to meet learners where they are and build upon it.

In an attempt to track changes in the teachers’ beliefs and pedagogical content knowledge and determine if the type of teacher preparation program influenced those changes, Luft and Zhang (2014) conducted a study that followed 76 new secondary teachers from their last year in preservice through their first three years inservice. Quantitative data generated from a survey and qualitative data derived from interviews. The results were similar to the three distinct phases of a teacher’s career based on Feiman-Nemser’s (2001) professional learning continuum. These phases, which present developmental tasks, include preservice, novice, and professional development. Of interest to Luft and Zhang’s (2014) research was the novice phase. In the first years of teaching, novices enhance those skills of knowledge and beliefs that guide instructional knowledge gleaned in preservice as well as “purposeful interaction with colleagues and other professionals” for the novice teacher (p. 326).
Luft and Zhang’s (2014) findings suggested that over time, the school culture influenced new teachers more than their college program. Beliefs and practices changed, but “they are impacted differently and by different factors” (Luft & Zhang, 2014, p. 329) as teachers interact with their curricula materials and colleagues in the school environment. The outcome of the study indicated that the four groups had similar increases and decreases in both student knowledge and instructional strategy at each checkpoint. Researchers noted a correlation between a decline in teachers’ beliefs and practices and a decline in student knowledge and instructional strategies in Post-Year 2 for all groups, but failed to discuss or proffer reasons. Luft and Zhang (2014) did not provide reasons for the increases in student outcomes for Post-Year 1 and Post-Year 3 either. The study results prompted the researchers to suggest that novice teachers need support in the first few years to maintain the pedagogical beliefs and practices instilled during their college program.

Ulmer and Timothy (2001) conducted a two-part study documenting the change of teachers’ core beliefs and practices at two points in time after an inservice session on implementing a specific reading comprehension strategy. One suggestion from existing research investigated by Ulmer and Timothy (2001) included the idea that responsible teachers should reflect on their theories and practices. However, in the 2001 study, the researchers noted the difficulty that teachers experienced with changing their deeply held beliefs and practices, especially when a professional development or an administrative model initiated the change instead of the teacher. At times, teachers agreed with a new
model, but the pedagogical practices that accompanied the new perspective did not appear in student results.

The first part of the study requested the teachers to reflect and write an essay that included information about their teaching philosophy regarding the focus skill and the teachers’ understanding of different types of assessment for the skill, in addition to selecting three of the five assessment strategies presented in the inservice to use in their classrooms (Ulmer & Timothy, 2001). After implementing the different assessment types, the teachers gathered student work samples to bring to a group meeting where grade level peers wrote a report on their analysis of the results. Raters helped categorize what the teachers learned about the student perspective and what the teachers learned, and coded categories about how teachers’ beliefs changed. At the end of the in-service, 65% of the teachers noted a change in beliefs, but due to personal or environmental factors, less than half actually could show a change in student output.

Ulmer and Timothy (2001) contacted the participants two years later. Only 5 of the original 23 teachers were unavailable for a follow-up survey. All of the remaining 18 teachers indicated use of the reading strategy in their classrooms. Most implemented the strategy for assessment or direct instruction. The results from the study indicate that exposure and experience with a new pedagogical form are not always enough for a change to occur by the end of the initial treatment. Core beliefs are deeply rooted in our consciousness. Time is required for change to occur in such a way that it is evident in teachers’ output.
Williams and Grudnoff (2011) designed a longitudinal study to determine if a college program positively impacted the participants’ perceptions of the uses of reflection for their professional practice. A nonrandom, purposeful sample of 12 novice and 12 experienced teachers participated in semistructured interviews. The researchers interviewed the novice teachers four times and the experienced teachers twice. The interviews did not provide any significant data regarding the influence of the teaching program as a whole on the teachers’ beliefs or pedagogy.

Of the 12 novice teachers, 11 were female and one was male; two-thirds were under 25 years of age; and the rest was between 30-40 years of age. The teachers were distributed between low-, middle-, and upper-income schools. Of the 12 experienced teachers, half were administrators and half were classroom teachers. Two-thirds had been teaching for at least 20 years before enrolling in the program.

Upon review of the data, the theme of reflection emerged from both groups. Using an inductive approach, Williams and Grudnoff (2011) reviewed the existing data for information about reflection. The data indicated a greater influence on instruction for both groups came from a mandatory class on personal and professional empowerment using Smyth’s (1989) four-stage model. The model was selected because “it required each participant to answer a question at each step along the way” (Williams & Grudnoff, 2011, p. 283) as a form of reflection. The model’s steps are:

Step 1 Describe: “What did I do?” A detailed description of the issue or problem
Step 2 Inform: “What does this mean?” An examination of the issue or problem from multiple perspectives
Step 3 Confront: “How did I come to be this way?” Examination of assumptions related to the issue/problem in terms of contextual/political factors

Step 4 Reconstruct: “How might I do things differently?” Consideration of alternative views and future actions in relation to the issue or problem

Both groups were able to appreciate the process of reflection within the structure of Smyth’s (1989) framework. Two major strands were revealed: (a) the usefulness of reflection and (b) different utilizations of reflection.

After being exposed to a model of reflection by Smyth (1989), both groups positively changed their perspective on the usefulness of reflection over the course of a year. Initially, novice teachers had not been able to comprehend how reflection would benefit them. When they had their own classrooms and could reflect upon their own actions and choices, it took only six weeks for novice teachers to realize the benefits. One novice realized that during the program, all reflection had been conducted in hindsight and often on someone else’s work. The benefit of reflection was unknown until the new teachers were able to use the process for future planning. The experienced teachers used reflection only at a tactical level and seldom saw any benefits in the process. When Williams and Grudnoff (2011) introduced the structure of Smyth’s (1989) model, the experienced teachers found purpose in the structure and focused on the reasons that practice can and should change. Williams and Grudnoff (2011) stated, “Collins (2004) argued, teachers’ knowledge literally sets the limit of their capacity to reflect because they can only think through the lenses provided by the knowledge and ideas to which they have been exposed” (p. 284).
There was a difference between the groups in how the teachers utilized reflection. The way in which the teachers used reflection related to the amount of experience and knowledge of the teachers prior to the use of the process model. It also showed that reflection is not intuitive just because of teaching experience. Nearly a year passed before the novices shifted from using reflective practice to describe their actions and using reflection to improve their practice, and they did not voluntarily consult colleagues. However, the experienced teachers quickly transformed their reflective practice from a simple descriptor of practice to one in which they might determine why they made the choices they did. McIntyre (as cited in Williams & Grudnoff, 2011) observed that experienced teachers reflect on more introspective topics than novice teachers do, focusing instead on changes needed at a broader level.

Williams and Grudnoff (2011) contended, “This widening of the lens appeared to impact the experienced teachers in three ways” (p. 288). An assessment of the school norms elicited a need for change. The teachers were able to engage in collaboration and critical discourse with greater effectiveness. The critical reflective practice promoted assertiveness and desire to bring about change and offset the status quo.

In summary, reflection requires more than just knowledge and personal experience, for as Atkins (cited in Williams & Grudnoff, 2011, p. 289-290) stated, “The ability to systematically and deliberately use reflection as a tool for teacher learning growth requires conscientious development over time”. Numerous factors influence teachers’ pedagogical practice. The school culture (Luft & Zhang, 2014), the amount of support available within that culture, and the teachers’ individual lived experiences over
time (Kissling, 2014) influence the level of development of reflective practice within the local school. Professional development at the local school and in college course work must be “tailored based on the varying levels of knowledge and experience” (Kissling, 2014, p. 290) of the teachers. Success at developing reflective practice also requires a model that allows educators to elaborate upon the purpose of reflection in order to elicit a greater understanding of pedagogical practice. Because of this, Williams and Grudnoff (2011) reiterated that a change in beliefs or pedagogy as a result of exposure to reflective practice may not manifest in the short-term program.

Research Using All Four of Brookfield’s Lenses over Time

The goal of this study was to elicit recall of critical incidents experienced by teachers in order to determine which, if any, of Brookfield’s (1995b) lenses of critical reflection correlate with the reflective lenses implemented by the participants over time. Research models regarding the use of reflection have evolved from Dewey (1933) and van Manen (1977) to Schön (1985), Gore, (1993) and Brookfield (1995b). Teachers’ interpretation and implementation of reflection varies widely between and among preservice and inservice models (Tsangaridou, 1993).

The majority of the literature on reflection involves a theoretical analysis of a professional development model or contains its focus to a single aspect of a particular model or theory (Ellis, 1986). This narrative inquiry focused on Brookfield’s (1995b) four lenses model. Although the literature references his work regarding Critical Incident Questionnaires often, there is a dearth of research implementing his four lenses model for becoming a critically reflective practitioner. A wider search was necessary. I began a
new search on Google Scholar using the search terms *Brookfield* AND *evaluation* AND *four lenses*.

Of the 1,970 results, I was able to locate one autobiographic study conducted in 2015 in South Africa. Prior searches did not locate this result based on the database and the prior combination of inclusionary terms. Specifically, the *Anthropologist* journal is not included in the education search engines and prior searches had inclusionary keywords of *teacher* OR *educator* in the search terms. The author of this study used the keyword *lecturer* instead.

The study, published in 2014, had the most relevance to my inquiry. In it, Ndebele (2014) conducted a three-year action research study of his practice as a lecturer at a “historically, disadvantaged university” (p. 3) in South Africa. Ndebele (2014) implemented Brookfield’s (1995b) four lenses model as the basis for the study. He sought assistance for this study to gather data for the two lenses of student perspective and peer review.

For those two lenses, Ndebele (2014) employed convenience samples to gather the data. A group of 10 peers, eight writing consultants and two lecturers, provided feedback after observing writing sessions and lectures. Data were anonymously collected from a group of 12 student-peers who provided electronic feedback on lectures throughout a 45-credit hour advanced diploma course. These student-peers were faculty lecturers from other departments. The data received from peer and student feedback were used later in the self-reflection process. In the analysis of the data, Ndebele (2014) consulted theory to gain insight into perplexing results.
The results from peer observations and student surveys indicated positive responses to practice. However, Ndebele (2014) did note that his observers did not provide feedback for improvement on instructional practices. From the student-peers, the only critique of the class indicated concern for the lack of student discourse and the amount of reading assigned for each class.

Ndebele (2014) noted that future research would correct three limiting factors he noted from the study. The first would be to ensure that the evaluators knew how to analyze how to use the college’s online system for gathering student feedback, as well as how to compile the results. A second finding was that peer evaluators may give too much, too little, or no constructive criticism. Phillip and Woznik (as cited in Ndebele, 2014) “argued that peer reviews can be developmental” (p. 540) and therefore, may not be comfortable evaluating the work of others. Additionally, Ndebele (2014) learned from the Centre for Teaching and Learning that during peer observations, colleagues are often self-reflecting on how to improve their own pedagogy when compared to the observed, which causes incomplete reports.

In summary, Ndebele’s (2014) action research was the most relevant study I was able to locate. It addressed Brookfield’s (1995b) four lenses. One insight from the study was that feedback can be informative, but caution is necessary when interpreting feedback. In other words, do not change pedagogy for the sake of change. There were a few limiting factors in this study. First, there was no indication of how often, or with what frequency the student surveys were administered, nor were there any indications of how many lectures or consultations were actually observed over the three-year
timeframe. Another limitation of relevance is that Ndebele (2014) gave no indication of areas in which he, through self-reflection or consultation of theory, wanted to improve; instead, he gave only a vague indicator that he wanted to improve his practice. Finally, the study took place over a period of three years, yet Ndebele (2014) did not mention any adjustments taken during the study. The peer results did not provide feedback that would allow for change, but Ndebele (2014) noted that the student perspective did. Unfortunately, it is unclear when that feedback was given and if any changes were made before the end of the study.

Summary

The themes from the literature review included discussions of successful, effective teacher behaviors, such as being a self-directed adult learner who strives to increase the impact of instruction through the development of critical social consciousness needed to transform the existing hegemony in the classroom and to continuously develop the skills needed to become a critically reflective practitioner. The areas of reflection discussed include: (a) definitions of reflection; (b) models, or types, of reflection; (c) reflection and collaboration; and (d) reflection in the classroom. The literature and its accompanying themes do not provide insight into the implementation of critical reflection by self-directed, classroom teachers. Revealing the critical reflection experiences of effective teachers not only benefits experienced teachers’ ability to hone their practices, but also provides a model for peers who wish to emulate the same effective skill of critical reflection. While current authors in education resubmit the idea
of reflective practice to a new audience, few are investigating which methods are still considered reliable in the current educational arena.

Successful studies of reflective practices are conducted in other professions, such as healthcare, and business, as well as extremely limited environments like teacher education programs and professional development programs. A study focused on an effective, reflective, healthcare professional would not necessarily provide a representative study employing the same methods of an effective, reflective, business professional. However, suggestions still call for elementary teachers to implement the same techniques from these two industries in the unique microorganizations of the K-12 classroom full of minors and limited contact during the workday with peers. Even the professional development programs created for faculty in higher education cannot presume to work around the isolation experienced by educators at other levels.

Too often, the quantitative methods in the field of education, along with the desire to fix or streamline educative practices, overshadow the differentiation that exists within the perspectives, practices, and potentialities of the K-12 classroom. Imposing a cumbersome, reflective practice based upon a spreadsheet instead of listening to current practitioners is contrary to critical reflection. Critical reflection is not a lock-step process, but one of fluidity (Larrivee, 2000). Bringing to light the critically reflective practices of effective teachers may provide an exemplar to encourage others to reflect critically as well.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Teachers face many challenges in the classroom. How a teacher approaches these challenges varies based on a multitude of factors that include the cultural environment of the school and community, as well as the cultural beliefs of the staff, community members, and students (Anderson, 2009). Some challenges are tangible and pertain to grades, reports, parent requests, and missing homework (Batt, 2008). Batt (2008) purported that educators have no trouble processing these situations in logical and linear manner in the following ways: if it is ungraded, grade it; if it is on a to-do list, do it; and if it is missing, either find it or reissue it. Other less tangible challenges identified by Batt (2008) include those dealing with perceptions and beliefs. Connell (2007) maintained, “Teachers who learn to reflect upon and assess their beliefs, and who reflect upon and improve their practice, are more apt to use teaching practices that are in line with their beliefs” (p. 56). The relationship between teachers’ critical practices and the impact critical reflection has on the transformation of those practices in various contexts is fundamental to the present inquiry.

A variety of factors influenced the choice of narrative inquiry in this qualitative research, versus a positivist, experimental methodology. Merriam (2009) contended that qualitative research is appropriate when attempting to understand a unique experience. Creswell (2007) urged researchers to select a method that will allow a deep investigation
of the research questions. The research questions presented in this inquiry generated out of concern for teachers facing influences to their classroom practices based upon an ever-changing variety of perspectives from new community members, and how these teachers implement critical practices to synthesize those perspectives and still meet the needs of a diverse student population.

Narrative Inquiry

Narrative is often considered as a two-sided instrument—one that tells and one that knows (Lyotard, 1979/1984; McQuillian, 2000). This is based on the etymology of the word from Sanskrit gnā (to know) up through the later Latin translations of narrativus (telling a story). From Aristotle to Croce, historical and fictional narratives of the human experience have been told (narrat-) and then analyzed for meaning (gnā) (Kearney, 2002; Metz, 2013).

A History of Narrative Inquiry

Modernistic study of narratives, or narratology as coined by Todorov (Kim, 2015), began in the structuralists’ camps within the literary and philosophical fields. Structuralism, in direct opposition with the views of existentialism and phenomenology, espoused universal truths based on reason. Structuralists, from the literary circles of the 1950s and within the field of philosophy, sought commonalities within cultures. The literacy linguists posited that certain invariant structures within a culture would provide a common meaning to individuals within that culture through the language, or word(s), used to label the invariant structure. Thus, the power of meaning making is removed from the human consciousness and transferred to the relationship of the societal systems
and structures that can be generalizable to the population of a culture. Subjectivity’s influence on an individual’s meaning making was not considered the source, but a product, of the invariant structure. Befitting the rigors of the fictional Professor Henry Higgins, narratologists studied the complexity of structural units of language including syntax, morphological, and “phonological representations” (Herman, 2005, p. 29).

Unfortunately, as Professor Higgins discovered in *Pygmalion*, the disconnect between theory and outcome (Fludernik, 2005) widened over time. Structures, invariant or otherwise, were different between and within cultures, making them too arbitrary to apply within reason. Eventually, narratology researchers of the era succumbed to the interdisciplinary influences of poststructuralism and cultural studies. Schrift (as cited in Kim, 2015) explained that, although not a theory, poststructuralists were still unsatisfied with the epistemological placement of the self as *subject* in phenomenology. However, the movement did hold shared assumptions and distinct characteristics that challenged the context of power, the binary forms of meaning making and universality, the influences on the subject, and the researchers to increase discourse and deconstruction analysis.

As noted above, narrative inquiry is not a new concept. Its use continues to require validation far beyond the postpositivist movement (Benjamin, 1969; Bruner, 1986; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Lyotard, 1979/1984; Polkinghorne, 1995; van Manen, 1990). Researchers from multiple disciplines (e.g. anthropology, business, education, economics, history, law, medicine, philosophy, politics, psychology, and the social sciences) discovered that as their fields expanded and matured, the limitations of positivist inquiry became more contentious (Boje, 1991; Brooks, 2005; Bury, 2001;

Narrative in psychology. Expounding upon Fludernik (2005), Kim (2015) explained that, as the postmodern and poststructuralist eras gained footing, “narrative theory became integrated into other disciplines such as psychoanalytic narrative approach, feminist narratology, and cultural studies-oriented narrative theory, extending to philosophy, linguistics, cultural studies, education, and even the empirical sciences” (p. 7). Theorists from the social sciences, such as psychology, joined the shift from the positivist paradigm to narrative as a better alternative to understanding the human condition (Sarbin, 1986; Schafer, 1981; Spence, 1982, 1986). Prominent figures in the field of development and psychology, like Freud, Skinner, and Piaget, were known for their use of narrative to help them increase their understanding of a patient’s holistic self (Gergen & Gergen, 1986). As professionals made the shift to narrative, the need to distinguish what the patient provided as a storied truth from the factual, or historical, truth was validated (Spence, 1982). To implement the change, adjustments were posited
to the practitioners’ research practices as well as the approach therapists utilized to observe and listen to patients (Fludernik, 2005).

Narrative in law. In the field of law, narrative is the basis upon which strategies for both the plaintiff and the prosecution derive. In law, there is a socially constructed reality of what it means to be normal (Kim, 2015). In the courtroom, both sides present an interpretation of normative reality through opposing stories (Bruner, 2002). Although still heavily reliant on a positivist paradigm, the court is responsible for decoding the normative message hidden in the stories (Bruner, 2002). The court must find the historical, positivist truth and weigh that information against the circumstances of each situation. The context of the counter-stories, as presented by counsel’s interpretation and construction of the client’s narratives, is an integral “way to give the law back to the people” (Delgado, as cited in Kim, 2015). The poststructuralist study of narrative inquiry in the field of law provides a context to sensitize legal counsel further to listen for and understand the presuppositions, along with the normative and hidden messages, shaped by the dominant culture of the court before constructing an effective counter-story expressing the client’s hidden message of justification (Bruner, 2002).

Narrative in medicine. Although much of its research is under the influence of the quantitative, positivist paradigm, the field of medicine is another narrative-laden and narrative-dependent practice (Peterkin, 2011). This conflict in paradigms began to shift in the mid-1980s with the emergence of postpositivism, although the basic procedures did not change. Practitioners of medicine deal with microcontexts (the patient and their story) and must synthesize the practitioner’s existing knowledge with the narrative
provided by the patient. As part of the shift, coursework and clinical studies in medicine combined with the humanities to promote empathy and *moral imagination* among practitioners (Kim, 2015; Werhane, 1998). A concise definition of moral imagination, conceived by Edmund Burke in 1791 and popularized by Russell Kirk in the early 1980s, is the ability to perceive what is ethically right and lawful for the treatment of each patient, even in the midst of chaos. Including moral imagination in medicine promoted a postpositivistic slant to the investigative work of practitioners as they conducted differential diagnoses.

Narrative is now being used and studied in various areas of the medical field, including psychology, occupational, and other therapies (Mattingly, 2007). This *narrative medicine* encourages doctors to examine not only the solutions of care derived through hegemonic clinical reasoning to address the illness, but also to invoke narrative reasoning based on the patient’s narrative and concern (Kim, 2015). In his example of palliative care, Drummond (2012) provided an extreme context for the development of moral imagination and moral reasoning based on a patient’s microlevel narrative.

Narrative in ethics. In the medical field, a gap in vocabulary has developed between doctors and patients. As this gap widens, the patient is unable to explain symptoms or ask questions that are refined enough to get beyond the stylings of Smith and Dale’s vaudeville skit, “Doctor, it hurts when I do this”, to which the doctor replied, “Don’t do that!” According to Charon (as cited in Kim, 2015), practitioners need to possess both *narrative competencies* and moral imagination to make appropriate decisions regarding patients’ level and scope of care. Charon defined narrative
competence as a set of ethical actions in which the practitioner considers and includes “the holistic other” (Torres, 2014, p. 248) in decisions. Werhane (1998) maintained it can be easy for practitioners to develop moral amnesia when past mistakes are neither recalled nor synthesized, preventing learning from occurring between contexts. Guided by moral imagination, practitioners can bridge the gap between theory and practice (Werhane, 1998). Drawing upon Kant’s division of the imagination, Werhane (1998) contended that we come to understand our context based upon our worldview, reevaluate our frame of reference based on the context, and act upon newly formed concepts based on new schema. This imaginative stance promotes recall and negates the forces of moral amnesia while lessening the likelihood of invoking moral minimums in decision making. Werhane (1998) described moral minimums as the “thread of agreement throughout society about good and bad” (p. 1).

The practitioner uses personal narrative to organize and frame new knowledge within the narrative of the greater hierarchy (institution, regulatory, legal, and social) to which the situation applies (Werhane, 1998). Before making a decision, Werhane (1998) recommended evaluating the context of existing benefits and consequences within the hierarchy, since they can be adjusted based on a change in the context. Other methods of gaining a nondominant moral perspective referenced by Werhane (1998) include taking a step back, offering an opposing view for the sake of argument, and adopting what Werhane referred to as a disengaged view. Using any of these methods, the practitioner may question a decision and amend it as needed (Werhane, 1998). To frame it in the colloquial, one might formulate a moral decision by asking, “What would Jesus do?”
Some moral questions suggested by Werhane (1998) include a consideration of legality, precedent setting, an outsider’s choice, the possibility of replication, and the benefits of replication.

Narrative in education. Over time, teacher educators have placed an increasing emphasis on becoming a reflective teacher in the curricula they have developed (Brookfield, 1995b; Schön, 1983). Narrative researchers, claiming that teaching is developmental in nature, have agreed: teaching requires continued reflection and reflective thought on daily experiences and how they influence the classroom (Brookfield, 1995b; Kim & Macintyre Latta, 2010). However, organizing the detailed, lived experiences of classroom teachers requires a qualitative methodology, and educational researchers now recommend the use of narrative to organize human experience (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Dunne (2005) also proposed narrative as a mode to understand teaching practices because each story can provide insight into student-teacher interactions in the classroom.

Narrative inquiry in educational studies. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) were the first to employ the term narrative inquiry in the field of education as they sought to learn about the experiences of teachers. In educational studies, the act of receiving an education “is a development within, by, and for experience” (Dewey, 1938/1997). Narrative is storying, and to story is to construct an understanding of lived experiences (Hatch & Wisniewski as cited in Kim, 2015). To explore the meaning of the lived experiences, Dewey’s theory of educational experience (1938/1997) is useful because it is applicable to both narrative inquiry and the general concept of experience.
Dewey’s theory of educational experience. Dewey (1938/1997) said that an educational experience consists of an active and a passive part, and both are required for a learning experience to occur. For example, a child may reach for a flame (active), and be burned (passive-consequence). In the future, the child, having learned from the prior experience, will recall these events and make the necessary adjustments to upcoming choices based upon these connections (Dewey/1938/1997).

To further the concept of a learning experience, Dewey (1938/1997) posited two inseparable principles of continuity and interaction. The principle of continuity was demonstrated in an if-then scenario. Simply put, each new experience builds upon prior experiences so it can modify the quality of future experiences. According to Dewey (1938/1997), the principle of interaction is that life as we know it exists as a series of interactions, generally communicative and social, that come together to form a situation. In other words, “a transaction taking place between an individual and . . . his environment” (Dewey, 1938/1997, p. 44) results in an experience. When participants interacting with researchers and the environment have a positive perception of the acquired knowledge, then an aesthetic experience is achieved (Dewey, 1938/1997). The purpose of an experience of this kind in narrative inquiry is found in the intended experience of the reader versus the experience of the participant (Dewey, 1934/1980).

Summary of Narrative Inquiry

Narrative inquiry as a form of research began during the postmodern and postexperimental movements in the evolution of qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). However, the origin of its expansion from the narratology of the literary specialist
and from psychology was the interdisciplinary works of Mitchell’s *Critical Inquiry* journal (1980, 1981) and later, his edited book entitled *On Narrative* (1981). As the use of narrative inquiry expanded, it “became a positive source of insight for all the branches of human and natural science” (Mitchell, 1981, p. ix).

The purpose of this narrative inquiry was to investigate the development of a teacher’s criticalness, especially as it relates to Brookfield’s (1995b) lenses of becoming a critically reflective teacher and that teacher’s personified level of social consciousness. While the literature review indicates an abundance of rhetoric touting the positive benefits of critical reflection that leads to transformative learning in adult education, research is necessary to provide a model for inservice teachers. As part of the inquiry, I explored the transformative nature of adult learning as it applies to the critical transformation of social consciousness and critical reflection among teachers. I proposed to represent the development of teachers’ critical narratives by analyzing themes based on Brookfield’s (1995b) four lenses of critical reflection. In doing so, I sought to understand the complementary influences of life experiences, professional experiences, duty assignments, and student diversity that may contribute to teachers’ transformation of pedagogical practices over time based upon the submitted reflections. The reflections range from those made solely upon the technical aspects of pedagogy up to and including changes that result from the critical consideration of all four of Brookfield’s (1995b) lenses. The next section presents the questions that guided this inquiry.

Research Questions Reiterated

The primary research question for this narrative inquiry was:
1. What is the nature of the development of veteran teachers’ critically reflective practice over time?
   a. In what ways is Brookfield’s (1995b) autobiographical lens displayed in the narratives of the participants over time?
   b. In what ways is Brookfield’s (1995b) lens considering the student perspective displayed in the narratives of the participants over time?
   c. In what ways is Brookfield’s (1995b) lens considering critical collaboration with colleagues displayed in the narratives of the participants over time?
   d. In what ways is Brookfield’s (1995b) lens considering theoretical literature displayed in the narratives of the participants over time?

2. In what ways, if any, do the participants’ narratives reveal the development of a critically social consciousness (Freire, 1990) through critical reflection over time?

The subsequent sections of this chapter present the research design and its rationale, the participants and the setting, the methods for the selection of these, and a description of the processes for collecting and analyzing data. The end of this chapter provides details regarding the role of the researcher in the process, as well as researcher bias toward the constructs of critical reflection and critical social consciousness.

Research Design and Rationale

This inquiry followed a qualitative methodology of narrative inquiry to better understand the catalysts that advance the development of teachers’ pedagogical style over
time. Wink’s (2010) model of pedagogical evolution suggested that an educator’s style of knowledge transmission evolves from the traditionally singular perspective of an authoritarian model, through the generative pedagogical model in which consideration of others may be pondered, to the final stage of a transformative model of critical pedagogy. Upon reaching the transformative stage, the educator becomes more critical of decisions based upon the consequences for students, parents, peers, and society and considers these multiple perspectives prior to making those decisions (Wink, 2010).

Although the narrative inquiry process most often begins with the telling (and hearing) of stories to obtain data, Czarniawska (2004) described the narrative as something to be “understood as a spoken or written text giving an account of an event/action or series of events/actions, chronologically connected” (p. 17). That said, Clandinin and Connelly (as cited in Creswell, 2012) contended, “The methods of conducting a narrative study do not follow a lock-step approach, but instead represent a collection of topics” (p. 55).

The current narrative inquiry used interviews and conversations as the primary methods of collecting data. Artifacts, in the form of timelines, were used in the beginning to elicit memorized experiences for each narrative (Clandinin & Caine, 2008). I sought to understand the development of classroom teachers’ critical practices by analyzing their stories of student-teacher interactions and pedagogical choices (Dunne, 2005). Employing narrative inquiry provided an avenue by which to obtain an in-depth look at the development of critical practices of teachers from multiple perspectives, as well as the transformative learning behind them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).
The correlation between teachers’ pedagogical practices and student achievement has been implicitly represented in the literature (Grant, Hindman, & Stronge, 2010; Nye, Konstantopoulos, & Hedges, 2004; Stronge, 2010). The pedagogical beliefs and choice of instructional practices have been linked to the processes teachers select as well as the level of reflection teachers apply (Brookfield, 1995b; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993; Ericsson, Krampe, & Tesch-Römer, 1993; Larrivee, 2000; Zeichner & Liston, 1996). When working with diverse student populations, educators must employ a rationale for their pedagogical choices that goes beyond their initial training (Larrivee, 2000). For educators to implement appropriate practices in the classroom successfully, they must be able to reflect critically upon the impact their personal beliefs have on their pedagogical choices, the perspectives of the students, and any conflicts that may exist within the context of the environment due to those same choices (Brookfield, 1995b; Lloyd, 2002; Ziechner & Liston, 1998).

Interpretive Framework of the Study

Narrative data collected on and about people are subjectively acquired, and so is the interpretation of that data (Denzin, 1994). An objective report cannot be generated (Boyce & Neale, 2006; Denzin, 1994). This interpretive view considers the information acquired as knowledge to be constructed through the linked experiences of both the observer and the observed, or researcher and informant (Creswell, 2012). Decisions of value, or those topics that warrant study, are based upon the researcher’s own personal ideologies (Boyce & Neale, 2006; Denzin, 1994). When using an interpretive
framework, socially constructed realities such as “class, race . . . and ethnicity shape [the]
inquiry” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 20).

Context of the Study

The site of this narrative inquiry was a suburban university on the outskirts of a large metropolis in the southeastern United States, where the university’s Office of Institutional Effectiveness recently reported the demographics of the School of Education’s graduate program. As of the fall of 2015, the School of Education had 683 students enrolled. Of these, approximately 80% were female and 20% were male. Requests for study participants were directed to advanced degree participants enrolled in the university’s Master of Education, Educational Specialist, Educational Leadership, and Doctoral programs. The selection of these programs was purposeful (Cooper, 1988). Based upon the university’s demographic report, the programs targeted afforded access to a diverse population of educators. Educators enrolled in these programs may hold almost any certified position in public or private schools around the metropolis, from classroom teacher to principal or county level administrator. The purposeful selection of these graduate programs at the university increased the probability that the participant would have more than seven consecutive years in a classroom setting versus the university’s Master of Arts in Teaching, which provides an initial certification to enrollees.

Sample and Sample Selection

Building upon a study by Langley-Weber (2012), I designed this inquiry to investigate the influences leading to the transformation of critical practices of teachers who had been teaching for at least seven years. Referring to Turner (1995), Berliner
(2001) claimed that reaching a level of fluidity requires a minimum amount of time, usually three to five years before a teacher displays consistent practice. Similar studies (Allison-Roan, 2006; Casey, 1993; Langley-Weber, 2012) selected teachers who were in education for a minimum of three years, which met the lower end of the range cited by Turner (1995). However, in order to show change in practice overtime, the criteria warranted a group of participants who had taught for a significantly longer amount of time and had opportunities for various experiences. Adjusting this criterion to seven or more years, versus a minimum of 10 or 15 years, kept the study open to nontraditionally certified teachers with less than 10 years of teaching experience but who had transformational life experiences that influenced their personal perspectives and pedagogy (Darling-Hammond, 2001). Finally, this expansion to seven or more years allowed for variations in narrative of experienced teachers in a new assignment who were not yet familiar with the idiosyncrasies the assignment presented (Turner, 1995), in order to make experiential comparisons.

The selection of the participants for this study was purposeful. According to Merriam (2001), a purposeful sample is one that best fits “the assumption that the researcher wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned” (p. 60). The sampling process used in this study was based on criterion sampling (Creswell, 2012). An overarching assumption, based upon the demographics, is that the potential participants will all have at least seven years of experience. In the event that this is not the case, the following selection criteria can still be applied.
The criteria needed for participant selection included: (a) students enrolled in one of the university’s advanced degree programs; (b) the respondent with the most years of classroom experience from among the applicants; (c) the respondent with the most years of classroom experience from the opposite gender of the above selected applicant; (d) one additional respondent with the highest number of years teaching in the classroom from a level of education yet unrepresented by the previous two criteria; and finally, (e) the respondent with the most years of classroom experience from the least represented cultural demographic. These criterion are further explicated in the following paragraphs.

My primary criterion was to gain the participation of two to four teachers from the university’s advanced education degree program. Of those responding to my request for participants, the first participant chosen was the respondent with the most years in the classroom regardless of other demographic information. From the remaining respondents, the second participant had the most years of classroom experience among the gender opposite the first selected participant. In the event that one gender was unrepresented, I planned to code that criterion as unrepresented and the selection process would continue to the next criterion. The next participant, selected from the remaining respondents, had the most years of experience in a different level of the education system (elementary, middle, and high school) than the others. The final criterion resulted in the selection of a participant from the least common cultural demographic.

Limiting the number of participants, while decreasing the generalizability, does allow for a deeper understanding of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2012; Patton, 2002). In order to expand upon the findings, Langley-Weber (2012) suggested using schools from a
different part of the nation or with different cultural mores than the original study, to add to the diversity of the data. Additionally, it is preferable for participants to not be members of “the dominate culture” (Allison-Roan, 2006, p. 61). Where possible, I sought participants with different teaching backgrounds and teaching different grade levels than the original study in order to add to the richness of the data.

Unlike the process utilized by Allison-Roan (2006), in which she compiled a list of potential teachers with whom she was acquainted at different schools and asked for referrals to enlist teachers, I invited participants from the university’s advanced degree programs using each program’s email list. A short email introduced the researcher as a university student conducting dissertation research, some expectations, and my contact information if they would like to participate in the study (Appendix C). Interested participants received a response email with a background questionnaire requesting the following: (a) more detailed contact information, (b) school name, (c) county, (d) grade level, (e) gender, (f) number of years in the classroom, (g) number of years in the current assignment if not working directly with students, and, for the sole purpose of record keeping and scheduling, (h) the degree program and course in which the potential participant was enrolled. Appendix D contains a copy of the questionnaire.

Data Collection and Instrumentation

Clandinin and Caine (2008) categorized data into information acquired from interactions, from conversations, from interviews, and from artifacts from the field. In the present inquiry, I employed field texts as data gathering methods to assist both the researcher and participant in understanding each experience. To explicate further the
necessity of using multiple sources to conduct a narrative inquiry, the illustration in
*Figure 4* depicts the merging of field texts in a “three-dimensional narrative inquiry
space” (Clandinin & Caine, 2008, p. 544).

![Figure 4. Three-dimensional narrative inquiry space](image)

According to Clandinin and Caine (2008), three perspectives—one seemingly
linear and two subjective—influence the refuge in which the researcher and the
informants operate to produce each narrative. They referred to these perspectives as
dimensions because each element of a lived experience is created with these three
dimensions of human reality. A description of Clandinin and Caine’s (2008) three
dimensions of space are summarized here:
1. The first dimension of temporality, or time, brings the researcher and the participants together frequently to reflect upon events that occurred over a span of time. The events of the story occur within the participants’ subjective recall of the timeline.

2. The second dimension, sociality, considers the social influences on the participants’ ethics and the beliefs under which each participant operates, as well as outwardly expressed thoughts and actions.

3. The third dimension of place considers the environmental influences on the participants’ beliefs and practices of the past and the present. The place in which the event occurred holds extreme influence: in the school building, where there are a finite set of conditions and consequences, or out of the building where an infinite number of possibilities may affect possible outcomes.

In order to bring these three dimensions together and portray the depth of reflection expressed through the narrated experiences of the participants, I used multiple field texts. These included background questionnaires, timelines, interviews, conversations, emails, and postcontact summary forms.

Background Questionnaire

Following Clandinin and Huber’s (2010) suggestions for inquiry, I asked the initial group of interested participants to provide basic background information to document the potential participants’ demographic information in order to fill the selection criterion. The questionnaire provided the critical insight and a synopsis of teaching
experience as well. A sample of the questionnaire can be found in Appendix D.

Example questions included:

1. Please provide your name, phone number, email, and gender.
2. What is the name of you school? What county is it in?
3. How long have you been in the classroom, or how long did you have a classroom assignment before your current post?
4. What is your current assignment and how long have you held the assignment?

Timelines

Each participant received six blank timelines (see Appendix E) with indicators for marking flexible increments of time on poster paper. Each timeline focused on a specific topic: significant life experiences, educational experiences, self-reflection, the student perspective, collaborating critically, and consulting theory. I explained samples and the purpose of the timelines at the first meeting, but prior to the beginning of the interview. As part of each phase of the interview, participants added significant critical incidents to the appropriate topic timeline. These visual aids were utilized during the interview as a means of providing dialogical validity to the narrative (Bauer, 1996).

Interviews

I scheduled three separate interview sessions with each participant. All interviews were recorded and transcribed promptly in order to guide future questions. The first interview was conducted in two distinct parts. The first part of the meeting was conducted as a semistructured interview (Wengraf, 2001), during which demographic data were confirmed. Participants agreed to commit to a schedule of contact dates for
follow-up sessions. During the second part of the first interview session, the four phases, explained in a subsequent separate subsection, of the narrative interview process were initiated. The following prompt initiated a narrative during this part of the process:

Developing one’s personal accountability is an increasingly important aspect in the life of an educator. As you reflect back upon your life, can you tell me about some of the most influential experiences that have shaped your development as an educator?”

Follow-up questions related to the lenses of critical reflection (Brookfield, 1995b) were posed to collect unique data on the participants, allowing insight into the context in which the participants operate, the cultural background to which the participants relate, and the worldview influencing pedagogical choices. A sample list of additional prompts included:

- Can you tell me more about what led up to that point?
- Were there any pressures, external or internal, to support or dissuade your pedagogical decisions?
- How did you handle the dissention to your choices?
- Tell me more about the emotions associated with that experience.
- In what ways were your colleagues included in your pedagogical choices over the years?
- To what extent has theory played a part in your teaching experiences over the years?
These prompts were either *immanent* questions, related to the participants’ stories, or *exmanent* questions about the topic at hand that were not addressed in the stories. An expanded list of immanent and exmanent interview questions are in Appendix F.

The narrative interview. When investigating which qualitative research method to use in this narrative inquiry, I selected the narrative interview. I initially considered the highly structured, traditional interview method, as well as the basic in-depth interview method. Although generalizability is considered low in all three methods, it was determined that the latter methods are typically used in an attempt to correlate opinions and separate outcome data (Boyce & Neale, 2006). Lines of questioning produced in these methods were also a deterrent since the researcher’s perspective often heavily influences the questions, thus producing passive participants (Reimann, 2006).

Fritz Schütze conceived the idea of a narrative interview in the late 1970s (Reimann, 2006). Schütze was an assistant professor of sociology in Germany at the University of Bielefeld, and Reimann was one of his research assistants. As of Reimann’s (2006) publication, Schütze’s 1977 study remained unpublished in English. Schütze (as cited in Reimann, 2006) was interested in using narratives as part of the research method; however, doing so required weaving the traditional subjectivity of qualitative narratives with the generalizability of an experiential process.

Conceptually, the narrative interview provides the researcher with the detail of an in-depth interview, but it uses an unstructured questioning format in order to reduce the influence of the researcher (Bauer, 1996). Schütze (as cited in Reimann, 2006) envisioned narrative interviewing as “the product of a process of preparing, doing and
thinking aloud about many interviews and thereby observing ourselves, gaining insights into certain mechanisms of this particular type of communication and gradually refining interview strategies” (p. 17). The structural integrity of this multiphase process is in the natural progression of the participants’ unique narrative regarding the topic (Bauer, 1996). The explicit details, relevance to self, and completeness of the story reveal the participants’ perspectives and spontaneous language (Bauer, 1996). Additionally, the narrative interview does not require a specific analysis technique. Therefore, the researcher may enlist any analytic process that best fits the inquiry (Bauer, 1996).

Bauer’s narrative interview process. Figure 5 presents a representation of Bauer’s (1996) five phases of the narrative interview process. The following paragraphs describe each phase.

Preparation phase. As the name implies, the interviewer-to-be researches the topic of interest and generates interview questions for which the perspective of others is required, but may not be discussed in the participant’s freeform recounting of past events.

Phase 1: The initiation. In the first phase of the narrative interview, the interviewer explains the entire process to the participant and solicits permission to record. As the interviewer introduces the topic, the interviewer may employ visual aids, such as a timeline, to assist the participants in organizing thoughts on the subject.

Phase 2: The main narrative. The interviewer now sits quietly while the participant is allotted an unlimited, uninterrupted span of time to present their stories. The researcher’s purpose is to passively encourage the story, take notes, and formulate immanent follow up questions. As the participant concludes each story, the researcher
may probe to ensure the story is indeed complete by asking questions such as “That’s interesting, would you like to tell me anything else on the topic?”

*Phase 3: The questioning.* The interviewer asks follow-up questions from both the immanent and exmanent categories. As suggested by Bauer (1996) and McCracken (1988), the interviewer utilizes open-ended questions to gain insight into the development of pedagogical beliefs and reflective practices of the participants (deMarrias, 2004). The interviewer does not ask any questions that require the participant to backtrack, infer emotions, or provide proof about what was said. When possible, the interviewer rephrases unanswered, exmanent questions to fit within the context of the provided story (Bauer, 1996).

*Phase 4: Concluding talk.* In this phase, the interviewer turns off all recording devices. During this time, exmanent and immanent questions requiring opinion or explanation are appropriate. The interviewer does record content verbatim and, by this time, a level of familiarity and trustworthiness between the interviewer and the interviewee may be gauged before asking evaluative questions.

*Figure 5.* The narrative interview process. This graphic summarizes the narrative interview process outlined by Bauer (1996) used in this study.
Oddly, the first step, the Preparation Phase, is unnumbered as a part of the interview phases. Additionally, although neither Phase 1 nor Phase 2 are repeated within the process, the latter is numbered. As the interview progresses, Phase 3 and Phase 4 may be placed in a loop to address more than one topic if interview sessions are limited (Bauer, 1996).

To ensure reliability and validity of the data collected in this inquiry, I provided transcriptions of the interviews to each participant to read and annotate (Bauer, 1996). As part of the initiation phase, I obtained permissions to record and transcribe follow-up conversations with each participant. I asked each participant to review and comment on the transcriptions and/or recordings (Bauer, 1996). In doing so, each participant was able to clarify events, expand upon intentions, and provide feedback (Moore, 2003). Keeping within these guidelines increased credibility and validity (Hays, 2004; Moore, 2003).

The nature of this qualitative inquiry lent itself to one of collaboration between the researcher and participant, instead of the traditional manner with the researcher as a distant outsider (Bauer, 1996; Clandinin & Caine, 2008). During the different phases of the interview, the researcher and participant ratiocinate to construct an understanding of the topic in a particular context (deMarrias, 2004). In this case, the participants helped the researcher understand the personal and professional context from which their current beliefs and practices formed. In addition, each participant was compelled to consider if a transformation occurred in practice or social consciousness.
Field Notes

During and after each interview and conversation, I wrote field notes to provide additional input to the analytic process to follow. Portions of the field notes were entered into MAXQDA. This step allowed for electronic sorting and coding of multiple contacts. These codes could then be correlated between participants as needed.

As part of the summary process, after every interview and member check, I recorded observation notes regarding the participant’s behavior, cooperation, focused themes, unanswered exmanent questions, and other concerns. I read the notes constantly and correlated them before and after the first step in McCracken’s (1988) data analysis process presented in the next section. My notes assisted in focusing my thinking about any themes that emanated from the interviews, recording unexpected data limitations, or tracking issues with the structure of the interview. I then incorporated these notes as part of the constant comparative portion of the data analysis process (McCracken, 1988).

I compiled the data sources over a four-month span. The schedules, displayed in Table 1, for data collection sources varied with each participant. I completed follow-up tasks based upon the participants’ fluidity with the process and their personal schedules.
## Table 1

**Timeline of Data Collection**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Collection Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January – February, 2017</td>
<td>● Complete IRB process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March, 2017</td>
<td>● Request for student records approved and provided</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Recruit and select participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March – April, 2017</td>
<td>● Narrative interview session #1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Field notes reviewed #1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April – May, 2017</td>
<td>● Member check #1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May, 2017</td>
<td>● Narrative interview session #2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Update timelines with participant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Field notes reviewed #2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Member check #2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May – June, 2017</td>
<td>● Narrative interview session #3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Update timelines with participant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Field notes reviewed #3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Member check #3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* Dates are approximate. Member checks were conducted either in person or through email.

### Data Analysis

The data to be analyzed were collected through participant questionnaires, interviews, timelines, field notes, and follow-up communications. Following McCracken’s (1988) recommendations, I conducted an analysis of the narrative data continually throughout the process. Transcripts and field notes from each interview were categorized using the commercial software MAXQDA. The software allowed for
searches using keywords and lexical phrases across participant interviews, as well as vertically within each narrative. Keeping in line with Brookfield’s (1995b) phases of critical reflection, I analyzed the narratives using McCracken’s (1988) five-step method for analyzing an interview. The process was similar to Strauss and Corbin’s (1998) open, axial, and selective coding steps, summarized in the next section for reference.

Data Coding Stages

Ezzy (2002), along with Strauss and Corbin (1998), recommend a three-stage coding procedure in order to deduce themes from qualitative data. The stages include: (1) open coding, (2) axial coding, and (3) selective coding. In the first stage, data were broken down into parts to extract feelings and critical events from the narrative. Each part was given a code. Their numbers were vast. In the second stage, axial coding, the data were reassembled and reordered to find the relationship between categories and subcategories. The final stage of the process, selective coding, occurred when major themes were superimposed and subthemes emerged within and between narratives.

McCracken’s Analytic Method

Expanding upon Strauss and Corbin (1998), I implemented McCracken’s (1988) coding process. It encourages researchers to review all cultural categories, including their own, prior to analysis in order for researchers to identify and appreciate their own “experience with the topic of interest” (p. 32). This process of self-reflection provides an opportunity for researchers to contextualize their own assumptions to better distance themselves from any bias during the analysis phase. The self-reflection process for this inquiry is presented later in this chapter in the section entitled Role of Researcher. The
details of McCracken’s (1988) five-step method of narrative analysis as used in this study are:

Step 1: I read the field notes and narrative interview transcripts twice to isolate viable utterances. The first time the data were read for meaning. The second reading of the data isolated short phrases that occurred in each paragraph. McCracken (1988) referred to these short phrases, often noted in the marginalia, as utterances.

Step 2: These isolated utterances were developed into descriptive and interpretive categories. McCracken (1988) purported the expansion of these utterances until the “implications and possibilities are more fully played out” (p. 45). Additionally, at this stage, cross-comparatives were begun and computer software was employed.

Step 3: Preexisting categories, along with preliminary categories generated from the utterances, were utilized. At this point, McCracken (1988) suggested the researcher look for “a field of patterns and themes . . . rising into view” (p. 45). Pattern codes were developed within the software to later assist in associating themes.

Step 4: Cross-comparisons were made between each interview and the clusters of comments in order to identify themes that now included the contexts of social consciousness, Brookfield’s (1995b) lenses of critical reflection, and transformation over time. Using the software, coded passages were checked for fit within categories and themes. Those that did not fit an assigned category were deleted, or moved, as a form of reliability checking (Piercy, 2004).
Step 5: Categories were collapsed and organized into common themes focused around Brookfield’s (1995b) four lenses and the development of transformative learning concepts of critical social consciousness and critical reflection.

Using field notes, interviews, and analytic memos (Ely, Anzul, Friedman, Garner, & Steinmetz, 1991) generated throughout the review process, epiphanies within the narratives were examined (Denzin, 1989). These epiphanies were merged, as Creswell (2007) suggested, into “an analytic abstraction of the case that highlights: (a) other processes in the individual’s life, (b) the different theories that relate to these like experiences, and (c) the unique and general features of the life” (p. 158).

Data Organization

Thematic analysis for the narratives, as recommended by McCracken (1988) and Riessman (2008), was used against a backdrop Brookfield’s (1995b) four lenses of reflection. Timelines were used to categorize and compare the data from each interview and artifact (Appendices G-J). Each year on the chart represented a year in the classroom. Initially, the participants were to focus on important times or event that occurred and not on chronological years. However, each participant began to speak of the experiences as before or after a specific year, or as an occurrence at a particular school. Some participants added the year to the original timelines. For consistency, all timelines are presented in this manner, even though the number of years taught varied per participant. Additionally, not all participants taught consecutive years in the K-12 classroom. Table 2 presents the participants’ background information. Table E1 (Appendix E) is an example of the format of a final timeline with only seven years.
Table 2

Participants’ Background Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Race or Ethnicity</th>
<th>Degrees and Certifications</th>
<th>Years teaching K-12</th>
<th>Number of Schools</th>
<th>Other Facts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>European-American</td>
<td>B.A. English and Communications; M.A.T. in Secondary English and M.A.T. TESOL; Ph.D. in C&amp;I</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Married; Two children; Also taught Adult English; International High school/College for six years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zell</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Anglo-American</td>
<td>Master’s in Elementary Education</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Married twice; Two children (living); Two passed at birth A two year, 10 year, and seven year hiatus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nathaniel</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Anglo-American</td>
<td>B.A. Elementary Education; ESOL certification; Master’s in Elementary Education; Ph. D. Enrollee</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Married twice; adopted a child in past years; Academic coach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachel</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Mexican-American</td>
<td>B.A. English; M.Ed. Elementary Education; Reading specialist; ESOL; National Board Certification; Ph. D. Enrollee</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Married in past 4 years; Tutored 3-5th for state testing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
From each interview and timeline, I extracted the narrative details pertaining to the themes of reflective growth in the life of the participant to similar, individual worksheets. Further correlation of the comments from interviews and field notes helped to create necessary categories for the instances of reflective practice taken by the participant. Based upon the narrated reaction, the lenses used by the participants before and after each memoried event were categorized further. Following analysis of the data to determine which of Brookfield’s (1995b) lenses were applicable to each story, a second analysis of the data sought to understand how various experiences over time impacted the development of each participants’ habits of criticalness across each category.

Role of Researcher

In qualitative research, the researcher is the primary data collection and analysis instrument (Merriam, 2009). The “use of self in data analysis is crucial” (Piercy, 2004, p. 2). The scope and depth of my experiences, however, created a bias in my assumptions regarding this inquiry topic in two ways (McCracken, 1988). First, the sameness of our cultural category as educators influenced my reaction to a significant portion of the data as a cultural insider (McCracken, 1988). Conversely, my position as a cultural outsider to those teachers at different levels of education than I am also influenced my interpretation of the data, and perhaps even the way in which the data were presented to me (McCracken, 1988) by the participants.
Insider Bias

As the researcher, I assumed multiple roles in this study. In this section, I address my philosophical biases toward the study as an insider. McCracken (1988) suggested that researchers should not just know what their personal, cultural perspectives are regarding a topic by reflecting up their memoried experiences. Instead, he purported that the researcher analyze the peripheral influences of those cultural experiences as a way to bracket personal knowledge apart from the inquiry data.

As I attempt to contextualize my experiences as a reflective educator, I must acknowledge the memoried sources of insider bias. I am a third generation teacher, and I identify with an historic culture of educators. Teaching, however, is my third career. I spent a total of 15 years between two different industries within the structure of the for-profit corporate sector before entering the public service field of education. Thus, as a legacy and second-career teacher, I realize my values and beliefs about the role of an educator were shaped long before my certification classes. As such, my experiences have shaped my axiological stance on the questions generated and analyzed in the inquiry.

Historical influences. As the youngest child, and grandchild, of elementary school teachers, I formed opinions early on about what teachers expected of students, parents, and colleagues, as well as local and county administrators. I knew of the plight of local teachers from the 1970s to 1990s. As new trends in education evolved during that time, I sympathized with my own mother’s anguish and concern when she reflected upon the impact of the conflicting pendulum swings within the local, state, and federal governments on our rural school system. In her day, a teacher’s accountability was to the
student and parent in the form of a promotable child to the next grade and to subsequent teachers in the form of a student prepared with the background skills needed to be successful. My experiences with this knowledge formed my perspective about the education system.

Throughout my K-12 matriculation, I was expected, and strove, to do my best. While I hoped for the ideal, perfection was not always in the cards for me. Due to the progressive curriculum changes in the county schools with which my mother disagreed, I was placed in a small, private school with a classical curriculum. Whether or not this placement decision impacted the local public school principal’s future curriculum decisions remains unanswered. To my mother, the incoming curriculum was substandard. Her beliefs and experiences constructed her ideal, her truth. I believed in my mother’s placement decision. As a result, I believe I learned to take ownership for my choices, constructed a predicted outcome, and reflected upon desired and undesired outcomes in order to identify obstacles to avoid in the future. This constructivist view of knowledge stayed with me through my industry experiences to the present.

After earning postsecondary degrees in business, I served on the board of the collegiate chapter of the American Marketing Association, where I constructed my earliest, pragmatic, educational philosophy as an adult. “The truth shall set you free,” the Bible says (John, 8:32, King James Bible English Standard Version). There is truth in what we know. There is power in what we know. There is money to be made in the solicitation of desirable knowledge. Wealth can bring freedom from worldly burdens. More simply put, knowledge is power, power is wealth, and wealth is freedom. In
marketing and management, we are told that to be successful, we must have vertical knowledge. That is, we must know the ins and outs of our industry, the industries that support us, and those we support.

To accomplish this, one may continue to learn within the walls of academia or begin the process of networking. The process of networking is simple. Meet everyone you can because each person has a powerful set of knowledge, skills, and experiences to share. Once the knowledge is shared, the power is shared, and freedom is closer. The field of education is similar. To be successful in our assignment, we must understand the inner workings of those who support us and those whom we support. Networking is useful for educators as well. It is irrational to major in every available degree program before ever instructing a single child. In education, we do have opportunities to network and consult colleagues, in the same way as the business community. Acquiring a socially accepted, shared knowledge is the key to success. Since there is little wealth in education, my epistemological mantra shifted. Knowledge is power. Power is freedom.

While working in the for-profit sector, I was also parenting two young children. I understood, from a management perspective, the kind of graduates the schools needed to produce in order to supply industry with useful workers. Knowing the type of output necessary for success provided me some guidance to shape the educational input my own children received. I was fortunate that my values and ethics at home similarly matched those at work—for example, honesty and integrity were attributes worthy of rewards. The standards of industry are established prior to hiring, and as an adult, you have to decide how, or if, you will adjust your values to meet those standards. If, for example,
your family’s view on timeliness was laisse faire, you soon would discover that an adjustment is necessary. Most industry standards mirror the ethical norms of society (Blackburn, Klayman, & Malin, 1988).

Current influences. Throughout my teaching career, I have taught, as my mother did, in Title I elementary schools. Within the field of education, my lenses of reflection, social consciousness, and transformative pedagogy are limited to this single context. However, holistically my lenses of reflection, social consciousness, and transformation include a broad spectrum of experiences. Together, these three dimensions of temporality, culture, and environment form my own narrative space as an educator (Clandinin & Caine, 2008).

Unlike the for-profit sector that focuses on a single industry’s standards to maximize profit, standards in education change, based upon the pressures of multiple industries (White & Lowenthal, 2009). Stevens (2001) suggested that as multiple fields take the lead influencing educational standards, there is a naturally tendency to change which educational standards dominate the curriculum. Educators and caregivers have little opportunity to adjust and prepare for the new standards before they are imposed, yet they are expected to do so retroactively (White & Lowenthal, 2009). It is possible to infer that educators are thus accountable for the beliefs and values of others with little or no power over the result.

Other contradictions between fields can be made. For instance, most industry workers are able to complete their tasks with little concern for the quality of work done by other departments (White & Lowenthal, 2009). For instance, if the fourth department
in a six-step process receives subpar goods, the items are returned or discarded. Delays in the process can be accounted for based upon inventory and quality control. Educators seldom have this luxury. Even when students arrive with gaps in their skill set, each teacher is expected to repair the gaps and continue the process in the allotted time (M. Kane, personal communication, October 21, 2014). A comparison of output results is made from year to year, even though the input was different (M. Perkins, personal communication, August 7, 2013). Based on my varied experiences, I do not believe teachers should be burdened with quotas and statistics set by external forces that do not take into consideration the varied quality of knowledge and skills of the incoming students, but expect the pressures of the educational system to mold each one into a perfectly symmetrical diamond.

Educators must be brave enough to adjust their focus based upon personal ideals and beliefs in the shadow of the current sociopolitical stance (White & Lowenthal, 2009). My peers and I, like our predecessors, navigate the sociopolitical issues of education based upon the reactions of our own children and students to the pedagogical focus of the times (e.g., whole word versus phonics; holistic versus skill and drill). The sociopolitical climate changes with each adult generation, yet the solutions are thrust upon the next generation instead of those old enough to do something about it.

As educators, we must test our experiential knowledge. Critically reflecting on our choices, by examining the perspective from which we constructed our knowledge and comparing those results with other perspectives, reduces errors in judgement by changing what we simply hope and believe into what we know to be reality, through a
multiperspective experience (McCracken, 1988). The educational curriculum employed by teachers is presented in a multisided box. Until each perspective is analyzed, we cannot know if we teachers have removed our own biases from the bits of knowledge our students are attempting to construct for themselves (McCracken, 1988). Knowledge is truth.

Outsider Bias

McCracken (1988) suggested that research biases toward the study, as an outsider, should also be addressed. The perspective of outside researcher, instead of participant-observer, was necessary to limit bias during data analysis. In order to reduce confirmation and culture bias (Sarniak, 2015), I excluded participants I knew personally or professionally. Finally, I employed member checking and used multiple artifacts from each participant in order to correlate the narrative data. Member checking of interview transcripts provided a way for participants to clarify and correct information before moving forward and to validate or update submitted artifacts. According to McCracken (1988), care must be given when researchers, who are considered outsiders by the participants, collect and analyze narratives. The reasons McCracken provided range from the researcher’s lack of understanding of the participants’ viewpoints to the participants’ lack of trust in the researcher. For instance, a participant may not want to divulge a particular story because it is embarrassing or counter to the expectations of the field. By implementing Phase 5 of the narrative interview process, the concern of disclosure may be assuaged since the information divulged during that time will not be digitally recorded, but only noted on paper, if significant.
Provisions for Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is a qualitative means to incorporate the issues of validity and reliability for a study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The use of a known method and the conscious attempt to adhere to that method lays the groundwork to validate the research in a qualitative study (Creswell, 2007). Following the measures set forth in Langley-Weber (2012), this inquiry implemented a variety of tools in the analysis process. The demographic questionnaire, the timeline, Bauer’s (1996) narrative interview process, audio taping of the interviews, field notes, emails, and McCracken’s (1988) Five-Stage process for Discovery of Analytic Categories set the stage for participants to review the information obtained in the interview using a process called member checking. Member checking of interview transcripts provided a way to clarify and correct information prior to coding and analysis. This step brought authenticity and credibility to the work and decreased the chances of the researcher basing categories and themes on misunderstandings, thus it also provided a timesaving element (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Trustworthiness, as utilized here, included the removal of fear of retaliation by implementing the use of pseudonyms during the transcribing, analyzing, and reporting phase. Only the original contact summary sheet listed the participants’ identity. It will remain in a secure location throughout the dissertation process before being destroyed.

The use of a few preset themes, based upon the components of the theoretical framework, provided opportunities for cross comparisons within and between interviews. Following the recommended protocol (McCracken, 1988; Moustakas, 1994; Piercy,
2004), the researcher’s personal experiences in the classroom and perspectives on critical practices were examined to identify the researcher’s situatedness within the topics.

Summary

In this narrative inquiry, teachers were purposefully selected from among a single university’s advanced degree programs. The university was a private institution; therefore, the candidate pool may have been reduced due to the additional financial burden incurred by those who attended. Data were primarily collected using the narrative interview process that employed an initial, open-ended question about each of Brookfield’s (1995b) four lenses as well as the lived experiences in and out of the field of education. Finally, the utilization of member checking ensured the credibility and reliability of the transcripts. Data were analyzed using McCracken’s (1988) Five-Step analytic process, which incorporates the constant comparative method (Glaser, 1978).
CHAPTER 4
RESULTS

In the preceding chapters, I established the need for this study, submitted evidence of this need in an overview of the existing literature, and provided the methods I used for data collected. This chapter discloses the results for each participant in terms of Brookfield’s (1995b) lenses to develop a critically reflective practice. Brookfield (1995b) prompted educators to reflect upon their practice using feedback from multiple sources, which include one’s self, one’s students, one’s colleagues, and scholarly literature. Additionally, Brookfield (1995b) encouraged teachers to take action on this new information through the implementation of critical pedagogy.

This chapter contains four sections. The first section provides an overview of the participants. The second section provides individual analysis of each participant. Each begins with the participant’s narrative recollection of their experiences as learners prior to entering the classroom, including background information and overall perceptions of education. Presented next are subsections that relate any significant changes that occurred with the participants in relation to the research questions. The third section provides a cross-case analysis of the participants’ experiences and includes information on commonalities and differences detected in the narratives based on each of Brookfield’s (1995b) four lenses. This section also presents experiences in which participants engaged in critical reflection. The interview or field note from which the
participant’s experience was revealed is indicated in parentheses at the end of the sentence or paragraph. Direct quotes are presented similarly with the addition of a paragraph indicator from the interview or a page number from field notes. The fourth section includes a summary of the chapter.

Overview of the Participants

From the recruitment method previously described, four participants were included in the study: Helen, Zell, Nathaniel, and Rachel. All had at least a Master’s degree in some area of education, and all taught for at least seven years in the classroom. Of the respondents, Helen reported the most years of service and the most varied experiences. Her levels teaching experience included students from fifth grade through adult with students for whom English was a second language. Zell had the second highest years of experience in teaching. Zell’s experience had always been in the K-2 classroom. Nathaniel was the only male to respond to the participant search. Rachel was the fifth respondent. The decision to include this fifth participant stemmed from the fact that she was the only respondent to acknowledge a Pre-K teaching experience—a perspective that would have otherwise gone unreported.

The next section presents each participant’s narrative with data sources referenced in parentheses. Each individual’s background information, motivations, and experiences leading up to the first year of teaching are provided first. Each participant’s development towards a critically reflective practice is described through significant incidents experienced by the participants. Specific experiences led to changes in practice are grouped into overarching themes that correspond to the research questions.
Helen

Helen, a White female, was in her forties. She grew up in the mid-Atlantic region and lived with her husband and children in a major metropolitan city in the southern United States at the time of this study. She did not begin her academic career with the goal of becoming a teacher. A set of unique circumstances prompted her option to teach (Interview 1).

Our lived experiences influence our perspectives, voiced opinions, and reactions (van Manen, 1977). Helen’s backstory, filled with a desire for serving others and promoting social justice, was unique to her current teaching position. Helen reported she was a language learner in her youth and not just because she had to have two years of a foreign language in high school. Her aunt and uncle lived in Europe when she was young, and Helen visited them often, but she inferred that she found herself frustrated as she tried to communicate with the locals as a nonstandard speaker of this second language in which she was immersed (Interview 1). Trips within Europe to visit friends of her aunt increased her level frustration with the addition of translating yet another language. Her aunt’s family expressed their perspectives openly within the home. Helen described it as a bit uncomfortable, but her vocal aunt provided Helen with an example of someone who speaks out when there are social issues at hand (Field notes 2).

Helen’s interest in communicating with others led to dual undergraduate degrees in Journalism and Communication. After college, she lived abroad. Using her knowledge of English rules obtained from her undergraduate classes, she taught English to adults in Germany and later to high school preparatory students in Italy. Helen noted
that the experience was fulfilling, and prompted her to consider teaching as a career (Field notes 1).

Upon her return the United States, Helen found the job market in her undergraduate field was not as fruitful as she expected, so she decided to use her experience with the English language to her benefit. She enrolled in a Master’s of Art and Teaching pilot program that also provided her with a MAT in Secondary English and Master’s in Teaching of English for Speakers of Other Languages. This program served to certify her to teach English and ESOL to grades six through twelve. Her experience in the MAT program was rather mundane, and she reported that it did nothing to prepare her for the classroom. She stated the project for her TESOL degree as the most eye-opening experience, for it provided a view into the undercurrents that make up part of the culture of a school (Interview 1).

Her project focused on nonstandard speakers of English in her home state. Her assignment was an ESOL position at a rural high school in an economically depressed area. This farming community had historically managed its needs within the family units. However, as the new millennium approached, farm children moved away leaving the community dependent on Mexican migrant workers. Helen indicated that the few who were able to get away from the fields met with prejudice and hatred from students, teachers, and townsfolk. Those learners assigned to general education classes were the subject of gossip. The teachers complained about having to deal with them because they did not want to adjust their lessons. Thus, Helen removed the students she could to work with them in her class. She recalled, “Nobody wanted them in their classroom”
(Interview 1, para. 36). As a result, no one trusted her. Helen related it to guilt by association. Helen stated this experience made her realize that she did not want a general education English classroom where she would have to deal with the prejudice of the other staff and students. Instead, she wanted to lead an ESOL class where she could see the students benefit from her expertise (Interview 1).

Helen became a certified teacher in 1999 and was then required to complete a yearlong teaching internship with a provisional certification. The pay was not any better than the offers she had received in journalism, but the potential for long-term employment and pay above the poverty line was much more encouraging (Interview 1).

Prior to teaching, Helen reported instances of considering multiple perspectives to inform her instruction. Although she admitted to now being “suspicious of those who come into education with that missionary zeal, that very softly conceived concept of what teaching is” (Interview 1, para. 103), she indicated concern for social justice and advocacy for students. This is perhaps because as a child, Helen also had personal experiences as a second-language learner that allowed her to empathize, versus sympathize, with those she was sent to instruct when she became an adult (Interview 1).

Due to her ESOL certification, Helen got a job in a high school in a metropolitan city in the southeastern United States. Due to an influx of refugees from the Sudan, Somalia, Ethiopia, and Hmong, this high school had a unique population of second-language learners—an ESOL population of approximately 1000 students comprised of over 100 languages. Many of the teenagers had not attended school since they were very young, and most had intermittent training from missionaries. Few had ever been in an
institutional environment with first-world conveniences that included a desk, pencil, and paper for every child, much less indoor toilets, light switches, cafeterias, and adult-controlled passes to the lavatory (Interview 1).

These teenage students were unique. Smart students in their own right, most possessed the academic identity of a first grader. Consequently, these students of this age could not be in the mainstream with elementary students. Therefore, administrators decided to divide the ESOL department. Some ESOL teachers would continue to work with students who had enough of an institutional education that they could be served academically in the classroom; other ESOL teachers supervised the students with extreme gaps in their learning experiences in a computer-based instructional environment deemed “The Lab” (Interview 1).

Helen supervised students who needed traditional ESOL instruction. In this preNo Child Left Behind context, student placement in ESOL classes depended upon level of language acquisition and not by age or grade. Helen’s students had experienced institutional academics and were “basically reapplying all that education into English, renaming their learning, as well as getting new content for their age” (Interview 1, para. 19). However, she received the students with the earliest, or lowest, level of English acquisition. Fortunately, Helen had been involved previously with students for whom English was a second language. Now, as an educator in a more traditional environment, Helen felt a special connection to the nonstandard speakers of English who experienced frustration with trying to communicate and simply be heard for the intelligent being God produced (Interview 1).
Helen reported a variety of changes that transpired in her personal and professional life. Some of the changes were supportive to her development as a teacher; other developments seemed less related, but in hindsight were quite germane. The following sections present Helen’s experiences within the themes related to Brookfield’s (1995b) lenses of becoming a critically reflective teacher.

Development of Helen’s Autobiographical Practice

Throughout the narrative, Helen reported several times that her work as an ESOL teacher was full of reactive responses to assigned curriculums, assigned instructional plans, and a mountain of paperwork. She did not consider any part of her practice to possess a self-reflective perspective. The following paragraphs present examples of autobiographical reflection at various levels of depth.

It is what it is, but what is it? Helen reported that mentions of the concept of reflection occurred frequently in her certification program. She received assignments that required her to reflect upon a scenario in order to apply the pedagogical knowledge currently presented in class. Helen divulged that when she graduated from her MAT program she knew nothing of reflection—it was just something to do after a lesson. She recalled that she “had no idea what that meant” (Interview 1, para. 103).

Helen recounted the impact of static in her personal life and the culture of the school on her motivation to truly reflect upon the instructional choices available and select what was best for the students. She recalled her feelings of discontent when she realized the instructional choices did not benefit the students. However, she was in no condition to mentally battle that challenge. As the year continued, her personal situation
Searching for the obvious answers. Over the next two to three years, Helen realized that the students were not benefiting from the new NCLB policy. She did not believe that she was very self-reflective, especially where her instructional choices were concerned. In her third year, Helen reported that she began to feel more confident in her ability to make changes in her instruction, as well as the curriculum upon which her students needed to focus. She stated, “My reflective thought of what my part in what was happening in my classroom” began to develop (Interview 3, para. 21). As she described her newfound efficacy as an avenue that allowed her to search for ways she could truly serve her students, Helen recounted, “By year three, a lot of new teachers have internalized strategies that allow them to work smarter, not harder. And, in doing so, it allowed me to start opening myself up to get to know the students” (Interview 1, para. 90). Helen recalled that one of the ways she began to reflect on what was going on in her classroom was in her conversation with her husband, both before and after they married. She knew if she could get him to understand some of the topics spinning in her head, then she was certain she had considered each situation from multiple angles (Interview 3).

Instructionally, Helen realized she had really declined in her reflective practice. Due to the increasing ESOL mandates, she stated that her instructional practice, as well as the reflection upon it, “moved from being topic specific and holistic to being more direct content specific and holistic” (Interview 2, para. 6). Instead of worrying about whether or not the students would be engaged and understand the context of the English
skill, it became more of a concern for completing the lockstep, explicit direction and collecting the plethora of required data. After five years of teaching at one school, Helen and her new husband moved out of the country (Interview 2).

Go with what you know. Upon her return to the classroom in 2014, Helen initially reflected upon her work from a theoretical perspective. She understood the theory that served as the basis for private institutions. She understood from previous experience how to apply the theory to the students in general. She understood how to connect to students with diverse backgrounds. She knew that with a bit of an adjustment to the curriculum tasks, these students could succeed (Interview 3).

However, she found that applying the provided curriculum in a way that would benefit her diverse learners was inadequate. She did not have just an ESOL cluster—instead, she was there to support all students from diverse cultural as well as language backgrounds. Helen reported attempts to use her previous, successful teaching experiences. However, she found there was “no latitude by the administration to present the classical theory to these diverse students in a way that would make sense to them” (Interview 3, para. 142). As a result, she did not return the next year (Interview 3).

Two steps back and three steps forward. The next school year, Helen was back in the ESOL department of the public school system in which she lived. She noted that her first year at the assignment was unique to her previous experiences. She pushed into different general education classrooms in order to assist her assigned students, which was a new experience upon which she could only react to the intended curriculum and obvious needs of the students. There were few strategies upon which to rely. Reflection
on anything, other than the situation, was virtually nonexistent. Helen did not indicate
that she reflected on her instruction for any purpose other than to “complete her required
forms” (Interview 3, para. 227).

In the second year at the school, Helen’s assignment changed from transitioning
from one room to another to the students coming to her class. Instead of serving 8-12
students in a general education classroom, she served that many in her own classroom.
Helen unilaterally denied using any “reflection beyond making sure that the students had
completed the required tasks for their other classes” (Interview 3, para. 211). However,
she confirmed that she took the time to “learn the academic and personal story of each
student” she served (Interview 1, para. 80).

Helen stated that much of her reflection regarding her work was comparing what
she was experiencing in the classroom to what she was studying in her doctoral program.
Helen referenced a book to which she made an analogy to her development as a teacher
stating, “The most important thing to remember is that you will never know it all”
(Interview 3, para. 306).

Development of Helen’s Consideration of Student Perspective

For many first year teachers, survival is the name of the game. Helen’s reports
from her first year in a new position echoed this theme of survival. Sometimes her
survival instincts were based upon basic needs, and other times, it was due to new
procedures. Either way, the student experience was certain to suffer. Most years, Helen
described the ultimate goal of her work to be for the benefit of the students. The
following paragraphs recount experiences in which Helen presented a focus on
instruction that included the students’ perspective (Interview 1).

Clearing a path. Helen admitted that, in the first year, considering the
perspectives of her students was not a part of her reflective practice. Helen framed her
reflection by stating,

When I started out in 1999 straight out of school, I just adopted the practices of
those around me for the first couple of years. I was in survival mode. A lot of the
instruction at that time, because it was almost all survival English, was very nuts
and bolts. It was more about explaining how English works. I didn’t connect
personally with my students because I felt there was so much of that nuts and
bolts English that I had to get in them as quickly as possible that I had no personal
relationship with them. I knew their demographics . . . but I didn’t have any
connection with them. (Interview 1, para. 79)

Helen reported that much of her survival mode in teaching that first year hinged upon her
personal situation and the events through which she was living (Interview 1).

Helen did not feel she was in a position to provide any extra support for the
refugees she was teaching. She had empathy for their plight because she was living it,
too, in her own way: she was in a new city with no support system outside of school, and
she was barely keeping herself fed or sheltered. While she had a glimpse into what these
students were going through, had she attempted to advocate for them, it would have been
like the proverbial blind leading the blind. She expressed that her ability to trust in others
allowed her to accept the support of her colleagues, and in doing so, finding the edges of this new construction in her life (Interview 1).

Creating a foundation. By her second year of teaching, Helen recalled her focus shifting towards the improvement of options that would provide a more holistic benefit for the students. The influence of gangs took root. She attempted to understand why gangs were such an attraction for her second-language students. Her experiences during that first year of teaching began to correlate. Hunger was, and is, a powerful motivator (Interview 2).

As a member of gang, the individual student had access to resources in the United States unlikely found otherwise. As a member, the lone student was now part of a collective, a community. Resources could be pooled. Committing a misdemeanor that held a consequence of going to jail where the student would be warm, dry, and fed was less of a deterrent than knowing the student could have done something to keep his or her entire family fed and roof over their head (Interview 2).

Scaffolding all around. Helen found herself constructing different supports for her students. During her third and fourth year, students from China and other Pan-continentals arrived at the school. Gang activity expanded, but Helen found a way to have real conversations with her students without being condescending of their choices. She felt compelled to remain neutral while providing mainstream options and understanding of each scenario so that the students could come to their own conclusions. Helen’s third year required her to view multiple student perspectives as she sought to communicate with these young adults while still conducting class (Interview 2).
During this particular year, she tried to adopt one of her students who arrived in the country as an orphan. The empathy she had for the child derived from their shared experiences of being alone and hungry in a strange place and latching on to the most secure anchors available. Helen had once found comfort in her teammates in the ESOL department. They had been her anchor and possibly her short-term salvation. When Helen noticed these same scenarios happening to this child, she attempted to become his anchor. Rules and regulations and documentation got in the way. Helen reminisced about the lost opportunity, but she was glad to have gained a new perspective (Interview 1).

The spring semester of her third year was a difficult one. One of her students was killed in a gang-related issue. Helen reported that she stopped instruction in order to deal with the students’ uncontained emotion, frustration, and lack of understanding (Interview 3). She allowed the students to be heard as they searched for words to express themselves. She recalled that it was not the intended academic vocabulary building exercise, but it instead turned into a social skills vocabulary lesson that would benefit all involved beyond their high school experience (Interview 1).

Too much scaffolding is constricting. Adding insult to injury was the unique makeup of a new group of students. Family units flooded in with unique identities to piece together. Helen noted Chinese families who were Christian, and Vietnamese families who were Muslim. All the cultural stereotypes were nonexistent. Additionally, these families “possessed a very different syllabary that required additional training in decoding and handwriting for the students” (Interview 3, para. 83). However, an
example of the NCLB standardization required these students to read and interpret Shakespeare and discuss its figurative language. Helen realized the students were not benefiting (Interview 3).

The different cultural and religious mindsets added to the confusion. Standardization for most of the general high school population may have made sense on some level. However, Helen recalled a lesson plan that required students in her ESOL class to learn a standard in English literature. Helen described it as a situation in which “the concept of that standard was so esoteric that it didn’t exist in the students’ own language . . . we had to flagrantly operate outside the boundaries of such irrelevant standards” (Interview 3, para. 86) and focus on the more basic syllabary and writing needs. With the help of her team, Helen attempted to justify the best way to help the students in her charge based upon their current academic needs (Interview 3).

Freedom still needs guidelines. Although not included on the timeline, Helen’s experience with the students she taught in the Virgin Islands was of interest. Unlike the students of the last five years, the Virgin Island students were not West Indian natives. These were predominantly White, privileged high school students. There was no policy to constrict her pedagogy, and all the students ‘basic needs of food, shelter, and clothing were met. However, their unique set of circumstances placed them in an academic and social-emotional scenario similar to that of her refugee students from the states (Interview 1). These students were basically raising themselves because their parents were seldom available. They had little structure at home, which produced a similar apathy held by her student in the states. The biggest difference, Helen noted, was that these students “had a
whole lot more money to get in a whole lot more trouble of a whole different kind” (Interview 1, para. 67).

Helen did not return to teaching in a K-12 classroom for 10 years. Raising three children did provide yet another layer to her advocacy. Knowing that there would still be restrictions to her work with students served under federal ESOL regulations, she applied at a private school and reignited her quest to serve all learners of all cultures in understanding the principles of the English language. She found that while the private school could provide an environment in which she could deeply assist the students, the curriculum was one-sided. The expectations did not account for culturally or religiously diverse students to be successful, even though they were heavily recruited from the nearby communities. Even students born in the United States who had already attended public school for three or four years were at a disadvantage because their families did not discuss historically Christian-American ethos, which was the basis of the school’s curriculum. If they did, it was not likely that the families “discussed these themes in the same open, analytical way the curriculum intended” (Interview 3, para. 157). Helen stated it was as if the entity of the school had set out to recruit these particular students “in order to remove their diversity and inculcate them into the American culture, even if it was to the detriment of the students” (Interview 3, para. 159). Helen continued to oppose the expected instructional style and meet the students where they were by contextualizing and discussing the content vocabulary through attempts to relate it to something familiar and then contrast their discussions of the known with the unknown scenarios of the curriculum. Helen noted that it was reactive teaching based upon the
materials the students brought in to get help with during their sessions, but it was the only way the students would “get any help contextualizing the curriculum” (Interview 3, para. 157).

The support of a pedestal. When Helen returned to the public school system, she admitted that she had little interaction with the students that would allow her to consider their deeper needs when deciding on an instructional style. Pushing into different classrooms for approximately an hour a day did little to help her plan with the student in mind. The County designated the curriculum, but she was again to instruct from a reactive stance. Her only influence of how best to assist the learner were in the words she chose “at any given point to reteach, reconceptualize, or redistribute knowledge based upon what the general education teacher had done” (Interview 3, para. 210).

Helen expressed that this year she again did not reflect upon the student when making instructional choices. She stated repeatedly that her instruction this year was completely reactive to the district’s dictated curriculum and scripted, timed lesson plans, accompanied by designated activities, received by all content areas and grade levels. However, she also reported that she was able to get to know her students this year. She learned about “their family life, their learning styles and interests in order to effectively address all of the parts and pieces . . . to fill in the gaps for every other class” (Interview 3, paras. 248, 252). Helen reported that even though the students in each segment were at different levels of language acquisition, she was able to differentiate instruction based upon the needs of the students (Interview 3). This holistic approach to teaching was the
critical level of consideration of the student perspective to which Brookfield (1995b) was referring.

Development of Helen’s Collaboration with Colleagues

With maturation come changes in relationship dependence. Helen’s relationships with her colleagues was similar to one most college students experience with their parents as they grow into their own person and become self-sufficient entities who can locate their own resources as well as be a resource to others.

A warm cocoon. Helen’s relationship with her ESOL teammates and mentors that first year was rather unique. Initially, she adopted the instructional practices of those around her while she was in survival mode. Helen related they acted as personal, rather than teaching, mentors. She described them as genuinely concerned individuals who provided advice in such a way that she felt their intentions were to only help improve her work. No matter what the situation, they always were able to provide a practical answer. Helen admitted that these frequent, practical solutions shaped her reflective practice. She reported,

Having started on the cusp of No Child Left Behind, the immediate transition in their advice and my practice was to work smarter, not harder. Data can be your friend, but data isn’t everything. Their advice helped me answer questions like what is the practicality of this suggestion, environment, change, or whatever? (Interview 1, para. 104)

On a personal level, Helen described her departmental colleagues as foundational supports. Due to her move into the state and minimum provisional pay, Helen was
essentially homeless throughout much of the first semester. When her team found out
she was often living out of her car or on people’s couches, they found her a steady place
to live and provided her with a loan out of their own pockets (Interview 3). Caring and
compassion for the human situation is where missionary zeal belongs, and this early
experience in education is where Helen learned about it (Interview 2).

Helen’s gratitude for her team’s support continued. The department heads
continued to take the burden of creating or locating the newly required standardized
curriculum resources for most of the team. Helen’s chaos in her home life allowed her to
focus on her students. She admitted that her understanding of the team’s perspective
remained unclear. Were they continuing to invoke their pseudo-parental concern for a
surrogate child out of habit, or were they just trying to develop a cohesive plan for the
team so that each team member could get the required data collected for the students they
served? Regardless, Helen felt supported, and the tasks for which she was accountable
were completed (Interview 3).

Spreading her wings. As a novice teacher in her second and third year of
teaching, Helen confirmed that she was happy to accept the lesson plans and resources
her colleagues provided. During these years, the federal and state policies regarding
certification and ESOL service began to change. This resulted in relocation of her very
experienced ESOL colleagues to different assignments due to their original content
certifications (Interview 3).

Because her colleagues upon whom she had been so dependent were no longer
there, Helen was responsible for continuing the work and supporting those teachers
reassigned to her ESOL department. She began to notice an influx of content area teachers seeking their ESOL endorsement. These teachers noticed the impact the ESOL teachers had on the students in their classes, and they seemed to want to learn more. She attempted to support them when they asked for help. Unfortunately, Helen did not see the general education teachers “use their new knowledge to its potential” (Interview 3, para. 110).

Time to fly. After a hiatus from the K-12 classroom, Helen returned to fulltime teaching at a private school. Her assignment was not specifically as an ESOL teacher, but as a Student Support Teacher. The students she served were diverse. The SST department included the Special Education teachers, the ESOL teacher, and any other staff assigned to assist diverse learners. Helen and her teammates were part of a small group of teachers with alternative teaching tendencies who attempted to operate within a very homogeneous school curriculum. Helen reported that they often met with challenges beyond the curriculum. The general education teachers and the administration were displeased when she, or her teammates, opposed the status quo. It was not likely that many of the general education teachers knew how to rebel, if they were even aware of the injustice at all. Most of the staff were college graduates who had no teacher training. Helen reported examples of a “second-grade teacher who had a degree in American Studies and another who had a background in Renaissance Studies and offered a person a fourth grade position because they studied the Middle Ages” (Interview 3, para. 165). In an effort to further advocate for the diverse population of students, Helen was able to get a cohort member hired to be a part of the SST department. Not only was
this person a certified Special Education teacher, but she was also a young, African-American woman who “could bring a much needed voice in support of the diverse learners and a possible change to the school policy or stance regarding diverse learners” (Interview 3, para. 165). The Student Support Team continued to “oppose the establishment in order to show the improved results possible to accomplish when you work together as a team” (Interview 3, para. 166).

The unicorn. For the two years leading up to this study, Helen has worked in the ESOL department at a public middle school. When asked about how she interacted with her colleagues in this new position, she stated that she was an island, for there were no other ESOL teachers in the building. She was isolated from collegial discourse not only by the physical location of her classroom, but also by her schedule. Last year she served two buildings in order to fulfill her required segments for payroll. The general education teachers, “while cordial,” were also not available for consult when she was in the room, they did not share common planning times, and they did not share their lesson plans because they followed the county scope and sequence. Their interactions regarding students were limited to emails (Interview 3).

For the year of this study, Helen stated that she was more isolated from the rest of the teachers. As a sheltered classroom instructor, the students come to her room at designated time, by grade, for help and instruction in reading and language arts. The students attended math, science, and social studies classes with their general education peers, but came to Helen for reading. Due to the schedule, she was not able to consult with other teammates about students in her class unless it was through email. She had
been affectionately nicknamed the Unicorn because many were unaware of her existence in the building and no one else served the cross-section of students. According to Helen, “discourse was not meant to be asynchronous” (Interview 3, para. 223). It was interesting to note that not only was she the only teacher of ESOL at a small academy, but she was also the only ESOL teacher at a fairly large, public middle school (Interview 3).

Development of Helen’s Consult of Theoretical Literature

According to Brookfield (1995b), using theory to negotiate classroom experiences can increase teacher efficacy by putting a name to the dilemmas. Theory may also provide possible interpretations of the events. Helen reported a contrary experience with theory—one in which the theories, upon which district policy and practice were based, ultimately failed to transfer to the reality of the classroom.

Holding onto theory. Helen advised that when she first entered the classroom, all she could depend on was the pedagogical and education theory she read about in her certification classes. Her cohort had little experience with classroom management, writing lesson plans, or even a basic understanding of the roles and relationships of the administrative staff. Policy was not even in her consciousness, aside from employment policy and dress codes. She had less than zero percent input or concern with the theory supporting her instructional practice. The contents of the curriculum included the content of her instruction. This combination made it difficult to understand the changes that were taking place “in the impending shadow of the NCLB influences from Texas” (Interview 2, para. 3). It was strange to know that in the many decades after desegregation and Civil
Rights, educators were using terms like “inclusion,” but still discussing second-language students in the third person. Helen remarked, “It was who will be teaching these people, or those people need to be pulled away because they need special instruction that nobody else needs, so they need to get that by themselves” (Interview 2, para. 3).

Indignation spawns a rebellion. By her third year, Helen recalled her vehement reaction to the policy interjected into the schools as the No Child Left Behind reform took root. She stated, “I saw my personal righteous indignation and cynicism toward institutional decision making that was unfair to my kids” develop. I wasn’t thinking about it in a philosophical manner” (Interview 3, para. 19), but she was struck by the disservice the implementation of standardization had on the students. By her fourth year working for this same district, Helen had seen the policy and focus for the ESOL program change along with the building administration. Additionally, the ESOL department staff dwindled to minimal levels. Students were “not fully served due to new NCLB laws regarding certification” (Interview 3, para. 64). According to Helen, ESOL certified middle school and high school staff were no longer able to serve ESOL students unless the staff person held a certification in English for the grade level. This resulted in removal of teachers certified to teach social studies or science and not certified to teach English for their grade level from the department. To make matters worse, those teachers were often not able to go back into the social studies or science classroom because those teachers had been out of the department for so long “they did not have the current curricular knowledge or certification” (Interview 3, paragraphs 65-67). The situation had a defeating, demoralizing effect on the ESOL staff as well as the students they served.
By the end of her fourth year, Helen’s cynicism of policy that was supposedly supported by theory reached a pinnacle. From her perspective, “both policy and theory were failing reality” (Interview 3, para. 46). There was pressure from two directions, and they were in conflict. Helen stated,

I know what we know in education that says will work for these students. That is not this. I know what the policy makers are saying they are basing their policy upon. That is not what is happening. There is static there. (Interview 3, para. 46)

Despite the policy and theoretical support meant to include students for whom English was not a first language, they still failed to do any less than exclude them. Helen remarked, “The theory of teaching language learners does not always intersect with the theory of teaching” (Interview 3, para. 41). By the end of her fifth year of teaching, Helen had experienced a rash of policy and instructional trends mandated by those in authority. Helen was comfortable enough in the expectations of her on a daily basis that she was able to reflect upon the research. The “party-line” concurred that the new methods were based upon research; however, that research “had not yet been validated” (Interview 2, para. 14). To Helen, the required collection of data allowed each school to simply complete a checklist but “never truly analyze or put the data to use for the benefit of the students” (Interview 2, para. 15).

Reality trumps theory. Ten years passed before Helen’s next K-12 classroom experience in the United States. She left the country due to her husband’s job, and then she stayed home to raise her children. In the interim, Helen worked part-time with international students abroad as well as second-language learners at the college level in
the United States. Her insight into policy at the university level was expanded. She soon found it to be manipulative, even exploitive (Interview 1, field notes page 2).

Helen returned to the classroom in 2014. It was a private preparatory academy, steeped in classical liberal arts theory of learning. Helen had been a liberal arts major, so she was well versed in the theory of classical education. She believed that all students, including the diverse learners, would be allowed to acquire this discrete knowledge and learn how to talk about it so that they, too, could use it in a practical application as intended. Unfortunately, the school’s policies and administrative direction did not apply the theory for all learners in the modern manner in which they originally conveyed. The school did not allow the inclusion of modern classical materials already in existence. The administration still relied upon the “Dead White Men” (Interview 3, para. 143) of decades past.

In the midst of her first year back in the classroom, Helen began a Ph.D. program at a private university in the southeastern United States. She admitted that she had been exposed to new philosophical constructs that have solidified and given names to ideas and concepts she has held for years. Due to differences in educational philosophy and pedagogical theory, Helen reported a move to an ESOL position at a public middle school in the metropolitan city where she lived. She had taught at this location for the two years leading up to this study.

Public schools must conform much of the limited instruction theory handed down by the state and federal government. However, within the application of these theories of instruction for students served by the ESOL department, Helen had provided services as a
push-in coteacher as well as an instructor in a sheltered classroom. As Helen reflected upon these models, she described the push-in model as the penultimate, theoretical model. In theory, the general education and classroom teacher would plan together to allow the ESOL teacher to support the students served within the classroom while working toward a grade level standard. It would also allow the general education teacher an opportunity to learn about and hone instructional skills to support the same students when the ESOL teacher is not in the classroom (Interview 3).

The year of this study, Helen was serving students through a lesser-implemented model known as a sheltered classroom. Typically, a sheltered classroom at the middle or high school level is comprised of no more than 13 students, grouped by grade level, served by one ESOL teacher in a designated classroom and expected to complete the district’s designated reading curriculum, even if it is at a slightly slower pace. In both of these current scenarios, Helen reported that her reflection on theory for the purpose of implementing instruction was nonexistent due to the continuing federal regulations. Helen reminded me of her experiences as the teacher in a high school sheltered classroom prior to the NCLB regulations. Again, Helen commented how these examples depict scenarios in which theory once again “fails not only reality, but also the student” (Interview 3, para. 227).

Helen’s Development towards Critical Reflection

Without implementing change, reflection becomes another useless, time-consuming act. Critical reflection is intended to lead to changes to instruction. These changes are often prompted by the teacher’s developing recognition of and response to
social inequities of power and policy that operate in the classroom. This development of critical consciousness varies based upon the teacher’s awareness of personal or professional beliefs and experiences in and out of the context of the classroom. This section provides examples of Helen’s developing awareness of her reflective practice in response to the ESOL students’ struggle against hegemonic cultures.

Naïve-transitive consciousness. Helen’s narratives provided multiple examples of pedagogical style that would be considered transmissive. When she described her first year of teaching, Helen recounted a limited awareness of the educational system and its policy. She reported that her personal life was in turmoil, thus limiting her cognitively and emotionally. She admitted that the best she could do was to ensure that the students’ tasks of the day were complete. During Helen’s seventh year in the public school system, she advised that the pressure of learning and implementing the updated NCLB policies, her schedule, and seclusion as the only ESOL teacher in the building reduced her pedagogical style to one in which she simply followed the status quo, even though she knew from her experience the students were not benefiting.

Developing social consciousness. Prior to completing her certification, Helen was exposed to unique situations from simply being a “frustrated second-language learner” (Interview 1, para. 30) to witnessing a group of Mexican immigrant students “endure the ridicule of an entire town as if they, these children, were scabs crossing a picket line” (Interview 1, para. 36). During her preservice experience, Helen discovered the existence of prejudice towards second-language learners and their culture in the general education classroom. It seemed to go unchecked by the general education teacher, partly because
the teacher was unequipped to respond to or deal with the class and partly because the teacher harbored apathy toward the ESOL students. Helen also reported that she received “unwarranted hostility and exclusion by the staff due to her association” (Interview 1, para. 36) with these children.

In her second interview, Helen again noted reasons to be concerned with the negative impact a socioemotional program had on an already culturally biased high school classroom (Interview 2). The program attempted to point out differences in hopes of highlighting diversity. Unfortunately, student differences were not only identified but also amplified, causing some of her students to seek refuge in her class room during lunch or free periods (Interview 2). Helen’s developing critical social consciousness was also evident when she told of the empathy she felt for the refugee students who came to this country hoping to find sanctuary, but instead “finding continued hunger along with social ridicule” (Interview 3, para. 51). Another example referred to an orphan in her class who she wanted to adopt so he would not have to experience loneliness and hunger (Interview 1).

Critical consciousness. Helen’s narrative contains incidents regarding social inequities and her attempts to right those inequities. The strongest statement Helen made regarding her awareness of the social conditions of a school environment occurred at the end of her first interview when she said,

My reflection in my practice is more about individual kids than it is about me. It’s about what did that kid need today, what did I not do, what am I going to do differently to serve that same kid better tomorrow, than it is about how I feel
about anything, or what I plan to do in the future as a holistic practice. (Interview 1, para. 106)

Later in that interview, Helen addressed several social issues impacting the students’ personal lives. These issues included gangs and fashion trends. In both cases, Helen assessed the social climate of the school and realized that it was not supportive of the social-emotional differences experienced by the students in her class. Throughout the year, she created an environment in which the students felt safe enough to discuss their concerns without the fear of retribution. Students were comfortable enough to come to Helen amidst “despair and confusion” (Interview 3, para. 49) because her daily commitment to them had proven to be genuine. Their trust and respect of her efforts were visible when they allowed her to comfort them when they grieved over the loss of a member of their group. Their respect for her was also revealed when they conceded to scolding them for inappropriately rebelling against the school dress code over a fashion faux pas that held deeper meaning among a criminal, societal subset of which the students had no knowledge. These instances provided the students an opportunity to “name, honor, and understand their own experiences” (Brookfield, 1995b, p. 208).

Finally, Helen described the hegemonic environment at a private school. The school administration wanted her to mold the diverse students so that they fit within the structure of the school. Helen attempted to oppose the hidden curriculum meant to inculcate students from diverse backgrounds into the American ethos promoted by the school. Even as “this model essentially devalued their home and religious cultures”,
Helen tried to make the students “feel empowered and successful” (Interview 3, para. 156).

Summary: Helen

Helen’s narrative provided examples of changes in her reflective practice and the development of a critical pedagogy over time. The preceding sections presented these changes in terms of Brookfield’s (1995b) lenses of multiple perspectives that he purported to be needed by a teacher in order to develop a critically reflective practice through the process of decision making. This decision making includes feedback from sources from one’s own self-knowledge, the perspective of one’s students, the perspective of one’s colleagues, and the perspective of scholarly literature. Brookfield (1995b) prompted educators to develop a critical pedagogy by examining the feedback for hegemonic examples in order to quell their continued use.

Zell

Zell, a Caucasian female, was in her fifties. She lived with her family in a major metropolitan city in the southeastern United States. Zell reported a southern upbringing in which she was respectful of her elders and they were respectful of her. Zell categorized her upbringing within a stereotypical, middle-class family. She implied an enjoyable school experience overall. Zell stated that her parents respected and supported her educational decisions; in fact, a motivating factor in all her endeavors came from her mother. Zell recounted her mother’s advice to her and her siblings was to always be independent and be able to do for themselves in order to grow. She revealed that self-improvement has remained a passion because of that advice (Field notes 1).
Zell’s journey into the field of education began in a traditional fashion. She entered an undergraduate program in her home state in the 1980s with the goal of becoming a teacher. In her first eight years of classroom teaching, Zell taught second grade, kindergarten, and first grade across five different schools in two eastern states. Most of the moves were opportunistic; other moves were due to unexpected life occurrences. Her husband’s job required multiple moves over the years. During the two years she stayed home, a life event changed her approach to teaching. Zell reported that she had a baby who died within a week. The loss of that child made her appreciate all children, all life, as a precious gift not to be taken for granted. The following year she returned to the classroom. Zell reported that when she became pregnant again, she left teaching for 10 years, partly because she wanted to devote herself to her child, and partly because her husband’s job caused them to move every couple of years. In the early 2000s, she returned to the classroom for two years before finding herself pregnant again. This time Zell stated that she only took eight years off before returning full time to the classroom. At the time of this study, she had been at the same post for the past two years (Interview 3).

Zell reported other changes that transpired in her personal and professional life. Some incidents were supportive to her development as a teacher, whereas other incidents seemed less tangible from her perspective, but were found to support her critical practices. The following sections present Zell’s experiences within Brookfield’s (1995b) lenses of becoming a critically reflective teacher.
Development of Zell’s Autobiographical Practice

When asked about her reflective practice, Zell admitted that she felt it changed since her first year in the classroom. She added, “I have never been afraid of change, and so I find listening objectively is always a good thing. And, it doesn’t mean that you’re gonna buy into it and go whole hog” (Interview 1, para. 16). She considered self-reflection as a helpful process to critique her instructional style and her methods. Zell noted that the most significant changes in her reflective process correlated with a significant change in her personal life. The following paragraphs present examples of her autobiographical reflection at various levels.

Egocentricity. When Zell critiqued her reflective practice that first year, she stated, “I was in survival mode. It took me a while to realize I didn’t know it all” (Interview 1, para. 18). She added, “I was a young woman right out of college. I was self-absorbed. It really was all about me. That was all I had time to worry about” (Interview 2, para. 13). Zell noted that most of her early career was spent on teams where, as the newest member, she was provided lesson plans the team created with the expectation that she would implement those plans as written. As a result, Zell remembered only assessing the lessons of the day on a pass/fail basis.

She stated that she measured her daily lesson critiques more on the progress the students made instead of her instructional methods. Even though she remembered trying to include different modalities into her instructional plans, Zell stated that it was not based upon improving through reflective practice. Instead, she posited, it was to push back and show her independence in the provided lesson plans and required curriculum, as
well as a way to show others that she was capable of applying what she had learned in college. Zell credited her face-to-face Master’s cohort as the critical incident that pushed her to focus on changing her interactions with the curriculum part of the critiquing process of each lesson (Interview 1).

The other side of the table. Zell mentioned the biggest hurdle she had to overcome those first couple of years involved a power struggle regarding parents and the unrealistic expectations she had for them. That first year Zell recalled thinking, “Nothing is more important than education, and if I deem it, then you should stop everything and run to see me” (Interview 1, para. 20). In her second year, Zell began the year with the same perspective. Then, one day the single mom of a kindergartener finally agreed to a face-to-face meeting during a timeframe that Zell had repeatedly requested because the student was falling behind and would not be ready for first grade without additional help. Zell remembered the mother arrived in an agitated state, but Zell continued with the conference. Eventually, Zell found out in the conversation that the mom had two jobs and had not been able to help the child with homework. However, she would have time now because the face-to-face meeting during this requested timeframe had cost her one of her two part time jobs. Zell stated,

That was one moment where I really knew. That solidified anything I had thought, but hadn’t really put into practice up until that point. I mean, that was like when I stepped back and just looked at the family unit and from that time on, I never demanded that parents do this, that, or the other thing, and I always tried
to show some sort of gratitude toward whatever it was they were offering.

(Interview 1, para. 24)

Another example of a parent communication issue, upon which Zell remembered reflecting, occurred recently. Her assignment at the time of this study was at Title 1 school with a large, Spanish-speaking population. She reported that many of the first graders were not returning homework packets. Reminders were sent home, but to no avail. Zell described an epiphany she had after a conversation with her husband. She explained,

I was complaining about not getting the work back, and my husband, who works in the construction industry, reminded be that many of the men understand more English than they may speak . . . but most cannot read English on an academic level well enough to help their children with homework. (Interview 1, para. 26)

In response, Zell searched Internet resources for bilingual homework packets. She related that, as a result of this change in communication with the Spanish speaking parents, the percentage of returned homework packets increased.

Doing the right thing. In the middle of her second year, Zell stated that she began to feel more comfortable with the curriculum and started to tweak the provided lesson plans with her personal touch. Zell explained,

My mom hammered into our heads that you should never compromise yourself for any reason. She felt really strongly that each of us should be our own person, don’t go down for anyone else’s mistakes, make your own decisions, and own them. (Interview 1, para. 59)
By her third year of teaching, Zell entered a Master’s of Education program. Through the stories told by the more experienced teachers in her cohort, Zell obtained vicarious experience regarding behavior management, parent communication, and student issues that she otherwise might never encounter. However, because she was allowed to listen in on the discourse regarding these situations, Zell felt empowered to change her perspectives. She admitted that there were still times when her perspective narrowed when she dealt with parents, but she clarified that her intent was to make the educational experience the best it can be for the student (Interview 1).

Recently, Zell described a scheduling situation that placed math time at the end of the day. The students were not performing as expected. Zell confirmed that she did reflect upon her lessons to ensure presentation of the standard in multiple ways. However, she realized it was the time of day. She decided to alternate her scheduled because if “you don’t feel like it is permitting the children to be where they need to be, then you have to make a professional decision to alter what you are doing in order to have success” (Interview 1, para. 45).

Development of Zell’s Consideration of Student Perspectives

Zell expressed her consideration of the students’ perspective of her instruction as nonexistent at the beginning of her teaching coursework. She believed that teachers should be respectful to all students and do what was necessary to support each one academically based upon the results of assessments in comparison to the grade level standards. During her undergraduate program, Zell learned that it is possible to present instruction in different ways, or modalities, such as drama, music, or movement. She
also learned that different students may respond more favorably to one modality over another, and making that determination could direct educators to the selection of an instructional style that would increase the student’s academic success. However, her coursework did not concentrate on developing that type of differentiation, so she stored the knowledge for future reference (Interview 1). Zell’s narrative excerpts regarding the student perspective follow.

What about the student? Zell admitted that during the majority of her first year, she did not focus on her instructional planning in a way that Brookfield (1995b) would consider critical. It did not matter to her, she recalled, where it came from or who it was intended for, as long as it correlated with the topic she was supposed to be teaching. Reflecting on her lessons at the end of the day included whether or not some of the students completed the assignment, or if they simply seemed to have no clue what was going on. As far as she remembered, that was as deep as she critiqued her work as the leader of the class. When asked during an interview if she considered the students’ perspective in her instructional planning or reflection, she responded, “No! I was way more bossy back then. It was my way all the way!” (Interview 1, para. 71). When she spoke of her reflective process during her novice years as a teacher, she mentioned that she began to incorporate differentiated levels of academic work when planning lessons because she did not want struggling learners to become less motivated. However, Zell stated that differentiating her lessons was an action she understood to be necessary to hone her skills as a teacher. Based upon the theories promoting these methods, she knew
the students would benefit, but that was not the catalyst for her actions until much later in her career (Interviews 1, 3).

During her novice years, Zell stated that she reflected more on how her social interactions with the students affected their emotional efficacy than how her instructional choices suited the needs of the students. She reported that her first assignment after college was teaching a second-grade class. She recalled a feeling of efficacy as she approached the position. A negative childhood experience from her own second-grade year influenced her interactions with the students in this second-grade class. Zell was intent on considering the emotions and self-worth of each student throughout the day (Interview 1). Her goal was not to bend to their preferences, to find out what engaged them in the learning process, or to get them to like her. In her opinion, it was up to her to be a role model for social actions and assist the students in building self-esteem and efficacy in their role in society (Interview 2).

Social awareness over instructional style. In her first year, Zell recalled an “eye-opening experience” (Interview 1, para. 11) with a nontraditional student. This incident was the first challenge to the assumptions she held about negative student behavior resulting from a negative home environment. To this she analogized, “You can’t judge a book by its cover” (Field notes 3). She reported that it was uncommon in the 1980s for a student with an emotional-behavior disorder to be placed in a general education classroom for part of the day. Zell described more of the student’s situation and resulting behaviors. He lived with his grandparents because both of his parents were incarcerated. At the age of eight, he was out late at night roaming this small, rural town. At one point,
he was caught breaking into the school. After checking his records, Zell found that this child had only recently developed these unseemly behaviors, even though his grandparents were devoted to helping the child make correct decisions. This situation provided Zell with what she called an “early lesson in family dynamics” (Interview 1, para. 14). Zell realized how closely correlated outward behaviors are to the social-emotional situations of the students and how uncorrelated those behaviors may be to the actions and intentions of the caregiver (Interview 1).

The next few years, Zell noted that her knowledge of various instructional methods expanded as she conducted her Master’s coursework. She acknowledged that the program and the changing school culture contributed to an increased openness and acceptance of changing methods and procedures from an adult, power-centered classroom to a more child-centered classroom. However, Zell did not consider her reflective practice at the time to consider the students’ perspectives. Instead, she recalled that planning included adults devising ways the students could participate, or interact, with the standards (Interview 1).

Several times Zell commented on the part she would play in the instructional decision making during those novice and intermediate years. At one point she said, “I wanted the kids to own their education. I wanted it to be intrinsic . . . so they could understand why they needed to learn it” (Interview 2, para. 16), and “I took it to mean that because we were expecting the kids to have connectivity and understand how things were interrelated, they had to become integral part of the classroom” (Interview 2, para. 22). Additionally, Zell characterized herself as the decision-maker when she said,
Seeing how children feel when they . . . have those hands-on experiences and knowing it is up to me to create the environment that allows that to happen at its fullest potential—that’s pretty cool. I think . . . that my changing knowledge of theory, looking at the curriculum differently, and how I impart it . . . helped to generate a positive change in the classroom environment. (Interview 1, para. 24)

Zell’s desire to promote efficacy among learners while individualizing the work as much as possible has continued to this day. However, Zell cited changes in her reflective process that occurred after her first hiatus from teaching. The next section details these events.

The view from the other side. When Zell reported that she took time away from teaching three different times, the first was primarily due to her husband’s relocation, and the other two were to stay home and raise her children. Zell made it clear that while family was a top priority for her, these gaps in her career were not a throwback to the cultural obligations of women of the 1950s. Instead, a change in perspective that occurred during her first hiatus prompted these gaps (Interviews 1, 3).

When asked when she felt she began to consider the students’ perspectives, Zell revealed a very personal experience stating, “When my husband and I lost our first child. I had medically documented miscarriages prior to this pregnancy . . . and because of those, I had maintained a very healthy lifestyle” (Interview 1, para. 78); therefore, the complications were unexpected. Zell then explained that her son was born premature. At 24 weeks, Zell lost all her amniotic fluid and went into the hospital to be monitored. She found the events of that time on hospital bedrest relevant to her change in perspective
because as she followed every directive given to her by the medical team, other high-risk patients did not. She said,

There I was doing everything I could; I did not deviate . . . and a lady down the hall snuck off the floor, with her husband’s help, to go smoke a cigarette. And then about two hours later she went into labor and her husband got irate.

(Interview 1, para. 79)

At 28 weeks, Zell delivered her son, but because his lungs lost the protection of the amniotic sac, his lungs developed emphysema, and he died after five days in the NICU. She recalled that her whole perspective about children changed, not only because of the loss of her child, but also because of the stark contrast of her attempts to sacrifice everything in order to maintain a life compared to the family down hall who appeared to her to do the opposite (Interview 1). Zell’s explanation of change in perspective continued,

The first thing I got from that was that children are not a given, they are a gift . . . you should listen to them intently, and you should value them as a person.

They’re not someone to be instructed and dictated to . . . . They have little minds that think and they have valuable ideas . . . and they can contribute if allowed . . . if you give them the opportunity and the platform, they will show you amazing things. I just became so not Type A after that. There’s nothing more disconcerting than having something happen that’s not in the natural order.

(Interview 1, para. 80)
Zell related that upon her return to the classroom, she became more cognizant of her students when planning. She continued to implement hands-on activities and presented lessons in multiple ways, but she also focused on building a community of learners. With three groups of sixth graders, Zell recalled her attempt to be a respectful role model and provide a place in which the students could practice respect. Within this safe space, students provided Zell with input for lessons without fear of retaliation (Interview 3).

The next year began with a move, the birth of another son, and a 10-year hiatus. Zell again stated that the catalyst to be a stay-at-home mom was not seated in anti-feminism. Instead, she referred to her state of mind after the recent loss of her first child. She remembered an overwhelming urge to stay with her son to help him absorb all the world had to offer. Unfortunately, he was soon diagnosed with a sensory integration disorder. Zell recalled that he spent six years in occupational therapy to help him become familiar with his body and its needs, so that he could attempt to be in control and experience less frequent meltdowns due to overstimulation. Zell noted that watching the world interact with her son when he was not in control made her realize that, as a teacher, there may be students who exhibit behaviors that are outside the norm. Now, with this life experience, she knew that in her next classroom, she must not react as she had in the past. Teachers, she said, must not act as if the student is not “coming to class every day to thwart their instructional choices” (Interview 1, para. 85). Instead, Zell synthesized her home experience and a recent professional development course by stating,
Most kids are just reacting to the environmental input, not trying to act as the input. Granted, there may be that one kid, but mostly it’s a reaction. I learned from mostly from interactions with my son at home . . . . I found myself having to explain it all to his teachers at school. They could be so unaccepting because they didn’t get to know his heart or the motivation for his reaction . . . because no, this child was not born to be the bane of your existence. (Interview 1, para. 87)

For Zell the experience provided her with a unique insight. She said, “I know now, that if I’ve done my job right, they [the students] are reacting positively to my instructional choices” (Interview 3, para. 3).

Zell returned to a first-grade classroom for two more years before leaving again to raise her next child. She recalled the academic extremes of the students from one year to the next, yet finding a way to consider their needs. In coming back to the classroom after 10 years, Zell realized her previous first-grade resources did not match the new standards well. Schools were just beginning to get Internet access, but it was mainly for email or for teachers to locate informative webpages for students to read. Instructional sharing websites were limited, so she relied upon her teammates for quick access to instructional resources. That was when Zell recalled her previous epiphanies. She noticed the students were not reacting as expected to the instructional options her teammates provided, so she reflected on the academic needs of this group. She noted they were academically above grade level. Zell described them as privileged, inquisitive explorers who welcomed a challenge. As a result, she relinquished as much control as she dared. She rearranged the room and extended the provided curriculum to include a greater
number of open-ended options. Zell noted that the students’ reactions became manageable and the work exceeded expectations (Interview 3).

The next year, the students had many academic gaps. Zell again made efforts to model respectful dialogue and redirect dissonance in order to create a safe space in which the students could be incorrect and still feel like they were progressing. For this class, Zell had to slow down the pace and remediate often. However, she still kept things challenging and open-ended to allow the students to feel in control of their work instead of always trying to find the one best answer that would please the teacher. The students’ academic gaps limited some choices with the lessons, but she noted that the choices she could make derived from the children’s preferences. For instance, if her class did not like to sing, then she would not incorporate songs into her lessons as frequently as a teacher in another class. In addition, if a provided lesson called for a song, Zell would look for an alternative presentation mode in order to keep the students engaged and thinking (Interview 3).

When Zell left teaching the next time, she did not stay away completely. After her youngest started school, she began to substitute and worked as a paraprofessional. She recognized how much had changed in just the few years she had been out of the classroom saying, “Electronic devices are as common as notebooks and pencils . . . and the students, even if they don’t know how, they expect me to use it and to give them the chance to learn” (Field notes 3, p. 4).

When she returned to the classroom, Zell continued her habit of modeling respect to build a safe haven in which to take chances. She stated, “The way I speak to them . . .
and my actions, set the tone for the classroom” (Interview 1, para. 63). Although most of
her class each year attended kindergarten, she still described her recent students as part of
a developmental first-grade class of disadvantaged learners with wide gaps in their core
knowledge base. They were not just missing content—they were missing experiences
that most teachers, and curriculum writers, might take for granted.

In education, teachers are urged to use a hook. This might be an analogy, a
reference to a book, or even a reference to a personal experience—all based upon
personal experiences. In Zell’s classroom, the majority of the students were Hispanic
from homes where Spanish was the primary language and the parents’ culture embraced.
Common American academic references to Goldilocks and the Three Bears or The Three
Little Pigs were not part of the students’ knowledge base any more than soccer was part
of hers. She found that hooks in shared lessons that referenced farm animals, the local
amusement park, or the fairground that was only two miles away to be out of reach for
these two groups.

In order to meet the students where they were, Zell had class discussions the way
she did during her Master’s program so that these students could at least collect
experiences vicariously (Interview 3). Zell noted that the students’ situations made them
vulnerable in more than one way. First, the students were immersed in an unfamiliar
academic world. Next, Zell explained, “As a child, you’re putting yourself out on the
line because you’re being asked to explain yourself at time when you may not have the
right answer . . . you risk being ridiculed by other students . . . and possibly your teacher”
(Interview 1, para. 64).
The discussions made Zell aware that technology motivated the groups, and she used that to her advantage when planning lessons. Additional interactions provided Zell with the knowledge that the students experienced confusion and frustration with the open-ended process: they did not know where to begin, what resources to use, or where to stop. Zell found that a familiar routine helped the students to focus on the content instead of a “bunch of new procedures” (Interview 2, para. 62). Establishing routines allowed Zell to implement open-ended instructional activities, such as STEM and project-based learning. She admitted that she did not follow the sample lessons exactly because the students did not have the content background. She noted, however, that once she found a procedure the students could manage independently, she was able to conduct similar activities. With pride, she stated that by the end of the year, she just had to inform the students of the object of the activity and the location of the new supplies, and then sit back and watch. Her only interventions were student requests to help cut heavy cardboard, for example, to the size they indicated because their blunt four inch scissors were unable to do so (Interviews 2, 3).

As Zell’s narrative about her experiences with students ended, she commented that student feedback was vital to her growth as a teacher. She noted that some of the feedback was nonverbal and based upon the students’ reaction to the lesson. However, she pointed out that the class discussions to recap the lesson, along with the simple asides to a neighbor, proved just as insightful. Were it not for the bonds of trust, respect, and acceptance that were established at the beginning of each year, Zell admitted that her
feedback may have been limited to what the students thought she wanted to hear and in return, the growth of all involved would have been stunted (Interviews 1, 3).

Development of Zell’s Collaboration with Colleagues

Over the course of 13 years in the classroom, Zell noted a variety of experiences with her colleagues. Some were positive. Some were negative. Some were simply void. However, the advice of Zell’s mother to remain an independent learner allowed Zell to be both a good follower and a good leader.

Tolerance versus team culture. Zell described her interactions with the team in her first year in the classroom as tolerable. She did not consider them to be role models. If she needed guidance regarding procedures, their reactions ranged from tolerance to defensive. They would share resources and materials when necessary, but did not go out of their way. Within that culture, she relied upon her ability to be an independent learner (Interview 1).

When she changed schools the next year, she found herself surrounded by a staff culture in which everyone was learning to do their job a new way due to innovative programs and staff development. The team planned together. Over the next two years, the team learned to consider the varied experiences and learning styles of the students. Zell mentioned that during her time at her second school, she began her Master’s program with cohort members who were much older. From their stories, she gained the greatest input regarding behavior, parent relations, and constructing a learning environment that was child centered (Interviews 1, 3).
Collaborative planning. Zell described most of her experiences with her colleagues in other schools as interactions in terms of collaborative planning. However, when prompted to provide more regarding the dialogue that transpired when she and her teammates would plan together, her description was limited to sharing lesson plans or dividing up the lessons to be planned and shared. Zell noted that the lessons were prepared up to the point of locating and sharing resources. Occasionally, the lessons provided alternative modalities as options, but they did not always have a purpose beyond initial engagement or hook (Field notes 2; Interview 3).

According to Zell, her years as a coteacher provided her the most opportunities for in-depth collaboration. She described her c-teaching experience as an important time in her career. She stated that she could expand her strengths because she did not have to exert excess energy researching other content areas where she felt less efficacy. This allowed the general education teacher and Zell to focus on the content and children from different perspectives to fill any instructional gaps (Interview 3).

Development of Zell’s Consult of Theoretical Literature

Zell recalled exposure to a variety of instructional theories prior to the No Child Left Behind movement of the early 2000s. In the 1980s, she recalled the popularity of using thematic units to impart specific grade-level curriculum. Some schools were more innovative than others were in their own county due to the expectation levels of the parents and willingness of the staff to exceed expectations. Working with the variety of curricula from different counties, Zell reported on those that led her through her overall
changes that honed her choice of behavior management styles to provide the most respectful interactions with students of all ages (Interviews 1, 2, 3).

From thematic units to innovation. Zell described the theory of teaching she acquired from her undergraduate education program in the 1980s as one that revolved around instruction in isolated units. She expounded on this thought: “There was not connectivity or an expectation to integrate the curriculum. Perhaps they were doing it in other places, but it wasn’t a prominent idea . . . at that time” (Interview 2, para. 2), except in the thematic units of kindergarten. Zell also referred to the concept of different modes of learning introduced in her special education courses. However, during her student teaching, she experienced topic guides sorted by grade level and possibly a purchased curriculum, but the instructional scope or sequence a teacher utilized to present the topics were entirely at the teacher’s discretion. There was no reason to teach with different modalities, expect perhaps in remediation (Interview 2).

Zell noted that the prominent delivery method of instruction at the time would be considered transmissive today. The students were expected to look, listen, and learn. Her first school used thematic units in Kindergarten. In Zell’s opinion, it made it easier to include different modalities here and there. She recalled that she did not attempt to use many modalities for the same unit, but instead used different ones for different units (Interviews 1, 3).

As Zell recounted her early encounters with pedagogical theory, she recalled with favor the information regarding behavior management that she studied in her special education courses. Even as a young adult, she understood that keeping tiny bodies safe
and social in an enclosed space would be a bigger challenge than attempting to impart content knowledge. She remembered thinking that the special education behavior management techniques would actually benefit all students. Ultimately, she felt that if she showed respect to the students, they would follow her example (Interviews 1, 3).

Zell told of her move to a new school her second year of teaching. This school was closer to home, but it put her in a new county with new experiences. An influx of military parents prompted a change in the school’s instructional style. Zell recalled that the parents were from different regions of the nation and familiar with more innovative teaching. The administrator accepted every opportunity for professional development and curricula afforded to him by the influx of federal dollars. Zell remembered her introduction to the whole-language movement, which, in her description, integrated and synthesized the material for the students and continued for the next two years she served at the school. It was during this time that she began to work on her Master’s degree. She reported a significant difference in the theories, which promoted a more integrated approach to instruction than that she was exposed to just three years earlier. Zell remembered the updated theory suggested, “Children should be heard and listened to as opposed to quiet and not seen or heard . . . and that you really try to engage with the students and show them how this affects their learning or their life later on” (Interview 2, para. 3).

Pulling from real life. Zell reported little change in her experiences with scholarly literature for the next four years in the classroom. Instead, the next two school systems she worked for provided no curriculum or were content to use the existing materials that
did not fit the changing student demographic. Consequently, she had to pull from her prior experiences with curriculum and theory. Reflecting back to her special education coursework helped Zell in her ninth year of teaching when a group of sixth graders reminded her of the importance of understanding the root cause of a behavior (Interview 3).

After a 10-year hiatus spent raising a child, Zell reported that her experiences of taking her child to occupational therapy and working with him to control his reflexes helped her to identify students who had difficulty controlling their bodies. This knowledge helped her realize that cognition is not the basis for all behavior. Zell implemented concepts from a field outside of education by adapting her schedule to allow her first graders time for muscular input in addition to cognitive input. In her last few years of teaching, Zell noted that she participated in professional development courses regarding brain development and brain stimulation for students in the classroom. She reported that the concept of experiential learning had an impact on her instruction. She also reported a positive increase in student independence as she gradually relinquished control of behavior in the classroom (Interviews 2, 3).

Zell’s Development towards Critical Reflection

When educators engage in critical reflection, they are not just assessing what adjustments to make to lesson or evaluating the amount of remedial attention a student requires. To reflect critically requires an educator to assess holistically the contextual balance of the social, political, and academic factors affecting his, or her, instructional choices. This level of reflection requires educators to be develop an awareness of the
assumptions they hold and be willing to confront and change those assumptions, especially those that detrimentally sway the balance of power. The following sections report Zell’s developing reflective practice and the experiences she overcame.

Naïve-transitive consciousness. Zell’s narrative contained two examples that fit into the category of transmissive pedagogy. One example lists common circumstances experienced by a first-year teacher. Another provides an example of how lived experiences can correlate with a negative outcome. Together, they illustrate the nonlinear nature of reflective practice.

During Zell’s first year of teaching, she reported that she was “motivated to do good by the students” (Interview 3; Timeline). She acknowledged a strong connection to behavior management theories and strategies she grasped during her undergraduate teacher training. Even in her twenties, Zell indicated that she understood the importance of maintaining order for the safety of the children. Zell admitted she was overwhelmed by the daily demands of the position. As a result, she accepted any resources without question that her teammates were willing to share. She described her team as something akin to an archipelago because each class functioned as islands swapping information and lesson plans like natural resources. However, she divulged that her focus that first year was not on the quality of the lessons nor how well they fit the students’ academic or personal needs. She described her pedagogy as one way: my way (Interviews 1, 2).

In her sixth year, Zell reported briefly on a personal crisis that sent her back into survival mode. She divulged that she divorced her first husband of two years at the end of the prior school year and indicated an innate need to flee her memory-filled
surroundings. She was able to secure a job out of state. She was again in a first grade classroom. At first, she took comfort in the laissez-faire culture of the school while she rebuilt her own levels of efficacy (Interview 3).

Developing social consciousness. As educators awaken to the political and social conditions that control their expressive choices in the classroom, an awkward inclination to take action against the suppressive factors rises. Zell told of her first experience with inequality in the classroom that occurred when she was only in second grade. It appeared in the form of unnecessary, public condemnation when a classmate was chastised in front of the class. Zell recalled feeling humiliated even though she had only been a witness. She knew no action could undo the incident, but in her mind, it could have been prevented if the teacher had just talked to the student (Interview 1).

During Zell’s second through fourth years of teaching, she taught at school with a unique cultural dynamic fueled by an influx of military families. Here she began to understand that there were many different family dynamics and that a student’s level of efficacy and school success could depend on home-school communication. At this school, she was also introduced to the concept of considering the future while planning the present. For Zell, that idea resonated in her reflection of her instructional style, student interaction, and acceptance of innovative theory during her Master’s program (Interview 1).

The next two years Zell reported a unique opportunity to peek behind the political veil. She was hired for a new position for which there was no curriculum or support available in the county. During her novice years, Zell noted she always had an intended
curriculum and resources from which to glean an example. She recalled focusing on the students because many already had their names penciled on the subsequent year’s class list as retained. She felt this status quo attitude was unfair and the students deserved the same opportunities to fill their academic and experiential gaps as those in other schools (Interviews 1, 3).

Zell detailed how one of her glimpses into policy created an awareness of the school’s status quo administrative culture. She questioned the curriculum of the grade level below her and the origin of the severe gaps of one-third of her students. She was assured by the administration that a 33% failure rate for the grade level was normal. Additionally, her administrator told her it was customary to have a rehearsed lesson ready, so he could give her high marks on her evaluation. Due to her discourse with the administration, the next year she was placed in the lower grade level about which she had voiced a concern and tasked with creating a curriculum that would better prepare the students for the next grade (Interview 1).

Critical consciousness. Zell’s narrative provided examples in which her awareness of inequalities prompted a change in her perspective. Most of these examples involved the student. Zell described her initial goal as an educator to be one who was always improving. Later, she realized that acquiring more theory or becoming more efficient with her schedule was not going to help students succeed in school.

Zell described how her drive to improve herself prompted enrollment in a Master’s program. As part of that experience, Zell engaged in discourse with veteran teachers from other areas of the state. Those conversations included scenarios of student
interactions and assessments, as well as how, or if, to implement the newer instructional theories, such as an integrated curriculum. Zell felt this discourse within the cohort was unique because most “peers don’t challenge each other to think about things differently” (Interview 2, para. 27) because they are in the same environment. As a result, Zell embraced the proposed concept of an integrated curriculum and implemented it often. Zell commented, “It was a profound moment for me. I had a kind of perfect storm of new information that led to a different way to explore changing theory, look differently at the curriculum, and how to impart it” (Interview 2, para. 24) so that the students could make a connection that would promote understanding. Her program experience solidified Zell’s hope that this process would become intrinsic to the students so that they might own their present and future education and not be dependent solely upon the information imparted in front of them by book or teacher (Interview 2).

In later years, Zell’s belief of appropriate implementation of instruction to ensure a successful interaction with students was challenged twice. In both situations, the school system provided no curriculum resources that aligned with the grade level of the students or the goal of the pilot classroom she was hired to staff. Zell was fortunate to have prior teaching experience at both grade levels. She reported a high level of efficacy in her knowledge of developmental theory and of developmental levels of students in the age range. Her concerns involved the administration. She had to convince one to abandon the school’s old attitude that embraced that status quo and the other to expand the new piloted curriculum, which embraced more recent theories she learned about in her Master’s program. Zell felt that the administrators’ choices, not to change or expand the
programs, created a type of social injustice for which she advocated. In at least one case, Zell and her coteacher convinced the administration to roll out the new scope and sequence to the entire grade. Many of the teachers at the grade level opposed the change. Zell remembered, “They were not happy. Most had been there for a while and weren’t happy with the way the school’s demographic had changed. They seemed to be doing everything in their power to maintain their version of normal” (Interview 2, para. 39). Zell reported that most of the teachers at the grade level did not return the next year (Interview 2).

Finally, Zell’s most recent epiphany led to the most complete transformation of her practice. A conversation with peers after a professional development session sparked a change in Zell’s thinking about how students view her and her instructional choices, as well as how those perceptions impact the students’ motivation. She reported that for most of her career she believed that it did not matter if students liked her. It was her responsibility to present the information and the students’ responsibility to at “least listen to the lesson, and then decide if they wanted to keep it or not” (Interview 2, para. 68). In the session, she learned that “if students are not engaged, they are not learning . . . and in order for students to engage in the lesson when I am the focal point, I have to have something they want or need” (Interview 2, para. 68), and it is the responsibility of the teacher to investigate what that might be. Moreover, that something has to be on their current level of understanding in order for the child to first recognize the proverbial hook and grasp it (Interview 2).
As the year ended, Zell attempted to implement what she learned. She mentioned that she had already inquired about her students’ lives. She felt it promoted trust and respect. She implemented the ritual each year since her self-centeredness led to a parent losing her job. Therefore, she selected some open-ended STEM activities that aligned closely with the group work procedures. Doing this, she noted, provided an interesting novelty she hoped would grab their attention, while providing a new procedure that matched their current level of understanding. She recalled that she tried, as the theory suggested, to be engaging while she explained the purpose of the activity. After the students completed the projects, Zell requested feedback from her first graders. She instructed to students to be honest with her because she would use the responses to become a better teacher. She commented that most of the students provided at least one positive item to keep in her instructional plans and at least one item to change (Interview 2).

**Summary: Zell**

Zell’s narrative provided examples of permanence and change in her practice over time. The examples aligned with Brookfield’s (1995b) concept of reflecting upon one’s instructional practice using multiple lenses to develop a critically reflective practice. Zell’s narratives disclosed a dramatic change early on regarding her students’ perspectives and in her own assumptions about family dynamics. Her narratives provided examples of her propensity to advocate for the others.
Nathaniel

Nathaniel, a Caucasian male, was in his thirties. He lived in a major metropolitan city in the southeastern United States with his husband and their adopted child. Nathaniel admitted that his current lifestyle would be considered unconventional when compared to his upbringing. He reported growing up in a traditional, middle class, southern family in a small, rural town with stereotypical southern values and stereotypical southern expectations of their menfolk. In an attempt to conform to these expectations, he went to college to become a lawyer (Interview 1).

He recalled a variety of factors shaped his decision. For example, numerous family members commented on his quick retorts with comments like, “Wow boy, with talk like that, you are going to be a lawyer someday” (Field notes 3, p. 2). Another pressure to conform came from the fact that most of the men in his family attended one of the top two colleges in the state to become lawyers, join law enforcement, or become business executives. Nathaniel could not confirm if his choice in prelaw as a major was based solely upon expectations, or if it was some form of missionary zeal to bring justice to a world he perceived to be unjust based upon the struggles he dealt with in his youth. Nathaniel did confirm that his experiences greatly influenced his worldview. Later, those experiences influenced his actions (Field notes 3).

Nathaniel reported that his struggles began in kindergarten. He was not interested in the confines of the institutional day. He never took naps because he did not want to sleep. Instead of just lying there quietly, Nathaniel would question the teachers and
disturb the napping students nearby. The teachers solved this by allowing Nathaniel to go out to recess with another grade level while his class napped (Interview 1).

By first grade, his disinterest in the curriculum opened him up to distractibility. He was an intelligent child who completed his work faster than other children. The off-task behavior that ensued got him in trouble. He was often told he was “too big for his britches” (Interview 1, para. 14). His attempts to understand his world through a line of questions frustrated his teachers. They perceived the questions as impertinent and sent him out of the classroom as punishment. Nathaniel stated that the teachers of the 1970s and 1980s expected elementary students to do as they were told. Thus, when they sent Nathaniel to stand outside the classroom door as punishment, they never thought he would walk away (Interview 1).

Looking back, Nathaniel posited that the school’s layout contributed to his trouble. There were no inside hallways; instead, the elementary classroom doors opened to an outdoor, covered breezeway. Consequently, once he was outside, he decided that he would rather walk home, or to his grandmother’s house, to pass the rest of the day instead of just standing there in the breezeway. Nathaniel remembered he left campus and began the walk home multiple times. Although home was a mile away, he never made it that far. As soon as the teacher realized he was not outside the door, she would put in a call to the sheriff’s department, and one of the officers would find him within a couple of blocks from school and return him to campus. His repeated trips off campus resulted in expulsion from first grade (Field notes 3; Interview 1).
Later, Nathaniel received a diagnosis of extreme ADHD. Additional testing revealed his academic functioning was in the gifted range. Treatment controlled his ADHD, and he began to enjoy school. He recalled that his gifted inquiry habits continued to afford him to receive more scolding than most students his age, but the ADHD diagnosis and gifted test results in his permanent records provided other teachers with the necessary information to locate resources to assist him (Field notes 3; Interview 1).

Nathaniel noted that social expectations of school were difficult for him. He recalled that he always knew he was different, but he was not able to label it until he was older. He reported how much he felt like an outsider because he did not feel he fit in, but his grandmother became his “touchstone in the world” (Interview 2, para. 123). It was she who always accepted his giftedness in a way that others did not. When she passed away after he turned 16, Nathaniel reported that he became emotionally detached from the rest of the world. “Looking back, I just stopped feeling . . . . I was very stoic” (Interview 2, para. 125). He continued to explain that he became very compartmentalized. He would complete the tasks he needed to do, and then he was ready to go home. Nathaniel noted that his lack of emotion affected his ability to understand when his parents, or others, did not do the things he felt they should. He admitted that his desire to emotionally connect to others did not return until he adopted his son (Interview 2).

As a college freshman, Nathaniel felt compelled to find a career to help others. At first, he was going to fulfill his father’s expectations and become a lawyer. Upon
attending his first prelaw class, he realized that his personality did not fit in with the status quo. He changed his major seven times in two years from prelaw to theatre arts to psychology, among others. During that time, Nathaniel took a required psychology class. He recalled his perception of the field was that psychologists helped adults who had mental issues as a result of some incident. He soon learned about child psychology and felt encouraged that the members of this field attempted to help children of all ages, and the adults in their life, to navigate critical concerns. He learned that this field helped children after they reached their limit, but Nathaniel wanted to help children before their circumstances caused the undue stress he experienced as a child. He remembered the conversation with this father about changing his major from prelaw to psychology was difficult. He had to do it again after he realized that the field of education offered a way for him to fulfill his desire to be an example to adults of a successful student once considered “troubled” and to advocate for children (Field notes 3; Interview 1).

As a college junior, Nathaniel entered the education program. He admitted that a deep depression onset led to an eating disorder that caused him to drop out of school and return home. During this time, he bravely announced to his family that he was gay. Later, he began to search for his passion (Interview 3).

For three years, Nathaniel worked at different jobs. He was still interested in education, so he substituted. Nathaniel was able to substitute in his home town in all grades K-12. He enjoyed it because he was able to see how different teachers ran their classrooms at different levels. He was able to view the classes from a different perspective and often identify the shy, overlooked student or allocate time to keep up
with a gifted student’s discourse beyond that regularly allotted by the teacher. Nathaniel realized that he still had a passion for teaching. He reported that his preference to teach elementary students seemed to stem from the desire to help determine what was going in a child’s life to keep him or her from going astray the way he did in first grade (Field notes 3; Interview 1). Nathaniel recounted that it was then that he was able to return to college, confident and secure in himself, and his decision to teach (Field notes 3).

Nathaniel provided few details about his personal life or the ways events influenced his professional life. He mentioned that the only obvious links between choices in his personal and professional life were in his decisions to move from one position to another. He reported that his first teaching position was in his hometown where he taught for three years. Following that, he moved to the town where his first husband lived and taught in that town for four years. Eventually, they divorced and Nathaniel met someone else. He moved again to the metropolitan area where his second husband worked, secured a job teaching across town, and commuted for four years. He and his husband adopted a toddler during his last year at that school. This added responsibility, paired with a unique weather event that stranded Nathaniel across town for most of the night, prompted him to relocate to a teaching position closer to home. He searched for a position that would provide the potential for their son to attend the same school where he taught, and that has come to fruition (Interview 2).

During his last interview, Nathaniel admitted that over the course of his career he has been able to maintain a long-term connection with only two or three people. He stated that he did not mean to insinuate that he disliked his other co-workers. However,
throughout most of his career, he rarely allowed the events in his social world to interfere with his professional tasks. He was able to compartmentalize well (Interview 3).

Nathaniel felt his life experiences contributed to his journey as an educator. The link between some of the experiences recounted above and his professional growth are more obvious than others are. The following sections present Nathaniel’s experiences within the themes related to Brookfield’s (1995b) lenses of becoming a critically reflective teacher.

Development of Nathaniel’s Autobiographical Practice

When asked to reflect on why he wanted to be a teacher, Nathaniel expressed his “desire to find what’s going to help keep a kid . . . from going astray. Whether it’s gifted, behavior or home environment and how we can counteract some of that at school” (Interview 1, para. 6). Nathaniel admitted that this desire was seated in his childhood experiences. He did not want other students to feel ostracized as he did because he communicated differently (Interview 1).

Nathaniel divulged that, although he was not the type of person to mix his personal life in with his professional life, all of his career changes were due to events in his personal life. The career changes, he noted, led to changes in his practice. His personal experiences affected his instructional practice and helped him generate a balance (Field notes 3).

Nathaniel attributed his early desire to have all the answers on his own experiences as a learner. He noted that he always viewed himself as an outsider who was treated differently because he was an undiagnosed child with ADHD. After he received
treatment, he was found to be a gifted learner. His teacher that year taunted him sarcastically if he did not answer the questions or if his desk was not perfectly neat. He felt that his social awkwardness did not allow him an avenue to discuss it, and it pushed him to focus on completing all tasks to perfection (Field notes 3). He explained that his grandmother had been the only person with whom he had a deep emotional connection and felt comfortable asking questions. After her death, he stated that he became extremely stoic, both personally and academically. He had to rely upon himself. If he had questions, he knew he must find the answer. In college, he had what he described as a nervous breakdown. He took time off to discover what he wanted to do with his life and his place in it. For him, only he could provide the answers for this life experience (Interview 3).

The answer man. Nathaniel pointed that it was no wonder his early experiences with reflection on his practice focused on the completed tasks. He worked in a school where the curriculum was scripted to the minute. There was no need to worry about miscommunicating the point of the lesson or forgetting a key element of learning. It was all in the script. He described himself as prone to perfectionism—a trait he blamed on his gifted attributes. At the end of the lesson, he only reflected to ensure he covered the script and the assigned activities. He noted that he did not reflect upon the emotional side of the lesson, like engagement. Few areas of the curriculum afforded Nathaniel an opportunity to vary his practice. He recalled his consistent efforts to ensure that he did not ostracize the students as he was ostracized in elementary school. However, Nathaniel
did state that his early interactions with students were usually curt retorts about the correctness of an answer (Interview 2).

Nathaniel found that in the blended classroom he had to reflect upon how best to communicate with the students for whom the curriculum was not working. Pulling from his own metaphoric learning style, he realized that many of the students required analogies to help them understand the language of the scripted lessons. This was both familiar and nerve racking because he had not learned about using analogies in his coursework, yet it was a strategy he used himself as a learner. Nathaniel recalled his continued reflection on his ability to be the best at whatever he was assigned. He strove to always have the answers and not depend on others any more than necessary. Nathaniel reported that always having the answer gave him a feeling of fulfillment because it allowed him to feel independent and self-sufficient. He noted that his innate ability to provide the answer was not always well received by his colleagues any more than it had been by his peers. Nathaniel stated that, at the time, he did not bother to reflect upon why his coworkers were not happy that he had provided an answer to their question (Interview 1).

Nathaniel recalled that each time he moved or assumed role in leadership, his tendency was to fall back to this mode. He noted that each situation could have provided insight into the overbearing approach he used to communicate. In his personal life, Nathaniel divulged that he had moved to a new town, married, and divorced. Although he developed social connections with his coworkers, he did not recall engaging in
reflective discourse with his peers about flaws in his instructional practice (Field notes 3; Interview 2).

Asking questions. Nathaniel recalled a shift in his approach when he changed schools after marrying again. Even after such an extreme change, he realized that he was a social introvert and an academic extrovert. However, instead of always being ready with an answer, he became a question asker. The same questions he asked himself as he sought answers, he now asked others in an attempt to include them in his process (Interview 1).

Nathaniel’s narrative revealed that his move to the city motivated him to question his work. He recalled his thinking shifted from “Am I doing my best?” to “Should I be getting better at that as a way to benefit the students?” (Interview 1, para. 70). The shift, he stated, moved away from self-gratification and toward authentically serving the students by questioning the curriculum in front of him. It was an important shift in his status when advocating for students, which dropped from “I am the advocate” to “This child has an advocate” (Interview 1, para. 72) as he began to realize that advocating for children was not about him. Nathaniel confessed that, although his questioning phase began because he refused to accept the status quo, his constant questioning began to get out of control. It became so contentious a few years ago that he made a colleague cry because he kept berating her with questions. Once again, a colleague brought to his attention that it while it was appropriate and responsible to point out the flaw, he did not need to advocate every detail (Interview 1).
Finding a balance. Nathaniel stated that he no longer strove to be called an expert. He correlated this change with the adoption of his son, which occurred just before his most recent coaching position. As much as he thought he knew, he realized he had more to learn about children. For that, he would have to ask many questions of many people. He stated that he was basically forced to bond with another human in a way he had not done since his grandmother was alive. This pair bond “made him want to be viewed as a person again” (Interview 2, para. 141).

In the past, Nathaniel recalled, he always sought to stay connected with those who needed an advocate. Now, he was emotionally open and willing to take notice of the emotional cues of others and respond within social norms. He detailed how, through bonding with his son, he came to understand the importance of having students identify with him as a person when he visited a classroom, “whereas in the past, I don’t think being viewed as a person was all that important to me” (Interview 2, para. 141).

Nathaniel also described his awareness of others in terms of the way he interacted with students. He explained that in the past, he was more likely to point out the errors and volunteer solutions or resources to fix the problem. In comparison, he admitted that he listened more, and he was less likely to correct students’ errors before they asked for help. Prior to adopting his son, Nathaniel recalled that people described his tone of voice as intense and even sarcastic. Now, he noted, his vocal tone was more subdued and inquisitive when interacting with students (Interview 2).

Upon entering the coaching arena, Nathaniel had to reflect upon the assumptions he brought to the position. Initially, he thought coaching was like teaching, but with
adults. He recalled that having worked at a high-functioning school prior to taking this position, he assumed that all teachers were as prepared each day as he and his coworkers had been. After reflecting, he realized that not all teachers had the same training, experience, or motivation. He assumed that the teachers had asked for assistance with implementing the curriculum, and that was why he was hired to coach them. Then, he recalled his prideful, independence he held onto as a novice teacher. He assumed that he was hired to train teachers to be just like him. He discovered he had to learn to help adults the way he learned to help students by finding out what each teacher needed and when they needed it. He assumed he was still there to teach the students through the teachers by modeling for the teachers how he would use the required resources. However, he realized his purpose was not to create clones of himself. He assumed he needed to assess the functionality of the resources and make recommendations to replace it. Instead, he realized he was there to help the teachers understand the existing resources so they can build their efficacy and help the kids connect to the curriculum (Interview 1; Timeline).

Development of Nathaniel’s Consideration of Student Perspectives

During the interviews, Nathaniel disclosed the ways in which his consideration of students evolved over time. Nathaniel reported that his interest in the field of education developed from an interest in child psychology. He mentioned that while psychologists helped people manage their emotions after a critical incident, he wanted to help children before the situation became critical. He hoped to be an advocate for students like himself who struggled to fit into the traditional school classroom.
Teaching to the students. Nathaniel explained that the curriculum at this first assignment was scripted, so when it came to his instructional style, he really did not have one. The script was very specific and even timed to the minute. Even if he wanted to adjust it for struggling students or extend it for gifted students, he would not have been able to do because of the layout of the program. When a student did not understand the lesson, Nathaniel stated that he went back to the script to find that section and then reviewed it with the child. He did not deviate from the script because it was what he was told to do, and he was going to be the best at it. At some point, Nathaniel recalled, if the student still did not understand the concept, he just moved on because, based upon the curriculum, the options for remediation were limited (Interview 1).

When Nathaniel cotaught a blended classroom of gifted, on level, and special education students, he described how he attempted to differentiate the work for the students. Spelling, he recalled, was one area where he had that latitude to differentiate. He observed that the gifted students were completing their work quickly, while the special education students struggled to complete the work. Nathaniel felt compelled to challenge the gifted students. He reflected upon his memories at this age when a lack of challenge led to off-task behavior. As a young boy, he would assist the struggling students with their classwork for which he was chastised. Nathaniel stated that he and his coteacher attempted to use this process. Nathaniel recalled that he did not mind helping when he was in first and second grade, so perhaps these gifted students would as well. However, they began to notice that the accelerated students had a difficult time using language other than the academic language in which the content was taught. The
remedial students did not understand the academic language the first time, and the second time did not make any more sense. Nathaniel said it was as if they were speaking two different languages. He noted that it was better for the accelerated group to assist the on-level group because it did not require the accelerated group to adjust their thinking processes to such an extreme. Nathaniel admitted that it changed the way he viewed the accelerated students: “I thought of the gifted kids as mini mes, not thinking about the fact that they’re eight” (Interview 1, para. 169).

To deter the accelerated group from always taking the role as junior teacher, Nathaniel and his coteacher developed differentiated spelling tests for the students. The lists derived from the approved resource, but Nathaniel and his coteacher raised or lowered the level of difficulty from the norm. Nathaniel explained that an initial assessment procedure determined the assigned level of difficulty of each student. If the student struggled for three weeks in a row, that student would be moved down a level. Conversely, if the student did well for three weeks they could move up a level (Interview 1).

Nathaniel recounted the story of a special education student who already struggled with the lowest level of difficulty. The boy came to Nathaniel one day and asked if he could try the accelerated spelling list. Concerned it was an issue of pride, Nathaniel talked it over with the boy, who said, “I think I can do more. I think I can do that one” (Interview 1, para. 27). Nathaniel stated that the boy tried very hard to pass the accelerated list for three weeks, but to no avail. However, a decision was made to allow him to try the grade level list instead of dropping him back to the remedial list. The boy
continued to work very hard, and he was successful. Nathaniel pointed out that this was one of those moments when he questioned whether he should be following the student and what they need, or following the expected curriculum (Interview 1).

Another student had a similar experience with the differentiated spelling lists and the system Nathaniel had in place. The girl was in the gifted cluster and failed three tests, so she was moved to the regular list. When she failed three of those, she was moved to the remedial list. At that point, the parent became upset and, through the principal, insisted the child return to the accelerated list. Nathaniel noted that it was an issue that parent had with the less than prestigious spelling list the child was studying and not because the child felt insulted. Once again, Nathaniel faced a decision to do what was right for the student, or conform to what the adults thought they needed. (Interview 1).

Teaching for the students. As Nathaniel reflected on his novice years of teaching, he once again spoke of his work with the cotaught class. After he realized that some of the students were not grasping the curriculum, as constructivist as it was, he found himself describing the concepts through analogies and metaphors. This, he noted, was process change. He admitted that he used “metaphorical thinking” to help him make sense of the curriculum. However, it took time for him to bring the concept into his instruction. Throughout his college career, he received instruction, and learned, to explain concepts in terms of their definitions. Now, instead of saying, “It means this”, he was now saying, “It’s like this”. Nathaniel mentioned that he utilized “the phrase when exploring terms outside of the students’ exposure” (Interview 1, para. 157).
Years later, Nathaniel learned the limits of his metaphorical thinking. As the gifted teacher with his multimodal knowledge, he was unable to find a method to help a remedial group of students understand a money concept. Nathaniel remembered using the preplanned lesson, visuals, and analogies to no avail. The shift from his pride in accomplishment to consideration for the student led Nathaniel to seek help in the middle of a lesson from a grade-level teacher who had experience remediating the topic to its introductory level (Interview 1).

In the middle of his career, Nathaniel once again questioned if the planned curriculum truly considered the needs of the students it was meant to serve. This time, Nathaniel stated he had some input because he planned the curriculum for the gifted and accelerated students at the school who were in his creativity classes. Initially, the classes were going to offer a fine arts and literary focus which Nathaniel admitted were his strengths and his interests. However, when the students wanted to go in a more labor-intensive route like construction and robotics, he stated that he allowed them to work within their interests. He divulged that it required him to plan far outside his areas of interest, and he often learned information in order to be ahead of the students. He reported the outcome to be successful and a catalyst behind his instructional change in which he learned to let go of being the one with the answer because he could still help a student be successful without knowing it all (Interview 1).

Development of Nathaniel’s Collaboration with Colleagues

Nathaniel reported on a few assumptions and prior expectations he held about his interactions with his colleagues. His academic personality, which pushed him to be the
star student, partly supported these. He reported that part of his understanding of his expected interactions developed from his journey as a learner and his certification program. However, he noted that he did not receive instruction in his undergraduate program regarding how to utilize his colleagues the way Brookfield (1995b) suggested.

The answer man. Nathaniel reported that he received a mentor in his first year in the classroom. He described her as older and well informed about the school’s scripted curriculum, and she helped him to navigate its implementation. One of his assumptions was that older teachers would be willing to mentor younger teachers about all aspects of the job, but Nathaniel stated that he found that was not always true. He mentioned that he was fortunate that another coworker was willing to assist with the daily procedural questions. Nathaniel stated that his personality motivated him to be the best at whatever task he was assigned. He noted that success, in his mind, was to be able to do his work independently and share his knowledge with his team. He said,

I think growing up as a kid I was always an expert type kid and I grew up around grownups who celebrated that . . . . All the way through college it was like that. I assumed it would be like that in the education world. I learned that . . . standing out and having new ideas was threatening to some teachers, and that was not something I had anticipated. (Interview 2, para. 69)

Nathaniel mentioned that as he became more self-reliant, he began to share his new ideas. He told of an unexpected social dynamic among teachers for which he was not prepared. His assumption was that the teachers were there to learn and help others learn and not to socialize.
As a self-described academic extrovert, he believed he developed a reputation as an innovator who had a desire to stand out, so when he did need help he was often met with “backhanded” comments like, “No, no, you got this. It’s fine, you don’t need my help” (Interview 2, para. 71).

When discussing team meetings, Nathaniel recalled the example that the team leader posed not only the question, but a suggested answer as well. As the members of the team changed, Nathaniel was exposed to a coteacher and a team leader who both practiced reciprocity of knowledge in a collegial manner. He noted that he was able to see how others shared their expertise without being overbearing. Nathaniel reported that it was during this time that he was able to socially bond with a teammate on a nonacademic level. It would be an experience, Nathaniel said, that he would reflect back on in the future (Interview 1).

The inquisitor. Leadership, Nathaniel noted, was something he felt he always possessed. He attributed it to his internal motivation to be the best. Nathaniel noted that he began to shift from the “answer guy” to the “question guy” after becoming team leader at a new assignment his fifth year of teaching. He recalled that it was a unique situation because he was brought onto an existing team as their team leader. As he searched within his knowledge base and experiences for how to approach this role, he began to carry over what he had experienced at his first school. He recalled that he embraced the leadership role and “handled everything. I thought through and said, ‘Hey, this is what we should do’, and I used my personality to win you over” (Interview 1, para. 64).
Nathaniel experienced some animosity from a few members. In hindsight, he realized that upon assuming a leadership role, he fell back into his “expert” mode (Interview 1).

Nathaniel reported that when he realized the team was not as responsive as he imagined they should be, the next year he tried to implement more collaborative planning, as it had been his last year at his first school. He noted that he delegated the work based upon each member’s strengths or interests and received a positive response. He also noted that the teachers’ pedagogy displayed these collaborative interactions (Interview 1; Timeline).

In his next assignment, he was a one-person team who taught gifted and accelerated learners. Part of his duties required him to work with other grade-level teams. Nathaniel reported that the school was innovative, open to new ideas, and his colleagues readily accepted his pedagogical expertise. Most importantly, he noted that when he struggled to find ways to help a student, he would ask for help from multiple coworkers (Interview 1).

As he transitioned into his coaching role, Nathaniel reported that he again began to regress to his “expert” role. He noted that he felt he was hired because he was a good teacher, and he wanted the teachers in his charge to reflect that, too. He recalled being frustrated because the teachers were implementing the curriculum he provided, but the results were not transferring to the students as well as when he did the same lesson. He began to realize that it was not that the resources were bad, nor was the problem the teacher. The problem, he discovered, was getting the teacher to understand and connect to the material. Nathaniel remembered that when he brought the teachers into the
planning process and followed up with a discussion about the lesson, he noticed that he was able to coach the teacher to improve his or her practice and not just be a clone (Interview 1).

Development of Nathaniel’s Consult of Theoretical Literature

Negotiating a new classroom dilemma can be a daunting task if a teacher has no vicarious knowledge of how to solve it. Brookfield (1995b) suggested using theory as a way to interpret and manage the situation. Nathaniel reported a mostly positive experience with the theory. He noted that his natural intuition about how things work in a classroom often preceded him studying about the theory and giving a name to it. Only twice did Nathaniel report instances where theory he studied seemed to fail to transfer to reality.

Pedagogy. Initially, Nathaniel reported a connection to the constructivist theories of Piaget and Vygotsky. They matched his personal learning style, so it “just made sense” (Interview 2, para. 79). He recalled how the ideas of preloading information and instructing students in small groups not only made sense logically, but also fit within the framework of the curriculum of his first assignment. Nathaniel reported that during his novice years, he took a sage-on-the-stage stance due to the scripted nature of the curriculum. He admitted that his personality drove him to be the best at whatever was assigned. He trusted that the resources provided were theoretically applicable. By his second and third year of teaching, Nathaniel began working in a cotaught class with a spectrum of exceptional learners in a blended classroom consisting of gifted students, on-level students, and students with cognitive discrepancies. It was then that he realized his
undergraduate program had not prepared him to help students served within the special education department. He found himself questioning the constructivist theory because he could not figure out how some building blocks were not staying in place as the teachers laid the foundation of learning. In an effort to fill in the gaps, Nathaniel reported he began to implement what he had learned about multiple intelligences and using different modalities to represent the information (Interviews 2, 3).

A new school and a new position as a drama specialist provided Nathaniel with a new perspective of the standards. As a specialist, it was his duty to organize the curriculum for multiple grade levels. Nathaniel reported that planning with specialists from the other fine arts brought to his attention the variety of theories present within each area. The experience called into question the decision process used when selecting the theoretical framework upon which a district based its curricula resources (Field notes 3; Timeline).

Over the next few years, Nathaniel experienced another version of curriculum built upon constructivist theory in a Core Knowledge magnet school, and later a school in which student choice and project-based learning led him to lean on Gardner’s theory of Multiple Intelligences and John Dewey’s theory on experiential learning. Nathaniel was able to mingle the trio to support the students in his classrooms. During this time, Nathaniel obtained his Master’s in education and sought his ESOL endorsement. In light of the many theories to which he was exposed, he was drawn to the works of Paulo Freire. He always felt compelled to advocate for students who existed outside the cultural status quo of the schools in which he taught by making extra efforts to provide
validity to their contribution in class or ensure they got the resources necessary to help them succeed. At the time of this study, Nathaniel was critically conscious of a student in need. Following Freire’s theory of action, he advocated for the student in an eligibility meeting and continued to stand his ground insisting the school do the right thing. The principal told Nathaniel that, while she appreciated his efforts to advocate for a student, he needed to understand that the staff at the school advocated as a team and that he was not the expert on the matter at hand. Nathaniel noted this was the second time that basing his actions on theory did not work in a particular context. He stated that now he assesses his desire for advocacy within the context of the situation to ensure his actions are a good match (Field notes 3; Timeline).

Andragogy. Recently, Nathaniel has implemented adult learning theories in his role as academic coach. He admitted that he began to revert back to his role as “expert” by providing his teacher-clients with the materials he thought they needed to improve their practice. This regression to acting as “expert” led to Nathaniel advocating for the local schools in a district meeting. He confessed that he felt the rest of the team was not addressing their assumptions about the culture of the local schools. They thought that the administrative teams would notice the extra step that would be necessary to make an existing spreadsheet usable to answer new questions. However, Nathaniel knew from working with the administrators that it was not a question of their academic intelligence to complete the necessary adjustment. Instead, it was the existing cultural attitude in which the teams would assume that the district office sent them a spreadsheet that would respect their time and not require such adjustments (Interview 1).
Nathaniel reported that by studying coaching theories, like those of dialogue and relationships recommended by Jim Knight, he was able to communicate with his teacher-clients on a deeper level. He noted it also helped him open himself up to learning from the coaching team. Nathaniel revealed that he recently entered a doctoral program. He informed me that this experience made him reflective of theory to which he was exposed and how it could be implemented in the classroom or in his current position. His reported study of adult learning theories helped him to move from a power position of expert doer and reflect upon his relationships and responsibilities to become an authentic listener (Field notes 3; Timeline).

Nathaniel’s Development towards Critical Reflection

The purpose of reflection is to illicit change in one’s practice, but change for change’s sake is futile. Brookfield (1995b) posited that educators should strive to improve their pedagogy by engaging in critical reflection. This process is not immediate, but develops overtime. To reflect critically, Brookfield (1995b) suggested that teachers assess the power assumptions that fuel their instructional choices. Nathaniel’s narrative revealed instances in which consideration of multiple perspectives led to a significant change in his practice.

Naïve-transitive consciousness. Nathaniel’s narratives exposed contexts in which a transmissive form of pedagogy was engaged. He remarked that his first year was overwhelming as he attempted to balance the daily requirements of paperwork, behavior, and pedagogy. During this first year of teaching, he explained that the provided curriculum was strictly scripted. He admitted that his perfectionist personality motivated
him to use this resource to the best of his ability and just follow the script. Even when it was apparent that some of the students were not learning from the material in the same way as the others, Nathaniel noted that to remediate a topic, he went back to the script and repeated the sections of the lesson the student seemed to not understand (Interview 1).

Reflection, Nathaniel recalled, was not at the top of his priority list. He explained that he did not consult others beyond learning about policy and procedures. He did not find it useful to reflect upon theory beyond the casual comparison of the scripted curriculum to what he learned in college. He recognized a difference between his constructivist preference and what was provided, but he did not know how to object. Nathaniel again referred to the fact that even with an avenue for opposition, he likely would not have done so because then he would not have been the best at implementing his assigned curriculum (Interview 1).

Developing social consciousness. When asked about his initial assumptions upon entering the classroom, Nathaniel noted two incidents that caused him to question other assumptions and required him to consider the family’s perspective and experience sensitivity toward cultural and socioeconomic subgroups. The first incident occurred because his local school asked teachers to encourage students to consider higher education as part of their future goals. His assumption was that all parents dream about their children going to college, even if financially it does not work out (Interview 3).

During a first-grade discussion about career goals, he asked the students to tell what they wanted to be when they grew up. As each student took a turn, he announced,
“Then, this is what you will need to study in college. This is what you will need to learn in first grade to be ready for your college experience” (Interview 2, para. 4). Out of consideration for the students, he gave each an opportunity to share or pass. One student who did not share in class approached Nathaniel at recess and asked him multiple questions about college. He seemed really interested, and Nathaniel was happy to share. The next day at recess, the boy approached Nathaniel. The following conversation transpired:

Student: “My momma said that you need to quit lying.”

Nathaniel [stunned]: “Wait, I need some context. What are you talking about?”

Student: “I went home and told her what you said about that whole college thing, and she said that people like us just don’t go to college.”

Nathaniel [confused]: “What do you mean ‘people like you?’” (Interview 2, para. 7).

Nathaniel explained that the student was not able to quantify what his mother meant. She did not take the time to explain her sociocultural perspective to her six year old. Nathaniel reported that the whole incident made him cry as he thought about the stereotypical options for this child in the future. The impact was so great that, as social media applications became popular, this child was one of a few students Nathaniel searched for on the Internet. He did locate the young man. While the boy did not appear to have met with Nathaniel’s worst fears for him, the young man did appear to be operating within the stereotypes of his upbringing. Nathaniel mentioned that he later
received training on cultural sensitivity with Ruby Payne, but this experience preceded it (Interview 2).

Another assumption Nathaniel described was the impression that all parents whose child showed gifted traits would be happy to have the child served in gifted classes. Nathaniel based his assumption upon the reaction of his parents, the parents of other students he taught, parents of gifted students he served as a gifted teacher, and the consensus in the education communities of which he had been a member. He held this assumption until his eighth year of teaching in a school located on the outskirts of a major metropolitan city in an affluent community, known for its objection to labeling or categorizing children. Nathaniel noted that while members of other communities he served viewed a gifted program as an added service that would allow the student opportunities to conduct higher-level discourse and gain exposure to an extended curriculum not available in the general education classroom, this community did not. He speculated that the culture of the community may not perceive the gifted program as a value-added service. Nathaniel observed that many of the students already had tutors, nannies, or annual passes to educational attractions in the city. These students did not need to be convinced of the virtues of a college experience, for they were already multi-generational beneficiaries of it. Consequently, he recalled parents assailing him with questions, such as “What are you going to do for my kid that isn’t already happening?” or “This is already happening, this is already happening, and this is already happening. What are you offering?”
Nathaniel stated,

It was more of a negotiation with gifted eligibility as opposed to in the past it had been a like a reward where we’d say, “Hey, your kid was selected to go to the gifted program.” Now it was more of a contract. (Interview 2, para. 43)

He noted that the small community only had one elementary, middle, and high school, so it was understandable that the parents were ensuring their children were getting what they needed (Interview 2).

A second “push back” from these parents was that the students would be in a room of strangers. Nathaniel commented that while students in other schools view the change as a chance to become part of a new community of learners with similar academic values, goals, and academically involved parents, the families in this affluent community did not want to be disconnected from their existing social network. Entering the gifted program would require the student be out of the classroom all day, and thus out of the loop. Additionally, the “level of work would impact them because they wouldn’t be able to do as much at home” (Interview 2, para. 37).

In response to these concerns, Nathaniel recalled that he changed his instructional practice to allow for more student choice because he did not know how to give a quantifiable answer to parents who asked how the gifted class would be a better experience. He remarked,

I think student choice grew directly out of that. What is offered in a classroom can only go so far with different learning styles and modalities, but through resource, I can personally develop the thing they’re actually passionate about in
an academic environment. You can put them in dance class, but I can work on the
academics that go into what it takes to become that, as well as developing the
things that they’re not good at. (Interview 2, para. 63)

Nathaniel noted that his last point, in conjunction with a resonating comment
from a previous principal that “It’s not about you”, created a major shift in his practice as
a gifted teacher. He reported that when he initially joined this school, his plan was to
offer options in which he excelled—creative topics, such as photography or public
speaking. He assumed that the gifted students would be like him and would appreciate
these topics, too. Instead, the students wanted construction or sports-oriented topics. He
commented, “There was a whole crew that did an engineering thing and created robotic
devices. It made me actually have to go learn about more STEM kind of stuff that’s not
my area” (Interview 1, para. 127).

Nathaniel added, “I had never really pushed kids to develop their weaknesses
within the gifted program. I had always developed their strengths” (Interview 2, para.
63). Nathaniel noted that sometimes he struggled to develop the strengths of the students
in his gifted class who were considered profoundly gifted. He recalled,

I couldn’t teach them. I could instruct them on the things they wanted to know,
but we had to find out together, which was tough because I wanted to have the
answer, and I didn’t. When you’re seven and figuring out the way that molecules
bond, it’s like “Hi, Sheldon, I’m here to help you. . . . So let’s just figure out what
it was that we need to do to help you because I can’t instruct you. I can teach you
to find resources, but I can’t instruct you because I don’t have the knowledge base
to instruct you.” (Interview 1, paras. 129, 131)

Nathaniel stated that he determined he needed to serve essentially as a coach to the students. Therefore, the students picked a topic, and he helped them find resources. It was another area he had to change in his approach to teaching. He also mentioned that this experience—of being open to choices beyond his comfort zone—helped him when he struggled to engage the most remedial students (Interview 1).

The following year at this school, the administrator asked Nathaniel to assist with a differentiated math group. The entire grade level completed a preassessment for specified subjects and then attended classes based on the scores. Normally, he would teach the highest group so that he could extend the material. The principal decided to transpose teacher assignments, Nathaniel taught the lowest remedial group (Interview 1).

Nathaniel stated that he agreed that it made sense. He assumed it would be fine because he had experience in a blended classroom, and his forte was helping students build upon their strengths. Nathaniel confessed that on this day, he learned what his pedagogical limits were. The lesson he taught was a third grade money standard about coins, specifically what coins could be used to make a certain total. He decided to begin by drawing each coin on the board and labeling them with the corresponding letter (e.g., P for penny). He recalled, “I vividly remember drawing the coins . . . and I was like, ‘Okay, what is that?’ And they were like, ‘Uhh.’ I literally had one kid say ‘Purple?’ I was like, ‘Purple?’” (Interview 1, para. 137). Nathaniel reported that he finished the minilesson, gave the students practice work, and walked across the hall to advise the
other teacher that this teaching arrangement was not going to work. Nathaniel felt that he could not remediate to a lower level than he already had without further training, which was not possible in the midst of a cycle. Like a student who advances their skill until they hit a level of frustration, Nathaniel had hit a level of critical frustration in his instructional pedagogy. He noted that even with the plethora of words in his vocabulary, he did not have the right ones to communicate with these students the way they needed him to do. He then felt compelled to advocate for the students and get them the help they needed by locating a teacher with right skills to help them to improve (Interview 1).

Nathaniel admitted that he had learned not to make assumptions based on prior experiences. Those experiences can be useful tools to try in an unfamiliar situation. He has learned that just because your teaching toolbox is full, or has a tool in there from your past, does not mean you are prepared for a particular job. It is still better to assess the present situation and then determine if what you have to offer will work, or if you need other resources (Interview 3).

Critical consciousness. This section presents Nathaniel’s contrasts of his pedagogical changes from expert to leader. Nathaniel commented that his reflective practice had changed significantly since he began teaching. He stated, “I definitely started off with an expert viewpoint of myself, just the way I always was through school. I think even my reflection was still very internal” (Interview 2, para. 108). He reported that when things did not go as planned, he would try to figure out what he needed to do to fix it. He assumed the answer was within him; he just needed to think harder to find the error. However, he added that it was also difficult for him to detect his mistakes, so
analyzing his own work for errors would have been futile because he would not have considered his work to contain errors. He did not seek outside analysis of his work. Nathaniel noted that others may have noticed, but they did not volunteer such input and he did not know why (Interview 2).

Nathaniel identified his attitude change to be in his ninth year when his principal told him, “It’s not about you. It’s about the kids. This is my school, and you are not going to do it your way. You are going to do it my way” (Interview 2, para. 109). Nathaniel recalled he was getting his ESOL endorsement, studying Freire, and becoming a more aggressive student advocate. He assumed that because he had knew information, he must use it. The fact that others might already possess such knowledge was not a prominent thought that he entertained. Up until this conversation, he felt it was his responsibility to advocate. After that, Nathaniel noted he was more likely to ask questions of others about his own instructional practice (Interview 2).

Nathaniel also referred to changes in pedagogy that resulted from changes in his understanding of constructivist theory. He recalled how he handled evaluating a situation in the past in which a student did not seem to understand the curriculum. He would try to discover how to make the student understand the curriculum by going back through the material. He remembered thinking that these building blocks of learning occurred naturally and simply fell into place as material was presented. If a student did not appear to learn the material, Nathaniel thought he could just go back to the missing piece and reteach (Interview 2). He noted that it was not until his Master’s program that he really began to understand that sometimes a student does not grasp basic concepts, possibly due
to an unidentified learning disability or a simple maturity issue in which the student is not
developmentally ready for the material. Nathaniel said, “I think for a long time I just
tried to adjust my instruction, say it differently, use a different material, instead of just
seeing that there was something missing and reaching out to a colleague” (Interview 2,
para. 82).

In the early years of his teaching career, Nathaniel stated that he was the one
controlling the grouping process in the class. His training led him to assess student
knowledge in order to place students into small groups within the class with the teacher
in the role of expert. Nathaniel reported that he did not question this method until he had
trouble applying it in his accelerated classes. The students’ background knowledge was
so similar that this traditional method placed three students who did not understand the
material in a remedial group and the rest of the class in the other. That outcome did not
provide him with the small groups he needed. As a result, Nathaniel relinquished some
of his power by having students preassess themselves. The students noted what level of
understanding they thought they possessed about the concept, thus allowing their input on
how they felt they should be grouped. Nathaniel admitted that initially he would make
adjustments in order to ensure the students were not embarrassed or to build efficacy.
These situations occurred when students marked themselves as experts, but Nathaniel
knew they were not, or when students marked themselves at the lowest level, and
Nathaniel knew they understood more than they gave themselves credit for understanding
(Interview 3).
As part of the classroom culture, Nathaniel wanted students to experience a place where failure did not bring judgment. Instead, failure was to be celebrated as a learning opportunity. After establishing such a culture, he no longer adjusted the students’ self-assessments, but made them responsible for their choices. He explained that those students who self-assessed as experts took on the added responsibility of being able to help the other students when he was unavailable. Nathaniel realized, “There was way more value in them realizing they weren’t an expert” (Interview 2, para. 215) and by holding them accountable they would “learn authentically whether they were or not” (Interview 2, para. 217).

Summary: Nathaniel

Nathaniel’s narrative examined the consistency and change in his practice over time. Presented within the context Brookfield’s (1995b) multiple lenses, the examples demonstrated various ways that Nathaniel reflective practice developed toward a critical level. Nathaniel’s narratives did not provide examples of extreme change in all areas; however, there was evidence that his motivation to advocate against social inequities in the classroom began prior to his teaching experience. Nathaniel’s preexisting motivation to be the best in all his endeavors presented complications when interacting with his colleagues. His role as a team leader required him to reflect in this area and make necessary changes to his approach.

Rachel

Rachel, a Mexican American female, was in her thirties. She reported that she grew up, taught, and married in her home state in the Midwest. After teaching first grade
for seven years in the Midwest, Rachel moved to the East when her husband’s job relocated. She substituted in a county in the center of the state that year and acquired a third-grade classroom position in the same county the next year. The year after, she was a tutor. Another move brought her to her current Pre-Kindergarten classroom in a major metropolitan suburb in the Southeast where she resided at the time of this study (Interview 1).

Rachel reported a stereotypical childhood. She attended a small private school from Kindergarten through fifth grade. She described herself as a good student who was good at reading. Although she never had any negative educational experiences, she recalled the competitive nature of much of the curriculum. Rachel described it as a “system where somebody is successful at someone else’s detriment. There are going to be winners and losers in the school game” (Interview 2, para. 3). In middle school, she attended all honors classes in a public school and remembered she was always in a group of the same students all day, every year. She found it odd that as an honors level student, she was not allowed to have more autonomy in her elective choices. Rachel recalled that she was interested in art in the eighth grade but she learned that she had to be on the yearbook staff instead because she was an honors student (Interview 2).

Rachel recounted happy memories from two high school classes. One teacher instructed using a generative model. The students worked in groups and reinforced learning through projects, games, and role play. Rachel conveyed that many considered the instructional style of her senior literature teacher to be very controversial in the school. Most students were reading different books that he selected for them. Rachel
remembered the books he selected for her were considered “pushy, progressive books” (Interview 1, para. 18), but they seemed to match the rebellious behavior she was showing that year. She stated,

Now in hindsight, I see he was giving me books that were feeding into what I needed, where I was in life . . . I was just really angsty and antisociety, and he showed me that I was not the only one, and the proof was in the all that had been written about it. (Interview 2, paras. 7-8)

She felt the books presented a different way of thinking about the world and how she might find a way to fit into it (Interview 2).

Rachel stated that she did not go to college to become a teacher. She planned to enter the medical field, but she struggled in some of the core classes. By junior year, she had a minor in psychology and decided to major in English as an alternative. Rachel described one of her psychology professors as a model of a transformative teacher. They had dialogues and discussions on current events. Rachel stated, “He would really back people into corners with their thinking and logic . . . and I wanted to kind of emulate him in my own life” (Interview 2, para. 11). Another professor she remembered appealed to the students because he shared information about himself—the bad choices as well as the good (Interview 2).

Rachel told of a study abroad experience she took during her undergraduate years. She had been raised to believe that America was a great place to live and that the rest of the free world believed it, too. She admitted that even though she had voted in the elections, she had never been very political, yet she was astounded to find herself
frequently questioned by foreigners about the President’s political stance on specific issues or the debated upon certain policies. Within weeks of her return to America, the attack on the World Trade Center occurred on September 11, 2001. Rachel recalled the shift that occurred in her thinking as a result of these two events: people in one country talking with disdain about the state of American policy followed by a terrorist attack by people from yet another country. She said,

 I think that was an important turning point for me, just as a human, to realize those were the first times in my life where I realize people don’t think that America’s the greatest country in the world. . . . I think of my high school teacher giving me those progressive, controversial books. He was trying to help me get past my framework. I hadn’t really gotten there. I think the culmination of the two events . . . created a realization in myself that everything I thought I had known about the world was really naïve and not necessarily the way it is out there (Interview 2, para. 14).

After earning her undergraduate degree, Rachel reported that she began to work on her Master’s in English Literature, but her parents impressed upon her the need for her to find employment. Childcare positions were abundant, so she started there. Rachel recalled the pleasure she felt during her time working with the young children at a daycare facility. As a result, she changed her major to a Master’s of Arts in Teaching program (Interview 1).

Rachel recounted a unique student teaching experience. She was able to complete her training at an international baccalaureate high school in the Caribbean. She knew of
high-stakes testing in the United States and the importance of teaching with standards; however, her experience in the Caribbean school reinforced her understanding of alternatives. Although the school did not administer high-stakes testing, there were high standards. The culture of the school and the outlying community made the experience different for those students. The whole school was on island time and conducting itself in the island way. Rachel remembered that everyone was very relaxed but still very respectful (Interview 2).

Rachel graduated from her one-year MAT program in December and spent the next few months working in early childhood development centers and being a nanny. Following these experiences, she confirmed that her passion was in teaching the youngest of students. Financially, she settled for elementary age students (Interview 3).

Development of Rachel’s Autobiographical Practice

Rachel maintained that much of her reflection had always focused on the students. However, she described her self-reflective practice as being interconnected with the growth in her personal life. Rachel provided a real-life of example of van Manen’s (1977) concept of lived experiences when she stated,

Something will happen in my personal life that will cause a shift . . . and change my way of thinking. Then there will be little bit of lag time . . . and I’ll be able to transfer that knowledge into what I’m doing at my job. (Interview 2, para. 66).

The following paragraphs present examples of her autobiographical reflection.

You cannot always get what you want. Rachel did not remember reflecting much on her practice her first year. She remembered feeling stressed and finding it a struggle
to get things done the way she wanted. Rachel stated, “Being a Type A person . . . I had to learn you can’t do everything on your list every single day” (Interview 2, para. 31), especially on your own. She recalled being accepting of assistance, but she usually just used the provided materials (Interview 2).

She reported that most of her thoughts focused on the students’ well-being and their level of efficacy. Rachel conveyed that she focused on the outliers, the students who needed her emotional support more than her content knowledge. That year she realized that even with all her knowledge about the psychology of children, there may still be children with whom she could not synchronize (Interview 2).

Physician heal thyself. The next two years, although emotionally draining for Rachel, were a catalyst for her transformation. She recalled the stress she encountered learning to deal with nonacademic issues of specific students and their families. Rachel thought that improving her content knowledge would help transition the level of instruction, and thus the student achievement, in her classes. Being a novice teacher with a few years of in-depth childcare knowledge and child psychology did not provide her the quick solutions her Type A personality desired. In her second year of coteaching with a special education cluster, she realized that fear of the unknown when instruction involved students with physical disabilities overwhelmed her. Rachel comprehended that her prior knowledge only involved the normal and abnormal psyche of children, not the physiological. She knew she must welcome the experience and learn about physical disabilities in order to adjust her instruction. It took commitment and communication
with the student, family, and other resources, but soon Rachel reported that making adjustments to instruction were instinctive (Interview 2).

The next year brought another emotional struggle. Rachel reported that two students had emotional issues that challenged her efficacy. Again, she reported that her autobiographical reflection on why she struggled to reach these children stemmed from personal issues. Once she understood how to surmount the obstacle, she was able to deal with the matter. She even entered therapy to keep the lines of communication open (Interview 2).

During the summers, Rachel recalled that she was taking various professional development workshops to help improve her instructional efficacy. She admitted that much of the motivation derived from her personal goal to improve herself continuously. She reflected often on the new knowledge and, as a result, she changed her lesson plans annually, even though she taught the same grade for seven years straight. She noted that her scope and sequence may have remained, but she learned early that things change and she must change with them (Interview 2).

In her fifth year, Rachel remembered actually beginning to identify herself as a teacher. Then, she took ill. She recounted a change in her socioemotional level of investment as she struggled with the idea of surgery. As she pushed through this process, she conveyed a need to obtain from the experience a positive bit of knowledge that she could apply to her teaching. Consequently, she gained a newfound empathy for others that improved her talents in the socioemotional aspect of her job (Interviews 2, 3).
Metacognitively speaking. Rachel reported that as she changed grades, schools, and even states, she experienced problems with colleagues, administration, and policy. She recalled that most of these conflicts involved what she perceived as a failure to accommodate policy in order to serve a student in need sufficiently. Rachel reported that her communication with the other person or entity was always her first step. If communications failed, she communicated with a high authority or searched for a way to help the child herself if it was within her skill set (Interview 2).

When she thought of her role, however, she realized that she must look inward to ensure she was objecting to a student impacting issue and not just fighting for the personal glory of being right. Her interviews conveyed that the battles she struggled through to broaden her personal perspectives were as meaningful and beneficial to her instruction as the professional knowledge she acquired through workshops, endorsements, and other certifications. Ultimately, Rachel related her process of autobiographical inquiry to an open, and honest, conversation with herself in which she tried to analyze negative feelings and find their root cause (Interview 2).

Development of Rachel’s Consideration of Student Perspectives

Rachel reported that she entered the classroom with the students in mind. Based upon her perspective as an exemplar student, she knew she must push back when instructional choices only validated academic skills (Interview 2, para. 3). Her middle school and high school experiences had taught her that her instruction must value student interest and build upon it when possible. No matter what age the student might be, she must find alternatives to the transmissive ways of the past if students were to feel
validated. During her daycare experience, she learned of Magda Berber’s philosophy of care for infants and the way it easily translated to interactions with older children. Her student-teaching experience provided a firm basis to support her attempts for a low stress, “we’ll get through it together” (Interview 2; para. 27) instructional style.

Good intentions. Rachel’s narratives across the years reflect her intent to focus on the needs of the student. Her first year was a traditional first-grade, general education classroom in which she was responsible for everything. Rachel reported that during that year, she felt overwhelmed by the planning and paperwork. She worked until the custodians sent her home and went to the school on Sundays to ensure everything was ready for the next week. As a novice teacher working alone in a classroom, Rachel reported that her level of stress outweighed her intentions. She admitted, “That first year, I just got through it” (Interview 1, para. 18). She recalled being dismissive of parents and assuming that parents were parents and had the same priorities as parents from her perspective. Rachel realized that first year that parental priorities are different among socioeconomic groups. For example, she recalled a parent conference in which she suggested that the parent make time to read to the student at home and found out that the parent could not read. Rachel said, “That was very humbling for me. Here, I thought this person was a bad parent, not a caring parent. I just had to do a whole lot of paradigm shifting about what families are all about in different environments” (Interview 1, para. 35).

Rachel described the students entering the first grade that first year as having little more than gaps. She tried to determine how she could advance through the standards
without a curriculum. She reported that she was willing to do things that the other teachers were not, such as ask the tough questions in determine the needs of the students. Rachel began with personalized, self-paced spelling lists that would meet the students at their own level, inventing fun learning groups that were motivating and not chastising. She soon realized that not only were they entering with gaps in their academics, but also with gaps in their basic needs (Interview 1).

Rachel described herself as compassionate and connected well with children. She remembered a student from her first year of teaching who exhibited troubling behavior. The child would run from Rachel’s attempts to comfort her. Rachel reported that she when she entered the classroom, she tried to remain cognizant that all children are humans and deserve to be treated with respect. This response threatened Rachel’s already threadbare level of efficacy once again. However, when Rachel discovered the student would also run away from the principal, she realized that the behavior was not a personal reaction to Rachel, but to a situation. Rachel knew she needed to problem-solve the situations that spawned the behavior in order to help the student (Interview 1).

A hard habit to break. The next two years brought challenges as Rachel moved into a coteaching role with a special education teacher. Although she was not in charge of the students’ IEPs, she and her coteacher shared the philosophy that all the students should be included in all the lessons to the best of their ability. She understood that the “idea that everybody has to learn the same things the same way . . . is not relevant for kids” (Interview 1, para. 12). However, reflecting on the academic goals she set, Rachel admitted, “I think I limited what I thought some students could achieve. I would give
them goals, and if they met that goal, I would feel like I’d done my job” (Interview 2, para. 115).

In her second year of teaching, Rachel was in a classroom with students who had physical disabilities. This was a new experience. She reported that she had some anxiety regarding her instructional planning to ensure these students felt included. It was through communication with the parents, the student, and her coteacher that she was able to overcome those feelings. She changed the existing classroom procedures to better match the needs of these students as well as the rest of the class (Interview 1).

Rachel continued to work in the cotaught class for five more years. She reported that each year brought a special child into her path. For example, in her third year teaching, two students completed psychological testing that confirmed some type of emotional behavior disorder. Rachel reported her many attempts to reach out to these children socially and academically. However, a young girl always seemed to disrupt her overtures. Other entities in the child’s life investigated and informed Rachel that the child was a victim of molestation. This knowledge created emotional turmoil in Rachel, for she knew her mother had also been molested as a girl. Her mother overcame the emotional consequences and made a life for herself. Rachel felt disquiet when she realized it was the social and emotional support her mother received as a girl that got her through her problems. Rachel reported that this child did not have the same support system after the incident and had subsequently alienated herself. She recalled feeling a sympathetic bond for the child and making a special effort to work with the child and provide the girl emotional and academic support (Field notes 3; Timeline).
Rachel recalled that her seventh year of teaching first grade was another emotional year. Three children from different families struggled with the loss of a parent. By this time, Rachel had class discussions about being different, having different feelings about the same thing, and communicating and reacting when others expressed those feelings. She recalled how quickly the class understood. One day, one of these students had an outburst in class and left her group. In reaction to this scene, a classmate commented, “Oh, she must be missing her mama. She’ll be okay soon” (Field notes 3, p. 1).

In her next classroom, Rachel was in a new school, a new state, and teaching third grade for the first time. After the year began, a fourth-grade boy demoted to the third grade entered her room. Rachel recalled feeling sympathy for his situation, the emotional turmoil, and embarrassment he felt entering the room. Rachel remembered assessing the boy’s academic level and noted it was almost two grade levels below third grade. Rachel was motivated to build this child’s confidence and advocate for him in order to get him any available resources. She stated that she devoted as many moments in the school day that she could for him each day. Soon he began to understand the skill of decoding and was able to put the skill to use. He gained a full grade level in less than a school year. Rachel reported that by simply communicating with the student on a daily basis to identify his gaps made the effort manageable (Field notes 3).

Through this work she changed her goal setting for students. Instead of setting a lower, achievable goal and being satisfied when the goal was met, Rachel communicated that she no longer considered her job “done” simply because a struggling student met a
goal, but still had a disadvantage. Instead, she reported that she continuously sets new goals for struggling students when they meet the old ones and “does not consider her job ‘done’ until the year is almost over” (Interview 1, para. 117). Rachel admitted that she continued to spend a great amount of time in and out of the classroom trying to determine the obstacles impeding the less successful child and ways to help that child become more successful (Interview 1).

Development of Rachel’s Collaboration with Colleagues

Rachel noted that she did not go into the classroom thinking about the type of interactions she would have with her coworkers. She reflected back on her teacher training and reported that the only expectation she had was that her coworkers would be there if she needed them. Rachel knew she might need to inquire about the local school’s daily operational requirements and location of needed resources (Field notes 3).

Not what I expected. Rachel recalled her first interaction with a teaching colleague to be her cooperating teacher from her preservice field experience. She considered the experience an example of what not to do. Rachel remembered a little boy’s frequent attempts to get the teacher’s attention each morning before class began and the teacher deterring him each time (Interview 2).

Rachel’s first year of teaching was in a first-grade classroom in 2006. She reported her experience with her team to be limited. She was assigned a mentor, who was another team member. Their teaching styles and pedagogical approaches were fundamentally opposite. The clash created stress that manifested in fewer instructional
alternatives than Rachel would have liked. She stated that most of the time she just accepted whatever scope and sequence she was given (Interview 2).

   We go together . . . well, mostly. The next year, the administration assigned Rachel a different coteacher. She remembered how similar their pedagogical beliefs were. Her coteacher was the special education teacher for the classroom, but they were both invested in the well-being and positive experience of all the students. This relationship remained in good standing for the next five years (Interview 2).

   By year three, Rachel was asked to mentor teachers new to the team. She reported that over the next four years, she and her coteacher, along with other new teachers, would plan together. Communication between most of the team was good, but Rachel recalled that it was not a utopia because a team member did not communicate well. Rachel portrayed the woman as an example of what not to do and a literal symbol of when to stop teaching and find something else to do. Rachel explained that this teacher would yell at the students all day and then watch television instead of planning during the planning time. Rachel described an incident in which this teacher failed to notify the team that she would be absent for a field trip until after school the day before the excursion. Then, when asked about field trip information such as head count, chaperones, and payment details, the woman began to yell and curse at Rachel (Interview 2).

   Moving right along. In 2013, Rachel moved to a new state with her husband to live in a larger county south of the state capital. She substituted long term in one school, and the next year she was hired to teach a general education, third-grade classroom. She
had the benefit of becoming familiar with the school culture when she substituted and knowing a little about her new team. She recalled that the team shared the load by dividing the planning, which helped with communication between team members, as each was able to share their content strengths. She also reported feeling disappointed by the lack of commitment of the administration, and those in other grade levels, to do what Rachel believed was best for students, which appeared to be a lower priority than appeasing the staff. Rachel suspected that there might be just cause for the outcome, but the manner in which the events were communicated to all parties involved left much to be desired (Field notes 3; Interview 2).

The 2015-2016 school year found Rachel moving again as her husband transferred to a suburb of the state capital. Out of the classroom once again, she found herself tutoring intermediate students part-time. The following year, Rachel was asked to take over a Pre-Kindergarten classroom, a unique post because she was in one of two Pre-Kindergarten classrooms housed within a public elementary school. She attended staff meetings, but most of the information applied to K-5 grades. Rachel and the other Pre-K teacher shared in some discussions, but did not often have an opportunity to plan on a daily or weekly basis as she did in her early career. She reported that she was confident in her ability; therefore, she did not feel uneasy about planning alone the way she did in her novice years (Field notes 3; Interview 1).

Development of Rachel’s Consult of Theoretical Literature

Before entering her certification program, Rachel found her passion for teaching among the youngest learners in the daycare where she was employed after obtaining her
bachelor’s degree. Her employers saw in her the willingness to go above and beyond simply doling out the scheduled curriculum. They saw her desire to understand children. They provided her with literature from Magda Berger in which the author discussed her philosophy of care for infants. Essentially, the theory focuses on caregivers maintaining and communicating boundaries, as well as respect for a passive child as if it were an older child who could verbally and physically react to your speech and actions. Rachel reported that this knowledge of human positive interactions with the youngest learners translated to her work with four to ten year olds (Interview 2).

Novice thoughts. During her first year of teaching, Rachel reported that she thought very little about the theories to which she was exposed during her intensive one-year MAT program. She was so overwhelmed by the daily procedures that she simply used whatever instructional material she was handed by her coworkers. Rachel remembered feeling inadequate while teaching the research-based writing curriculum, for she had not been trained and her teammates were not well versed enough to explain it. Rachel set a goal to improve in writing instruction the next year (Field notes 3).

In regards to the socioemotional side, Rachel recalled relying upon her natural ability to communicate respectfully to students. She recounted an incident with a child who was known to run away from the classroom and remembered feeling less than effective when dealing with the child until she discovered that the child ran from the principal, too. That knowledge prompted her to recall Magda Berger’s philosophy of care. Rachel’s experience using that philosophy helped her to successfully problem-solve future issues with that child (Interview 3).
New information. In the summer between her first and second year of teaching, Rachel was able to attend a training session for the writing program of her school. As a bonus, she also convinced a group of teammates to attend as well. Her efficacy in this philosophy of instructing writing, as well as planning the instruction, increased exponentially. Rachel reported that the coursework and the opportunity to discuss the material with members of that cohort during planning made the difference. She testified that merely attending the course alone would not have produced the same outcome (Interview 1).

Over the next three years, Rachel noted that she engaged in a variety of professional development courses to help her increase her understanding of the first-grade standards so that she would be able to communicate that understanding to the students and their parents. As she entered her fifth year, she described how her increased exposure to scholarly literature had increased her self-efficacy to a point where she could identify herself as being a teacher. She completed her reading endorsement and added those theories to her toolbox (Interview 1).

Veteran synthesis. Rachel described herself as an ambitious person. The professional development courses provided a means to delve deeper into the county’s curriculum, but it did not provide answers to the reflective questions of “What’s going on here?”; “Why is this happening and not that?”; and “What’s the right thing to do in this case?” that she and her co-teacher were constantly asking each other. Rachel reported that the ambition to be able to answer those questions and to be a better teacher than those around her prompted her to enroll in the National Board Certification experience.
Her description of the process involved constantly recording, reviewing, reflecting, and critiquing her instructional practice (Interview 1).

Rachel recalled that the process of reflection required by the National Boards helped her when she moved to a new state and new grade level. She noted she was able to analyze and prioritize what needed to be done, even though she was not familiar with the curriculum. It was during this schoolyear that Rachel began to question the curriculum choices. She expressed a desire to not only understand them better so that she could communicate the standards to the students and parents, but to understand why these standards were selected for this age group when so many had such obvious academic gaps. She felt that the goals set for the students, when compared to their academic and life experiences, set the students up for failure (Interview 1).

Rachel’s Development towards Critical Reflection

Rachel’s pedagogical practice began to develop a critical path prior to entering the classroom. Her interactions with the young learners in the daycare evolved from her ambitious behavior, which she attributed to her self-proclaimed Type A personality (Interview 1). This ambition to change is vital to the progress needed to develop a critical pedagogy. This development requires a teacher be aware of inequities, reflect upon the situation, and respond appropriately. The following paragraphs report Rachel’s levels of awareness and response to students’ struggles.

Naïve-transitive consciousness. Rachel’s narratives provided examples of a pedagogical style that would be considered transmissive. For example, when she described her first year of teaching, Rachel recalled a dependence on the provided
curriculum and her limited understanding of how to implement it. She also commented that she relied on her team for instructional materials and followed the status quo to initiate the lessons until she was more familiar with the material. She reported feeling overwhelmed trying to make the curriculum fit the needs of the students (Field notes 3; Interview 1).

During Rachel’s eighth year in the classroom, she moved to a new state and a new grade. She confessed, “It was that whole first year again. Dogpaddling to keep my head up, of the curriculum of what I have to teach” (Interview 1, para. 20). Again, Rachel reported a heightened dependence on others to transmit the requirements to the students while balancing the requirements of her daily duties. She described it as a year of getting things done (Interview 1).

Developing social consciousness. During her youth, Rachel reported developing an awareness of inequity in the classroom based upon the way the some teachers spoke to a few of the students from dissimilar backgrounds. As a result, she reported that she began to push back against the attempted inculcation into society, leading others to consider her rebellious. Her field service and student-teaching experiences led to her recognition of two extremes of classroom culture. In the first experience, Rachel recalled the negative socioemotional responses of the teacher towards certain students. In the second experience, the teachers were more open and willing to set aside the tasks of the day in order to reinforce the socioemotional needs of the students, thus providing an example that proved it is possible to meet high academic standards while maintaining a positive social environment (Field notes 3; Interviews 1, 2).
Rachel’s experiences in the classroom as a novice teacher afforded her opportunities to address her personal deficits when dealing with students who have socioemotional or physical disabilities. Her awareness of parental issues prompted a change in her discourse with, and expectations of, them. Some of the issues affecting the students aroused memories and feelings related to her family. These triggers allowed her to sympathize with the students on a deeper level.

Later in her career, Rachel noted that she had become disillusioned by the state curriculum, which she considered to lack the flexibility necessary to fill the experiential gaps for students with nontraditional home, or life, experiences. She also admitted concern regarding the poor communication skills witnessed between teachers, between teacher and student, and between teacher and parent (Field notes 3; Interviews 1, 2).

Critical consciousness. Rachel’s narrative provided several examples of inequities and her conscious attempts to address each situation. The first classroom situation Rachel discussed involved her regard for, and interaction with, a parent. Brookfield (1995b) prompted teachers to consider the perspective of the student. A part of that perspective involves the adult caregiver and the caregiver’s life experiences. In Rachel’s example, the caregiver was illiterate. However, Rachel had entered the transaction assuming otherwise. When this information was revealed, Rachel ensured that her interactions and expectations with students would no longer include this assumption. She realized that providing positive socioemotional support for the student would require more information from the caregivers, thus preventing undue internal embarrassment for the child (Interview 2).
Other students mentioned in Rachel’s narratives involved children from environments of abuse and neglect, as well as students who had lost parents prior to the beginning of the year. She recalled that each child had a need to express him- or herself in a manner that may be considered inconsistent with typical classroom norms. Rachel stated that her knowledge of Magda Berger’s philosophy made the adjustment easier. As the interview progressed, Rachel admitted that her acknowledgement of students’ emotional issues and her willingness to try to understand them helped her confront and deal with emotions she possessed regarding her mother’s abusive childhood (Interview 2).

In another example, Rachel told of a situation in which a student was demoted from fourth grade to third grade. Based upon the child’s academic functioning, Rachel agreed the move was justified. However, the manner in which the move was communicated had a negative impact on the student. He was still reading on a first-grade reading level. In Rachel’s opinion, it seemed that no other teacher “had taken the time to work with him to grasp the skill of decoding” (Field notes 3; page 4). The child was just brought to Rachel’s door one day, and the story was disclosed in the doorway. Rachel stated that she worked with the student one-on-one every chance she could during each day of school. She recalled that the positive motivation and interest she took in his emotional well-being, as well as his academic, appeared to fuel his own internal motivation. He did not meet the end of the year grade-level standards, but he did make the equivalent of a full year’s growth (Interview 3).
Summary: Rachel

Rachel’s narrative provided examples of change and consistency in her practice over time. These examples were presented within the context Brookfield’s (1995b) multiple lenses that he maintained necessary for a teacher to acquire in order to develop a critically reflective practice. Rachel’s narratives did not provide examples of extreme change. There was evidence, however, that her self-awareness and motivation to advocate against perceived inequities began their development prior to her classroom experience. That motivation to continually improve her understanding of the world around her and communicate that understanding to others demonstrated a critical level of consciousness that was revealed through her interactions with others.

The next section provides a cross case analysis. I describe themes that emerged from the participants’ reflective experiences based upon Brookfield’s (1995b) four lenses. Additional themes are also examined. Themes are illustrated with descriptions or descriptive quotes.

Cross-Case Analysis

Brookfield (1995b) wrote that a teacher develops a critically reflect practice by evaluating choices to be made in that practice through four lenses: the autobiographical lens, the lens of colleagues, the lens of the student, and the lens of theory. The point of this in-depth practice is to prevent stagnation and oppression by moving beyond the technical levels of reflection on the success of a lesson. Instead, he posited that by assessing personal beliefs and choices and viewing them through the perspectives of others, teachers would have enough knowledge with which to make an informed choice
to change their practice or continue as usual. Realistically, teachers will not have the opportunity to reflect using all four lenses for all decisions. However, Brookfield (1995b) and Mezirow (1990) recommended reflecting at a critical level and utilizing all four lenses when previous practices conflict with new situations.

In the previous section, each of the participants’ narratives provided evidence of reflection within each of Brookfield’s lenses at some point in their career. The level of reflection for each memoried event was different for each person within, and across, each lens. Though Brookfield (1995b) considered a critically reflective practice to employ all four lenses when assessing an event, the concept of critical reflection is also dependent upon a person’s fluctuating level of consciousness of the world. The level of consciousness employed is based upon their experiences at a particular time and within a particular context (Cunningham, 2000). These levels of consciousness, which are contingent upon the individual’s perspective, overlap instead of progressing sequentially (Freire, 1974/2012, 2000). The subsections below provide a cross-case analysis for each of Brookfield’s (1995b) four lensed followed by an additional section provides an analysis of examples fitting Brookfield’s (1995b) conditions for critical reflection.

The table presented for each lens indicates if a participant disclosed information of an experience correlated to the lens and during what stage of his, or her, career the experience occurred. However, it does not indicate if the experience carried over into other career stages. Headings used to indicate when an experience occurred in participant’s career are as follows: preservice years, novice years, intermediate years, or veteran years. For the purpose of discussion in this inquiry, the term *preservice* indicates
any time from childhood through the year prior to the first year of teaching; the term *novice stage* indicates the first three years of teaching; the term *intermediate stage* indicates the fourth through sixth years of teaching; and *veteran stage* indicates the seventh year onward. The following section focuses on the participants’ reported experiences with self-reflection using Brookfield’s (1995b) autobiographical lens.

Participants’ Experiences with the Autobiographical Lens

Evidence in the narratives of the participants’ use of the autobiographical lens varied based upon the context in which the theme was referenced. Brookfield (1995b) intended practitioners to reflect upon their prior experiences in order to pinpoint the power structures and cultural preferences from which their instinctual pedagogical preferences and assumptions originate. As part of the process of reflecting, teachers are prompted to analyze not only what they do, but why they choose to teach a certain way. This process may also afford teachers an understanding of why they instinctually revert to previous pedagogical methods when faced with a crisis or uncertainty. Table 3 presents a comparison of the autobiographical experiences between participants’ for this lens.
Table 3

**Participants’ Autobiographical Experiences of Instinct and Assumption**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Instincts and Assumptions</th>
<th>Novice</th>
<th>Intermediate</th>
<th>Veteran</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>Instinct – cognitive empathy with learner. Assumption- teacher education</td>
<td>She found language/cultural immersion frustrating as a child so she understood some of what the transient farm worker/ refugee students felt. Assumed program with a dual Master’s would prepare her for teaching and that classroom teachers would be empathetic to ESOL student needs.</td>
<td>__</td>
<td>Frustration that the academy conforming diversity under guise of classical curriculum.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachel</td>
<td>Instinct – cognitive empathy; validate learner; meet them where they are.</td>
<td>Overwhelmed, but with cognitive empathy she was able to get an EBD student to not run off less by validating her needs.</td>
<td>__</td>
<td>Overwhelmed. New school/state/grade, but cognitive empathy to validate learners needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zell</td>
<td>Instinct—respect for learner as person and opinion. Assumption- family is dynamic.</td>
<td>As a youth she was shocked when teacher was disrespectful to a student-did best to always do opposite. Assumed negative behavior of EBD student due to poor models at home. Instead due to parents’ incarceration. Assumed uninvolved mother declined face-to-face meeting, but it was due to strict boss.</td>
<td>__</td>
<td>Parents of second-language learners unconcerned with homework, but they could not understand the academic English.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* __a__ designates no fit between participant experience and Brookfield’s definition


<table>
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<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nathaniel</td>
<td>Instinct “to be the best” Assumptions: family dynamics; mentor teachers.</td>
<td>Overwhelmed-tried to be the “poster boy” for the curriculum’s procedure. Assumed parents want child in gifted program, or to go to college; Assumed veteran teachers want to mentor new teachers and hear new research.</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>New position-Tried to make other teachers into “mini-me.” Assumed experienced teachers put forth similar effort to support students. He also assumed teachers appreciated discussion new ideas to support students.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* a designates no fit between participant experience and Brookfield’s definition

Pedagogical instinct. Each of the participants reported on a pedagogical element or style to which they reverted when faced with a situation that initiated feelings of imbalance. Over the course of their respective careers, each of the participants experienced this relapse multiple times. In the first year of their teaching, the participants reported that their pedagogical instinct was to take control and do their best when they felt overwhelmed by the tasks of the classroom or when the curriculum did not fit the needs of the learner. Each participant had unique reasons for this pedagogical instinct to resurface and override new, more insightful pedagogical habits.

Nathaniel recalled that during his first year he encountered a curriculum that did not match the pedagogical models he had encountered before and he felt overwhelmed. Relying on instinct, he put his efforts into building his knowledge base of the curriculum...
in order to be the best at it. Tracing this response into his past, Nathaniel recalled that his unpleasant, overwhelming experiences as a learner had been followed by empowering praise from teachers for consistently being the best at each new task in school (Interview 1). Nathaniel noted that his grandmother had been his greatest supported outside of school and after she passed, his accolades came from academic achievement so that was where he focused his attention.

Unlike Nathaniel, Zell, Rachel, and Helen reported mostly positive experiences as learners, but Zell and Rachel witnessed disrespect towards others during their youth that Helen did not report about until her college years. Even when they reported being overwhelmed, the instinctive style they reported was empathizing with the students’ situation in order to fulfill their needs. The catalyst behind this style preference as well as its frequency of reoccurrence was different for each woman.

When Helen reflected on her experiences as a learner, she recalled feelings of frustration as a youth immersed in a foreign culture and language with which she had little experience. When the context of the environment limited what she could do independently, she did what she had to do in order to get her needs met. From the experience, however, her ability to empathize cognitively with second-language learners often prompted her to take action and do what was right for the students when their needs were not being met by the school (Interview 1). Helen described situations in which this pedagogical instinct, to do what is right and meet the needs of the learner, surfaced during her Master’s program, the implementation stages of NCLB, and at the small academy that attempted to inculcate versus celebrate diverse learners (Interviews 2, 3).
Zell stated that the learning experience that she brought into her career was “Respect.” She traced her pedagogical instinct of respect for learners to an event in second grade when a classmate received excessive scolding in front of the class (Interview 1). However, Zell described her first year as overwhelming, but when confronted with frustration, her instinct to be respectful prevailed. Returning to the classroom the year after the death of her newborn was as stressful and overwhelming as her first year, but her desire to appreciate and value each student was increased by her personal experience (Interview 3).

Rachel’s history as a learner also began with a positive experience for herself. Rachel developed emotional and cognitive empathy in high school as she became aware of how different social groups were treated. Her literature teacher individualized assignments to meet the emotional and academic needs of the students. The knowledge she gained interacting with children as a daycare worker strengthened this experience. Rachel’s disorienting experiences involved students whose academic gaps were overwhelming, but employing cognitive empathy for the student helped subdue the situation.

Pinpointing assumptions. As part of the autobiographical consultation, Brookfield (1995b) prompted educators to investigate their existing assumptions periodically. The purpose of the investigation was to unveil the power structures from which they originated. Based upon the educator’s current context, each assumption would be assess for its accuracy and validity so that a decision could be made to reject
the assumption, amend the assumption, or maintain the assumption. The origination of each participant’s assumption, if disclosed in the interviews, is noted.

Upon entering the classroom, all four participants revealed assumptions that had created a dilemma for them. Interestingly, some had the same type of dilemma multiple times during their career. Zell, Rachel, and Nathaniel, for instance, all held assumptions about family dynamics. Early in his career, Nathaniel assumed that all parents discussed the concept of college with their children and would support a child’s choice to attend college, but was shocked when he was asked to stop lying to the student about his being able to attend college. After seven years as a gifted teacher, Nathaniel assumed that parents would be happy their child was accepted into a gifted program. He noted how stunned he was to find a number of students from the same school decline the opportunity for a variety of academic and social issues.

In Zell’s first year, she assumed that an emotionally disturbed child was growing up in a neglectful home. Upon investigating the student’s placement in her class, Zell discovered that in previous years the child had a positive attitude. His parents’ incarceration had been the catalyst for his spiraling behavior. The next year Zell again assumed that a parent was neglecting her duty to support her child in school. After many requests to meet at a certain time of day, the mother complied and eventually divulged that she had been fired from one of her two jobs to attend the meeting.

Zell and Rachel had students who were not completing homework, so they requested a parent conference. It was Rachel’s first year, and she wanted to ensure student success. At the conference, the parent admitted that she was illiterate and could
not help the child. A similar assumption of neglectful parents impacted Zell in her veteran years. During a discussion at home, she realized that bilingual parents may not be biliterate. When homework was sent home in English and Spanish, the work was returned.

Helen and Nathaniel both held assumptions about other teachers and teacher education. Helen assumed that her dual certification coursework would prepare her for her job as teacher of ESOL students. She noted an extreme disconnect between the theory of ESOL education and the implementation of the program in the public school system. Nathaniel assumed that more experienced teachers would be willing to mentor new teachers. Both participants noted that the assumptions were based on information provided by the college through which they were certified.

Nathaniel and Helen both assumed that other teachers will put forth the same effort to support the students in their class. In Helen’s novice years, she was shocked to find out that second language learners, with extremely limited English, were being sent from a high school content classroom to a resource room instead of be afforded the opportunity to choose to stay in the class or go to the resource room. In Nathaniel’s veteran years, he assumed that all teachers appreciate receiving and discussing new information with others and that the teachers will begin to prepare and integrate the information in a timely fashion. The following section focuses on the participants’ reported experiences with reflection from the students’ perspective.
Participants’ Experiences with the Student Lens

Brookfield (1995b) encouraged practitioners to reflect upon their instruction from the students’ perspective. To understand this perspective requires the practitioner, through communication, to become aware of what the students already know, what they have experienced, and what their attitudes are toward learning. Additionally, Brookfield (1995b) suggested that practitioners monitor how students interpret the balance of power in the instructional context. Participants’ use of this lens varied. Based upon the context of the timeline, the themes of communication and power dynamics arose. Table 4 presents a comparison of the experiences between participants for this lens.
Table 4

Participants’ Experiences with Communication and Power within the Student Lens

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Communication and Power</th>
<th>Novice</th>
<th>Intermediate</th>
<th>Veteran</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>Communication builds trust. Students in gangs confide concerns.</td>
<td></td>
<td>a</td>
<td>a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Empowerment-Meet student needs. Students change conversation to life lesson.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Student diversity clashed with hidden curriculum.</td>
<td>a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zell</td>
<td>Communication increases knowledge of student. Talk through EBD student triggers.</td>
<td>Connect student interests to lesson to bridge gaps.</td>
<td>Family academic proficiency may be less than spoken language proficiency. Students frame understanding of curriculum through preferred manipulatives and project learning.</td>
<td>a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Empowerment - student choice Students connect lesson to life to and why they need it.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nathaniel</td>
<td>Communication increases knowledge of student. Use analogies of student prior knowledge to connect lesson.</td>
<td>Challenging level encouraged for even struggling students.</td>
<td>Discovers not all gifted students share same interests. Learn topics along with his profoundly gifted students.</td>
<td>a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Empowerment - student choice</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachel</td>
<td>Communication increases knowledge of student. Discussions with special needs children to help her revamp class procedures.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Getting to know prekindergarten child’s social emotional needs.</td>
<td>a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Empowerment - students make own connections.</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. a designates no fit between participant experience and Brookfield’s definition.
Communication. All of the participants considered the knowledge and operant level of understanding of the students at some point in their career. Three participants provided examples communication with students from two stages of their career. One participant provided examples from three stages of her career.

Helen, Zell, and Nathaniel all discussed events in which they took the time to communicate with students in order to work through a situation. Helen recalled a time during her novice years when refugee students confided in her their reasons for wanting to join the local gangs. Zell explained that in the middle of her career, she gathered information about students’ personal and academic interests in order to plan for connections between the lesson and the students’ interests with the hope of bridging academic gaps. Similarly, Nathaniel, in his novice years, learned more about the interests of his students so he could create analogies to connect the material to the students’ prior knowledge. Later in his career, he talked with his profoundly gifted students about their choices for topics of study that allowed for an authentic self-directed learning environment.

Early in their careers, Rachel and Zell were supporting students with emotional behavior disorder. They both took time to learn more about the students emotional needs. Zell noted that she began the practice as a way to get to know the child and possible triggers. Rachel did so in order to adjust classroom procedures to meet child’s needs.

Helen and Zell realized how much can be learned about a student’s idiosyncrasies if you find out about their family. In conversations during her intermediate years, Helen discovered how difficult it is for students being raised in a culturally or religiously
diverse home in which English is a second language. Zell realized late in her career that the knowledge of the family academic proficiency is as important as knowing the dominant language spoken in the home.

Power dynamics. At some point in their career, all of the participants considered the balance of power, or empowerment, within the instructional context from the students’ perspective. Two participants shared experiences from the novice and veteran stages of their careers. One participant shared experiences from only the novice and intermediate stages. Finally, one participant shared experiences from the veteran stage only.

All four participants recounted a scenario in which the instructional plan was altered to allow students an opportunity to control their learning. Rachel and Zell did not believe that the choices in the classroom should be theirs alone. In a classroom of four year olds, Rachel maintains certain controls, but the students are still able to independently gather input from the many resources of the classroom. Zell recalled learning about student empowerment and engagement during her Master’s program. At that time, she planned her instruction so that the students could own their knowledge and understand why they needed to learn it and how to connect the new knowledge to their circumstances. Now, Zell’s students are empowered to master the resources that fit their preferences and explore the curriculum through learning projects.

Helen and Nathaniel’s stories involving older students display significant similarities to those of Rachel and Zell. For example, Helen and Nathaniel both had prepared an activity for the class during their novice years. However, Helen noticed the
students were pushing back due to a school related tragedy, she stopped her planned lesson for the day and allowed the students to discuss the situation in a safe, nonjudgmental environment. In the middle of her career, Helen again pushed back against the intended curriculum when it did not benefit the students. Nathaniel, like Helen and Zell, encouraged students to participate in guiding their own learning and allowed students to challenge themselves beyond his instructional plans. During his veteran stage, Nathaniel relinquished his power in the intended curriculum for gifted students and allowed them to change the topics for upcoming projects from those he previously selected based upon his interests in the fine arts, to projects involving math, science, and construction. The following section focuses on the participants’ reported experiences consulting colleagues to assist in their reflective process.

Participants’ Experiences with the Colleague Lens

References of the participants’ experiences, viewing their work through the lens of their colleagues, varied based upon their interpretation of the theme. Brookfield (1995b) noted that conversations with colleagues promote “new ways to analyze and respond to problems” (p. 141). Without proper reflection, however, conversations “can also close down certain groups and perspectives” (Brookfield, 1995b, p. 142) by inadvertently reinforcing oppressive practices. Table 5 presents a comparison of the experiences between participants for this lens.
Table 5

Participants’ Experiences with the Lens of a Colleague

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Purposeful Discourse</th>
<th>Novice</th>
<th>Intermediate</th>
<th>Veteran</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>Discourse to problem solve</td>
<td>ESOL meetings—how to meet student needs and be in compliance.</td>
<td>Discussions with support member about changing status quo.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zell</td>
<td>Critical discourse</td>
<td>Master’s cohort prompted change.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Discourse to problem solve</td>
<td></td>
<td>Coteacher collaboration to develop a Kindergarten curriculum.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nathaniel</td>
<td>Critical discourse</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Model as coach; open to critique of method and content.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Discourse to problem solve</td>
<td></td>
<td>Magnet school; scheduled half-days for discourse and planning.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachel</td>
<td>Discourse to problem solve</td>
<td>Frequent discussions with coteacher instructional input or changes.</td>
<td>Same coteacher; same school.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: * designates no fit between participant experience and Brookfield’s definition

Critical discourse with colleagues. Brookfield (1995b) wrote, “Critical reflection is a social process” (p. 141). He reminded educators that they needed to impart the input of others in order to be fully aware of their instructional practices. Critical conversations
with colleagues can reveal hegemonic practices about pedagogy of which educators might otherwise be unaware. Those same conversations can provide new options for instruction. Only two of the participants reported engaging in critical conversations with colleagues for the purpose of evaluating their instruction for bias at some point in their career. One participant shared experiences from only the novice stage of her timeline, and one participant shared experiences from the veteran years of his timeline.

Though Zell and Nathaniel engaged in critical discourse for a similar purpose, the outcome of their experience was different. For instance, Zell noted that her Master’s program required a videotaped lesson and discourse with veteran teachers. Zell admitted she acquired a great deal of her insight toward developing a socially responsible pedagogy she thought students deserved. Nathaniel, however, did not open himself up to critique from other teachers until his most recent role as an academic coach. Now, his discourse with colleagues focuses on clarity of lessons, their pedagogic purpose and if students understood the lesson.

Problem solving with colleagues. Brookfield (1995b) referenced adult educator Myles Horton’s theory of how to help people learn from their own experiences. In doing so, Brookfield hoped to demonstrate that teachers can solve problems within their community of learners and do not always need to consult those they consider experts or coaches. Instead, he suggested combining the results of autobiographical reflection with the results from a critical consultation with a colleague to derive solutions that fit best within the individual’s context. All of the participants reported engaging in conversations purposefully with colleagues to change their instruction in order to solve
problems with student learning gaps at some point in their career. All participants provided examples from their intermediate years of teaching. One participant reported more discourse with colleagues in her novice years of teaching due to building assignments.

All the participants reported collaborating with colleagues for the purpose of problem solving during their intermediate years. Helen and Nathaniel referred to unscheduled conversations that focused on instructional resources, planning, and how to use the resources to fill students’ academic gaps. Nathaniel’s experience in the magnet school during his intermediate years provided a unique opportunity for scheduled half-days during which the teachers were able to collaboratively plan and discuss students who were struggling. Nathaniel, Rachel, and Zell both recalled the benefits of working with a coteacher. Zell worked with another teacher to solve the curriculum problem in their school to support Kindergarteners’ success in first grade. She also considered a coteacher to be the best person to provide an accurate alternative for instruction. Rachel recalled almost daily opportunities for deeper discussions of shared pedagogical beliefs.

Like Rachel, Helen reported that during her novice years, her team was located in the same building. They could assist her when she had concerns. They could also discuss quandaries erupting from a clash between instructional theory and reality. Unlike the rest of the participants’ narratives, Helen shared that in recent years she was the only ESOL teacher for an entire building. Therefore, opportunities for problem solving conversations with coworkers were limited to phone calls and department meetings. The
following section focuses on the participants’ reported experiences with reflection on scholarly literature and theory.

Participants’ Experiences with the Theoretical Lens

Participants’ narratives regarding their use of the theoretical lens varied based upon the context in which the theme was referenced. Brookfield (1995b) encouraged the use of formal theory to develop a connection to practice. Doing so assists with naming puzzling parts of our practice, prevents generalizing and adherence to undisputed norms, and provides a lens by which to view the political structures within the practitioners’ social context. Table 6 presents a comparison of the experiences between participants’ for this lens.
Table 6

Participants’ Experiences with the Theoretical Lens

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Experiences</th>
<th>Novice</th>
<th>Intermediate</th>
<th>Veteran</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>Status quo</td>
<td>__ a</td>
<td>Theory supported divergence from intended curriculum as a means to avoid the hidden curriculum.</td>
<td>__ a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Big picture</td>
<td>__ a</td>
<td>Theory a scapegoat for policy changes that do not support student academic needs.</td>
<td>__ a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zell</td>
<td>Label the experience</td>
<td>Used theory to identify behavior and techniques to manage.</td>
<td>Professional development provided theory to support pedagogical beliefs.</td>
<td>__ a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Status quo</td>
<td>Master’s coursework provided insight of trends to come; opened school to new student opportunity.</td>
<td></td>
<td>__ a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nathaniel</td>
<td>Label the experience</td>
<td>Theory from coursework helped him identify his unique learning style and then his students’.</td>
<td>Professional development provided theory to support advocacy efforts.</td>
<td>__ a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Big picture</td>
<td>__ a</td>
<td>Theory in Master’s coursework increased questions about district curriculum choices.</td>
<td>__ a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. *a* designates no fit between participant experience and Brookfield’s definition
Table 6 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Experiences</th>
<th>Novice</th>
<th>Intermediate</th>
<th>Veteran</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rachel</td>
<td>Label</td>
<td>Used theory to identify behavior and techniques to manage.</td>
<td>Professional development provided theory to support new instructional trends.</td>
<td>___</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Status quo</td>
<td>Convinced team professional development training helps understanding theory behind new curriculum.</td>
<td>___ a</td>
<td>___ a</td>
<td>___</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big picture</td>
<td>___ a</td>
<td>___ a</td>
<td>Theory in doctoral coursework prompted questioning of district curriculum choices.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* a designates no fit between participant experience and Brookfield’s definition Name experiences. Only three participants reported an instance in which knowledge of theory, or scholarly literature, helped them to label, or name, an experience. All three confirmed the event occurred during their novice stage of teaching. Rachel and Zell looked to theory to glean ideas for dealing with student behavior they had not experienced before. Nathaniel was able to find a connection between his personal learning style and his coursework.

Over the years, Zell, Nathaniel, and Rachel continued to consult theory for answers. All three participants were able build upon their desire to ensure that all students were afforded the same respect and access to the latest pedagogical knowledge.
Each attended a variety of professional development courses. For each participant, the experience was different.

Zell noted that the concepts underlying the instructional styles presented in the professional development courses she took were similar to the pedagogical beliefs she developed after becoming a parent of an exceptional learner. Nathaniel’s enrollment in classes to obtain further endorsements, validated his advocacy efforts to keep exceptional learners from being overlooked. Rachel’s encounters with scholarly literature through professional development coursework validated her desire to keep up to date with instructional trends.

Break familiar groupthink/status quo. Only three participants reported an instance in which knowledge of theory, or scholarly literature, helped them to push back against the status quo. Two participants experienced this push back against the cultural norms during their novice years of teaching. The third reported a similar incident during her veteran years of teaching.

Zell and Rachel where both able to utilize scholarly literature and research based practices to gradually improve the cultural norms on their grade level. Zell’s experiences with theory helped her to convince others that changing to a more student-centered instructional method could work. As more team members were exposed to the new theories, Zell was able to able to plan with her team frequently to adjust existing lesson plans. Rachel, too, was able to convince most of her team to engage theory from a professional development course in order to improve the planning and understanding of the writing curriculum.
During Helen’s veteran years, the culture of the school where she was employed was “deeply seated in American ethos and pushed against the true theory of the classical curriculum” it represented “as if to inculcate the diverse population.” With the support of one colleague, the pair were able to “push back against the xenophobic ‘cult-ure’ and avoid the Kool-Aid” (Interview 3; Timeline).

Seeing the bigger picture. Brookfield (1995b) noted that scholarly literature, research, and theory can “locate our practice with a social context” (p. 188). Reading scholarly literature helps teachers reframe what they see as a typical struggle in the classroom. The struggle changes from getting through the required standards while trying to meet the students where they are and within their interests to be redefined as a struggle between the curriculum department’s placing the expense of an adoption above the appropriateness of the materials for the various groups of students with unique learning needs. These groups may be ESOL, students with disabilities, marginal learners, accelerated learners, thematic learners, or even average learners. Three participants reported an instance in which knowledge of theory, or scholarly literature, helped them to question their interpretation of the big picture, or gain insight as to what may be creating the frame for an even bigger picture being unveiled outside the walls of the classroom. Two participants experienced this at the end of their intermediate years of teaching. The third reported her desire to understand the decision-making process occurred during her veteran years of teaching.

Nathaniel and Helen both found that the positions they held out of the classroom afforded each of them an opportunity to “see behind the veil” of administrative decisions
and how those decisions were linked back to a theoretical foundation. Through this view, Helen found that the theory applied to the ESOL program was inappropriate for the students it was meant to serve and that decision contributed to the disconnect between theory and practice. Nathaniel’s study of theory during his Master’s program motivated him to question the philosophical perspectives of the curriculum decision makers.

Even with her many certifications and endorsements, questioning curriculum choices had not been a part of Rachel’s toolkit until recently. After beginning her doctoral coursework, she began to inquire about the policies behind the current standards and why certain standards are selected for certain age groups. The following section focuses on the participants’ reported experiences within the levels of critical reflection.

Participants’ Experiences with Critical Reflection

Brookfield (1995b) maintained, “Reflection becomes critical when it has two distinctive purposes” (p. 8). The first purpose would be to assess the situation. To truly assess, a depth of awareness of the existing constructs must be developed. As a teacher’s awareness develops, the constructs can be better understood. At that point, the teacher can then determine which constructs “distort educational processes and interactions” (Brookfield, 1995b, p. 8). The second purpose of critical reflection “is to question assumptions that seem to make our teaching lives easier” (Brookfield, 1995b, p. 8), but really inhibit our long-term goals.

All of the participants’ narratives displayed an experience in which their understanding of how power structures disturb the educational processes called into question assumptions about their own practice, or how assumptions, once exposed, shed
light on the power structures that distorted the educational process. Two participants’ stories share significant events from the novice stage of their careers. The other two participants’ stories revealed a significant experience from the veteran stage of their careers. Table 7 presents a comparison of the participants’ experiences for this lens.

Table 7

Participants’ Experiences with Critical Reflection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Novice</th>
<th>Intermediate</th>
<th>Veteran</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Helen</td>
<td></td>
<td>a</td>
<td>Helen’s assumptions regarding the theories supporting classical education conflicted with power structure of the school culture and its disregard for how the theory of language acquisition could support diverse learners.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zell</td>
<td></td>
<td>a</td>
<td>Zell’s assumptions regarding student engagement and its power structure were questioned and evaluated during a professional development session presenting new research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nathaniel</td>
<td>Collaboratively planned, differentiated spelling tests still produced teacher-centered power structure; fostered existing assumptions.</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachel</td>
<td>Educational structure promoting required homework fostered assumption regarding parents’ literacy level.</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. a designates no fit between participant experience and Brookfield’s definition
Nathaniel and Rachel experienced an event during their novice years that prompted each of them to reflect critically upon their classroom practices. Both events centered on a routine, theoretically based, classroom activity: a spelling test for Nathaniel and a homework packet for Rachel. Each participant collaborated with the coteacher before implementing the activity. Both activities were built around a teacher-centered power structure in which assumptions about implementation are seldom assessed. Both noted that when the power structures that exist are not face-to-face, the distortion it has on the educational process increases. Nathaniel realized that he should assess procedures for grouping students periodically for assumptions so that educational constructs do not stifle students. Rachel recognized that her assumptions of parental ability originated from her personal experiences. She also admitted that even an assessment of the homework procedure may not have pinpointed that assumption at such an early time in her career.

Helen and Zell each recalled an event in their veteran years that was different from any other participant. However, both Zell and Helen, each collaborated with a colleague, questioned personal assumptions, assessed surrounding power structures and compared the context of the event to a correlating theory in which it was rooted. Helen’s critical event pitted the theories of language acquisition against the methods of classical education and the academy’s oppressive power structure fueled by a strong American ethos. Helen quickly found her assumptions of how an ESOL program would be conducted in a classical liberal arts curriculum challenged and distorted by a hidden curriculum. Zell attributed a significant transformation of her practice to a discussion
during a professional development workshop in which she began to question her assumptions about student engagement in light of new research. Like Rachel and Nathaniel, Zell’s pedagogical assumption was based upon preexisting power structures and outdated research in which teachers control the choices.

Summary

Analysis of the participants’ reflective experiences focused on Brookfield’s four lenses as they pertain to critical reflection. The first lens was engaging in autobiographical, or self, reflection in which the practitioner may begin to understand their preferences. The next lens promoted the consideration of the student’s perspective in which the practitioner would ultimately seek the opinion of the student regarding instructional style. For teachers of younger students, this proves more difficult, and the practitioner must find other methods when the student is still in the prewriting phase of development. The third lens encouraged practitioners to engage in discourse with colleagues about instructional concerns by considering their opinions and perspectives. The fourth lens encouraged practitioners to engage in reading scholarly literature as a way to validate current practices and acquire new ones. The last section, on critical reflection, provided examples of the outcomes of critical reflection from the participants’ collective experiences.

The following and final chapter presents a discussion of the research results. Connections are made between the literature review and the results. Implications for practice are offered. In the final section, I submit recommendations for future research on Brookfield’s (1995b) lenses of critically reflective practice.
CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This investigation sought to discover the development of critically reflective practice by veteran teachers over time. In addition, I sought to understand their reflective practice by examining their experiences in relation to Brookfield’s (1995b) lenses of critical reflection, which included the autobiographical lens (alternatively called the lens of self-reflection), the student lens, the colleague lens, and the theoretical lens. The development of a critical consciousness was an additional component of this research. Possible connections between the development of critical consciousness and the development of a critically reflective practice over time were also explored.

The participants were four veteran classroom teachers who had taught for seven years or more. Each completed an initial questionnaire regarding their teaching experience and degrees held, along with their current teaching assignment (Appendix F). During the study, I interviewed each participant three different times. In the third interview, we compiled a master timeline that displayed the events from their narratives (Appendices G-J).

This chapter includes five sections. The first section is a review of the research questions. The second section contains a summary and discussion of the results of the research in which connections are made between the results and the literature review. The third section provides implications for practice. The fourth section includes
recommendations for future research. The last section of the chapter provides a final summary of the inquiry.

Addressing the Research Questions

The leading question, What is the nature of the development of veteran teachers’ critically reflective practice over time?, framed the subsequent research for this study and generated further subquestions, as well as a second question. The subquestions were:

a. In what ways is Brookfield’s (1995b) autobiographical lens displayed in the narratives of the participants over time?

b. In what ways is Brookfield’s (1995b) lens considering the student perspective displayed in the narratives of the participants over time?

c. In what ways is Brookfield’s (1995b) lens considering critical collaboration with colleagues displayed in the narratives of the participants over time?

d. In what ways is Brookfield’s (1995b) lens considering theoretical literature displayed in the narratives of the participants over time?

The secondary research question that emerged was: In what ways, if any, do the participants’ narratives reveal the development of a critically social consciousness (Freire, 1990) through critical reflection over time?

The intent of this inquiry was to acquire and analyze narratives of the participants as a way to obtain possible answers to the research questions. In doing so, authentic information and insight might be discovered to promote additional research. The
following sections connect the literature and research questions and then the research questions to potential answers displayed in the narratives.

Becoming Critically Reflective over Time

Based upon Mezirow’s (1990) transformational learning theory, all four participating teachers appeared to have experienced transformational learning with at least two of Brookfield’s (1995b) lenses over their career. However, based solely upon Brookfield’s (1995b) concept of considering all four lenses when contemplating the reasons a current belief or assumption existed, only two of the participants met those criteria at some point in their career. Furthermore, none of the participants appeared to have developed a level of consistent critical reflection. Other incidents reported by the two participants that occurred after those summarized in Table 8 did not reflect the activation of the four lenses at the same time to resolve a dilemma.

This fluctuation within the reflective practice of teachers is not uncommon. According to Glen, Clarke, and Nicole (1995), the reflective practice of teachers may ebb and flow throughout a teacher’s career, but typically, the level increases over time. Table 8 displays the critically reflective experiences of the two participants.
Table 8

*Helen and Zell Becoming Critically Reflective over Time*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Autobiographical Lens</th>
<th>Student Lens</th>
<th>Colleague Lens</th>
<th>Theoretical Lens</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Inculcation of students:</td>
<td>Personal experiences; prior teaching experiences.</td>
<td>Meet student needs.</td>
<td>Compared discourse with cohort members and local staff.</td>
<td>Knowledge of ESOL procedures and Federal mandates.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Refused to drink the Kool-Aid.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zell</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Status quo: one-third of students expected to fail first grade.</td>
<td>Personal expectation; prior teaching experience in both K-1.</td>
<td>Meet student needs.</td>
<td>Discourse with teammate.</td>
<td>Knowledge of K curriculum from other districts and child development.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Allison-Roan (2006), Brownlee (2001), Garcia (2005), Schommer (2004) and Williams and Grudnoff (2011) noted that teachers’ level of experience influences their beliefs and level of awareness of social injustice. These beliefs and awareness then influence instructional choices and willingness to empower students, which in turn impact students academically and personally. Ostermann and Kottkamp (2004), MacDougall and Drummond (2005), and Minott (2006) validated the concept of collaboration as a way to strengthen output, improve discourse, and understand why a change in practice is necessary. Brookfield (1995b) suggested that teachers delve into scholarly literature to acquire new teaching methods or to validate whether to keep, change, or vacate a personal stance on policy, pedagogy, or social justice. Based upon
the narratives from this group of participants, veteran teachers’ critically reflective practice developed differently over time. A variety of experiences expanded each teacher’s self-awareness of the impact of their existing beliefs and practices. This awareness prompted each participant to consider changing one or more long-held beliefs regarding collaboration, theory or the influence of student interest on instructional choices.

Participants’ Use of the Autobiographical Lens

Unique circumstances inspired the critically reflective moments reported by each participant. The participants’ narratives disclosed changes related to Brookfield’s (1995b) autobiographical lens that stemmed from events in their personal and professional lives. In the instances summarized in the following sections, accompanied by tables summarizing the information, the participants’ narratives revealed that each event caused them to reflect upon the reason for their decision.

Personal changes. Kissling’s (2014) narrative inquiry noted the influence of lived experiences on the instructional choices teachers select and that most development continuums do not account for the influence teachers’ personal experiences have on their teaching. Mezirow (2012) noted that, as individuals acquire new information, they must consider adjustments to norms and decide to continue as usual or change. Within those norms exists a complex category of beliefs, values, and assumptions that Mezirow (2000/2012) termed habits of mind. These beliefs connect to and individual’s upbringing, spirituality, and knowledge of self. Changes require a significant event to initiate a
paradigm shift. As contradictions in the environment occur, an action is necessary to achieve a balance.

Common catalysts for changes in the participants’ lived experiences, as suggested by van Manen (1977), presented in the form of marriage, divorce, children, continuing education, and illness. Although these events were reported as significant life events by the participants, some events did not initiate a shift in their habits of mind. Interestingly, all participants experienced a marriage prior to their seventh year of teaching. However, none of the participants reported a change in core beliefs or assumptions or the questioning of any long-held beliefs as suggested by. The only reported consequence disclosed by the participants regarding marriage or divorce was that it became a catalyst for changing schools. This suggests that some personal events, while significant to the individual, do not always promote a change, but might instead allow the individual to continue on as usual as Mezirow (2012) stated.

Three participants, Zell, Nathaniel, and Helen, changed schools frequently. They often stayed less than three years at any school. Rachel stayed in one place the longest: a total of seven years at one school. For Zell, Helen, and Nathaniel, changing schools also became a stimulus for questioning assumptions and existing beliefs as Kissling (2014) posited.

As Helen began her first year teaching, her mental health deteriorated as she found herself homeless, hungry, and almost financially destitute. The move to a different state and provisional pay scale wages prompted Helen to rethink her decision. The support that came from her team when they learned of her situation had a lasting impact
on her level of cognitive empathy, as mentioned by Stojiljković, Todorović, Djigić, and Dosković (2013). Rachel’s cognitive empathy was also impacted by personal experiences. The abuse her mother experienced as a child and the abdominal surgery she experienced helped her become more aware of the social implications surrounding physical and mental illness. These experiences prompted her to display more empathy towards students and colleagues.

Mezirow (2012) noted that the change of pragmatic assumptions requires an immediate and drastic event. Nathaniel reported that the death of his grandmother when he was a teenager caused a disconnect that kept him from bonding with others. It was not until the adoption of his son that he discovered a desire to bond with others and identify as a person (Field notes 3). This experience demonstrates Schommer’s (1990) concept that change cannot easily occur in isolation, but may require additional support and time.

Zell had a drastic experience that required additional support and time as Schommer (1990) suggests. During her time away from the classroom, her firstborn child died abruptly. She reported her instructional perspective changed from egocentric and in control before this event to one in which her new value for life was reflected in her personal interactions. Table 9 summarizes the information presented in this section.
Table 9

*Changes to the Autobiographical Lens: Personal*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Circumstance</th>
<th>Novice Years</th>
<th>Intermediate Years</th>
<th>Veteran Years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>Single, homeless, hungry, and struggling with her decision</td>
<td>Peer loan: no longer homeless; married; one school</td>
<td>Moved out of country; had two children; returned after 10 years; two schools</td>
<td>One school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zell</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Two schools; marriage #1;</td>
<td>Divorced; marriage #2; two schools;</td>
<td>Three schools; loss of newborn; son #1: special needs, 10-year hiatus; Son #2: eight year hiatus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nathaniel</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>One school; Single</td>
<td>Two schools; married/divorced</td>
<td>Two schools; married; adopted child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachel</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>One school; Married</td>
<td>Surgery</td>
<td>Two schools</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Professional changes. Interestingly, all the participants mentioned they began their career implementing a pedagogical style tied to their youth—either because of a positive experience they continued to emulate, or a style opposite of a teacher with whom they encountered a negative experience (Brookfield, 1995b). Zell, Rachel, and Nathaniel reported that they implemented an instructional style as a result of a negative experience during their youth. Table 10 provides a summary of the information.
Darling-Hammond (1996) referred to a teacher as a person who continues to learn. Each participant confirmed that they continued to improve their practice through continuing coursework in content areas and pedagogy. Finley, Marble, Copeland, Ferguson, and Alderete (2000) contended that a teacher’s motivational intent has a stronger impact on a learner than the curriculum itself, inferring that an authentic model for students to emulate is a motivated teacher-as-learner. This concept showed up in the narratives of Rachel, Zell, and Nathaniel. Rachel began her career with a Master’s degree, but felt compelled to improve her practice by taking professional development workshops, obtaining an ESOL and a reading endorsement, and earning her National Board Certification. Zell returned to college to earn her Master’s degree and frequently volunteered for professional development opportunities. Nathaniel obtained his gifted and ESOL certifications and was later motivated to obtain his Master’s degree.
Table 10

Changes to the Autobiographical Lens: Professional

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Initial</th>
<th>Novice Years</th>
<th>Intermediate Years</th>
<th>Veteran Years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>MAT; MATESOL</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>Ph.D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zell</td>
<td>Bachelor’s degree</td>
<td>Master’s degree</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>Two professional development cohorts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nathaniel</td>
<td>Bachelor’s degree</td>
<td>Gifted endorsed</td>
<td>ESOL endorsement</td>
<td>Master’s; Ph.D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachel</td>
<td>MAT</td>
<td>Professional development Cohort</td>
<td>Reading endorsement</td>
<td>National Board Certification; Ph.D</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participants’ Consideration of the Student Lens

Brookfield’s (1995b) consideration of the student’s lens primarily focused on gathering written feedback from adult learners regarding lessons taught in order for the teacher to reflect upon it and improve. For teachers to consider the perspectives of students under 18, other methods may need to be employed. Consideration the student lens was displayed in the narratives of all four veteran teachers. Each disclosed events during their career that perpetuated an evaluation of, and eventual change to, their perspectives or assumptions about student interests and needs. Other research, supporting the actions of the participants, promoted the concept that a teacher’s ability to reflect upon the views of others as well as making connections between students’ lives
and the content must be developed. Below are summarized examples displayed in the narratives of the participants that demonstrate Brookfield’s (1995b) idea of considering the student’s lens as a way to become critically reflective.

The research of Delpit (2003), Hamre and Pianta (2005), Hattie (2012), and Wyre (2007) suggested that teachers find effective ways to connect the content to students’ lives outside of school. Helen, Zell, and Rachel reported that they entered the classroom with a desire to help students do their best and feel safe and respected. However, when Helen noticed her high school ESOL students were not connecting with the material, she obtained comments from the students about how unrealistic and disconnected the materials were from their lives. This feedback prompted Helen to educate herself on the interests and personal histories of her students. Zell admitted that before the sudden death of her newborn, she did not consider the students’ lives or interests outside of school when she selected activities or planned lessons. She noted that considering the interests of students has become a habit of mind. Rachel reported that her consideration of the student’s lens had always involved empathy based upon the students’ current context and lived experiences. Rachel’s description of a yearlong struggle to understand the viewpoint of others and promote a positive classroom climate is similar to results from studies by Bjekić (2000) as well as Stojiljković, Stojanović and Dosković (2011).

Nathaniel’s narrative displayed multiple events that prompted a change in his consideration of the students’ perspectives based upon family culture. He also reported an event demonstrating the results of Gay’s (2000) study, which confirmed a positive correlation between encouraging attitudes and expectations of the ability levels of diverse
populations and their achievement levels. By extending the same encouraging attitude and expectations to the rest of the class, he realized a similar affect from the entire class as Gay (2000) posited. Table 11 displays these findings.

Table 11

*Changes to the Student Lens*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Entering Service</th>
<th>Novice Years</th>
<th>Intermediate Years</th>
<th>Veteran Years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>Desire to help students understand the complexities of English.</td>
<td>Listened to student concerns about disconnect between content and student experiences.</td>
<td>Got to know about student interest when possible.</td>
<td>Not always able to make personal connections, but attempts to keep abreast of current trends.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zell</td>
<td>Desire to help students become successful learners and feel respected.</td>
<td>Differentiated material based upon academic performance.</td>
<td>Continued to select options available to students.</td>
<td>Death of baby; value placed on student personal choices; Connect topic to student interests and experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nathaniel</td>
<td>Provide a safe haven; respect all learners; extension activities for exceptional learners.</td>
<td>Epiphany- not all families encourage college option.</td>
<td>Allowing students options and personal goal setting</td>
<td>Not all gifted students share same interests. Allow students to choose topics of study in the gifted classroom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachel</td>
<td>Desire to help students succeed; feel safe and respected.</td>
<td>Emotional empathy; try to understand students’ current context; children with different behavioral and academic needs.</td>
<td>Empathy for children with unstable life experiences.</td>
<td>Cognitive empathy developed; positive, safe classroom climate; focus on demoted student.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Participants’ Consultation of the Collaborative Lens

According to Brookfield (1995b), becoming critically reflective requires a teacher to consult with their colleagues regarding previously held assumptions and perspectives in order to provide better support for students. MacDougall and Drummond (2005) explained that engaging in collaborative reflection provides a deeper understanding of one’s beliefs. The participants’ descriptions of interactions with colleagues varied. The narratives of some participants displayed ways in which they employed the experiences of colleagues with the intent of gaining another teacher’s perspective in order to improve their own practice (Brookfield, 1995b). The participants revealed that the frequency with which they sought the opinion of others depended on their perspective at the time, the cultural expectation of the building, and availability of colleagues. The following paragraphs provide summaries from the narratives and correlating research.

Hodkinson and Hodkinson (2003) studied the influence of the environment of teachers’ practice. The researchers reported a positive correlation between the culture of the school and the relationships among colleagues. This supports Zell’s comparison of school environments. She described the interaction with colleagues at her first assignment to be completely different from her experience at the second school. Zell noted that the open and inviting culture among teachers at the second school was a contributing factor. Helen reported that even though she was in survival mode her first year of teaching and thought nothing of reflection, her colleagues took a genuine interest in her professional and personal well-being. This display of empathy influenced her to pass that feeling on to the students.
Zell noted that the Master’s program allowed for lengthy discussions in which the theory could be discussed as it applied to current practice in the classrooms of the more veteran teachers in the cohort. Zell disclosed that there were many times she did not have the classroom experiences to make the necessary connections. However, during the discussions she was able to learn vicariously through the discourse with her colleagues in the cohort. In this example, Zell’s cohort demonstrated Lave and Wenger’s (1991) community of practice, where members with similar interests gather for a self-defined purpose. As a member of the cohort, Zell also described results similar to those in Berkley et al.’s (1990) four-year collaboration project in which collaboration between experienced teachers and researchers helped bridge the gap between research and practice.

Zell, Rachel, and Nathaniel noted years in which they cotaught. They described situations during these years in which they discussed the needs of a student who was not responding to the current methods of instruction. Elbaz (1988) and Ostermann and Kottkamp (2004) studied the formal and informal exchanges of viewpoints and ideas between teachers in order to bring about different instructional techniques.

Nathaniel recalled a unique collaborative experience in his intermediate years at a school following the Core Knowledge curriculum. During his first year, he was part of the Fine Arts team teaching drama to primary grades. This group of specialists met often to coordinate lessons for the school. The following year he returned to the classroom and reported that in addition to their daily planning time, grade-level teachers met for half a day every few weeks for more in-depth collaboration. Making collaboration a priority
echoes the research of Glickman, Gordon, and Ross-Gordon (2001). These findings are displayed in Table 12.

Table 12

*Changes to the Collaborative Lens*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Novice Years</th>
<th>Intermediate Years</th>
<th>Veteran Years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>School culture/schedule permitted collaboration as needed.</td>
<td>Position did not allow frequent contact with other ESOL teachers.</td>
<td>She was the only ESOL teacher in the building. Teammates were available by phone and sometimes at department meetings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zell</td>
<td>Second school’s environment built around collaboration of pilot programs. Master’s cohort provided <em>community of practice.</em></td>
<td>Cotaught classroom-opportunities for partner planning.</td>
<td>Shared plans and information at RtI meetings; Professional development video taping/evaluating instruction common practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nathaniel</td>
<td>Cotaught class, but only a few exchanges to confirm differentiation ideas complied with IEP.</td>
<td>Informal exchanges during meetings; later, half day planning with team every few weeks.</td>
<td>As academic coach, consults with teachers regarding what they need to help student success.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachel</td>
<td>Cotaught; Cohort of team on content and instructional methods.</td>
<td>Cotaught class and partner planning.</td>
<td>Cotaught class and partner planning; After moving to a new school the culture of the school provided few opportunities for collaboration.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Participants’ Consultation of the Theoretical Lens

Brookfield (1995b) posited that teachers should consult theory and scholarly literature throughout their career in order to keep up with evolving research or to help name a situation. All of the participants revealed the impact of theory on their changing career. Table 13 displays these changes. When the participants believed the school’s theoretical stance met the needs of the students, their narratives revealed a willingness to put their personal perspective aside. When the participants were forced to apply a research-based instructional method that did not appear to be meeting the needs of some, or all, of their students, however, they told of the different ways they pushed back against the status quo. Research by Argyris and Schön (1975), Larrivee (2000), as well as Luft and Zhang (2014), support these scenarios revealed in the participants’ narratives.

Larrivee (2000) reported in her research that effective teachers are open to changes in their philosophy. Nathaniel’s experiences with educational theories he experienced in the different schools in which he taught broadened his perspective over time, thus giving him the opportunity for new ways of thinking about instruction based upon what fit the culture of the school and the students he taught. Helen, Rachel, and Zell mentioned that their first year in the classroom, they implemented the instructional methods utilized by the members of their academic team. These experiences echo the work of Argyris and Schön (1975), who posited that classroom teachers do not always implement their own theoretical beliefs. Additional notes, interviews, and timelines of the participants reflected the conclusions of Luft and Zhang (2014). Their longitudinal study of secondary science teachers revealed the theoretical culture of a school influences
the beliefs and practices of new teachers more than the theoretical viewpoints presented in their certification programs.

However, Larrivee (2000) also contended that a mismatch in philosophy and practice could negatively impact student growth. Helen’s narrative revealed a negative impact due to an unmatched philosophy and practice. She mentioned that as regulation changes were imposed due to the No Child Left Behind Act, the instructional and data collection requirements superseded the needs of the students to a point where the theories she studied during her TESOL Master’s program were essentially mute.

Nathaniel’ recalled a disconnection between theory and practice that occurred in his novice years. He stated that in college, the constructivist theories best matched his view of what teaching should be. However, for the first few years he worked at a school utilizing a scripted curriculum for every minute of every lesson. His opportunities for implementing a constructivist method were limited.
Table 13

*Changes to the Theoretical Lens*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Novice Years</th>
<th>Intermediate Years</th>
<th>Veteran Years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>ESOL theory; Local school application. Philosophy and theory mostly match.</td>
<td>NCLB causes disconnect between ESOL theory and practice; leads to rebellion.</td>
<td>Disconnect continues, but more experience working around it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zell</td>
<td>Implemented provided curriculum vs theory learned in undergraduate or Master’s program.</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachel</td>
<td>Initially personal theory from Master’s program conflicted with local school options. Implemented Magda Berger to bridge. Professional development with cohort opened more options.</td>
<td>More professional development increased understanding of school options; National Board Certification increased theoretical knowledge.</td>
<td>Move to new state-conflict of previous and current local school options.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participants’ Development of Social Consciousness

Freire (1990) posited that the development of critical social consciousness would occur when critical reflection was employed, but a person’s level of social consciousness was dependent upon the context. From the analysis of the narratives, I gleaned that life
experiences and maturity are the common catalysts for the development of critical social consciousness. Three of the four participants’ narratives began with an event from their youth in which the participant witnessed, or experienced, unjust treatment in a classroom setting. Zell and Rachel separately witnessed a teacher treating a student differently and, in their youthful opinion, unjustly. Nathaniel recalled receiving different treatment from his teachers prior to his diagnosis of ADHD. Furthermore, none of his teachers recommended gifted testing for him. As an adult, Helen witnessed the unjust treatment of second-language learners during her certification program. She empathized with the students because she had been the outsider as a youth visiting family overseas who attempted to expose her to international cultures. The lived experiences of the participants, prior to entering the classroom, provided a platform for growth. Cruikshank (2008) stated that consciousness was not an automatic state of being, but instead “it comes through being . . . curious, and often furious” (p. 1). The research relating to social consciousness focused on awareness of diversity or confronting the status quo. The following subsections reveal evidence of changes in participants’ social consciousness. Table 14 displays this evidence.

Awareness. McKinley (2004), Pajares (1992), and Stronge (2002) reported that teachers’ awareness of the diversity of their students impacted the academic and social outcomes in the classroom. All of the narratives provided evidence of growth in the participants’ level of social consciousness at some point. Each revealed a reproductive, or inculcating, approach to teaching the first year, as each adopted the rituals and routines of the school culture. It was not until their intermediate years in education that Nathaniel
and Helen disclosed events that led to resistant behaviors. Nathaniel pushed back when another wanted him to use a scripted curriculum. He learned from his novice years that such programs did not allow for the making of adequate connections for exceptional learners.

Helen resisted the status quo when the staff received advice not to discuss certain gang-related trends, but to respond with an administrative statement. Instead, Helen attempted to learn more about the attractiveness of membership from the students’ perspective and then provided the students with opposing cultural norms so they could make an informed decision. This example echoes Messiou and Ainscow (2015), who posited a positive correlation between the improved cultural knowledge of the teacher and students alike. Likewise, Zell reported that as her awareness of different family dynamics increased, she made adjustments in her interactions with parents and students. Research by Freeman and Vasconcelos (2010) also supports teachers’ who develop a new understanding and put it into practice.

Howard (2001) and McKinley (2004) posited the need for changing instruction to be relevant to students based upon their age, culture, and needs. This is displayed in Nathaniel’s narrative when he began to use analogies to assist the students in making a connection to the material as well as making changes to his instructional style based upon the students’ interests. Rachel’s narrative supports these research results. She stated in her novice years, she felt compelled to change her lessons annually. She advised that the changed was often inspired by professional development courses she took during the year to improve her pedagogical knowledge.
Advocating. Three of the four participants reflected upon events, as Allison-Roan (2006) submitted, in which they each considered there to be an issue with justice or equity. These events, as revealed through the narratives, demonstrate levels of consciousness developing closer to that which Freire (1990) described as critical consciousness. Although Nathaniel was aware of the inequities resulting from the scripted curriculum during his novice years, he reported that he was not aware of how to compensate, other than finding moments during the day to discuss analogies. He later realized the students’ lack of experiences resulted in numerous academic, cultural, and economic gaps which prompted him to inquire further into the curriculum choices for instruction when he interviewed for future positions.

Allison-Roan (2006) posited a correlation between the degree to which a teacher confronts oppressive elements of the status quo and the development of the teacher’s critical practices. The narratives of all participants displayed examples of this level of social consciousness. During Nathaniel’s veteran years, he taught a student receiving special education and gifted services. When he pressed for more effort to be made to supply the student with device he thought necessary to support the student’s success, the principal told Nathaniel that he was not the only advocate for students in the school.

Rachel pushed back against the status quo of a local school in which she taught third grade. The culture of school did not provide emotional or cognitive support for the demoted student in her class. Rachel worked to confront the oppressive elements, such as those put forth in the Allison-Roan (2006) study by helping the student beyond the
typical interventions to allow additional practice. The student made a full year’s progress in academic areas he had not been able to during the previous year.

Helen and Zell both pushed back against the accepted instructional style of their respective schools when they became aware of its failure to successfully support their students. Both events provide examples of Allison-Roan’s (2006) results. Although they both pushed back against the status quo, the catalyst for this critical display of social consciousness was different for each participant and occurred at different times in their careers. The incident for Helen occurred during her novice years, but for Zell it was in her intermediate years.
### Table 14

**Changes to the Level of Social Consciousness**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Initial Stance</th>
<th>Novice Years</th>
<th>Intermediate Years</th>
<th>Veteran Years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zell</td>
<td>Childhood-witnessed disrespectful treatment of classmate.</td>
<td>Adopted school culture—shared lessons. Parent has responsibilities to family before teacher dynamics.</td>
<td>Cannot let students/family believe they</td>
<td>Family dynamics of second language learners. Parents cannot help child if cannot read English.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nathaniel</td>
<td>Personal negative classroom experience as ADHD and gifted learner.</td>
<td>Adopted school curriculum/scripted; inculcating. Used analogies to expand student connections. Unaware of other options.</td>
<td>Refused to work with scripted curriculum. It didn’t allow for making connections to the learner.</td>
<td>Advocated for student to get needed device; Willing to amend instructional plans to fill experiential learning gaps.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachel</td>
<td>Childhood-witnessed disrespectful treatment of classmate.</td>
<td>Adopted school culture; later sought district training to meet student needs. Changed lessons annually to keep relevant to student interest.</td>
<td>Sought endorsements to continuously increase awareness of instructional options to use as student needs change.</td>
<td>Supported demoted student beyond the status quo of the school culture.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Relationship to the Literature

The literature reviewed in this inquiry focused on how teacher understanding and practice with the concept of reflection could be cultivated to operate at a critical level. Many educational researchers over the years encouraged teachers to reflect on their instructional choices (Apple, 1988; Freire, 1990; Hook, 1996; Knowles, 1988; Mezirow, 1995, 1998, 2000; Vygotsky, 1987). Most focused on improving teachers’ overall practice which included reflecting critically, but did not delve into how that depth of reflection might be accomplished by a K-12 classroom teacher.

It was Brookfield (1995b) who stated that developing a critically reflective practice is a “slow and incremental” (p. 241) process. At its root is the act of critical reflection. Critical reflection is itself informed by three intellectual traditions of critical pedagogy, reflective practice, and adult learning. Thus, the process of critical reflection must be viewed as more than just pinpointing “assumptions of power and hegemony by viewing what we do through different lenses” (Brookfield, 1995b, p. 207). Critical pedagogy, as it informs critical reflection, requires teachers to check their current knowledge gradually, and ways of conducting their work, for oppressive ideas and practices. The idea of reflective practice also prompts teachers to understand, question, and investigate what they learn and how they apply it to their practice.

However, reflective habits are learned within an imposed culture. Therefore, a teacher’s best practice in one school may be view as mediocre at another. Valli (1992) emphasized that reflective practice should not become a process conducted in a lockstep manner completed as a program goal to attend to technical problems. Instead, it should
occur organically as concerns of power enter an individual’s instructional practice. Mezirow (2009) highlight the necessity of bringing the assumptions and perspectives rooted in a teacher’s childhood and youth to a level of critical consciousness in order for proper assessment to occur. However, he (2009) also noted that such an assessment is unique to the functions of adult learning because adult learning does not typically begin with content. Instead, it begins with what Linderman (as referenced in Brookfield, 1995b) referred to as understanding “the situations and experiences which mold adult life” (p. 33). The teachers who experienced critical reflection provided a lasting example of how they challenged assumptions within their practice and came to understand the power structures that had distorted their experiences, thus allowing them the opportunity growth toward critical consciousness.

As reported previously in the literature review, the construct of critical reflection resides within multiple theories. Its purpose within each theory is to provide a strategic lens through which to view the origins of an individual’s reality. The theory of transformational learning (Mezirow, 2003) suggests a process that adult learners can follow in order to enact change. To summarize this theory, Mezirow (1990) explained that the process begins when a teacher encounters a dilemma in which his or her existing beliefs or understandings about the appropriate methods of classroom instruction come into conflict with the views held by another person. In education, some examples could be students, colleagues, new research, policy, administration, parents, or any combination of these.
Once the teacher reaches a level of consciousness that recognizes the issue and the necessity to address it, then the teacher must enact the practice of reflection on a critical level. This phase of Mezirow’s (1990) theory involves advising the teacher/learner to consider not just how something is done, but why it is done that way. For instance, the teacher/learner should investigate if the teacher/learner socially constructed the conflicted belief in a different context, or was it an inherited belief? The need for this level of depth is what Brookfield (1995b) realized needed expansion. If a teacher develops a social awareness and realizes that his or her practice needs to change, then the pressure exists to ensure that the change does not negatively affect other students.

Brookfield (1995b) suggested that a teacher becomes critically reflective when, in an effort to resolve the dilemma, the teacher ultimately consults all four sources of self, student, colleague, and theory. This is different from Mezirow’s (1990) perspective that critical reflection occurred when previously held beliefs and assumption were examined for accuracy based on a new situation prior to deciding if a change in the belief will occur.

Findings and Implications

The purpose of this inquiry was to investigate the development of teachers’ critically reflective practices over time. Four veteran teachers participated in three interviews. During the interviews, all participants revealed critical moments of their lived experiences in and out of the classroom that served as catalysts for changes in practice. Each participant completed a timeline before each interview to act as a visual
aid to help support his or her narrative. Data were analyzed using Freire’s (1990) levels of social consciousness and the Brookfield’s (1995b) lenses for the development of a critically reflective practice. Subthemes for each of Brookfield’s lenses emerged during data analysis.

Findings suggest that the participants’ level of social consciousness varied depending upon the context, but all of the participants experienced a level of critical social consciousness at some point in their career. Findings also suggest that participants consistently engaged their autobiographical lens when reflecting, followed by the student lens. All of the participants experienced some growth in their reflective practice; however, none of the participants displayed a fully developed critically reflective practice.

Limited research pertains to the development of teachers’ critically reflective practice over the extent of their teaching career. Likewise, there is a dearth of information investigating teachers’ reflective practice through Brookfield’s (1995b) four lenses. Investigating how teachers implement reflection in their practice over their career provides a unique perspective into the development of this important practice. Findings from this inquiry may provide a starting point for future professional learning regarding the development of critically reflective practice and for school administrators to develop interview questions about a teacher’s reflective practice. These findings may also influence ways to model reflection in teacher training.

A dearth of information in the form of narrative inquiries exists regarding the development of veteran teachers’ critically reflective practice over time. This narrative
inquiry adds to the research base for these themes. The results of this inquiry have several implications for local schools and university programs as they support the reflective practices of current and future teachers.

Preservice Training on Reflective Practice

The participants all reported similar memories of reflective activities they completed during their certification program. Although they attended different schools and different types of programs, all reported these activities to be little more than a report on what they observed, what opinion or belief they held, or how they were able to connect the theories they studied to the observed classroom. Based upon their narratives, no one asked them to have deep conversations with the cooperating teachers or speculate how they would meet the needs of struggling students in the class.

Teacher education programs should consider ways to emphasize this type of discourse with veteran teachers in the classroom during the certification program. Zell and Rachel both reported that it was during the discussions they had with more experienced teachers and educators that they gained unique insight into teacher-student interactions, home-school connections, and conflicting theory and available curriculum. Zell also admitted that these conversations greatly prompted changes in her attitude towards the student within the instructional context. Preservice teachers also need experiences focusing on individual students in order to identify any specific learning needs in order to include that perspective as they plan instruction. Information gathered from the participants’ narratives mentioned that although they knew from the coursework that students learned differently and in diverse ways, they found it difficult to match the
resources at hand with the students’ needs. Therefore, a greater emphasis on shared experiences between preservice and veteran teachers during the certification process has the potential to increase the social awareness of the unique challenges found in the classroom.

Time for Reflection

The teachers in this inquiry reported how overwhelmed they felt during their first year in the classroom. For example, Rachel mentioned that although she accepted the scope and sequence of the curriculum along with any of the activities passed on to her by her teammates, she did not have in-depth conversations with any of them. In fact, all of the teachers reported that they managed some type of collaboration with colleagues during the first year, but none reported what Brookfield (1995b) or Mezirow (2003) would define as deep, reflective dialogue that would bring about change in pedagogical practice, much less growth toward critical reflection. Furthermore, with each extreme change in venue or grade level, the participants reported feeling like it was their first year all over again. It might serve all teachers to have a structured time to engage in reflective discourse with a teammate or other mentor, such as an academic coach, as they experience instructional dilemmas with students. Lindeman (1925) suggested that, as adults, teachers seek to learn beyond the content. In doing so, adults add meaning to their lives by knowing what purpose their efforts add to the context in which they operate.

Professional Development

Local districts and other professional development planners should continue the contemporary models promoting frequent interaction within teacher teams and between
teachers and the mentoring staff and administration that support them. Evidence from Rachel and Zell’s narratives confirm that when adult learners chose their own professional development experiences, they are more likely to implement the new information into their practice. Later, the teacher is more likely to reflect on the effect of the new information on their future experiences within their current context. An example of this type of professional development experience would be a critical friends group.

However, Finley et al. (2000) noted that, as self-directed learners, teachers must voluntarily participate in such groups. Participants in such groups must be comfortable enough with group members to reflect deeply and reveal what they perceive as personal or professional failings. Such encounters with reflection obligate each member of the group to confront existing beliefs about students, theory, and pedagogy. If only one member of a group changes his or her beliefs to something different from the team culture, conflict similar to what Rachel and Nathaniel experienced during their novice years may occur.

To promote this trust and encourage critical reflection, professional development facilitators should have personally experienced opportunities to develop a critically reflective practice in order to provide a validated example of the process. Often facilitators have only experienced critical reflection or developed a workable process that fits their own needs after they leave the classroom, as Nathaniel referred to in his narrative. Facilitators need to be able to help teachers go beyond sharpening technical skills. Instead, they should help teachers uncover any disconnect and its cause in order to begin the necessary instructional changes. As mentioned earlier, Rachel noted a number
of disconnects between her certification coursework and required practice in the classroom. When attempts to resolve the disconnect by conversing with her teammates failed, she attended professional development courses that increased her content efficacy and allowed her to not only address her concerns, but also those of the team. In addition, Rachel was able to gather a cohort from her team to attend professional development together. Doing so afforded all of them exposure to the same content information, creating equal efficacy for each member and thus, providing a foundation for discourse about how the information might impact instruction for student groups.

Recommendations for Further Research

This narrative inquiry utilized only four participants who, at some point, attended the same university. Additionally, the participants were now, or had been, enrolled in one of the university’s advanced degree programs. When this study was conducted, all participants held at least a Master’s degree and worked in different school districts. This limitation provides an opportunity for future research to be considered to include more participants or participants from other universities; specific advanced degrees; the same school district; or more school districts. Further analysis of this inquiry for additional themes that were beyond the scope of this dissertation could be conducted, thus expanding upon the existing research by producing different outcomes.

First, four teachers participated in this study. Two received certification through traditional undergraduate programs, and two received certification through alternative programs. All reported a positive level of instructional preparedness and a desire to positively impact the lives of the students. However, all reported a lack of preparedness
for the plethora of duties and paperwork, as well as disconnect between the theory to which they were exposed and the curriculum and culture of their first job. Each participant admitted to a dependence on colleagues to navigate the new experience. Of the four participants, only one described the interactions with colleagues to extend beyond question and answer sessions. I would find it interesting to focus a study on how certification programs link theory to action, not only in pedagogy, but how to approach the topic of critical discourse with colleagues as one way to develop critical reflection.

The second recommendation for future research considers the ultimate goal of teaching, which is to impact student learning. This inquiry did not include input from any of the participants’ students. A correlation could exist between the participants’ current reflective and pedagogical practices and the students’ perspective of learning and achievement over the course of a school year. Including this additional, first hand perspective of the student in the data analysis could potentially to strengthen this inquiry.

Third, this inquiry only had one participant from middle school and no participants from high school. The middle school participant was in a unique position of ESOL support teacher most of her career. It would add depth to the research to interview veteran middle school and high school classroom teachers to see if their reflective practices developed in a different way than those presented in this study. The culture of schools at the upper levels may influence teachers differently.

Fourth, this inquiry was conducted with teachers who had experiences in schools located in metropolitan school districts in the southeast. A similar inquiry was conducted in a small school district the northwest among elementary teachers who were all part of
the same religious organization. I would find it interesting to conduct an inquiry with participants native to other regions of the United States at each of the PreK-12 levels and possibly in more rural areas. The school context might differ significantly based upon the region, the size of the population and the diversity of students with exceptional and academic needs that it supports.

Finally, the four teachers in this inquiry reported a fluctuation in their level of social consciousness as they moved from one teaching position to another. Occasionally, they reported a change from one year to the next. The decreases in their reported level of social consciousness correlated to the dilemmas each faced. Sometimes these dilemmas were personal, and sometimes they were professional. This inquiry did not focus on the participants’ professional learning continuum per se. That continuum focuses on the development of teachers’ tasks, but not the influence of what is happening in teachers’ lives. A study to correlate teachers’ reflective practice regarding the development of their instructional skills with the teachers’ reflections on lived experiences could add depth to this line of inquiry.

Final Thoughts

The purpose of this narrative inquiry was to investigate the development of teachers’ critically reflective practices over time through the application of Brookfield’s (1995b) lenses of reflection. I sought to understand the influence of life and academic experiences on instructional choices over time. I also sought to examine the interplay of exposure to theory, discourse with colleagues and students, and development of a consciousness of the social context. Four veteran classroom teachers, of seven years or
more, participated in the study. I interviewed them two different times. The third time we met to review their story and complete timelines that displayed the events from their narratives.

Analysis of the participants’ reflective experiences focused on Brookfield’s (1995b) four lenses. The focus of the first lens was engaging in autobiographical, or self, reflection in which the practitioner may begin to understand their preferences. The next lens prompted teachers to consider the student’s perspective in which case the practitioner would ultimately seek to understand the students’ preferred instructional style. For teachers of younger students, this proves more difficult, and the practitioner must find other methods when the student is still in the prewriting phase of development. The third lens encouraged practitioners to engage in discourse with colleagues about instructional concerns by considering their opinions and perspectives. The fourth lens encouraged practitioners to engage in reading scholarly literature as a way to validate current practices and acquire new ones. The final component, critical consciousness, addressed the connections between fluid levels of consciousness (Freire, 1990) and the development of each participants’ critically reflective practice.

As the process unfolded, the theories and constructs upon which this inquiry was based began to appear in the narratives of the participants. Each participant entered the classroom with a conscious plan to create a better experience for their students than what they experienced personally or vicariously. Each teacher revealed a self-directed drive to continuously improve. In some cases, the participant experienced what Mezirow (2003) termed a disorienting dilemma. For some, this drive was innate and derived from their
upbringing. In each case, the participants’ desire to transform their existing practice, while meeting the needs of the students, was executed following a period of reflection. As the participants’ reflective practice approached a critical level, the more likely the transformation would remain consistent over time, even when faced with a similar dilemma. Interestingly, as inferred in the literature of adult learning theory, not all learning experiences transferred within or between the personal or professional contexts of a participant. However, those dilemmas that reached the “in-between spaces” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 1), requiring critical levels of reflection from multiple sources and critical levels of social consciousness requiring action, produced the most enduring change for each participant.

Classroom teachers’ effectiveness is dependent upon an ever-changing plethora of factors from new teaching techniques to social change. Something comes with change. Hopefully, as a result of new learning, a transformation will occur. This inquiry provides evidence that teachers who are open to change do transform. They are able to move their reflective practice along a sliding continuum from blind adherence (Tolstoy, 1967) to critical and strategical adaption. Readers are encouraged to expand their own model of reflective practice to include the multiple perspectives posited by Brookfield (1995) in an effort to support teachers’ transformative experiences as they “create themselves endlessly” (Bergson, 1911/1998, p. 7) through critically reflective practices.
REFERENCES


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Kissling, M. T. (2014). Now and then, in and out of the classroom: Teachers learning to teach through the experiences of their living curricula. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 44*, 81-91.


line


APPENDICES
APPENDIX A

IRB APPROVAL
Tuesday, March 14, 2017

Ms. Laura H. Nager
3001 Mercer University Drive
TFT College of Education - Atlanta
Atlanta, GA 30341

RE: Building a Critically Reflective Practice: Relating Brookfield’s Four Catalysts to Inservice Teachers’ Experiences (H1612353)

Dear Ms. Nager:

On behalf of Mercer University’s Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects Research, your Modifications for Expedited Review submitted on to the above referenced protocol was reviewed and approved on 14-Mar-2017 in accordance with Federal Regulations 45 CFR 46 and 45 CFR 46.111(a) under category(ies) 6, 7 for expedited review.

Changes Approved:
This narrative inquiry is designed to explore how teachers’ critically reflective practices developed over the course of their career. Changes to the Mason and online classes in session this Semester and recruitment of former graduates from either campus.

NOTE: The approval date of this modification does not change the annual renewal date of your protocol which expires on 11-Jan-2018

We at the IRB and the Office of Research Compliance are dedicated to providing the best service to our research community. As one of our investigators, we value your feedback and ask that you please take a moment to complete our Satisfaction Survey and help us to improve the quality of our service.

It has been a pleasure working with you and we wish you much success with your project! If you need any further assistance, please feel free to contact our office.

Respectfully,

Ave Chambliss-Richardson, Ph.D., CIP, CIM.
Associate Director of Human Research Protection Programs (HRPP)
Member
Institutional Review Board

“Mercer University has adopted and agrees to conduct its clinical research studies in accordance with the International Conference on Harmonization’s (ICH) Guidelines for Good Clinical Practice.”

Mercer University IRB & Office of Research Compliance
Phone: 478-301-4101 | Email: ORC_Mercer@Mercer.edu | Fax: 478-301-3329
1501 Mercer University Drive, Macon, Georgia 31207-0001
APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT
Informed Consent

Building a Critically Reflective Practice: Relating Brookfield’s Four Lenses to Inservice Teachers’ Experiences

You are being asked to participate in a research study. Before you give your consent to volunteer, it is important that you read the following information and ask as many questions as necessary to be sure you understand what you will be asked to do.

Investigators
Laura Nager, M.Ed.
Tift College of Education
Mercer University – Atlanta

Faculty Advisor
Dr. Justus Randolph
3001 Mercer University Drive,
Atlanta, Georgia 30341
678-547-6519

Purpose of the Research
This research study is designed to investigate the authentic development of teachers’ critically reflective practices. The data from this research will be used to explore a possible correlation of this authentic development to Brookfield’s four suggested lenses as well as compare the critical content of teacher reflection and the context in which it occurs. The results of this research will contribute to the primary investigator’s doctoral dissertation submission in her pursuit of the Doctor of Philosophy degree in Curriculum and Instruction.

Procedures
If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to answer a few questions about your teaching experience as well as basic background information. In addition, you will be interviewed three times regarding your teaching experiences. You will also have access to a personal timeline which you may update between, during, and after each interview. There will be no control or experimental group. Your participation will take an
average of one hour per week for 12 to 15 weeks. This includes, but is not limited to interviews and follow-up email correspondence.

**Potential Risks or Discomforts**
The researcher does not foresee any physical, psychological, social, or emotional risks as a result of your participation in this study. If any discomfort is experienced as a result of your participation in this study, the researcher advises you to notify her, or the faculty advisor, immediately to discuss reasonable options to resolve the concern. You may, at any time, discontinue your participation in this study without penalty.

**Potential Benefits of the Research**
Potential benefits to participants in this study include, but are not limited to:
(a) Validation of development in communication between and awareness of others;
(b) Potential to improve reflective practice; and
(c) Contributions to the current research literature.

**Confidentiality and Data Storage**
Participation in this study is confidential. Precautions will be taken to preserve the confidentiality and privacy of participants. Therefore, while the researcher is aware of the identity of the participants and is able to link the information to the participants, no one outside of the study would be able to identify any participant by name or other characteristics. Digital tapes will be used to record information. This data will be stored until the conclusion of the study in a secured location known only by the researcher and the faculty advisor. It will then be housed at Mercer University for three years per university guidelines after which time it will be destroyed. The results are subject to publication and professional presentation, but no participant identifiers will be revealed.

**Participation and Withdrawal**
Your participation in this research study is voluntary. As a participant you may refuse to participate at any time. To withdraw from the study please contact Laura Nager at xxx-xxx-xxxx, or xxx@xxxx.com. Note: if any data is submitted anonymously, withdrawal of the data cannot take place after the fact.

**Questions about the Research**
If you have any questions about the research, please speak with:
Dr. Justus Randolph, PhD
3001 Mercer University Drive,
Atlanta, Georgia 30341
678-842-6519

**Incentives to Participate**
In exchange for you participation, in-person interviews will be rewarded with a nonalcoholic beverage and a snack of your choice.
Audio/Video Taping
In an effort to maintain valid and reliable data, video and/or audio taping of in-person interviews and web-based interviews and conversations will be required.

Reasons for Exclusion from this Study
There are no reasons for the researcher to exclude a participant after he or she has been selected.

This project has been reviewed and approved by Mercer University’s IRB. If you believe there is any infringement upon your rights as a research subject, you may contact the IRB Chair, at (478) 301-4101.

You have been given the opportunity to ask questions and these have been answered to your satisfaction. Your signature below indicates your voluntary agreement to participate in this research study.

___________________________________________ _______ ________
Signature of Research Participant                Date

__________________________________________ ________ _______
Participant Name (Please Print)                  Date

___________________________________________ _______ ________
Signature of Person Obtaining Consent            Date

Rev.08/19/2010
APPENDIX C

PARTICIPANT SEARCH
Potential participants from the university’s advanced degree programs received an email via the Listserv for each program. The following is a copy of the email correspondence.

Hello fellow student,

My name is Laura Nager. I am a Ph.D. candidate in Curriculum and Instruction at our university. I am looking for students in the advanced degree programs to participate in my study. Selected participants will need to be able to commit to at least three interviews spaced approximately one to two weeks apart. Each will last approximately 60 minutes, but may require more or less time depending upon how much you have to say on the subject. Meeting days and times will be arranged at your convenience.

Respectfully,

Laura Nager
APPENDIX D

BACKGROUND QUESTIONNAIRE
Interested candidates from the university’s advanced degree program received the following questions in an email in order to obtain general background information for future contact and gather information needed for the criterion sampling process.

A copy of the email sent to the respondent is copied below.

Hello again! Thank you for replying to my participant search. Please complete the following four questions, and reply back so that I may obtain your contact information and learn a little about your teaching experience.

1. Please provide your name, phone number, and email.

2. What is the name of your school? What county is it in?

3. How many years have you been teaching in the classroom, or how many years did you have a classroom assignment before your current post? If you are currently out of the classroom, how many years have transpired since your last year in the classroom?

4. What is your current assignment and how long have you held the assignment?

5. To help provide a well-rounded demographic, please note the gender with which you identify and the race or culture with which you identify.

This email was sent as a response to interested participants.

Congratulations! You have been selected to participate in a dissertation research study. This narrative will focus on how parts, or all, of your reflective practice changed, or stayed the same, over the years. There will be three or four quasi-structured interviews lasting approximately an hour for the first two and possibly less for the third and fourth. The interviews will be audio recorded for transcription using MAXQDA software.

There are a few action items.

1) Attached to this email is a one page summary of Stephen Brookfield’s Four Lenses of Reflective Practice. Please read over it as a means to provide you with a general idea of the theory upon which this study is based.

2) At the bottom of this email are a few demographic questions about you. These will help me set up the needed parameters to tweak the interview questions to suit your particular situation.

3) Finally, tell me about your schedule so that we can set up dates and times to meet. I live and work in [redacted]. I can meet you at the college campus after you class if that is more convenient, or most anywhere of your choosing. The place we meet just needs to be quiet enough to record our conversation.
The participants received four of copies of a blank timeline, similar to the one in Figure E1. Each timeline was provided to the participants on paper measuring approximately 16 inches by 24 inches to allow for portability between interviews. Each was labeled with heading aligned with research questions. The timeline headings were as follows:

- Moments critically reflecting on my perspective (Autobiographical lens)
- Moments reflecting on students’ perspectives (Student lens)
- Moments reflecting on colleagues’ perspectives (Collegial lens)
- Moments reflecting on theoretical perspectives (Theoretical lens)

Blank Timeline

Critical moments of self-reflection

![Blank timeline sample presented to each participant as a dialogical visual aid to recount significant educational experiences in which the perspectives of colleagues, students, and theory were consulted in addition to reflection upon personal motivation and mores.](image)

During the final interview, the participants’ notes were compiled onto a sheet of butcher paper measuring three feet by seven feet. For ease of transfer to the larger paper, and understanding of the timeline for the events, the headings were number by year of
teaching and the events place in the approximate cell as directed by the participant.

Finally, notes from all four individual timelines were compiled. This example is in Table E1.

Table E1

*Sample of a Summarized Timeline for One Participant*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Y1</th>
<th>Y2</th>
<th>Y3</th>
<th>Y4</th>
<th>Y5</th>
<th>Y6</th>
<th>Y7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Autobiographical Lens</td>
<td>Zero thoughts-just trying to get by.</td>
<td>Pregnancy #3 - Felt instinct to protect and provide stability for students.</td>
<td>Assumed intermediate students can handle more freedom like my own kids.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student lens</td>
<td>Zero thoughts about them.</td>
<td>Looped grades due to a gifted student who lacked stable home.</td>
<td>Students pushed back, still needed one step at a time.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collegial lens</td>
<td>Ask them about everything - was I doing “it” right.</td>
<td>Peer walk-throughs mandated. Feedback helpful to improve instruction to extend beyond standards</td>
<td>Grade change. Back to asking if I was doing “it” right</td>
<td>Coteacher provided suggestions that worked</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical lens</td>
<td>Compared everything to course work theory.</td>
<td>Found disconnect No longer seemed useful.</td>
<td>Master’s Program brought light to its usefulness.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX F

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
Lead question: “Developing one’s personal accountability is an increasingly important aspect in the life of an educator. As you reflect back upon your life and academic career, can you tell me about some of the most influential experiences that have shaped your development as an educator?”

A categorized list of possible immanent prompts and questions based upon Brookfield’s (1995b) four lenses are found below. The prompts are listed in the category for which it is most applicable in order to guide participants based upon information previously stated in the initial story. Most may be used in multiple categories with only slight changes. The use of each will vary based upon the depth of information provided by the lead question in each interview (Bauer, 1996). A list of exmanent questions can be found following the immanent questions.

Theoretical category

- Do you recall the research that prompted that decision? If not the authors, then where you heard about it? (i.e. workshops, professional development course, professional literature, observations)
- To what extent did theory influence your decision to _______?

Colleague category

- In what ways were your colleagues included in pedagogical choices over the years?
- With whom did you engage in pedagogical discussions? (i.e. mentor, colleagues, study group, university courses)
- What prompted you to consult him/her?
• Were there any pressures, external or internal, to support or dissuade your pedagogical decisions? Have you noticed a difference now?
• How did you handle the dissention to your choices then? How has that changed, if at all?

Student/ Social consciousness category
• What prompted you to change or enhance your practice?
• How did the student(s) factor into that decision?
• In what ways did that change influence future responses to students with different needs regarding alternative access to the curriculum and/or opportunities to experience academic success?

Self-Reflection category
• Why did you want to become a teacher?
• How has your practice changed over time?
• Can you tell me more about what led up to that point?
• How did that experience influence the way you implemented things then and now?
• Tell me more about the emotions associated with that experience. Upon what were those emotions based- work ethics, personal values, and institutional expectations? Did anything similar happen again? How were subsequent experiences different?
• What evidence do you have of your growth?
• What were the results of implementing what you learned?
What conclusions did you draw from that experience?

How do you apply that knowledge as part of your continuing growth as an educator?

Exmanent questions are reserved for the end of the interview time and are often unrecorded as part of Phase 5 of the narrative interview process (Bauer, 1996). These questions, while open ended, require more explicit answers that shape the participant’s narrative around the research questions (Bauer, 1996). A list of exmanent questions include:

- Can you recall any events that prompted you to change, or affirm, the way you planned to conduct your classroom? For example, a daily schedule, pedagogical preferences, or even discipline techniques? Why, or why not?
- In what ways did you involve your colleagues in your decision processes? What characteristics prompted who you included?
- When you reflect upon your current pedagogical choices, to what degree did you consider the perspectives of your colleagues? Your students? Personal motivators? Critical theory? Why, or why not?
- Power structures exist at all levels of education from the federal level to the classroom. What power structure is most prominent in your classroom and how has it changed over the years? What catalyst has been behind the changes? Why, or why not?
### Table G1

**Helen’s Timeline**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Helen's timeline</th>
<th>Year 1</th>
<th>Year 2</th>
<th>Year 3</th>
<th>Year 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theory</strong></td>
<td>All theory - no reality&lt;br&gt;no policy&lt;br&gt;all practicality</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>NCLB changes begin&lt;br&gt;S. America/Chinese</td>
<td>NCLB changes collide with theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student</strong></td>
<td>African and Hmong&lt;br&gt;Sudan&lt;br&gt;Refugee: limited/no formal ed individualized content for individual needs</td>
<td>Mexican &amp; N.&lt;br&gt;South America/&lt;br&gt;Vietnamese&lt;br&gt;Renaming not training&lt;br&gt;just trying to fill their gaps for understanding content</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Colleague</strong></td>
<td>ESOL tight, supportive team&lt;br&gt;personal support with money for food and lodging&lt;br&gt;Gen ed teachers didn't seem to understand our instructional purpose&lt;br&gt;Homeless till November/ on provisional pay till March I &quot;get&quot; instability and hunger the refugees experienced.</td>
<td>Certified areas and ESOL losing department staff due to NCLB certification changes</td>
<td>Content area staff begin add ESOL endorsement as their certifications requirements change under NCLB regulations.</td>
<td>More content area teachers become ESOL certified, but not skilled yet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self</strong></td>
<td>Content of practice provided by in-situ curricular guidelines. Percent reflective 0%</td>
<td>Content of practice begins modification of thinking re: NCLB Percent reflective 2%</td>
<td>Impact of NCLB is more &quot;data&quot; driven. Just collect the data and turn it in. INDIGNATION onset Percent reflective 5%</td>
<td>The rebellion begins as the indignation increases.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helen's timeline</td>
<td>Year 5 - then a 10 year gap</td>
<td>Year 6</td>
<td>Year 7</td>
<td>Year 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theory</strong></td>
<td>Knowledge of theory fails reality, &quot;big&quot; policy influencing local policy fails reality = burnout</td>
<td>Deeply steeped in the theory but not in the application to instruction</td>
<td>Cotaught, but secondary player</td>
<td>All shelter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Influx of students from Latin America continent</td>
<td>Watching deeply divided student demographics influence potential for success - proved survival skills</td>
<td>Very little student guided instructional design; individual student affect.</td>
<td>Individual plans for each student w/in Standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student</strong></td>
<td>Minority Asian Feels like knowledge scrabble</td>
<td>&quot;meet kids where they are&quot;</td>
<td>Constant tension -- didn't drink the kool-ade; didn't support the practice, didn't share the belief structure</td>
<td>Functioned as an island respected for my work receptive to input when they get it but don't know &quot;its&quot; there</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Colleague</strong></td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Kid-motivated to move out of adult ed and back into K-12; Took position at the academy making less money than teaching at college level.</td>
<td>Move to public school system motivated by money</td>
<td>Functioned as an island - isolated for 2nd year in a row.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self</strong></td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Indignation transformed to cynicism</td>
<td>I am unicorn - Sophies world - top of the rabbits hair</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total disgust and burn-out</td>
<td>ALONE - out of field, watching the 3rd grade read to learn failure &quot;do what's needed&quot;</td>
<td>Iterative Practice - re-do what core teacher did</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Left after 1/2 year to teach overseas when husband transferred</td>
<td></td>
<td>Reactive Practice</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX H

ZELL’S TIMELINE
### Table H1

**Zell’s Timeline**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Zell's timeline</th>
<th>Year 1</th>
<th>Year 2 - New school</th>
<th>Year 3</th>
<th>Year 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theory</strong></td>
<td>Clung to behavior management ideas from Special Education course upon entering the classroom.</td>
<td>Exposed to theory similar to what Naval parents requesting - student centered, student choice, hands-on.</td>
<td>Changes continued in the building, professional develop and procedural changes to benefit more student choice.</td>
<td>Divorced.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self</strong></td>
<td>Realizing that don't you know everything and its ok to ask.</td>
<td>No real change, just exposure to other possibilities; Master's program began</td>
<td>Married. Still not reflecting on preexisting assumptions.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student</strong></td>
<td>Didn’t really take the students’ perspective into account for anything other than to ensure they felt respected. It was mostly about the teacher and instructor.</td>
<td>No real change, just exposure to other possibilities.</td>
<td>School norms provided for more student choice.</td>
<td>Changes were not based upon reflection.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Colleagues</strong></td>
<td>Teammates were like islands. They were not eager to share beyond curriculum (worksheets).</td>
<td>Teammates worked collaboratively on the many new concepts the principal adopted. Not in mindset to critique. Master's cohort did model critical reflection as we critiqued the required videos of each other’s lessons.</td>
<td>Continued to glean experiential knowledge from discourse with cohort members.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table H1 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Zell's timeline</th>
<th>Year 5 - New school</th>
<th>Year 6 - Moved out of state; new school</th>
<th>Year 7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theory</td>
<td>Developmental K-1 class; no set curriculum; Used prior knowledge of curriculum and Master's program to create from available resources.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Changed grades to investigate Kinder curriculum. Deviated from County curriculum for K. Old was completely themed. Introduced multi-modal and family involvement. Cognizant of student gaps in first grade when planning for K. Married over summer. Stability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td>Completed Master's (M.Ed.); Focused on maximizing time in order to attempt to get a year and a half of curriculum covered in one year.</td>
<td>Personal crisis after divorce. Not focused on personal changes at work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Individualized instruction- similar to what Naval families desired earlier in career. Smaller classes made it possible to meet kids where they are. Students made huge gains.</td>
<td>Concern that students being set up to fail 1st grade. 1/3 was considered status quo. Advocated for Kinder curriculum to be reviewed.</td>
<td>Spiral curriculum and multi-modal, hands-on for young concrete learners. Really took their needs into consideration vs. just implementing a research based program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleagues</td>
<td>Collaborative teacher to problem solve student gaps; Not so much to check our own assumptions.</td>
<td>Staff and administration seemed to accept the status quo. Felt no need to change anything. Principal even told me to &quot;can a lesson&quot; for the evaluation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zell's timeline</td>
<td>2 year hiatus</td>
<td>Year 9 - new school- 6th grade</td>
<td>10 year hiatus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding core behavior</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Theory**

- Second pregnancy - lost a twin - many moves; 6 years of OT with surviving child.
- Approached classroom with welcoming behavior modeled.

**Self**

- Family - 2 miscarriages; 1st born died after a week.
- Environment, feelings. More genuine concern for student social emotional needs. Modeled respect; safe haven; behavior check; student input/choice

**Student**

**Colleagues**

- Coaching team helpful - supportive as I learned curriculum.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year 10 - new school</th>
<th>Year 11</th>
<th>Year 12 - new school</th>
<th>Year 13</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Zell's timeline</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theory</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Added occupational theory behavior knowledge to adapt education based behavior theory</td>
<td></td>
<td>Continued to implement experiential based options.</td>
<td>Theory changed over the years regarding brain based learning, student mindset, teacher as learner, and behavior management.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transformed how I viewed myself as part of the class dynamics. Let go of control/planned differently/ more open ended. Used parenting skills (listening and responding)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assumed the older students &quot;knew&quot; procedures and frequently skipped steps when they actually had gaps. Assumed privileged knowledge because on or above grade level. They desired challenges. They were inquisitive explorers who worked better with a freeform room arrangement. Student choice was high priority.</td>
<td>Different group of students- on or below grade level. Slowed down the pace, but kept the style the same.</td>
<td>Cohort video-taped lessons to critique implementation of social-emotional techniques learned during the professional development sessions.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Colleagues</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did more collaborative planning to address student gaps, but not to a critical level</td>
<td>Volunteered for professional development cohorts to learn latest versions of curriculum and practices.</td>
<td>Continued to volunteer for professional development. Social-emotional development cohort.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX I

NATHANIEL’S TIMELINE
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nathaniel's timeline</th>
<th>Year 1</th>
<th>Year 2</th>
<th>Year 3</th>
<th>Year 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theory</strong></td>
<td>Piaget - preloading for assimilation &amp; working through accommodation</td>
<td>Humanism</td>
<td>Co-teaching theory</td>
<td>Fine Arts/Specialists team (drama)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vygotsky - small groups &amp; facilitation</td>
<td>Multiple intelligences &amp; Gifted theories; sought use of theory with gifted students</td>
<td>Purposeful pairing of gifted -&gt; SPED vs. gifted -&gt; on-level and on-level- &gt;SPED</td>
<td>Learning -&gt; leading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fully trained on new curriculum by mentor. No colleague input really sought for instruction. Just tried to be a model for the curriculum.</td>
<td>Coteaching with a SPED expert allowed opportunity for me to ask. Bonded with a new grade level teacher - became friends. Some colleague input sought but only for SPED students to ensure compliance.</td>
<td>Recognized for TOTY, Parent Choice Reciprocal expertise knowledge with team. No critical exchanges like Brookfield's example.</td>
<td>Planned together, but nothing significant like Brookfield.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Colleague</strong></td>
<td>No thought of student perspective. Delivery method of the required curriculum was scripted. I was focused on being good at requirements of school.</td>
<td>IEP collaboration</td>
<td>Coteaching in a blended classroom gave opportunity for observing students trial &amp; error and individual growth. More generative model of constructivist teaching style to meet the needs of students.</td>
<td>Luxury of focus on curriculum to meet students where they are and build upon strengths. But had minimal engagement with students throughout the day. Pre -&gt; 2 more generative model of talking and then doing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student</strong></td>
<td>Desire to be the best; likely gifted perfectionism Assumptions confronted about what parents expect &amp; cultural sensitivity of socio-economics. (&quot;T's&quot; questions about college)</td>
<td>Assumption confronted about student ability Earnest - spelling</td>
<td>Saw myself in gifted students. Pushed myself to stay connected to students needing remediation.</td>
<td>Self-reflection on how I was as a gifted student/ADHD student - Not letting kids go my same route.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 5</td>
<td>Year 6</td>
<td>Year 7</td>
<td>Year 8 -new school</td>
<td>Year 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nathaniel's timeline</td>
<td>Core Knowledge steeped in Idealism - the classics</td>
<td>Theory</td>
<td>Thematic units Guided reading Calkins &amp; Richardson</td>
<td>Community micro society pragmatic Student choice was key</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close knit team of friends - nonjudgmental -Learned to ask for help when needed, but we did not confront assumptions</td>
<td>Became lead teacher; learned to delegate and be responsive --reciprocal processes pedagogy</td>
<td>Leaned on colleagues for personal support during divorce.</td>
<td>Colleague's accepted me as an experienced gay man with much expertise to share about pedagogy. But, only 1 gifted teacher so no one to help with critique.</td>
<td>Principal pushed back against my attempts to advocate. She said it was &quot;my school&quot; and things would be done her way. She did promote collegiality. Media Specialist provided personal support, District level gifted teachers offered other perspectives for advocating.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuation of assumptions magnet school pulled from public housing; student gaps in academic vocabulary; expectation was high, but realistic; parents stressed, but supportive; Instruction with manipulatives generative / transactive</td>
<td>Assumptions of student performance corrected by parents</td>
<td>Learned to enforce wait time due to complexity of material; student choice applied to curricular engagement &amp; down time; Focus on the whole child included yoga for test anxiety; Fine arts theatre promoted literacy and STEM; first interaction with profoundly gifted caused question of assumptions- I did not have all the answers/ not all gifted people share same interests.</td>
<td>New knowledge of theory reinforced advocacy for all students.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td>Refused to go backwards to scripted because I didn't think it was best &amp; didn't see connections.</td>
<td>Shared my passion through MS endeavor</td>
<td>Assumed that as an adult, I would still be able to teach the students something knew, but the profoundly gifted students were smarter than me.</td>
<td>After a failed attempt to teach lowest remedial group, I found I was unwilling/unable to differentiate way down.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nathaniel's timeline</td>
<td>Year 10 - Master’s program</td>
<td>Year 11</td>
<td>Year 12 - new school</td>
<td>Year 13 - Doctoral program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theory</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrated aspects of Dewey with Gardner's Multiple Intelligences to work with diverse academic groups beyond gifted.</td>
<td>Year 10 - Master’s program</td>
<td>Year 11</td>
<td>Introduced to Adult Learning Theory, Jim Knight's ideas for dialogue and professional relationships</td>
<td>Year 13 - Doctoral program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional support from team to work &quot;your way within her way&quot; after being shut down by the principal the prior year.</td>
<td>Year 10 - Master’s program</td>
<td>Year 11</td>
<td>Friday collaborative sessions with other district coaches helped me be reflective of my practice and establishing norms with working with the staff.</td>
<td>Year 13 - Doctoral program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Colleague</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal rejected application to be an Instructional Coach - kept personal life changes separate from work.</td>
<td>Year 10 - Master’s program</td>
<td>Year 11</td>
<td>More operational reflection than critical reflection.</td>
<td>Year 13 - Doctoral program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased demands of school to work with a larger group of students who functioned differently and produced an intentional struggle. Feelings of failure, not &quot;the best&quot;</td>
<td>Year 10 - Master’s program</td>
<td>Year 11</td>
<td>My personal assumption about coaching put the classroom teacher in the position of my student. I approached the teacher the same way I approached a student. I modeled as a form of training. I was later advised that it came across as condescending. Chain of information went from the District--&gt;me--&gt;teacher.</td>
<td>Year 13 - Doctoral program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Realized after Master's program that I enjoy the theoretical side of education more than the instructional. Failure to be accepted as &quot;the best person for the job&quot; set up a disconnect at all levels.</td>
<td>Year 10 - Master’s program</td>
<td>Year 11</td>
<td>My assumption was that coaching was training others. Over the course of the year I learned it was different. Adopted a child.</td>
<td>Year 13 - Doctoral program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More consistent reflection of myself as a coach. Echos from the past of &quot;you are not in control&quot; reinforced in personal life (parenting)</td>
<td>Year 10 - Master’s program</td>
<td>Year 11</td>
<td></td>
<td>Year 13 - Doctoral program</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table J1

**Rachel’s Timeline**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rachel’s timeline</th>
<th>Year 1</th>
<th>Year 2</th>
<th>Year 3</th>
<th>Year 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Colleague</strong></td>
<td>Mentor was another 1st grade teacher</td>
<td>P.D. in writing with cohort of teammates</td>
<td>Same coteacher and parapro for next 5 years</td>
<td>Began to change plans annually to prevent stagnation and provide a better fit for each group of students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Different pedagogical style; She pushed for neatness; perfection without modeling; She showed distain in front of kids. Did it her way while learning options.</td>
<td>New SPED coteacher provided less stressful, positive experience.</td>
<td>I mentored new teacher on team</td>
<td>Individualized as much as possible like my high school lit teacher.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student</strong></td>
<td>&quot;D&quot; was a child with behavior issues since Kindergarten. Ran from teachers and from principal. Began with problem solving using M. Berger philosophy I learned at the day care. It worked.</td>
<td>Student w/ physical disability in class. I didn’t know how to handle it. I was intimidated and scared. Learned more about the student. Changed planned procedures to include the student.</td>
<td>2 emotionally disturb students challenged my efficacy. Turn out one child was being mistreated/abused.</td>
<td>Began full implementation of the workshop model.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theory</strong></td>
<td>Did not give any thought to theory-not even a second Just went with what was said during new teacher orientation.</td>
<td>Writing P. D. over summer changed most of instructional choices. Social-emotional theory from daycare job Magda Gerber's Rye philosophy.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self</strong></td>
<td>Found 1st grade overwhelming stressed set goal to improve writing instruction next year</td>
<td>Dealt w/feelings about SWD to overcome fear</td>
<td>Emotionally draining Brought recall of my mom's experience as an abused child and how it could have been for her.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachel's timeline</td>
<td>Year 5</td>
<td>Year 6</td>
<td>Year 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleague</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Found sub position in Spring. Hired following year.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td></td>
<td>More students with socio-emotional needs. 3 kids with recent parent deaths. 2 needed to express themselves- often tantrum or crying ; 1 closed off to deal with it. Empathy of whole class increased.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theory</td>
<td>summer reading</td>
<td>National Board Certification. Exposed to lots of theory. Awareness of choices increased.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self (I.d. self as Teacher)</td>
<td>(Built empathy due to surgery)</td>
<td>Increased social-emotional awareness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table J1 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rachel's timeline</th>
<th>Moved states</th>
<th>Year 8</th>
<th>Year 9</th>
<th>Year 10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Colleague</td>
<td>Found sub position in Spring. Hired following year.</td>
<td>First year in 3rd grade; new school Good rapport/open to new reciprocal things plans split between members and shared.</td>
<td>Milestones Mentor. Tutor @ school 3-5 Reading. It was like a resource position. Unique position for me. No actual team with which to confide or rely upon.</td>
<td>Began job after year started; only 1 other preK teacher. Good rapport, but no critical interactions. Spent 1/2 yr without online teacher resource. Frequent conflicts with principal over PK vs K-5 policy on uniforms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4th grader sent back to 3rd grade (dumped) Administration handled poorly Advocated for him for reading. Provided 1-1 remediation to overcome his decoding hurdle.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Impulsive Boy Smart kid; Referred again to M. Berger and meeting student's needs, especially a 4/5 year old.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theory</td>
<td></td>
<td>Began doctoral program - introduced to theory beyond instructional choices like policy and curriculum decision making.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Local school policy clash with State preK requirements Realize socio - emotional elements missing from state instructional procedures; extremely important for student development at this age.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Position was only parttime. Wondered if I was meeting the students' needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>