

**SEEKING OUT ATTUNEMENT**  
**WITHIN A PEDAGOGY OF RELATION: A NARRATIVE INQUIRY**

by

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PREVIEW

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SEEKING OUT ATTUNEMENT  
WITHIN A PEDAGOGY OF RELATION: A NARRATIVE INQUIRY

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University of Nebraska, 2006

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The work of teaching for greater attunement is characterized as a capacity to concomitantly see and act on relational complexities gathering within classrooms, furthering learning. This narrative inquiry renders more visible the process of one teacher's search for greater attunement within the relational complexities of her particular classroom practices. The narrative created discloses the reflexive nature of this search, attending to the relationships found amid teacher, learner and subject matter. The interconnections between the researcher and the participating teacher become integral to envisioning attuned practices. These interconnections are evidenced through the reflexive interplay amid theoretical literature, field texts, and teaching and learning practices. The ensuing narrative account depends upon this constant interchange among teacher, researcher, and other(s) as the medium for sense-making. Layered images indicative of the shared, lived experiences of both teacher and researcher reveal permeating themes across the data, typifying both the teacher's and the researcher's interconnected searches for teaching/learning attunement. The themes portray the fluid, reflexive, demanding and generative work of attuned teaching and learning. These themes form the interpretive ground offering the reader resonance, reaffirming the relational nature of teaching and learning, and challenging educators to envision and revision their teaching/learning practices for greater attunement.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Chapter One: To See From Whence I Came .....	6
Statement of the Problem.....	10
Summary of Chapter One .....	12
Chapter Two: To See Where I Must Go .....	14
The Purpose of the Study .....	15
The Necessity of the Study .....	16
The Research Questions.....	18
The Language Integral to the Study.....	18
Subject Matter.....	19
Relational Pedagogy .....	19
Attuned Practice.....	20
Image.....	21
Reflexivity.....	21
Self-Understanding .....	23
Resonance .....	24
Summary of Chapter Two.....	24
Chapter Three: Disclosing the Texture of Attunement.....	25
Envisioning Teaching and Learning Through Narrative .....	28
Ethics of the Methodological Process.....	32
Methodology: Narrative Inquiry and its Reflexive Nature .....	32
The Field .....	33
The Role of Participant/Observer .....	33
Participant Selection .....	34
The School .....	36
The Field Texts .....	38
Data Set.....	38
Data Collection .....	39
Reflexive Interplay.....	40
The Research Texts.....	40
Dewey's Interstices .....	42
Gadamer's Interstices.....	46

Merleau Ponty's Interstices.....	48
Drawing Together Layered Interstices.....	51
Biesta's "Gap" as Interstitial Space for Relational Learning.....	53
The Medium for Narrative Inquiry: Conversation.....	53
Professional Dialogue as Elemental to Conversation .....	54
Data Analysis .....	56
Summary of Chapter Three.....	60
Chapter Four: Images of the Search for Attuned Practice .....	62
Theme One: Interstitial Space Between Prescribed Curriculum and Moving Curriculum .....	62
Of Mice and Men and Adolescent Sense-Making .....	64
Interpretation.....	74
Theme Two: Interstitial Space Between Vulnerability and Authority .....	75
Concomitant Roles of Teacher-Learner and Learner-Teacher .....	78
Interpretation.....	85
Theme Three: Interstitial Space Between Self-Understanding and Self-Doubt.....	86
Breaking from Six Traits and Examining New Texts.....	88
Interpretation.....	96
Summary of Chapter Four .....	96
Chapter Five: Implications of the Search for Attunement .....	98
Relational Responsibilities.....	99
Issues of Authenticity, Bias and Generalization .....	99
The Fecundity of Resonance.....	101
Hope.....	102
Consciousness of Self .....	105
Shared Language.....	106
Relational Vulnerability .....	108
Greater Self-Understanding .....	110
Summary of Chapter Five .....	111
Chapter Six: Implications of the Narrative .....	113
Self-Study .....	113
Professional Development .....	114
Teacher Education .....	115
Summary of Chapter Six.....	116
Chapter Seven: Conclusions - The Impact of Teaching for Attunement.....	117

References.....	122
Appendix A: Write Traits 6-Trait One-Pager adapted from <i>Creating Writers</i> .....	131
Appendix B: Two-Page Assignment Sheet titled <i>Steinbeck's Great Depression</i> .....	133
Appendix C: <i>The Kite Runner</i> (Hosseni, 2004) Essay Test.....	135

PREVIEW

## Chapter One

### To See From Whence I Came

I began my teaching career in the school district from which I had graduated four years earlier. I felt academically prepared, excited, and naively optimistic as I began what I have come to see as the process of becoming a teacher. In that month prior to the beginning of school, I carefully laid out the principles upon which I would build my classroom: come prepared to learn; bring your materials; participate in the discussion; treat each other like you'd like to be treated. I arranged and rearranged the classroom, conscious of the placement of desks and eager to create a colorful and inviting environment for my students. I was idealistic and passionate about my first teaching experience, and perhaps that youthful zeal allowed me to meet each day looking for the good in my students. Beneath the outer surety, however, lay a young woman full of questions and lacking insight: *How will I manage student behaviors? What if I don't know the answer to a student's question? How will I survive the paper load? Can I live up to the expectations of the administration and my fellow teachers, many of whom were my teachers such a short time ago?* As the warm breezes of Indian summer waned, so did my excitement. School became more about my own learning instead of a place where I helped others learn, and at some indiscriminate time I realized teaching meant constant adjustment, continual preparation and unending work. In spite of careful planning, my plans were often turned upside down by fire drills or assemblies and always teenage whimsy. Reflecting on my first year of teaching, I questioned if I had fully prepared my students for the demands of future studies.

That first year was harried and disjointed, and with a sense of relief I reported my students' grades and left the building, free from the school bell. In spite of the ups and downs of the year, I felt I had successfully completed my first teaching year and deserved a bit of relaxation. But the following week I was back at school glancing through texts in preparation for the start of the next school year. Momentarily, it seems, I laid aside the difficult work of teaching and became lost in the possibilities for the fall school year: new students, fresh ideas, a blank slate with which I could begin anew. Although I had yet to develop a language articulating my beliefs, I saw *becoming* a teacher as an ever-moving process of engaging in conversation with myself and other(s) – through scholarly



coursework, educational readings and discussions with colleagues – enlarging my perspectives about teaching and learning. August came and I entered my classroom empowered by a year of experience. In the years since, I have recognized a renewed sense of optimism each fall as I enter my school room with a reframed philosophy and refreshed eyes. I have come to see teaching as rigorous, intensive, laborious work, demanding my heart as well as my head. My efforts to continually rejuvenate myself include academic conversation, writing and voracious reading, ever reminded “. . . there is no limit to one’s growth as a teacher. . .” (Kohl, 1984, p. 77). Until recently I had failed to notice the complacency that had quietly seeped into my practice, gradually dulling my vision of the complexity of teaching and learning. Let me explain.

The first time my children visited the zoo they were aware of everything. At the ticket booth they squealed over the ink stamp on their hands. As their dad knelt down with the color coded map, all three children craned to see the images representing the different areas of the zoo. Eyes darted from building to building, catching glimpses of giraffes and coral colored flamingos, but the penguins of the Arctic Zone won everyone’s vote, so off we headed. Entering the Arctic Zone was an experience in itself. After walking through a dark cave of refrigerated air, bright-white light drew my children inward toward an amazing image: the floor-to-ceiling window allowed spectators to see penguins swimming, bobbing, waddling. Hundreds of penguins frolicked over mounds of man-made ice and snow. As parents, the reactions of our children were far more entertaining than the penguins. Our children were speechless, standing wide-eyed and watchful. The oldest stood on her tip-toes, stretching to see over the top of the water as penguins caught fish thrown from the zookeeper. Our son ran alongside a swimming penguin. “Hey, Dad. Did you see his feet? They’re orange!” Our youngest rested on her dad’s shoulders, delighting in the entire scene, gazing serenely at the tuxedoed show before her: smiling, laughing, and entranced. The show lasted for a good half hour and when the zookeeper exited the secret door at the back of the Arctic Zone, our children dashed to the next exhibit. My children lived out and awakened in us what American essayist Henry David Thoreau (1965/1854) suggested: “To be awake is to be alive.”

My children’s wonder revives in me the wonder that should continue to embody my teaching and learning practices. The wide-eyed wonder with which I began my

teaching career has paled over the last 15 years of practice. After deliberate contemplation, I attribute my comfortable, sometimes complacent practices to the absorbing familiarity of school culture and custom. Instead of standing on my tip-toes, running alongside my students and delighting in the particulars of teaching and learning, I succumbed to a practice of patient endurance and submergence in the daily habits of teaching. As I map out my teaching experiences I can identify significant changes within my practice, changes stimulated by altered teaching responsibilities, personal circumstances, or insightful academic experiences.

Reflection permeates many learning experiences that have strengthened my teaching practice. Increasingly visible is my understanding of Maxine Greene's (1978) call for "wide-awakeness" within teaching and its role in my own process of becoming a teacher. While Greene insists teaching entails living at full attention with eyes wide open, she goes further, suggesting wide-awakeness must also inhabit the process of becoming a teacher, must help teachers "attend more fully than they normally have to their own lives and its requirements" (p. 46). To see from whence I came requires embracing the struggles and pleasures I experienced as a novice teacher, learning from my complacency in order to see my present journey as a teacher educator with fresh eyes, and actively engaging in the move toward ever-deepening understandings of the complexities inherent within teaching and learning.

In her writing nearly twenty years later, Greene (1995) echoes her call for wide-awakeness, asserting that as teachers "we ourselves have to experience breaks with what has been established in our own lives; we have to keep arousing ourselves to begin again" if we are to provoke our students to "break through the limits of the conventional" (p. 109). Heeding this call to break forth from quiescent understandings of teaching and learning, I find myself negotiating and questioning the persistent educational discourses that suggest learning to teach can be attained through applied content knowledge, exposure to educational methods/strategies, theories, and extended practice. Teaching is not something to be attained, for attainment exudes images of a reached destination, completion, rest. Rather, teaching is ever-changing, constantly reforming and hovering amid the classroom's complexities stemming from the relationships formed amid teacher, student and subject matter (Kohl, 1984; Hansen, 1995; Greene, 1997; Barone, 2000;

Macintyre Latta, 2001; Bingham, 2004). These thinkers suggest learning moves between the known and the unknown in order to make sense of that for which the learner strives. Teaching and learning, then, remain temporal and fluid, thick with the humanness to which teaching and learning must attend.

As a teacher educator, I am increasingly aware of my students' demands for *the* way to teach, grasping for prescribed notions of teaching while effectively eliminating any part of their processes of learning as well as the processes of their students. Rather than seeing teaching as something continually formed and reformed through the influences of situation, self and other(s), teacher candidates are driven to exacting practice based on predetermined curricular standards. I am distressed when conversation about teaching is poled to content and method, theory and practice, never submerging to the relational depths from which teaching and learning must be understood. Upon reflection, I am troubled by the assumption that content and method can be distanced from the self. Likewise, the complexity of theory interwoven with practice is frequently diluted to simple dissemination of information. Both assumptions neglect the personal sense-making I know to be integral to learning.

My experiences tell me teaching and learning are opaque, their pathways dense and concealed. I know teaching and learning must be guided in order to create knowledge that sweeps forward, drifts back and returns once again, only to be extended by the circumstance of the experience. Burbules (1995) asserts:

Teaching should be seen as an inherently imperfect, uncertain and incomplete process; and in every case there are parallel and equivalent kinds of imperfection, uncertainty, and incompleteness involved in the endeavor of learning. Thus a commitment to education means that one must place greater faith in the journey than in the certainty of reaching one's destination (p. 31).

Thus, teaching and learning are fluid processes of knowing that "occur in the complex meeting spaces of the personal and relational" (Macintyre Latta, 2004, p. 330), creating a pedagogy gathering relationships, acknowledging their significance to teaching and learning. Of primary concern to me are those relationships created among teacher, learner and subject matter. Attending to the resurgence of these relationships depends

upon attunement, a discerning capacity to see and to prompt genuine learning. The notion of attunement increasingly informs and reforms my relational teaching practices. The search for attunement suggests a learning direction transcending dependence upon concrete approaches to teaching and learning toward a more intuitive approach charged with seeing, hearing, feeling more wholly. [See also Merleau-Ponty, 1995; Hansen, 2001; Macintyre Latta, 2004]. Within attunement, the notion of teaching as oversimplified theory and practice disappears. It seems as though relational teaching and the search for attunement attends to the particulars found within classroom situations, revealing renewed understandings of the interconnections between teaching and learning while attending to the relationships formed amid teaching, learning and subject matter.

#### *Statement of the Problem*

Currently, No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation and the standardization of curriculum efforts nationally have been implemented in order to better ensure learners are adequately equipped to function within society upon their graduation from high school (No Child Left Behind Act, 2002). In this effort, however, I fear the creation of self and the reciprocal movement of learning are neglected, perhaps disregarded in many classrooms. Greene (1978) describes how the discovery is taken out of learning when “the self as participant, as inquirer, as creator of meanings has been obliterated” (p. 12). Some current educational research brings to the forefront what NCLB legislation is overlooking (Noddings, 1984, 2003; Barone, 1993; Duckworth, 1996; Hansen, 1999; 2000; 2001; Macintyre Latta, 2001; Easton, 2002; Biesta, 2004; Bingham, 2004; Margonis, 2004; Stengel, 2004). Each of these researchers examines different aspects of obliteration while noting the neglect of the self. Easton (2002) takes up the role of student choice in subject matter; Barone (1993; 2000) and Margonis (2004) reveal the role of personal sense-making in subject matter; Biesta (2004), Stengel (2004) and Hansen (1999; 2001) elucidate the teacher’s role in guiding students toward connections with subject matter; Duckworth (1996), Bingham (2004), Macintyre Latta (2001) and Noddings (2003) reveal the need for good teachers who are “keenly aware that they might have devastating effects or uplifting effects on their students” (p. 249). Noddings (2003) further emphasizes the importance of searching out the possibilities for learning located in the particulars of the situation asking, “what form or level of learning is called

for by *this* topic, for *this* student, in *this* situation?” (p. 244). The work of these researchers indicates teaching and learning must allow for the interpretation of the self by the self, drawing together the necessary relationships formed amid teacher, students and subject matter. Teachers who attend to the making of self – both in their students and in themselves – must recognize “how interhuman relations affect and define teaching and learning. . . [and how] meaningful education is possible only when relations are carefully understood and developed” (Bingham & Sidorkin, 2004b, p. 2). Noddings (2003) contends “we affect the lives of students not in just what we teach them by way of subject matter but in how we relate to them as persons” (p. 249). When teaching is attentive to building educational relations that rely upon the complexity of self and the ensuing interconnectedness between self, other and subject matter, space for creation of self is essential. It seems the evolving creation of self is necessary not only for the student within the classroom but also for the teacher who embraces continued growth and greater understanding of teaching and learning. To pay attention to the movement of learning and the evolving creation of self is to make decisions centered on discernment. This is the work of attunement.

Teachers seeking out attunement within relational practice must continue “to learn and to share their learning in response to the expressed needs of students” (Noddings, 2004, p. viii) while, as Eisner (2002) suggests, participating in the same movement of learning when planning lessons and remaining open to the possibilities of movement away or beyond those particular lesson plans. The teacher consciously aware of the relational nature of both teaching and learning will rely upon the movement found among the particulars of learning experiences to seek attunement. Alongside this relational awareness, the teacher makes discerning decisions that consciously guide learners to learn *how* to learn. Such practice “result[s] in an understanding of the ways in which meanings have been sedimented in an individual’s own personal history” (Greene, 1997, p. 147). In order to precipitate this movement of learning, awareness of student achievement within the context of making self is paramount, for “the origins of significant quests for meaning . . . ought to be held in mind by those willing to enable students to be themselves” (Greene, 1997, p. 147). Such awareness is manifested in the teacher’s search for attunement within her own teaching and learning while recognizing

“... relation, not a fixed ideal of teaching, steers the teacher’s choice of methods” (Noddings, 2004, p. vi). Attunement as discerning movement between the self and other(s) looks to the needs and interests of the learner in relation to the world. The teacher continuously searches out the relation between the lived experiences and the sense-making both teacher and students undertake. Thinkers such as Dewey (1904), Palmer (1998), Hansen (2001), and Noddings (2003) see the ensuing relational flux as interdependent and organic, elemental to human beings. A teacher seeking attunement develops a capacity to see this flux and act in accordance with it to further learning.

The texture of attunement in relational practices cannot be reduced to applied method or technique. Rather, approach emerges through “the active process of organizing facts and ideas . . . [as] an ever-present educational process” (Dewey, 1938, p. 82), a process derived from the search for attunement between self and other(s), demanding better understandings of the interdependency between self and other(s). The relational interplay assumed within this interdependency is a fundamental condition of mental growth. Dewey (1904) explains: “To be able to keep track of the mental play, to recognize the signs of its presence or absence, and to test apparent results by it, is the supreme mark and criteria of a teacher” (p. 14). The complexity of learning and the importance of relational knowing is established in recent teacher education research (Kessels & Korthagen, 1996; Mitchell, 1999; Carr, 2000; Davis, 2000; Cochran-Smith, 2001; Korthagen, 2001; Munby, 2001; Loughran, 2002; Sidorkin, 2002; Jardine, 2003). A conclusion of Gallego, Hollingsworth and Whitenack (2001) emphasizes the need to recognize relational knowing, for “without opportunities to develop the capacity for relational knowing, teachers and teacher educators will never be able to teach their students to develop such capacities” (p. 261). If teachers are to seek out attunement – recognizing and attending to the relational particulars of teaching and learning - concrete exemplars with which teachers can grapple and come to terms in their own practices are needed.

### *Summary of Chapter One*

Chapter One reveals the past/present/future interconnections of my teaching and learning processes as novice teacher, post-graduate student, parent and teacher educator. Through these various roles I feel the impetus to become wide-awake to teaching and

learning as Greene (1978; 1995) suggests, more cognizant of the role relation plays in both teaching and learning. Of particular interest and concern to me are those relationships formed amid student, teacher and subject matter. I fear the emphases of accountability and academic achievement in the current educational climate disregard the importance of attunement, undermining attention to the relational particulars of teaching and learning for both teachers and learners.

PREVIEW

## Chapter Two

### To See Where I Must Go

Recognizing and grappling for attuned relational practice holds consequences for teachers, teaching, learners and learning. Marcel Proust, 19<sup>th</sup> Century French author of *Remembrance of Things Past*, writes of experiencing art in a way that resonates with my understanding of the search for attunement.

Only through art can we get outside of ourselves and know another's view of the universe which is not the same as ours and see landscapes which would otherwise have remained unknown to us . . . instead of seeing a single world our own we see it multiply until we have before us as many worlds as there are original artists (Bartlett & Kaplan, 1992, section 612).

The texture of attunement lives within relational particularities, yet discovery of attunement must entail voyaging through the familiarity of the teaching landscape with new eyes as Proust suggests. This re-vision of teaching revitalizes and regenerates the teacher, enabling teaching and learning to emerge and transform, to continually inform one another while also being reformed in the midst of situational particulars. This re-vision generates a greater sense of self-understanding, reminds me of Greene's (1978) "wide-awakeness" and is akin to the self-understanding Gadamer (2000) writes of concerning aesthetic experiences. Gadamer maintains that when experiencing artwork, we "meet the artwork in the world and encounter a world in the individual artwork" (p. 97). Essentially, we learn of ourselves both *in* and *through* the artwork. Gadamer contends "self-understanding always occurs through understanding something other than the self, and includes the unity and integrity of the other" (p. 97). Taken in the context of the classroom, the learning experience created can be a medium to self-understanding. Not only does the student gain knowledge of other(s) to further learning, but also the teacher gains knowledge from the other(s) to deepen self-understanding and, in return, transform her teaching. Gallego, Hollingsworth and Whitenack (2001) advocate for "critical relationships enabling educators to learn about themselves as they learn with others, thereby creating opportunity for the understanding and development of different perspectives" (p. 241). The essence of self-understanding is disclosed when self is examined in relation to other(s).



Upon reflection, the notion of knowing self in relation to other has repeatedly influenced and transformed my understandings of teaching and learning. As a novice teacher I sought out conversation with experienced teachers in order to gain greater understanding of academic content knowledge and methods of assessment for that knowledge: What should the students know and be able to do by the end of this course? As I continued my education, theory and text challenged my thinking and transformed my teaching and learning practices. Consistently, the challenge to know self in relation to other has taken the form Guifoye (2004) distinguishes as professional dialogue, dialogue which allows the parties involved “to explore ideas, theories, concepts, and practice . . . [to] develop understandings that allow confident action” (p. 1111). Presently, as a teacher educator, I seek to continue scholarly conversation through the same means: by engaging in professional dialogue that extends and transforms my understanding of self in relation to other(s), thus continually reforming and transforming my teaching and learning and leading to the purpose of this study.

#### *The Purpose of the Study*

I am passionate about teaching and learning that attends to the relationships found amid the particulars of the situation and am eager to rethink the role of relation in fostering genuine learning experiences. Throughout my ten years spent teaching at the junior high and high school levels I became increasingly aware of the separation of self from learning. In response, I began to search out a language to give meaning to my own understandings of worthwhile teaching and learning while attending to its particulars. As a secondary education instructor and practicum advisor for teacher candidates at The University of Nebraska-Lincoln, I came to see teaching as a continual journey, a search for the self, while learning from students, guiding them to recognize meaningful connections between themselves and their experiences with the subject matter they would be teaching. These experiences have fueled my genuine interest and concern for teachers at all stages of practice to recognize the relational movement of learning while seeking out attunement, a way of being centered on discernment.

Attunement is perceptual in that it takes into account both the “internal and external attention” to which Dewey (1904) calls the teacher to examine and act upon. The learner’s internal attention is “the giving of the mind without reserve or qualification

to the subject in hand . . . the first-hand and personal play of mental powers” (pp. 13-14). External attention “is manifested in certain conventional postures and physical attitudes rather than in the movement of thought” (p. 14). Teachers must perceive the students’ physical responses to learning as well as their meaning-making process, seeing both as evidence of the relationship built between students and subject matter. Teachers navigating through and attending to these particulars will begin to build relationships between themselves and their students within and through their interconnections with subject matter. Relationships being formed in a classroom are made more complex by uncontrollable elements impacting the physical and social setting: natural phenomena such as time of day, season, light and temperature; cultural identities such as gender, race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation; uncontrolled social circumstance including socioeconomic status, community expectations, financial and administrative support. Teachers must also take into account the students’ previous learning experiences with subject matter and how past experiences may affect the relationships students form with subject matter. The implication of these elements on the learning experience necessitates attunement, a conscious awareness across all levels of interconnected relationships forming amid teacher, students and subject matter. Given the multiple combinations of relational particulars, attunement will look very different depending upon the relational situations, the practices and the experience of the teacher.

#### *The Necessity of the Study*

Berliner (2002) recognizes educational research as a huge undertaking because “humans in schools are embedded in complex and changing networks of social interaction” (p. 19), calling for researchers to “deal with particular problems, where local knowledge is needed” in order to promote “argument, discourse, and discussion” (p. 20) among consumers of educational research. I am convinced greater awareness of the search for attunement is a philosophical and pragmatic necessity for education and holds an important place in realizing the relational complexities inherent to education. The concrete implications of seeking out attunement are of tremendous interest and concern to me. Brown (2005) calls for educational research “to shed light on the complex web that frames the everyday work of people in schools. . . [because] without such illumination, we stand to forget just how complicated the teaching and learning process really is” (p.

33). Educational research must seek methods and voices which will contextualize the difficulties of relational teaching and learning, including collaborative undertakings between researchers and participating teachers.

The initial intent of this study was to present one teacher with whom the reader would become acquainted through images of *her* search for attunement as interpreted by me. Created images would enable the reader to envision the relationship forged between the participating teacher and me as well as the particulars of the lived experience. What happened over the course of the narrative inquiry became significant to my own teaching and learning practices: I became attentive to *my* search for attunement. Within the inquiry, the research participant's search for attunement and my search for attunement converged.

Increasingly, I am struck by the mutuality of this research study. Tandon (1981) writes of the impact of mutuality: "Both the researcher and the subjects learn from each other; they also learn together from the very situation they are a part of and engaged in analysis of. The interests of both parties are mutually inclusive and supportive in dialogue" (p. 299). Together the research participant and I lived out the collaboration driving this interpretive narrative, collaboration that became a "dynamic process . . . a powerful and instrumental device in uncovering and tackling individual values and beliefs, biases, and preconceived notions" (Beck & Black, 1991, p. 138). Clandinin and Connelly (1991) remark: "When one engages in narrative inquiry. . . the two narratives of participant and researcher become, in part, a shared narrative construction and reconstruction through the inquiry" (p. 265). Our collaboration allowed for a shared and mutually constructed sense of the search for attunement that allowed me to retain interpretive authority as an "ongoing communicative interchange that acknowledges difference in knowledge, experience, or ability. . . that allows for changing authority relations over time. . . that manifests reciprocity and respect.. ." (Burbules, 1995, p. 38) with the participating teacher. Thus, this narrative attempts to disclose more fully my search for attunement alongside images of the participating teacher's search for attunement. The narrative inquiry to follow is, then, a reflexive record of my own sense-making of two concomitant and interrelated searches for attunement. Connections between our past experiences – as teachers and students - and our present circumstance –

as teachers, researchers and colleagues – were revealed by thinking amid roles, readings and conversations surrounding the research undertaken. Throughout data collection, we experienced the reflexivity of observing another teacher’s search for attuned teaching while negotiating theories which ground our understanding of attuned teaching. I recreate the thinking as evidence of the search for attunement and its tensions as it grounds the narrative reflexive conversations. We both gained greater understanding of ourselves, our practices, our process. Through disclosing two interrelated searches for attunement, I invite our reader “. . . to recognize, to know, the centrality of relation in your own educational experiences” (Stengel, 2004, p. 143).

### *The Research Questions*

Given the mutuality of the narrative, eight interrelated questions guide the research.

- What might be the consequences for collaboratively seeking out attunement within relational teaching and learning practices?
- How do the teacher and researcher see the relational aspects of teaching and learning?
- How do the teacher and researcher describe his/her sense of self as teacher/learner?
- How do the teacher and researcher attend to the learner’s sense of self as learner/teacher?
- What critical incidents offer images of attunement in teaching practices?
- What does attuned teaching look like in the practices of this teacher?
- What supports teachers engaging in the work of attunement?
- What does attuned teaching offer teachers and learners in the learning environment?

### *The Language Integral to the Study*

Upon entering my doctoral program I brought to my academic studies several years of teaching experience, multiple images of teaching practices and intuitive beliefs about teaching and learning. Through the process of my doctoral studies I have begun to develop a language to give meaning to my pedagogical belief that teaching and learning

is relational in nature. What follows are initial definitions of the language further clarified within the context of this study.

### *Subject Matter*

When I begin to define subject matter, I turn to Dewey (1997/1929) who asserts “The true center of correlation on the school subjects is . . . the child’s own social activities” (p. 20). Subject matter is not a collection of abstract concepts removed from the student; rather, subject matter connects past experiences with present circumstances and offers possibility for future learning. It transcends isolated study to encompass the student’s interests, experiences and the meaningful connections s/he makes with two things: content standards and process standards. Content standards include knowledge or comprehension of basic subject area concepts. Process standards include such things as an objective that is directed at the use of skills, content related behaviors or attitudes related to subject matter concepts (Personal Communication with Jody Riibe, 2006). In an English classroom such as the one where this research was conducted, content standards might include such things as elements of a narrative, types of expository writing or literary devices used in writing. Process standards in an English classroom might include identifying literary devices used in a short story to make inferences about the author’s meaning in order to identify or critique the theme of the work. The teacher who sees and prompts these meaningful connections draws student to the depth and complexity of subject matter in order for education to be conceived as “. . . a continuing reconstruction of experience” (Dewey, 1929/1997, p. 21).

### *Relational Pedagogy*

Pedagogy entails guiding, and to guide in teaching and learning is inherently relational. To teach is to build relations between learners and learning that extend beyond predetermined curricular outcomes to foster the “living through of one’s life” (Pinar & Grumet, 1976, p. 18). Teachers must commit to building relationships amid their students and subject matter, fostering community in their classrooms through ethical attentiveness to the particulars within the classroom. Stengel (2004) explains relation as a “triadic reality” and asserts: “In any educative relation, the ‘teacher’s’ simultaneous interaction with the ‘subject matter’ and the ‘student’ opens spaces for the student’s interaction with and connection to that subject matter” (p. 146). Relational practices

encourage learning that evolves through continual sense-making between the tensions of past, present and future experiences that give rise to greater understanding of self and other(s). Van Manen (1991) suggests the learning space (1) must support learning as a shared activity between teachers and learners in a reciprocal movement of learning; (2) must seek knowledge that emphasizes “lived experience” (Pinar & Grumet, 1976, p. 18); and (3) must understand the nature of pedagogical experience as an intersection between situations, relations and actions. Woven together, these beliefs about the possibilities within relational pedagogy create a renewed vision for teaching and learning, a vision that seeks attuned practice.

### *Attuned Practice*

Attuned practice attends to the relational complexities of the learning situation, fostering and navigating across levels of relationships formed amid student, teacher and subject matter, recognizing such interdependent relationships hold implication for learning. While I offer a guiding definition of attuned practice, I cannot “literally and univocally” (Jardine, 1998, p. 41) define attuned practice; rather, I seek to “playfully explore what understandings this instance [of attuned practice] makes *possible*” (p.41, emphasis added). Ritchie and Wilson (2000) argue that over time, teachers must “come to see that they reside as teachers and persons at the intersections of various educational, gender and social class ideologies” (p. 14). Given the overlapping identities of teachers, I recognize multiple images of attuned practice are lived daily. It seems, however, that the strength of diverse teaching practices is problematized by the “mis-educative” (Dewey, 1938, p. 25) nature of teaching and learning distinguished by Dewey. “Any experience is mis-educative that has the effect of arresting or distorting the growth of further experience” (p. 25). Mis-educative experiences yield callousness to ideas or a “slack and careless attitude” toward learning which promotes “disconnected” learning and further interferes with the possibility of future learning (p. 26-27). Further, such mis-educative experiences limit the capacity to judge and act intelligently. Greene (1978) notes such experiences are prevalent in today’s “self-obliterating” (p. 12) educational climate. Teachers must reaffirm the complexities of teaching and learning, acknowledging their work as both difficult and rewarding while deliberately searching out images of attuned practice with which to grapple.

### *Image*

Connelly and Clandinin (1988) articulate images as “. . . something within our experience . . . expressed and enacted in our practices and actions” (p. 60). Unlike individual pictures that flash within our memory, images call us to reach into our past experience, gathering “experiential threads meaningfully connected to the present,” then reaching “. . . intentionally into the future . . . [creating] new meaningfully connected threads” (p. 60). Woven together, these past/present/future experiences draw upon critical teaching and learning incidents which work together to create images from which understandings of attuned practices can be revealed. Missing from the contemporary educational research literature, however, are images focused on the search for attuned practices and rooted in reflexivity.

### *Reflexivity*

Alvesson and Skoldberg (2000) write of reflexivity, articulating it as “a complex relationship between processes of knowledge production and the various contexts of such processes as well as the involvement of the knowledge producer” (p. 5). Reflexivity, then, draws across a triad of information: the processes through which I learn, the context and image of the learning experience, and my involvement in process, context and image. Much like the Gadamerian (2000) notion that I cannot know myself except in relation to other(s), reflexivity searches out interconnections, demanding wide-awakeness to the learning process as well as its context. Usher (1996) recognizes the value of the researcher’s lived experience alongside his/her values, noting the influences of each “. . . not only in the choice of subject or topic researched but also in how the research is carried out, how ‘data’ is generated and how its significance is evaluated” (p. 36). The interconnected nature of the learning process is best served by reflexivity, a practice calling me to “turn attention inward” (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000, p. 5), and concomitantly outward.

With heightened awareness of the importance of reflexivity to teaching and learning practices, I sought out one teacher willing to embark alongside me in a reflexive search for images of attuned teaching and learning. Several questions permeated my thinking about the prospective research participant: What might attuned teaching/learning practices look like? How might we work collaboratively to reveal these practices? What



might be the implication of attuned teaching/learning practices? As is revealed in the pages to follow, our search together took on a narrative form, drawing on the reflexivity of narrative inquiry as explored by Eisner (1998), Glesne (1999), and Clandinin & Connelly (2000). Specifically, the theoretical underpinnings of reflexivity emerged as movement “. . . from field to field text to research text, weaving our way forward and backward, inward and outward, and always staying situated in place” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 169). My research practice is influenced by Alvesson and Skoldberg (2000) who write of reflexive interpretation as “the open play of interpretation across various levels of interpretation” (p. 248). Much like ethnographic study or case study, the interpretation of data is situated amid layers of influence: my experience, the research texts, my sense-making, the research participant’s sense-making, and the ensuing dialogue used to verbalize our collaborative sense-making. This constant stream of reasoning, questioning and conversation offered a narrative pathway to enlarged understandings of attunement alongside emergent images of attuned practice.

As I reflect upon planning, implementing, and researching, I recognize reflexivity as constantly moving between these stages of the narrative inquiry. Concurrently, reflexivity has become central to my sense-making process, a process driven by the relationships among past and present critical incidents, conversations with colleagues, and interactive readings and reflections. The richness of reflexivity is invigorating yet draining, driven by both centrifugal forces drawing me outward to converse with other(s) and centripetal forces grounding the inquiry process. Alvesson and Skoldberg (2000) insist “reflexivity . . . means paying attention . . . [to the particular influences of the research process] without letting any one of them dominate” (p. 246).

Given the interconnections between processes of this research study and my own sense-making, reflexivity presents a medium for continual negotiation among various contexts situating the research: research texts, research literature, my experience and the research participant’s sense-making. During data analysis, critical incidents emerged as worthwhile texts, disclosing images of the complexity of attuned teaching. While the method of data analysis will be detailed in Chapter Three, it is important to understand critical incidents reveal permeating themes across the data that best foreground the work of attunement. During data collection I reviewed research literature, finding meaning