AUTHENTICITY IN TEACHING:

Reflecting Through Narrative Writing and Contemplative Practices

by

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Abstract

Authenticity matters in education. Teaching is a practice that when done well, becomes an art. To develop one’s art takes time, patience, humility, and the courage to look honestly and carefully at one’s practice. To feel that one’s work is meaningful, to be part of a learning community, to feel authentically engaged, fully alive, and able to meet challenges, are factors that contribute to one’s sense of well-being and purpose in life. Yet often determinants such as lack of time or insufficient support prevent teachers from doing the work necessary for growth and authentic development. This self-study revealed that meaningful critical reflection is both a process and a habit that can be cultivated as part of one’s regular teaching practice. Engagement in critical reflection on one’s practice can become an organic process suited to the individual teacher’s style, preferences, tendencies, values, and lifestyle. Moreover, the on-going process of authentic critical reflection is likely to have immediate impacts on one’s community.

This qualitative self-study explores my teaching practice. Three months of on-going daily critical reflections on past and present experiences related to my teaching resulted in 26 written documents illuminating memories, thoughts, feelings, insights, and epiphanies. Data collection strategies included narrative writing, dialogue with a mentor, and engagement in contemplative practices, such as Yoga, meditation, and mindfulness. The main purpose of this study was to explore, learn, and develop a core teacher identity and teaching practice while addressing two main research questions: how am I authentic in my teaching practice; and how might engaging in self-study contribute to my authenticity as a teacher? I used Cranton and Carusetta’s research, specifically referring to “Authenticity in Teaching” (2004a) and “Developing Authenticity as a Transformative Process” (2004b) to guide this study and analyze my findings. Results revealed the various ways in which I practice authenticity in my teaching and that my engagement in on-going critical reflection through self-study contributed to my authenticity as a teacher.
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“The desire for self-knowledge or the realization of identity in fact represents one of the strongest and most compelling of the human instincts ...it is the need to know in which particular field of endeavour one's talents or highest capacities actually lie, or otherwise put: what kind of work can I do best?”

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Through the process of socialization and conditioning, we internalize external messages telling us what we should do or how we should be and act in the world. We often adopt ways of being and acting that mimic external social norms rather than develop ways of being and acting based on our own self determined values which derive from honest reflection on our thoughts, feelings and experiences. In other words, instead of thinking, feeling, and deciding for ourselves and trusting our own experiences, we learn to rely on external voices to guide and direct us, maybe even adopting and then claiming these voices as our own. This is a problematic yet common situation influencing human development and the field of education, a phenomenon that leaves one wondering are we really learning? Authenticity matters in all areas of life not just formal institutions of education. The question of how to be an authentic teacher is both important and complex. As an early career teacher I have come to see that if I want to help my students I must begin with myself. This self-study tracks my transformative journey through contemplative practice and narrative writing towards authenticity in my teaching.

Engaging in this study I looked deeply at past and present events both inside the classroom and in my personal life. Sometimes my thoughts and experiences manifested as poems, other times as short essays, blog posts, concise paragraphs, lists of unanswered questions, or pictures. I spent over three months meditating, practicing Yoga, writing, engaging in conversation, and observing myself teaching. My study became the centre of my life. And I transformed.
Asking myself meaningful questions about who I was, who I am, and who I am becoming as a teacher was not easy. Especially when halfway through this degree my five year relationship with my fiancé came to a sudden and painful end. Every time I sat down to work I was flooded with memories and often ended up in tears. I was quite literally mourning. Letting go of dreams and visions of what I thought my life was going to be to make way for the life in front of me I began to write and reflect more intimately and authentically than I ever thought I could in an academic setting. This thesis became part of my journey towards wholeness. The mourning, the poetry, the meditation, the Yoga, and the feelings of doubt and shame were as much a part of this journey as the endless scholarly articles I read, the teaching I did, and the course work I completed. What appears in the following pages is just a slice of a much larger and deeper process of discovery and change, one which I have come to embrace as my lifelong journey.

**Purpose of Study/Research Questions**

The main purpose of this study was to explore and further my development as a teacher, by addressing the questions: how am I authentic in my teaching practice? and how might engaging in self-study contribute to my authenticity as a teacher? I anticipated that my engagement in critical reflection and contemplative practice would support a transformative process of developing authenticity. My desire for self-development as a teacher is inextricably linked to the process of becoming more authentic.

Much has been written explaining the benefits of self-study on teacher-practice (LaBoskey, 2004; Samaras, 2006; Loughran & Russell, 2002), on the connection between self-study and transformative learning (Schulte, 2009; Wilcox, 2009), and on the concept of authenticity as it relates to self-study and adult education, particularly transformative learning.
However there is a gap in the literature linking contemplative practice with self-study, transformative learning, and authenticity. This study addresses this gap in research and in doing so makes a valuable contribution to the field of adult education, specifically transformative learning. This study had immediate impacts on my personal life and my professional practice by helping me gain more awareness of myself as a teacher and of my own transformative learning process, which in turn allowed me to show up authentically to support my students. Additionally, findings benefit the larger field of educational research, particularly in the areas of transformative learning and self-study in teacher development.

**Background**

I entered the Masters of Education program at Queens University wanting to explore questions around adult education and transformative learning. My questions began while teaching disenfranchised teenagers and young adults at various alternative inner city high schools. These early career experiences have been amongst the toughest but perhaps the richest learning experiences of my life. As I struggled daily to inspire interest in students who had been told their whole lives they were failures, I wondered if I was adequately equipped to provide them with the support they needed. Five years of university, including a year of education to teach youth at-risk, did little to prepare me to work with students facing issues of abuse, poverty, addiction, and neglect. Understandably, these students seemed more concerned with getting their social assistance cheque, staying clean, or getting through the day, than handing in an assignment.

During my first few years teaching in the public school system I began to engage in contemplative practices and found that I started to open to the process of self-inquiry. I started asking questions not only about myself and my values as an educator, but also about my students.
and how best to serve them. I took a mindfulness training course, became a certified Yoga instructor, and began attending silent meditation retreats in the Vipassana tradition. I moved from the large urban city centre where I had grown up, to a cabin in Northern Ontario on a lake. I spent months teaching Yoga in the nearby town, volunteering and substitute teaching at the local schools, meditating, practicing Yoga, and reflecting. Much of my time up North was spent in deep contemplative reflection. I now see this period, a time spent away from the city, away from the constant busyness of life as a student and then a teacher, as one of the most transformative learning experiences of my life. It was during this period that the seeds of self-directed learning and critical reflection were planted. When I left my temporary home up North I went travelling to serve as a volunteer and eventually settled in a small city near my partner’s organic garlic and maple syrup farm. After finding employment teaching literacy to developmentally delayed adults and instructing Yoga at a downtown studio, I decided to return to university for a Masters in Education with a focus on transformative learning.

The practice and art of mindful Yoga and Buddhist meditation are contemplative practices that have shifted my outlook on life including my approach to teaching and learning. A dedicated, mindful practice has opened my mind and heart and reawakened a creativity within, giving me permission to explore questions in new ways and to new depths. Teaching and practicing Yoga and meditation allows me to develop deep compassion for myself and others and to view life as a constantly changing journey full of learning opportunities. These practices allow me to bring my whole self, physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual, to the work I do, whatever that work may be. Mindful Yoga and meditation have opened a door to a mode of being and a way of accessing knowledge that moves beyond the rational intellect. Contemplation, an integral
part of Yoga and meditation, is not only a way to still the mind, but a vehicle for recognizing and changing conditioned behaviour, which is the foundation of transformative learning.

In my course work with Dr. Tom Russell and Dr. Susan Wilcox in the graduate program in Education at Queens University I became exposed to a type of research and learning that not only provides room for my perspective but that encourages and values my voice and experience as a legitimate knowledge base and source for research. In particular, their work on transformative learning, self-directed learning, and self-study profoundly influenced my experience as an adult learner, my conception of what it means to teach adults, and my practice of teaching. Being introduced to the work of Mezirow, Dirkx, Cranton, and Palmer expanded my notions of teaching beyond what I do in a particular learning environment, to include who I am, what my values are, and how I genuinely express elements of my being with others.

I began studying and practising Yoga and meditation over six years ago. I have been teaching Yoga since 2008. I have a mentor that I meet with regularly. When I began seeing the benefits of regular contemplative practice on my teaching and learning, such as an expanded worldview, a deepening of awareness and compassion for my students, I began to explore the connections between my personal practices and the literature on transformative learning. Eventually I started to see connections between literature in the field of contemplative practice, work by Thich Nat Hahn, Stone, and Kabat-Zinn, and literature in the field of transformative learning and adult development by Mezirow, Cranton, Dirkx Palmer, Brookfield, O'Sullivan, and bell hooks. I sought to explore how contemplative practices might be a catalyst for reflection, thereby encouraging personal transformation and contributing to the transformation of my teaching practice. In other words, I wanted to explore how these practices might help support a transformative process of becoming authentic.
Assumptions

I begin this study with the assumption, grounded in personal experience, that engaging in contemplative practice has the potential to enable transformation and lead to a more authentic way of being. When I engage in regular contemplative practice, I open to myself and to others, I enter each situation with new eyes, I observe and re-evaluate my thoughts and beliefs, and I explore who I am and what is meaningful to me in my teaching and learning. Through contemplative practice, I strengthen the relationship between self-knowledge and the transformation of my lived reality.

Another assumption I begin with is that authenticity is a way of being that is valuable, even necessary, for effective teaching and learning to occur. Being authentic opens me to the possibility of my own transformative learning. Consequently, I begin this study with the belief that openness to the possibility of transformation on the part of the teacher is essential to allow room for the possibility of transformation on the part of the student.

My Definition of Authenticity

My view of authenticity is influenced by the literature reviewed in Chapter Two of this thesis. Specifically this study is grounded in the belief that as Wilcox and colleagues argue, “authenticity in higher education is strengthened through attention to intellectual, emotional and spiritual growth” (MacKenzie, McShane, & Wilcox, 2007). I see authenticity as a way of being rather than a fixed concept, a set of values to be adopted, or something we do or create in our learning environment. What that way of being looks like in practice and what it means varies depending on the individual. In my experience, authenticity cannot be found through instrumental learning or by attending a workshop. Indeed, authenticity cannot be attained from following a set of rules. Rather authenticity is dependent on an individual values, beliefs, culture,
history, and experience, and how one is able to see what they hold to be true for themselves and come alive in their actions.

A key component of my definition of authenticity is congruency between my values and the way I express these values through my behaviour in and interaction with the world. Yet I recognize that the concept of authenticity is highly individualized. Authenticity is not a fixed concept but dependent on the individual, the circumstances, and the moment. I have come to see, too, that my personal values are in a constant process of change. At each new stage of growth and learning I am shaped and reshaped by my experiences. I respond to learning by reassessing, reflecting on, and adjusting my values to fit my new level of understanding so that I may re-emerge with new eyes to enter into yet another phase of learning. This view, that becoming authentic is an on-going process involving constant reflection on self and practice, has come to shape my perspective of an authentic practice.

**Cranton and Authenticity**

Cranton researches and teaches in the area of adult education and transformative learning and has written extensively on the topic of authenticity in teaching. Cranton (2001) describes authenticity as a process:

A part of a circle, or perhaps a spiral. We must first understand our self—our basic nature, preferences, values, and the power of our past experiences. We need to separate our sense of self from the collective community and society, to know who we are. (p. vii.)

Having read and engaged in teacher professional development exercises offered in Cranton's (2006) book *Understanding and Promoting Transformative Learning*, tasks primarily focused on developing and increasing self-awareness and authenticity, I was open to Cranton's approach to teacher development and explored her research (conducted with Carusetta) on teacher authenticity. Cranton and Carusetta (2004a) have established five interrelated categories to define
authenticity; Self, Other, Relationship, Context, and Critical Reflection. In considering the ways in which my practice is authentic, I used these categories in combination with my own understanding of authenticity, to analyze my teaching experiences. I have chosen Cranton and Carusetta's research because their holistic approach, their philosophy of adult education, and their views on authenticity in teaching and learning resonate with my own values and experiences.

**Self-Study**

I chose self-study as a method of research in order to engage in honest, in-depth self-inquiry involving change on more than just a professional level. When approaching this study, I needed to make room for all parts of myself. Miller (1988) notes that “from a holistic perspective it is important to work from the inside-out. Change then, should be congruent with our centre, not according to some external set of expectations” (p. 55). Approaching this study from a holistic perspective meant including personal elements of myself while examining my professional practice. To reflect in a way that included the intellectual, emotional, spiritual, and physical aspects of my being, I engaged in contemplative practices that were holistic in nature. This allowed me the opportunity to explore my inner thoughts, feelings, and assumptions in a deep and meaningful way, a way that felt authentic to my learning preferences and lifestyle. Consequently, I became more able to express myself genuinely in my teaching and learning communities.

Parker Palmer (2004) has said that self-study leads to self-understanding which cultivates integrity, wholeness, and nourishment of spirit. As a Yoga and meditation practitioner and teacher, I am interested in matters of the soul, in living with integrity, and working from a place of wholeness. I am also interested in the ways in which I bring spirituality, integrity, and wholeness to my teaching. Ezer (2009) notes, “(s)elf-study is situated in the interface between qualitative research as a tool in professional development among teachers and their search for a
professional identity” (p. ix). Indeed self-study can enhance both professional development and professional identity. Yet self-study can also attend to more personal aspects of one’s being at the same time. A significant portion of this study was about discovering where the personal intersects with the professional.

**Scope**

I began planning this study when I entered the Masters of Education program at Queens University in the fall of 2010. Months of course work, conversation, personal reflection, engagement in contemplative practice and writing laid the foundation for three months of intense and focused reflective work on my teaching practice. My reflective work centered on my teaching experiences from the time I obtained my Bachelor of Education degree in 2006 up until the writing of this thesis in the Spring and Summer of 2012. However, many of my reflections included early memories of being a student, a volunteer, and a daughter.

**Thesis Organization**

This thesis is divided into five chapters. Chapter One provides an introduction and an outline, includes the purpose of the study, my research questions, background, assumptions, and my definition of authenticity. Chapter Two is an extensive literature review describing some of the key literature in the area of authenticity, transformative learning, contemplative practice, self-study, and critical reflection. Chapter Three describes my methodological approach to the study, including my chosen orientation and framework, how I collected, organized, and analyzed my data, as well as perceived limitations. In Chapter Four I present my research findings organized according to the authenticity categories identified by Cranton and Carusetta (2004a); Self, Other, Relationship, Context, and Critical Reflection. In Chapter Five I review my research questions and then discuss my findings in relation to themes that emerged. I also describe the ways in
which engaging in this self-study has been transformative, resulting in my ability to be more genuine in the work I do as a teacher.
Chapter 2

Literature Review

The following is a review of some of the key literature in the area of authenticity, transformative learning, contemplative practice, self-study, and critical reflection. Historical interpretations of authenticity will be examined from a diversity of disciplinary perspectives and then compared to the more recent work by some key thinkers. Particular attention is paid to the work of Cranton and Carusetta as it is their research that provides the framework for this study. Similarly, various interpretations of transformative learning will be explored, as will the multiple ways in which one may approach reflection, for example through contemplative practice, while engaging in self-study.

Authenticity, a Historical Perspective

A large body of literature exists on the concept of authenticity. What authenticity looks like depends on who is defining it, their field, culture, background, and the purposes behind the exploration of the term. Miller (1988) states that by adopting a holistic view of education “we attempt to facilitate a broadening of vision and perspective. We move from a restrictive scope of an atomistic perspective to a more inclusive view that witnesses the connections between ourselves and the universe” (p. 7). Before exploring authenticity in relation to teaching and learning specifically, it is helpful to broaden the discussion to consider authenticity more generally. Adopting a holistic framework to trace the origins of authenticity allows for a wider view of the variety of disciplinary perspectives, paradigms, fields, and frameworks that have sought to conceptualize it. Such an interdisciplinary approach honours each perspective individually and then shows how the various domains of knowledge connect and relate to one
Braman (2008) traces the concept of authenticity back to the end of the eighteenth century finding routes in the Cartesian notion of individualism and the writings of philosopher John Locke. Focus on the individual was carried over into the Romantic era and extended to include a search for an even stronger sense of “individualized identity” through a “source deep within each of us that would connect us to something greater than ourselves” (p. 4). Romantic notions had religious or spiritual undertones not previously included in the more political stance adopted by Locke. For example, Braman (2008) notes that in the work of Rousseau we see an emphasis on “self-determining freedom,” which involves being true to oneself in order to live a full and meaningful life” (p. 4). However, Braman credits the influential German philosopher Heidegger for being “the most instrumental in making the question of human authenticity prominent within and without philosophical circles” (p. 8). Heidegger felt that to become authentic one must first begin to see oneself as part of the world and a product of cultural conditioning (Guignon, 2006). Heidegger urged individuals to question their unexamined beliefs in order to escape their cultural cocoons. Becoming authentic, then, is a process of noticing our conditioning, and then differentiating ourselves from the rest of society by engaging in critical self-reflection. To Heidegger, this self inquiry, which in essence is a method of reflective self-study, inevitably results in understanding the true nature of our being. The following is a list of questions Heidegger urged us to ask ourselves to understand our conditioning and reflect on the nature of our being:

How can we extract ourselves from our conformity, rise above our enculturation?
How is it possible to become more whole, centered, and integrated in a world that prevents these qualities from emerging?
Beginning as conformists whose 'decisions' have already been made by culture, how can we become more free, unified, & focused?
How can we bring ourselves back from our lostness in conformity?
What have we neglected, which has allowed our culture to absorb us?  
How can we re-possess our lives, wrench ourselves away from the ‘they’?  (Park, 2006)

A comparison can be made between these Heideggerian questions and the content, process and 
premise questions listed in the more current literature on reflective practice (Cranton, 2001; 
Brookfield, 1991):

What do I value?  
Do I value this based on experience?  
Do I value this because this is part of a vision of how things should be?  
Did I deliberately and autonomously choose this value?  
Is this value important because it is part of my social world?

Engaging in a critical examination of ourselves, our world, and our values may be a 
direct path to becoming more whole, self-aware, and authentic. The process of questioning as 
suggested by Heidegger and found in the more recent literature on reflective practice and self-
study is an integral part of the process of self-study and transformative learning (Cranton, 1996; 
self as something for which we have a feeling rather than an argument. This marks a turn from a 
rational-logical perspective of authenticity put forth by Locke to embrace a view that includes 
spirit and emotion. Although Splitter (2008) looks to Rousseau for “clues as to how the search 
for an authentic self might proceed beyond the Romanticist vision of an inner essence” (p. 135), 
he credits Rousseau for introducing the idea “that the authentic person is not so much an object or 
product as a search or process (project) of ongoing construction” (p. 146). Just as Heidegger's 
insistence on critical self-examination can be seen as an early form of self-study, Guignon and 
Splitter's take on Rousseau coincides with the practices of self-study and reflection as a way to 
finding one's authenticity.

Both Splitter and Braman explore the work of Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor. In
The Ethics of Authenticity, Taylor (1991) explains the idea of authenticity as being true to one's own inner nature, which he claims is a significant and legitimate ethical principle. Taylor offers the following explanation:

There is a certain way of being human that is my way. I am called upon to live my life in this way, and not in imitation of anyone else’s life. But this notion gives a new importance to being true to myself. If I am not, I miss the point of my life; I miss what being human is for me. (p. 28)

Yet Taylor (1991) warns of what he terms “the dark side of individualism” where individuals centre on the self alone limiting their lives by becoming “less concerned with others or society” (p. 5). Taylor urges us to develop a sense of authenticity from within but based on “horizons of significance”, which he describes as “certain larger contexts within which humans move” (p. 37). According to Taylor, these horizons of significance include respect and care for others as they provide a sense of personal connection with a larger political, social, or religious source of meaning. According to Splitter (2008) Rousseau also denied the notion of pure subjectivity, seeing one's identity as bound up with that of others—“in other words, while the self, as subject, remains at the center of our deliberations, its subjective intelligibility will depend, in some way, upon its intersubjectivity” (p. 146). As with self-study, we cannot distance ourselves from others in our search for authenticity. The process of becoming authentic involves more than a solitary search for self-awareness and when self-study is seen as the process of becoming more authentic, then self-study as a collaborative venture means the search for authenticity is also a process involving a wider community.

Humanist psychologist Carl Rogers has influenced education over the past century. According to Rogers, our fundamental human drive is to self-actualize, which involves opening to experience, deep listening, and having the ability to live fully in the present moment (Thorne,
1992). Although Rogers' work centered on the psychotherapist-client relationship, his emphasis on congruence, or genuineness, is equally important for the educator. Individuals who are congruent in their professional and personal lives, Rogers claimed, maintain a high level of self-awareness, do not hide behind a professional role, and are constantly in touch with what is being felt at an experiential or visceral level (Thorne, 1992). Thus in moving towards a more authentic way of being, we move away from the culture of performativity (Wilcox, 2009) and towards more congruence in our work and in our lives.

These perspectives lay the foundation for an exploration of meaning and authenticity as it relates to teaching and learning. Additionally, this brief historical overview of some key thinkers on the topic of authenticity highlights some important connections between the search for authenticity as process and the process of self-study. When we engage in honest critical reflection about who we are and how we relate to the world, we are engaging in self-study, which is bound to result in our becoming more authentic individuals personally and professionally.

**Current Definitions and Perspectives on Authenticity**

Cranton has written extensively on the topic of authenticity and teaching in the field of transformative learning. According to Cranton (2001) authenticity can come about through engagement in a series of exercises to uncover an essential self. Rather than viewing authenticity as something that can be obtained by taking one-off workshops or by following a set of guidelines, Cranton (2001) claims that authenticity is a process. Cranton's view is grounded in Jung's notion of individuation.

Ashton (2010) described authenticity as a way of being rather than a fixed concept, a set of values to be adopted, or something we do or create in our learning environment. What that way of being looks like in practice and what it means varies depending on the individual. Like
Cranton, Ashton claims that authenticity cannot be found through instrumental learning or by attending a workshop. Indeed, authenticity cannot be attained from following a set of rules. Rather, authenticity is dependent on the individual values, beliefs, culture, history, and experience, and how one is able to see what they hold true manifest in action. Ashton refers to Heidegger’s (1962) description of being as “(e)verything we talk about, everything we have in view, everything towards which we comport ourselves in any way, is being; what we are is being, and so is how we are” (p. 26). Such a view of authenticity relies on the ability to be present, flexible, open to truth of the moment, and compassionate. Not being authentic, on the other hand, would mean lacking self-awareness and following along with the ideas, attitudes and values of others without question.

Cranton’s (2001) book, *Becoming an Authentic Teacher in Higher Education* includes the voices of four adult educators. Of authenticity teacher Peter Lane offers the following: “authenticity is not a method. It is a mindset. It is a genuine desire to progress, to improve, to grow, and to become more. It is the willingness to suspend belief in the face of what is” (p. 64).

The idea of authenticity as a way of being or, as Lane says, a “mindset” is helpful in understanding authenticity from a perspective in which concepts are subject to change inherent to time and place. Another teacher, Susan B. Wesley, explains that authenticity in teaching is built on “an unquenchable thirst for self-awareness” (Cranton, 2001, p. 65). Wesley discusses the quality of presence and says that “enlightenment” comes from being present with her students (p. 66). Such views are a valuable contribution to a discussion of authenticity and teaching as they come directly from the voices of practising adult educators.

Cranton and Carusetta (2004b) explore teacher development in the area of higher education, specifically as it relates to authenticity, exposing a gap in previous literature: “the
literature that guides practitioners in adult and higher education tends to provide principles and guidelines for effective teaching without taking into account the preferences, styles, and values of the individual educator” (p. 276). Cranton and Carusetta (2004b) explain:

It is more common for people to look for standardized principles of effective practice than it is for them to turn inward and examine how it is that they as social human beings and individuals can develop their own way in the world of teaching. (p. 21)

Their study of university educators produces concrete findings on which to develop a more meaningful foundation for authenticity by answering the questions: “how does authenticity (develop) in teaching?”; how do teachers at the university level “relate to others in authentic ways...and reflect on their practice so as to become authentic?”; and “how do educators bring their sense of self into their teaching?” (2004b, p. 277).

Using seven guiding questions related to the following themes: self-awareness, relationships with students, learning environment, being inauthentic, power, critical reflection, and changes in practice, Cranton and Carusetta (2004b) discover five interrelated categories of authenticity; Self, Other, Relationship, Context, and Critical Reflection. (These five categories act as a framework for my own research and are discussed in detail in the methodology section).

Through the creation of these categories and the description of the phases of authenticity, Cranton and Carusetta show how the journey of becoming authentic can be transformative. Findings indicate the importance of self-awareness and of closing the gap between “their teacher self and their personal self through a better integration of the facets of the self” (2004a, p. 290). Cranton and Carusetta found that not adhering to norms or wearing a mask was a key factor in being an authentic teacher, as was seeing students as individuals, opening up frames of reference to allow for meaningful relationships with students, separating the self from the collective, and being critically reflective. All of these factors helped individuals move from unconsciousness to
consciousness, a key component of the transformation into an authentic teacher. 

The developmental process of increasing self-awareness by first separating self from other Jung called individuation. Jung considered individuation essential to wholeness. His views have profoundly influenced the field of adult education. Cranton (2004), for example, writes of the relationship between individuation, the process of self-actualization, and authenticity in teaching. Daloz (1986) draws on Jung's view of individualism when describing how adults change and develop over time as "the process by which we differentiate ourselves from our surrounding culture in a way that leads not to isolation but paradoxically to a greater sense of membership in the whole" (p. 57). Dirkx (2006) uses a Jungian perspective to suggest that the imaginative dimensions of the self play a critical role in our journey and experience as teachers and in developing self awareness and authenticity in our teaching (Dirkx, 2006).

Vella (2000) discusses the process of developing awareness using the term metanoia, or "the passage of spirit from alienation into deeper awareness of oneself" (p.10). Vella claims that knowing anything is an opportunity for metanoia, which is a deeper realization of one's meaning and purpose. Brookfield (1995) emphasizes the importance of being authentic as educators through a commitment to on-going critical reflection. Scott, Spenser, and Thomas (1998) mention freedom, democracy, and authenticity as goals of transformative learning. Freire (1972) refers to the "authentic witness," a persona adopted by the teacher based on a critical knowledge of the context of practice. Taylor's (1991) critique of the modern ethic of authenticity (p. 277) finds that there is a gap in the literature on authenticity in education and human development. He claims that the modern search for self is influenced by horizons of significance, or the social contexts within which humans move. It is important then that research in the field of education broaden to include the development of the whole individual and the various ways in which a
search for authenticity is shaped by social forces. Likewise, it is imperative when discussing an authentic search for self, that the various social forces that shape human development, such as educational institutions.

**Authenticity in Teaching**

Relationships are particularly relevant when exploring authenticity in education. The search for self includes our connections and relationships with others. Jung, Heidegger, Taylor and Rousseau all note the importance of others in the process of becoming more authentic. Cranton's view of authenticity as “the expression of one’s genuine self in the community and society” (Cranton, 2001, vii.) is similar to Jung's concept of individuation as evidenced in the following statement: “the circle closes, or the spiral moves upward, when authentic expression leads us to further differentiate ourselves from others” (Cranton, 2001, p.1). Wilcox notes: “authenticity entails being true to one’s self” (Wilcox, 2009) but agrees with Cranton and Carusetta's claims that the self is socially situated, and thus authenticity must include being conscious of self, other, relationship and context (Cranton & Carusetta, 2004; Wilcox, 2009).

The process of moving from unconsciousness to consciousness is emancipatory and may influence our students to work towards their own liberation as well. Writer, scholar, and feminist social activist bell hooks argues for a progressive, holistic education. Hooks (1994) writes about having the courage to teach from a place of authenticity and openness:

To educate as the practice of freedom is a way of teaching that anyone can learn. That learning process comes easiest to those of us who teach who also believe that there is an aspect of our vocation that is sacred; who believe that our work is not merely to share information but to share in the intellectual and spiritual growth of our students. To teach in a manner that respects and cares for the souls of our
students is essential if we are to provide the necessary conditions where learning can most deeply and intimately begin. (p. 13)

For hooks liberation is a clear goal for education as is recognizing the whole student and their spiritual growth. When hooks talks of “teaching in a manner that respects and cares for our souls...”, she is talking of honouring an authentic way of being rather than acting in accordance with our conditioning.

Becoming an authentic teacher may involve or result in recognizing our place in society and transforming our way of being in the world. Teaching inevitably includes issues of power and privilege. Self-study can help to uncover and deconstruct this inherent position of authority. Recognizing who we are and where we come from by adopting a social justice stance in our work as teachers can transform our practice, our relationship with students, and may help us to teach from a more just and authentic place.

**Transformative Learning**

There are numerous interpretations of transformative learning. As Garvey-Berger (2004) notes: “the definition of what transformation is depends strongly on who is speaking and from what theoretical stance” (p. 340). An important component of the transformative learning process is a change in adults’ frames of reference through critically reflecting on their assumptions and beliefs and consciously creating and implementing plans that bring about new ways of living in the world based on their new outlook. Mezirow (2000), credited as the first to develop a coherent theory and body of literature on transformative learning, refers to the process as: “becoming critically aware of one's own tacit assumptions and expectations and those of others, and assessing their relevance for making an interpretation” (p. 4). More recently Cranton (2006)
defined transformative learning as “a process by which previously uncritically assimilated assumptions, beliefs, values, and perspectives are questioned and thereby become more open, permeable, and better justified” (p. vi). Importantly, the transformative learning process is not merely about what we know, but coming to understand how we know what we know (Kegan, 1994; Berger, 2004).

Recent literature by scholars in the field of adult education, such as Dirkx, Cranton, and O'Sullivan, focus less on the rational aspects of the transformative learning process. These interpretations offer a holistic approach to transformative learning that embraces the emotional, mythopoetic, spiritual, and embodied aspects of transformative learning. O'Sullivan (2003) offers a holistic perspective of transformative learning:

Transformative learning involves experiencing a deep, structural shift in the basic premises of thought, feelings, and actions. It is a shift of consciousness that dramatically and irreversibly alters our way of being in the world. Such a shift involves our understanding of ourselves and our self-locations; our relationships with other humans and with the natural world; our understanding of relations of power in interlocking structures of class, race and gender; our body awarenesses, our visions of alternative approaches to living; and our sense of possibilities for social justice and peace and personal joy. (pp. 326-330)

Although transformative learning is often described with emphasis on the rational intellect, a broader, more inclusive view of transformative learning, such as that articulated by O'Sullivan, is helpful when exploring contemplative learning as transformative process. Such a view points to the possibility of contemplative practice to change frames of references, shift perspectives, and expand worldviews in ways other than just analytic and rational modes of thinking.

Examples of transformative learning are varied and plentiful. Robinson's (2005) study of Cambodian women refugees reveals implications of the contemplative journey for transformative and integrative learning. Engaging in contemplative practice helped these women to process and
move through their disorienting dilemmas, a term coined by Mezirow to describe a life transition or crisis that acts as a catalyst for the transformative learning process. Hart (2004) outlined ways to strengthen the contemplative mind and open ourselves to the transformative process through activities such as: evoking the creative imagination, critical reflection, concentration, poetry, silence, and Yoga. Dirkx (1997) looked at research that has extended transformational learning into the realm of spiritual questions; e.g., those that explore the self and one's life purpose. The view of transformative learning as involving the spiritual self connects it to the literature on contemplative practices.

**Contemplative Practices**

Contemplative practices are practices that still the mind to cultivate a capacity for focus and concentration. Contemplative practices help broaden perspectives, increase mindfulness, deepen personal insight, and heighten moment to moment awareness. Examples of contemplative practices include seated meditation, Yoga, Tai Chi, and walking meditation. In their study on descriptive inquiry and contemplative practice, Kesson, Traugh, & Perez (2006) define contemplation as “a state of being in which one is fully present and attuned to the world, bracketing thinking, judging, and analyzing, while trying to see clearly” (p. 1879). In a lecture given at Naropa University, eco-philosopher and Buddhist scholar Joanna Macy described contemplative education as based on “the deepest questions that arise when we befriend our own experience, when we find our own authority” (lecture, April 6, 2011). Research indicates it is possible to avoid professional burnout and increase chances for wellness and self-care as a result of engaging in contemplative practice (Griswold, 2010; Kabat-Zinn, 2007). In his work on contemplative epistemology, Hart (2004) noted the capacity of the contemplative mind to “expand awareness and push beyond our assumptions and our sedimented habits of knowing” (p.
34). These interpretations all point to a common thread in contemplative practices: the cultivation of awareness and the development of a connection to one's inner wisdom.

**Contemplative Practices in Education**

Contemplation is often seen as a way of being and thinking that takes place in religious and spiritual centres, such as churches, monasteries, and temples. In Western secular society, we are rarely encouraged or taught to engage in contemplative practices. However, Western universities, colleges, and informal adult learning environments are increasingly incorporating contemplative pedagogy and practice into their curriculum. Columbia University offers a course on contemplative practices and education. Kabat-Zin, founder of the Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program, has been incorporating meditation and mindfulness into hospitals, universities, and mainstream society for the past 20 years. Naropa University in Colorado is an institution of higher learning based on Buddhist principles and contemplative education. In Canada, the Transformative Learning Centre at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto offers workshops and courses on contemplative pedagogy and practices, such as a course on embodied learning through Tai Chi. The Learning Strategies Development program at Queen’s University offers information and exercises on Mindfulness for students.

In her report on mindfulness and leadership training, Schuyler (2010) suggested that embodied learning and mind training are grounded in similar perceptions of the importance of attention and awareness in developing effective, powerful action in the world. Boyd supported this claim, stating that the emotional and kinesthetic component of the transformational experience is the major catalyst for change (as cited in Imel, 1998). Dirkx (1997) noted that adult learning questions about self and one's life purpose are at the core of a dedicated yoga practice.
Nonaka and Takeuch (1995) posited that “the most powerful learning comes from bodily experience” (p. 239). Others in the field of education support this claim, noting Tai chi chuan, acupuncture, Hatha yoga, and vipassana meditation as ancient complex systems for educating many aspects of the person (Johnson, 2002; Hart, 2004). According to Feldenkrais methods, learning directly from the body and movement is sufficient for deep life change; focusing the learner on close observation at a micro-level of movement, breathing, and one's state of mind can yield change at the level of tacit knowledge (Cheever, 2000). This literature highlights an arena where we know but usually cannot articulate what we know. It is from this human knowing that change in values and long standing habits is possible (Schuyler, 2010, p. 34).

There are many ways to explore a deeper understanding of the role that emotions play in contributing to and expressing one's sense of self as practitioner and learner. Hart (2004) noted the importance of the contemplative mind to “expand awareness and push beyond our assumptions and our sedimented habits of knowing” (p. 34). Hart has outlined ways to strengthen the contemplative mind through various transformative activities such as evoking the creative imagination, critical reflection, concentration, poetry, silence, and yoga. Spolsky (1993) and Hart (2004) both pointed to the importance of a type of intellectual process different from the linear, analytical, and product-oriented processes emphasized in the majority of contemporary education. Mindful practices, such as yoga and meditation, involve “paying attention in a particular way, on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally” (Kabitz-Zin, 1991, p. 4). Put another way, embodied learning can be a process of “deep learning that foster(s) new approaches almost subliminally, reaching around, beyond, or beneath the discursive, analytical mind” (Shuyler, 2010, p. 13).

As noted earlier, literature in the field of adult learning has increasingly turned towards
the role of spirituality in education (English, Fenwick & Parsons, 2003; Kazanjian & Laurence, 2002; Tisdell, 2003; Dirkx, 2008). The turn to spirituality demonstrates a re-visioning of the role of emotions in human experience and learning, and stresses alternative ways of knowing (Dirkx, 2008; Palmer, 1993). How one defines spirituality is both personal and complex. Although there is no consensus on what spirituality is, Tisdell and Tolliver (2001) give a broad and inclusive definition of spirituality as a connection to what many refer to as the Life force, God, a higher power or purpose, Great Mystery or Buddha Nature; a sense of wholeness, healing, and the interconnection of all things; meaning-making; the on-going development of one's identity, including one's cultural identity, moving towards authenticity; how people construct knowledge through largely unconscious symbolic processes manifested through image, symbol, and music, which are often cultural (p. 13). Such a vast definition implies that spirituality is an inclusive term, open to a diversity of interpretations. Tisdell and Tolliver differentiate religion from spirituality by saying that spirituality often happens by surprise. The element of surprise is reminiscent of what is termed in the literature on transformative learning as a disorienting dilemma (Mezirow, 1991), an event that acts as a catalyst for waking us up, setting off the process of transformative learning.

There exists a body of literature connecting spirituality with authenticity in teaching and self-study. Miller (1994) suggested that one way to engage in self-study and (perhaps) become more authentic is through spiritual practice. Palmer (1998) asserted that self-knowledge is at the heart of authenticity and represents the core of authentic teaching (Palmer, 1998). Dirkx (2009) explored the connection between self and authenticity in teaching, and “pathways to the self and self-understanding as methods for fostering authenticity” (p. 29). Dirkx (2006) encourages us to welcome into teaching and learning environments “the person in fullness of being: as an
affective, intuitive, thinking, physical, spiritual self” (p. 46). Vella (2000) called for a spiritual revolution in education positing three assumptions: human beings are designed to be subjects, or decision makers, in their own lives and learning; each learning event is a moment of spiritual development in which people practice being what they are—subjects of their own lives and learning; transformation is not grasping an external set of information, knowledge, or skills, but rather a change into one's new self, informed by the new knowledge and skills. Such a diversity of views contributes to an understanding of spirituality as it relates to self, authenticity, and adult education.

**Self-Study**

In their exploration of narrative, self-study, and auto-ethnography, Hamilton, Smith, and Worthington (2008) promoted a focus on the self as a legitimate and worthy approach to research. They acknowledged criticism of self-study, noting common questions such as: “Is it research? Does it contribute to the knowledge base? Does this methodology represent good research?” (p. 17). To differentiate self-study from narrative and auto-ethnography, Hamilton, Smith, and Worthington turned to LaBoskey’s (2004) five elements of self-study. According to LaBoskey, self-study is self-initiated and focused; is improvement-aimed; is interactive; includes multiple, mainly qualitative, methods; defines validity as a process based on trustworthiness. Hamilton, Smith and Worthington (2008) responded to questions concerning the validity of self-study by clarifying boundaries between self-study and other research methodologies and by positioning themselves within a community of scholars who adopt self-study as a worthy genre of teacher research.

Although commonly used in the field of educational research for teacher improvement of practice, the literature on self-study shows that it is not limited to the teaching profession. Self-study is a method that can be used by nurses, doctors, and researchers in other fields to
understand and develop their professional practice (Northfield, 1996). For example, Sojonky (2010) adopted self-study to examine his role as a psychologist in an Indigenous setting. Sojonky wrote that “self-study for the purposes of self-understanding and professional development is an intensely personal experience. It has demanded that I deconstruct what I do, how I think and how I work as a professional” (p. xv). Sojonky (2010) noted that self-study can assist individuals in gaining a deeper understanding of self motives, personal agendas, assumptions, goals, as well as personal strengths and weaknesses. Thus self-study may be of benefit to a diversity of individuals in multiple fields, and moves beyond the individual self to build knowledge which is meaningful and may be useful to others in the professional community, regardless of what that community looks like.

**Self-Study as Community Practice**

Much of the literature explains that self-study is rarely done in isolation. Relationships developed through teaching are at the centre of practice. Consequently, any study that looks at ones teaching will inevitably involve others. Thus the benefits of self-study impact not only the teacher-researcher.

Ghaye and Ghaye (1998) argued that professional reflection should be not only a solitary practice, but also a social endeavour in which the knowledge produced “has the potential to enlighten and empower teachers” (p. 3). Russell (2005) explains that self-study relies on “ideas and perspectives presented by others” (p. 5), and the impact of self-study extends beyond the self to include a wider community of teachers, researchers, and students. In fact, a teacher's engagement in self-study often has direct and immediate impacts on students’ experiences.

Examples of collaborative self-study and the impact of self-study on a wider community include the work of Williams and Power (2010) who used a model of core reflection developed
by Korthagen and Vasalos (2005) to explore their identity and practices. Williams and Power explained: “(c)ore reflection is a process by which teachers reflect on their practice, incorporating an examination of personal beliefs, mission and identity” (p. 115). The authors highlighted the importance of dialogue and communication in self-study. Examining the ideals, perceived obstacles, and self-efficacy of the teacher, they concluded that their conversations were relevant to understanding their teacher selves and that the identification of core qualities helped clarify their own identities and improve their overall practices. Such examples show the importance of communication in self-study and suggest that engaging in self-study may allow time and room for collegial support, an opening to other perspectives, and a strengthening of communication between teacher, colleagues and students.

**Critical Reflection**

Reflection can take on many forms and need not be limited to achieving a certain set of professional goals, although often professional growth is an outcome. Gamelin (2004) says that there is an inherent transformative energy within self-study that allows room for vulnerability. Burchell and Dyson (2009) note that self-study emphasizes that researchers commit to reflection for the purpose of improving practice and examining trustworthiness. Reflection may take on a variety of forms including journaling, conversation, graduate work, and thinking deeply about a teaching problem (Crafton & Smolin, 2004; Russell, 2005). Other forms of reflection include art-making, meditation, contemplation, and mind-body work such as yoga, Tai-chi, and dance (Hart, 2004; Kabat-Zinn, 2001, 2005). Regardless of the strategy adopted, the process of self-study involves teachers observing, exploring and questioning themselves and their practice.

Not only can reflection lead to a deeper understanding of self, but sharing reflection with others allows for colleague feedback and the transformation and integration of ideas into
practice. Loughran (2005) provides suggestions to help guide others interested in looking at their own practice. To adopt the stance of reflective practitioner, Loughran suggests the following; choosing to pay attention to what we normally take for granted, adopting an open-mind, and searching for alternative frames of reference. Additionally, Loughran suggests that reflection can take the form of “modelling the doubt, perplexity, uncertainty, and risk-taking that encompasses the problematic nature of practice” (p. 30). Such a stance requires being present, honest, self-aware, and open. Gamelin (2004) noted that the path through self-study led to a place of vulnerability which became the stance from which to write and teach most authentically. Behar (1996, cited in Gamelin, 2004) writes of the “vulnerable observer” explaining that when we research and write from a vulnerable place others tend to respond vulnerably.

When reviewing the literature on reflection in teacher self-study, the work of Donald Schön must not go unmentioned. Russell (2005) in particular credits Schön for influencing his views of the importance of reflective self-study. Schön (1983) argued that reflective practice should be an essential feature of professional education. He defined his model of reflection-in-action as the ability of professionals to think about what they are doing while they are doing it. Schön also noted that this process is at least to some degree conscious but may not be verbalized. Russell and Munby’s (1994) authority of experience, influenced by Schön’s 1983 publication of *The Reflective Practitioner*, is a concept not unlike Loughran's modelling and Schön’s reflection-in-action. Authority of experience is linked to reflective practice as it conceptualizes how experience plays a role in professional knowledge. The models of reflection discussed by Schön, Russell, and Loughran require the teacher-researcher to be present, able to think on their feet, and respond to whatever arises in the moment.

The literature on self-study includes examples from individual teacher practices.
Teacher-researcher Childs (2006) offers an account of art making as reflective practice. After the loss of her son Childs engaged in a journey of self-reflection to find meaning, reassess her values, and ultimately transform. Without knowing exactly where it would lead, Childs (2006) teaches herself to paint and ends up gaining more understanding of her students, renewing her sense of self, and teaching more mindfully. Childs described her process as transformative. Through reflective art-making she explains feeling more unified and less fragmented. Reflection may indeed lead the practitioner to feel more whole and authentic while teaching. Examples such as these show the transformative potential of self-study.

Research has shown that critical reflection through journal writing is an effective tool for adults to gain meta-cognitive awareness, often resulting in transformative learning which involves challenging their own perceptions and eventually changing their actions (Mezirow, 1991). The use of journals can help teachers to reflect on and interpret their experience, become more metacognitive, and identify shifts in perception. Reflection through journal writing may help teachers complete the transformative process and change their behaviour. According to Hiemstra (2002) journal writing as an instructional or learning tool in adult education has gained cogency during the past three decades. Knowles (1975) and Brookfield (1995) provide support for journal writing as a process for reflection and as a way to see ourselves and others in a new way.

**Reflecting Through Contemplative Practice**

Self-study is a process that requires critical analysis of one's internal and external world. Contemplative practices such as Yoga and meditation are activities that encourage reflection and self-inquiry. Cranton and King (2003) note that when educators are led to examine their thinking and actions and look at alternative ways of doing things, transformative learning about teaching takes place. In their study on descriptive inquiry as contemplative practice, Kesson, Traugh, and
Perez (2006) note: “learning to suspend judgement, bias, conditioned responses, and hasty interpretation allows for more fluid and open perception, guiding the practitioner into forms of inquiry closely akin to Polanyi’s tacit knowing (1962), Schön’s reflection-in-action (1983), and Miller’s contemplative practice (1994)” (p. 1863). In the literature on adult education, Cranton and Carusetta (2004b) state: “we do not mean critical reflection to be judgemental, but rather we see it as the open, questioning, mindful consideration of how we think about ourselves and our teaching” (p. 21). The qualities of openness and mindfulness are often evoked through contemplative practices.

Contemplation and reflection are similar activities. Both are ways to focus the mind, and engage in intense consideration of a particular issue or object of attention for a sustained period of time. Both often result in a deepened understanding of the object of attention, of oneself, or of both. This study is not interested in the act of contemplation but in practices which I call contemplative in nature. When describing these practices, I refer to the Centre for Contemplative Mind in Society's definition: “contemplative practices quiet the mind in order to cultivate a personal capacity for deep concentration and insight” (retrieved from http://www.contemplativemind.org ). The specific contemplative practices I engaged in throughout the course of the study are meditation, Yoga, mindfulness, and contemplative mentorship.

Contemplative practices do not require the practitioner to be religious or spiritual. However, engaging in contemplative practices does require a willingness to open to other ways of accessing knowledge. Kesson, Traugh, and Perez (2006) refer to the attunement required for contemplative practice as “caring attunement” that makes room for “the possible and the unimagined—to the possibility of new ways, new knowledge, new relationships, new awareness”
This deeper level of attunement insists upon attention to sense perception and the body, tapping into parts of ourselves that may not normally be accessed through critical reflection alone.

The type of reflection that accompanies contemplative practices, or that can result from engaging in such practices may vary from practitioner to practitioner. For some, contemplative practices encourage spiritual reflection. Dirkx (2006) explains the role of critical reflection in teaching as soul work. Although he sees value in critical reflection to help develop a greater sense of self, he warns that “we have to be careful around ‘matters of the soul’, including powerful emotions” (p. 31). Similarly, Palmer (2004) suggests “critical, analytical methods often drive the soul into hiding” (cited in Dirkx, 2006, p. 31). Embracing the contemplative mind allows room for emotions and spirit in our work as teachers and learners, bringing meaning beyond the rational and intellectual frameworks often associated with adult education.

**Conclusion**

This literature review reveals the vast amount of research and information existing in the area of self-study, authenticity, transformative education, reflection, and contemplative practice. An exploration of past and current findings indicates connections between self-study and authenticity, as well as the potential for transformative learning in the process of authentic self-study. Continued research and practice of self-study for adult learners and educators contributes to the growing body of knowledge in the field and would encourage more educators to engage in the process of reflection for personal and professional growth. Similarly, more attention should be given to the various ways in which adult teachers and learners commit themselves to the journey towards wholeness and authenticity, regardless of what that journey entails. Examples of the stories and experiences of those who are reshaping their practice and deepening their
relationships through the process of becoming more authentic through self-study should benefit the field of adult education and transformative learning.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

In this Chapter I explain my chosen methodological orientation providing a brief description of self-study and narrative. I outline the framework I adopted for the study which draws on the work of Cranton and Carusetta (2004a). I have included Table 1 from Cranton and Carusetta’s (2004a) study, which I call Table 1-A (Table 1-B is introduced in the Chapter Five, and includes properties unique to my findings). This chart displays descriptions of the five interrelated categories and their specific properties. I use these specific properties to analyze and organize my finding. I then outline my approach to this study, my method for data collection, data organization, and data analysis. Finally, before concluding this chapter, I briefly describe possible limitations.

Methodological Orientation

This qualitative self-study takes an in-depth look at my current teaching practice in order to address the research questions: how am I authentic in my teaching practice and how might engaging in self-study contribute to my authenticity as a teacher? I chose a qualitative approach to address these questions, as narrative self-study was the most natural and effective way for me
to honestly and intimately reflect on my practice.

**Self-Study**

Self-study has emerged and evolved over the past 15 years within the field of education (Cole & Knowles, 2001; Zeichner, 1999; Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001; Loughran, 2004). Self-study involves “the study of one’s self, one’s actions, one’s ideas, as well as the ‘not self’ ” (Hamilton & Pinnegar, 1998, p. 236). Thus, although the self is at the centre of self-study, it is an approach to research not strictly autobiographical. Self-study includes “the autobiographical, historical, cultural, and political . . . it draws on one’s life, but it is more than that. Self-study also involves a thoughtful look at texts read, experiences had, people known and ideas considered” (Hamilton & Pinnegar, 1998, p. 236). Self-study is a multifaceted approach to research that is creative, complex and holistic in nature.

The process of self-study involves re-assessing one's thoughts, feelings, and actions. Consequently, self-study can lead to transformative learning and may even be transformative by its very nature. Wilcox (2009) views self-study as involving honest critical reflection, discourse, and a commitment to taking a caring yet self-critical stance toward improving and perhaps transforming self, practices, and institutional culture. Speaking specifically of authenticity and professional development in higher education, Wilcox (2009) identifies guidelines for studying oneself: knowing ourselves; managing ourselves; (re)creating ourselves; and caring for ourselves. These guidelines helped prepare and guide me through my own authentic and meaningful self-study.

**Narrative**

Adopting narrative form allowed me to develop my own voice, a voice from which to
intimately and accurately express my lived reality. According to Bakhtin (1986) narrative research makes use of personal, internal discourse that communicates in various voices and brings to light misgivings and indecision. Narrative “is not authoritative, but rather examines, inquires, wonders and hesitates to some degree” (Ezer, 2009, p. x). Writing in the form of narrative allowed me the freedom to creatively reflect on teaching experiences, experiences that were often complex and uncomfortable, in a way that felt safe, fluid, and honest. Narrative was an appropriate tool to use for reflection and to ask myself important and meaningful questions about my teaching practice, without insisting upon a definitive or exact answer. It allowed me to be in process and write from a space of not knowing, a space of discovering.

I began to experiment with narrative writing as a graduate student by reflecting on blogs for class assignments. I enjoyed this work and received encouraging feedback from professors and colleagues who read my posts. Yet, when it came time to produce reflective work for my thesis, my writing became stiff and forced. Overly concerned with whether or not I would sound academic enough to be accepted by a scholarly community of researchers and graduate students, I became aware of incongruence within. I wanted to engage in honest and thoughtful critical reflection, and yet there was a voice in my head that was insisting I write in a style not my own. I eventually broke the habit of writing in a disconnected way when, sitting in the library one night, something clicked. Overwhelmed and ready to give up, I came across an article posted on-line by a friend about graduate students who burn out and never complete their degrees. Worried that I would join the group of graduate student drop-outs, I picked up my pen and began to write. I wrote exactly what I was feeling and what I was thinking in an uncensored and truthful way. I wrote about the exhausting voice in my head that told me I had to constantly produce. I wrote about the stress I felt in my body as a university student amongst my high achieving performance
oriented peers. I wrote of the insecurity I felt as an outsider in a culture of competition. The writing felt uncomfortable but liberating and authentic. I sent this work to my supervisor and she encouraged me to keep writing in this way and to see what happened.

The narrative approach helped me find my voice. I could discuss memories and events from as far back as my childhood from a present perspective. Giving voice to my experiences as a teacher, I was creating an identity for myself that included those past incidents that shaped who I am and who I am becoming. Narrative also let me vividly describe myself in contemplative practice. Without the narrative voice, I would not have been able to describe in such thick and accurate detail the ways in which Yoga and meditation were tools to reflect on my practice. Narrative was an honest and clear way for me to communicate the experiences that have shaped me and it became a way to reveal how I was changing in the moment of my own transformation.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) note, “life—as we come to it and as it comes to others—is filled with narrative fragments, enacted in storied moments of time and space, and reflected upon and understood in terms of narrative unities and discontinuities” (p. 17). A retelling of past experiences through “storied moments” revealed shifts in my perspectives and ideas as they were occurring.

**Setting Self at the Centre**

As I described past and current experiences teaching, I made mention of the various contexts within which I taught. Sometimes I reflected on particular contexts such as schools or Yoga studios. However, given the nature of my research, an in-depth self-study, I must add myself and my tools of practice, my meditation cushion and yoga mat, to the list of settings in this study. In contemplative practice, the body becomes a place of knowing. Often in my data I provided vivid descriptions of what it felt like to literally live the questions I was asking. When
my whole self became a place of knowing, of exploring, and of understanding. I was, as Patton (2002) notes, “living the data” (p. 65).

**Cranton and Carusetta Framework**

To help frame my research, I used the work of Cranton and Carusetta. Specifically, throughout the course of my study, I referred to two articles outlining their work on authenticity in teaching: “Perspectives on Authenticity in Teaching” (2004a) and “Developing Authenticity as a Transformative Process” (2004b). Dissatisfied with what they call “scattered and unsatisfying references to authenticity” in the literature on adult education, Cranton and Carusetta were led to conduct their grounded theory study on developing authenticity as a transformative process. Working with 22 university educators over a 3 year time span, their study produced concrete findings on which to develop a more meaningful foundation for authenticity by answering the questions: “how does authenticity (develop) in teaching?”; how do teachers at the university level “relate to others in authentic ways...and reflect on their practice so as to become authentic?”; and “how do educators bring their sense of self into their teaching?” (Cranton & Carusetta, 2004b, p. 277). Results revealed five interrelated dimensions of authenticity: self-awareness, awareness of others, relationships with learners, awareness of context, and a critically reflective approach to practice. Identifying these categories and the description of the phases of authenticity, Cranton and Carusetta showed how the journey of becoming authentic can be transformative. They present the five categories of authenticity, descriptions of the meaning of the categories, and properties or characteristics of the categories in Table 1: Authenticity Categories and Properties of Categories (2004a, p. 13). I have chosen to use the 5 interrelated categories drawn from the Cranton and Carusetta study as a framework for my study, as well as the specific properties listed
in the chart below. In total, Cranton and Carusseta identified 31 properties. I have altered Cranton and Carusseta’s original version of Table 1, calling it Table 1-A, and including letters beside the properties to make clear how I organized my findings in Chapter 4.

**TABLE 1-A**

**Authenticity Categories and Properties of Categories**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Property</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Self     | Possessing an understanding of oneself both as a teacher and as a person    | A. Self-awareness  
B. Articulates values  
C. Congruence between values and actions  
D. Genuine  
E. Open  
F. Explicit  
G. Articulates teaching story  
H. Brings self into classroom  
I. Shows passion for teaching  
J. Knows preferred teaching style  
K. Sees teaching as a vocation |
| Other    | Possessing an awareness of others as human beings in the teaching and learning environment, especially students, but sometimes colleagues and individuals outside of the classroom | A. Awareness of students’ needs and characteristics; for example, learning style, motivation, abilities and gifts, prior experience, developmental stages  
B. Interest in students’ lives and needs outside of the classroom, including personal problems and obstacles to learning  
C. Interest in other individuals who may be a part of teaching- |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship</th>
<th>Possessing an awareness of the relationship between teacher and students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Carefully defined relationship between teacher and student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A. Caring for students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B. Helping students learn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C. Dialogue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D. Sharing self with students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E. Awareness of how power is exercised</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F. Teaching as relationship and communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>G. Awareness of nature of personal relationship with students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context</td>
<td>Possessing an awareness of how the context of teaching influences self, other, and relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A. Knowledge of discipline, subject area, content of teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B. Awareness of classroom environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C. Departmental norms and expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D. Institutional norms and expectations, including promotion and tenure policies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E. Cultural expectations, role of professor in larger culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical reflection</td>
<td>Being critical of or engaging in critical reflection on each of the previous categories- self, other, relationship, and context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A. Critically questioning one’s own values, preferences, and experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B. Critically reflecting on the meaning of student needs and characteristics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C. Critically questioning one’s relationship with students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D. Critically examining the influence of context on teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E. Critically questioning the norms and expectations present in</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Approach

Although I knew that I wanted to approach this thesis as a self-study, I was uncertain if I would have enough current teaching opportunities to collect sufficient data for an in-depth study. I decided that I would include my past as well as my present experiences. I wanted to incorporate my past experiences while still maintaining a focus on my current practice, showing the relevance of the past in shaping the present. I decided to use past teaching journals, blog posts, and other forms of reflection as documents from which to draw my data. Additionally, having been engaged in on-going self-inquiry for a number of years through various contemplative practices such as meditation, Yoga, and daily mindfulness techniques, I envisioned using these practices as tools for self-reflection.

I began the data collection phase of my study in January 2012. As I began engaging in the process of in-depth critical reflection through writing, often in the form of personal narrative, I soon discovered this to be the most natural and effective way for me to gather my data. Over the course of 3 months, I produced 30 written reflections of varying length on my current teaching practice and on critical incidents from my past teaching experiences. Some days my reflections were in the form of a poem, a list of unanswered questions, or a piece of artwork. Most often reflections were stream of consciousness narratives or short reflective essays. The average length of reflection was 4 written pages per day. I also maintained a daily seated meditation and yoga practice and consciously made choices to foster mindfulness in my teaching practice. I chose to use the theoretical framework from the grounded research study on teacher authenticity.
conducted by Cranton and Carusetta (2004a). Specifically, I used their five categories of authenticity: Self, Other, Relationships, Context, and Critical Reflection, to organize and analyze my data according to the properties of the categories listed in Table 1-A.

My approach to addressing my research question was exploratory and emergent in nature. That is, during data collection I did not stick firmly to the authenticity categories identified by Cranton and Carusetta (2004a). Instead, I opened to my own process of self-study through written critical reflection on my teaching practice and by engaging in contemplative practices. I did so without knowing exactly where my writing would lead or whether or not my findings would correspond to those that emerged in the Cranton and Carusetta study. I returned to their study once I had completed my own unique and organic process of critical reflection. At that point, I explored the ways in which the categories and properties of authenticity related to my own findings. I also sought to understand the ways in which the categories and properties that emerged from the Cranton and Carusetta study did not relate to my findings. I noted when properties emerged that were not specifically identified by Cranton and Carusetta in their study. I also paid attention to themes that emerged related to the development of my authenticity. This way I was able to truly enter into the study honestly and openly, in a way that reflected my own individual experience.

Data Collection

From the time I first conceived this self-study I wanted to focus on my involvement with contemplative practice as a way to reflect on the development of authenticity in my teaching practice. Having for a number of years studied and practiced various contemplative practices for many years, such as Yoga, seated meditation, contemplative mentorship, and mindfulness, I
wanted to explore the ways in which these practices were influencing my growth and development as a teacher. Since the purpose of my contemplative practice is self-inquiry often resulting in transformation, I chose to use my daily practice as a means to reflect.

My personal experience with contemplative practice provided a rich source of information for this study. The written critical reflections I produced became the “hard” data that I was able to work with in a tangible way. This in-depth exploration of a bounded system, myself in reflection through contemplative practice and critical reflection, was based on an extensive amount of written data collected over a three month period. I tried to remain flexible and organic in my approach to writing, allowing for themes to emerge and transform as I moved through the various stages of thinking, imagining, organizing and writing. The qualitative approach allowed me to provide intimate, detailed, thick descriptions, while using multiple sources of information.

In approaching this self-study, I engaged in a number of activities to promote my self-development. I met weekly and dialogued regularly with a mentor. I maintained a regular contemplative practice of Yoga, meditation, and mindfulness. I engaged in on-going, in-depth critical reflection for a period of 3 months during the winter of 2012, writing almost daily. I kept in contact with my supervisor and received regular feedback from her as I moved through the various stages of writing, reflecting, organizing, and planning. The result was the production of approximately 30 individual written reflections documenting my thoughts, feelings, insights, and actions from both past and current teaching experiences. Some of these reflections included excerpts from past teaching journals. Of the 30 written documents, I selected 26 to use as data, based on their clarity and relevance to my professional and personal development. The four documents omitted I considered too personal having to do more with personal issues occurring outside of my professional work than with the development of my authenticity as a teacher.
At times I used secondary sources of data, such as past teaching journals. These documents triggered my memory and allowed me to draw connections between past and present insights in my teaching and thinking. Thus, although this study is situated in my current practice, many of my reflections weave back and forth between past and present. Some data collected came from notes taken from discussions with my mentor. These notes consisted of comments, important observations, insights, and guidance offered by my mentor.

**Data Organization**

After the data collection phase of my research, which yielded 26 written reflections of varying length and depth, I began coding. I sorted through all 26 reflective documents individually, colour-coding my data using the five categories identified by Cranton and Carusetta in their grounded study on developing authenticity in teaching: Self (blue), Other (pink), Relationship (Green), Context (yellow), and Critical Reflection (orange). These five documents were a clear way to organize and keep track of my data. Each file acted as a container for primary and secondary sources of information. In some ways, data collection was an ongoing continuous process. McMillan & Schumaker (2010) note that in qualitative case studies “the process of purposeful sampling, data collection, and partial data analysis are simultaneous and intertwined rather than discrete sequential steps” (p. 317). The data sets continued to change shape as I sifted through and made decisions regarding the relevancy of each piece of written data, and as I created and added new pieces of data. I also used Cranton and Carusetta's identifying factors and properties that make up each of the five categories to make sense of my data.

Once I had my data colour coded and organized into five separate documents, I went through a second round of coding, organizing my data by tagging so that I could keep track of it.
I experienced an inner tension that was almost always present. I was experiencing what it was like to be a living contradiction (02/01/12-S).

In instances where I reflected on teaching experiences by using journals or written reflections produced in the past, the tagline would include an extra date reflecting the date I had originally reflected on the experience, as well as the date of the document I had organized it into during my data collection phase. For example, reflecting on an incident which took place during my second teaching position in 2007, I coded by first putting the date I was reflecting, followed by the date the incident actually occurred, followed by an ‘S’ to indicate that it belonged to Category I: Self:

I am staying very present for this, it is not easy, but I know it is best to provide some steadiness for myself and the students (02/01/12-05/20/07-S).

Coding in such a way allowed me to easily locate segments of data within my data sets and use these segments to draw connections between themes throughout the five categories of authenticity.

**Data Analysis**

Data analysis included re-reading my data multiple times to see in what ways my findings corresponded with the findings generated from the work of Cranton and Carusetta (2004a). As noted, I have chosen to use the five interrelated categories drawn from the Cranton and Carusetta
study as a framework for my study. Data analysis included going through the 26 written documents I produced over a three month period to see if my findings related to the five categories of authenticity. After discovering that my data did in fact correspond to the five categories, I once again went through my data, which I had then organized into five data sets corresponding with the categories, to see if any new categories emerged. I found that my data fit easily into the five categories generated by Cranton and Carusetta and that no new category emerged. I went through another round of data analysis, this time becoming more detailed in my analysis to see if the 31 properties of authenticity listed in Table 1-A were present. I found that these same properties emerged in my data, with some variations as explained in Chapter Four. In exploring my data this round, I noted when a property emerged that was unique to my study. This involved paying close attention to themes that appeared multiple times throughout my documents. I conducted a final round of data analysis by highlighting indications of my development, such as any significant changes or shifts in my thoughts, ideas, or perspectives.

This final round of data analysis allowed me to move from a more superficial description of my data to a richer theoretical interpretation of my findings. In order to make sense of my data, which I had organized according to the properties covered in the C & C categories, I looked for major reoccurring themes that were emic (arising from the data) rather than etic (arising from the literature, i.e., C & C categories). The criteria I used to determine the importance of the themes to the development of my authenticity were: frequently of times a theme appeared in my data; indication of challenging previously unexamined assumptions; indication of shift in my thinking or actions as a teacher; and evidence of an increase in awareness or depth of insight. In essence, I was looking for indications of the development of my authenticity as a teacher resulting from my engagement in reflective work. Where, I asked, were those “a-ha” moments that led to a
new understanding or a broadening of my perspective? And where had I noted a change in my practice teaching? These questions and criteria were what led to a deeper analysis of my data.

**Limitations**

This in-depth self-study exploring my personal experiences describes only my particular situation and not the experiences of others. I recognize that my approach to self-study, through in-depth critical reflection and contemplative practice, may not appeal to other teachers and learners, especially those not comfortable with honest self-inquiry. It may be especially difficult for busy teachers and learners to make the time and space in their lives for such work. Furthermore, although I am under the counsel of my supervisor and committee member, and although I engaged in critical reflection with my mentor, I am the sole researcher and the only participant in this study. Recognition of my personal biases and assumptions and being clear that I am operating from within my own worldview must be an imperative part of the research process.

My hope is that any perceived obstacles involved with this research will be outweighed by the benefits. I anticipate that through this research others within the field of education will begin to value their own practice, inquiry, and personal well-being enough to find ways to engage in practices that enhance their development, self-awareness, and authenticity. I hope to show that contemplative practice is a way towards authenticity in teaching and learning that is profoundly transformative and life-enhancing.

**Conclusion**

In Chapter Three I provided an outline of the methodology I used to conduct my self-study. After a brief discussion of my chosen methodological orientation, qualitative self-study
conducted through engagement in contemplative practice and written narrative, I outlined my framework, approach, data collection strategy, data organization, analysis, and limitations. My decisions for how to conduct this study were purposely made based on what would engage me most authentically in the process of self-study.
CHAPTER FOUR
FINDINGS

Findings from my research are organized according to the five categories of authenticity identified by Cranton and Carusetta (2004a): Self; Other; Relationships; Context; and Critical Reflection. I provide a description for each category based on the properties identified and presented in Table 1-A: Authenticity Categories and Properties of Categories. Within each category data is broken down and presented according to distinct properties, some of which are also presented in Table 1-A. Properties not listed in Table 1-A were unique to my study, and are listed in Table 1-B in Chapter Five.

Category 1: Self

Cranton and Carusetta (2004a) found teachers’ awareness of self to be an important factor contributing to authenticity in practice. They provide the following description of awareness of self: “possessing an understanding of oneself both as a teacher and as a person” (p. 13). They list the following 11 properties: Self-Awareness; Articulates values; Congruence between values and actions; Genuine; Open; Explicit; Articulates teaching story; Brings self into the classroom; Shows passion for teaching; Knows preferred teaching style; Sees teaching as a vocation. The properties identified by Cranton and Carusetta in their grounded research study emerged in my research.

Although I use Cranton and Carusetta's categories and properties to frame my work, I discovered variations and additional properties in my data, which were not mentioned in their findings. When additional properties surfaced I included these as factors within the 11 main properties. For example, related to the property Self-Awareness, Self-Acceptance emerged as a
theme. As I articulated my teaching story, I identified Transitions as a property, as when I transitioned between jobs, or when I was shifting perspectives. I also found Tension to be a reoccurring property throughout my data. In my reflections on being genuine, the Vulnerability emerged. In particular, I often discussed the impact that accepting my vulnerability had on my ability to empathize and connect to my students in a genuine way. Consequently I included the property Vulnerability in my discussions of Property 1D: Genuine. Additionally, awareness of my body emerged related to the properties: self-awareness, bringing myself into the classroom, and knowing my teaching style. Thus, within these categories the property of embodiment figured prominently.

Property 1A: Self-Awareness

At the core of this study was the development of self-awareness through reflective practice. I often reflected in solitude, sitting in meditation, practicing Yoga, or writing. In solitude I experienced a deeper connection to myself and an ability to clarify and understand my thoughts and feelings. Yet I also reflected in action as I taught and interacted with others. Communicating and interacting with others also led to an increase in self-awareness. And I also began to see how much of an influence others had on my development as a teacher. For instance, my awareness of myself grew as I reflected on my father, other teachers, my mentor, and colleagues. For example, I noted that, like my father;

*My spirituality is the ground from which I work and operate in the world. Also like my father, when I believe in the work I am doing, I have an intensity and a focus that cannot easily be broken. I am persistent. Enduring. Gutsy. Passionate. And yet also sensitive and compassionate.* (02-01-12-A-S)

As I wrote about my father and others who influenced my development as a teacher, I gained a
deeper connection to myself. Understanding the various ways that others impacted me I was able to see the root of certain preferences and tendencies as a teacher and learner. Reflecting on my influences, I noticed certain tendencies and characteristics I was drawn to in others, and I saw that those same characteristics appeared consistently in my teaching. For example, I saw that my more introverted tendencies, my sensitivity, and my desire to be open and honest with my students were also characteristics I was drawn to in my past teachers. As I reflected it became clear which characteristics I displayed more often in my teaching and which characteristics tended not to be as significant.

Noticing the influence of others on my development, I became more flexible in the way I viewed myself. I saw that my identity was not fixed nor was I a product of my conditioning. Being aware of the ways I had developed my teacher identity meant I could then reimagine and open to other ways of being. Moreover, as I articulated what drew me to the path of teaching, I displayed self-awareness. This included being able to identify a purpose and meaning behind my decision to teach. I wrote:

*Certainly one reason I am drawn to teaching, like my father, is that it connects me to others, allows me to feel part of the world, to contribute meaningfully, and build relationships with students. This same desire for understanding through connection is perhaps also what has brought me to work with my mentor... And connection is what draws me to teach yoga. (02/01/12-A-S)*

Importantly, self-awareness included knowing what was meaningful to me as a teacher. Meaning came from my ability to contribute and connect to others authentically.

Exploring myself in relation to others, I reflected on teaching experiences where I felt supported by a community and situations in which there was a lack of support. I came to recognize the benefits of working with others in deepening my self-awareness, as I noted:
When I began to find a supportive community that I could share my thoughts with, and I began to bring questions into class, I began to feel less alone as a teacher, but also more autonomous and aware of who I was in comparison to the other teachers and to my students. (02/01/12-A-S)

Developing self-awareness did not happen in isolation. Although I often reflected in solitude, it took being with others and reflecting on myself in community to develop a greater capacity for self-understanding.

Part of this self-study included asking important and honest questions about myself. Findings indicated that growing an awareness of self was not an easy or pain free process. Often in my reflections, and especially through the practise of mindfulness in my teaching, I came to see an inner struggle, a persistent tension. Stepping back and looking at myself in practise I became clearer and more explicit about this tension. Often when I experienced tension or confusion, I meditated and observed these feelings. I would not attempt to rationalize or sort through my experiences by problem solving or thinking of next steps. Instead, I would simply sit with the questions, the tension, and be with whatever arose. During Yoga Practice too, I was often led to a deeper embodied understanding of the nature of my experiences, and of myself.

After engaging in contemplative practices, I found that my written reflections revealed an increased awareness of myself in my teaching experiences. When I reflected in this way, I began to see my characteristics, tendencies, and values as a teacher in a new light. This usually took recognizing the root of my struggle, which I found difficult to do through critical reflection alone. For example, after about a week of feeling disconnected in my teaching, I began to reflect on my past challenges as a student. As I reflected I saw how I struggle, how I never feel like I fit anywhere, how I cannot seem to learn in the way others seem to learn (8/20/11-S). Evidently, coming to know myself involved admitting my challenges as well as my strengths. It involved
recognizing my insecurities as a student and the ways in which these insecurities showed up in my teaching, especially as a new teacher teaching a new subject. I explained:

*I feel lost and out of place... I fear I don't know enough about any given subject matter, and that students expect an expert which I am not. I am learning and growing alongside students and some will view this as laziness, or lack of professionalism.* (05/30/12-S)

Although these were not easy insights to recognize, my ability to be honest about what I was experiencing in my practice, allowed me to deepen my sense of self.

Eventually through reflection and practice, I came to a place of self-acceptance. I saw that teaching is about learning and change. Self-awareness involved being able to see that as a teacher I am in a state of continuous process and learning. I reflected on this phenomenon when I noted observing myself: *learning with more ease. And there is this sense also that I am creating myself as I am doing it...and there is just less doubt and more acceptance* (02/01/12-A-S).

Importantly, findings indicated a shift in my awareness of self as teacher, and of the very nature of teaching itself. I articulated this shift when I wrote:

*Over the past year in particular, I feel myself moving out of the stage of insecure, novice teacher, and into a place where I feel my work and what I have to say is meaningful, and may help facilitate others along their journeys.* (02/01/12-A-S)

Not only is there a sense of increased self-awareness in this passage, there is also an indication of self-acceptance.

Self-awareness involved understanding myself in relation to others, being aware of my characteristics, tendencies, and values as a teacher, knowing what brings meaning and purpose to my teaching, accepting my challenges and insecurities, and recognizing that teaching is a continuous process of learning. Reflecting through meditation, yoga, and writing, helped me gain more clarity and insight into my daily experiences and myself. Reflections also show an increase
in my self-acceptance.

**Property 1B: Articulation of Values**

Throughout my reflections, I often articulated my values as a teacher who wants to teach to empower the learner (03/03/12 & 03/08/12-S). I reflected on past teaching experiences and saw that confusion often arose when I was unclear about my values or before I had clearly articulated them. Once I had taken the time to think about and articulate my values, issues became resolved, if not in my teaching experiences, at least internally, in myself. My teaching philosophy came to reflect my core values as a teacher. I created an extensive list which included: compassion, truth, respect for difference and diversity, openness, willingness to take risks, curiosity, interdependence, the ability to hold paradox and contradiction, social justice, peace, safe space, change, non-judgemental awareness, authenticity, and learner autonomy (05/30/12 –S). I reflected on the origin of these values as I discussed the influence of others on my thinking:

*Like Freire, I have a passion for justice, critical knowledge, and social change, and I am guided by feelings of love, compassion, and comradeship with those I teach. Similarly, my view of transformative learning involves gaining freedom from internal and external constraints, limited perspectives, and oppressive circumstances. Such a perspective involves modelling critical reflection.* (05/30/12-S)

A sense of empowerment emerged as I began to articulate my values as a teacher. In articulating my values, I experienced more confidence in my teaching, often became clearer about how to handle problems that arose, and understood what was happening when I was experiencing tension. Additionally, as I articulated my values, there emerged a recognition of teaching as process. With this came the realization that my values and perspectives must be consistently reassessed and open to change. The more I challenged and looked critically at myself in practice,
the more I opened to changing my own perspectives and values to broaden my outlook and integrate other points of view.

**Property 1C: Congruence between Values and Actions**

A desire to experience congruence between my external experiences and my inner values emerged while engaging in this reflective work. I looked back on past teaching experiences and saw clearly when I was teaching in a way that honoured my values, and when I was not. I saw that I struggled when I was unclear about, or had conflicting values. I asked: *The values I espouse in my yoga practice, those that are so dear to me, how can I see these same values come to life (in my teaching)?* (02/01/12-A-S). I set intentions to mirror my values while teaching. I wrote: *I am trying to practice humility, and continue to teach from a place that feels real to me, and hope others will be inspired to learn and respond in a way that feels real to them* (02/01/12-A-S). I often emphasised acting in ways that felt real or genuine.

Being genuine meant teaching in a way that was congruent with my values. Yet I noticed that what felt real varied depending on the circumstances and the people I was teaching. Although my core values remained consistent, how these values came to life in my teaching often varied. Congruency also meant less tension and more ease. When I was congruent, I felt as if I was fulfilling a purpose and that what I was doing was meaningful. I experienced the positive impact being congruent had on students as well, as I noted: *After all, if I teach mindfulness, I have to act in mindful ways. The more conscious, awake, and attentive I am, the more my students will learn to be this way in their practice* (02/12/12-S). Thus, becoming more congruent allowed me to feel more effective and more at ease in my teaching, and it impacted my students too. Exploring the issue of congruency in teaching, I reflected on the writing of bell hooks:
bell hooks writes that the practice of giving love is a continuous and every day practice. It is to be worked at constantly. Thus, I dedicate myself to the work, and to acting from a place of wholeness and care in order to influence others to do the same, and because it is what feels right to me. (02/21/12-S)

I was drawn to hooks’ dedication to the daily practice of giving love as it was in line with my desire to bring my values into congruence with my actions as a teacher. Feeling ‘right’ meant being in congruence.

When the values I identified as important to me were not in congruence with my practice, sometimes I was shocked and confused by my experience. A sense of confusion surfaced when it seemed I had done all I was supposed to and yet still I was not arriving at the anticipated results: I thought back on all the work I had done, I wrote, to accept my challenges and embrace my unique learning style…and yet still there existed a real incongruency within (02/01/12-A-S). As I moved from articulating my values to applying them in my teaching I discovered that practising these values was not always so simple. Although I clearly identified my values as a teacher that wants to teach to empower the learner I realized that empowerment is totally different from person to person. I cannot define what empowerment is for my students. This is something they will need to discover just as I am discovering that what has been empowering for me may not be empowering for another…and it is not my job to define what is empowering for another (03/03/12 & 03/08/12-S). Thus, I came to see that identifying and then attempting to put my values into action involved struggle and change.

Working towards congruency between my values and actions increased my awareness of my values, my limitations as a teacher, and the different ways to put these values into practice. I began to see that to be congruent in practice required a degree of diligence. Congruence was to
be worked at daily. Of course, dedicating myself to the daily work of becoming congruent, meant recognizing all of the incongruencies in my teaching. Sometimes I worked through them with ease. Other times I remained frustrated. Yet the search for congruency required a degree of conscious effort that allowed for the growth of self-awareness.

Property 1D: Genuine

In my data I expressed a desire to be genuine in my teaching, often using words such as real, authentic, honest and natural. I reflected on how I felt uncomfortable wearing a mask or being in a culture of performativity. I commented on what it was like to speak and act and relate in a way that feels natural and genuine to me, in an embodied way (02/11/12-S). I discussed how my teaching involves showing up each day mindfully and honestly even when difficulties arise (02/11/12-S). Being genuine in my teaching involved a level of self-awareness as I noted: I try to be honest with myself and the biases I hold and open to changing and challenging my preconceptions. I feel strongly about showing my authentic self to my students and connecting to them as fellow human beings (05/30/12-S). I noted feeling more in touch with my genuine self by engaging in a regular practice of meditation and yoga. I also described how the daily practice of mindfulness was a way to stay rooted and in touch with my genuine self.

I noticed the positive effect that being genuine had on my students. I found that when I was genuine students were more comfortable around me and opened up. I also saw that when I displayed a genuine passion for my subject or for the act of teaching, students probably also sensed my genuine interest and passion for the topics as well, and that I was teaching about a practice and a subject that was close to my heart (02/01/12-B-S). Being genuine also meant being responsible for my role as a teacher and noticing that I am at the centre of my experience. I reflected on this when I wrote:
More and more, I am waking to the realization that there is no total authority or expert on teaching, or yoga, or life for that matter. I am the one that is here day in and day out with these students, with myself, and there is no expert to turn to. Nowhere to go but to my experience and inner reflection. (02/12/12-S)

Bringing my genuine self into teaching and while interacting with students meant accepting mistakes and experiencing uncomfortable moments. I noted that when I allowed vulnerability and the insecurity to surface (it) is a lesson and it informs all I do in my daily life including my research work and my teaching (8/20/11-S). I also discussed experiences in which I did not feel genuine in my teaching. On one hand the experience of incongruency led me to feel that I was not acting in accordance with my genuine self. Yet paradoxically the more in touch I was with the experience of incongruence the more genuine I felt. Recalling past experiences too I reflected on what being genuine meant as a new teacher:

because I was still so new, it did not feel authentic to me. What was real then was being unsure, a bit afraid, insecure, a novice. To be a genuine novice I had to be all those things, to feel through those stages, which is different than what being genuine as a teacher is now, and this will be different again next week. (02/12/12-S)

Being genuine was clearly a key factor that emerged in my reflections on becoming more self-aware. I noticed that being genuine allowed me to be more present and grounded in myself, and more able to connect with my students.

Property 1E: Open

Openness was a theme that emerged in my reflections in Category 1: Self. I listed openness as a core value in my teaching. I described emphasizing comfort, inclusivity, safety and openness in the learning atmosphere (05/30/12-S). I talked of a teaching practice that balances clarifying and respecting boundaries with being playful and open (05/30/12-S). The property of openness also emerged when I reflected on teaching adults. I wrote that to be effective as an adult educator I must be open to change in myself, including transforming my own habits of mind
and world views. I described moments when I approach my work as a task, or with a ‘have to be here’ mentality (05/30/12-S). I saw that in these moments I lose the openness to possibility, the joy, the creativity. If I open to my yoga practice, my teaching practice, and my life with a curious and open mind, an inquiry based approach, everything changes (05/30/12-S). I learned how to be open by experiencing and asking questions and by observing what did and did not work in my teaching practice:

I was open but maybe too honest with being unsure, and I worry the students would interpret this as me being unprofessional, or a novice teacher. Perhaps I was not displaying enough confidence, not owning my entering into the class with new eyes. (02/13/12-S)

Through the experience of being open myself I learned the value of opening while teaching. Perhaps the most valuable thing I noted in my reflections was that I see I can’t go into a situation as the teacher that is also not open to changing and learning myself (03/03/12 & 03/08/12-S). Once again the image of teaching as learning arises in my data as I came to accept myself in process.

**Property 1F: Explicit**

Throughout my writing I was explicit about my values, thoughts, and feelings as a teacher. Being explicit in my reflections in turn allowed me to be more explicit in my teaching. For example, I explicitly stated my desire to teach from a place of compassion, to be truthful, and to be open to learning from my students. The more I engaged in the work of critical reflection, the more explicit and clear my questions about teaching became: When do I feel I am congruent in my teaching? I asked. What is my responsibility as a teacher and what are the students’ responsibilities? When do I resist? When do I feel open? Answering these questions helped me become more explicit, better able to articulate what I was experiencing in practice, and what I
needed to do to move forward.

As I became more explicit in my teaching, I brought many of the questions I asked myself into class to be explored. For example, when I engaged in critical questions about my own practice as a Yoga teacher and about the culture of Yoga in general, I brought these questions to my students as I taught and I asked them to explore them as well. Clearly articulating my values to myself, I could also then be explicit about my values to others which in turn helped them be explicit.

Property 1G: Articulation of Teaching Story

Through writing and reflecting I told my teaching story. This story involved how I came to teach and included the experiences and the learning that occurred as I found my way through difficult and uncertain circumstances as a teacher. As I wrote my story, I discussed early influences in my life and in my learning both in and out of school. I reflected on my experiences teaching high school to youth at risk, teaching adult literacy, volunteering, and teaching yoga. Telling my story I developed a deeper and clearer voice and a stronger awareness of myself.

My story included early memories of my father, a teacher with intense focus...puritan work ethic... dedication to students... care (02-01-12-A-S). I gained a deeper understanding of myself as I reflected on my father especially when I noticed our similarities: I see him in me often these days (02-01-12-A-S). It was through this recognition and acceptance of my father’s influence that I came to understand and articulate my own characteristics and qualities as a teacher. These reflections on my early experiences at home allowed me to grow in my awareness of self.

My story also included my experiences as a student. Reflecting on influential teachers and professors, I came to identify who I was as a learner and how this shaped me as a teacher.
For example, I reflected on my final year of my undergraduate degree and wrote:

*I took a course in Contemporary Native literature...the professor began every class speaking in his Native language. Sometimes he would just repeat the words ‘Acoma Pueblo’, the name of his home in New Mexico. He would offer these words slowly and mindfully speaking with his entire being. Then he would tell a story about his people, about the land he came from, his home, his ancestors. As I write these words I can still hear his deep ardent voice, and I recall the way he seemed to connect to both his inner experience and to something greater than himself as he spoke. The sounds exiting his mouth, some completely foreign to me, always communicated great meaning. He spoke with his entire being, with dignity, as if his voice didn't just belong to him but to all of his ancestors, living and dead. (8/20/11-S)*

Remembering this particular learning experience, I reflected on how this played a part in my decision to teach:

*This story...reveals the power and significance of story in teaching and learning. Through story, this teacher connected to me in meaningful ways. From talking to others, I learned this professor touched others in a meaningful way not found in the typical university classroom. It was this experience in particular that watered a seed already planted in me from earlier years. That seed began to grow when I entered the BEd program a couple of years later with the intention of bringing Indigenous narrative and perspectives into high school English classes (8/20/11-S).*

Reflecting on my learning experiences I created a map of my past. I wrote of those people who touched me and helped me along my journey. Part of my journey involved listening to the stories of other teachers.

My story included transitions too. I have had many varied experiences and my path was never clear or direct. I went through many in between stages where I was unsure what would come next. However, I came to see that *transitions, even the most painful, can be rich lessons, provided we are willing to look. And transitions matter to me as a teacher and learner because I want to bring my whole self to the classroom* (02/08/12-S). Often the theme of transitions emerged when I wrote of what it was like to be a novice teacher in the classroom. I told stories of being confused and uncertain as a new teacher, of working in highly stressful, even unsafe
environments, of dealing with the loss of a student.

In telling my story, I discussed the ways in which contemplative practices played a part in helping me move through transitions and in my overall development as a teacher. Not only were contemplative practices a way for me to reflect on my experiences they were techniques I brought into my teaching. In telling my story of teaching, I discussed how bringing mindfulness and meditation into class profoundly impacted my ability to be present and work with students in crisis. Not only did (mindfulness) help me deal with the difficulties involved with transitioning during my first year teaching by setting in place strategies for calming, centering, and slowing down my reactive tendencies and “fight or flight” responses at work, mindfulness opened my contemplative mind and helped me become more mindful and aware of my teaching practice, of the interactions with students and staff, and of deep questions that arose when I taught.

Contemplative practices, such as mindfulness, helped me cope with the stresses of being a teacher. Contemplative practices also played a central part in my ability to recall, reflect on, and see the significance of all the past experiences that contributed to my teaching story. These practicing allowed me write of the various influences and experiences that I encountered as a learner and as a teacher.

The written portion of my data consists of a compilation of vignettes, anecdotes, poems, and essays. Taken together, the 26 written reflections comprised my teaching story over the past 5 years. My story evolved as it was remembered, in a non-linear and multi-faceted way. In the honest retelling of the unfolding of the events of my past and present I experienced myself uncovering who I have become as a teacher. This uncovering resulted in my ability to be more authentic in my practice.
**Property 1H: Brings Self into Classroom:**

Engaging in this study I looked at the similarities and differences between myself as a teacher and who I am as a person outside of the context of teaching. In my written reflections I often described becoming whole and bringing all aspects of myself into my teaching. The sense of wholeness is related to the theme of incongruency as I struggled with the experience of feeling fragmented, as when I encountered situations where I felt I have to perform or hide parts of myself. I discussed bringing myself into class when I wrote: *I think it is important to integrate the creative self and my personal history into the academic work I do and into teaching and learning* (8/20/11-S). At other points in my writing, I discussed the importance of being physically, emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually grounded as a teacher.

Bringing my entire self into my teaching, especially as a yoga teacher but also in my classroom teaching, meant being embodied in my learning. Being embodied was a way of being more attentive and aware of internal and external changes. Below is a written reflection describing how my relationship with my body contributed to my ability to be present not only in teaching, but in other areas of my life as well:

*Every cell of my body wants to wake up. Is waking up. This is not just an intellectual knowing. I feel it. bell hooks talks about the importance of bringing the body fully into the work we do as teachers. This is so easy to do in the Yoga class but what about elsewhere in my life? When do I tune out, when am I tuning in? Why is it so hard to slow down? What am I afraid of? Every time I do, as I did today, students tend to be more receptive and relaxed and I begin to see things I may have missed had I continued at such a hurried pace. Resting this body, moving more mindfully and with ease will allow my mind to also relax. I must practice what I teach, return to a state of balance.* (02/12/12-S)

Being mindful of my body was a daily effort that influenced my teaching and my ability to be present both inside and outside of the class.

Finally, bringing myself into class meant allowing my vulnerability and sensitivity to be
part of my teaching. By showing that I make mistakes and that I am not an expert, I allowed myself to bring more of my humanity into class. I saw that in teaching I'm learning, I'm changing, I'm not perfect. And it is ok to be sensitive too, and vulnerable, and show a bit of this in my teaching, and share a bit of who I am. The human side of me (02/30/12–S). Vulnerability was an essential part of feeling authentic as a teacher.

Reflecting on the ways I brought my whole self into the classroom was an important part of this self-study. Discussing being whole, showing up physically, emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually, and allowing my vulnerability to surface were all indications of bringing my entire self into my teaching. Bringing all of me into class was being authentic.

Property II: Shows Passion for Teaching

Emerging out of this study was an awareness of my passion for teaching. For instance, when I wrote about teaching yoga I explained: When I first began practising yoga, I fell in love. I experienced a felt sense that I had come home. I felt it was what had been missing from my life...I became more spiritually connected which allowed me to connect more meaningfully with my students. I felt happier. More alive (02/01/12-A-S). Clearly studying and teaching Yoga fueled a passion within me. This passion was almost immediate and the work involved in practicing and teaching I experienced as a sort of effortless effort.

Considering past experiences teaching I noticed my passion for teaching emerged while teaching a subject I loved. I noticed my passion impacted my students in a positive way too, as I wrote: They (the students) probably also sensed my genuine interest and passion for the topics as well and that I was teaching about a practice and a subject that was close to my heart (02/01/12-B-S). Although context and subject mattered when considering my passion for teaching, I also
described a feeling of passion for teaching in general, as I noted in the following reflection:

*I also know that regardless of the subject matter, my real passion is to work with people and help them on their learning paths, whatever that path may be. This is one reason why I am drawn to working with adults to develop their capacity for lifelong and self-directed learning. It is human potential and individual growth I am interested in rather than the specific details of any given subject. (05/30/11-S)*

It is clear that, especially when working with adults, I am interested in the development of the whole individual and helping them reach their potential. I noticed too that this desire to help learners on their individual path was directly connected to helping them be authentic. In other words, I uncovered my authentic desire to help students uncover their authentic selves.

I often described my passion by explaining my desire to empower students and contribute to making the world a more socially just place. I accepted being with the tension that accompanies teaching because I felt that my passion for authenticity in teaching and learning was the foundation and inner drive that fueled my actions as a teacher. I found that it was passion as well that brought me out of doubt and back to teaching when I went through periods of confusion.

Thus, the sense of passion, whether implicit or explicit, is mentioned consistently throughout my reflections.

**Property 1J : Knows Preferred Teaching Style**

An awareness of my teaching style emerged in my data. Often by reflecting on my learning style, I reflected on my teaching style. Recalling moments in my learning and seeing my tendencies as a learner to be more intuitive and introspective I became aware of my characteristics as a teacher. I saw that **when teaching I am not a planner, I plan a little but not strictly...I am intuitive and connect emotionally and am very much an improviser (02/30/12).** I reflected on my teaching style in response to questions from a graduate independent study course
and wrote:

*How would I describe my learning style and teaching style? Varied. At times I am bold and direct asking challenging questions...at other times I am very careful, coming to the questions from the side by gently coaxing learners to arrive at their own truth. I am a kinesthetic learner and love movement, getting in touch with the body and the senses, so this shows up in my teaching. Emotional awareness also has to be involved in the process, regardless of the subject matter.* (03/03/12 & 03/08/12-S)

I developed a preference for teaching as co-learning with the instructor is learning alongside the student. I noted my preference for this particular style of teaching, remarking that sometimes I am learning more about myself and my own presumptions than about the student (03/03/12 & 03/08/12-S). Approaching teaching in this way, *I see I can't go into a situation as the teacher that is also not open to changing and learning myself* (03/03/12 & 03/08/12-S).

Learning and growing alongside my students was an approach to teaching that emerged throughout my writing.

Other characteristics I discussed as my teaching style included a tendency toward introversion, allowing room for silence and space, encouraging self-direction and self-inquiry in learners, modelling, and integrating mindfulness into my daily teaching. Mindfulness in particular was a key theme that emerged in my work. Approaching my teaching with mindfulness related to my preference for a holistic way of teaching and learning, one that integrates mind, body, emotions, and spirit, allowing me to be more grounded and present in my teaching. I reflected on mindfulness as a style of teaching in the following reflections:

*I had instead come to practice a way of teaching that was more about being than doing. This meant I was in the moment, present and awake and aware ...I began to pay attention to my breath, to my body, to the sounds of the birds outside, or the crumpling of paper by a frustrated student. I just listened, without reacting. And I opened. I welcomed space between my words, between my students asking questions and me answering, or*
encouraging them to answer. I was integrating ‘the mindful pause’ into every lesson.
(02/01/12-B-S)

Mindfulness, creating space, and allowing pause and silence, appeared as an integral part of my teaching style.

The theme of embodiment emerged as I mentioned my style of teaching. I reflected on being a kinesthetic learner preferring an experiential approach to education. My description of teaching reflects these attributes, for example when I explained: *I moved my body around the room, interacted, opened up...* (02/01/12-A-S). In my reflections on teaching yoga and also as I reflected on my classroom experiences I mentioned being a kinesthetic learner, feeling most comfortable when moving and teaching with my body.

My approach to teaching was clearly connected to mindfulness and embodiment. Yoga and meditation strengthened these aspects of my teaching style as I began integrating into all areas of my life what I was cultivating in these practices.

**Property 1K: Sees Teaching as a Vocation**

In my written reflections I often discussed teaching as a vocation, or more commonly a path. It is not a clear path and I often mentioned the struggle I feel when I come to see that *I have to find my own way* (03/03/12 & 03/08/12-S). Because of my various teaching interests and contexts I often wrote about the pressure I felt when I thought I must choose which way or context best suited me. Thus, I discovered that many questions arose when considering teaching as my path and there was uncertainty and doubt as much as a sense of direction and clarity.

However, I came to a place of acceptance when I saw that context and subject mattered less than the actual act of teaching and my ability to be present and resourceful. In my written reflections I described feeling a sense of being ‘at home’ while teaching noting: *I am noticing*
more lately how much more confident I feel that teaching yoga is my path. I don't feel more at home and engaged with my work then I do teaching in a studio (02/18/12-S). I came to see with more clarity that the path of teaching is also a path of learning. When I accepted this I was able to be open to my own practice and all the areas I need to work on (02/18/12-S). As I came to accept the path of teaching I made a commitment to the process:

Since I made a commitment with myself to allow myself to do what it is that I love and to do so with presence, truth, and great love, I am learning with more ease. And there is this sense also that I am creating myself as I am doing it...and there is just less doubt and more acceptance. (02/01/12-A-S)

Occasionally I experienced some uncertainty when reflecting on teaching as my path and I asked myself questions about what I felt called to do. But as I opened to these questions and reflected on my various experiences and multiple interests I came to re-imagine what teaching meant for me. In doing so I defined teaching as a process that involved my own continuous learning. Once I saw that I didn’t need to choose between one particular context, type, or discipline, but that it is the act of teaching and my ability to find congruence that matters most, I began to imagine teaching as my path.

To summarize, the following properties emerged from my data: Self-Awareness; Articulates values; Congruence between values and actions; Genuine; Open; Explicit; Articulates teaching story; Brings self into the classroom; Shows passion for teaching; Knows preferred teaching style; Sees teaching as a vocation. These properties were found in Cranton and Carusetta’s research and presented in Table 1. Specific properties that surfaced which were unique to my self-study within Category 1: Self were: Self-acceptance, Transitions, Tension, Vulnerability and Embodiment. I have mentioned these properties where they relate to other the 11 properties.
Category II: Other

In addition to an awareness of self, Cranton and Carusetta (2004a) found awareness of other to be an important factor when studying authenticity in teaching. Cranton and Carusetta (2004a) define the awareness of other as “possessing an awareness of others as human beings in the teaching and learning environment, especially students, but sometimes colleagues and individuals outside of the classroom” (p. 13). The following three main properties make up this category: Awareness of students' needs and characteristics, for example, learning style, motivation, abilities, and gifts, prior experience, developmental stages; Interest in students' lives and needs outside of the classroom, including personal problems and obstacles to learning; Interest in other individuals who may be a part of teaching-colleagues and the methods they use. My findings coincide with the same three categories identified by Cranton and Carusetta. Properties unique to my findings that emerged within Category II: Other were: Listening, Silence, Space, Boundaries, Empowerment, Vulnerability, an awareness of Diversity amongst learners, Tension when I tried to meet the needs of various learners, and a Desire to teach the whole student. Of these nine properties, three, Embodiment, Vulnerability and Tension, were also found within Category 1: Self. These nine properties are woven throughout the three properties identified by Cranton and Carusetta (2004a), and are presented below.

Property 2A: Awareness of Students' Needs and Characteristics

My data revealed many examples where I reflected on students’ characteristics, needs, and learning styles. I often discussed a desire to understand my students from a holistic perspective, learning to relate and know them emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually. I expressed a desire to understand students developmentally as learners. Additionally, culture, race,
gender, and socio-economic background were factors I often considered while getting to know and understand my students as unique and whole individuals. Specifically, I often reflected on how these characteristics might influence students’ viewpoints and their approaches to learning.

Within the 26 documents I produced during the data collection phase of my study, I often commented on past teaching experiences where I struggled to understand my students. As a new teacher, when I encountered new students, I was often left with questions rather than a clear understanding of students’ needs. As I reflected, I asked: *I really wonder if they are growing in their practices, if they are growing in themselves* …((02/01/12-A-O), and *Are they gaining more body awareness, or are they tuning out?* (02/08/12-O). Attempting to discern the developmental stages of my students, I wondered if they *know how to notice and articulate changes that may be happening in their practice* (02/08/12-O). At times, lacking an understanding of what it was my students really needed as learners, and what learning style worked best for them, left me frustrated and confused about my ability as a teacher. I wondered if I was *really teaching them anything* as I observed students, the younger ones especially, *stare at me with blank eyes. Their faces appear blank. How do I know they are benefiting from the practice?* (02/08/12-O).

Concerned about whether or not I was helping my students, I asked myself a series of meaningful questions. I wondered: *how am I serving my students if they come to practice and it is merely a continuation of the doing and pushing that is happening outside in their busy lives? Are they restoring? Are they coming back to balance?* (02/12/12-O). My approach shifted when I saw that getting to know learners meant going beyond intuiting, or assuming things in order to understand them. I started asking students questions and interacting more with them in order to gain a deeper and more accurate understanding of what they needed. When *I allowed students to show me what kind of learner they were, instead of deciding from a distance what I thought they*
needed to learn (02/01/12-B-O). I found I had more success meeting their needs.

Sometimes when I asked students what they needed, it didn't always result in an increased awareness of their needs and characteristics. One difficulty was that much of my teaching took place in contexts where students were not accustomed to being asked questions about themselves as learners. I noticed as well that often students seemed unsure how to respond when asked what they needed. When students were unable to articulate their needs, I wondered if it is just the developmental stage they are at. They may not know how to notice and articulate changes that may be happening in their practice... (02/08/12-O). I noticed that it was particularly difficult when teaching Yoga, to have students engage in dialogue with me. Since so many students came for the quiet and silence, I saw that asking students to tell me what they want I have found to be unsuccessful (02/08/12-O). Thus, I noticed that the way in which I was becoming aware of students required revision.

As a literacy instructor, gaining an understanding of students by asking them about themselves as learners was a challenge. I explained one incident in which a student approaches me with the same worksheet he's been staring at for weeks but he refuses to let me help him. I ask him what he needs. He warns me he has an anger problem and can explode at any moment (02/21/12-02/15/10-O). Working with a sensitive population, one where many of the students had learning difficulties and a history of trauma, it sometimes felt impossible to get them to articulate their needs to me. When students were unclear about their own needs, or were reluctant to share with me what kind of learner they were, I struggled to gain an awareness of them as learners.

At other points when I was aware of students’ needs, characteristics, and learning styles, I was faced with the challenge of trying to meet a diversity of learners’ needs. I found I spent a great deal of time trying to understand and meet the needs of various students. Below is an
example taken from my reflections teaching Yoga:

The students who attend my classes on a regular basis at (the) University tend to be beginners, in their first or second year of practice. Some have been practising on and off for 4 or more years. As with many classes, I am faced with the challenge of trying to meet everyone's needs. I have adult professionals who want to use Yoga to de-stress and prefer a restorative practice. I have others who are interested in using the practice merely for the physical benefits. Others still come for a spiritual purpose. Some students like music, others silence. Some like verbal cues and hands on adjustments, others prefer to watch and feel with little verbal instruction or guidance. How do I ensure everyone is getting what they need and want? How do I attend to the needs of the entire class? Taking into account everyone's differences? (02/08/12-O)

I noted the difficulties I faced when trying to both understand and meet the various needs of a diversity of students. Eventually I came to a place of acceptance when I realized it was not always possible to meet everyone's needs. I came to see that one solution was to encourage students to be more self-directed in their learning. I saw that modelling self-direction might be one of the best ways to do this.

Perhaps the most important factor in gaining an awareness of students’ needs, characteristics and learning was listening. Through listening, I was both addressing students’ needs to be heard, and I was gaining an understanding of students’ characteristics, preferences, and learning styles. I often remarked on the benefits of a daily practice of mindfulness and meditation which let me strengthen my teaching practice by allowing me to talk less and listen more (02/01/12-B-S). Listening also surfaced as I discussed my conversations with other teachers as we dialogued about what happened in our classes when we talk about what we experience in our classes when we listen and watch and feel (02/11/12-O). Throughout my reflections, I noted that students just needed to be given the space to be listened to (02/01/12-B-O). I often mentioned a desire to listen to students so that they would perhaps feel understood (02/13/12-0). I noted that at times I have to see the student in front of me clearly and listen to
them (02/30/12) and also that once I accepted them exactly as they were, and when I just listened... students seemed to let down their guards (02/21/12-O). Listening to students with difficult life circumstances I found became an important factor in building trust. Clearly, listening became a way to help students feel safe thereby allowing me to connect with them and establish a relationship. (I reflect more on this phenomenon in my data in the Category 3: Relationships).

Sometimes my data reveals that listening did not always come easily, especially in earlier teaching practices. I discussed unlearning a tendency to fill space in order to make room to hear students. Teaching high school especially I recognized the need to fill silence in the classroom, as noted: I have always been a bit more introverted then extroverted. Yet, when I first began to teach, I talked a lot. I felt it was my responsibility to communicate everything I knew about a subject or topic (02/08/12-O). I found that I filled silent space even more when I felt I did not know enough about a topic. I reflected on Palmer’s (1998) insights in The Courage to Teach, in particular his thoughts on the place of silence in teaching. Palmer wrote: “I live by an ethic of professional responsibility, so in the silence, my sense of competence and worth is at stake...” (p. 85). Like Palmer, I noticed my assumptions about needing to fulfil a professional role by talking more than listening. I began to challenge this and cultivate habits of silence in class by weaving lessons from my contemplative practices into all of my teaching situations. I came to see my endless chattering caused students to tune out more, and learn less than if I had allowed for more space.

My data shows that by listening and paying attention, my awareness of the needs, characteristics, and styles of students grew. Reflections also indicated that listening strengthened by my personal practice of mindfulness meditation, helped me grow myself awareness as a
teacher. The practice of mindfulness let me welcome and soften into the silent spaces where
before there was only talk. My reflections show a shift in my ability to be present for my students
as I began to pay attention to my breath, to my body, to the sounds of the birds outside, or even
the crumpling of paper by a frustrated student…

I just listened, without reacting. And I opened. I welcomed space between my words,
between my students asking questions and me answering, or encouraging them to answer.
I was integrating a mindful pause into every lesson. (02/01/12-B-O)

The properties space, openness, and silence often appeared alongside listening in my
data. All three properties played an important part in my ability to understand students’ needs, in
meeting their needs, and in the growth of my teaching practice. For example, reflecting on
Teaching challenging high school students I noted (a)ll I can do is explain where I am coming
from and also give them signs that I am ready to listen and that I will do my very best to try and
understand them (02/25/12-B-S 02/25/12-B-O). Once I began to listen more, and provide
students with space and silence, I learned more about my students as learners and it took a while
for students to get accustomed to the silence, but I think they began to appreciate and value the
space as much as I did (02/01/12-B-O).

I discussed the need for personal space as a teacher, the importance of creating a safe
space in the context of the teaching and learning environment, and the space between teacher and
student, necessary for the growth and possibility of relationships in teaching and learning. Thus,
at times my reflections on space show my growing awareness of context, and awareness of
relationships, and of myself. (I have however discussed these reflections in Category II: Other
where the central focus is on the need to provide space for my students).

Issues involving space also appeared in connection to the theme of boundaries as when I
noted I am discovering that boundaries in teaching and learning are very important especially when working with at-risk populations (02/21/12-02/20/10-O). Reflecting on my experiences teaching adult literacy, I described a situation where establishing boundaries was the central concern in class:

I meet with the program instructor and we talk about boundaries. She says it is very common for these students to cross boundaries. I decide to do a lesson on boundaries. I am reacting to what I’ve been noticing in class. Students do not seem to have a sense of boundaries, physically or psychologically. There is crowding. There is an unsafe feeling and confusion. I try to explain the benefits of creating space, and I explain that space allows us to be ourselves and then to be in healthy relationships with others. (02/21/12-02/15/10-O)

In this particular situation the theme of boundaries was integrated into the lesson content as I worked with students to address their needs. Reflecting on the lesson I noted: I try to explain the benefits of creating space, and I explain that space allows us to be ourselves and then to be in healthy relationships with others (02/21/12-02/15/10-O). Although creating space and establishing boundaries was important, bringing these issues to the attention of the class was not always welcomed or appreciated by this particular group of students. I reflected on an incident where a student exits the room during a lesson on boundaries. Later I discovered by speaking with this student she felt as if I was targeting her. This incident reminded me of the sensitivity of students and the necessity of the need to feel safe. Again, this incident let me see that understanding students as learners was not always so simple, especially when my assumptions about what students needed differed from what they expressed for themselves: On one hand (the students) experience anxiety when boundaries are crossed, on the other hand boundaries can feel like a lack of care, even coldness (02/21/12-O).

My data revealed incidents where students claim their own space and become more autonomous and better able to express their needs once they are able to do so. When working
with a difficult student for example I learned what the student needed once I continued to show her the space and respect she seemed to be asking for (02/21/12-O). Such incidences allowed me to better understand and meet the needs of my learners. As I explained; this woman was able to claim her space, to speak for herself and articulate her needs ...(she is) someone trying to claim her space in a world she felt she didn't belong to, perhaps a world she didn't want to belong to (02/21/12-O). Negotiating the appropriate amount of space, I found, related to a sense of safety, and was a necessary part of teaching. The more safety, the more room there was for myself and others to be authentic.

Reflecting on my experiences teaching high school students, I came to see the value of space in meeting students’ needs. I wrote: it felt like a victory over all those voices that have told these students they have no focus, that they have ADHD...today they were clearly focused, respectful, and attentive. They just need to be given the space and to be listened to (02/01/12-B-O). The more I became aware of students needs for space, the more I began consciously making room for space in my teaching experiences. I began to focus on the interactions and connections that honour myself, the student, the subject, and the space between us. That is what is real, and that is how I teach (02/30/12-O). Eventually, I noticed meeting students’ needs for space let them appreciate and value the space as much as I did.

In addition to the need for space and boundaries, silence was a recurring theme in my data. Especially as a Yoga instructor, but also in situations where I was a regular classroom instructor, silence was a requirement for many of the students. Since many students come for the quiet and silence (02/08/12-O), silence became an integral part of the teaching and learning environment. Silence and space often were mentioned together: It took awhile for students to get accustomed to the silence, but I think they began to appreciate and value the space as much as I
I found in my reflections that silence was a way to connect with my students in a way that they may not be accustomed to, but in a way that I felt was essential for deep learning to occur.

In my reflections, the property of empowerment often emerged when I discussed students’ needs. I discussed wanting students to be empowered to become their own self directed learners, or to become more autonomous. Yet, as I soon discovered, helping learners become empowered was not a simple thing to accomplish, nor was it something I could necessarily teach a learner to do. The more I taught, the more I came to see that what I considered to be liberating was often very different from students’ definitions of liberation. Moreover, I saw that each student had his or her own ideas of what empowerment was based on this or her own unique backgrounds and experiences.

In my reflections on teaching literacy to adults with developmental difficulties, I came to see that my ideal notions of empowerment, of becoming independent and having more choice in society differed from what the learners desired for themselves. Thinking about class and my own consciousness and ideas and thoughts of people of other classes was important in the understanding and development of myself as a teacher and learner. I noticed I often felt the desire, as a teacher of students living in poverty, to help empower students, but in my attempts to do so, sometimes I missed hearing their wants, needs, and stories. I reflected on this phenomenon in a written reflection, noting so often I have assumed students need or would benefit from this or that, but do I really know this to be true? How do I know, until I really ask them and get to know them, and until I also learn about their own assumptions of me? (02/21/12-O). My reflections showed my growing awareness not only of my students, but of my own class consciousness. I began to see the complexity of the notion of empowerment, and also that my
ideas about what students need don't always match their own interpretations of their needs.

Again, I reflected at length on my perspective, asking myself meaningful questions:

*I guess I have always worked from the idea that it is best not to be dependent on government assistance, and that to be empowered one must build a healthy sense of self, and join or at least feel a part of the wider society. Yet, is this really desirable for everyone? What about students who would rather not be a member of society, who feel society is neither welcoming nor equitable? Or who live humbly out of choice? I can recall a student I worked with at the adult literacy centre who often complained to me that receiving government assistance was much more desirable to his family then having to be a part of “the white man's world”. He said he had a real community connection in the government housing building he lived in. Tenants ate together and talked together and took care of one another. It is rare to see this kind of connection and support in upper middle class neighbourhoods. (02/21/12-O)*

Noticing a gap between what I assumed students needed and what they told me about their needs, I began to view empowerment in a new way. I saw that empowerment is totally different from person to person and that I could not define what empowerment is for my students. This is something they will need to discover on their own (03/03/12&03/08/12-O). This was an important realisation to have that resulted in a shift in how I approached teaching. I began to open to the multiple ways students were experiencing empowerment. Sometimes this included students resisting me, the teacher, to express their own freedom. As these experiences arose in my relationships with students, at first I did not consider that students might actually be claiming their space and learning to speak for themselves. Instead, I usually experienced a feeling of tension, confusion, or I felt as if I was doing something wrong when students rebelled against me. This tension is articulated in the following reflection:

*When I thought I was demonstrating empathy, students seemed to react as if I were belittling them. What I perceived as empowerment, students interpreted as me being pushy or trying to boss them around. My expressions of unconditional regard for learners were mistaken as signs that I was naïve. (02/21/12-O)*
Often, as I tried to get to know students as learners, I met resistance. I began to see all the ways in which these students were resisting not only me but the culture of schooling and the larger society as well. As I tried to engage students in conversation around future goals and employment opportunities, they became distant and appeared irritated. I sensed a lot of fear and hesitation.

Despite the tension, looking at these questions brought more clarity. I began to see that perhaps students needed to resist me in order to become more empowered as learners. One student in particular presented me with significant challenges in the adult literacy program. Yet, this time I could better understand her needs. I reflected in detail on the power dynamics between myself and this student:

(Shes) often speaks to me in a dialect of English I have never heard before. I do not want to say it is ‘broken’ English because it is not. It is an English that is just not what I am accustomed to. It is an English that is not a product of a patriarchal colonial education system. Or is it? In a way, she seems to be using language to resist. She is resisting the dominant culture. She seems to be acting in a counter-hegemonic way. I have seen her write more clearly (clear to me) before, in past journal entries I find in her file. I have heard her talk in the hallway with her friends. Yet when she speaks with me she uses a kind of English that is difficult for me to comprehend. I don't want to call it slang, because it is not. It is her version of the English language. (02/21/12-O)

When I started to look at this individual student as someone trying to claim her space in a world she felt she didn't belong to, rather than perceiving her as a threat I relaxed and accepted her. It was very difficult at first. This student, and others, seemed to be testing me. Despite my intention to remain calm and non-reactive I was very often triggered. I noted that this student was acting out to test their boundaries and mine. When I requested quiet for reading and independent work, I would get laughed at, or sometimes she might talk loudly on her cell phone. It was difficult because these were grown adults and I wanted nothing more than to treat them as such. I recalled similar experiences teaching high school to Youth:

Another student often complained to me that I was trying to run the class as a democracy
when they preferred to live in anarchy. And another told me they preferred to be told what to do and not have to converse with others in the class. To these and other students I must have appeared naive, idealistic, and even spoiled. And isn’t it unfair to assume my ideas and ways are the best? There are so many other factors going on, many that I will never really understand from my position. (02/21/12-O)

I experienced tension when I tried to negotiate between my students’ requests and my own ideas about what was best. Another example occurred while I was tutoring at a community centre for adult women. The reflection below shows me once again struggling to come to some clarity over a situation where I experienced a learner resisting what I thought was empowering:

*When I volunteered at a community centre for Indigenous women, I recall tutoring one woman who had been in a residential school. She had such little confidence in herself and described herself as lacking motivation. Yet she came every day and she seemed to be working whenever she was at the centre. After working with her for a few days I tried to encourage her to have more confidence. I explained that in my view she was capable and that she would have no trouble doing more work and getting her GED diploma. I was shocked when she responded almost as if insulted. She said that she was uncomfortable, and she felt I was pushing her. I did not get it. I had such sensitivity towards students with learning challenges, and I was well informed about Indigenous history of oppression in Canada. I had been involved in tutor training in organizations working with marginalized communities. I had spent time reflecting on my white privilege, and my heart was in the right place. I tried to approach each encounter at the centre as a learning opportunity, where I was becoming “de-schooled,” unlearning habits, ideas, ways of thinking and assumptions I had about working with disenfranchised and socially marginalized peoples. Yet, here I was, in a situation where I thought I was helping, and really I seemed to be creating more of a division between myself and this student. (02/21/12-O)*

I experienced a shift in perspective when I began to see that what was happening between myself and this learner was not necessarily a problem but a way that she was able to clarify her own needs and speak her truth. I actually came to welcome her resistance when I saw that *this woman was able to claim her space, to speak for herself and articulate her needs* (02/21/12-O).

Embracing the entire learner gave her space for subsequent personal growth.

My insights around class consciousness and education had me question power and authority. Reframing my experiences around class, I saw that power and authority were not
necessarily negative, but could be empowering if students learned to resist and define their boundaries. In a sense, this woman had been given the opportunity to speak for herself by resisting my pressure, and in doing so she was acting in an empowered way. Despite my initial shock in my following encounters with this woman, I felt more connected to her, and more able to see her for who she was. Her behaviour indicated to me that she felt more comfortable and at ease with me after she had claimed her space.

Clearly, my data shows that understanding my students’ needs, characteristics, and learning styles was not a simple task. At moments I expressed frustration, tension and confusion when I saw that what I thought students’ needs were did not match what they expressed or desired for themselves. Many properties emerged from my data including: listening, silence, space, boundaries, and empowerment. Interesting, these properties are related to my contemplative approach to education. I often express a desire to do my very best to try and understand (02/25/12-B-S 02/25/12-B-O). At times, understanding is embodied, as I note in my yoga teacher reflections: I notice the deeper we move into feeling our body sensations, the more we reach a place of understanding one another (02/11/12-O). At other times, understanding meant learning to listen to what my students needed, and to who they were as whole individuals.

Property 2B: Interest in Students’ Lives and Needs Outside of Classroom, Including Personal Problems and Obstacles to Learning

I reflected on my students’ lives outside of the classroom. I discussed a desire to teach holistically and view each student by taking their whole selves into account. Understanding students often meant knowing about students’ lives outside the classroom. In my reflections on teaching Yoga for example, I often discussed students’ development by gaining an understanding
of who they were as whole individuals, spiritually, emotionally, mentally, and physically. Sometimes gaining an understanding of my students personal problems meant connecting to them less formally than I might in a more traditional teacher-student relationship. Thus, once again in my reflections, the theme of boundaries emerged. Moreover, becoming aware of the whole student meant I had to bring my whole self into the classroom or Yoga studio. I reflected on my vulnerability as a teacher and what it felt like to allow my wounds to connect me to my others.

Teaching underprivileged and high school students at-risk I often noted feeling as if my work went beyond the delivery of course material. Meeting students’ needs meant getting to know who students were as whole individuals, including their backgrounds and circumstances both in and out of school. Below are reflections on my first experiences working with challenging and challenged youth:

*After graduating from my bachelor of education program, I was hired as the social science teacher at a small suburban high school in Ontario. The student population was made up of youth from 16 to 21 years of age, most of whom had either dropped out or been expelled from their previous school. The school was established to serve students labelled “at-risk”, for one reason or another. Many of the youth had been in and out of jail and were prone to violent outbreaks. Some carried weapons, some came to school high on drugs or drunk. Many of these students lived dependent on social assistance cheques, some in shelters or on the street, others with family members struggling with addiction and mental illness. Most had been the victims of abuse and neglect themselves. (02/01/12-B-C)*

With time I came to understand more about how the students’ lives outside of class influenced their behaviour in class:

*There is a reason why they have been expelled from all the other schools in the city. Some of them come out strung out on drugs, others exhausted from working the night shift, or trying to raise their babies alone. It is not their fault, I know this. They are not bad kids. They have been neglected, abused, told they are stupid and worthless and failures. Of course they are hard to work with...I can't seem to reach them. (02/01/12-B-10/07/06-O)*
Reflecting on instructing adults with developmental difficulties, most living in poverty with a history of abuse, I came to understand their backgrounds and what issues might be preventing them from making any progress:

_A persistent issue here is the fact that so many of these students are dependent on social assistance. They are on either a government program that requires them to be in school or they are on disability support. These students have made it very clear that they do not want to be off government support._ (02/21/12-02/20/10-O)

I discussed a desire to treat and approach each individual student as a ‘whole being.’ Teaching from a holistic perspective also meant bringing my entire self into teaching. I discussed understanding students holistically in a series of reflections on my experience at a lecture given by teacher, activist, psychotherapist and author, Michael Stone. This series of reflections written the week after I attended the lecture showed my growing understanding of what it meant to teach from a holistic perspective. The focus of the lecture, how people living at the intersection between spirituality, social justice, and wellness might contribute to creating a better world, prompted my insights on how to understand my students better by allowing room for my own vulnerability:

_A lesson in how to be with my vulnerability, this was one of the main things I took from yesterday's lecture. Stone opened his talk, a discussion on how to be awake in the World, connecting contemplative practice with social justice, by discussing the importance of being with our pain, and the valuable lessons that may surface when we are able to use our wounds to connect us with others, rather than as a way to harden ourselves or distance ourselves from others. He spoke of making a change in the world through teaching and activism, but only by realizing our essential interconnectedness, and [stated] that our wounds and pain become what connects us to others and what helps us be in the world._ (02/12/12-O, 021212-R)

Reflecting on the lecture reminded me of my human interconnectedness which helped to deepen my understanding of others. With this increase in awareness, I experienced a connection to my students on a deeper, more authentic level. My beliefs about the importance of knowing
the self, embracing our wounds, and using our stories and our pain to connect to others were reinforced. One of the central themes was what Stone called an ecological sense of self. He explained that self-awareness eventually leads to an awareness of how we are all intricately connected to one another.

To truly know my students individually and holistically, it was necessary to give them room to be themselves. Adopting this perspective required allowing myself to be more vulnerable and open in my teaching. I was able to be more open by allowing my whole self into my teaching and my interactions with my students. This was not an easy or natural way of being at first as it required me to unlearn previous habits of being. I was learning to see myself as less fragmented, my teacher self being separate from the other parts of myself. Once I began to see how we are all intricately connected to one another, and to view others whom I teach and work with from such a perspective, I began to know them not just as students, but as complex individuals. I noted for example:

*When I relaxed into my experience of vulnerability, I began to see things in my students that I may not have otherwise noticed. I recognized their struggles more clearly. I wasn't trying to solve their problems, or fix them. I could truly empathize and I could do so quite deeply, naturally.* (02/08/11-O)

Thus, in my reflections, there is a strong sense that getting to know my students beyond who they were as students was important for me. By observing and reflecting on my vulnerability and my interconnectedness to others, I was able to bring my whole self into teaching which allowed me to understand and become aware of my students as unique, whole individuals with complex backgrounds.

*Property 2C: Interest in Other Individuals Who May be a Part of Teaching*
Throughout my reflections, I mentioned individuals who touched on my teaching in one way or another. I discussed past teachers and professors who had a strong influence on my development as a teacher. I also wrote about and reflected upon individuals in my personal life, such as my father, who had a strong influence on my choice to become a teacher. Reflections also included mention of individuals who are presently in my life, such as my mentor, colleagues, and others with whom I engage in regular dialogue about my current teaching practice. Properties that emerged from reflections on other colleagues, teachers, and people who impacted my teaching were commitment, dedication, passion, and the tension that arises from discovering how to learn from and teach alongside of others while remaining authentic in my own teaching.

When contemplating questions and beliefs about who I am as a teacher and why I chose this path, early memories of my father emerged...

_I think of my father. I remember thinking that no one worked harder than him. After dinner, he would sit by lamplight at his antique wooden desk, marking. Sometimes, as I passed by him in the hall or sat in my room doing homework, I would hear the gentle hush of his whispers as he quietly read over his students work. My dad. His intense focus. His puritan work ethic. His dedication to students. His care. I see him in me often these days. But I also feel the struggle. (02/01/12-A-O)_

Clearly, my father’s dedication to his teaching practice influenced my development. Being the daughter of a hard working teacher, I also witnessed the challenges he faced. I reflected on my father's own past in school and how his struggles influenced his own development as a teacher:

_Perhaps underneath he still carries shame about being the kid in the back row of the classroom... Tears well up now as I imagine the feelings that come from being told you are not smart enough that you are different then your peers. In my view, dad was just an extremely sensitive and shy youth who carried a lot on his shoulders...As he got older he worked harder, longer, and with more persistence in school then the other kids... He went_
I wrote of being influenced by teachers I worked alongside of. I reflected on one teacher in particular whose actions and behaviour were an inspiration to me:

*I remember a man about my age that I used to teach with. I would watch and listen to him as he interacted with the students. The joy he displayed, and the dedication and commitment he had for the students was so admirable. The students were drawn to him. They would spend their breaks and lunch in his classroom, and would go to him if they had a problem. He worked with a kind of effortless effort. I recall looking at him and thinking, ‘wow, he is truly in his element, he has found his calling.’ I wondered if I would ever feel the same way about teaching.* (02/01/12-A-S)

This man, was fully engaged and in the flow as he taught. He profoundly impacted my views of teaching. His dedication and commitment to students transformed the way I viewed the profession of teaching. He was an example of how to fully bring one’s self into their profession. He showed me it was possible to feel fully at home in the work we do as teachers.

In my reflections, I mention my own past experiences as a student and those teachers who influenced me. In doing so, I come to see more clearly who I am as a learner and how my particular learning preferences helped to shape me as a teacher. In my data, I moved back as far as my own high school experiences as I reflected on teachers who impacted my development:

*My grade 11 English teacher, a Jewish man, displayed a profound passion for literature written by holocaust survivors about their experiences and world views. He designed our course so that the central focus was on stories of the atrocities of anti-Semitism. I wrote and read and devoured the material he gave us. For the first time I felt engaged in school in a way that didn't depend on the marks I received, but on the lessons I was learning.* (02/25/12-B-O)

Stories and memories of high school teachers were an important part of coming to better understand myself and therefore become more genuine in my teaching. I also reflected on my
experiences as a university student. In particular, I discussed an experience in my final year of my undergraduate degree where for the first time I felt able and encouraged to bring my whole self into my learning. This experience marked a transformation in my view of teaching and learning in higher education:

I was fortunate to have two remarkable professors, both well recognized North American Aboriginal writers and scholars. I was profoundly influenced by both of these men. Not only did they urge me to look at my own privilege from a critical point of view, but they taught in a way that was radically different from any other university professor I had had. Everything they did seemed subversive, and meaningful. These experiences also allowed me to bring more of myself into class, and this felt very new to me. I was able to engage in discussion with Aboriginal students and communities in a way I had never done before. Through participatory action research and journal reflections, I was transformed and moved by the realness of my experiences. I began to look with new eyes at my role as privileged ‘other’ in marginalized communities. (02/20/12-o)

I was influenced by the passion these professors displayed for their subject matter, the alternative ways in which they taught and communicated with their students, how they brought their whole selves into the classroom, including their spirituality. I remarked on the impact these professors had on my views of academia when I wrote:

This approach to academia was deeply challenging, eye opening, and transformative in painful as well as joyful ways. These experiences allowed me to be fully involved in my learning, mind, heart and spirit as well as intellect. This was also the first time in my university education I had experienced learning in such an embodied, experiential way (02/20/12-O).

Reflecting on others, I mentioned teachers with whom I presently work. Often I reflected on on-line discussions with other teachers, workshop discussions, or simply my observations of other teachers’ styles and preferences. I reflected on my views, assumptions, and interpretations of colleagues and teachers, and at other times I reflected on my thoughts about how I assumed I was being perceived by others. There is a sense of tension as I tried to establish my teacher
identity as separate from other teachers, and also as I tried to honour and learn from others in a constructive way that allowed room for my own unique preferences and teaching style.

Before relationships between myself and other teachers began to develop, most often at the beginning of a new teaching position, I often felt unsure about where I fit in with other teachers. I recalled my initial teaching experiences when *I was always so concerned the colleagues were judging me as lazy or underprepared, and yet I see that I just can't teach according to anyone else's standards* (02/30/12-O). My writing showed me struggling to find my place amongst teachers with more experience whom I considered to be experts. At other times I judged others according to my own ideas, preferences, and visions of teaching. Quite often my reflections on working with other teachers ended with questions rather than clear answers:

*To teach with others that I do not agree with, who have different styles and philosophies, and not try to change them or impose my values, and at the same time see that I am also probably being judged by someone out there. It does beg the question, however, how does change on the larger scale happen? How do teachers influence each other to practice in a way that is authentic to them but also is open to change?* (02/18/12-O)

Slowly I came to a place of acceptance. I saw that I can't teach in a way that does not feel authentic to me. I stopped comparing myself to other teachers and began instead to establish relationships based on learning and understanding. Below is an example of a time I was asked to teach for another teacher. I begin to clarify my need to be true to myself and not try to teach like others:

*Yesterday I taught a class for a teacher who was sick. This teacher has a style and philosophy that is very different from mine. I was hesitant at first to teach for her, but I decided to do it. I've tried in the past to teach like someone else when subbing, and even as a beginning teacher I recall trying to teach like my teachers, both as a yoga teacher and as an English teacher. It never works. I always feel disconnected from the students*
and from myself. I need to teach in a way that feels right for me, in a way that engages me as a teacher and that engages the students. (02/01/12-A-O)

Despite my initial insecurities when I established my own style and identity as a teacher alongside of other teachers who had their own unique teacher identities I realized what it meant to teach with others. I came to really see how we are all learning together, how all these teaching jobs are about continuously learning. I came to see that there is no one way to teach and that ultimately, it has to be about the learner; and about owning one’s practice and finding out what works for them and what doesn't (03/03/12&03/08/12-O).

To summarize, the same authenticity properties that Cranton and Carusetta (2004a) found in their study emerged in my data: Awareness of students' needs and characteristics; Interest in students' lives and needs outside of the classroom; Interest in other individuals who may be a part of teaching. Properties unique to my data findings that emerged within the category Other were: listening; silence; space; boundaries; empowerment; vulnerability; an awareness of diversity amongst learners; the tension that often arose when I tried to meet the needs of various learners; and a desire to teach the whole student. My data indicates an awareness of other was an essential part of my reflections.

**Category III: Relationship**

Cranton and Carusetta (2004a) found awareness of relationships to be an important factor in their study of authenticity in teaching. Cranton and Carusetta (2004a) offer the following description of awareness of relationship: “possessing an awareness of the relationship between teacher and students; Carefully defined relationship between teacher and students” (p. 13). Cranton and Carusetta identify the following seven properties within the category Relationship: Caring for students, Helping students learn, Dialogue, Sharing self with students, Aware of how
power is exercised, Teaching as relationship and communication, Awareness of nature of personal relationship with students.

The same properties identified by Cranton and Carusetta emerged in my data. Ten additional properties and variations to the previously identified properties also emerged. These ten properties were: Teaching as co-learning emerged in relation to the property helping students learn; Embodied teaching emerged within the various properties; Finding alternatives to dialogue emerged in relation to the property dialogue; Vulnerability emerged within the properties sharing self with students and Teaching as relationship and communication, and Awareness of nature of personal relationship with students; Class consciousness emerged in relation to how power is exercised; Connected knowing emerged in teaching as relationship and communication; Tension, or a sense of struggle to find an effective way to work with and support challenging students and colleagues; Recognizing my limits in my ability to help others; Understanding and developing a relationship with myself; Developing an understanding of relationships that include interconnectedness. Of these ten properties, the same three properties that emerged in Category 1: Self, and Category II: Other, emerged in Category III: Relationship. These properties were: Embodiment, Tension, and Vulnerability. Below I present my findings and explain any variations that emerged as well.

**Property 3A: Caring for Students**

Throughout my reflections I indicated a strong sense of caring for my students. This caring is what drives my desire to help and teach students. For example, I explained a desire to care for myself and to care for others and I noted a preference to work from a place of compassion as the foundation of my teaching practice (02/01/12-B-04/04/08-R). Through my daily meditation and Yoga practices, I strengthened my empathy, care, and compassion for
students and for all the individuals in my various teaching communities.

Sometimes in my writing I discussed a desire to show students my care. With challenging students in particular, I often mentioned a strong desire to have them see that my actions come from a place of deep care: *I tried explaining today that it may feel as if I am pushing them but that I just really want them to see they are capable and competent* (02/21/12-R). At times I was frustrated when I realized that as much as I care for students I could not always help them if they are not at a place where they are willing or able to learn. Care and compassion were influenced by my contemplative practices. My daily personal practice of mindfulness and meditation were a way to cultivate care for my students, as I noted: *When I began practising mindfulness I was able to cultivate loving kindness and compassion* (02/01/12-B-R). I allowed these feelings of care and compassion to fuel my work as a teacher. The more care and compassion I brought to my teaching the more authentic I felt.

**Property 3B: Helping Students Learn**

I often felt a desire to help my students learn. Helping students learn was related to establishing relationships that were founded upon mutual respect, autonomy, and empowering students to be their own self-directed learners. A theme that emerged related to the property of helping students learn was the theme of teaching as co-learning. I clearly articulated my desire to establish relationships founded on mutual respect and co-learning and at one point in my writing I described relationships by using the metaphor of dancing. The metaphor encapsulates my views on teaching as co-creating, or co-learning, where teacher and student learn together. It includes elements of spontaneity and surprise and is an image that displays teaching as an art form, an act of creation:
It is almost like a dance between the teacher and the student. The teacher begins and knows the steps and appears to be leading, yet the student is also influencing the direction of the steps and the movements of his or her body. The teacher is learning about the student as they dance, about how they move, what they struggle with, where they are able to lead. And who knows what will happen after the steps have been learned by the student, who knows what new moves will be created, what new dance will be danced. (03/03/12&03/08/12-R)

The image sums up my views on adult education which I articulated at various points throughout my writing. Namely that an adult educator does not impose knowledge on others but works with them to jointly construct knowledge (11/11/10-R). This view that teachers and learners are co-learners in a situation where mutual respect must operate became an integral part of an authentic teaching practice. In particular my relationships with students and my approach to helping them learn was shaped by the concept of co-learning. Through co-learning I felt I was able to practice an approach to teaching that felt authentic, and at the same time make room for students to be authentic also.

Property 3C: Dialogue

Dialogue was another property that Cranton and Carusetta (2004a) identified in their study of authenticity in teaching. In addition, however, my relationships were also based on a silent embodied connection to students. Embodiment was most evident in my reflections on teaching Yoga, as when I noted:

I felt an experience of connection with the students and something which I interpreted as a sense of ease and relaxation filled the room. For the next 75 minutes we breathed and moved through the postures together. As we inhaled and lifted our arms up over our heads in unison, and then folded our bodies over on an exhalation, it was as if we were all waves making up a large body of water. (02/01/12-A-R)

As shown, the way I experienced connection between myself and students was not always or
entirely dependent on dialogue. There was a kinesthetic element to my relationships as when we moved and breathed together in class.

Nevertheless, throughout this self-study I grew my relationships with learners by developing rapport based on regular dialogue. In the following example I become aware of a shift in my teaching practice once I begin to dialogue with students:

Instead of always just saying thank you when a student says they enjoyed the class, maybe I will begin to ask them what they actually enjoyed in the class, so I can learn from their comments, about me as a teacher, and maybe also about the particular learner. Why have I not been asking about what it is they like and did not like? It seems to be more engaged, I need to ask my students about their experience. (01/15/12-R)

Working with adults I noted my goal was to really get to know the students and connect with them. I set up weekly one-on-one ‘interviews’ with each student, and organized the day so that the schedule was consistent and included individual and group work (02/21/12-R). Dialogue became a way to establish and maintain relationships and to track changes in students’ progress. I found that relationships grew with an increase in dialogue. More conversation helped me view students as co-learners, so that rather than impose knowledge on them, we could jointly construct understanding together.

The more I engaged in conversation with students, the more my relationships with students developed, and the more I was able to feel more confident and effective in meeting their needs. Open and regular dialogue allowed me to teach, not based on my assumptions of who my students were or what I thought they needed, but in response to our discussions. Establishing relationships through conversation with students also allowed me to gain insight into student preferences, which meant I could adapt my teaching to better meet the needs of my learners.

I incorporated more dialogue into my teaching in a productive manner that honoured both teacher and student as I reviewed guidelines for dialogue identified by Freire. I referred to
Friere's (1970) list of seven attributes for authentic dialogue to guide me in conversation with students. These guidelines, summarized by Shih (2011), are: Love for the world and humanity, Humility, Faith in people and their power to create and recreate, Hope that dialogue will lead to meaning-making, Humor, Silence, and Critical thinking. Throughout this self-study I often used these guidelines to help me establish meaningful and authentic dialogue.

In some situations, as when working with students with developmental difficulties, communication through talking was a challenge. I noticed that as I tried to engage students in conversation around future goals or employment opportunities, they became distant and irritated with me... They were not interested in talking to me about work. I sensed a lot of fear coming up (02/21/12-R). In such cases, I had to seek out alternative ways in which to engage students in order to build relationships. One alternative way to deal with learners struggling with verbal communication was through journal writing. To connect with these students I asked the students to spend time writing freely every morning. My goal was to have students experience a sense of freedom as they wrote in a genuine unforced manner. I wanted to see how they communicated, to know them, and to have them feel free to express themselves. If I sensed that some students appeared to approach journaling as a task rather than as a way to honestly engage with me, I began to write with students and make it a shared activity. I reflected:

I decide to sit and write in my journal as the students write in theirs. I hope they see that I am not merely assigning tasks but that journal writing can be enjoyable. Some sit there and do not touch their books. Others write slowly and carefully. I hope after I have gained a bit more trust students will write more. (02/21/12-R)

With time, journals became an effective way to build relationships with my students, as I explained:

It did take some time for students to open up, but soon most did. When I read the students’ journals, I would not correct grammar or spelling. I wanted them to feel free to express
themselves in their writing. I merely wrote responses in the margins or below what they had written. My comments were usually in the form of showing interest and asking questions. I wanted to open them to dialogue with me. I wanted to use free-writing as a way to build a relationship and to connect meaningfully. (02/21/12-R)

Although not the only form of communication between myself and students, dialogue became a central part of establishing and maintaining relationships with students. Part of this study was recognition of the importance of dialogue in teaching. Through dialogue, I found I was able to be more authentic and encourage students to be more authentic too.

**Property 3D: Sharing Self with Students**

I often described a desire to bring my whole self into my teaching in order to share myself with students. I talked about what it is like to share with others in a way that feels nourishing, authentic, unforced (02/11/12-R). At times I mentioned being unsure of how much of myself and my experiences I could bring into class while still maintaining a sense of professional boundaries. However, the more I reflected on my experiences of opening to my students, the more I noted feeling connected and able to establish relationships.

The most common theme that emerged in relation to the property of sharing myself with students was the theme of vulnerability. Vulnerability, I found, connected me most authentically with my learners. Especially when faced with difficulties in my personal life, it was important for me to find a way to address my vulnerability as I taught.

I found that my vulnerability became a strength and a way to connect more meaningfully with students. I felt as though my personal wounds engaged me more as a teacher. I risked exposing my human weaknesses, and I risked judgement. I worried I would come across as unprofessional or that somehow I would ruin my image. By choosing to expose my vulnerability I chose to take off my armor; to remove my mask, to give up my defenses (02/08/11). I began to
see that it is ok to be sensitive too, and vulnerable and show a bit of this in my teaching, and share a bit of who I am. The human side of me (02/30/12-R). Sharing myself with others meant not acting in ways that felt unnatural, not performing or hiding behind a mask. I noted what is real are the interactions and connections that honour myself, the student, the subject, and the space between us. That is what is real, and that is how I teach (02/30/12-R). When I became more honest in my teaching, I became more vulnerable. When I opened, students opened. I found this opening allowed for authenticity for myself and my students.

Once I saw that my own life story and struggles were not something to separate or hide from in my teaching but a way to connect to my students and be more present. I wondered: how can I embrace my vulnerability to connect more fully with life, to be intimate with life? Opening to my own vulnerability allowed me to deepen my connections with students as I started to see that all my relationships needed to be based on what was real, rather than my ideas of who I thought students were or how I thought I should act.

Allowing my vulnerability to connect me to students, especially when faced with difficulties in my personal life, I could address my issues head on, work through my pain and confusion, and show up more fully present for my students. This way my relationships could be based on genuine truth and trust, honesty and integrity.

Property 3E: Awareness of How Power is Exercised

I often reflected on issues of power when I reflected on the relationship between student and teacher. Sometimes questions around power in teaching and learning emerged as I attempted to figure out my roles and responsibilities teaching adults. Quite often I reflected on power dynamics in my relationships when teaching individuals from very different socio-economic backgrounds then my own. I questioned how I could enter into a relationship of co-learning
while continuing to fulfil my role as teacher.

I found that power was of central concern when I was teaching adult literacy. My writing revealed that when working with adults from different backgrounds it was important to be mindful of the power dynamics between teacher and student. I often reflected on my position as an educated white woman from a middle class background teaching at-risk students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Being aware of my privilege influenced my interactions with students and my data revealed a voice searching for the best way to work with challenging learners.

I often found myself in situations where I was figuring out the dynamics of power between myself and students. In the following reflection, I recall an experience as a tutor at a community resource centre serving Indigenous women. Issues of power surfaced as I tried to understand my relationship with a learner. I reflected:

*I recall tutoring one woman who had been in a residential school. She had such little confidence in herself and described herself as lacking motivation. Yet she came every day and she seemed to be working whenever she was at the centre. After working with her for a few days I tried to encourage her to have more confidence. I explained that in my view she was capable and that she would have no trouble doing more work and getting her GED diploma. I was shocked when she responded almost as if insulted. She said that she was uncomfortable, and she felt I was pushing her. I did not get it. I had such sensitivity towards students with learning challenges, and I was well informed about Indigenous history of oppression in Canada. I had been involved in tutor training in organizations working with marginalized communities. I had spent time reflecting on my white privilege, and my heart was in the right place. I tried to approach each encounter at the centre as a learning opportunity, where I was becoming “de-schooled”, unlearning habits, ideas, ways of thinking and assumptions I had about working with disenfranchised and socially marginalized peoples. Yet, here I was, in a situation where I thought I was helping and really I seemed to be creating more of a division between myself and this student. (02/21/12-R)*

My writing shows me in the process of figuring out my relationship with this student.

How, I wondered, was I to act given my position as an educated, young, white woman tutoring an
older Indigenous woman living on social assistance. It shows the complex nature of the dynamics of power between tutor and student, and how my background and position in society influenced my relationship with students.

Power was a pervasive theme throughout this study. Often I experienced feeling as if I was being challenged by my students and that they were trying to test my boundaries. Although I mentioned wanting to help and empower students, to treat them as equals, and establish relationships of co-learning, I often noted feeling as if students were resisting me. At times I expressed feeling threatened and unsafe. In one particular incident I felt as if I was the victim of bullying. In my journal I explained these feelings and I wrote:

_A male student approaches me with the same worksheet he's been staring at for weeks but he refuses to let me help him. I ask him what he needs. He warns me he has an anger problem and can explode at any moment. His girlfriend is the student with the large presence. She is the bully in the class. She dislikes it when he talks with me. I overhear her say that no one should listen to the teacher. I can't believe my ears. I feel I am the victim of bullying. I feel as if years and years of student anger at their teachers is being dumped on me. I do not feel safe in this classroom. It is a terrible feeling to be the target of other's aggression and judgement._ (02/21/12-R)

Power was a complex issue when instructing literacy to adults. On one hand, it seemed as though students were recreating a conditioned dynamic between teacher and student, one they had been taught through their past educational experiences. On the other hand as a novice teacher I was struggling to understand my role as teacher, and how my own conditioning and assumptions were influencing my interactions with students.

Clearly, issues of power were never straight forward. Every teaching situation differed in terms of how power was exercised and experienced. I struggled to understand an appropriate way to work with adults, in particular, that honoured them as co-learners, but that also respected my position as teacher. Class and age were also factors I considered when reflecting on power.
Exploring the complex nature of my relationships with students helped me grow in my awareness of power.

**Property 3F: Teaching as Relationship and Communication**

Teaching as relationship and communication emerged as a theme as I engaged in self-study. In particular, I experienced teaching as a way to connect to others, and as a way to make a meaningful contribution to the world. I often reflected on individual relationships and on being a part of a larger community of teachers and learners.

The theme of teaching as connection surfaced in my written reflections on my father’s teaching career: *teaching connected him to the world, I wrote, giving him...the type of meaning and connection perhaps we are all searching for* (020112-A-R). As I accepted my father’s influence on me as a teacher (*I now see how similar I am to him*), I came to see how, like my father, teaching was a way for me to connect and to feel connected. I articulated this desire for connection when I reflected on what led me to the path of teaching:

*Certainly one reason I am drawn to teaching, like my father, is that it connects me to others, allows me to feel part of the world, to contribute meaningfully, and build relationships with students... And connection is what draws me to teach Yoga.* (02/01/12-A-R)

I found that when I did not feel that I was connecting to students, I felt less engaged in my work. In contrast, the more I connected and built relationships with students and staff, the more I felt able to be my authentic self, engaged in meaningful work. I discovered that building relationships and communicating was easiest while teaching Yoga. I most often experienced connection with Yoga students as a feeling, rather than through an intellectual bonding, as I described in the following reflection:
I felt an experience of connection with the students and something which I interpreted as a sense of ease and relaxation filled the room. For the next 75 minutes we breathed and moved through the postures together. As we inhaled and lifted our arms up over our heads in unison, and then folded our bodies over on an exhalation, it was as if we were all waves making up a large body of water. (02/01/12-A-R)

Often, such as in the above description, I found that my deepest connections were experienced in an embodied and emotional way.

As a learner too, relationships and connection were important. Interestingly, although this self-study was to focus on my teaching practice, I developed a deeper relationship and connection with myself as a learner. Understanding my own unique learning style, I came to better understand my students and their learning style. I reflected on the work of Belenky and Clinchy (1986) who coined the term connected knowing. A connected knower seeks to understand others’ points of view and ideas and often does so through empathy and by placing value on felt experience rather than logic or argument. During an experience in a Yoga teacher workshop I reflected on my understanding of connected knowing and wrote:

The receptive way I listen and communicate with other women in the workshop and the way they respond to me is evidence of connected knowing. We are seeking to understand one another and although we do ask questions and challenge assumptions at times it is really an understanding of each other that we are aiming for, through deep listening and attention rather than debate or analysis. We are opening the enquiring mind, thinking and asking important questions, but we are trying to relate and understand one another, and stay rooted in something deeper than the intellect. (02/11/12-R)

Framing my experience in this workshop with the notion of connected knowing helped me understand my relationship with myself as a learner and to others with whom I learned. I became more aware and accepting of the different ways in which I connected, beyond intellectual knowing. I began to explore the notion of connected knowing in my teaching and reflected:
This deep knowing has been waking up in me the last couple of years in particular, and it is informing and influencing the way I am relating to others...we are all intricately connected and once we wake to this fact, really feel this knowledge deep in our bones, in our psyches, we won’t be able to do anything other than work for positive change in the world (02/12/12-R).

This notion of deep knowing expressed in the above example reflects my approach to teaching and learning cultivated by contemplative practices. It is a way of being and relating that may be described as spiritual, embodied, or perhaps imaginative.

Especially when working with challenging students the property of trust and safety emerged in relation to the property of relationships and connection. I noticed the importance of establishing trust and safety as a foundation on which to build relationships. I watched as relationships grew once there was a sense of safety and trust between myself and my students, and I noted: once they felt safe, they came to class more often, and we began to establish relationship (2/01/12-B-R). When relationships were built on trust, they were authentic and meaningful.

In addition to trust and safety, compassion emerged when reflecting on relationships and connection. I found that my dedication to meditation and Yoga established a foundation for compassion which allowed me to connect with my students in a way that had previously been missing (02/01/12-B-04/04/08-R). I described a natural tendency towards compassion in my teaching relationships as well as the strengthening of compassion gained through my personal practice of mindfulness. In particular, I reflected on the role compassion played in my relationships with difficult high school students. Recalling my first few months teaching high school, which overlapped with my training in a mindfulness course, I wrote:

I worried these students wouldn't accept what I had to teach them, and wouldn't trust me if I attempted to connect with them on their terms or use pop-culture references to bridge
the gap between us. When I began practising mindfulness, I was able to cultivate loving kindness and compassion that transcended these barriers to connection...I cared less about the apparent differences between me and the students, and more about what we had in common, and how these differences could be welcomed, in a way to learn more about each other. (02/01/12-B-04/04/08-R)

The integration of mindfulness in my teaching practice became a way to connect to the students, to bring lightness into the classroom, and to deepen a trust. I also think it helped them to feel more confident and maybe even experience a sense of pride in their own background (02/01/12-B-R). I found that connecting mindfully and establishing relationships built on trust, allowed both myself and my students to be genuine in our connections.

Part of this study involved the growth of awareness of teaching as connection and relationship. I began to explore and accept the different ways to connect. I also described relating to and understanding myself both as a teacher and as a learner. This related to my observations about connected knowing which I described earlier. Not only did my experience of being a connected knower involve a deep relationship with myself, but it was also a way to connect to my students.

Property 3G: Awareness of Personal Nature of Relationship with Students

Another theme that emerged from my reflective work was an awareness of the personal nature of my relationship with students. Related to this property was the theme of boundaries. In their research Cranton and Carusetta (2004a) found that an important component of any relationship was to establish “carefully defined parameters between teacher and student” (Cranton and Carusetta (2004a), Table 1, p. 13). They explain that boundaries differed from person to person but that an awareness of appropriate boundaries was an integral part of most of their participants’ teaching. I too found that boundaries was a prominent theme in my writing. I noted:
I am discovering that boundaries in teaching and learning are very important especially when working with at-risk populations (02/21/12-R). The theme of boundaries figured most prominently when discussing relationships between myself and my students.

Often I described teaching in new or unsafe environments and the struggles I faced when getting to know students from difficult, sometimes abusive, backgrounds. Establishing relationships with students meant I had to take into consideration each student’s unique background. Often this meant empathizing with and understanding students whose life circumstances were much different from my own. At times, I would talk with others on staff for suggestions on how to build relationships with my students. I found that talking to colleagues about students increased my understanding of the nature of relationships between teacher and students, and it helped me build a relationship with the staff. Engaging in dialogue with colleagues helped broaden my perspective and also allowed me to see how my views differed from the views of others (This is her opinion, her perspective). Establishing my own views as distinct from others while still seeing from other people's points of view was an important component in building relationships. These experiences showed me the necessity of creating appropriate boundaries.

Establishing clear boundaries was not always easy. In some incidences my attempts at establishing boundaries to create a good foundation upon which to build relationships with students actually had the opposite effect of what I had expected. Building relationships with students was essential but not easy especially when working with students that appeared to have little experience in relationships that honoured healthy boundaries. Nevertheless, reflecting on my relationships with students, it was essential that I understood how to define parameters in my relationships with students.
In summary, all seven properties identified by Cranton and Carusetta within Category III: Relationship emerged from my data: Caring for Students, Helping Students Learn, Dialogue, Sharing Self with Students, Aware of How Power is Exercised, Teaching as Relationship and Communication, Awareness of Nature of Personal Relationship with Students. Within and related to these properties but unique to my data were the following properties: teaching as co-learning emerged in relation to the property helping students learn; embodied teaching emerged within the various properties; finding alternatives to dialogue emerged in relation to the property dialogue; vulnerability emerged within the properties sharing self with students and teaching, teaching as relationship and communication, and awareness of nature of personal relationship with students; class consciousness emerged in relation to how power is exercised; connected knowing and compassion emerged in teaching as relationship and communication. Throughout the various properties there was a sense of struggle to find an effective way to work with and support challenging students and colleagues. There also emerged a mature recognition of limits in my ability to help others, an understanding and developing of a relationship with myself, and the development and understanding of relationships that include interconnection to all beings.

Category IV: Context

In addition to awareness of self, other, and relationship, Cranton and Carusetta (2004a) found awareness of context to be a factor in authenticity for their teacher-participants. They describe the context as “possessing an awareness of how the context of teaching influences self, other, and relationship” (p. 13). They list five properties mentioned by teacher participants that contributed to Category IV: Context: Knowledge of discipline, subject area, content of teaching; Awareness of classroom environment; Departmental norms and expectations; Institutional norms
and expectations; Cultural expectations, role of teacher in larger culture. These same five properties emerged in my reflections on teaching. Some variations between my findings and the findings within the Cranton and Carusetta study mostly due to the fact that the participants in the Cranton and Carusetta study were university faculty members. In contrast, my findings are based on my experiences as a high school teacher, a literacy instructor, and a Yoga teacher. Four additional properties that emerged in my data were: Balancing expectations with personal choice of what and how to teach; Living the content of my teaching outside of the class; Teaching in supportive versus less supportive environments; and Struggle to teach and learn in contexts that felt inauthentic. These variations and additional findings are noted in the following sections.

**Property 4A: Knowledge of discipline, subject area, and content**

During this self-study I reflected on discipline, subject area, and other factors related to the content of my teaching. When reflecting on my experiences as a high school teacher I mentioned curriculum. Sometimes I reflected on the curriculum I was expected to teach and at other points I reflected on what I choose to teach. Often I found that in my past teaching experiences I was balancing expectations (for example the curriculum standards of the school board I had been previously employed by) with what I thought would be appropriate and meaningful for my students. Recalling my experiences teaching high school,

*I was assigned to teach grade 10 and 12 college English and World Religions...I tried to choose literature that would relate to their lives. Literature that talked to their circumstances, their cultures, their interests. Poetry and stories telling the truth of Blacks in Canada, stories written from the Indigenous voice, stories about oppression and freedom, justice and injustice, pain and joy, and everything in between. (02/01/12-B-C)*

During this self-study I read, wrote, and attended lectures and workshops on the discipline of Yoga. I found that as a Yoga instructor it was essential to have at the very least a
basic understanding of the various styles, lineages and approaches to Yoga, the historical roots of the practice, traditional texts, and modern interpretations as well. Because Yoga is such a broad discipline, I found that I needed to articulate the art and practice of Yoga as I live and understand it. In doing so, I deepened my awareness and understanding and was better able to transmit my knowledge as I taught. I found that as a practitioner and teacher, the work of understanding this ancient discipline from a modern perspective helped me improve my teaching. I displayed an awareness of Yoga by reflecting on the holistic and integrated nature of the practice which led to a deepened understanding of why I felt called to teach. I wrote:

Yoga is also a preventative practice both intimate and individual. It has us listen to and understand the intricacies of our own bodies and minds so that we may hear the whispers, so the body doesn't need to scream. Again, this is not just in relation to the practitioner’s body, but has implications for other areas of our life as well. When we cultivate a mind and body that is attuned to the subtleties and intricacies of internal and external experience, we are able to respond and take appropriate actions before a problem becomes serious. When we are well, we work from a place of balance and are more able to move and act in the world in positive and productive ways. Thus, individual wellness affects those we work with, our families, our economies, our communities, and our schools. (02/13/12-C)

I incorporated others views and ideas into my reflections too. My understanding of the content of my chosen disciplines included reading and reflecting on the ideas of writers and scholars such as hooks, Mandela, Macy, Freire, Foucault, and Stone. Stone (2009) for example marries the discipline of yoga with academia and psychotherapy writing that “Yoga teaches us that everything is connected to everything else in the ongoing flux and flow of reality, beginning in the microcosm of the mind and extending all the way through the myriad forms of life” (p. 2). Yet my awareness grew mostly through my own experience. So awareness of the content of what I was teaching became integrated into the fabric of my being and into my life outside of practice. I described my experience of integrating the content and discipline as I reflected on my
dedication to on-going learning development at a Yoga instructor:

Teacher professional development is an important part of a Yoga teacher’s life. In fact, in no other teaching job that I know of is the teacher also always practising the course content. To teach Yoga is to practice yoga. To practice yoga is to be intimate with all of life and to learn and grow from our experiences. Additionally, workshops and trainings allow teachers to build community, get support, and gain further skills and qualifications to teach more effectively. (02/11/12-C)

In February 2012, after completing a Yoga teacher workshop, I reflected on my insights. The workshop added to my understanding of the knowledge of the discipline, subject area and content of teaching. I came to reflect once more on what all of this knowledge meant from a holistic perspective. I wrote:

Not surprisingly, the approach to the training is holistic in nature. The focus is on anatomy, but the weekend includes philosophical, spiritual, and personal discussions and reflections of our lives as yoga practitioners and teachers in the twenty first century. Although we talk about individual bones, ligaments, and sections of the body, the emphasis is on how everything is connected. Yoga aims to improve overall health and well-being by recognizing and honouring the interconnection of all things. The idea is that once we recognize our inherent interconnectedness, we may take the proper steps to bring ourselves back into a balanced state. (02/13/12-C)

I reflected on the ways in which I applied what I know and learn in Yoga to my whole life and related this to past experiences teaching in various other contexts. Importantly I found the principles of Yoga to be in line with the principles of a holistic approach to education. Holistic education emphasizes connectedness, wholeness, and being. I found that it encourages an authentic way for me to teach.

Much of my writing centred on knowledge of discipline, subject area, and content of teaching. Sometimes I reflected on what I was expected to teach while other times I discussed what I felt called to teach. I discussed balancing what I felt I was required to teach with what I
felt drawn to teach based on what I felt would be meaningful to students. Reflecting on the practice of Yoga as a discipline and discussing it as a holistic practice, I wrote about how I lived the subject in my everyday life.

**Property 4B: Awareness of Classroom Environment**

I often reflected on the various learning environments in which I taught. When reflecting on the class or studio environment I described the physical environment of the class as well as the psychological environment and the staff. I also thought about the ways in which both physical and psychological factors influenced each other.

Below is an example of a reflection I wrote describing one particular teaching environment. I revealed an awareness of my physical space and in doing so I created an image of the feeling of this particular environment:

> I have been teaching in the athletic centre at the university for two years now. It is an interesting place to practice yoga. The giant complex is the newest, and perhaps largest building on campus. It feels sterile, cold, and corporate. To get to the studio where I teach yoga, you have to walk through the various sections of the gym, by rows and rows of perfectly lined up treadmills, stationary bikes, elliptical machines, and various other apparatuses that are completely foreign to my eye. The machines are always in use, with a dozen or so students, and presumably faculty too, lined up along the wall waiting for their turn. (02/08/12-C)

I noticed the ways in which my surroundings influenced the classes I taught. I found that the behaviour of the students and the feel of the class differed depending on the particular teaching environment. *This differs from the yoga classes I teach in the yoga studio downtown, I wrote, where students are in seated meditation or lying on their backs in savasana, corpse pose, when I enter the room* (02/08/12-C). Often when working with difficult populations I felt a sense of disease in such an intense, sometimes unsafe, environment I recall feeling as if I was entering a battle field when I walked down the halls (02/01/12-B-C). I reflected on the characteristics of
these early teaching environments such as *issues of low attendance, student dropout, and lack of motivation*. I also described staff and students in my descriptions *however having a supportive staff made things much smoother*. On rare occasions I would have almost a full class, students paying attention, interested, asking, contributing (02/01/12-B-C). I noticed differences working with students at different levels, with various abilities, learning styles, and preferences. Insights revealed an awareness of my students and an awareness of the context within which I taught. I found I tried to remain genuine and consistent in my teaching while facing the challenge of trying to meet everyone's needs.

Included in the physical descriptions of my past and current teaching environments are reflections on the feel of the learning environment, general descriptions of students and staff, and the characteristics of the class make-up such as the various abilities and levels of students within a single class. I discussed what it felt like to work in an atmosphere where students lacked motivation or were struggling with mental illness. Quite often I attempted to create and maintain a safe and comfortable learning atmosphere, observing *the atmosphere has to feel safe enough for the student to feel comfortable enough to risk take. And there are probably a thousand other factors I'll never know about* (02/01/12-A-C). My desire to teach in a safe environment was fuelled by the values I espoused, such as, space, openness, and room for personal reflection in my teaching and learning environment. I frequently asked questions about how to best create a space safe and supportive environment when everyone’s needs differed. My desire for a safe psychological environment reflected my need to create a space in which myself and my students were best able to work.

Related to my awareness of my teaching and learning environment was an awareness of community, culture, and staff. In my reflections, I mentioned the staff with whom I worked as
part of the teaching context. I described what it was like to work in contexts with little support, especially in times of crisis, all the while I wondered why none of the other teachers, support staff, or administration were out here helping him (02/01/12-B-C). I compared these experiences to working in environments where the staff was very supportive:

Thankful to have fled the dysfunctional administration, the politics of an unhealthy staff, the endless trips to the end of the subway line. Here, the staff seemed supportive, progressive and creative...we were a supportive staff, and we managed to come together to support one another and the students...having a supportive staff made things much smoother. (02/01/12-B-C)

An awareness of the classroom environment emerged in my data as did an awareness of the various other environments I taught in. My reflections included an awareness of the psychological make-up of the learning environment, and the staff. My ability to be authentically engaged in my work meant understanding these various work contexts and how I was influenced by them. By reflecting I also came to see how I could teach authentically regardless of context.

Property 4C: Departmental Norms and Expectations

Cranton and Carusetta (2004a) listed departmental norms and expectations amongst the properties related to their participants’ awareness of their teaching context. Instead of departmental norms and expectations, I described norms and expectations within the specific and various teaching and learning environments where I taught. I described my experiences teaching in schools where following a set curriculum and preferring order and control over creativity was the norm (02/01/12-A-C). Reflecting on experiences learning and teaching in environments where the majority of the staff preferred to teach by the book rather than in the moment (02/01/12-A-C), I noted I did not experience the kind of freedom or understanding that would
allow me to succeed or feel confident that the way of learning that was most natural to me was worthy (02/01/12-A-C).

Reflecting on experiences as a new teacher, I was often simply trying to discover what the norms and expectations were. As I began to understand the norms and expectations I often searched for ways to work with the norms and expectations of my teaching environment in a way that felt authentic to me. Often I tried to figure out a way to appropriately challenge and question the norms and expectations that did not make sense to me, or that I felt were unjust. There is a sense that I am searching for a balance a way to work with norms and expectations while still engaging in the critical questioning of these norms and expectations.

As I continued to reflect on the norms and expectations within my various teaching environments I soon found others with whom I could discuss these issues. Discussing my thoughts and concerns with others, such as friends and teachers, and reading articles and online blogs, I made a conscious effort to stop worrying so much about what was happening for other people and in other classes (02/01/12-A-C). Thus, reflecting on the norms and expectations, and often by engaging in dialogue with others, I learned how to work within my specific teaching environments in a way that allowed me to challenge and question the norms and expectations but also accept what I could not change.

Property 4D: Institutional Norms and Expectations

In my writing I reflected on institutional norms and expectations. I reflected on what it was like to work within a school versus what it was like to teach outside of an institution. I described my preference for active, autonomous learning, in comparison to the banking model so often seen in our Canadian school system (02/25/12-A-S). Sometimes I reflected on institutional norms from an outside perspective but most often I reflected on what it was like to be working
within the educational system. Often, my reflections were prompted by reading scholars such as bell hooks and Paulo Friere:

*hooks has written endlessly of her experience as a black woman in white dominated academia as ‘education that merely strives to reinforce domination’. I too have seen and value her perspective and yet I acknowledge I am a product of this system for better and for worse. I have benefited from learning to talk the talk of the dominant culture. I know how to navigate my way through bureaucratic systems of power and, even though I experienced a deep sense of not fitting in throughout my time in school, my physical appearance and my family background allowed me to get by and find the support I needed.* (02/25/12-A-S)

Integrating other perspectives into my reflections became a natural, almost automatic process. When I considered the thoughts and writing of other adult educators and critical thinkers I was better able to understand and frame my own teaching experiences.

In environments that did not follow strict institutional norms, such as alternative learning environments and yoga studios, I found I reflected less on the institutions and more on the specifics of my place of work. However, within my reflections, I also discussed the pressure I felt as a graduate student. In particular, I described a feeling of being different in school of feeling as if my various learning environments did not match my particular learning style.

The experience of feeling isolated as a student carried through into my more recent experiences as an adult in graduate school. I often reflected on my struggle to find my voice and negotiate my position as a student in what I experienced as a culture of performativity, driven by competition. I wrote:

*I hide from the culture of competition and performance. In this atmosphere, I feel my throat tighten and my heart race, and I become totally unproductive and can't work. And it isn't just at university. I see this competition and comparison creeping into the yoga studios where I teach.* (01/25/12-S)
This is a thesis about me, about my journey, my insights, and my experiences. And yet, I am struggling as much now as I ever did in any of my past academic pursuits. The struggle just looks a little different. Now, I am faced with this doubt, these voices, that say, you can't be studying yourself...who cares? (01/25/12-S)

My struggle within what I considered a competitive culture of constant productivity and my refusal to rate my worth according to academic standards often had me ask questions about who I was and what my goals were in the culture of teaching and learning.

How do I become more free as a teacher and learner? Free from personal, institutional, and environmental forces that prevent me from seeing new directions, from gaining control over my life, society, the world. How can I feel more empowered and less enslaved? Less a slave to the voices of my culture, and the university culture I now find myself in? And the teaching culture I will return to again one day? The culture of produce, produce, produce? A culture that says: Show me evidence that what you are doing is worthwhile, measurable evidence. And allow me to determine what is worthwhile! (01/25/12-S)

With time I came to accept the way I felt as a part of the process of becoming more self-directed in my learning and of increasing my self-awareness. This was by no means an easy process and in my reflections I am often questioning my place within my educational context. However my reflections eventually show more acceptance of the community and culture within which I find myself, as well as an understanding of how to question and challenge what I do not agree with. The more I reflected, the more I was able to act according to my values and not try to enforce my views on others. Although I was still bothered by what I considered to be unjust or inauthentic behaviour of others, I began to use their actions as another way to reflect more on what I could do to become more authentic in my practice. I noticed that others responded positively and appeared more likely to be reflective themselves if they noticed I was doing my work but not imposing my views on them.
Property 4E: Cultural Expectations and the Role of Teacher in Larger Culture

During this study I critically reflected on the larger social context within which I taught. I often reflected on the current culture of Yoga in North America and how it impacts my teaching and the environments in which I work. Sometimes I look at the history of the practice of Yoga from my current perspective. Below is an example of my reflections on the practice:

When I began practising I assumed that yoga and self care went hand in hand. I assumed that social justice and yoga were interconnected somehow. The rise in popularity of Yoga in North America amongst the radical leftist hippies of the sixties and seventies seemed to indicate that yoga was part of a powerful statement being made against war and the problems of inequality and injustice in the world. Yoga, it seemed, was about liberation. (02/01/12-A-C)

Yoga remains a practice rooted in emancipation. Many Westerns teach and write about the interconnectedness of yoga and social justice. Many teachers use yoga as a powerful means through which to empower people. (02/01/12-A-C)

Often when reflecting on the norms and expectations of the larger culture, I discussed experiencing a tension between how I practice, the values I uphold in my teaching, and what I see as cultural expectations and norms put on teachers. Eventually I come to see that I can find a balance between what is expected of me culturally and what is true for me in my daily practice.

To summarize, each of the five properties identified by Cranton and Carusetta (2004a) in relation to context presented were present in my findings. These properties were: Knowledge of discipline, subject area, content of teaching; Awareness of classroom environment; Departmental norms and expectations; Institutional norms and expectations; Cultural expectations, role of teacher in larger culture, emerged in my data. Each property meant something different in my data based on my experience as a teacher in various contexts. Properties that emerged throughout my data related to the category Context were: balancing expectations with personal choice of what and how to teach; living the content of my teaching outside of the class; supportive/safe
versus less supportive/unsafe environments; struggle to teach and learn in contexts that felt inauthentic.

**Category V: Critical Reflections**

Cranton and Carusetta (2004a) found critical reflection on self, other, relationship, and context to be a key component in the authenticity of their teacher-participants. They describe critical reflection as “being critical of or engaging in critical reflection on each of the previous categories—self, other, relationship, and context” (p. 13). The five properties that emerged within the category Critical Reflection are: Critically questioning one's own values, preferences, and experiences; Critically reflecting on the meaning of student needs and characteristics; Critically questioning one's relationship with students; Critically examining the influence of context on teaching; Critically questioning the norms and expectations present in the teaching context.

My findings corresponded with the five properties of critical reflection identified by Cranton and Carusetta (2004a). Throughout my self-study I critically reflected on myself, on others, on my relationships, and on context. Although much of what is written below is similar to what is contained in the previous four sections, I have chosen examples that clearly showed myself actively engaging in the process of critical reflection. Four properties that emerged within the category Critical Reflection that were unique to my study were; Critical reflection on control and self-efficacy, Critical reflection as a way towards self-acceptance, critical reflection on myself as authority, and The importance of establishing a support network for critical reflection.

**Property 5A: Critically Questioning One's own Values, Preferences, and Experiences:**

Throughout this study I questioned my values, preferences, and experiences. While
engaging in critical self inquiry I often came to revise many of my thoughts and assumptions. I questioned the values, preferences and experiences I had come to hold as a teacher and I reflected on myself as a learner. As I observed myself I saw how I struggle, how I never feel like I fit anywhere, how I cannot seem to learn in the way others seem to learn (8/20/11-S). The more I critically reflected the more I came to accept my own nuanced way of learning and teaching and my struggle as well. Self-acceptance in turn helped me accept and understand others as I noted: I have come to see the unique way in which we learn, as something to be embraced as a gift rather than something that we should feel ashamed of (02/01/12-A-S). Questioning my beliefs and experiences as a learner I came to understand my learning style which helped me grow and accept who I am as a teacher. I observed myself as I opened to the process of change and broadened my view to include others’ perspectives.

Engaging in the process of critical reflection on my values, preferences and experiences as a teacher I continually asked myself questions about my beliefs. I noticed, in particular, previously unquestioned beliefs that felt limiting. I noticed my preference for silence and space as I taught. However, as I reflected I came to see that in order to teach effectively I needed to respond to who and what was happening in the class regardless of my own preferences. Thus, I learned to become more flexible in my teaching by engaging in dialogue when it was appropriate despite my introverted tendencies as a teacher. Through the process of critical reflection I recognised and then made changes to my teaching practice. The changes I made felt genuine as they came from observing my own practice.

Part of this self-study included critical reflection through a series of questions from Patricia Cranton’s (1996) Professional Development as Transformative Learning. I watched my self-awareness develop and grow as I asked myself meaningful questions about my practice. For
example, I reflected on my self-efficacy as a teacher as I answered questions about personal control. I noted:

*I am beginning to feel I have more personal control in my practice, where in the past I think I have felt I lack control. As time goes on I see that I may have little control over my students and others but I can control how I respond to circumstances.* (05/30/12-S)

As I reflected, I saw a shift in the way I viewed my abilities and my sense of control. I began to bring to light my perceived limitations with regards to what I could and could not control as a teacher. Recognising what I could and could not control as a teacher was important for me, as it allowed me to own my practice and know my responsibilities.

Through reflection, I also became increasingly aware when certain approaches to teaching and learning were not helpful: *When I move through the day seeing what is wrong, what I need to fix, what is the matter, I am on constant problem solving mode and do not feel the freedom or space until I manage to let go. This habit is not working for me* (02/26/12-S).

Identifying what did and did not work in my teaching I could change my views and actions and improve my practice. I began to notice that through on-going critical reflection I gained a teacher identity by becoming more autonomous and better able to ask and answer those specific questions that were relevant to my teaching. Seeing that I was the centre of my experience, I saw that *there is no total authority or expert on teaching... I am the one that is here day in and day out with these students, with myself, and there is no one expert to turn to. Nowhere to go but to my experience and inner reflection* (02/26/12-S). This insight was essential in the process of becoming more autonomous and genuine in my teaching.

**Property 5B: Critically Reflecting on the Meaning of Students Needs and Characteristics**

Throughout my reflections, I identified students' needs and characteristics and I critically
reflected on the meaning of their needs and perspectives. When I reflected on the meaning of students’ needs and characteristics, I was better able to empathise and support them as a teacher. For example, reflecting on students’ characteristics and needs while working with youth at risk I saw:

*There is a reason why they have been expelled from all the other schools in the city. Some of them come out strung out on drugs, others exhausted from working the night shift, or trying to raise their babies alone. It is not their fault, I know this. They are not “bad” kids. They have been neglected, abused, told they are stupid and worthless and failures.* (02/01/12-B-10/07/06-O)

Reflecting and looking deeply at my students situations, my awareness grew. I was able to better understand and empathise with them. I felt more authentic and present when I allowed myself to be more empathetic. I gained a new perspective and in doing so I stopped labelling them. I was able to move through my frustration and be of better support. Often it took critically reflecting on the meaning of students’ needs and characteristics to be able to reach them:

*They are actually coming! One girl is writing pages and pages of stories for the autobiography project I assigned...It felt like a victory over all those voices that have told these students they have no focus, that they have ADHD, are not meant to be in school...today they were clearly focused, respectful, and attentive. They just need to be given the space and to be listened to.* (02/01/12-B-O)

Through critical reflection on students’ characteristics, I came to understand what developmental stage they were at, what particular teaching style would best suit their learning style, and why they might act or behave in certain ways. I gained a clearer understanding of the differences amongst students. Again, engaging in this type of reflection allowed me to connect more deeply with students, and offer them the support they needed.
Property 5C: Critically Questioning One’s Relationship with Students

Throughout my writing, there are many examples of how I critically reflected on my relationships with students. As previously discussed, the theme of boundaries emerged. As I tried to establish safe, honest and authentic connections, I noted:

*Students do not seem to have a sense of boundaries, physically or psychologically. There is crowding. There is an unsafe feeling and confusion. I try to explain the benefits of creating space, and I explain that space allows us to be ourselves and then to be in healthy relationships with others.* (02/21/12-02/20/10-O)

When I saw that many of my interactions and perceptions of students were based on my observations, intuition and ideas rather than on dialogue I came to make a change in my practice. After my realization I wrote:

*So, I am going to look at this. And I am going to change this a little also, so that instead of always just saying thank you when a student says they enjoyed the class, maybe I will begin to ask them what they actually enjoyed in the class, so I can learn from their comments, about me as a teacher, and maybe also about the particular learner: Why have I not been asking about what it is they like and did not like? It seems to be more engaged, I need to ask my students about their experience.* (01/15/12-R)

Thus, I critically reflected on how I connected with students and in doing so I came to make changes in my practice and in my relationships with students. This resulted in a deepening of relationship with my students and more understanding of what my students’ needed and wanted. Perhaps the most important realization in critically reflecting on relationships was realizing the individuality of every student and the importance of consistent communication in understanding who my students were and what their needs were. Communication helped me to avoid assuming and generalizing about my students. Critically reflecting on relationships became a way to know my students, to understand their unique personalities, and also to know who I was
I still hold to my values as a teacher that wants to teach to empower the learner. Yet, I am seeing that empowerment is totally different from person to person. I cannot define what empowerment is for my students. This is something they will need to discover. Just as I am discovering that what has been empowering for me, finding my voice, staying open but grounded in certain values and principles, such as mutual respect, safe boundaries, and autonomy, may not be empowering for another...and it is not my job to define what is empowering for another. (03/03/12&03/08/12-S)

I reimagined my role as a teacher and the role of the student where both are learning and growing together. Establishing relationships based on mutual respect helped me stay open to learning from my students. I recognised the relationship between teacher and student as a delicate balance and I created a metaphor of dancing to explain the dynamic:

*It is almost like a dance between the teacher and the student. The teacher begins and knows the steps and appears to be leading, yet the student is also influencing the direction of the steps and the movements of his or her body. The teacher is learning about the student as they dance, about how they move, what they struggle with, where they are able to lead. And who knows what will happen after the steps have been learned by the student, who knows what new moves will be created, what new dance will be danced.* (03/03/12&03/08/12-O 03/03/12&03/08/12-R)

Reflecting on relationships between teacher and student, I began to honour the creativity, surprise, and possibility involved in co-learning. I experimented with teaching in ways that honoured this vision by creating more open relationships with my students that felt less bounded by rules of how I thought I should engage with students. I allowed students space to show me who they were instead of assuming I knew. As a result, I felt more engaged and genuinely present in my interactions with students.

Through critical reflection, I was also able to step back, look at, and make changes in my relationships with colleagues and other support people. I reflected on how I approached others
for teaching advice when I noted *I am going to work on soliciting advice in an empowering way, a way that shows I would like help and support* (O2/25/12-B-R). Importantly by critically reflecting I was able to see how to best solicit advice from others and then identify a support network for myself. I remarked on this when I wrote:

> When I do encounter a situation in my teaching or in my learning, a situation that I keep going over and over again in my head and find I am just creating more knots, I will call on one of my supports. My Supervisor, my mentor, my good friend, my counsellor, my colleagues at the faculty these are all women I admire and turn to for advice and support. (O2/25/12-B)

When I reflected, I saw that I needed to establish a support network for myself. Once I established a network of support, I was then able to critically reflect on my teaching through dialogue.

**Property 5D: Critically Examining the Influence of Context on Teaching**

I critically reflected on how the context in which I teach influences my teaching.

Recalling my first experiences teaching in alternative high schools as well as when teaching in adult literacy programs, I reflected on what it was like to teach in environments where there was little support and where students were often unmotivated and struggling both in and out of school. I noted feeling a sense of dis-ease, of feeling unsafe and being bullied by students. There was uncertainty in these contexts and I mentioned feeling as if I was doing something wrong and that *in such an intense, sometimes unsafe, environment I recall feeling as if I was entering a battlefield when I walked down the halls* (02/01/12-B-C). Through critical reflection, I saw that being in an unsupportive teaching environment with challenging students had a negative impact on my self-efficacy as a teacher, especially at the beginning stages of my career.
When I reflected on teaching contexts in which I felt supported and safe, contexts where the staff seemed supportive, progressive and creative (02/01/12-B-C), I noted feeling more effective and connected to my work. I felt free to be my genuine self, to take risks, and to teach in a way that felt authentic to the stage I was at in my career. I noted that I feel more able to be myself and to influence my students (02/01/12-B-C). In contexts where we were a supportive staff and we managed to come together to support one another and the students I noted having a supportive staff made things much smoother (02/01/12-B-C). Context influenced my teaching which made critical reflection on context all the more important.

I took a critical look at the broader context within which I taught by critically reflecting on the North American Yoga culture. I discussed and compared teaching in the context of the public school system with my experiences teaching yoga. I also reflected critically on what I saw as the norms and expectations within my teaching environments. I commented that something felt missing when I noticed a lack of engagement in meaningful conversations that challenged students and staff to critique the culture of Yoga. Below is an example from my data where I critically reflected on the lack of critical reflection:

No one seems to really be talking...there are no discussions in the classes about what the students are thinking or sensing. Students are approaching me on the street and complaining about how they are being... pushed beyond their comfort zone...and what happens if we always connect yoga to physical appearance, without a broader discussion or analysis of the media, the weight loss industry, or consumerism in general. (02/01/12-A-C)

Reflecting on my experiences, I made changes to my practice instead of adapting to fit the norms of the context I was in. Thus, critically reflecting on the context and how it influenced my teaching, my practice transformed. I started to bring more awareness into my classes, as I noted: bringing critical questions into yoga has deepened my own practice and let me feel much
more engaged with students...yoga requires as much awareness and critical reflection as any other type of teaching (02/01/12-A-CR). Learning how to work within my teaching environment in a way that allowed me to challenge and question the norms and expectations but also accept and work with what I could not change, I grew more competent in my teaching.

In summary, critical reflection was an empowering and engaging way to develop my teaching practice. My awareness deepened as I reflected on myself, others, my relationships, and the context within which I taught. I began to see all of my experiences as lessons and opportunities to look at my practice and, at times, make necessary changes. I gained clarity, began to see my experiences from multiple perspectives, grew more confident, made changes to my practice based on new insights, and established a practice of critical reflection.

**Conclusion**

In chapter four I offered a detailed presentation of my findings. I presented my data in relation to the five categories identified by Cranton and Carusetta (2004a) in their study on authenticity in teaching: Self, Other, Relationship, Context, and Critical Reflection. In addition, while presenting my findings, I also showed properties that emerged that were unique to my study and I explained how they related to my authenticity as a teacher.
CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

In Chapter Five I discuss my findings through identification and explication of nine main themes. I begin the chapter with a brief review of my research questions and a summary of my initial findings corresponding with Cranton and Carusetta’s (2004a) five authenticity categories. I include a revised version of Table 1-A, that I refer to as Table 1-B, created to display the properties I found in my study and how they link to the properties in the Cranton and Carusetta study. Finally, I provide an in-depth discussion of my findings while engaging with the relevant literature.

I have organized these discussions according to the following nine themes: Experiencing Myself as a Living Contradiction; Transitions and the Edge; Beyond Intuition, Engaging Through Dialogue; Critical Reflection with a Mentor; Vulnerability in Teaching; Emancipatory Nature of Critical Reflection; Modelling Authenticity in Teaching; Embodied Teaching; Coming Back to Whole: Contemplative Approach to Education. I arrived at these themes through in-depth analysis of the 31 properties previously identified by Cranton and Carustta (2004a), as well as the 33 properties specific to my study, not mentioned by Cranton and Carusetta (2004a&b). The criteria I used to identify the themes were: frequently of times a theme appeared in my data; indication of challenging previously unexamined assumptions; indication of shift in my thinking or actions as a teacher; and evidence of an increase in awareness or depth of insight. I was looking for indications of the development of my authenticity as a teacher resulting from my engagement in reflective practice. I was also paying attention to the
ways in which my contemplative practices were influencing my approach to teaching and my ability to be authentic as a teacher. Thus, although I considered all of the properties that made up the five categories presented in Chapter Four when analysing my data, it was those properties that were unique to my self-study and that spoke directly to my process of development that contributed to the creation of these nine themes.

**Overview of Findings**

The main purpose of this study was to explore and further my development as a teacher by addressing the questions: how am I authentic in my teaching practice and how might engaging in self-study contribute to my authenticity as a teacher? I anticipated that my engagement in critical reflection and contemplative practice would support a transformative process of developing authenticity. Data provided evidence that I have attended to those aspects of my development that contribute to an authentic teaching practice. I found that my engagement in ongoing critical reflection and contemplative practices supported a transformative process of developing authenticity. Returning to the Cranton and Carusetta (2004a) study I discovered that my data fit easily into the categories of authenticity which were developed based on their own findings. I also discovered that all 31 properties identified by Cranton and Carusetta (2004a) emerged in my research. In addition to the 31 properties, I identified 33 properties specific to my self-study. These properties are listed in Table 1-B. In the following section I discuss how awareness and analysis of these properties led me to identify nine main themes arising from my data. Through discussion of these nine themes, I show how this self-study allowed me to become more authentic in my teaching practice. Throughout my discussion I incorporated various perspectives found in the literature to support my findings.
The following summary highlights the benefits gained from the process of on-going critical reflection on my teaching while showing how self-study contributed to my transformation. Many of the findings I mention are similar to those discussed in the work of Cranton and Carusetta (2004a). Other insights are unique to my study and based on my individual practice. The italicized portions indicate those factors which were unique to my study findings.

**Category I: Self**

Through the process of on-going critical reflection I...

- Developed a core teacher identity
- *Developed a personal teaching philosophy*
- *Increased a sense of self-efficacy as a teacher*
- Articulated my values
- *Began to view my experiences of inner tension & incongruency as a sign for further reflection*
- *Came to see that values and beliefs are not fixed, and can and should be regularly reassessed*
- *Came to see teaching as a process of constantly becoming (ie. that my teacher self is adaptable and changes, but that the act of on-going critical reflection is what is consistent).*
- Learned to bring my whole self into class *including my vulnerability* in appropriate ways
- *Articulated the benefits of an embodied way of teaching*
- *Practiced situating the body at the centre of my teaching*
- Began to view teaching as a path
Category II: Other

- Gained a deeper awareness of students needs and characteristics
- Gained a deeper understanding of myself by reflecting on others
- Saw the importance of getting to know each student individually to avoid generalizing
- Recognized the importance of others personal lives in gaining a deeper and more whole understanding of who they are as learners and as people
- Learned how to work productively with others who hold different views
- Began to see dialogue and communication as key to gaining a more accurate way of understanding others (beyond intuiting or sensing).
- Became aware of the way contemplative practices influences my teaching, and consciously practiced a more contemplative approach to teaching

Category III: Relationships

- Increased awareness of why I was not growing in my relationships with others
- Increased awareness of ways to connect more with students, for example by increasing opportunities for dialogue and other interpersonal communication strategies
- Increased awareness of the multiple ways in which to communicate with students when dialogue was not possible (i.e., conversations through the use of journals)
- Identified preferred way of teaching as co-learning
- Became more aware of the ways that contemplative practices influence the way I relate to others

Category IV: Context

- Increased awareness of the ways in which context influenced my teaching,
- Increased awareness of connection between self-efficacy as a teacher and context
• Increased awareness of contexts that best suit my teaching style
• Increased awareness of how to work within challenging environments
• Increased awareness of how the larger context and culture impact my teaching & the specific environment within which I work

Category VI: Critical Reflection

• Developed a more integrated and complex understanding of the world through critical reflection
• Became a life-long learner, establishing the habit of on-going critical reflection
• Increased awareness of the benefits of critical reflection to:
  • problem solve
  • gain clarity
  • improve practice
  • assess future action
  • adopt a broader perspective
  • examine assumptions
  • shift perspectives
  • question beliefs
  • understand myself
  • feel engaged
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<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Property</th>
<th>My Property</th>
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| Self     | Possessing an understanding of oneself both as a teacher and as a person | L. Self-awareness  
M. Articulates values  
N. Congruence between values and actions  
O. Genuine  
P. Open  
Q. Explicit  
R. Articulates teaching story  
S. Brings self into classroom  
T. Shows passion for teaching  
U. Knows preferred teaching style  
V. Sees teaching as a vocation | A. Self-acceptance  
B. Transitions  
C. Tension  
D. Vulnerability  
E. Embodiment |
| Other    | Possessing an awareness of others as human beings in the teaching and learning environment, especially students, but sometimes colleagues and individuals outside of the classroom | D. Awareness of students' needs and characteristics; for example, learning style, motivation, abilities and gifts, prior experience, developmental stages  
E. Interest in students’ lives and needs outside of the classroom, including personal problems and obstacles to learning  
F. Interest in other individuals who may be a part of teaching-colleagues and the | A. Listening  
B. Silence  
C. Space  
D. Boundaries  
E. Empowerment  
F. Vulnerability  
G. Diversity  
H. Tension  
I. Desire to teach whole student |
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<th>Relationship</th>
<th>Possessing an awareness of the relationship between teacher and students</th>
<th>Caring for students</th>
<th>Teaching as co-learning</th>
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<td>Carefully defined relationship between teacher and student</td>
<td>Helping students learn</td>
<td>Embodied connection</td>
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<td>Sharing self with students</td>
<td>Alternatives to dialogue</td>
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<td>Awareness of how power is exercised</td>
<td>Vulnerability</td>
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<td>Teaching as relationship and communication</td>
<td>Class Consciousness</td>
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<td>Awareness of nature of personal relationship with students</td>
<td>Connected Knowing</td>
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<td>J. Cultural expectations, role of professor in larger culture</td>
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<td>Context</td>
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<td>Critically reflecting on Control as a teacher and self-efficacy</td>
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Interconnectedness of Authenticity Categories

Analyzing my data, I became aware of the interconnectedness of the five categories of authenticity. As I identified themes that emerged from my reflective work, I noticed some themes cut across all five categories. Rarely did a theme present itself in only one category. For example, my self-awareness grew as I began to see characteristics and qualities consistent in my teaching. I often noted my more introverted tendencies, my sensitivity, and my desire to be open and honest with students. Identifying my values and preferences, noticing my habits, and telling my story placed me at the centre of the study. Yet increasing my awareness of myself did not occur in isolation. The growth of self-awareness included finding out who I was in relation to others, discovering how to relate and build appropriate and meaningful relationships, and reflecting on my various teaching contexts.

The property of vulnerability surfaced quite often throughout my reflections. Awareness of vulnerability came from reflecting on myself and coming to terms with my challenges.
Becoming more vulnerable in my teaching and with my students took a great deal of emotional self-awareness. Additionally, the contexts within which I taught, Yoga studios, alternative schools and programs for at-risk populations, encouraged a holistic approach to teaching that welcomed vulnerability. Thus, in my findings, vulnerability emerged in the Category I: Self, Category III: Relationship, and Category IV: Context. Vulnerability was a bridge connecting the categories of authenticity.

Although it was immediately evident that reflecting on myself involved my views and relationships with others, I was unsure how self related to context. Initially, I thought of myself as separate from my context. Yet, as I analysed my findings, I described the various ways of being in different teaching contexts, and my sense of self grew in doing so. I watched how I felt and how I acted as a Yoga teacher, for example, in comparison to how I felt and how I engaged while teaching adolescents in high school and adults in a literacy program. I uncovered a core self that was present regardless of context. On one hand, this core self appeared as the ground of awareness itself. Although critical reflection is a learned skill, awareness itself is not. Thus, my capacity for awareness was consistently present regardless of context. This awareness was linked to the theme of embodiment. Experiencing a sense of presence by being grounded in my body and my being was threaded throughout the multiple categories of authenticity. Additionally, I noticed the presence of some basic and essential values that remained consistent regardless of my surroundings. These values included compassion, respect for diversity amongst learners, safety, autonomy, and authenticity/honesty. Thus, although certain values were subject to change and varied at times depending on context, my core values remained the same. By reflecting on myself in a diversity of contexts, I came to deepen my understanding of myself and I grew an understanding of the contexts as well.
As I analysed my data in more depth, paying attention to properties that emerged that were unique to my study and not mentioned in the Cranton and Caruestta (2004a) study, I came to see that certain properties appeared throughout my data with a high degree of frequency. Of the 33 properties that were unique to my study, the three properties that appeared most often were embodiment, tension, and vulnerability. For example, I discussed an embodied approach to teaching, one that allows me to ask questions about myself, to deepen my understanding and connection to others, and to feel grounded in the context within which I work. Tension surfaced throughout all categories, as I reflected on inner tension, on tension between myself and others with whom I worked and taught, and the tension I felt in various contexts. Vulnerability appeared as I reflected on myself, on how I related to others and on how I appropriately expressed my vulnerabilities in various teaching contexts. Critical reflection on these three properties was ongoing as they appeared so frequently in my self-study.

The interconnectedness of the five categories of authenticity made separating my findings challenging but it was important to observe how awareness and development in one area impacted all the other areas. For example, as discussed, one of the properties identified by Cranton and Carusetta under the category “Self” was “articulates one’s teaching story”. Articulating my teaching story I grew in my awareness of self, I understood how who I was outside of my role as teacher connected to who I was as a teacher and I identified my core values. By telling my story, I also displayed a passion for teaching and began to see teaching as a path, a vocation. These are all clearly factors related to Category I: Self. Additionally, telling my story involved reflecting on people who influenced me and helped shape my perspectives on teaching and learning. Whether I wrote about my father, my mentor, past teachers who influenced me to pursue teaching as a vocation, or others with whom I taught, I was unable to talk about myself as
a teacher without discussing those that helped shaped me.

Data analysis shows the interconnection between and among categories of authenticity. Teaching is about communication. To be authentic as a teacher is to interact authentically with others. Cranton (2001) defines authenticity as “the expression of the genuine self in the community” (p. vii). Consequently, when I reflected on myself as a teacher I was led to reflect on those in my community too. To truly be in a teaching and learning community meant I needed to be myself, to understand others, and to develop meaningful relationships. Similarly, as a teacher in relationship with others I am always situated in a learning context. Context influences how I understand and express who I am and it determines the ways in which I view and interact with others. Thus, growth of self-awareness relates to and impacts awareness of others, relationships, and context.

Discussion

Experiencing Myself as a Living Contradiction

“Experiencing oneself as a living contradiction — when we experience our actions being at odds with our beliefs and values — as the impetus to improve. When we experience that feeling, we are motivated to act. To change. To iterate” (Featherstone, 2005, para. 2).

Consistently throughout my writing, there emerged a sense of inner tension. As I reflected in meditation and Yoga, the ways in which I held this tension became even more apparent. Thus, not only did this tension exist in my mind, I experienced it emotionally, such as when I felt frustrated, and in my body, through the experience of constriction, physical holding, or tightness. Whether I was reflecting on myself, on how I saw and related to others, or on the multiple ways in which context influenced my thoughts and actions, my writing reflected a struggle for understanding. Studying myself, it became clear that tension emerged when I felt as
if my values, thoughts, and assumptions were not congruent with my experience of reality.

Tension also appeared when I encountered situations in which I was confused about my responsibilities and role as a teacher. At first I resisted this tension. Eventually, throughout the course of my study, I began to see it as an inevitable part of an engaged authentic practice and a sign to address incongruencies in my teaching.

Whitehead (1989) discusses the experience of being a living contradiction, a concept used to describe when an individual’s actions in their teaching and learning practices do not match their values. Whitehead advocates for the recognition of values when teaching and legitimizing experiential embodied knowledge in teaching and learning. Whitehead's view, that practitioners can and should develop their own theories by consciously paying attention to and living their own experiences, helped shape my own philosophy of teaching and learning as I engaged in this self-study. In particular, I was influenced by Whitehead's Living Educational Theory, which emphasizes the importance and the possibility of connecting one’s work to one’s life purpose. Indeed, my questions and my reflections are often philosophical, even existential, in nature. When I discussed teaching, I was often also engaging in meaningful questions about life.

The work of teaching in congruence with my values inevitably involved moments of inner struggle, contradiction, confusion, and doubt. Although at the time it remained unclear, as I reflected back on my experiences teaching youth at risk by rereading old teaching journals, I began to see with more clarity the ways in which I was experiencing incongruency in my teaching. Reviewing my journals, I reflected on the experience of struggle in my earliest teaching experiences:

*When I re-read these words now, and the many other entries that fill the pages of my teaching journals, the struggle is evident. I see how my vision of empowering and*
Recalling early teaching incidences, I began to make connections from a more informed place. I was seeing my experiences from a new perspective, relating my experiences to relevant theories and concepts from literature and from insights gleaned from in-depth self-inquiry. Through the process of reflection, I was able to re-frame my experiences, gain clarity, and use these experiences to help guide my future action. As I gained clarity, new understanding emerged. I began to re-articulate my past experiences from a new, more well-informed perspective, as I noted: when I first started to teach, I experienced an inner tension that was almost always present. In retrospect I was experiencing what it was like to be a living contradiction (02/01/12-B-S).

Reflecting led to acceptance of my experiences. I noticed and opened to moments when I felt as if I was incongruent viewing these experiences as part of my journey as a teacher. I saw that as a new teacher I was transitioning from seeing myself as under the authority of an expert, to being the expert in authority, and which meant I was in a liminal space, faced with uncertainty and doubt. To return to Whitehead's conceptualization, working in this space I often felt as if I was a living contradiction. As I reflected I saw that I could embrace this reality rather than move away from it, and in facing my tension, I often worked through it. The clarity I gained from reflecting resulted in a movement towards rather than away from the experience of being a living contradiction. Embracing these moments of tension as indicators to look deeper into my practice and into myself resulted in a transformation of perspective, and a transformation of practice.

Accepting the paradoxes involved in the practice of teaching was a step towards becoming more genuine. It meant knowing my responsibilities and my role as a teacher (what is
my role here?), owning my practice (I must find my own way), and situating myself at the centre of my experience (I am the one that is here day in and day out with these students, with myself; and there is no one expert to turn to. Nowhere to go but to my experience and inner reflection).

The experience of reflecting on being a living contradiction, allowed me to own my own practice teaching and all the awkward, confusing, and difficult moments that come with being a teacher. These moments became rich learning opportunities, urging me to either lean in more and investigate my experience of tension or step back and take a broader perspective.

**Transitions and the Edge**

“a willingness to acknowledge the strangeness, the uncertainty, that is part of learning”

(Greene, in Zacharias, 2004, p. 2)

Data reflections revealed that I was often in a state of transition while teaching and engaging in this self-study. The growth of my awareness of self, others, my relationships, and the context within which I taught involved moving through liminal spaces as I came to shift my perspective, broaden my understanding, and change my actions. Sometimes I re-evaluated my beliefs and values, as when I experienced certain beliefs as limiting or when I felt I was creating a barrier between myself and my students. Sometimes I switched roles as I entered a new teaching job or when I moved from being a student to becoming a teacher. Regardless of the exact circumstances surrounding these moments of transition, many of my reflections revealed what it means to be in a liminal space, as I moved from one way of being, thinking or acting to another.

Although at the time I may not have been immediately aware of the power of my experiences, upon reflection I began to see the richness of transitioning. Especially as a new teacher or as a teacher encountering new students, I was teaching in a space of uncertainty. I
entered into what Garvey- Berger (2004) refers to as “the growing edge”. In “Dancing on the Threshold of Meaning” Garvey-Berger explains:

The edge is the most precarious—and important—transformative space. It is in this liminal space that we can come to terms with the limitations of our knowing and thus begin to stretch those limits. This makes the liminal zones between our knowing and not knowing both difficult to understand—because they are constantly moving and being redefined—and also of central importance to our work as transformational educators. (2004, p. 338)

Garvey-Berger describes the “edge” as a confusing place. She borrows Perry’s (1968) term “catastrophic disorganization” to describe the inner experience of being at the edge of knowing.

Indeed, I noticed in my self-inquiry when I described myself as being in a state of inner chaos. My writing reflects an almost constant struggle to face limits and uncertainties as I took on new forms of responsibility or when I experienced a dissolution of previously established beliefs. A sense of incongruence often accompanied being at the “edge” in a state of transition as when my perceptions and vision did not match my experience. Below is an example from my data describing a situation in which I faced new experiences that challenged my personal vision as a teacher:

*Struck with the reality of the job...I recall feeling as if I was entering a battle field when I walked down the halls. I received little support from colleagues, and little evidence that what I was doing was making a difference, or that it even mattered.* (02/01/12-B-S)

Often reflections that recall experiences at the early stages of my career, such as the one above, showed me in transition from being a student, assuming I was under the authority of another, to being the teacher, assuming a position of responsibility. These shifts then became evidence of a transition from that space of uncertainty and discomfort to a place of understanding and great clarity. Thus, as I reflected my self awareness grew as did my teaching practice.
In studying graduate students’ processes of learning Garvey-Berger (2003) identified the place where we come to the limit of our knowing and begin to stretch our boundaries so that we are able to re-emerge to a new level of understanding. When I understood this, I began to pay more attention to my own meaning making as a process, one that is frenetic by its very nature. I wrote:

*More and more I am waking to the realization that there is no total authority or expert on teaching, or yoga, or life for that matter. I am the one that is here day in and day out with these students, with myself, and there is no expert to turn to. Nowhere to go but to my experience and inner reflection.* (02/12/12-S)

There is a sense of movement in my writing here. A sense that my experience is all part of a larger process of change and growth. Critical reflection became a way to clarify uncertainty. I began to discover my responsibilities and role as a new teacher, I was actually feeling and witnessing myself in the midst of transition: *I feel myself moving on as I write this. I am moving out of a very self-focused stage, and into more active and engaged work* (02/12/12-S). Letting go of old values, ways of thinking and doing by challenging ideas of what a teacher *should* do, I entered into a new transformed space, a place where I constructed new meaning. As a result, I was better able to act from this more aware place.

This new insight led to a profound shift in my perspective and strengthened my metacognitive muscles. I spoke from this transformed space when I wrote that *transitions, even the most painful, can be rich lessons provided we are willing to look. And transitions matter to me as a teacher and learner because I want to bring my whole self to the classroom* (02/12/12-S). These words reflect not only my acceptance of the inevitability of the often awkward and uncomfortable reality of transitions in teaching but also the possible benefits and rich lessons that can be learned from transitioning.
Beyond Intuition, Engaging Through Dialogue

“If I do not speak in a language that can be understood, then there is little chance for dialogue.”

(hooks, 1989, p.78).

Throughout this self-study, reflection on habits in my teaching led me to revise my perspective and act on this revised view. Amongst the many interpretations of transformative learning, some of which I have outlined in my literature review, is “the process of becoming critically aware of one's own tacit assumptions and expectations and those of others, and assessing their relevance for making an interpretation” (Mezirow, 2000, p.4). An important component of the transformative learning process is a change in adults’ frames of reference through critically reflecting on their assumptions and beliefs and consciously creating and implementing plans that bring about new ways of living in the world based on their new outlook.

In “Contemporary Paradigms of Learning”, Mezirow (1996) outlines 12 key propositions in the Theory of Transformation. Amongst these propositions is: “Learning is understood as the process of using a prior interpretation to construe a new or a revised interpretation of the meaning of one's experience in order to guide future action” (p. 162). Throughout my writing I often used prior interpretations of experiences in my teaching to revise and develop new meaning. Although during the process of reflection I am not usually thinking about future action, inevitably once I come to a revised interpretation, I integrate this new learning into my being and am propelled forward to act in ways that honour my transformed perspective.

It was apparent in my reflections that especially in my experiences teaching Yoga my views and observations are often based on emotional intelligence and sense perception. I explained that many of my interactions when teaching were based on a silent embodied
connection to students. I often referred to myself as an introspective and introverted teacher noting that my teaching style embraces this preferred way of being. I wrote that connecting to students need not be entirely dependent on dialogue. I had a habit of using the words *sense* and *feel* when explaining how I understood my students.

Especially when working with at-risk populations and also as a Yoga instructor, the ability to work empathetically, with compassion, is an integral part of practice. In her work on education as a practice of freedom hooks (1994) emphasizes the power of emotion, in particular love, to establish and maintain a progressive, holistic approach to education that has the potential to meet the needs of all students regardless of race, class, gender, or ethnicity. Palmer (1993; 1998) encourages teachers to foster a community of truth by creating room within educational environments for giving voice to issues of the heart. Solomon, who has written extensively on emotion and learning, has stated that “we live our lives through emotions... and it is our emotions that give our lives meaning” (Solomon, 2007, p. 1). In my experience, some of the benefits to teaching from an emotionally engaged perspective include: an ability to empathize and connect meaningfully with students; connecting to a diversity of students, not just the emotionally aware learners, but all learners; inspiring others to feel comfortable to bring their whole selves into their teaching and learning; engaging emotionally with the discipline and subject matter; increasing ones sense of meaning and purpose in their learning. Certainly, being attuned emotionally as a teacher has many benefits.

However, as I engaged in the process of reflection, I noticed a gap in my relationships with students. I saw that my views of students were often based on taken-for-granted assumptions rather than on clear communication and dialogue. Dirkx (2006) notes that “because it is fundamentally rooted in relationship, teaching practice is inherently affect and emotion laden.
As in other helping professions, this emotional dimension can—and often does—subvert our best intentions, leading us at times to act more in our own self interest than for those to whom we are providing service” (p. 28). In continuing to teach in a way that honoured my preference for connection through emotional understanding, I was remaining in my comfort zone and perhaps overlooking my students’ own learning preferences.

Through the act of critical reflection I came to revise my perspective and act on my revision. I saw that my preference for quiet and space, and the label I had given myself as “introverted” teacher, may have actually been limiting my ability to connect with students. I saw that an embodied and intuitive way of communicating has many benefits but that without dialogue something was missing from my practice. There was a gap between myself and my students that did not need to be so wide. Consequently, I chose to try a different approach and deepen my relationships with students by increasing opportunities for dialogue. I wrote:

Instead of always just saying thank you when a student says they enjoyed the class, maybe I will begin to ask them what they actually enjoyed in the class so I can learn from their comments about me as a teacher and maybe also about the particular learner.

(01/15/12-R)

This simple observation made a profound difference in the way I approached my relationships with students and how engaged I felt in my teaching. When verbal dialogue was a challenge I used alternative methods to encourage a regular flow of communication, such as journal writing. I also opened space up in class for students to talk more freely with one another. Thus in response to my perspective change I began engaging in more conversation both inside and outside of class.

The shift from a predominantly intuitive and emotional way of connecting to students to a more balanced practice that invited dialogue and conversation was not the only perspective transformation I underwent. Another shift in my approach to practice that is recorded in my
writing occurred when I became aware of moments in my teaching when I was acting incongruently. I expressed my preferences for values such as openness and curiosity in teaching and learning. I often described meeting students wherever they are and being flexible and adaptable moment by moment. However, I became increasingly aware of incongruence when I saw that in my past teaching and present practice I was often on automatic pilot. I saw that although I claimed to value such things as openness, space and freedom, there were areas where I was clearly stuck. Awareness of these incongruencies was expressed when I wrote: When I move through the day seeing what is wrong, what I need to fix, I am in constant problem-solving mode and do not feel freedom or space until I manage to let go. This habit is not working for me (02/12/12-S). I began to notice the ways I was approaching my work with a “have to be here” mentality.

This realization showed me my need for creativity and open-mindedness in my teaching. The more I became aware of where I felt stuck the more I was able to set intentions to change my practice so that I could approach teaching with the curiosity of a beginner’s mind. There was a shift in my tone too as I decided to move away from a task-based approach to an inquiry-based approach. Through the process of reflection, of paying close attention to my thoughts and feelings, of writing through my experiences of inner tension as they arose, I brought more awareness to what was occurring in my teaching. I saw what I needed to change, I made choices on the best actions to take to create the necessary changes, and then I implemented these changes to work in congruence with my values.

Interpretive narrative researcher Hanna Ezer (2009) claims that self-study “leads (teachers) to move from intuitive and sometimes emotional thinking to systematic and rational thinking based on evidence” (ix). I maintain that there are many benefits to having a strong
intuitive base from which to work. Being able to emotionally connect with and understand myself in a professional capacity, and observe events in my teaching from an emotional perspective, has been and continues to be a way to deepen my practice. However, through critical reflection on my practice I developed new ways of looking at my assumptions and habits in my teaching. I became more articulate, precise, and clear about exactly what was occurring internally in my various interactions with staff and students and in the classroom and Yoga studio. As a result I have grown a professional identity that is significantly more well-rounded and refined.

**Critical Reflection with a Mentor**

Much of my reflective work occurred in conversation with my mentor. The shift towards increasing dialogue to better understand my students was in part sparked by practicing dialogue with my mentor. Critically reflecting with my mentor opened me to new ways of understanding and engaging and allowed me to practice being authentic in dialogue. In other words, not only was I discussing ways to become more authentic in my life and teaching I was becoming more authentic through dialogue.

In his work on mentorship, Daloz (1986; 1999) uses the analogy of a journey to describe the role of the modern mentor in education. Rather than merely providing directions to guide the mentee as quickly and painlessly as possible to her chosen goal, Daloz conceptualizes the mentor as someone helping the protege become a competent traveller, creating a map with the mentee along the way. For Daloz, mentorship is not about the transmission of knowledge from authority to student but about co-creation, reciprocity, and being open to surprise. In other words, Daloz rejects the concept of education as knowledge “out there” to be learned and instead sees
knowledge attainment as a journey of uncovering. This vision of mentorship as a process of unravelling, of looking inward, and drawing forth one's own unique potential makes it an effective tool for self-study.

Daloz (1999) notes that support is providing a place where a person “can contact her need for fundamental trust” which is “the basis of growth” (p. 215). I entered into my relationship with my mentor in need of support. In the midst of completing my third university degree and with some professional teaching experience behind me I was already well versed as a critical thinker. Yet I knew this learning relationship needed to be different from what I had previously experienced in my past academic and professional work. There was a level of trust and care that I was looking for to move into the next stage of my learning and growth. Thus, if my mentor was going to serve as a guide for me as I embarked upon my developmental journey, I needed to feel safe enough to let her listen to my inner life without filtering or holding back.

Safety in my relationship with my mentor came as a result of our commitment to a non-judgemental attitude while working together. This let us engage in challenging discussions, raising questions that often caused discomfort and occasionally triggered emotional reactions. We discussed the importance of remaining critically aware of our own habit patterns, of the often automatic ways in which we protected ourselves from looking inwards by judging ourselves and others. Maintaining an awareness of our own tendencies to judge each other and ourselves was an important ground rule to establish as we worked together. Adopting a non-judgemental attitude was crucial to my ability to see outside of my own world and through the eyes of another. The ability to see another's perspective is, as Daloz (1999) notes, “of profound developmental significance. For it demands in some small way we cross the boundary between ourselves and another person or idea or sensation, and in so doing, that boundary becomes just a bit more
permeable to new ideas and fresh views” (p. 226). By practicing non-judgement, my mentor and I remained open to each other’s points of view no matter how new or challenging they seemed.

Learning involves risk-taking and taking risks is frightening. Yet as Daloz (1986) says, “what allows us, finally, to take the risk is the faith that we will survive. At the heart of development is trust, a willingness to let go, to listen to voices we too often struggle to shut out, to receive with clear-eyes what the world has to offer” (p. 237). Working with my mentor allowed me to gain the trust I needed to move into and through the new and often frightening territory of self-study and in-depth critical reflection. Additionally, my mentor and I fostered an environment that respected collaborative knowledge construction. Buzzanell (2009) speaks of mentoring as a two way process that honours mutual support for each other’s growth and “transcends the usual career, psychosocial support, and role-modeling activities to embrace the whole person” (p. 18). Thus, on-going work and learning happened for both myself and my mentor, often simultaneously.

Through listening, communicating, and honesty, my mentor showed me a form of acceptance that felt unconditional. This acceptance let me take risks and be vulnerable. No matter what I said, it seemed, my mentor welcomed it. This freedom allowed me to be open and honest with whatever I was thinking or feeling. In response, my mentor was also able to feel comfortable to take risks. When I was accepted without apology or explanation, I began to trust my mentor, myself, and the process of development as it unfolded.

Buzzanell (2009) points to a gap in the literature on contemplative mentorship noting there “is little written about the mentor-mentee relationships as a place where spirituality enhances relationships in ways unaccounted for by research and practice” (p. 18). Buzzanell (2009) writes that there is a body of literature on spiritual or contemplative mentorship that
focuses on “how to relate to a Higher Being” but that there needs to be more written on a type of spiritual mentoring that refers to a particular way of interacting in mentor-mentee relationships (p. 18).

Contemplative mentorship focuses less on content and skill attainment and more on how one is able to call forth his or her own unique potential, the recognition of which allows for growth in awareness of self, other, relationships, and the context within which one finds oneself. Contemplative mentorship allows the mentee to recognize their weaknesses and build on their strengths. Work with my mentor was contemplative in nature. We did not focus on the acquisition of a particular skill nor the transmission of knowledge from expert to novice who lacked knowledge content in a specific subject area. In my experience the practice of contemplative mentorship involved bringing about a recognition in the mentee of her own pre-existing nature.

**Vulnerability in Teaching**

“Courage is about putting our vulnerability on the line. If we want to live and love with our whole hearts and engage in the world from a place of worthiness, our first step is practicing the courage it takes to own our stories and tell the truth about who we are. It doesn't get braver than that”

(Brene Brown, 2012, para. 19).

In many ways this self-study gave me the permission I was seeking to become more whole in my teaching. Critical reflection and reflection through contemplative practice became tools to construct this vision of wholeness. The journey of uncovering myself, of allowing both my unique personality and my core humanity to be what connects me to my students, meant recognizing and showing my own vulnerability. It meant finding appropriate ways to express a more vulnerable side while teaching and interacting with students.

The theme of vulnerability emerged consistently throughout my data, especially in
Category I: Self and Category II: Relationship. American Buddhist writer Pema Chodrin discusses the importance of vulnerability. She suggests that in order to live a full and honest life of connection, courage, and compassion, we must open ourselves to what she calls the “shaky tenderness” at the heart of vulnerability. Similarly research professor Brene Brown (2010) writes and lectures on the power of vulnerability. She claims that those in the helping professionals, such as teachers, social workers, and therapists, benefit not only themselves when they embrace their vulnerability, but they benefit all those they work with by encouraging them to be authentic.

My reflections on vulnerability were in large part prompted by the sudden end of my long-term relationship. At the time of this loss, I was still emerging from a tumultuous period of my life, a time of personal struggle and illness. I could not deny the pain and anguish I was feeling. Any time I tried to separate from my feelings of grief and confusion in order to teach or write, I suffered. Leaving my emotions behind in order to “get to work” felt spiritually deadening and completely inauthentic. I felt it, my students felt it, and my writing became lifeless and disengaged. My Supervisor and colleagues encouraged me to honestly embrace my present situation as part of my journey. What resulted was some of the most challenging and perhaps the most honest work I have ever done.

In the winter of 2012, I attended a lecture by Michael Stone, psychotherapist, Yoga teacher, Buddhist teacher, author and activist. The previous summer I had attended his teaching workshop. After these experiences my approach to teaching shifted. Inspired, I begin to integrate Stone’s teachings as I incorporated them into my practice and into my reflective work. I stopped denying my grieving and saw that my human interconnectedness deepened my understanding of others and allowed me to connect to my students on a deeper level. If I truly wanted to live in congruence with my core values and follow my interest in teaching from a holistic perspective, an
approach that honoured mind, body, emotion, and spirit, I had to find a way to allow my vulnerability to be a part of who I was as a teacher.

Embracing and exposing my vulnerability as I taught by discussing personal challenges with students and colleagues was not always easy. I described feeling concerned about getting too personal, about feeling overly exposed, or acting in an unprofessional manner. It took time for me to own my story, wounds and all, but I discovered the more comfortable I felt, the more students were able to meet me and respond with their own stories. I reflected on the experience of becoming more vulnerable in my teaching and how this contributed to my wholeness when I wrote:

To truly know my students, individually and holistically, it was necessary to give them room to be themselves. Adopting this perspective required allowing myself to be more vulnerable and open in my teaching. I was able to be more open by allowing my whole self into my teaching and my interactions with my students. This was not an easy or natural way of being at first, as it required me to unlearn previous habits of hiding parts of myself. I had to learn to stop thinking of myself in a fragmented way, my teacher self being separate from the other parts of myself (02/08/11-O).

There is movement in my writing as I described a shift in my perspective and my practice. As I began to open to my experience and lean into the rawness of my vulnerability, my mistakes, my challenges, my insecurities, and my loss, I moved away from feeling disconnected from myself, my teaching, and my students, towards a place of authentic connection. I described some of the benefits I experienced when I discovered how to appropriately integrate vulnerability into my teaching when I wrote:

When I relaxed into my experience of vulnerability, I began to see things in my students that I may not have otherwise noticed. I recognized their struggles more clearly. I wasn't trying to solve their problems or fix them. I could truly empathize and I could do so quite deeply, naturally. (02/08/11-O)

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My practice shifted as I became more aware of my students and of myself. Importantly, the more vulnerable I was able to be in my teaching the more aware I become of my student’s needs. The more intimate I was with my visceral experience, with how emotions felt in my body, the more present I was with others. I was in a sense waking up to what Palmer (1998) calls “the inward sources of our teaching... the claims it makes on our lives about our relations with our students, about a teacher’s wounds and powers” (retrieved from online source: http://www2.capilanou.ca/Assets/Parker-Palmer-article-The-Courage-to-Teach.pdf). Vulnerability allowed me to fully express myself in my writing and to my students. I moved away from acting in ways that kept my heart guarded and my story silenced, towards becoming more vulnerable, engaged and present in my teaching. Consequently students were more responsive and able to share themselves and their stories safely and openly.

*Emancipatory Nature of Critical Reflection*

“Teachers must be actively involved and committed to a process of self-actualization that promotes their own well-being if they are to teach in a manner that empowers students”

- hooks, 1994

The theme of emancipation emerged in my data. Not only did I reflect on my experiences of liberation, both mine and my students, the act of critical reflection itself was emancipatory. Sitting in meditation, practicing Yoga, talking with my mentor or writing felt liberating. My thoughts became clearer and I could see the limiting beliefs and habits that had been holding me back as a teacher. I was able to target areas in my practice that required me to revise limiting views or explore alternatives to my actions. This did not always result in an immediate resolution of problems. In fact, often strategies failed when I attempted to put them into practice. Or, at the very least, I would experience a sense of discomfort as I attempted to
integrate my new way of understanding into my teaching. Often, after reflection, I approached teaching from a broader, more open and permeable perspective, but it took time and trial and error before new habits of regular reflection became the norm. Yet the work of reflection, of stepping out of my experience to look back on my teaching and thereby adopt a broader, often more inclusive view, was liberating. I learned to take full responsibility of my practice. Coming to see from a broader perspective and exploring alternatives helped me gain the skills to work through difficult circumstances.

Cranton (2006) describes emancipatory knowledge as that which “frees us from personal and social constraints and leads to awareness and development” (p. 18). The ability to think freely, to enquire critically, and to reflect on myself, others, my interactions with the world, and the context within which I work, has proven to be an important part of my development as a teacher and learner. Critical reflection freed me from many of the constraints that had previously prevented me from developing my practice.

Interestingly, at first I found it challenging to bring critical reflection into my practice as a Yoga teacher. Especially in my earlier reflections I often noted feeling fragmented, torn between two distinct parts of myself-the-critical-analytical-thinker, and the more receptive contemplative self. This inner dichotomy is articulated in the following reflection:

as a university educated, North American white woman, I am well versed in critical inquiry. I cannot, nor do I want to, silence the questions that challenge unexamined thoughts and assumptions, both my own and others. On the other hand, my dedication to contemplative practices, such as yoga, meditation, and mindful living, allows me to see beneath the critical, thinking mind and find a place of truth and peace, a place that grounds, nourishes, and inspires me. (02/25/12-A-S)

The more I engaged in the process of critical reflection the more I saw these two seemingly distinct ways of thinking, merge. This merging felt freeing. I noticed that these two modes of being could happily coexist within and be expressed so that I might work from an
authentic place. In essence, I became less divided and more whole. I experienced a new kind of knowledge as I learned how to bring my entire self into my teaching. I reflected on this phenomenon:

_Incorporating critical inquiry into my Yoga teaching has not been easy. It is part of what this degree and this thesis have been about. (I have) strengthened my sense of self, deepened my compassion, and expanded my awareness of and connection to the world... I now see that the more I am able to accept and allow all parts of who I am to coalesce, the more effective I will be in the world. (02/25/12-A-S)_

According to influential German thinker Habermas knowledge is gained by self-emancipation through reflection leading to a transformed consciousness or 'perspective transformation'. My experience of inner merging was no less than emancipatory. Developing a more integrated self concept transformed my practice and deepened my awareness. I could act in ways that were genuine to me, regardless of the context or the subject I was teaching.

Other examples of emancipatory perspective transformation in my self-study, some of which I have previously discussed, include: seeing that teaching expertise depends less on content and subject matter and more on my ability to be open to the process of learning, adapting, and reflecting on my practice; seeing that intuitive teaching is only part of assessing student needs; understanding that my values in teaching can and do change and that it is my job to review and adapt my values when appropriate; realising that tension is an inevitable part of practice and often an indicator of incongruence between my values and actions, which can be addressed. These are all examples of what I consider emancipatory perspective changes that emerged from my reflective work.

_Modelling Authenticity in Teaching_

“Be the Change you wish to see in the world”

-Ghandi
Critically reflecting through contemplative practice, conversations with my mentor, and writing, I experienced many moments of emancipatory perspective transformation. Shifts in my thinking led me to act more authentically in my teaching. I realized that I could not determine what was emancipatory for my students. Consequently, I came to revise my role as an adult educator. I saw that just as I was the only one who could determine what I needed to become more autonomous, whole, and free as a teacher and a learner, my students also needed to explore their own questions in their own unique ways.

I shifted my perspective and started to guide and support rather than instruct and control. This became most evident when teaching literacy to developmentally challenged adults, many living in poverty and from abusive homes. As much as I tried to help these students realise their potential, succeed in the literacy program, lead healthier lifestyles, and find employment, I discovered that the students themselves had to be the ones to determine their own goals. I could not define success for others. Only when the changes came from inside the students themselves would there be any chance of true empowerment and lasting transformation. Realising this was empowering for me as a teacher because it allowed me to let go of control and the burden of over-responsibility and it made room for me to enter into relationships of co-learning founded on mutual respect and authenticity.

Experiencing freedom in my practice meant modelling habits of critical reflection and self-inquiry for my students. It meant openly articulating my thinking process in order to be transparent. It meant accepting paradox and contradiction to the habit of challenge black and white thinking. *I found that the process of moving from unconsciousness to consciousness, at least when working with adults, is best learned through the process of mirroring. When hooks...*
calls for a progressive holistic education, she is talking about having the courage to teach from a
place of authenticity and openness, not to impose our views on students. It is the work of hooks
in particular that has inspired my vision and influenced my thoughts:

To educate as the practice of freedom is a way of teaching that anyone can learn. That learning process comes easiest to those of us who teach who also believe that there is an aspect of our vocation that is sacred; who believe that our work is not merely to share information but to share in the intellectual and spiritual growth of our students. To teach in a manner that respects and cares for the souls of our students is essential if we are to provide the necessary conditions where learning can most deeply and intimately begin. (hooks, 1994, p. 13)

Like hooks, I came to view liberation as a goal for education. Yet I also came to see that the way in which one experiences liberation varies from person to person. My work involves recognizing the whole student and helping them grow, not defining what growth or wholeness looks like. “Teaching in a manner that respects and cares for our souls...” means honouring an authentic way of being rather than acting in accordance with one’s conditioning. This has placed a certain level of responsibility on myself as an educator in terms of well-being and commitment. I needed to become committed to acting in ways that were authentic and right for me so that students could act in ways that were authentic and right for them.

I have come to see that dedication to authentic empowerment “means that teachers must be actively involved and committed to a process of self-actualization that promotes their own well-being if they are to teach in a manner that empowers students” (hooks, 1994, p. 15). Freedom in teaching comes from dedicated self-study that must happen, if not alongside our students, for the benefit of our students. Emancipatory education is inextricably linked to the idea of authenticity. When educators commit themselves to
freedom and authenticity and are actively engaged in this work on a daily basis, students will be influenced to do the same.

**Embodied Teaching**

“The body never lies”

—Martha Graham

In “Somatic Knowing and Education,” Matthews (1998) explains embodied knowing as experiential knowledge that involves sense, perception, and mind-body communication. In her review of somatic/embodied knowing and adult learning, Kerka (2002) outlines key literature that emphasizes a move towards a holistic approach to education placing the body at the centre of knowing. Aposhyan (2004) defines embodiment as “the moment to moment process by which human beings allow awareness to enhance the flow of thoughts, feelings, sensations, and energies through our bodily selves” (p. 52). hooks (1994) emphasises the importance of bringing the body fully into the work we do as teachers. Regardless of the exact interpretation, discussion on embodiment in teaching and learning brings the body into Western learning environments, spaces that have traditionally treated the mind as separate from the body.

Emerging from my data was a strong sense of being embodied in my teaching practice. Although, as previously discussed, I came to see that intuition and observation is not the only means through which I can connect to students, it is apparent that my ability to be authentic in my teaching is linked to a deep sense of presence. Being present meant being connected to whatever was occurring on a moment to moment basis in my environment, being attentive to students and other teachers, and to myself. For me, being
present is physical. To be deeply connected in this way involves a deep level of attunement to the body. Not surprisingly, as a Yoga teacher, my writing reflected an awareness of my body. The sense of connection to and through my physical self, surfaced in all of the categories of authenticity. It was through this awareness of and connection to my body that I grew in awareness of myself, others, relationships, and context. Not only was attention to my body a way to become more present in my teaching, the body became a source of knowledge in my teaching too.

Embodied teaching was another way through which to connect to my students. Reflecting after teaching a Yoga class, I wrote: *at times, understanding is embodied... I notice the deeper we move into feeling our body sensations, the more we reach a place of understanding one another* (02/11/12-O). This noticing did not happen on an intellectual level. Nor did this embodied way of knowing occur in isolation. When I was fully embodied in my practice, the physical self became another means through which to perceive and understand my students. At times my body was also a way to reflect on my habits while teaching. Listening to my body, I paid attention to the subtleties in my environment and noticed things I may not have previously noticed. Embodied teaching helped me understand the needs of my students too. It was a way of being more present and aware, and a way of deepening and establishing healthy relationships.

An embodied practice allowed me to develop a deeper awareness of the contexts within which I taught as well. Interestingly, embodied teaching also opened me to creativity in my teaching practice. As I reflected I came to notice how this deeper level of attunement influenced my surroundings. *When I cultivate a mind and body that is attuned to the subtleties and*
intricacies of internal and external experience, I wrote, I am able to respond and take appropriate actions before a problem becomes serious (02/11/12-C). Body attunement was reinforced by my personal practice of Yoga, meditation, and mindfulness, which I integrated into my teaching context. I discussed the impact of mindfulness which included mindfulness of the body: the practice of mindfulness let me welcome and soften into the silent spaces where before there was only talk. I begin to pay attention to my breath, to my body, to the sounds of the birds outside, or even the crumpling of paper (02/01/12-B-O). Opening to my body, staying tuned in, listening, and paying attention to my breath, I opened to my class, to my surroundings, and to my students, intuitively and creatively.

Clearly, embodiment emerged as a central theme in my writing. The more tuned into my body I was as I taught, a practice in mindfulness cultivated by Yoga and meditation, the more present I was. This presence showed up as being connected and grounded in myself, connected and empathetic with students, creative in my approach to teaching, and able to notice and respond appropriately to my surroundings.

Coming Back to Whole; Contemplative Approach to Understanding

“The highest function of education is to bring about an integrated individual who is capable of dealing with life as a whole.”

-J. Krishnamurti

My personal practice of Yoga and meditation and my training in mindfulness were an integral part of this study. Not only were they tools I used to reflect, but they were ways of being and approaching life that had a profound impact on my teaching. The practice of Yoga is holistic.
Holistic education emphasizes connectedness, wholeness, and being. A holistic pedagogy is an open, responsive, flexible, and self-reflective approach to teaching and learning that takes into account a person’s entire life as well as their connection to the world in which they live. This perspective directly corresponds with a Yogic approach to education.

In a sense, the very goal of Yoga is to become whole. The word yoga comes from the Sanskrit root yuj, which means “to yoke” or unite. Teaching Yoga I teach and model mindfulness, cultivate the ability to be in silence, deep presence and stillness. Creating space in the body, calming the mind, cultivating the development of body awareness, and establishing healthy boundaries are all skills I develop and teach. These skills, cultivated through a regular and dedicated contemplative practice, which is a journey of self-inquiry, became integrated into other areas of my life and my teaching. Amongst the many themes that emerged from my data related to my contemplative approach to understanding were: listening, silence, space, boundaries, and, as discussed in the previous section, embodiment. These themes in particular were cultivated by my engagement in contemplative practices and helped me create a more holistic approach that honoured self inquiry. Reflecting on the meaning of Yoga I wrote:

_Yoga is not about tuning out, but tuning in to what is occurring in our bodies, in our hearts, and in our minds ...we feel the pose from the inside. We experience yoga fully, and it becomes a way of knowing. We can share with others and talk about our practice, but we can only ever talk about it from our own place of knowing, based on our embodied experience._ (02/11/12-O)

Yoga is more than a physical discipline. It is a way of life. The Yoga Sutras, ancient texts written by the sage Patanjali, list ethical guidelines for practitioners to follow. These guidelines, referred to as the limbs, (in Sanskrit “Ashtanga”) are reminiscent of Buddhism's eightfold Noble Path. They are principles not to be mindlessly accepted or viewed as externally
imposed rules. Both the Buddhist eightfold path and the limbs of Yoga, consisting of the yamas, or restraints, and the niyamas, or observances, are guidelines that help the practitioner turn attention inward to live a life of inquiry. Svadhyaya is the fourth of the five niyamas. Sva means “self” and adhyaya means “investigation, inquiry, or education.” Yoga is an educational path situating the self as the course content and life as the context. Practicing Yoga as part of this self-study, I gained a deeper understanding of my teaching experiences from a whole and embodied perspective.

**Conclusion**

hooks calls for an “engaged pedagogy,” an empowering and holistic approach to education that integrates classroom lessons and real life. She discusses the need for truth and passion in teaching. hooks encourages liberation and genuine human connection and draws on Freire’s concept of critical consciousness in her focus on developing an “engaged pedagogy.” Freire was concerned with conscientization, or developing consciousness, “but consciousness that is understood to have the power to transform reality” (Taylor, 1993, p. 52). The authentic development of a teacher’s consciousness can come about through on-going critical reflection in one’s daily experience. Of authenticity, Freire (1970) has stated:

> The teacher cannot think for her students, nor can she impose her thoughts on them. Authentic thinking, thinking that is concerned about reality, does not take place in ivory tower isolation, but only in communication. If it is true that thought has meaning only when generated by action upon the world, the subordination of students to teachers becomes impossible (p. 260).

Both hooks and Freire promote a teacher’s dedication to reflection and action for the development of an engaged pedagogy, a way of teaching that is authentic and holistic. They write that teachers must be aware of themselves as practitioners and as whole human beings if they wish to teach
students in a genuine and just way.

Hiemstra (1988) notes: “The recognition of personal values, beliefs, and the various changes a person undergoes throughout life... can result in foundational tools useful as guides or mirrors for subsequent professional action and ethical decision making” (p. 178). Taylor (2008) writes that “change is continuous...developing more reliable beliefs, exploring and validating their fidelity, and making informed decisions are fundamental to the adult learning process” (p. 5). Through the process of in-depth critical reflection over a 3 month period I established habits that will accompany me along my future journey as a teacher. I have integrated various modes of reflection into my teaching practice such as journal writing and dialogue with a mentor. I model critical reflection as I teach, engaging others in dialogue that often leads to their own self inquiry. I am transparent. I challenge black and white thinking and accept paradox. I am more explicit about what my values are with students and those with whom I work. I speak my truth even when it feels uncomfortable. I have become a lifelong learner, dedicated to the process of critical reflection in my work and in my life.

This kind of on-going inner questioning required me to have the courage to ask challenging and meaningful questions, to think critically, and to reflect honestly and deeply on my actions, behaviour, and choices. Displaying the habit of critical reflection will influence other teachers, colleagues, researchers and students to engage in critical reflection themselves. As I have watched myself become more open and flexible in the way I approach my teaching and in my ability to adapt to different teaching environments while still maintaining a coherent sense of self and remaining aware of my overall purpose, to support my students, and to learn and grow myself.

The work of Cranton and Carusetta (2004a&b) helped to guide this self-study. Their
identification of the five categories of authenticity: Self, Other, Relationship, Context, and Critical Reflection, provided a coherent framework for the presentation and discussion of my findings in Chapter Four. The 31 properties they identified as components of authenticity amongst the 22 educators who participated in their study, allowed me to be both detailed and flexible in my analysis. Their work helped to inform my self-study, was a springboard for my research on authenticity, and allowed me to situate my findings within a broader field of research on teaching and authenticity. I was able to join the collective of voices of teachers in the process of developing authenticity and conducting self-study. Yet it is important to take into consideration that the participants in the study on authenticity in teaching conducted by Cranton and Carussetta were not engaged in formal self-study, at least not as part of this study. Thus, their study is helpful for those interested in the development of authenticity in teaching, but is not an example of self-study. More actual examples of teacher self-study are needed to bridge the theory-practice gap and to inspire authentic, engaged, and potentially transformative reflective work by teachers. It is my hope that my study might be an example for others interested in conducting their own authentic self-study.

In my research I identified areas of authenticity in teaching not identified by Cranton and Carussetta. I identified 33 properties that contributed to the development of my authenticity. The two main areas that emerged as key properties of authenticity in teaching were a sense of presence and embodiment. The ability to be fully present with my students and myself in my teaching was essential to my authenticity as a teacher. The more I brought a sense of presence to my work, the more I connected with students, with the subject, and with myself. Being fully present meant being physically, emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually awake and aware. Being present was linked to being congruent or to noticing when I was not in congruence and
then making changes to bring me back into a state of congruence. Being in congruence was being authentic. Similarly, being in touch with my body and acknowledging my body as a place of knowing contributed to my authenticity as a teacher. Embodiment in teaching brought me more fully into a place of congruence, into knowing what was true for me from moment to moment, and into a deeper and richer awareness of myself, of others, of my relationships, and of the contexts within which I taught. Thus, in addition to the properties and categories identified by Cranton and Carusetta, presence and embodiment were integral to my authenticity as a teacher.

In Chapter Five I have identified nine themes that emerged from my research: Experiencing Myself as a Living Contradiction; Transitions and the Edge; Beyond Intuition, Engaging Through Dialogue; Critical Reflection with a Mentor; Vulnerability in Teaching; Emancipatory Nature of Critical Reflection; Modelling Authenticity in Teaching; Embodied Teaching; Coming Back to Whole: Contemplative Approach to Education. These themes reveal the ways in which the process of self-study through narrative reflection and contemplative practice have contributed to the development of my authenticity. When I began this study my writing and my approach to teaching and learning often felt stiff and forced. I felt disconnected and unsure of how to become more congruent. The more deeply I moved into reflecting and contemplating in this self-study, the more I transformed into a more connected, whole, and authentic teacher and person. The nine themes highlighted in Chapter Five provide evidence for this transformation.

The work of self-study is both important and meaningful. Critical reflection is an essential component of self-study. The capacity for sustained reflection grows the more one practices critically and honestly reflecting on their thoughts, feelings, and behaviour. This is not
new information. However, discovering and fostering more holistic ways of reflecting on one’s practice, such as through contemplative practices, may help teachers become more fully engaged in their reflective work in a way that feels more meaningful and personal. Yoga, meditation, and mindfulness are all ways to open the contemplative mind, strengthen mind-body awareness, deepen insight, and develop compassion and understanding for others.

Throughout this self-study I became totally immersed in my life, in my research, and in my teaching. I watched as the educational concepts and theories I was drawn to became my living reality. This was not easy and I could never have predicted what the process of complete engagement, of living and creating my own theories, would feel like until I actually experienced it. Learning to teach and learn in an engaged way required unlearning conditioned ways of being and often entering into a liminal space of not really knowing what was next. It required courage to feel uncomfortable, to be vulnerable, and to ask and live the important questions about why I do what I do. The result was that, throughout the process of honest reflection, I witnessed myself becoming authentically engaged in my teaching. In a sense, I came home.
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GREB Ref #: GEDUC-597-11; Romeo # 6006510  
Title: "GEDUC-597-11 Contemplative Practice as Self-Study"

Dear Ms. Vine: The General Research Ethics Board (GREB), by means of a delegated board review, has cleared your proposal entitled "GEDUC-597-11 Contemplative Practice as Self-Study" for ethical compliance with the Tri-Council Guidelines (TCPS) and Queen’s ethics policies. In accordance with the Tri-Council Guidelines (article D.1.6) and Senate Terms of Reference (article G), your project has been cleared for one year. At the end of each year, the GREB will ask if your project has been completed and if not, what changes have occurred or will occur in the next year.

You are reminded of your obligation to advise the GREB, with a copy to your unit REB, of any adverse event(s) that occur during this one year period (access this form at https://eservices.queensu.ca/romeo_researcher/ and click Events - GREB Adverse Event Report). An adverse event includes, but is not limited to, a complaint, a change or unexpected event that alters the level of risk for the researcher or participants or situation that requires a substantial change in approach to a participant(s).

You are also advised that all adverse events must be reported to the GREB within 48 hours. You are also reminded that all changes that might affect human participants must be cleared by the GREB. For example you must report changes to the level of risk, applicant characteristics, and implementation of new procedures. To make an amendment, access the application at https://eservices.queensu.ca/romeo_researcher/ and click Events - GREB Amendment to Approved Study Form. These changes will automatically be sent to the Ethics Coordinator, Gail Irving, at the Office of Research Services or irvingg@queensu.ca for further review and clearance by the GREB or GREB Chair.

On behalf of the General Research Ethics Board, I wish you continued success in your research.
Yours sincerely,

Joan Stevenson, Ph.D.  
Professor and Chair General Research Ethics Board  
cc: Dr. Susan Wilcox, Faculty Supervisor  
        Dr. Lesly Wade-Woolley, Chair, Unit REB  
        Erin Wicklam, c/o Graduate Studies and Bureau of Research