An inquiry into the pedagogical practices of high school social studies teachers: Imagining and reimagining becoming a teacher

Tim Skuce
Brandon University, Manitoba, Canada

Lloyd Kornelsen
Faculty of Education, the University of Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada

On three days in 2017-18 two university professor-researchers gathered with three high school teachers to talk about the experience of teaching social studies and about the insights, questions, and wonderments therefrom derived. The intent was to research the life and work of social studies teachers. The gatherings were funded by the Brandon school division (Brandon is a small city in the southwestern Manitoba (Canada). The research was conducted under the auspices of the Manitoba Education Research Network (MERN) with support from Manitoba Education and Training (MET).

The underlying premise was that teachers, through their lived experience in the classroom and beyond, were able to access understandings unique to teaching and learning. This article chronicles, in part, what one teacher revealed about his conception of being a social studies teacher and his teaching experience and how, thereby, the understanding of social studies teaching is increased and provides a signal as regards what it might be to be a social studies teacher.

But first: a brief overview of our personal connection to the research topic, the theoretical framework undergirding our assumptions, and our methodological approach.

Personal context

Before becoming university researchers, we spent several years teaching school; Lloyd taught high school social studies for 25 years before retaining a position at the Faculty of Education at the University of Winnipeg in 2013. Tim taught junior and senior high school social studies for 12 years. In addition to his teaching responsibilities, for six years Tim worked as a mentor teacher under the auspices of a ‘Reflective Mentorship Program’ before transitioning into academic positions, first at University of Calgary and then at the Faculty of Education at Brandon University in 2015. Our gaze, including our research worries, priorities, and assumptions, is deeply implicated by our school teaching experience – particularly as it intersects with new academic responsibilities and opportunities. To wit:

In the past several years, many of our social studies teaching friends and colleagues - all master teachers, have begun to retire. They take with them their wisdom and rich insight into educating youth for citizenship. It is a pedagogical wisdom developed over the years seeking the engagement of students in a dialogue about themselves and their world. To us, teachers leaving in midlife wastes a lifetime of expended energy and the acquisition of irreplaceable understandings.

We saw this research project as an opportunity to seek out social studies teachers and record their pedagogical insights and understandings. We wished to investigate what their interpretations,

reflections and stories reveal and to examine how their offerings could broaden our horizons of teaching practice and social studies education (Kornelsen, 2016).

In our new academic positions, to reconcile differences between field and academy, high school and faculty of education, by explaining why our previous work operates as a necessary and seamless function for our new academic endeavours, is challenging. Even so, we regard it as worthy of formal academic recognition (Kornelsen, 2017). In our opinion, it is essential to demonstrate how the often unique and indispensable way teachers work in the field informs, advances, and nuances research. This project, working alongside our participants and co-venturing into the topics (pedagogy, social studies, etc.) offered an ideal occasion to bridge field and academe—a way of exploring how teacher-practitioners inform teacher education and education research. In short, our leadership of this project was founded on a deep regard for teachers' lived experience in conjunction with a desire to establish the recognition, and accessibility of their knowledge in an academic environment.

Theoretical framework

Multiple strands of literature in education speak of the value and importance of teacher voice in education research. Three research traditions – critical theory, narrative inquiry, and philosophical hermeneutics – argue that teacher voice is critical and necessary to advancing understandings of education and pedagogical practices.

Calling attention to issues of power, critical theorists challenge the notion that university researchers, often operating at great remove from the teachers and students they are researching, should have a disparate influence on education policy. Freire (1970, 1977) posited only those who encountered problems themselves (e.g., an 'inquiry' to 'explore,' or a response to emergent challenges/problems in the lifeworld of students and teachers) could most effectively and meaningfully engage with the problem. Meaning, in a learning environment, teachers are most able to inquire into and address significant problems arising in their classroom (Aulls & Shore, 2008). Kincheloe, McLaren, and Steinberg (2011) concur, arguing:

> teachers must have more voice and more respect in the culture of education. Teachers must join the culture of researchers if a new level of educational rigor and quality is ever to be achieved . . . they [teachers] realize that they have understandings that go far beyond what the expert researchers have produced. (p. 165, 66)

It is from a critical perspective Aulls and Shore (2008) review literature focused on the contributions of teacher-led research. They list its benefits, including increased teaching confidence and awareness, and new ways to value and think about teaching. Furthermore, they draw attention to conditions necessary for teachers to do research, including being respected as researcher equals with the university counterparts, and "discussing all aspects of the research project from the start . . . developing a common language through dialogue, and . . . making ample time for teachers to ask questions, reflect, and form conceptual frameworks" (p. 78).

Speaking from both an ontological and a research philosophy perspective, narrative inquiry theorists raise critical questions of those whose stories are being told (Senehi, 2009) and whose experience is being represented (Cain, Esefan, & Clandinin, 2013). As Kincheloe, McLaren, and Steinberg (2011) infer, often it is not teachers' experience. Furthermore, Connelly and Clandinin (1988) argue that because experience informs practice and since there are few other ways of thinking about experience or modes of its inquiry other than narratively, teachers' stories are critical to the field of education research.

Teaching practitioners agree; and they talk of how their stories, although crucial to educational research, are often marginalized. Kathy Carter, writing in 1993, said:

> We can readily point to instances in which we have felt excluded by researchers' language or powerless in the face of administrative decrees and evaluation instruments presumably bolstered by scientific evidence . . . only the teacher owns her or his story and its meaning. As

researchers and educators, we can only serve by getting this message across to the larger society and, perhaps, by helping teachers to come to know their own stories. (p. 8)

Carter believes that perhaps the best we teacher educators can do is to help teachers know their stories, while bringing them into consciousness and into language.

As a form of research, philosophical hermeneutics calls for one to venture while being prepared to accept one's preunderstandings may initiate opportunities to enlarge understandings of self, others, and the world. It is through encounters with others we come to recognize our limits—the familiar becomes unfamiliar. Researchers and participants enter into a dialogue which ultimately uncovers additional meanings of the topic of inquiry. Philosophical hermeneutics is not attempting to ascertain universal methods, but rather foster an alignment with the ethical responsibilities embodied in a particular practice or associated with a specific theory. Hermeneutic understanding is always tied to a concrete situation, consciously or otherwise, to a particular case, for example, this student, teacher or event.

In summary, we believe our ontological research can be critical to the understanding teaching and education as it reflects the teachers' experience reconstructed in stories told or revealed in recollections of lived experience. The benefit of this research may simply be to raise the consciousness of school teachers and university researchers to their shared concerns (Noddings, 2016), or ultimately contribute to a nation's PISA test scores (Sahlberg, 2015). Researchers in the Canadian provinces of Ontario (The Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat, 2010) and Alberta (Adams & Townsend, 2014) found when teachers are collaboratively and meaningfully involved in research, educational policy is affected, classrooms are transformed, and opportunities for new understandings and actions are generated.

Method

The research group met on three days over the course of four months. Each day followed a similar agenda with the introduction to the session's topics/queries:

i. Reflections on one's social studies classroom: stories, wonderments, etc.;
ii. Unpacking lived experience, i.e., challenges and highlights in teaching high school studies;
iii. Understandings of Manitoba's K-12 Social Studies curriculum framework;
iv. Individual writing periods where participants responded to the sessions topics/queries; and,
v. Group discussion/responses on the written responses.

Participants submitted their written reflections at the end of each day. Tim and Lloyd kept extensive notes during the discussion sessions. All sessions were audio-recorded. Finally, following the three sessions, during the analysis stage, Tim had numerous one-on-one conversations with participants as he sought to authentically reflect their perceptions and understandings as they appeared in our various forms of remembrance: memories, field notes, written reflections and audio-recordings.

All three participants - all names are pseudonyms - had extensive teaching experience in a variety disciplines and contexts. Mark had taught social studies, world issues, and geography for twelve years in a senior high school, Andrea had been teaching French and psychology in junior and senior high school for fourteen years and Lisa had been teaching for twenty-one years. She had engaged in diverse pedagogy practices teaching multiple subjects including inquiry and project-based learning to young people from kindergarten to 12th grade.

Even though the sessions were led and facilitated by university researchers Tim and Lloyd, in many respects, the relationship with teacher-participants was collaborative. Importantly, all participants shared similar and recognizable experiences and educative perspectives. For example, many years had been spent by the researchers wrestling with the challenges and joys of teaching high school social studies. In this context, Ellis (1998) and Van Manen (2000) emphasize the indispensable value of researchers' caring concern and worrying mindfulness in gathering, analyzing and

interpreting data. Clearly, the worries and concerns similar to those of the teacher-participants enhanced a seamless activity for the whole group.

Invariably understandings were derived from overlapping and interpenetrating recollections, reflections, and stories of both researchers and the researched. Even though there were differences with respect to the various viewpoints, for the most part, they had been affected by such things as differing researching responsibilities, analyzing and interpreting undertakings, publishing motivations, and teaching geographies. The shared interests and concerns relating to the study were founded on a common question: What does it mean to teach high school social studies?

For the sake of brevity and in the cause of hermeneutical fidelity the discussion below relates to single case. In subsequent articles, our intent is to write an account of each of the other participants. What follows is Tim's account of one research participant's imagining and reimaging becoming a teacher.

Imagining and reimagining becoming a teacher

> A teacher in search of his/her freedom may be the only kind of teacher who can arouse young persons to go in search of their own…children who have been provoked to reach beyond themselves, to wonder, to imagine, to pose their own questions are the ones most likely to learn to learn. (Greene, 1988, p. 14)

Part of our research project involved several individual and small-group conversations discussing learning outcomes included in the provincial curriculum. Mark was one of the members of our research project who inquired into the pedagogical practices of high school social studies teachers.

Mark is 43 years old, a high school geography teacher in a small rural city in western Canada who loves to fish. When speaking with Mark, his general passion for geography, and specifically the environment, is palpable. He talks about driving to one of his favorite fishing holes in rural Manitoba, describing the vast blue beauty of the sky and the endless prairie horizon. Mark laments that in seeking economic benefits from the land, humans have scarred this place—his home. His attunement to life is apparent when he talks about his commitment to the students in his care as they learn the subject matter of the provincially mandated curriculum. He asks himself:

> "How might I design learning experiences that invite students to explore life's mysteries? How might I cultivate reflexive spaces for my students and me to venture into the world? How might I honour the infinite interpretability of the world?"

During one research day, participants were asked to respond in writing to the following excerpts from the Manitoba Curriculum Framework of Outcomes (2003) and later shared their insights, questions, worries, etc. during a group discussion:

- "Through social studies, students are encouraged to participate actively as citizens and members of communities and to make informed and ethical choices when faced with challenges of living in a pluralistic democratic society (p. 3);
- "Discussion and debate concerning ethical or existential questions serve to motivate and make learning more personally meaningful" (p. 6);
- "Citizenship is a fluid concept that changes over time: its meaning is often contested, and it is subject to interpretation and continuing debate" (p. 9); and,
- "Many factors influence identity and life in communities, including culture, language, history, and shared beliefs and values. Identity is subject to time and place, and is shaped by a multiplicity of personal, social, and economic factors. A critical consideration of identity, culture, and community provides students with opportunities to explore the symbols and expressions of their own and others' cultural and social groups" (p. 11).

On many occasions, Mark stressed that when pursuing such outcomes as, for example, fostering critical reflection regarding the making of ethical choices, engaging in open dialogue with others regarding existential questions, examining students' subjectivities by merely applying universal methods, was insufficient. Moreover, he emphasized that venturing into the abundance of curriculum

topics is not simply a service rendered, but rather a golden opportunity for a student to learn, work from within, *study* their own experiences with others in the world and provoking new understandings.

Experiencing the outcomes mentioned above is important for any social studies class in Manitoba. Mark believed the provincially mandated outcomes call on students and teachers to confront ambiguity and to risk their previously held understanding. *Study* and encounters with alterity make new understandings possible. As Gadamer (2004) reminds us, "self-understanding always occurs through understanding something other than the self" (p. 367). Mark talked about the notion that there is no terra firma on which to stand—there is no place of innocence, as all of us, students and teachers, are always and already imbued with ways of being in the world, always situated in a time and place. He suggests that it is important to cultivate a vigilance that honours the un-finishedness of one's life.

Mark's initial thoughts during teaching

When embarking on his teaching career fifteen years ago, Mark believed he possessed the knowledge, skills, and strategies to ensure his students could successfully *cover* the objectives stated in the provincial curriculum. He trusted that if he adhered to *best practices,* he could control students' responses to the activities he planned for the class and move them toward a predefined outcome.

In the classroom, however, "beyond [his] wanting and doing" (Gadamer, 2004, p. xxvi), his carefully crafted lessons came face to face with the eternal flux of the lifeworld: Alexa could not read. Ismail's unexcused absences were mounting up. After many years spent in refugee camps Aziza and her family struggled to adjust to their new lives in Canada. Heather's provocative questions concerning life's mysteries revealed concepts such as justice, democracy, and personal and collective identities are temporal and do not possess singular meanings. These concepts live in the world, begging to be interpreted anew. Mark learned that in the messy, ever-unfolding demands of the classroom and his students' real lives, despite all his planning he could not compete with the realities plaguing human kind.

Like teaching, fishing is a way of being

As the research progressed, Mark and Tim had several one-on-one conversations about Mark's love of fishing and how he recognized something familiar, something he already knew to be true of the lifeworld. His experiences conspire in the cultivation of a sensitivity to the fact that nothing remains static. Metaphorically - each cast of his fishing line invites new possibilities.

As Mark described his love of fishing, he acknowledged the need to linger on the water—to pay attention to its playfulness. Once at the lake, Mark launches his boat and upon reaching the place where he has fished for decades, turns off the boat's motor and drops the anchor. Sitting and lost in reverie, he fixes his gaze on the stillness of the water, remembering learning his ways as a fisherman from his father. Mark recalls admiring the well-practiced motion of his father's casting, the position of his wrists, the rhythmic movement of his fishing rod, the apex of the release point, the unreeling of the fishing line and the lure's entrance into the water many meters away.

Mark recalls learning from his father about the need to pay attention, the ever-emerging ways of this place, and recollections about weather patterns changing dramatically, how water levels became increasingly shallow, how the water had warmed considerably, and why new species of fish were introduced into the lake.

During countless hours on the lake Mark garnered a deep appreciation that universal principles are insufficient when responding to a particular time and place. It is not simply an epistemological quest or the amassing of knowledge. Though fishing requires *techne*- a repeated bodily practice - a special mode of knowing and being, it is insufficient to learning *its* ways He understood that fishing is also a way of *being* that it calls for a presence in the world; a particular attunement to the unceasing and ineradicable flow of life

What is it *to be* in this place? As Gadamer (1977) suggests, venturing necessitates a "momentary loss of self" (p. 51), which is a form of suffering. According to Gadamer, it is in moments of suffering that we experience our own limited understanding of the world, and "the truly experienced person is one who has taken this to heart" (Gadamer, 2004, p. 357). As Mark experiences the *ways* of fishing, he becomes *someone* – *someone* due to the way he carries himself. And perhaps it is his love of the wonders of the open water, his embracing of *its* ways that assists him in loving teaching. "If you know one landscape well," Anne Michaels writes, "you will look at other landscapes differently. And if you learn to love one place, sometimes you can also learn to love another" (1996, p. 82).

Regardless of how much Mark prepares for success in either fishing or the classroom, success is not simply the application of universal methods. Instead, Mark must dwell in the necessary tension between a world that is familiar to him and the *other* that resists assimilation.

The fecundity of the individual case: The maple tree

Mark recounted a lesson presented many times before with his grade 10 and 11 geography students. After sharing his experiences tapping maple trees for syrup, he asked if anyone had ever tapped a maple tree. Hearing many negative responses, Mark created a space for his students to reflect and wonder. Some students were bewildered and naturally quiet while others posed questions revealing the ambiguity and vulnerability of life.

In this relational moment, Mark confronted the limits of his planning reason. What was he now pedagogically called to do? He understood how much he took for granted, his finitude and the limitations of hidden assumptions. He realized that there is no place free of presuppositions and how one is always historically situated. Mark recognized, as Gadamer (2004) suggests, that encountering the *other* reveals "a hitherto concealed experience that transcends thinking from the position of subjectivity" (p. 90). This intersection drew him outside himself; a salient moment in the classroom revealing possibilities for learning.

Student questions can often be perceived as interruptions that "gum up the works" of careful lesson plans, derailing the smooth delivery of the subject matter. After all, there is so much content to cover. Immersed in the frenetic pace of school, Mark often felt anxiety, induced by the ever-present shackles of time. Time was always running out; "time's up"; "we're out of time"; "time on task"; "we need to move on." As teachers, remaining vulnerable to what we cannot foresee, in the words of Jardine (2006) reveals the, "way we carry ourselves in the world, the way we come, through experience, to live in a world full of life, full of relations and obligations and address" (p. 100).

The maple tree can be studied as an object, examined by parsing it into its constituent elements. There are multiple ways a maple tree may be treated. Perhaps objectively, its constituent parts examined—bark, leaves, roots, trunk, etc. Perhaps in an interdisciplinary way, considering it through lenses of science and culture. However, knowing his students wanted to try tapping maple trees, Mark decided to take his students outside to give them an opportunity to experience maple trees in an embodied way.

Lewis Hyde (1979) stated that "the way we treat a thing can sometimes change its nature" (p. xiii). Perhaps as part of a living place, among living interdependencies: a refuge for birds, a medium for the exchange of essential gases, a sustainer of life. Perhaps from a cultural perspective, as a maple tree is full of ancestral voices, historically embedded and waiting to be understood in this moment. Along these lines, the Aboriginal academic achievement worker found out that Mark's classes were going to tap trees. She asked if she could join the activity and discuss the role maple syrup played in local Aboriginal culture, providing an opportunity to explore fuller meanings possessed by the tree.

Once outside, Mark encouraged students to explore the trees' textures. He invited them to venture into their own concrete experiences, into their flesh and life; their sentiments revealing troubling, beautiful, and anxious events in their lives. Students questioned how they could walk by

these maple trees for years and not be conscious of the trees' existence. They wondered how many other things and ideas existed that eluded their attention, realizing that as we move through the world, we are not conscious of all that is in it. Although those things still exist. They wondered, now that they were awakened to the multifariousness of the maple tree, what they might learn by knowing this. As one student jokingly put it: "Is this going to be on the test?"

By way of this experience, Mark recognized his initial lesson plans, relied only the method of telling students about tapping maple trees - closing other opportunities for inquiry. However, the maple tree, being alive in the world exceeds the strict confines of method and is full of possibilities. As Gadamer (2004) suggests, our preunderstandings "do not [imprison us], as if behind insurmountable barriers, but to which we are opened" (p. xxiii). Mark's preunderstandings of teaching, of the maple tree, and of fishing did not enclose him; rather, his preunderstandings are "the biases of [his] openness to the world" (Gadamer, 2004, p. xv). He reached a vital clarification about teaching. Mark's pedagogical responses to the students in his care point to an attunement to the ever-unfolding presences of classroom life. Dunne (1993) portrays these ambiguities and contingencies as:

> "not a process of making which can be judged exclusively on its end-results, and that teaching methods are never merely means but are intrinsically related to some ends—perhaps unintended ones; that the open-endedness and hazard of action haunt what a teacher does; that, no matter how much she strives to remain 'in role,' she unavoidably expresses 'who' she is; that her character, with its fusion of emotion and reason, is always 'on the line'; that she acts within the field of an individual and communal 'effective history'—which is the more effective for operating pre-judgmentally; and that her own greatest effectiveness of 'power' is realized in moments not of manipulation but of interplay" (p. 367).

Mark recognizes he is increasingly at home in the lifeworld of teaching—engaging its constant interplay, which as Gadamer (2004) suggests "preserves itself by drawing into itself everything that is outside it. Everything that is alive nourishes itself on what is alien to it" (Gadamer, 2004, p. 253). In the lifeworld of the classroom, Mark confronts his own historicity—his privilege as an upper-middle-class male and how his understandings have been shaped by living in a communal world. As a young boy he had extensive opportunities to travel, an opportunity many of his students have never had. Venturing with the young into the living disciplines they must learn, he has realized that he is not hermetically sealed from the world. His own historicity influences his gaze on himself, students, and the subject matter. His interactions with students make him question his assumptions, and dialogic space with students frequently challenges him ethically. Mark is continually *opened* by classroom conversation to the voices of his students; he must consider the students' questions in this deeply relational space, and at times, he must strengthen their comments. Mark can question the subject matter along with his students; as Gadamer (2004) suggests, "the art of questioning...is to lay open, to place in the open. As against the fixity of opinions, questioning makes the object and all its possibilities fluid" (p. 376). Students and teachers are already imbued with understandings; students' reflections are not merely "their opinions" or "their constructions," but rather show the substrate that undergirds their understandings.

Mark cultivates a hermeneutic imagination, gaining the capacity to see what is questionable: his pedagogical orientation and his understanding of the disciplines he teaches. This allows him to explore himself, as "understanding is to be thought of less as a subjective act than as participating in an event of tradition, a process of transmission in which the past and present are constantly mediated" (Gadamer, 2004, p. 302). The voices of his students often interrupt his previously held beliefs regarding his identities and his understanding of the topics that he teaches, but he nurtures the capacity to hear them. Gadamer (2004) writes that "openness to the other…involves recognizing that I myself must accept some things that are against me, even though no one forces me to do so" (p. 369). In the tension between curriculum-as-plan and curriculum-as-lived-experience, his pedagogical commitment remains to foster a space that greets and embraces and *studies* Alexa's, Ismail's, Aziza's and Heather's lived experiences, inviting his students to extend their understandings—and his own—of themselves, others, and the world. For Mark to become an experienced teacher, *he* must become vulnerable in order to experience the multiplicity of fabrics and textures of the world. As Smith (1999) asserts, how one transforms:

> Depends upon [one's] orientation and attitude toward what comes to meet [one] as new: whether [one] simply [tries] to subsume or repress it within prevailing dispensations or whether [one] [engages] it creatively in an effort to create a new common, shared reality. (p. 34)

When Mark encounters his students in the world, he is reminded of his own commitment to become a "better teacher, a better father and a better person" (Mark, personal communication, February 10, 2018). Mark seeks to continually embrace alterity, and in encountering otherness his experiences are not simply confirmed but his expectations are surprised. "I am not the kind of teacher that I was when I first started…I am more responsive to the uniqueness of students" (Mark, personal communication, February 8, 2018).

Throughout his career, Mark has become increasingly committed to the notion that teaching is a *practice*; teaching is a way of being, relating to his students and the subject matter. Moreover, he has embarked on his own existential journey and he acknowledged the unfinishedness of this quest. This is no solo journey, for he has embraced the alterity that initiates an educative process, enabling him to garner more expansive horizons of understanding. Mark acknowledges that this venture is risk-laden; feelings of vulnerability abound. Through his encounters with *others* he often feels uncomfortable or estranged; however, it is in moments of breakdown, when familiar pathways are no longer suitable, that the possibility of education emerges. In the end, he will become at home in the world "in a more creative way, in a good way, a healthy way, a way tuned to the deepest truth of things" (David Smith, 1999, p. 2).

Mark now orients his practice around the generative tension that ought to reside between his own intentionality and the living disciplines contained within provincially mandated curriculum documents. A teacher cannot merely amass strategies, formulas, or sure-fire methods; to do so, as Grumet (1988) argues, would forego their own freedom, and such demands "come from those whose actions are not organized around their own intentionality...[like] an eagle scout looking for the badge instead of the mountain" (p. 121).

Mark's heightened consciousness around the maple tree—a specific matter, with a specific class, at a specific time—does not live as a universal construct. The teaching of the maple tree is not simply an abstract concept but is full of relations. Mark's decision to take his students out into the schoolyard is illustrative of a pedagogic heart; an imaginative and generative space that embraces a concrete particular. Mark's heartfelt commitment to be present as he co-ventures with his students leads to a dialogue between him and his students that is (as articulated by Gadamer) "not merely a matter of putting oneself forward and successfully asserting one's point of view but being transformed into a communion in which we do not remain what we were." Similarly, Jardine (2006) purports, "you become someone (not just anyone) as a consequence of how you carry yourself in the world. With practice, you can become more experienced in experiencing things in their abundance" (p. xxv).

The classroom is alive, full of possibilities not yet known; it is where the young live, move, navigate, worry, wonder, learn, and unlearn. This interpretable place is replete with intersections where students and teachers gather to explore the living disciplines of history, geography, religion, economics, gender studies, etc. Mark is conscious of the fact that as he enters the world of a classroom, he already sees it as a place where students may be perceived as worrisome, troubling, wondrous, lovable, and fecund. And through certain types of practices, certain modes of experiences, Mark may become more attuned to the frailty of life—all life—his life. Mark knows that it is not enough to merely plan in advance, that is, read all there is to know about a topic; he needs to linger in a quiet presence with the topic's rhythms—*its ways*. Here, in the varied textures of classroom life, Mark must dwell in this "living space, a living field of relations, and...to make [his] way into it requires a momentary sense of loss, of giving [himself] over to *its* ways by 'letting'" (Jardine, 2006, p. 66) the students and their responses to the topic have something to teach him about their lives.

Mark's attentiveness to his students helped create a liminal space that embraces a tension central to hermeneutic inquiry. This in-between space is hermeneutics' "true locus" (Gadamer, 2004, p. 306). The life of a teacher requires improvisation; Mark's students' responses called on him to tarry with the negative, to live in the tension, and to respond to the young in his midst. This call—and Mark's response to it—points to the deeply relational quality of teaching. Teaching calls for constant mediation between Mark's preunderstandings and the understandings of his students in relation to the subject matter. Mark must comport himself with humility and reciprocity, creating opportunities to dwell in the tension "not so much [as] a matter of overcoming the tensionality but more [as] a matter of dwelling aright within it" (Aoki, 2005, p. 163).

End bit

Ethically, a teacher must not only possess a "toolkit" full of strategies, but also a perceptual acuity to respond to the concrete moment. The universal application of methods in the form of best practices assumes that providing a teacher possesses this "toolkit," it negates the need to cultivate wisdom. This orientation conceives teaching as a practice where teachers learn to deftly respond to each child. The cultivation of praxis—a wisdom that is intentional, contextual and reflexive—allows educators to enact judgments that are attuned to the nuanced lifeworld of the classroom. Perhaps such attunement assists in fostering a convivial and loving space to venture. Perhaps a generous and open space will invite students to embark on their own existential quests.

As we come to an end point in our research with Mark, we are ever more drawn to the complex task of teaching, of co-venturing with the young. Throughout his journey, Mark exhibited humility, acknowledging his limits as a teacher. As Gadamer (2004) suggests, "experience is experience of human finitude" (p. 365). Our own limitations as educators caused us to seek fellow travelers, to better understand others, the world and ourselves. As teachers, perhaps venturing into the subject matter with students offers new understandings that contribute to the cultivation of a pedagogical attunement, a wisdom that spawns a responsible responding to the students in our care. Moreover, becoming experienced makes us welcome our journeying with others and occasions a radical openness to possibilities not yet known. As Mark has alluded, our greatest gift to the young is inviting them to embrace their own existential quest and become partners in a shared responsibility for humankind.

References

Adams, P., & Townsend, D. (2014). From action research to collaborative inquiry: A framework for researchers and practitioners. *Education Canada, 54*(5), 12–15. www.cea-ace.ca/education-canada/article/action-research-collaborative-inquiry

Aulls, M. W., & Shore B. M. (2008). The experienced teacher and action research. In M. W. Aulls, & B. M. Shore (Eds.), *Inquiry in education: Vol.1* (pp. 69–81). New York, NY: Routledge.

Caine, V., Estafan, A., & Clandinin, J. (2013). A return to methodological commitment: Reflections on narrative inquiry. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research, 57*(6), 574–586.

Carter, K. (1993). The place of story in the study of teaching and teacher education. *Educational Researcher, 22*(1), 5–18.

Connelly, F. M., & Clandinin, D. J. (1988). *Teachers as curriculum planners: Narratives of experience.* New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Dunne, J. (1993). *Back to the rough ground: 'phronesis' and 'techne' in modern philosophy and in Aristotle*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press.

Ellis, J. L. (1998). *Interpretive inquiry as a formal research process.* In J. L. Ellis (Ed.), *Teaching from understanding* (pp. 15–32). New York, NY: Garland Publishing.

Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed.* New York, NY: Herder and Herder.

Freire, P. (1977). *Teachers as cultural workers: Letters to those who dare teach.* Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Gadamer, H.-G. (2004). *Truth and method*. New York: Seabury Press.

Greene, M. (1988). *The dialectic of freedom*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Grumet, M. R. (1988). *Bitter milk: Women and teaching*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press.

Huber, J., Caine, V., Huber, M., & Steeves, P. (2013). Narrative inquiry as pedagogy in education: The extraordinary potential of living, telling, retelling, and reliving stories of experience. *Review of Research in Education, 37*(1), 212–242.

Hyde, L. (1979). *The gift: imagination and the erotic life of property.* Vintage Books.

Jardine, D. W., Friesen, S., & Clifford, P. (2006). *Curriculum in abundance*. Mahwah, N.J: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Kincheloe, J.L., McLaren, P., & Steinberg, S.R. (2011). Critical pedagogy and qualitative research. In N.K. Denzen & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 163-177). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Kornelsen, L. (2016). Researching practice: findings from teacher inquiry into the implementation of the global issues course in Manitoba. *Manitoba Education Research Network Occasional Paper Series,* Teacher Research, Number 1, http://www.mern.ca/occ/ted-1.pdf

Kornelsen, L. (2017). For academy's sake: A practitioner's search for scholarly relevance. In T. Sibbald & V. Hubbard (Eds.), *The academic gateway: Understanding the journey to tenure.* Ottawa ON: University of Ottawa Press.

Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat, Province of Ontario. (2010). Collaborative teacher inquiry [Secretariat special edition]. *Capacity Building Series, 16*: www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/literacynumeracy/inspire/

Michaels, A. (1996). *Fugitive pieces.* Toronto: McClelland & Stewart.

Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Noddings, N. (2016). *Philosophy of education.* Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Sahlberg, P. (2015). *Finnish lessons: What can the world learn from educational change in Finland?* New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Pinar, W. (2011). *The character of curriculum studies: Bildung, Currere, and the recurring question of the subject*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Senehi, J. (2009). Building peace: Storytelling to transform conflicts constructively. In D. J. D. Sandole, S. Byrne, I. Sandole-Staroste, & J. Senshi (Eds.), *Handbook of conflict resolution and analysis* (pp. 201-214). New York: Routledge.

Smith, D. G. (1999). *Pedagon: Interdisciplinary essays in the human sciences, pedagogy, and culture*. New York: P. Lang.

Van Manen, M. (1990). *Researching lived experience: Human science for an action sensitive pedagogy.* London, ON: Althouse Press.

Van Manen, M. (2000). Moral language and pedagogical experience. *Journal of Curriculum Studies, 32*(2), 315–327.

About the Authors

Dr. Tim Skuce is an Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Education, Department of Curriculum and Pedagogy at Brandon University, Canada. He completed his PhD in the Department of Interpretive Studies at the University of Calgary, Canada. He is a social studies educator in undergraduate preservice teacher educator and also instructs as part of the graduate studies program. His current research interests include curriculum theory and pedagogy, masculinities in education, and interpretive inquiry.

Dr. Lloyd Kornelsen is an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Education and the Director of the Human Rights program at the University of Winnipeg. His academic interests derive from his current work with social studies teachers and international practicum students. They are grounded in his 25-year high school teaching career – one that was animated with classrooms brimming with difference. Today, his teaching and research work explore questions at the intersection of experiential learning, teacher knowledge, and global citizenship, therewith examining the contested meaning of global citizenship and its most affecting and critical pedagogies.